

Event-based approach

Children's ideas and decision-making are central to an event-based approach. They are encouraged to plan and enact events in real-life contexts drawing on their experiences. An event-based approach may include investigations, problem-solving and play. It provides a context for learning that is sustained for the short- or long-term and provides opportunities for children to connect knowledge and practice. They draw on knowledge and experiences that are socially and culturally significant from home and the community when planning and enacting events. This approach has been identified as having positive impacts on literacy and numeracy learning.

The benefits of an event-based approach are that young learners are directly involved in making decisions about the focus and processes of an investigation, discussing, planning and implementing ways to solve real-life problems, and engaging in a range of play types with partners. Event-based learning is underscored by a social climate in which young learners are considered competent, capable and agentic participants in classroom decision-making.

Teacher decision-making

When planning for event-based learning teachers decisions are informed by:

- young learner's interests and capabilities and dispositions to learning
- their own interests, skills, capabilities and philosophies
- the Australian Curriculum learning area content
- evidence of learning
- school and community contexts.

Key drivers of an event-based approach

The key drivers that underpin an event-based approach provide a framework for teachers to discuss the benefits of this approach with colleagues and parents. The capacity to articulate why a particular approach is used helps to reassure parents of the potential benefits for their child in terms of short-term and long-term educational outcomes. The key drivers also help to shape teachers' decisions in ways that support young learners' holistic development, a critical aspect of contemporary education (see *Age-appropriate pedagogies for the early years of schooling: Foundation paper*) (see *Age-appropriate pedagogies for the early years of schooling: Foundation paper*). The key drivers of an event-based approach share common features with play-based learning and inquiry learning related to the roles young learners play in decision-making. An event-based approach is differentiated from other approaches, however, through a planned event that marks the culmination of learning experiences related to a particular topic, interest or unit of work.



Ownership of learning is shared: Learning is an active process. Opportunities for young learners to participate in decision-making and make choices are a central feature of an event-based approach.

Young learners’ interests are supported: Opportunities are available for young learners to explore individual and group interests within the parameters of Australian Curriculum expectations. Exploring interests and research ideas encourages deeper engagement in learning.

Prior knowledge is valued: Young learners are encouraged to share their ideas and contribute to classroom decisions.

Learning experiences are purposeful: Learning is guided by real-life events in authentic contexts.

Collaboration supports learning: An event-based approach provides opportunities for cooperation and collaborative learning in small and large group experiences.

Learning environments facilitate learning: The learning environment promotes curiosity, engagement, autonomy and independence.

What knowledge, skills and dispositions do young learners need to engage in an event-based approach?

An event-based approach to learning requires young learners to contribute to class discussions, to plan and collaborate with peers and to be willing to try new challenges with the support of adults and peers. Of particular importance in the early years is establishing the prosocial behaviours that support classroom interactions and underpin collaboration. Teachers discuss and model these skills and dispositions as part of everyday classroom experiences to facilitate young learners’ understanding and capacity to engage collaboratively with other learners. The knowledge, skills and dispositions young learners require to engage in an event-based approach to learning are closely linked to the Australian Curriculum, general capabilities, personal and social capability and critical and creative thinking.

Social and personal learning: Teachers discuss and model ways to:

Recognise emotions	‘Sometimes I get worried when I can’t do something and then I remember that if I ‘have a go’ I might surprise myself with what I can do!’
Express emotions appropriately	‘If we make a sign for the grandparent’s day morning tea, what can we say or draw that will make people feel welcome and special?’
Work collaboratively	‘Thanks for sharing the clipboards now each group can make their plans.’ ‘Maybe Connor and Bella can help us with the sign, together they know lots of words.’
Communicate effectively	‘When someone is talking to you remember to stop, look and listen, then they know that you are interested in what they are saying.’ ‘Cassie when someone in your group has shared their equipment with you, remember to say, “thanks very much for sharing’ and smile. That’s good manners.’
Negotiate and resolve conflict	‘Sometimes you might feel upset when friends don’t want to listen to your ideas. Instead of getting angry think about what else you might say or do?’
Develop leadership skills	‘Why don’t I hold the top part of your construction while you get the masking tape. That might be stronger than the glue stick.’

Critical and creative thinking: Teachers discuss and model ways to:

Pose questions	‘People ask questions when they want to find out some information. A question needs to start with a who, what, when, where, why, or how word like, “When can I start making my signs for the museum?”’
Identify and clarify information and ideas	‘I don’t think the marbles will float in the water. Does anyone know why that might be?’
Organise and process information	‘If we have a museum tour in our classroom we might need to make a list of the people we need to invite to see our exhibition. How will we decide whose names to add to the invitation list?’
Imagine possibilities and connect ideas	‘I wonder what might happen if we add more water to the paper maché mix? What do you think might happen to it?’
Consider alternatives	‘How should we organise the signs for our museum so that they don’t flop over?’
Seek solutions and put ideas into action	‘How will people know which way to move and what to do in our museum?’
Think about thinking (metacognition)	‘When I’m not sure about how to draw an animal I think about where I could find the information I need. It might be in a book that I have, in the library or I might do an online search for it using Google images.’
Reflect on processes	‘Next time we plan a special event in our class maybe we should think about different ways to share our learning.’
Transfer knowledge into new contexts	‘This morning you used the maths counters for skip counting. When everyone is lined up can you skip count how many people are going to swimming lessons today?’
Apply logic and reasoning	‘I think the dough mixture we made is too sticky and that will make it too hard to get off the table. What can we add to make to make the dough firmer?’
Draw conclusions and design a course of action	‘If we move the tables and chairs around we might have more space for the museum tours with parents. Does anyone have some ideas to share so that we can create a plan?’
Evaluate procedures and outcomes	‘I’m not sure that this website gives us enough information for our information report.’

Implementing an event-based approach

An event-based approach to learning may vary in length according to the interests of young learners, the focus for the learning, the specific links being made to the Australian curriculum and availability of resources. An event may arise from the interests and experiences of a young learner that operate as a springboard for an inquiry, play or a problem to solve. An event may also be teacher-initiated through inquiry questions, connected to:

- cultural events – for example, NAIDOC week, ANZAC Day, Mother’s Day, Grandparent’s Day
- planned excursions – for example, to an art gallery, science centre, museum, puppet show, farm
- school-based events – for example, theatre and dance groups, a community gardening group, community service workers (police, ambulance, fire and rescue).

Apart from the social and personal skills that young learners need to sustain interactions and collaboration with peers, the skills necessary to engage in an event-based approach using inquiry, play or problem solving will vary according to the context of the event. For example, if the teacher planned an excursion to an art gallery and young learners were interested in holding an art show the teacher would likely explore various art mediums with young learners and teach media specific skills such as, watercolour painting, clay modelling, digital drawing connecting to assessment requirements.

Teacher self-reflection on understandings of event-based approach

- How do I evoke young learner’s interests and experiences, orienting them towards the staging of an event?
- Are there opportunities for guided planning, preparation, rehearsal and enacting events?
- How is agency promoted? (how are young learners’ ideas and thoughts included in classroom decision-making)?
- How do I explicitly teach and model the required skills of cooperation and collaboration?
- In what ways does my planning demonstrate a strong understanding of the Australian Curriculum learning area/s and associated achievement standard/s that underpin this approach?