

Early childhood education



Position Statement

Introduction

Early childhood education occupies an increasingly significant position in Australia evidenced by government reforms in the provision of early childhood education and care and major research into the impact of the early years on the quality of children's health, learning, life outcomes and wellbeing. The *Lifting our Game* report presents evidence of the extensive and consistent benefits of early childhood education including improving educational achievement in school and broader life impacts such as higher levels of employment, income and financial security, improved health outcomes and reduced crime¹. Children's brains develop rapidly throughout the period of early childhood and quality early childhood education can generate lifelong benefits for children and the entire community (Australian Early Development Census)².

The National Quality Framework recognises the early years as being critical for establishing self-worth, resilience, healthy growth and capacity to learn. The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration sets out a vision for a world class education system that begins with making sure that every young child has the opportunity to benefit from structured play-based learning before they start school contributing to the social, emotional and cognitive skills they need to succeed in the years to come. The Catholic Church values early childhood education and supports parents, families, carers and communities in early faith formation of children.

The Catholic Church values and acknowledges the importance of quality early childhood education and supports parents and young families in the early faith formation of children.

Each person's formation takes place within a process that is implemented over many years by several educators, starting with parents. Educating is ... an attitude, a way of being; in order to educate it is necessary to step out of ourselves and be among young people, to accompany them in the stages of their growth and to set ourselves beside them. Give them hope and optimism for their journey in the world. Teach them to see the beauty and goodness of creation and of man (sic) who always retains the Creator's hallmark.

Congregation for Catholic Education (2014)

Definition

Early childhood is inclusive of all children from birth to eight years. Early Childhood Education is educational programs delivered through intentional play-based learning that builds on a child's natural sense of enquiry and discovery through hands-on exploration of the world around them.

¹ Pascoe AM, Susan and Brennan, Professor Deborah (2017). *Lifting our Game: Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools Through Early Interventions*, 2017

² Australian Early Development Census – Australia's Census of children in their early years

Rationale

- Parents, carers and families are the first and most important educational influence in a child's life. They have a critical role in children's early development, including social, emotional, intellectual, spiritual and physical wellbeing (Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration).
- Catholic School Authorities, Catholic delegated agencies, schools and kindergartens have a vital role in the provision of high-quality, age appropriate approaches and supports for early learning and development and faith formation.
- Catholic early childhood education settings, open to all children, are nurturing and stimulating environments where educators give witness to Catholic beliefs, values and attitudes.

Position Statement

The Queensland Catholic Education Commission advocates that Catholic School Authorities and Catholic delegated agencies involved in the provision of early childhood education services commit to establishing policies, practices and procedures that value and reflect:

- the uniqueness and dignity of each child
- parents, families and carers as children's first and most influential educators
- the importance of actively engaging families in their children's education and faith formation
- the diversity and participation of children, their families and the communities to which they belong
- young children's competence, confidence, agency and voice as successful learners
- the diverse cultures, knowledge and experiences of all people, including Australia's First Nations peoples and their connection with this land
- quality learning environments that engage young children, that give them the opportunity to encounter rich learning experiences that nurture and expand their thinking, language, and physical and social development and where their cultural identity development is formed
- children's spiritual and cultural development integrated with and essential to their wholeness and wellbeing
- current research on early childhood education and learning and
- all elements of the National Quality Framework.

Implications

Catholic School Authorities, delegated Catholic agencies, schools and kindergartens in Queensland will give consideration to:

- building strong partnerships with parents, families, carers and communities
- creating welcoming environments where all children, parents, families, carers and communities are respected for their diverse histories, cultures, languages and traditions, including religious traditions
- developing collaborative partnerships with those who care for young children within parish and local communities, government and non-government agencies
- valuing and nurturing the spiritual aspects of children's lives and learning
- enhancing the Catholic culture in early childhood education settings
- providing opportunities for children to engage in purposeful, meaningful and play-based learning experiences that enhance, extend and respond to learning
- advocating for early childhood education and its importance in providing the foundation for

children's future success in learning and to maximise their potential in life

- assessing capacity to provide viable early childhood education services.

References

Pascoe AM, Susan and Brennan, Professor Deborah (2017). Lifting our Game: Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools Through Early Interventions, 2017.

<https://earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/aboutUs/Documents/lifting-our-game-report.pdf>

[Australian Early Development Census – Australia's Census of children in their early years](#)

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2013). Guide to the National Quality Framework. <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about>

Council of Australian Governments Education Council, (2019). Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration. https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/final_-_alice_springs_declaration_-_17_february_2020_security_removed.pdf

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Church – Understanding Culture and Faith and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday Resources. <https://www.natsicc.org.au/>

Congregation for Catholic Education. (2014). Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion. Instrumentum laboris

Foundations for Success: Guideline for extending and enriching learning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children in the kindergarten year 2013. <https://www.foundationsforsuccess.qld.edu.au/>

Date of publication: TBA

Next review: TBA