Age Appropriate Pedagogies Program

Progress Report 2016

Queensland Government

'This program is contributing to a focus on quality teaching and learning which will enhance learning outcomes for Queensland children.'

Minister's Foreword

Quality teaching and learning in the early years of schooling helps children achieve better outcomes.

The State Government is committed to establishing strong foundations for children and building on these throughout their early years of schooling.

When we introduced Prep almost a decade ago, we significantly changed the early years landscape in our schools.

It is timely that we now look with fresh eyes at what contemporary research says about effective teaching and learning approaches for our youngest students.

We will build on this to enhance quality education programs for all children.

Children need to engage in learning experiences that give them the opportunity to be active, engaged, successful learners.

We have commissioned a research program to gain a better understanding of age-appropriate teaching and learning approaches that enhance children's learning outcomes.

The Age Appropriate Pedagogies Program is shaping the way teaching and learning in Prep and the early years of school look now and into the future.

This requires using a range and balance of effective teaching and learning approaches in our early years classrooms.

In getting the balance right, we are putting children at the centre of curriculum decision-making and looking holistically to their learning strengths, capabilities and development to determine the most effective way to deliver curriculum.

At the same time, we remain committed to achieving the stated curriculum expectations and to maintaining our focus on high standards and continued improvement in learning outcomes.

Children's engagement in and motivation for learning is enhanced when teachers use a range and balance of teaching approaches to deliver the required curriculum. Continuing to focus on implementing effective teaching approaches supports children's achievements in learning in the long term.

This work has demonstrated the immediate benefits that can be achieved through using a range and balance of teaching approaches in early years classrooms. We are seeing happy and engaged children becoming more competent and successful learners, and highly motivated and enthusiastic teachers.

This program is contributing to a focus on quality teaching producing great outcomes for Queensland children. I thank the school teams for their involvement in this important work.

The Hon Kate Jones MP
Minister for Education

Overview

Young children learn best when they are actively engaged in purposeful learning experiences that take account of their interests, strengths and capabilities. When motivated to learn, children more readily apply themselves to learning tasks. The Palaszczuk Government wants children to see themselves as contributors to their own learning and to be engaged and motivated learners.

For young children, learning is richer and deeper when it occurs in social or group settings that encourage dialogue and discussion, problem solving and responding to the ideas of others. Active learning involves the use of practical, hands-on materials that enable children to represent their thinking, ideas and understandings.

Queensland teachers use a range of teaching approaches to deliver high quality curriculum. Investing in our teachers and supporting them to be the best they can will deliver quality learning outcomes for our children. The term pedagogy is used to describe the collective influence of factors such as teaching practices, approaches, decisions (both teacher initiated and child initiated), interactions and expectations that comprise the social structure of early years classrooms.

The Palaszczuk Government understands that teachers in the early years are committed professionals seeking to provide the best education for all children. We also know teachers and school leaders are exposed to a range of pressures and expectations and these can flow on to the children in our schools.

This government is committed to enhancing teaching and learning in the early years of school to make sure children are the centre of decision making, and that teaching and learning programs allow for active, creative learning experiences. This commitment builds on the play-based practices in kindergarten and early childhood services and helps promote continuity of learning for children as they transition to school.

Focusing on children leads us to reflect on how we teach. While knowing how to teach the curriculum is essential, it is vital teachers know and understand the connection between curriculum, pedagogies and assessment in response to knowing the child as a learner. We see this as vitally important for teachers to consider all three components if learning is to be maximised, learning outcomes achieved and success experienced.

The Age Appropriate Pedagogies Program

The Palaszczuk Government is championing high quality teaching and learning in the early years of schooling. Its election commitment to establish a strong foundation for children's continuity of learning has prompted a return to age-appropriate teaching practices that underpin active, purposeful and creative learning experiences in the early years of school P-3.

The Age Appropriate Pedagogies Program is delivering on this commitment. The program comprises six key elements that inform the priorities in the early years of schooling.

