

NORTHSIDE
CHILDREN'S SERVICES

EDUCATOR HANDBOOK

Educators have a hugely important role to play in supporting children's learning and wellbeing, and our teams of educators are the most important part of Northside's approach to early childhood education.

But we also know the job can be challenging.

This Educator Handbook helps educators use the National Quality Framework every day to ensure children are having the best possible experience in Northside Early Childhood Centres.

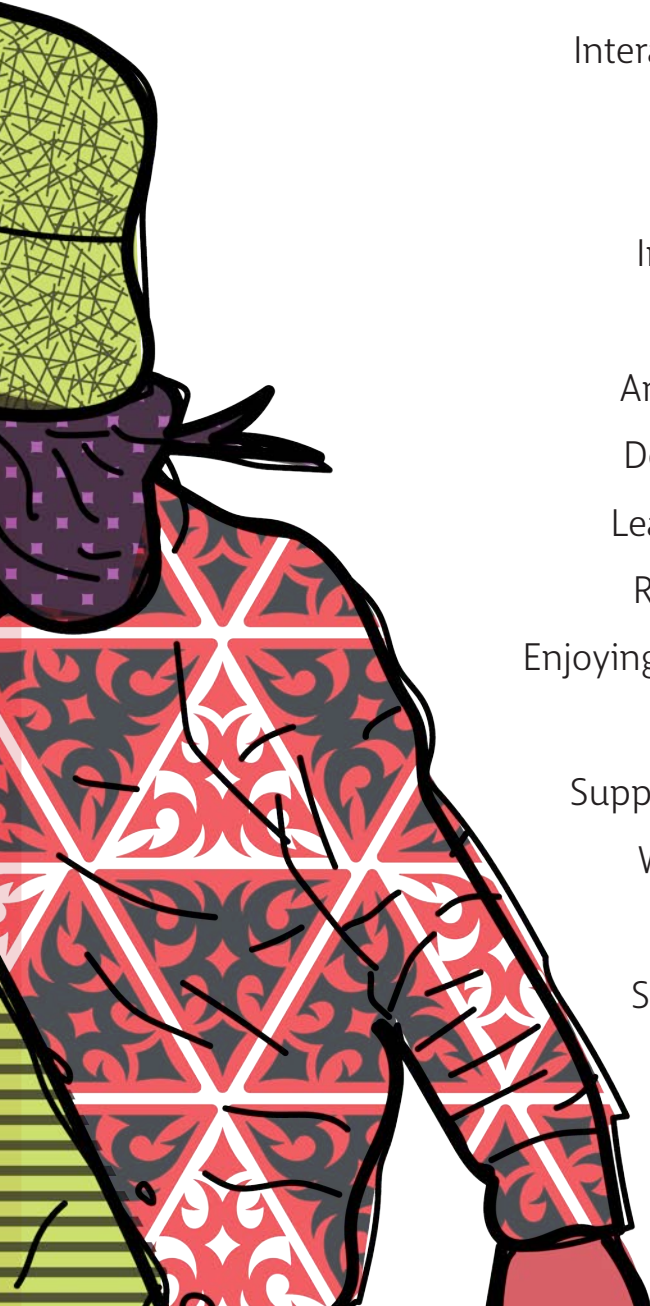
The guides in this handbook are a summary of Northside's approach to early education. You should also make sure you are familiar with Northside's policies and procedures.

If you have any questions about your role as an educator, or any of the guides in this handbook, please speak with your Centre Director.



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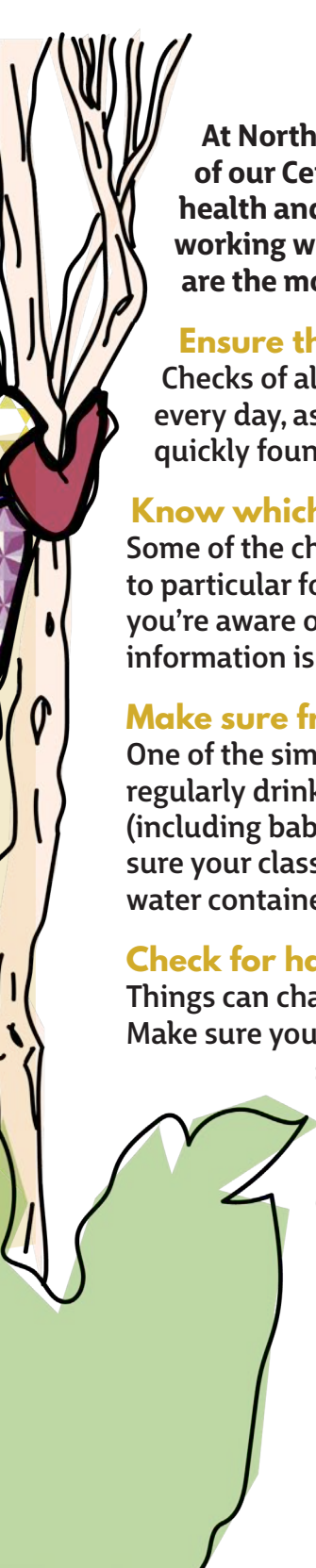


CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY

The first and most important priority for every member of the Northside team is ensuring that children are healthy and safe while they are with us.

This Handbook only provides a summary of possible risks to children's health and safety. If you have any concerns at all about any risk to children, **Speak with your Centre Director immediately.**





At Northside, we have a range of measures in place in all of our Centres and classrooms to ensure that children's health and safety is not put at risk. Make sure you're working with your team to meet those requirements. Here are the most important things to focus on:

Ensure that environment checklists are completed.

Checks of all indoor and outdoor spaces must be completed every day, as the most common dangers to children can be quickly found and removed before children arrive.

Know which children have allergies or intolerances.

Some of the children you work with may be allergic or intolerant to particular foods or things found in the environment. Make sure you're aware of all of the risks in your classroom, and where that information is kept.

Make sure fresh water is available at all times.

One of the simplest ways to support health and wellbeing is regularly drinking water. At Northside we expect that every child (including babies) has access to fresh water at all times - make sure your classroom always has clean drinking glasses and full water containers available.

Check for hazards and risks throughout the day.

Things can change after the morning checklists were completed. Make sure you're regularly looking around where you work to see if there is anything dangerous that needs to be removed or reported.

Talk with children about their safety.

Children will take safety and wellbeing more seriously when they are involved in respectful and meaningful discussions about how they can ensure their own safety and the safety of others.

INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN

How we talk to and behave with children has the biggest impact on their learning and wellbeing.



At Northside, we know that how educators interact with children has a direct impact on how well - and how much - they learn. It is important that all educators know the key parts of how to talk to and behave with children, and how to support them with their own behaviour and interactions. Here are the most important things to know:

Focus on making children feel welcome and valued.

Just like adults, children are more confident and secure when they feel welcome in a group, and feel valued for who they are. Think about how your words and actions with children make them feel like they belong, and that you are happy to see them.

Treat each interaction as a learning opportunity.

The most important way to help children to learn isn't expensive toys or resources, but regular interactions with an engaged adult. Every conversation with a child, big or small, is an opportunity to help a child think more about something.

Use questions and curiosity to drive learning.

When you respond to children, try and ask questions or respond in ways that encourage children to think more deeply, or ask more questions. Use long, full sentences with all children, just like you would with an adult.

Try and include things like asking children to name and describe things; counting or grouping; or talking about new words.

Never try to physically control children.

Under Northside's policies and the National Law and Regulations, it is not allowed to drag, push or restrain children in any way. If you find yourself in the middle of a challenging situation, always ask for help from your colleagues and focus on talking children through their behaviour calmly and respectfully.



ACTIVE SUPERVISION

Ensuring that we know where children are and are engaged with them is the most important way of keeping children safe.

At Northside children's safety and wellbeing are our first priority. The majority of accidents and incidents happen when we don't know where children are or what they are doing. Active supervision is about knowing where children are while actually engaging in play and learning with them. There are some important things you can do to practice active supervision.





Know who is in your classroom or group.

Regularly check sign-in records or classroom logs so you know how many children are under your supervision, and who they are.

Communicate with your team.

Make sure you know where the other educators you are working with are and what they are doing, and let everyone know if you need to change what you're doing or where you need to be.

Don't just stand back - get involved.

Standing and looking around might seem like the best way to supervise, but it's important to actually engage with children and support their learning and wellbeing. Being actively engaged with a group of children, while being aware of your surroundings, is the best way to know where children are and what they are doing.

Follow your supervision plan.

Each Centre will have supervision plans and maps for indoor and outdoor areas. Make sure you know the plans and have discussed them with the other educators you work with.

Know the children you work with.

