

Getting to know the child factsheet

Sources of knowledge:



The Child



Family/ Caregivers



Colleagues



Allied Health Professionals

This factsheet supports you as an early childhood teacher in getting to know children with disabilities.

You can use these activities to understand how to build secure, respectful and reciprocal teacher-child relationships. These factsheets will help you embed practices related to the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* focus areas 1.5 and 1.6 - Differentiate teaching to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities and Strategies to support full participation of students with disability.

The activities are aligned with the [Early Years Planning Cycle](#). They will help you collect relevant information, question and analyse what you observe and will support your planning, practice and regular reflection.

You can collaborate with families, colleagues (including support staff) and allied health professionals on these activities to build a holistic view of the child. This will serve to strengthen both your relationship with the child and your professional partnerships.

Create a personalised plan with the questions and knowledge you need to seek.

Sources of knowledge



The Child

Communicating and learning from the child is key to building knowledge, understanding and relationships with children. See Article 12 of the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) to learn about the children's right to have their voices heard.

... use these activities to understand how to build secure, respectful and reciprocal teacher-child relationships.



Family/Caregivers

Families and caregivers have an in-depth understanding of their children. By learning about the child from the family, you will learn about the child's interests, strengths, abilities, achievements and constraints. You can also learn about relevant aspects of the child's home life and experiences that can impact the child's participation in your classroom (e.g. home routines, friendships, previous or existing barriers to social and educational participation).



Colleagues

Your colleagues can be a source of knowledge and support for you, provide advice if challenges arise and celebrate children's achievements with you. Ongoing collaboration with colleagues are useful in getting to know the child from various perspectives. Other educators and support staff from previous education and care settings that the child has attended can also offer valuable insights.






Allied Health Professionals

Allied health professionals, including psychologists, speech therapists and occupational therapists, can provide advice and support and may also have accessible reports about the child's strengths and interests.

They can also advise on any constraints the child may encounter in physical and/or learning environments, their communication and tolerance to auditory and sensory experiences, or their self-regulation and emotional awareness. Make time to discuss these reports with the health professionals to build trust and a shared approach in supporting the child.

In order to establish secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships with children, families and allied health professionals, you can use the ideas below as reflective prompts to create your personalised plan with the questions and knowledge you need to seek.

Source of Knowledge	What to ask about	When to ask	How to ask
Child 	Ask questions about the child's interests, preferences and what they would like to explore in the centre.	When first supporting the child with their transition to the early childhood setting.	"Hi [The Child's Name], I can see you have a big dinosaur on your t-shirt. We have a lot of dinosaurs for you to play with, and many dinosaur books too, would you like to come and explore?"
	Ask questions about the best way to support the child to feel physically comfortable (e.g. using adaptive seating) when engaging in group times with other children.	After the child has settled into the centre and is starting to build relationships with other children.	"Would you like the floor seat now so you can be next to _____ while you're reading some books?"
Family/ Caregivers 	Ask the family/caregiver to share details about the child's strengths, interests, abilities and their previous experiences in early childhood settings.	When first getting to know the family/caregiver during orientation visits to the early childhood setting.	"It would be great to learn more about [The Child's Name] and how to help him/her to feel part of our setting. What are his/her strongest interests and abilities? Has he/she attended any other early childhood settings before? What was this previous experience like?"
	Ask questions about the other people involved in the child's life, the relationships they have with the child and the ways they support the child's learning and development.	Once you have established a stronger and more comfortable relationship with the family/caregivers.	"[The Child's Name] brought in a photograph of Aunt _____ today, I would love to hear more about her. Who are the other important people in [The Child's Name]'s life?"
	Seek clarification or request further information on enrolment documentation and any information about the child's disability that the family/caregiver has shared with the centre.	This will depend on the child, the family/caregiver and when and how the information was shared with you.	"I can see in your enrolment form that [The Child's Name] is seeing an occupational therapist. Can you tell me more about the sessions? Are there any exercises or activities that you do in these sessions or at home that we can also implement in our classroom?"

Source of Knowledge	What to ask about	When to ask	How to ask
Allied Health Professionals 	<p>Ask about the child's disability and any relevant assessments and reports.</p>	<p>Families/caregivers can provide the details of the allied health professionals to allow you to make contact and begin to establish a collaborative partnership.</p> <p>Communication can begin as soon as you have consent from the family.</p>	<p>"Are there any assessments or other reports I could seek permission from the family to access?"</p> <p>"Can I follow up with you if I am not sure how to interpret some of the recommendations from the child's assessment report?"</p>
	<p>Ask about strategies and approaches that are being used in their interactions with the child.</p>	<p>This can be done as soon as the family/caregiver has provided the allied health professional's details.</p>	<p>"Do you have any tips on...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. how to make [The Child's Name] feel relaxed and comfortable?" 2. what helps [The Child's Name] focus? 3. what I can do to recognise when [The Child's Name] is becoming excited, distressed, anxious, and to boost their confidence and pride? <p>"In your experience, what is the best way to communicate and engage with [The Child's Name]?"</p>
	<p>Share what you are doing and your own experiences and ask for professional advice.</p>	<p>Over time you can start to build a collaborative relationship with the allied health professionals.</p>	<p>"I have tried helping [The Child's Name] when they are feeling overwhelmed by doing _____ and _____, but this does not seem to be as helpful as I thought. We have some other options at our centre, and these are (e.g., a quiet room). I would value your thoughts on the best approach here. If the family think this is also a good idea can we have a trial of putting the action into place and then meeting again in a month to see if the child is feeling happier and more engaged, if not can we try something else together?"</p>

Alongside asking questions or seeking information it can also be beneficial to observe the child to get to know them better. Use the accompanying Getting to know the child - Observation Template and Third Party Observation Template to help build a holistic picture of the child to assist in your planning and teaching.