The six key elements of the program are identified in **Diagram 1:** *Age Appropriate Pedagogies Program*. These key elements are supported by a range of current or planned initiatives and actions.

Current priority

In order to provide a robust program, we sought to obtain a contemporary and defensible evidence-base from which to build strong classroom practice. Not only was a research base needed, but evidence of the effectiveness of the application to current school practices was required.

Griffith University was commissioned to undertake a review of contemporary research literature and identify the elements of effective teaching in the early years of school.

As a result, a set of characteristics of age-appropriate teaching practices were identified. A small number of schools (45) participated in a pilot study in 2015. Components 1 and 2 of the Age Appropriate Pedagogies Program had commenced with participating schools receiving professional support to implement the characteristics through action research.

Diagram 1: Age Appropriate Pedagogies Program

Wheel diagram with centre hub reading "Every child experiencing continuity of learning and development" surrounded by six segments:

1. Professional development
2. Research and evaluation
3. Holistic assessment
4. Continuity of learning
5. Connections
6. Communication

Outer ring labels: Equity, Affordability, Continuity, Accessibility, Quality

Contemporary research

More than 100 contemporary research articles, studies, papers and texts focusing on teaching and learning in the early years of school were independently reviewed and analysed. Specific attention was given to ten high quality international longitudinal studies offering insights into the successes and challenges of building on various pedagogies used in early childhood education. These studies were identified because they focused on the impacts of specific approaches to teaching and learning over time, providing rigorous argument and data to support their findings. For information on the ten international studies see the full reference list in the Age-appropriate pedagogies for the early years of schooling: Foundation paper deta.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/pdfs/foundation-paper.pdf.

From this research, 11 characteristics of age-appropriate teaching practice were identified. The characteristics represent the qualities considered essential in effective teaching and learning interactions with young children. When teachers make conscious decisions to apply these characteristics in their teaching they strengthen the conditions that support and enhance curriculum delivery and learning. For information on the 11 characteristics of age-appropriate pedagogies see the Age-appropriate pedagogies for the early years of schooling: Foundation paper deta.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/pdfs/foundation-paper.pdf.

In addition to the characteristics of age-appropriate teaching practice, six approaches to teaching and learning were also identified. Teachers make decisions about which approach will be most effective in supporting specific curriculum content. Each approach has an important role to play in supporting children's achievement of learning outcomes. No one approach should be prioritised and given greater emphasis, and the approaches may be blended. A range and balance of approaches is required to maximise children's engagement with the curriculum.

The relationship between the child, teacher, curriculum, context, evidence of learning and the approaches and characteristics is demonstrated in **Diagram 2:** *The Age Appropriate Pedagogies Conceptual Framework*.

The Age Appropriate Pedagogies Conceptual Framework

Central to the framework is the child, their interests, capabilities, and the experiences and understandings they bring to school and schooling. The child is the pivot around which all the other concepts of the framework revolve.

The teacher/educator is represented by the next component of the framework, with recognition that they bring to the teaching process a particular set of beliefs and philosophies, skills, capabilities, and experiences that inform and influence their pedagogical relationship with the children.

Three vital and connected components situate teacher decision-making within the teaching and learning process. Teachers give consideration to the influence of context, including school and community location, ethos, culture, and diversity, and the resources provided or available within that context, both human and physical, in informing decision-making.

Curriculum involves considerations of content (focus, skills, knowledge, general capabilities, cross-curricular connections) achievement standards and criteria providing the direction for teacher planning and student engagement and learning. This is followed by evidence of learning progress, a component of the framework that recognises the importance of monitoring students' learning and development on a regular and ongoing basis.

The final two components of the framework introduce the approaches and characteristics of age-appropriate teaching practices. Unlike the components that precede them, these are presented as flexible and movable so that purposeful selections that support children's learning can be made.

When a range of approaches and characteristics are selected and utilised over time, balance is achieved. The 11 characteristics are represented by the longest arms and support the selection and development of age-appropriate pedagogies. A full description of the 11 characteristics is included on page 18.

