

Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)

Guide to communication skills and general knowledge

Resources for Queensland
early childhood education
and care services



Guide to communication skills and general knowledge

This document has been designed to support early childhood education and care services to understand the AEDC domain 'Communication skills and general knowledge' to inform curriculum programming, planning and quality improvement.

As children explore and play with others and the environment around them, they draw upon communication skills to make sense of their world, clearly communicate their needs and understand others. Language, thinking and learning are inextricably linked. Children acquire and refine knowledge, and make meaning predominantly through language and social interaction. Children's ability to make themselves understood, and in turn understand others, is critical to their engagement and success as learners. Communication skills can consist of listening, verbal and non-verbal response, eye contact, humour and expression of personality.

Communication skills and general knowledge

The AEDC reveals communication skills and general knowledge as an area supporting children's development, learning and engagement as they start school. Children developing well in this domain can communicate easily and effectively, can participate in storytelling or imaginative play, articulate clearly and show adequate general knowledge.

'General knowledge' in this context is where children show knowledge about the world e.g. 'apple is fruit', 'dogs bark'.

Protective factors

Families and early childhood educators can help increase protective factors and reduce risk factors in a child's life. Social engagement with peers, extended family and/or community groups such as playgroups, sporting, cultural or recreation groups are examples of protective factors which positively contribute to children's development of communication skills and general knowledge.



Supporting children's communication skills and general knowledge

Educators can play a vital role in equipping children, parents or other primary caregivers with knowledge, skills and support to influence and enhance children's communication and general knowledge outcomes.

Young children use a range of communication skills to connect with others and their environment. These include non-verbal gestures, expression through visual arts, along with talking, dancing and singing. In order to support children's connection with others, the development of a common spoken language is important.

Educators build children's capacity to communicate by modeling clear, rich language skills—thereby encouraging children's growing attempts to express themselves appropriately.

Paying attention to obstacles or impediments to clear communication skills (e.g. speech delays, processing difficulties or developmental disorders) is vital. When children have limited communication skills, educators may find it necessary to model or script language choices and possibilities. Similarly, scaffolding children's thinking and exploration through the use of open-ended questions, and wondering alongside them is useful. The addition of print or media based resources such as posters, books and pictures can also prompt and extend play and inquiry.

While these practices are not uncommon to educators, responding to children with developmental vulnerabilities in communication and general knowledge demands explicit and intentional time allocation for success. Children experiencing vulnerabilities in this domain will benefit from educators adopting a slower pace in order to respond to children's interests and questions.



Allowing for repetition in play may provide children time to practise and build their skills and understanding. Careful observations, discussions and reflective questioning with children will assist educators to assess children's development of concepts and skills, and make further plans.

Reflection

- What do the AEDC results reveal about children's communication skills and general knowledge in your community?
- What strategies are other services using to support children's communications skills and general knowledge?
- How can your service begin a conversation among staff or families about improving children's communication or knowledge building skills?
- How can your service incorporate language games to support children to learn to articulate sounds?
- How do educators at your service observe children's behaviour to identify any concerns about their communication skills and language development?
- How can educators extend children's language skills to support their interactions with others? For example, saying 'use your words' is not effective without a clear understanding and knowledge of appropriate words.
- How can educators support children and families through role modeling?
- What can your service do to ensure family's cultures, histories, languages and traditions are respected?

Partnerships with families and communities

Educators can support families through:

- talking with parents about how children enter, engage in and exit play. Some children benefit from practising specific phrases such as 'Please can I have a turn?', or 'Can I play please?', or 'Would you like to play in the sand with me?'
- offering information sessions about language and speech development
- clearly showing the learning opportunities in everyday experiences when discussing or documenting children's play
- sharing photos of their child engaged in play (e.g. playing with toy frogs) and offer suggestions of what to do next (e.g. search for information about frogs in books or on the internet; explore the backyard or park for frogs; listen to different frog calls; make a frog pond; explore the patterns or markings of frogs; investigate frog lifecycles)
- sharing centre resources (e.g. take home library books for children; parent library of resource books or information sheets)
- sharing useful apps or webpages with families.

Sue's story

Parents in Jimboomba wanted to extend their knowledge of nursery rhymes and choosing appropriate books for their children. After consulting with the families, Centre Director Sue Taylor and her team provided parents with specific resources, including written lyrics for nursery rhymes and a list of suitable books for different age groups of children, compiled with the help of the local library. Feedback from parents has shown that they are using the resources at home, with their kindergarten-aged children and also with younger siblings.

Early childhood services can also form partnerships and help families to access community services. Some of the services families and staff can access for support include:

- local schools
- libraries, toy libraries
- playgroups
- speech and occupational therapists
- community health services.



Reflection

- How does your service build partnerships with families and community organisations to support children's communication skills and general knowledge?
- How can your service share ideas for games and activities that families can use to support their child's oral language development?

Resources for educators and families

Early Childhood Australia, available from www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au. Fact sheets and information on a range of topics affecting communication skills and general knowledge.

Australian Broadcasting Corporation, *ABC splash*, available from www.splash.abc.net.au. A website which includes links to multimedia resources, games, shows and information for parents and educators.

Zero to three, *Supporting your child's communication skills*, available at www.zerotothree.org/early-care-education/early-language-literacy/communication-skills.html. An American based website containing useful resource guides and podcasts for educators and parents.

Queensland government, *Speaking Promotes Education and Knowledge (SPEAK)*, available at deta.qld.gov.au/about/app/speak.html. An app that provides activities, ideas and information for parents, carers and educators to support and nurture language development in children from birth to six years of age.

Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA), *Intentional teaching: Communicating*, available at www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/31516.html. Resources for educators on intentional teaching strategies to support children's communication skills.



To access further AEDC resources please visit www.deta.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood.

To access the AEDC data please visit www.aedc.gov.au.