Every child will have individual and particular needs, and we know that some children might need more support at times. Make sure you're regularly talking with your team to ensure that children who need it have lots of engagement with an educator.

Ask for help if you need it.

If you're worried that children are in an area that can't be well supervised, or might need you to give them one-on-one support, ask someone to cover you or provide help.

MANDATORY REPORTING

Every educator working in the ACT has a legal obligation to report if they suspect that a child is suffering from abuse.

Find out more:
communityservices.act.gov.au/ocyfs



At Northside, we take our obligations under Mandatory Reporting laws very seriously. Every educator has an individual legal responsibility to report to Child and Youth Protection Services (CYPS) if they suspect that a child is at risk of abuse or neglect. It is important that you have a very good understanding of your obligations, and know when and how to report. Complete guides to mandatory reporting are available in every centre, but here are a few key things to think about:

If something feels wrong, discuss it with someone.

Often it may be something small or unusual that makes you suspect that a child might be experiencing abuse or neglect. If you feel like something is wrong but aren't sure, talk with your Centre Director or contact CYPS to have a confidential discussion.

If a child tells you something, don't push.

Children may tell you with words when something has happened or something is wrong. It's important not to push the child for more details or more information, just let the child know you have heard them and make a report to CYPS as soon as possible.

Tell your Centre Director when you report.

It's important to remember your legal obligation is to report to CYPS, not the Centre Director. But letting the Director know as well means we can ensure we are supporting you and the child during the process.

Make sure you attend training.

Northside provides regular Mandatory Reporting Training for all educators throughout the year. Make sure you have spoken to your Centre Director and booked in to a session at least once a year.



INCIDENTS AND INJURIES

**Accidents
and injuries
happen - we
need to make
sure that
when they do
we've correctly
reported to help
us keep children safe.**



At Northside, we know that accidents and injuries are part of life. In order to make sure we're doing everything we can to keep children safe, and that we are meeting our obligations under the National Law and Regulations, it's important that an Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record is completed and given to the child's family. Here are few things to keep in mind when you do this:

Ensure children are safe after every incident.

The most important thing to do after an accident is to make sure the children affected are safe from harm. If it is a minor accident, comfort the child and provide first aid, and check if there is risk to other children. Notify the Centre Director immediately if it is a serious incident.

Complete the Record as soon as possible.

It's important to complete all the information in an Incident Record as soon as possible after the incident. Often details can be hard to remember hours later, and it also means that families can be informed quickly and given an opportunity to make decisions regarding their child. You may think an incident is minor, but the family may think differently.

Check all the details carefully.

An Incident Record is a legal document, that can be used in later legal cases or for compliance checks by the ACT Government. Every area must be completed correctly - common things that are forgotten are surnames, dates of birth and specific times. All of these details must be completed every time on every Record.

Make sure the Record is given to the Director.

The Centre Director must check and sign every Incident Record, so once you have completed it provide it to the Director as soon as possible. If the Director asks you to make any changes, make them and then give it back to the Director.



GIVING MEDICATION

We may often be required to support children's health by giving them medication - it's important that we get it right.



At Northside, we want to make sure that children's health and safety is always upheld. Children can be seriously harmed if small mistakes are made with medication, so make sure you're aware of the important things to do if you're giving medication:

Make sure families complete the Medication Form.

If a family tells you that their child needs medication that day, make sure they complete the Medication Form before they depart - and make sure they've filled in all the details.

Put the medication away properly.

Some medication may need to be put in the fridge or kept in a particular place. Check carefully, make sure the medication is kept where it needs to be, and check it is not past the expiry date.

Read the medication details very carefully.

The most common mistake made when giving medication is giving the wrong amount. Read the Form and the medication itself very, very carefully, particularly looking for decimal points. If you're unsure, contact the family rather than guess and make a mistake.

Give the medication with a colleague.

Two educators must be there when a child is given any medication, and one must hold a Diploma. Both of you must check the Form and the medication to make sure all the details are correct.

Fill in the Medication Form correctly.

A Medication Form is a legal document, that can be used in later legal cases or for compliance checks. Every area must be completed correctly - common things that are forgotten are surnames, dates of birth and specific times. All of these details must be completed every time on every Record.



ARRIVING AND DEPARTING

How children arrive at and leave the centre are very important transitions for both the child and their family.