Diagram2: The Age Appropriate Pedagogies Conceptual Framework

active

agentic

scaffolded

inquiry

collaborative

event-based

blended approaches

responsive

Evidence of Learning
assessment for;
as and of learning

Context
school,
community resources
(human and physical)

Teacher / Educator

Child
interests and capabilities

interests, skills,
capabilities and philosophies

creative

explicit

project

playful

learning areas,
general capabilities,
cross-curriculum priorities

Curriculum

explicit

narrative

play-based

direct

language rich and dialogic

learner focused

School-based implementation

During 2015, teachers and school leaders in 45 state schools participated in a professional support program underpinned by a structured research program. The program expanded in 2016 to include 115 state schools across the state and, in partnership with Independent Schools Queensland, a further eight Independent schools commenced the program in Term 2, 2016.
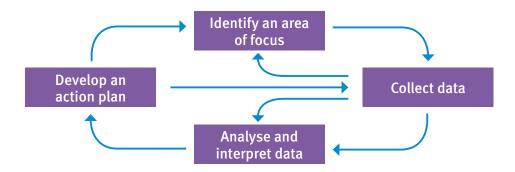
The program designed by Griffith University is described as research-informed and research-led. The guiding principles described as the characteristics and approaches became the focus for teaching practice.

To ensure the validity of the characteristics and approaches, participant schools are applying them to a current curriculum priority area of identified student need or school improvement focus. Each school has developed an individual local-level action plan to guide implementation of the characteristics and approaches. These schools are at the forefront of pedagogical change and curriculum leadership with evidence gathered through school-based research.

Participating schools are demonstrating the link between research and practice and are providing the practical evidence of the impact of the characteristic of age-appropriate practices on children's engagement and learning outcomes.

Diagram 3: *Dialectic Action Research Spiral (Mills 2011)* outlines the action research approach used by schools. Each school gathered evidence of children's engagement and learning throughout the period of the action research and shared their findings with the researchers.

Diagram 3: Dialectic Action Research Spiral (Mills 2011)

The research team provides support to schools (individually in 2015 and via a cluster model in 2016) to strengthen their understanding of the characteristics and approaches, support the application of these in relevant curriculum contexts, and gather feedback from teachers about their pedagogical decision-making.

The Palaszczuk Government wanted to hear from teachers and school leaders about their views on teaching and learning before the program commenced and at the end of the school year. The 2015 program findings are heavily informed by the views of practitioners and the leadership teams supporting them. Children were not specifically interviewed for this program. However, information gathered by the research team through the related 200 Children's Voices project illuminates children's perspectives on learning.

The Age Appropriate Pedagogies Program highlights the importance of children being active participants in their learning. In recognition of this, the metropolitan region commissioned the 200 Children's Voices project.

The metropolitan region leadership team was inspired by the philosophical position adopted by the City Council of Mt Gambier, South Australia. The Council listened and responded to the many voices of children as part of its strategy to become a learning community.

The 200 Children's Voices project investigated the perspectives of children from 3-8 years of age about learning. The goal of the project was to inform educators, educational leaders, theorists, policy makers, curriculum designers, parents and the community about children's learning preferences and inviting them to consider children's perspectives when making decisions about teaching and learning in the early years.

This project provides supplementary evidence to be considered along with the Age Appropriate Pedagogies Program. The insights of children and their learning preferences can be viewed in terms of the characteristics of age-appropriate practices and the approaches to teaching identified in the research literature as being effective in supporting young learners.

Underpinning this was the premise that children have ideas and opinions on things that matter to them, and that children are competent and capable communicators who use a range of media (drawings, artwork, stories, other) to construct and share knowledge.

The data collected and analysed indicates that children are seeking active, creative, collaborative and playful learning experiences and opportunities to exercise agency. What is evident is that there is the alignment between research evidence and children's views, but not as strong an alignment between these aspects and the practices occurring in schools.

