

# Early Years Position Paper

September 2017



Supporting State School Leaders Since 1966  
Queensland Association of State School Principals

## Purpose

The most critical years of formal learning occur in the early years of schooling. It is necessary to ensure an accessible and high quality early years sector which provides students with the best start to learning and offers families the opportunity to engage in their child's educational journey.

This position paper outlines specific strategies that we believe are essential for continuing to provide high quality educational services for all state school students in the early years. It is underpinned by strategies that have implications for policy, programming, pedagogy, recurrent funding and the provision of the human resources necessary to maintain continued growth in quality learning – essential to maximising learning outcomes for all young children in state schools.

## Background

*Every student succeeding* is the shared vision of Queensland State Schooling.

Young children learn best when they are actively engaged in purposeful learning experiences that take account of their interests, strengths and capabilities. 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 in an active way to represent their thinking, ideas and understandings.

Reputable, research-validated, school-wide pedagogy provides the vehicle for every student to access quality curriculum experiences aligned with the Australian Curriculum in a way that promotes wellbeing and achievement.

The geographical size of Queensland and the significant isolation of some areas presents challenges for the delivery of equitable, high quality education for all students. Isolation can create difficulties accessing human resources as well as accessing valuable professional development for staff. This is why it is essential that quality services are provided for all children. Critical to all schools therefore, are the partnerships state schools have and maintain with the early childhood sector and National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). These partnerships must remain deeply valued and integral to schooling success, enabling all children in Queensland to have access to quality early childhood education prior to entering state schools.

## Key Focus Areas

- **Common Pedagogical Approaches**

Educators being familiar with a collection of pedagogies which are validated by research is essential to the development of all early childhood students in order to maximise learning potential. Using a range and balance of effective teaching approaches in early years' learning spaces, places children's learning at the centre of curriculum decision making.

- **Smooth Transitions to School**

Facilitation of high quality wrap-around services and partnerships with early childhood providers is needed to ensure seamless transitions take place. This gives children and families the best start to learning and engagement in state schooling. Further to this, and essential to maximising the personal development of young children is a focus on wellbeing – through a concerted effort to monitor progress and connect to support agencies across sectors. This can only be made possible through highly effective systems of communication and operation.

- **Monitoring Student Wellbeing and Achievement**

Provision of relevant, developmental information, tracking every child prior to entering state schools, continuing throughout their early years' education, captured in a comprehensive, universal and accessible way that ensures no child falls through the gaps is needed at all stages.

- **High Quality Universal Access To Kindergarten**

Critical to the success of all state school Prep students is their active participation in high quality Kindergarten services which need to be made universally available, and indeed accessed by all.

## **Positions**

### **ABECEDARIAN AND AGE APPROPRIATE PEDAGOGIES**

Abecedarian and Age Appropriate Pedagogies offer a comprehensive solution to the implementation of research validated pedagogies to maximise the learning potential of early childhood students. In recent years, direct funding from the state government to regions has enabled strong early work in preparing a workforce of early childhood educators to be conversant in these essential pedagogies. Our position is for a continued resource provision to ensure all early childhood educators receive the necessary professional development and learning to enable implementation with fidelity and maintain future sustainability.

### **WRAP AROUND SERVICES THROUGH NDIS/NDIA**

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) executed through the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is an ideal way to wrap vital interagency services around students and families connected to this organisation. Currently as young children enter compulsory schooling in state schools, information is easily accessible and shared with relevant educational stakeholders. As we transition to the NDIS, state school educators cannot be disadvantaged in the process. Essential partnerships with all stakeholders must have highly effective systems of information sharing so that schools can continue to maintain the overall management of the child's education during their years of schooling. Furthermore, one of the fundamental principles of state school education is inclusive practices. It is critical that maintaining commitment to this belief does not disadvantage children in state schools as a direct result of the execution of NDIA recommendations of support. Nor should NDIA practices and processes impact negatively on the provision of learning at schools.

### **TRANSITION STATEMENTS**

Transition statements are highly valued sources of 'point in time' information for state school educators. As a result we believe that a common format, common process and common time for release is essential to maximise the impact of these statements.

1. **Common Format** – Coordinated collaboration of critical stakeholders facilitated through ECEC partnerships so that all state schools receive information in a common language linked to common early childhood principles and practices.
2. **Common Process** – Families linked with community early childhood providers have an opportunity to formally give consent for the direct delivery and handling of transition statements to state schools.
3. **Common Time** – System-wide agreement in Queensland for a common release ‘point in time’ transition statement made available to families and schools in November for children scheduled to attend Prep the following year.

## **KINDERGARTEN SERVICES IN ISOLATED AND REMOTE LOCATIONS IN QUEENSLAND**

Queensland is uniquely positioned in Australian education with the complexity of isolated rural and remote communities affected by distance and limited service provisions. One huge impact on these communities is the difficulty of all families being able to easily access universally available Kindergarten services. The government’s position to value all young children attending Kindergarten is critically important. The challenge is to enable services to be easily accessible through our state schools should none exist within reasonable access to the local community.

Our position is to ensure that all rural and remote state schools become the incumbent service provider for the delivery of Kindergarten programs provided that:

- The necessary facilities, infrastructure, training, support and staffing are deployed while aspiring to meet the National Regulatory Authority standards.
- Regional support staffing is differentiated across Queensland, ensuring that regions with remote Kindergartens in state schools are provisioned with ample staff to support and assist state school educators with the necessary skills and training to aspire to the National Regulatory Authority standards with regard to Kindergarten services.
- Formal recognition of school complexity is reflected in school profiles, job descriptions and school classification.
- Designated regional leader training is offered annually for all new educators based at rural and remote state school facilities with incorporated Kindergarten services.

Early and sustained intervention is essential to ensure that children in the early years have the best chance possible. The most effective technique for achieving this is the fully funded implementation of Early Start. This valuable data collected in:

- a) the first and last term of Prep;
- b) the end of Year 1; and
- c) the end of Year 2

provides educators with the necessary developmental tracking to monitor progress without allowing any students to fall between the cracks.

QASSP calls on politicians at all levels to work together to fully fund the implementation of Early Start in Queensland schools.