At Northside, we want to make sure that transitions for children are as positive as possible. How we greet children and families, and how we farewell them at the end of the day, are key parts of what we do to help children feel welcome and included in the classroom. Here are important things to keep in mind during these times:





Make sure every child and family is greeted on arrival.

A quick and simple “hello, how are you today?” is the least that we can provide to every child and family each morning, even on busy days. This helps everyone arriving feel welcome and valued, and sets up a positive day for the child.

Make sure every child is signed in.

It’s a legal requirement that every child is signed in, so remind families to do so when they arrive. If you notice a child has not been signed in, let the Centre Director know as soon as possible.

Ensure any information about the child is recorded.

Mornings can be busy, and families may have important information about their child to pass on, such as medication requirements or their previous night’s sleep.

Make sure you write it down, or let a colleague know as soon as possible.

Talk to every family at the end of the day.

The end of the day is busy as well, but it’s important that every family can talk with an educator about their child’s day. Work with your colleagues to ensure someone who knows about their child speaks to the family.

If it’s busy, set up another time to talk.

When it’s really busy, don’t ignore families. Quickly ask if they can wait for a few minutes, or let them know you’ll set up another time to talk with them.

Is the person allowed to collect the child?

Every person who collects a child from the Centre must be authorised to do so. Make sure you know who is authorised to collect each child, and if you are even a little bit uncertain, ask the person to wait while you check with the Centre Director or Team Leader.

DOCUMENTING LEARNING

It's important that every educator contributes to observing and assessing children's learning.



At Northside, we have a specific approach to assessing, planning for and documenting children's learning that is lead by the Centre Directors and Team Leaders. But it is every educator's responsibility to contribute, and there are a number of things you can do to make sure we are helping children move towards the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) Learning Outcomes:

Read the Early Years Learning Framework.

All of our planning and assessment in Centres is based on the EYLF. It's important as a professional educator that you have a good understanding of this document, particularly the Principles, Practices and Outcomes.

Know what the plan is for children's learning.

Every classroom completes a Monthly Intentions document that outlines the focus for learning every month. Make sure you know what this document says and keep it in mind as you set up classroom environments and engage with children.

Write in the classroom's Engine Book.

Every classroom has an Engine Book that collects ideas, conversations and reflections on children's learning. If you notice something interesting, surprising or amazing with a child and their learning, write it down. Talk with your Team Leader about the kinds of things that you can add to the Engine Book.

Be a part of Quarterly Learning Summaries.

Every child's family receives a Learning Summary every three months that summarises a child's progress against the five EYLF Learning Outcomes. Make sure you talk with your Team Leader about things you've observed or know about children that should be included.

Reflect on your own teaching and learning.

Educators are better when they reflect on what they do - write down questions you might have about your work with children and discuss them with a colleague.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

How we set up, use and maintain classrooms for children affects how they learn.



At Northside, we believe that children deserve classrooms that are clean, tidy, engaging and filled with opportunities to investigate and explore. Keeping them tidy and organised is everyone's responsibility - here are a few things to keep in mind every day in your classroom:

Know how and why your classroom is set up.

Each classroom will be set up in particular way with furniture and resources to try and support the individual and group needs of children. Make sure you've talked with your Team Leader about why the classroom is laid out a certain way, what the specific areas are for, and help ensure they are set up properly each day.

Regularly check for broken or damaged resources.

The best way to help children look after the classroom is to make sure we do too. If you spot something broken or damaged, let your Team Leader know. Talk with children regularly about the importance of looking after the things we use in classrooms.

Make environments engaging and interesting.

When you are setting up a classroom, or a specific learning area, think about how you could make this interesting and exciting for children. Ask yourself if you would want to play there!

“Reset” classrooms often during the day.

We expect that children engaged in active play and learning will leave the classroom a bit untidy and messy. Work with children several times during the day to “reset” the environment back to how it should be, and talk with children about why.



READING WITH CHILDREN

Research is clear that one of the most effective teaching strategies when working with young children is reading books with them.



At Northside we want to make sure that children of all ages have lots of opportunities every day to be reading books with educators. There's a few things you can do to make sure this happens:

Make sure that lots of books are available.

Check around the classroom you work in every day. Are lots of books available for children to find and read?

Make sure that books are in good condition.

If books are ripped and torn, children will be less likely to engage with them - and less likely to look after them! If you notice that books are damaged, let someone know.

Read to children in small groups.

