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Foundations for Success

Guidelines for an early learning program
in Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities





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Notice to readers

The Queensland Department of Education, Training and the Arts respects the cultural issues inherent in the recording and publication of photographs.

The photographs featured in these guidelines are from early learning programs in the communities of Woorabinda, Horn Island, Thursday Island and Napranum and have been used with permission.

If someone shown in these guidelines has passed away, these images may cause distress to some readers.

Where the term 'Indigenous' is used in these guidelines it refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

'Indigenous Australia' is a term used to describe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia.

'Indigenous' means 'first', and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the first peoples of Australia.

These guidelines have been co-developed with Indigenous and non-Indigenous early childhood educators.

Special thanks are extended to early childhood educators at Woorabinda, Mapoon and Thursday Island, who trialled the draft guidelines, our Professional Support Teachers, members of the Advisory Group and critical friends.

In particular, we wish to acknowledge the children, families and educators of the 35 Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities.



Foreword

Achieving educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is a high priority for our Government. The foundations for successful learning are laid in the early years: research shows that engaging children in learning at an early age sets them on the path of lifelong learning.

Foundations for Success provides guidelines for educators to work with families and communities to develop early learning programs for children living in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Quality programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the years before Prep must value and build on the cultures and languages that children bring with them. *Foundations for Success* enhances Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's continuity of learning, laying the foundations for their success in learning as they make the transition into Prep and Year 1.

This is a pioneering document that has evolved in collaboration with Indigenous education experts, academics and the teaching teams that work alongside the children and families in each community. The guidelines recognise the importance of strong family and community partnerships, and build on the strengths and experiences of existing programs to enhance the quality of children's learning experiences.

Foundations for Success values home languages in creating play-based learning environments to support children's developing awareness of Standard Australian English (SAE) as a second or additional language.

Successful early learning relies on strong relationships between school and community. The guidelines will support educators in a range of settings including schools and early childhood centres in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, to work with the children's families and communities to create a program that reflects their local cultures and experiences.



Rod Welford MP
Minister for Education and Training and
Minister for the Arts

Overview

The *Foundations for Success* guidelines have been organised to reflect the holistic nature of a quality early learning program. Each section builds on and complements the others as educators come to understand their role in implementing an effective program.

Sections One and Two of the guidelines set out the principles and perspectives that are embedded within an effective early learning program for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Educators and administrators will use these principles and perspectives to guide their interactions and decision-making processes for all aspects of an early learning program.

Educators should use these sections to consider:

What are the key principles that will guide me in creating a quality early learning program in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities?

What practical considerations will help the children learn?

What language, literacy and numeracy capabilities will Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children bring to an early learning program, and what does this mean for me as an educator?

Section Three introduces the early learning program framework which provides educators with tools to plan, implement, document and reflect on an effective program. The framework aligns three components — planned learning, pedagogy and documenting and reflecting on children’s learning — with children, families and community. The alignment of these sections of the framework is essential as educators endeavour to refine the effectiveness of an early learning program and their pedagogical approaches to meet the needs of the children.

Educators should use this section to consider:

What framework will guide the teaching and learning that occurs in an early learning program?

What five learning areas will determine the content of an early learning program?

What four pedagogical approaches will ensure that children are active participants within an early learning program?

What will I use to document and monitor children’s learning?

Section Four further reinforces the holistic nature of the framework by connecting it to the five learning areas. Suggestions for planned learning, pedagogical approaches and documenting and reflecting are explored in detail. *Questions to ask yourself* are provided as a reminder for educators to continually reflect on the ‘cultural fit’ of their decision making. Finally, a tool is provided to assist educators in reflecting on a quality early learning program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Educators should use this section to consider:

What learning opportunities for the children could be included in an early learning program?

What approaches could I use to ensure the effectiveness of my teaching?

How will I know if the children are learning?

How will I include children, their families and community as participants in an early learning program?

What can I use to reflect on the quality of an early learning program?