



Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)

Case study: Mitchelton Pre-Schooling Centre

Resources for Queensland early childhood education and care services

'The AEDC is a really good body of work. It is important to get the information out to parents. There are a lot of competing demands, so it's crucial to use a variety of strategies to support parent engagement.' — Leanne Hunter,
Director Mitchelton Pre-Schooling Centre

For Mitchelton Pre-Schooling Centre, the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) has provided an additional layer of evidence to inform programming and planning.

Located in the outer-northern area of Brisbane, Mitchelton Pre-Schooling Centre is a three unit kindergarten, running programs for children aged 3.5 to 4.5 years old. The centre also offers a program for children who have turned three by 31 January. The service is affiliated with The Gowrie (Qld) and caters for up to 132 children each week.

Getting started with the AEDC

The director of Mitchelton Pre-Schooling Centre, Leanne Hunter, explains how her teaching team had been introduced to the AEDC. Past co-director of the centre, Dr Lisa Sonter, supported the development of the current suite of AEDC resources for early childhood education and care services (ECEC), so the AEDC is not new for the service. 'At the beginning of the year we watched the videos from the current suite of resources as a team, and were very interested in what the 2015 data release would say about our local community,' Leanne explains.

Later in the year, the AEDC re-emerged as a key resource after Leanne attended a local early years network meeting at Mitchelton State School.

At the meeting, Leanne heard from the Queensland AEDC team during a guest presentation. The network unpacked their local community data and used this to build their understanding of the developmental strengths and vulnerabilities of the children and families in their community.



Informing practice

Leanne was eager to bring these new understandings back to her teaching team at Mitchelton Pre-Schooling Centre. She arranged for a workshop using the AEDC resources suite during the centre's two days of professional development in April.

The teaching team looked at how the AEDC aligned with the *Early Years Learning Framework*, and identified areas where their program was already targeting these domains.

'We reflected on our program in terms of the AEDC domains. We believe one of our strengths as a service is our ability to share information with families,' Leanne explains. 'We decided to use this as a platform to share information on children's development in these domains, and support continuity of learning between children's experiences at the kindergarten and at home.'



'We are lucky to have a large, very experienced teaching team who are motivated learners. We have established a culture of collaborative decision-making,' Leanne says.

'The resources helped to create a shared language, to look at our local data and determine areas where we felt we could provide additional support to children and families. We reflected on the data and our own knowledge of the children in our service and decided a focus on Physical health and wellbeing and Communication skills and general knowledge was right for us.'

Working with families

Establishing strong partnerships with families is a core element of Mitchelton Pre-Schooling Centre's philosophy and practices.

For Leanne, it is about empowering the children to lead the conversation. 'Having something practical to do with families and children makes it more likely that parents will stop and listen to their children,' she says.

With so many competing demands for a parent's attention, the centre implements a variety of strategies to engage their families, including:

- sharing conversations which teachers have had with children
- displaying photographs of the children engaging in learning experiences
- sharing research and resources through newsletters and the parent library
- hosting parent information evenings.



Conversation Starters project

‘This term we are focusing on the importance of talking with and listening to children, particularly at routine times, such as over meals and driving in the car,’ Leanne explains. ‘It’s about slowly increasing families’ awareness in a variety of ways.’

At the end of Term 2, the teachers worked with the children to build a child-sized car. During this process they engaged children in thinking about the kinds of conversations they might have in the car, and collated a list of the children’s ideas for conversation starters.

This *Conversation Starters* project is now on display alongside the finished car in the foyer. The teachers have seen an influx of parents stopping to check out the display with their children and adding their own suggestions.

The families at Mitchelton Pre-Schooling Centre couldn’t be happier with the centre’s approach. Reflecting on the *Conversation Starters* project, one parent noted that her new favourite time with her son is in the car. ‘We used to listen to music in the car, but one day I asked “Would you rather talk or listen to music?” he said, “Talk”. It’s a really great learning time,’ she says.

Leanne’s advice for services that have not explored their AEDC data yet is to ‘use the available tools to reflect; review the data and resources in the context of your centre and local community; make a plan and take little steps.’



Next steps

1. Download the suite of AEDC resources online at www.deta.qld.gov.au/aedc.
2. Explore your community data at www.aedc.gov.au/data.
3. Critically reflect on your AEDC data and your knowledge of the children and families at your service.
4. Work collaboratively with your teaching team to plan and implement meaningful programming and practice.