Trying to read a book to 20 children is very difficult, and often not very engaging for children. Make reading time enjoyable by encouraging small groups of children to join you for a story.

Read to children many times during the day.

Reading time doesn't need to happen at a specific time once a day (like Group Time or Story Time). Make reading something happens all through the day at different times.

Read to all children - particularly babies.

Regular, engaged reading with an adult is one of the best ways to boost babies' later language and literacy skills. Researchers believe it is one of the most important things to do with babies.

Practice reading aloud to children.

Storytelling is a skill like any other - it gets better with lots of practice. Put aside time every day to read with children and become more confident. Watch and learn from your colleagues - and most importantly, enjoy reading with children!



ENJOYING MEALS WITH CHILDREN

Sharing meals with children are a great way to build relationships and promote healthy eating habits.



At Northside, mealtimes are an opportunity for learning for children and educators. We want to make sure that mealtimes are enjoyable, unhurried experiences that provide time for discussions, questions and relationship-building. Here are some things to think about:

Make sure you know the menu each day.

Early Childhood Centres are required to develop a menu and follow it every single day. Before you prepare or serve meals, make sure that you know what's on the menu, and if any changes have had to be made.

Make sure you know about allergies and intolerances.

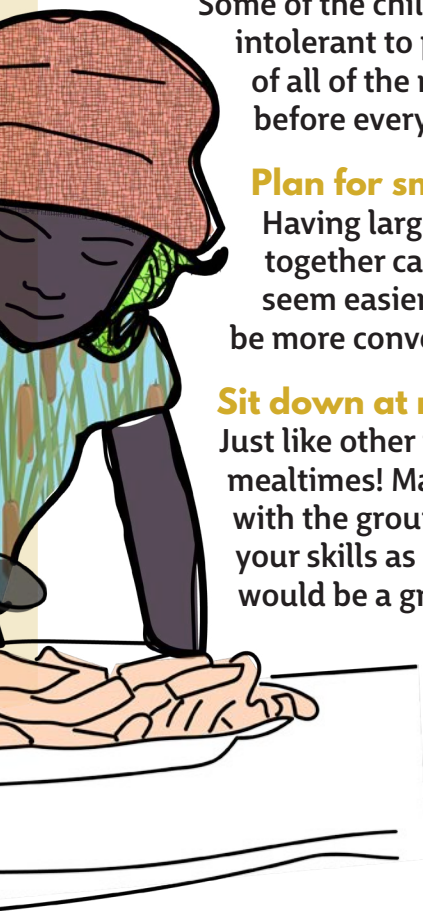
Some of the children you work with may be allergic or intolerant to particular foods. Make sure you're aware of all of the risks in your classroom, and double-check before every meal.

Plan for small groups at mealtimes.

Having large amounts of children and adults sitting together can be noisy and challenging, even if it might seem easier. Planning for small groups means there can be more conversations and individual support for children.


Sit down at mealtimes and start conversations.

Just like other routine times, the learning doesn't stop at mealtimes! Make sure you're sitting down and engaging with the group of children having their meal, and using your skills as an educator to prompt discussions. This would be a great time to discuss healthy eating, different kinds of food or any other topic!



SUPPORTING TOILETING

Helping children manage their toileting requirements respectfully is an important part of early education practice.



For the full procedure on changing nappies, carefully read the display in every nappy change area.

At Northside, we base our approach on the Early Years Learning Framework, which tells us that children's learning isn't just about letters and numbers, but is about all the things they do as they learn and grow. Supporting children to go to the toilet or changing their nappy is something we need to take as seriously as everything else we do. Here are the key things to think about:

Children's dignity and rights must be upheld.

Having their nappies changed or being helped with the toilet can put children in a vulnerable position. Make sure you always help children respectfully by never laughing at or teasing them about anything to do with toileting, and by always talking them through what you are doing to help them.

Talk and engage with babies during nappy changes.

Use nappy changes and times to build respectful individual relationships with young children. Talk with them and explain everything you are doing to help them, and make the experience positive; not something that just needs to be finished as soon as possible so the next change can happen.

Help older children take the lead with toileting.

Older children who are beginning to use the toilet will be more engaged and happier with the process if they can be in charge of their own bodies. Provide gentle and respectful support by regularly reminding children to use the toilet, and talk them through the specific steps - and helping when they need it.

Remember health and hygiene needs.

Ensure that you are following the nappy change and toileting procedures by washing your hands and children's hands, cleaning change mats and bathrooms regularly and wearing gloves when appropriate.