Additionally, the data revealed that even very young children can demonstrate sophisticated understandings of the learning process, describe their relationships with teachers and others, and identify learning approaches that are appropriate for their ongoing development. Children are also able to recognise what motivates and engages them in learning.

The 200 Children's Voices project found kindergarten children appeared to have many opportunities to exercise agency in their learning while these opportunities were not as evident for school-aged children. Strong alignment is evident in relation to the purpose of the Age Appropriate Pedagogies Program in fostering more creative, active and agentic learning opportunities for children, and to enhance children's perspectives of themselves as learners.

Clearly, children indicated that they prefer to participate in learning experiences that are active, playful and experiential, where they have opportunities to seek the unknown, collaborate with their peers, challenge themselves, and take risks.

Age Appropriate Pedagogies Program Schools

School	Region	Years participating
Cooktown State School	Far North Queensland	2016
Redlynch State College	Far North Queensland	2016
Isabella State School	Far North Queensland	2016
Kowanyama State School	Far North Queensland	2016
Tully State School	Far North Queensland	2016
Gordonvale State School	Far North Queensland	2016
Georgetown State School	Far North Queensland	2015 & 2016
Lower Tully State School	Far North Queensland	2015 & 2016
Rossville State School	Far North Queensland	2015 & 2016
Chillagoe State School	Far North Queensland	2015
Kennedy State School	Far North Queensland	2015
Caravonica State School	Far North Queensland	2016
Aitkenvale State School	North Queensland	2016
Camooweal State School	North Queensland	2016
Halifax State School	North Queensland	2016
Hermit Park State School	North Queensland	2016
Home Hill State School	North Queensland	2016
Richmond Hill State School	North Queensland	2016
Townview State School	North Queensland	2016
Barcaldine State School	Central Queensland	2016
Bucasia State School	Central Queensland	2016
Chelona State School	Central Queensland	2016
Dysart State School	Central Queensland	2016
Fitzgerald State School	Central Queensland	2016
Longreach State School	Central Queensland	2016
Mackay North State School	Central Queensland	2016
Taranganba State School	Central Queensland	2016
Victoria Park State School	Central Queensland	2016

School	Region	Years participating
Gargett State School	Central Queensland	2015
Oakenden State School	Central Queensland	2015 & 2016
Prospect Creek State School	Central Queensland	2015 & 2016
Bajool State School	Central Queensland	2015 & 2016
Thangool State School	Central Queensland	2015 & 2016
Marmor State School	Central Queensland	2015 & 2016
Banksia Beach State School	North Coast	2016
Bellmere State School	North Coast	2016
Burnside State School	North Coast	2016
Caboolture East State School	North Coast	2016
Caboolture State School	North Coast	2016
Caloundra State School	North Coast	2016
Granville State School	North Coast	2016
Kawungan State School	North Coast	2016
Maroochydore State School	North Coast	2016
Morayfield East State School	North Coast	2016
Mountain Creek State School	North Coast	2016
Nambour State College	North Coast	2016
Noosaville State School	North Coast	2016
Peregian Springs State School	North Coast	2016
Tullawong State School	North Coast	2016
Urangan Point State School	North Coast	2016
Roma State College	Darling Downs South West	2016
Goombungee State School	Darling Downs South West	2016
Drillham State School	Darling Downs South West	2016
Greenmount State School	Darling Downs South West	2016
Surat State School	Darling Downs South West	2016
Mitchell State School	Darling Downs South West	2016

