



Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)

Snapshot: Cranbrook State School

Cranbrook State School is located in Townsville and caters for 523 students from Prep to Year 6. The school has a high Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolment which makes up approximately 20 per cent of their student cohort. Cranbrook State School has a commitment to ensuring the students develop to the best of their ability.

In 2015, the school reviewed their transition process and decided to implement a transition program that could:

- provide parents with information to help them prepare their children for the transition to school
- help children become familiar with the school and make starting school less daunting
- give the school an opportunity to identify children who may need additional supports early.

The transition program takes place over 12 weeks and is run in partnership with local early childhood education and care providers.

Looking at the data

Cranbrook had previously taken part in each of the three AEDC collection cycles, but they considered the data to be more useful to others in the community rather than being for schools.

“We didn’t understand the intention behind the data collection, or why we were doing it. We received the data from the department, but we didn’t really understand the value of it,” said Principal Jeff Capell.

Cranbrook is working to have a data-driven focus to inform teaching. This involves engaging with the AEDC data to understand students’ emerging needs.

Like many other schools, Cranbrook considered the AEDC data as sitting outside their core business. Because the AEDC data reveals the characteristics of students entering into the school, they didn’t understand how they as a school could influence those characteristics before children started their Prep year.

In 2016, the school was approached by local early childhood education and care services. These services contacted the school to ask about how they were using their AEDC data. This prompted Jeff to contact his regional office for support in taking a deeper look at the data.

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Working collaboratively

When Jeff first started looking at the data, there was no clear spike in vulnerabilities or a clear place to start. Through early conversations about the AEDC data with the school staff, the school realised they had to change their mindset to look at the trends at a higher level.

“We invested a lot of time in engaging with the data to see what it told us. Spending time in the data space will allow you to identify areas where you’ll have the biggest effect and biggest impact,” he said.

Working through both the school and community AEDC profiles with other relevant community members allowed the school to consider what factors might be affecting children at the community level, rather than focusing on the individual students or on a particular strategy. From this process, the group identified that there were consistently around 30 per cent of children who were missing out on opportunities in the community.

Multiple sources of data told them:

- around 30 per cent of children were missing out on early childhood education and care services
- around 30 per cent were not attending the school’s rich transition program
- around 30 per cent of parents were not engaged with their children’s learning
- around 30 per cent of students were reported to not be transitioning well to school.

When they started to bring together all their data and began thinking about the intersection of the data more broadly, they realised that, based on anecdotal

evidence, they were making a lot of assumptions about the community and difficulties children were facing.

Working together with their Transition and Partnerships Officer within the department’s regional office, the school identified a number of potential partners and stakeholders within the community who were working with children and families. These included existing partners in the local early childhood education and care centres, and new partners in health, Aboriginal and Islander health services, the local library, the local council and housing. This was a much wider suite of community partners than the school had engaged with in the past.

The school invited the group to come together to discuss the AEDC data and share their knowledge of the community.

A number of factors were identified by the group as potentially contributing to children missing out on early years services and supports. They identified that parents in the community faced a number of challenges. These included having moved to the area for more affordable housing, financial pressures, poor school experiences of parents, potential lack of awareness of services, and poor transport.

The group also recognised that although there were many services in the area for families, the services were not necessarily aware of each other and rarely referred families to other services and supports.

They decided a collaborative response was needed to support parents to access early years supports, including the school’s comprehensive transition program. They also saw potential to establish a community playgroup that was responsive to the local context.

“Being involved in the four-year-old [children’s] space is not part of our core business, so when you are in that space you want to make sure you’re having the biggest impact. Spending time in the data space will ensure a better outcome and will also allow you to have clarity around the intent — the why and how everyone can contribute,” Jeff said.

Developing an action plan

When working through the data, the school looked at what they had tried in the past and the success, or lack thereof, for these programs. In the past, the school had attempted to provide a free playgroup to help engage parents in the early years, but the playgroup was poorly attended and eventually disbanded.

Jeff reflected that in the past the playgroup may have had difficulty attracting parents because it wasn’t well connected or responsive to barriers parents faced.