SUPPORTING SLEEP & REST

Sleep and rest is an important part of every child's day, and we need to make sure that every child can do so safely.

For the full approach to ensuring children sleep and rest safely, carefully read the displays in every sleep room.



At Northside, we know that supporting children to sleep and rest helps their health and wellbeing when they are with us. It's also important that we help children in ways that ensure that are safe while they are sleeping or resting. The following practices can make sure this happens:

Check children's individual sleep or rest needs.

For young children, classrooms should have documents which outline their sleep and rest needs. Check in with families regularly to see if things have changed at home and need to be updated at the Centre.

Follow SIDS and Kids guides for infants.

We need to follow clear guides for very young children's sleeping to ensure they are safe and free from harm. Check the SIDS and Kids displays in sleep rooms, and talk with your Team Leader about what you need to do.

Make sure sleep and rest spaces are safe.

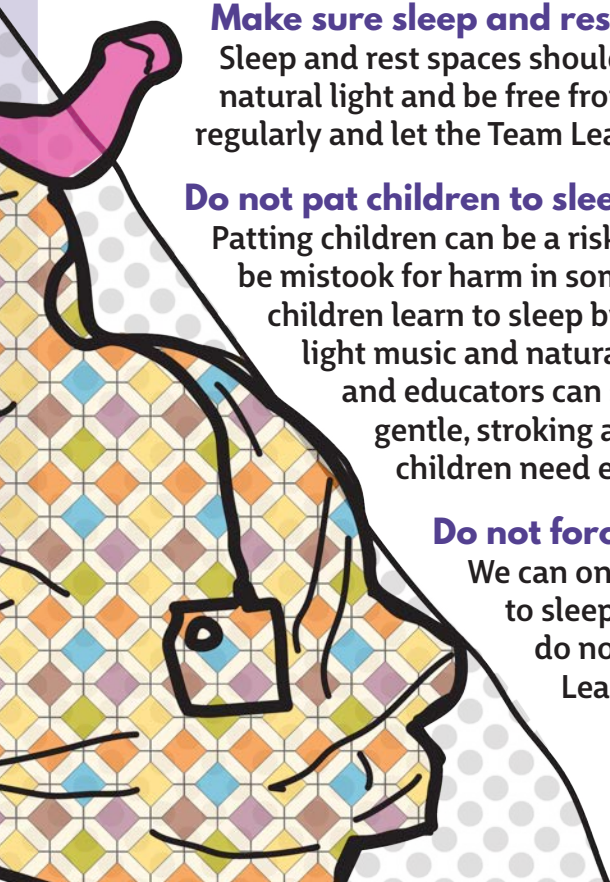
Sleep and rest spaces should be clean, have fresh air, natural light and be free from hazards. Check these spaces regularly and let the Team Leader know if there are risks.

Do not pat children to sleep.

Patting children can be a risk to educators, as the action can be mistook for harm in some cases, and it does not help children learn to sleep by themselves. Calm classrooms, light music and natural light will help children settle, and educators can sit next to children using gentle, stroking actions with their hands if children need extra help.

Do not force children to sleep.

We can only encourage and help children to sleep or rest, not force them if they do not wish to. Talk with your Team Leader if you are having problems.



WORKING WITH FAMILIES

Families are the most important people in a child's life, and children do better when we work with them to support learning.



At Northside, we work to develop close partnerships with families to support their child's learning and wellbeing. Every family is as unique as their child, but there are some key things we can do with every family to help build that relationship:

Treat all families with respect.

Every family is unique, and made up of different people who are all special and important to a child. All relationships start with respect, so all educators need to demonstrate that with the families of all the children we work with.

Be friendly and supportive with families.

Families may have questions for us about their child and the Centre. Always be friendly, polite and non-judgemental with families, and if you are unsure of the answer to a question, let them know that you will find someone who can help (such as the Centre Director).

Talk with families to learn more about their child.

Children do better with their learning and wellbeing when educators know as much as possible about each child, including what they do outside the Centre. Talk with families about what the child enjoys doing at home and in the community; find out what is important to the family. This is a great way to start building a relationship with a child's family.