School	Region	Years participating		School	Region	Years participating
Back Plains State School	Darling Downs South West	2016		Milton State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016
Chinchilla State School	Darling Downs South West	2016		Minden State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016
Highfields State School	Darling Downs South West	2016		Mount Marrow State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016
Dalby State School	Darling Downs South West	2016		New Farm State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016
Cunnamulla State School	Darling Downs South West	2016		Nundah State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016
Gatton State School	Darling Downs South West	2016		Oakleigh State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016
Taabinga State School	Darling Downs South West	2016		Patricks Road State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016
Dirranbandi State School	Darling Downs South West	2016		Samford State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016
Newtown State School	Darling Downs South West	2016		Seven Hills State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016
Charleville State School	Darling Downs South West	2016		Seville Road State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016
Injune State School	Darling Downs South West	2016		Zillmere State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016
Ascot State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016		Camira State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016
Bracken Ridge State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016		Benowa State School	South East	2016
Bundamba State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016		Coomera Rivers State School	South East	2016
Cannon Hill State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016		Coomera Springs State School	South East	2016
Carina State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016		Crestmead State School	South East	2016
Carole Park State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016		Greenbank State School	South East	2016
Chapel Hill State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016		Gaven State School	South East	2016
Churchill State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016		Varsity College	South East	2016
Coopers Plains State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016		Ashmore State School	South East	2016
Corinda State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016		Coombabah State School	South East	2016
Craigslea State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016		Cleveland State School	South East	2016
Eagle Junction State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016		Park Lake State School	South East	2016
Enoggera State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016		Highland Reserve State School	South East	2016
Gumdale State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016		Currumbin State School	South East	2016
Ferny Grove State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016		Boronia Heights State School	South East	2016
Geebung State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016				
Goodna State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016				
Hendra State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016				
Ithaca Creek State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016				
Kedron State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016				
Mackenzie State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016				
Manly West State School	Metropolitan	2015 & 2016				

Independent schools	Geographic location	Years participating
Cannon Hill Anglican College	Brisbane	2016
Freshwater Christian College	Freshwater	2016
Mackay Christian College	North Mackay	2016
Moreton Bay Boys College	Brisbane	2016
Somerset College	Mudgeeraba	2016
Somerville House	Brisbane	2016
Trinity Anglican School, Kewarra Campus	Cairns	2016
Whitsunday Anglican School	North Mackay	2016

Current findings and progress

An overview of findings is provided highlighting the perceptions of participants and their views about the impact of age-appropriate practices on their practice and children's learning. The data presented in this report is reflective of responses from the 2015 pilot schools (45) and regional leaders (three regions) and Department of Education and Training senior leaders. However, as this is a longitudinal study, further data is being gathered by 2016 participants to inform future directions.

Key findings from the study relate to:

- leaders and leading
- teachers and teaching
- learners and learning.

Leaders and leading

Leaders reported the alignment of messaging from the highest levels down as contributing significantly to schools' engagement with the program. A strong authorising environment was appreciated as it demonstrated a commitment by the government to more holistic views about teaching and learning. The clearly articulated research-informed evidence-base was also cited as important in building and sustaining participation. Early childhood education has a long history of practice informed by theoretical and philosophical models of teaching and learning. Drawing on research evidence embedded in the first years of school and within curriculum contexts provided a high degree of validity for school and system leaders.

'[the] school action plan was a great working document that enabled us to maintain traction, to meet targets and goals and for the project to be consistently implemented.'

Leaders acknowledged the program as both 'flexible' and 'responsive' to the dynamic and changing nature of schools and their emerging needs. The importance of building capacity within school teams and regions to 'future proof' the program in any further implementation was seen as a priority.

'Working with leadership teams and guiding them in action research has been really valuable and has helped because it's really focused the work, prioritised the parts of the work that are important for the school.'

Central to the program was the notion of engaged leaders. As a change management process, the role of school leaders in driving change, maintaining consistency and embedding the change within existing school priorities is imperative.

'I think it's very important for leaders to understand the principles because they are the ones promoting the school. They are the ones who support the teachers to do what is best. Happier teachers, happier children, happier parents. It is very important to keep the integrity of the project so that all have an in-depth knowledge of what we are trying to achieve so it doesn't become watered down.'

Another principal commented, his/her role is leading change and trusting in the teachers to make appropriate pedagogical decisions within the expectations, targets and goals of the school:

'It's about trusting teachers, empowering teachers to actually knowing what's best for children of this age. However, there needs to be a key member of the leadership team involved with them doing the action research. [That person] maintains the integrity of the process. My job is to ensure the resources are there, the time is there, and the support is there to allow teachers to do their work.'

