The Role of the Educator in the Early Years

Who is an educator in the early years?
Educators in the early years are not just teachers of carers. All people who support children’s learning are educators. As the Early Years Learning Framework puts it: ‘Educators [are] early childhood practitioners who work directly with children in early childhood settings.’ (p.5)

What is the role of the educator in the early years?
As the CEOWA Early Years Positional Statement says: ‘Educators take on many roles in play with children, move flexibly in and out of these different roles and draw on different strategies as the context changes. Educators are deliberate, purposeful, and reflective in their planning, documenting and evaluating of children’s learning. They provide quality environments that engage children actively in their learning and ensure the children’s wellbeing, health and safety.’

What do educators do in early years’ settings?
Educators will be actively involved interacting with individual and small groups of children – at times entering into their play, intentionally teaching, observing children at play, preparing the learning environment, talking with other adults, collecting resources and arranging them in the learning environment – indoors and out. Educators will also be hard at work well before the children arrive and after the children and their families leave, reflecting on their observations and their own learning, reviewing programs and preparing learning activities and resources.

What you will not see
- Educators standing photocopying worksheets or templates
- Educators disengaged from the learning setting
- Educators gossiping with other adults – professionals or families

Some questions to think about
- Is there anyone in your learning centre who you don’t consider to be an educator? Why?
- Is there any person you know who could usefully be brought in as an educator in your learning centre?
- How are the families in your school participating as educators?

Some things to do
Systematically track how all the educators in your learning setting use their time from arrival to departure to better understand the roles they undertake.

Some more to read
Reggio books
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