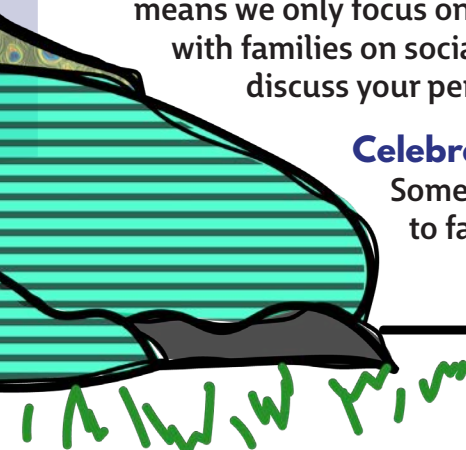
Be professional with families.

Educators have a professional relationship with families, which means we only focus on work-related issues. Do not connect with families on social media (such as Facebook), and do not discuss your personal issues or concerns with families.

Celebrate learning with families.

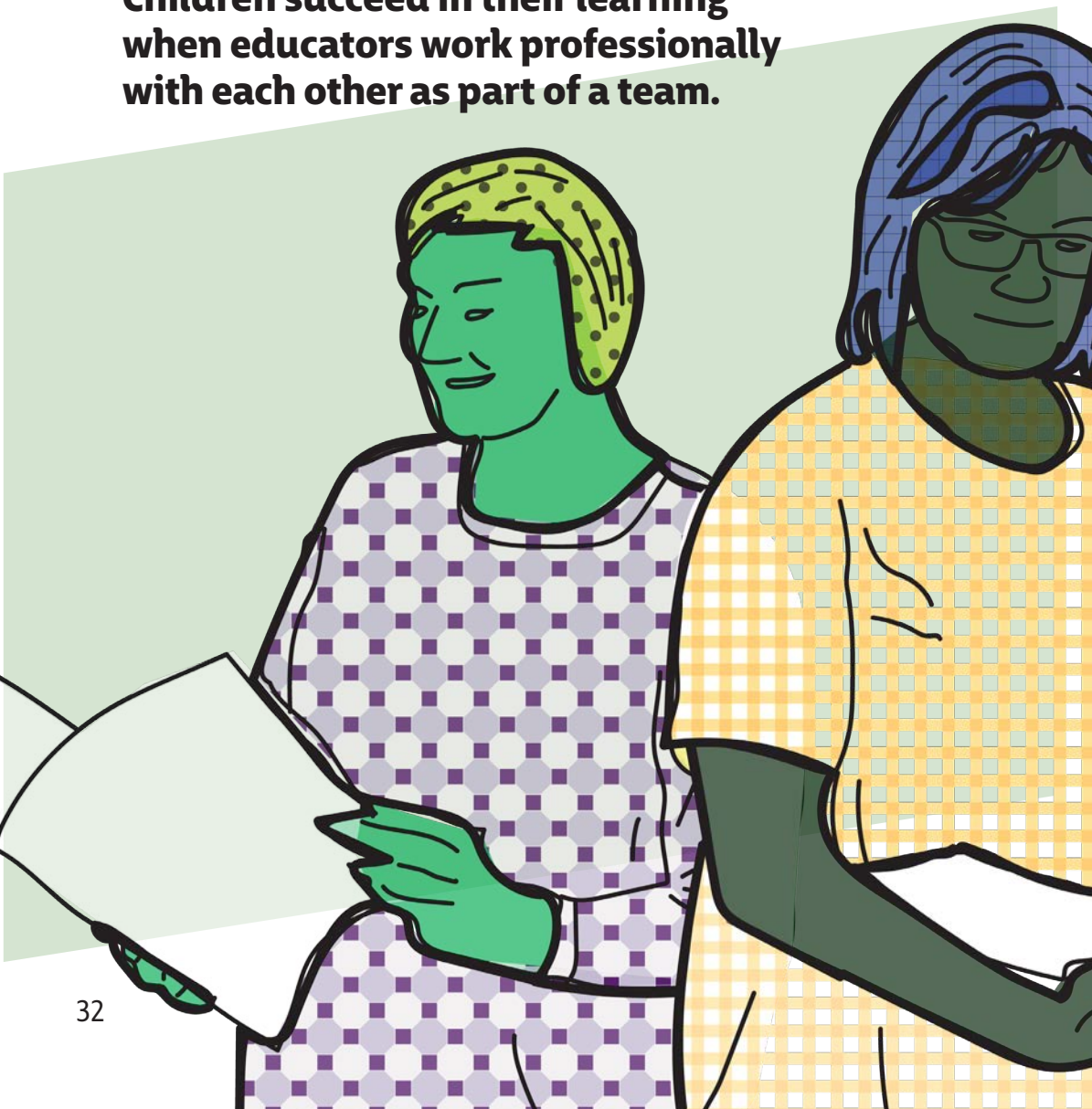
Sometimes it feels like we only speak to families when something is wrong!