A common theme from leaders was a commitment to maintaining high expectations of learners and retaining a focus on delivering a rigorous curriculum in line with the stated expectations of the Australian Curriculum. In the 2015 pilot program, emphasis was placed on understanding the pedagogies and approaches as tools to support curriculum delivery. The researchers anticipated schools would have deep knowledge and understanding of the Australian Curriculum. However, the focus on pedagogy and teacher pedagogical decision-making further contributed to strengthening teacher knowledge of the curriculum.

Teachers and teaching

Teachers reported a need to continue to reflect on their teaching. Based on initial self reflection, teachers in the pilot program schools determined that over 95 per cent of their current pedagogical practices were teacher initiated and planned. Teacher responses to post-study questionnaires suggest they are happiest and feel a stronger sense of professional identity and agency when there is close alignment between their own deeply held beliefs about learners and learning, and the approaches and practices they are implementing. Responses to a question about the characteristics 'affirming my early years' philosophy' drew strong agreement from teachers with 98 per cent either strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statement (SA: 64%; A: 32%).

While teachers acknowledged the strong alignment with personal philosophies, they also acknowledged the need to adapt or change their current practice. This was particularly evident in relation to providing more opportunities for spontaneous, child-initiated learning experiences, and providing opportunities for children to exercise agency in the learning process.

Teachers echoed the perspectives of leaders regarding enhanced knowledge and understanding of the Australian Curriculum. Teachers noted that having an in-depth knowledge of the Australian Curriculum enabled flexibility in both planning and the enactment of plans, while maintaining the integrity and the rigour of the curriculum.

Knowledge of the Australian Curriculum was particularly important when teachers were seeking to provide opportunities for more spontaneous and child-initiated learning. It was at these times that a clear and deep knowledge of the curriculum content and sequencing allowed teachers to guide learning rather than direct it. Teachers acknowledged the impact self reflection had on their practice. They found it useful in aligning philosophy, practice and curriculum knowledge.

Some teachers also found this challenging:

> *'The reflective process has been challenging and it has also been useful for pointing out areas in need of development in my skill set… However, this deep reflection has forced me to confront the fact that there are weaknesses in my teaching ability and that I have a distance still to travel.'*

Teachers also commented that working with the age-appropriate pedagogies had re-affirmed their enjoyment of and commitment to teaching in the early years with 97.9 per cent of teachers strongly agreeing or agreeing that application of age-appropriate practices enhanced their motivation and professional engagement (SA: 76.6%; A: 21.3%). One school noted:
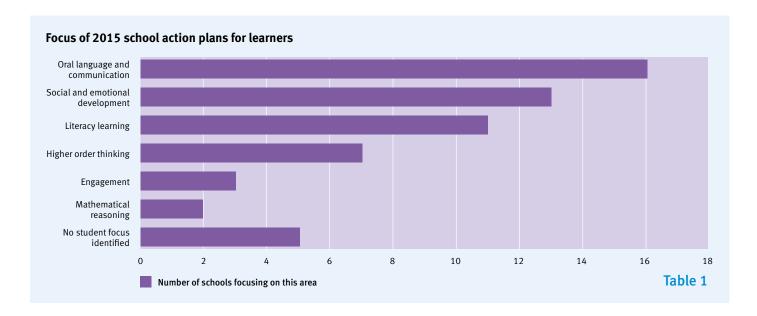
> *'This project has produced a shift in teachers' motivation, passion for the job, and enthusiasm. Teachers are discussing the range and balance of pedagogies in their work as the "teacher", and how they see themselves in the classroom.'*

Learners and learning

Teachers and school leaders determined a range of quantitative and qualitative data sources to assist them in monitoring children's progress in response to the use of the characteristics of age-appropriate pedagogies and range and balance of approaches to teaching.

