

PEDAGOGICAL REFLECTION IN ACTION for Educators

"Seeing beyond the moment - understanding the child."

What is Critical Reflection?

Critical reflection is how we think about children's learning within our everyday practice.

It is not something we do after the moment, it happens **within the moment, alongside the child.**

It is when we pause and ask:

- What is this child communicating right now?
- What does this tell me about their thinking, development, or experience?
- How should I respond to support and extend this learning?

Within our practice, critical reflection ensures that what we do is **intentional, not automatic.**

Critical Reflection Within Our Inquiry Practice

In our environments, reflection is part of an ongoing cycle:

- We notice what children are doing
- We interpret what it might mean
- We respond through our interactions and environments
- We reflect again to guide next steps

This means:

- We are not just observing
- We are making decisions based on what we see

Critical reflection is what turns observation into **meaningful, responsive practice.**

Looking Beyond the Surface

Children's behaviour is not random, it is communication.

For example:

A child repeatedly knocks down a tower.

Without reflection, this might be seen as:

- disruption
- lack of focus

With reflection, we begin to consider:

- Is the child exploring cause and effect?
- Are they seeking control or predictability?

- Are they expressing frustration or testing ideas?
- Are they inviting interaction or connection?

This shift is critical.

We move from managing behaviour...

to understanding **learning, thinking, and communication**.

Why Critical Reflection Matters in Practice

Children communicate through:

- play
- repetition
- movement
- emotion

If we do not reflect, we risk missing what they are telling us.

When we engage in critical reflection, we are able to:

- recognise patterns over time
- understand each child more deeply
- respond with purpose
- plan meaningful next steps

This ensures our practice is:

responsive → intentional → individualised

Your Role as an Educator

As an educator, you are not just supporting routines—you are:

- observing with purpose
- interpreting children's learning
- making informed decisions in the moment

This means you:

- notice small but significant moments
- question what you see
- adjust your responses based on the child
- reflect individually and with your team

This is what shifts practice from care...

to **intentional teaching and learning**.



Seeing the Whole Child

A single moment of play often includes multiple areas of development.

For example, when a child is building:

- they may be planning and problem-solving (Executive Function)
- managing frustration (Social & Emotional)
- communicating with others (Language)
- exploring balance and structure (Cognitive)

Critical reflection allows you to:

- see these connections
- respond holistically
- extend learning in meaningful ways

The Role of Relationships

Strong relationships are central to understanding children.

Through your interactions, you begin to notice:

- how a child engages
- who they connect with
- how they express belonging
- how they respond emotionally

Critical reflection is not only about what children do, it is also about:

- how they feel
- how they experience the environment
- how they relate to others

This understanding guides how you respond and plan.

What This Looks Like in Your Daily Practice

When critical reflection is embedded:

- you respond in the moment with intention
- your interactions support and extend learning
- your environment reflects current interests and needs
- your planning builds from real observations
- your documentation captures thinking, not just activity

This means your practice is not based on assumptions—it is based on **what you know about each child**.



Guiding Reflection Prompts

Use these questions to support your thinking:

- What am I noticing right now?
- Why might this be happening?
- What is the child trying to understand or communicate?
- What patterns have I seen over time?
- How can I respond to extend this learning?

These prompts support you to move from:

seeing → understanding → responding

Closing Thought

Learning is not always obvious.

It is not always verbal.

But when we take time to reflect:

We begin to see meaning in everyday moments.

And it is within these moments...

that the most important learning is happening.

1 What is Critical Reflection?

Seeing beyond the moment—understanding the child.

Critical reflection is how we think about children's learning within our everyday practice.

It is when we pause and ask:

- What is this child communicating?
- What does this tell me about their thinking or experience?
- How should I respond to support and extend this learning?



2 Critical Reflection Within Our Inquiry Practice

Reflection is part of an ongoing cycle:



We are not just observing.

We are making decisions based on what we see.
Critical reflection turns observation into meaningful, responsive practice.

5 Your Role as an Educator

You are not just supporting routines—you are:



This means you:

- notice small but significant moments
- question what you see
- adjust your responses based on the child
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9 Guiding Reflection Prompts

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- What am I noticing right now?
- Why might this be happening?
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3 Looking Beyond the Surface

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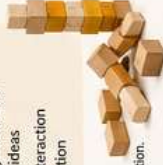
Without reflection, this might be seen as:

- disruption
- lack of focus
- starting again

With reflection, we begin to consider:

- exploring cause and effect
- seeking control/predictability
- expressing frustration or testing ideas
- inviting interaction or connection

We move from managing behaviour... to understanding learning, thinking and communication.



4 Why Critical Reflection Matters

Children communicate through:



When we engage in critical reflection, we are able to:

- ✓ recognise patterns over time
- ✓ understand each child more deeply
- ✓ respond with purpose
- ✓ plan meaningful next steps

This ensures our practice is: responsive intentional individualised

7 The Role of Relationships

Strong relationships are central to understanding children.



Critical reflection is not only about what children do—it is also about how they feel, how they experience the environment and how they relate to others.



8 What This Looks Like in Your Daily Practice

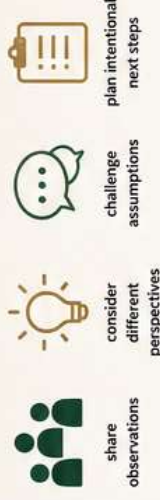


Your practice is not based on assumptions—it is based on what you know about each child.



11 Reflect Together

Critical reflection is stronger when we do it together.



Through team reflection, we build a deeper understanding of each child and strengthen our collective practice.

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