Celebrate children's successes and achievements with families at every opportunity.



WORKING IN A TEAM

**Children succeed in their learning
when educators work professionally
with each other as part of a team.**



At Northside, we know educators are crucial to children's learning and wellbeing. How educators work together in a team affects how children experience life in the Centre, so it's important that educators support each other in their roles. Here are a few expectations for educators working with each other:

Talk with your colleagues regularly.

Open and respectful communication is the best strategy to manage a busy day working with children. Check in with your team often during each day to ensure the classroom is organised and working effectively.

Be professional with your colleagues.

Early childhood educators are professionals like any other employee at any other job. Make sure you are being professional with your colleagues at all times, and are treating everyone at work with respect, fairness and dignity.

Talk about your work with your team.

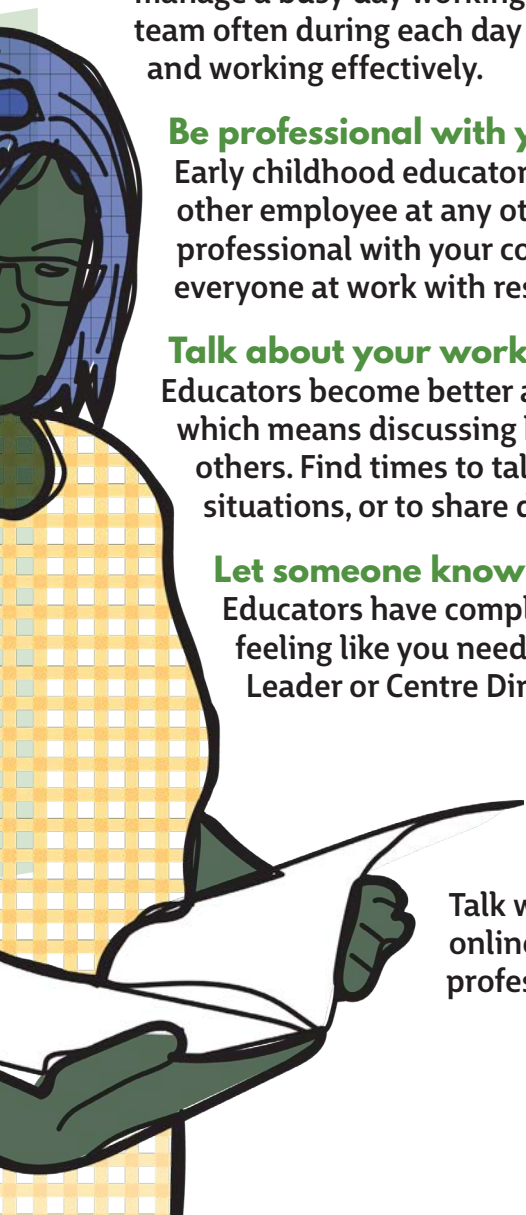
Educators become better at teaching when they are reflective, which means discussing how you work with children with others. Find times to talk about how to approach challenging situations, or to share documentation.

Let someone know if you need help.

Educators have complex and challenging jobs. If you're feeling like you need more help or support, let your Team Leader or Centre Director know.

Always keep learning.

Great educators always take charge of their professional development. Talk with your Centre Director about free online resources and access to Northside professional development.



SUPPORT FOR EDUCATORS

This Handbook covers a range of the most important things that educators do every day. It will provide you with a starting point for how to ensure that as a team across all Northside's Early Education Centres we are supporting children's learning and wellbeing.

Northside has a range of other support options for educators if you have any other questions, or need help with something.

Centre Directors.

Centre Directors provide leadership and guidance to all educators in our Centres. If there's particular support you need, find a time to speak with the Director.

Human Resources Team.

Northside has a Human Resources team that supports educators with issues related to contracts, payments and performance. You can contact them by emailing hr@northside.asn.au or calling (02) 6171 8017.

Employee Assistance Program.

Northside provides all employees with access to an **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**, a free and confidential telephone support service that can provide support with personal and professional issues. Ask for a brochure or speak to the Human Resources Team for more details.





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