The school’s partnering with early childhood services provided knowledge around their experiences and connections, which was invaluable to the group’s understandings, allowing them to plan more strategically and effectively based on the needs of the community. This resulted in a strategy that would be more sustainable and more likely to succeed because it was supported by data and a variety of stakeholder knowledge.

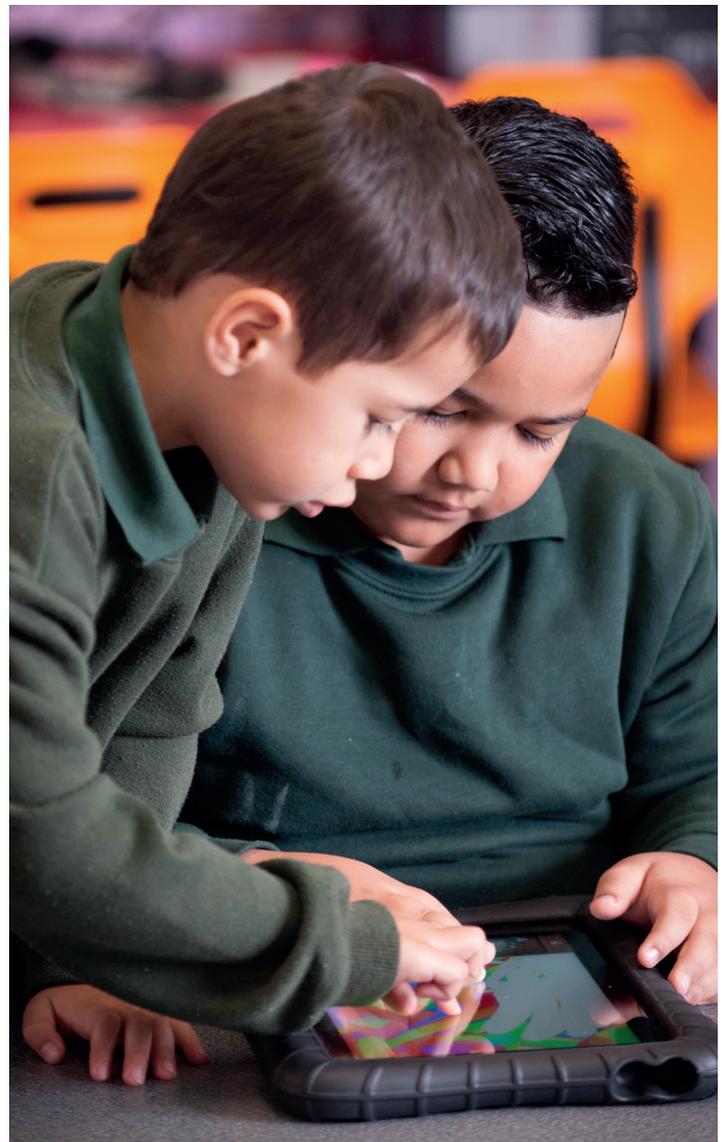
“When we looked at the data and options to engage with the 33 per cent, we decided on a mobile playgroup. However, the outcome of the playgroup wasn’t the important part, it was the partnerships with the other community groups which allowed us to increase parental engagement and support them on the pathway of early childhood education for their children.” Jeff said.

The school now sees the AEDC data as useful, purposeful and relevant to the school’s core business. Through working with their partners they will look to keep refining strategy to improve parental engagement and attendance in early childhood education and care, as well as provide children with the opportunity to develop to the best of their ability.

Who are your existing community partners?

Is there anyone missing who could provide a different perspective?

Find out about how communities across Queensland have been using their data to inform planning and delivery of supports, services and initiatives to improve outcomes for children and families at www.education.qld.gov.au/about-us/reporting-data-research/data/aus-early-development-census/community-stories



Take the next steps

1. Explore your community data at www.aedc.gov.au/data
2. Critically reflect on your AEDC data and your knowledge of the students and families at your school.
3. Work collaboratively with your teaching team to plan and implement student-focused programming and practice.
4. Identify community groups and organisations who may partner with the school.
5. Explore the AEDC community data with community partners to identify areas of mutual concern and benefit.

To find out more about how you can start incorporating the AEDC in your planning download the suite of AEDC resources online at www.education.qld.gov.au/about-us/reporting-data-research/data/aus-early-development-census/school-resources