



Durack State School Early Years Statement

Statement of Intent

Durack State School is committed to setting high standards in pedagogical practices in the Early Years and beyond. Student learning and achievement are underpinned by explicit teaching and learning experiences that embrace and celebrate diversity, inclusion and innovation. By setting high expectations and providing differentiation in a safe and nurturing environment, all students are encouraged to grow their skills and reach their potential.

This document provides a statement of intent, outlining a birth to eight plan that is responsive to the unique context of the school and incorporates the vision of teachers and leaders of Durack State School, to ensure all children have a great start.

Evidence Based research

Due to a strong focus being placed on national and international comparisons of older students' academic outcomes, reforms for schools have previously been aimed at improving results in tests, resulting in high standards for academic achievement being set for our very young students. This has resulted in play-based and active learning approaches in the Early Years to be undervalued in the past. However, many updated bodies of research now suggest that The First Five Years and Early Childhood Education and Care play a vital role in setting each child up to achieve success from birth to eight years.

The Queensland Government has made a commitment to refocus on evidence-based approaches to teaching and learning in the Early Years of school. The commitment builds on The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008). Moreover, The Mparntwe Education Declaration in 2019 builds on the Melbourne Declaration and emphasised eleven areas of action which includes strengthening Early Childhood Education. In addition, other initiatives and strategic plans such as National Quality Framework, Every Child Succeeding and A Great Start for all children acknowledge the importance and value of early childhood education and care, and the need for great transition to school processes. Having a successful transition to school has the potential to significantly impact a young child's early learning and development and their future academic success.

Age-Appropriate Pedagogy at Durack State School

Age-appropriate pedagogies (AAP) provides a framework from which teachers can select a broad range of pedagogical approaches, based on their knowledge of the child and their experiences, the context of learning and the curriculum intent. The strength of this evidence-based framework is that it provides a common language for teachers to reflect and improve on their practice and ensure a range and balance of pedagogies are chosen to actively engage children in meaningful, playful and responsive ways.

At Durack State School, we have a clear and collaborative vision about teaching and learning in the Early Years which is shared and celebrated by our whole school community. We believe excellent pedagogical practice involves child-initiated learning, where children's voices and interests are valued and incorporated in the teaching and learning process. Our staff realise that curriculum can be enacted through engaging and hands-on experiences that use both the children and teachers' skills, interests and learning styles. The characteristics and approaches outlined in the AAP pedagogy, are further evaluated when considering action responses to the school's AEDC Report vulnerability areas.

Transition

Durack State School recognises that quality transition experiences are key element of children's success at school. Through the continuity and alignment of pedagogical practices between early childhood settings and the early years of school, we appreciate that creating responsive environments in conjunction with using a range and balance of age-appropriate pedagogies, helps to create learning experiences in which children can flourish.

AEDC data for Durack State School indicates that children are experiencing high levels of vulnerability in the areas of; *language and cognitive development, and communication skills and general knowledge*. Through the enrolment process, it is apparent that very high numbers of young children in our school community are from non-English speaking backgrounds and are not accessing early childhood education settings prior to school.

In response to the context of our children and the community, the implementation of the following initiatives is helping to facilitate a successful start to school for all children:

1. Playgroup

Playgroup is offered to families with children aged 0-4 years to attend one morning a week for 1.5 hours. This group is facilitated by an Experienced Classroom Teacher and learning takes place in a dedicated space in the Outdoor Learning Area. The intention is to build parent capability, provide children with rich language and social experiences prior to school and increase parent engagement in the school community.

2. Pre-Prep (Dance into Durack)

Pre-prep is offered to families with children aged 4 or 5 years to attend one morning a week for 1.5 hours. The program is based on gaining the skills necessary to be ready for school as well as providing experiences that familiarise children and families with all aspects of school life. This program formalises the transition to Prep and starts in Term 3. There are three groups: Group A (Fortnightly Term 3 & 4), Group B (Fortnightly Term 3 & 4) and Group C (Weekly Term 4).

3. Prep Open days

In order to provide ample opportunities for our local kindergarten children to visit the school setting, we hold a Prep Open Day in Term 2 before the Pre-prep Program commences and again early in Term 4.

We work closely with our local feeder kindergartens to develop a multi visit schedule that enables students to visit Prep classrooms, eating and play areas dependant on the centre's cohort needs. Our Prep teachers have regular opportunities to visit various kindergartens to meet children in a natural manner. During visits, our teachers may sing or read to the children if given permission to do so by the centre with the aim of building early connection and relationships.

4. Early Years Network

An Early Years Network has been established to create links between ECEC services, Durack SS and other local schools. The aim is to build a collaborative network that focuses on excellent transition practices, sharing pedagogical approaches to create links with members of the community and building strong collegial partnerships.

5. Age-appropriate pedagogies

Age-appropriate pedagogies are used throughout P-2 to ensure continuity of creative, playful and active opportunities across all learning environments. In order to provide our community with active and playful opportunities, local kindergartens are invited to incursions, Under 8's Day and other celebrations and events happening in our school.

6. Transition to School Role

The role of Transition Teacher was established in late 2021 in response to the Department's initiative of supporting successful transitions. The role requires:

- Analysis of school practices based on the School Decision Making Tool
- Key contact for feeder and local ECEC services:
- Reciprocal visits

- Invitations to school events, planned transition events and professional development opportunities
 - Email communication
 - Phone calls
 - Prep Teacher to kindy visits
 - Kindy to Prep Classroom visits
 - Attend Parent Information Sessions
- Host of the Early Years Network (Inala)
 - Participate in other Early Years Network clusters,
 - Collate Transition Statements and guide analysis for teachers
 - Upkeep of Facebook advertising
 - Provide curriculum, pedagogical and transitional support to Early Years' Teachers
 - Implement 'Positive Pal' mentoring program between Year 5 and Prep students where students meet regularly.
 - Coordinate transition events including school tours, Prep information sessions, Prep orientation and Prep enrolment interviews
 - Implement Pre-prep Programs
 - Collect and analyse key data about transition practices
 - Attend ECEC community events

