

Pedagogical Reflection in Action

1. Critical Reflection

"Seeing beyond the moment—understanding the child."

What is Critical Reflection—really?

Critical reflection is not just something educators do—it is how we think, question, and grow our understanding of each child.

It is the moment where we pause and ask:

- ◇ What is this child telling us through their actions, words, and emotions?*
- ◇ What might this mean for who they are becoming?*
- ◇ What is my role in supporting this learning further?*

It is about moving beyond surface-level observation and stepping into deep interpretation.

Looking Beneath the Surface of Play

To an outside eye, play can look simple.

But through critical reflection, we begin to see something much deeper.

For example:

A child repeatedly knocks down a tower.

Without reflection, this might be seen as:

- disruption
- lack of focus
- "starting again"

With reflection, we begin to ask:

- Is the child exploring cause and effect?
- Are they seeking sensory feedback and control?
- Are they processing emotion or frustration?
- Are they inviting social interaction?

Suddenly, the moment shifts from behaviour...to communication, thinking, and meaning-making.



Why Critical Reflection Matters So Much

Children do not always express themselves in words.

They communicate through:

- play
- movement
- repetition
- emotion

Without critical reflection, these messages can be missed.

With critical reflection, we are able to:

- recognise patterns in learning
- respond with intention
- create meaningful next steps
- support each child as an individual learner

How This Aligns With Frameworks

Critical reflection is a cornerstone of both:

- Early Years Learning Framework V2.0 (EYLF V2)
 - ◊ *Reflective Practice*
 - ◊ *Responsiveness to Children*
 - ◊ *Assessment for Learning*
- Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF)
 - ◊ *Reflective Practice*
 - ◊ *Assessment for Learning and Development*

It is also central to:

- NQS Quality Area 1: Educational Program and Practice
- Particularly Element 1.3.2 (Critical Reflection)

The Role of the Educator in Reflection

In our environments, educators are not simply supervising or guiding.

They are:

- researchers of children's learning
- listeners and interpreters
- collaborators in thinking



They:

- observe closely
- document meaningfully
- reflect together as a team
- challenge their own assumptions
- ask deeper questions

This is what transforms practice from routine care → intentional pedagogy.

Critical Reflection Through the Lens of Learning Trajectories

When we reflect deeply, we begin to see how learning connects across domains.

A single moment may include:

- Executive Function
 ◊ *the child is planning, adjusting, persisting*
- Social & Emotional Development
 ◊ *managing frustration, seeking connection*
- Language & Communication
 ◊ *expressing needs, inviting others*
- Mathematical Thinking
 ◊ *exploring size, balance, pattern*

Learning is never one-dimensional—it is interwoven and complex.

The Influence of Relationships (3a & FIF)

Through the Abecedarian Approach Australia (3a) and the Fusion Inquiry Framework, critical reflection is deeply connected to relationships.

We reflect not just on:

- what children are doing

But also:

- how they feel
- who they connect with
- how they experience belonging
- Our Noticing Tool & Conversations with children tool support this critical reflection lens

Because learning does not happen without:

- ◊ *connection*
- ◊ *trust*
- ◊ *engagement*



What This Means for Your Child

When educators engage in critical reflection:

Your child is:

- seen as an individual
- understood beyond behaviour
- supported in ways that are meaningful to them
- given opportunities that truly extend their thinking

This ensures learning is not generic—it is personalised and intentional.

What This Means for You as a Family

You may begin to notice that we:

- talk about your child's thinking, not just their activities
- share insights about their development and learning
- ask for your perspectives and experiences
- revisit and build on ideas over time

This is because we see you as a partner in reflection.

A Deeper Reflection for Families

Next time you see your child:

- building
- drawing
- repeating an action
- becoming frustrated
- inviting someone to play

You might pause and wonder:

◊ *What are they exploring here?*

◊ *What are they trying to understand?*

◊ *What are they feeling?*

Because within these everyday moments...is where the most powerful learning lives.

Closing Thought

At Imagine, we believe:

Learning is not always loud.

It is not always obvious.

But when we take the time to reflect deeply—
we begin to see the extraordinary within the ordinary.

