

Age-appropriate pedagogies

Approaches

Questions to support teacher reflection

Various teaching approaches may be considered age-appropriate for teaching the Australian Curriculum in the early years. The teacher's role in enacting a range and balance of age-appropriate pedagogies involves deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful decision-making and actions to promote children's innate drive for independent learning.

The questions can be used to assist teachers to engage in the reflective processes required to embed these approaches into planning and practice.

Approach	Description	Questions for reflection	My reflections/examples of my practice
Inquiry learning	<p>Inquiry-based learning begins with a question, problem or idea. It involves children in planning and carrying out investigations, proposing explanations and solutions, and communicating their understanding of concepts in a variety of ways. Throughout the inquiry process, children observe, raise questions, and critique their practices. It is an approach that encourages collaboration and can be used effectively in a trans-disciplinary way or in most subject areas.</p> <p><i>If utilised effectively, possible characteristics may include: active, agentic, collaborative, creative, scaffolded.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In what ways do I initiate the inquiry through a question, problem or idea? In what ways do I support children to theorise, hypothesise and wonder? How do I provide opportunities for children to become more confident and autonomous problem-solvers and thinkers? How do I organise for learning experiences extending beyond singular activities, that can be repeated or returned to, and that lend themselves to active engagement in purposeful learning? 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? 	
Event-based approach	<p>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.</p> <p><i>If utilised effectively, possible characteristics may include: active, agentic, collaborative, creative, explicit, language-rich and dialogic, learner-focused, narrative and playful.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do I evoke children'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 child agency promoted (how are children's 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? 	
Project approach	<p>A project approach is an in-depth exploration of a topic that may be child- or teacher-initiated and involve an individual, a group of children, or the whole class. A project may be short-term or long-term depending on the level of children's interest. What differentiates the project approach from an inquiry one is that within the project approach there is an emphasis on the creation of a specific outcome that might take the form of a spoken report, a multimedia presentation, a poster, a demonstration or a display. The project approach provides opportunities for children to take agency of their own learning and represent this learning through the construction of personally meaningful artefacts.</p> <p><i>If utilised effectively, possible characteristics may include: active, agentic, collaborative, explicit, learner-focused, responsive, scaffolded, playful, language-rich and dialogic.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In what ways does the project support a three-step process that includes planning, exploration and culmination? In what ways do I orientate children towards a shared outcome or the creation of an artefact? How do I provide opportunities for individual children or small groups to explore aspects of the project that are of specific interest to them? How do I provide opportunities for children to negotiate the medium used for creating and sharing their project? 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? 	

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Explicit instruction	<p>Explicit instruction is a structured and systematic approach to teaching academic skills. Archer and Hughes (2011, p.1) explain that it is “characterized by a series of supports or scaffolds, whereby students are guided through the learning process with clear statements about the purpose and rationale for learning the new skill, clear explanations and demonstrations of the instructional target, and supported practice with feedback until independent mastery has been achieved.” They go on to say that there is an emphasis on proceeding in small steps, checking for understanding, and achieving active and successful participation by all children.</p> <p><i>If utilised effectively, possible characteristics may include: active, explicit, learner-focused, responsive, and scaffolded</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I ensure that the skills, strategies, vocabulary terms, concepts, and rules that I teach match the children’s instructional needs? • In what ways do I break down content into manageable instructional units based on children’s cognitive capabilities? • What processes do I use to review children’s prior skills and knowledge before beginning instruction? • Do I always begin lessons with a clear statement of goals and expectations, providing step-by-step demonstrations followed by guided and supported practice? • 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? 	
Play-based learning	<p>Play-based learning provides opportunities for children to actively and imaginatively engage with people, objects and the environment. Symbolic representation is a critical aspect. When playing, children may be organising, constructing, manipulating, pretending, exploring, investigating, creating, interacting, imagining, negotiating and making sense of their world. It promotes the holistic development (physical, social, emotional, cognitive and creative) of a child and depending on how it is utilised, may also support a broad range of literacy and numeracy skills. The teacher’s role in scaffolding play is pivotal.</p> <p><i>If utilised effectively, possible characteristics may include: active, agentic, collaborative, creative, scaffolded.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I construct opportunities for play within (not as opposed to, or as well as) the learning program/environment? • Am I clear about what connects the play to the Australian Curriculum, and can I clearly articulate this relationship? • In what ways do I model, support, initiate and generate play to include the use of, for example, miniature worlds, socio-dramatic, puppet, media, block, sand, water? • How do I ensure my own active engagement in the play — before, during and after? • 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? 	
Direct teaching / instruction	<p>Direct teaching/instruction is a step-by-step, lesson-by-lesson approach to teaching which is scripted and follows a pre-determined skill acquisition sequence. This prescribed approach to teaching is tightly paced, linear and incremental, aiming to maximize time-on-task, and positively reinforce student behaviours (Luke, 2014). It is also used as a general term for the teaching of skills by telling or demonstrating. It is a common approach used for the teaching of handwriting, as well as phonics, letters and numerals.</p> <p><i>If utilised effectively, possible characteristics may include: explicit and scaffolded.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In which learning areas, and to what extent, do I control content, activities and lesson pacing? • For what purpose do I use pre-planned sequences of content and activities (fixed, linear and incremental)? • Which behaviouristic learning principles do I employ (getting children’s attention, reinforcing correct responses, providing corrective feedback, practising correct responses)? • What data informs the ability/achievement groups that I use? • 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? 	

Conceptual framework switch

A range and balance of approaches is required to maximise children’s engagement with the curriculum.

The relationship between the child, teacher, curriculum, context, evidence of learning and the approaches and characteristics is demonstrated by the Conceptual framework switch.