Schools seeking to gather quantitative data opted for sources including commercial diagnostic products, existing internal sources such as MySchool data, report cards or reading benchmarks. In most of these cases, both pre- and post-data were collected and analysed, and learning over time for individuals tracked or comparisons made between outcomes achieved by current and previous cohorts. Schools also made use of a diverse range of qualitative sources, including children's work samples and assessment materials, photographs, annotated videos, audio recordings, teacher journal entries, and observation notes.

Table 1 provides an overview of the focus of school-based action research projects in which a specific aspect of children's learning was prioritised. These priorities were drawn from analysis of existing school data (academic and behavioural), Australian Early Development Census data or school-determined anecdotal evidence.

Focus of 2015 school action plans for learners

Focus area	Number of schools focusing on this area
Oral language and communication	16
Social and emotional development	13
Literacy learning	11
Higher order thinking	7
Engagement	3
Mathematical reasoning	2
No student focus identified	5

■ Number of schools focusing on this area

Table 1

The data gathered reflected the focus of the school plan and a high level analysis suggests that, overall, teachers and school leaders reported an increase in children's engagement and motivation for learning across learning areas. They noted an increase in children's application to tasks at hand and greater connectedness with the content being taught. Children were more readily able to sustain engagement with learning tasks.

'These approaches gave the Preps more agency over their learning. The Preps were active, vocal, involved in writing, working collaboratively with others, displaying positive attitudes, involved in team work, participating in creative experiences and highly motivated to learn.'

'The learning is never stronger than when children make the connections themselves. This might be a slightly slower process, but along the way you have engaged, happy children who continue the desire to learn. What could be more important!'

Teachers and parents commented on a change in children's levels of enthusiasm for learning. Teachers suggested that using a range of approaches had a positive impact on engagement.

'Including project-based and play-based approaches improved children's engagement and motivation not only within these experiences, but they were also more focussed during explicit instruction activities.'

By providing more agency for children and connecting more fully with their learning preferences through the use of a range of teaching approaches, teachers noted a reduction in avoidance and negative behaviours in classrooms.

'Children's ability to be self-directed has improved greatly. They know where to find the resources, know how to plan and then design. They can use the plan, design, make and appraise process on their own. They have the freedom to be creative. ...In addition, whilst behaviour previously was manageable, the general behaviour issues have calmed down. Less attention seeking, more on-task learning and more enjoyment and engagement.'

Overall, 97.9 per cent of teachers and 96.6 per cent of leaders indicated their belief that children were more engaged and enthusiastic when opportunities for them to exercise agency and voice were provided. The data also revealed that 95.6 per cent of teachers and 100 per cent of leaders were confident that children could achieve the required academic outcomes with age-appropriate pedagogies. Parents also noted a change in the enthusiasm and motivation of their children in response to the use of age-appropriate practices.

'Parents have communicated that their children are talking positively about what they are doing at school, and learning is carrying over to home. For example, one student who could be apprehensive about coming to school, as she found some content areas challenging, now frequently goes home talking positively about what she has been doing at school and wants to continue this at home.'

Looking forward

Ongoing research supports the need to further deepen the knowledge and broaden the application of the pedagogies in Year 1, 2 and 3 classrooms in schools across Queensland.

As the 2016 program nears completion and findings emerge, we will reflect on the opportunities and challenges. We are keen to take the learnings identified during 2016 and strengthen future opportunities for mentoring of teaching teams, professional learning and regional capacity building.

We will continue to identify the success factors and overcome challenges to position the regions and participating schools as leaders in embedding age-appropriate practices in the early years of schooling.

At the centre of any future plans is our commitment to the fidelity of the underpinning research. We value knowledge of each child's interests and capabilities as being at the centre of decision making.

While primarily focused on Prep, we are committed to expanding the reach of the program into Years 1, 2 and 3. It will be important for school teams to consider how this can best be achieved within their school. The professional conversations of teaching teams will determine how the approaches could continue to be responsive to changing curriculum expectations and the children's capabilities and attributes. This will contribute to this government's vision for continuity of learning for children across P-3.

