



Research shows that early childhood teachers and educators who are actively involved in their own development are more motivated and provide better learning and development outcomes for the children they engage with. Therefore, providing opportunities for ongoing professional development of employees is a critical consideration for employers in the EM&D process.

There are many options for supporting employee development. Effective organisations utilise a variety of options to support targeted development for employees as they move through their career.

It is important that the employer and employee discuss appropriate development and support options that will meet the needs of the employee, the service and the employer. Consideration should also be given to the employee's interest and the extent to which the training will support the employee's long-term goals. Further guidance on options available in the local area may be sourced through local government, other early learning services, peak bodies or training organisations. Considerations in the choice of appropriate development options for each employee may include relevance, cost and time required. The choice of professional development to be undertaken should be agreed by the employer and employee.

There are several development and support options including those described below.

Peer support

Peer support is when two employees work closely together. They may be in the same work location or in different locations. The key to peer support is in the sharing of experiences, discussing practices and exploring ideas and options together. The peers form a learning partnership and share their learning journey with one another.

Teaming a new employee with an experienced employee can help the new person integrate in the work environment more quickly. It also promotes a feeling of inclusion for the new employee.

Peer networks

Peer networks can be formal or informal, and individuals may meet face-to-face, speak on the phone, chat online and/or be part of a discussion forum group. With the increased number of interactive technologies, the possibilities are endless. Peer networking is a very important way for people to pose questions, gain insight from others and share ideas in a non-hierarchical environment.

Peer interest groups

This takes peer networks to the next level. The interest group, which is often active online and could be local or global, brings together individuals from a variety of backgrounds to focus on an area of interest.

Coaching

Coaching is usually a one-on-one relationship that focuses on building competence or skills to achieve a specific goal. The process can be formal or informal, with the person who provides the coaching assisting the other person to develop in a particular area. Coaching is results-orientated and focused on the 'here and now'.

Coaching can be provided by a supervisor or manager, or by an experienced peer e.g. an Educational Leader.

Mentoring

Mentoring can enhance performance, support development, and assist people to realise their career aspirations. Mentoring tends to be broader and more future-focused than coaching. Mentoring can involve a more experienced person supporting the development of a less experienced person through professional discussions and observations of practice which both lead to increased knowledge. Mentoring is also a relationship-based strategy where both parties share their experiences and insights. It is a mutual engagement in which both parties experience positive benefits. Mentoring is best provided by someone other than that person's direct manager.

Mentoring can be an excellent process to offer a high performing employee who is keen to progress in their career. Mentoring could be provided by an Educational Leader, a Manager or an external expert.



Mentoring is also a valuable approach to development when it is reciprocal. This means that both the mentee and the mentor learn from each other through reflective discussions around pedagogy and practice. Reciprocal mentoring generally moves away from the expert/novice approach and brings together knowledge and experience from both perspectives to share in a respectful and equitable manner.

Professional development meetings

In addition to any formal professional development sessions, individuals can participate in meetings with people from other local services to connect, and share experiences and learnings. Some meetings have a formal structure and/or theme for discussion while others allow the opportunity for individuals to provide updates on their own services and discuss any relevant issues, practice, policy changes.

Professional development workshops

These are workshops organised around a particular development theme and are led or facilitated by an individual who is an expert or is highly experienced in the area being explored. Those participating in the workshop have the opportunity to discuss and explore the issues under the leadership of the workshop facilitator. Such workshops are particularly useful to explore complex theories or issues.

Professional development conferences

Conferences offer a multitude of opportunities for development. In addition to the opportunity to hear leading researchers and practitioners present their work, conferences create opportunities for delegates to network, discuss what they have learned at the conference with peers and explore the ways in which the learning can be applied in their own practice.



Cultural and linguistic diversity is an important aspect of the early childhood workforce in Victoria. When planning and undertaking the EM&D process, employers must follow inclusive policies and practices which ensure that all employees are treated equally and with respect and are provided with the opportunities they need to develop professionally.