We remain focused on the importance of successful school transitions and support schools to engage with local early childhood education and care services to develop shared understandings about their learning environments.

Schools not currently participating in the program may also be interested in the research and practices associated with the program. A range of resources have been made available publicly on the Department of Education and Training website to spread the message more broadly.

Working in collaboration with our research partners, we will strengthen teaching and learning approaches in the early years to ensure every child develops the capabilities they need for future success.

Key resources

Key resources are available on the department's early childhood website. Additional resources will be made available as the program is implemented.

Age-appropriate pedagogies for the early years of schooling: Foundation Paper

Commissioned by the Department of Education and Training and prepared by Griffith University, this paper outlines contemporary research into effective teaching in the early years of schooling.

It identifies the 11 characteristics of age-appropriate pedagogies and the effective approaches to teaching that support young learners.

Postcards and posters

Sets of postcards and posters, with a definition of each of the 11 characteristics of age-appropriate pedagogies, are also available.

Videos

Four videos have been produced. The videos share the experiences of teachers and school leaders as they broadened their array of teaching practices in Prep classrooms during the program.

Explanation of terms

The Explanation of terms outlines a range of teaching practices that may be considered age appropriate for teaching the Australian Curriculum in the early years.

Case studies

Five case studies are available to show how school teams implemented their age-appropriate pedagogies action plan.

Snapshot

A series of practice snapshots provide an insight into how teachers have aligned curriculum, age-appropriate pedagogies and assessment in their classroom.

www.det.qld.gov.au/ageappropriatepedagogies

Characteristics of age-appropriate pedagogies

Characteristic	Description
Active	Requiring physical and embodied engagement across all areas of learning. Whether this is indoors or outdoors, activity is essential in order to activate children's full potential. Their focus, concentration, motivation and self regulation are enhanced through moving, doing and interacting within a range of learning environments.
Agentic	Ensuring that children have voice in their learning. Their ideas and interests initiate, support and extend learning possibilities in order to build on their real-world understandings and experiences.
Collaborative	Being social and co-constructed. Children and educators work together to identify ways of learning and understanding through sustained shared thinking and action.
Creative	Inviting children to consider 'What if?' they encourage investigation, inquiry and artistry to explore new possibilities and ways of thinking.
Explicit	Making conscious for both learner and educator the relationships between the learning purpose and processes employed and the skills and understanding these processes support.
Language rich and dialogic	Ensuring that learning occurs in environments where rich language is modelled and employed by both children and educators. Meaningful dialogues between children, as well as between children and educators, are created to support thinking, learning, engagement and imagination.
Learner focused	Recognising that all children learn in different ways and that learning is a highly individualised process. They also acknowledge differences in children's physical, intellectual, cultural, social and personal experiences and perspectives.
Narrative	Acknowledging the important role that personal, written, oral and digital stories play in all our lives. They support both the production and comprehension of narratives through active processes, especially play.
Playful	Encouraging children to make connections through imagination and creativity to explore alternate worlds and ways of thinking. These worlds, not bounded by reality, offer the freedom children need to innovate and enact new possibilities.
Responsive	Incorporating a willingness to be flexible, to ensure that learning is always child, context, content and discipline appropriate. To achieve this, educators will balance opportunities for structure and spontaneity, open-ended and specific tasks, and child-led and educator-led learning.
Scaffolded	Including such actions as modelling, encouraging, questioning, adding challenges, and giving feedback, to provide the support needed to extend children's existing capabilities. Effective scaffolding by both educators and other children provides active structures to support new learning; it is then progressively withdrawn as learners gain increasing mastery.

Effective
pedagogies

Characteristics:

- Active
- Agentic
- Collaborative
- Creative
- Explicit
- Language rich and dialogic
- Learner focused
- Narrative
- Playful
- Responsive
- Scaffolded

and teeth for biting.