

Age-appropriate pedagogies for the early years of schooling

Learning walks tool

Critically reflective practices support a teacher's deep understanding of the characteristics of effective pedagogies and age-appropriate teaching approaches, practices and strategies. This has a positive effect on a teacher's capacity to support children's engagement and learning.

The process of learning walks supports professional discussions, collaborative planning, reflective practice and ongoing professional learning, allowing teachers to identify their strengths, make connections between their pedagogies and personal philosophies, and identify what they want to change in their teaching and how.

This *Learning walks tool* may be used by a group of teachers visiting multiple classrooms at their own school, with the aim of fostering conversation about teaching and learning in order to develop a shared vision of age-appropriate pedagogies for the early years of schooling.

What are learning walks?

- a group of teachers visiting multiple classrooms at their own school
- focused on the walkers' goals/needs aligned with school/team priorities
- aims to foster conversation about teaching and learning in order to develop a shared vision of high quality teaching that impacts.

Why learning walks?

- increases teachers' awareness of practices occurring within their school
- builds whole-school sense of accountability for quality of teaching and learning
- encourages improvement through openness and sharing of practice
- supports teachers to implement effective practices observed in other classrooms.

What are the key elements?

- driven by teachers within the school with support from the leadership group
- deliberately short visits, followed by immediate debrief
- use of group-established agreements and protocols
- emphasis on learning from the observed teacher, with a lesser focus on providing feedback.

What do I need to consider?

- avenues for sharing learnings may not be clear
- may be perceived as a one-off observation
- may be perceived as threatening.

What actions are involved?

Phase 1: Pre-walk meeting with facilitator and group

- **Establish and clarify focus of the walk, for example:**
 - ✓ the use of the play-based approach within a History unit
 - ✓ identifying the characteristic of *language-rich and dialogic* within a Mathematics block
 - ✓ approaches, practices and strategies in the outdoor learning environment
 - ✓ identifying *playful* explicit instruction and *explicit* play-based learning.
- **Revise expectations, protocols and schedule of agreed visits, for example:**
 - ✓ a group of teachers visiting multiple classrooms at their own school
 - ✓ focused on the walkers' goals/needs aligned with school/team priorities
 - ✓ aims to foster conversation about teaching and learning in order to develop a shared vision of high quality teaching
 - ✓ short visit/immediate debrief/repeat cycle/final debrief and feedback.

Phase 2: Observation of learning

- **Groups of 2-4 teachers, for example:**
 - ✓ year level team
 - ✓ Prep, Year 1, Year 2 teachers
- **Facilitated by a group-nominated facilitator, for example:**
 - ✓ Deputy Principal, Head of Curriculum, Year level co-ordinator
- **Visit classrooms and observe evidence related to the agreed focus (approximately 10 minutes per classroom), for example:**
 - ✓ teacher's role in socio-dramatic play in a classroom 'History Museum' play space
 - ✓ teacher questioning to scaffold meaningful mathematical dialogue between children working in pairs to solve maths problems with open-ended resources (*language-rich and dialogic*)
 - ✓ project approach/opportunities for children to negotiate the medium used for creating and sharing/provision of resources to support project
 - ✓ observe *playful* during teacher-led guided reading groups.
- **Discreet interaction with observing teachers and observed children and/or adults may occur if appropriate**

Phase 3: Post-observation debrief

- **Group engages in reflective conversation**
- **Group shares detailed and non-judgemental observations, identifies patterns, poses questions, for example:**
 - ✓ transcribed dialogue of two children working in a pair with Mathematics provocation basket containing open-ended patterning resources
 - ✓ recorded teacher questioning to support Mathematical thinking, learning, engagement and imagination
 - ✓ 'How can I include this partner work within my Mathematics block?'
- **Individual teachers reflect on observations in relation to their own practice**
 - ✓ *Balancing pedagogies: A framework to guide teacher decision-making*

Phase 4: Repeat cycle

- **Repeat observations and debrief conversations in successive classrooms until scheduled visits are completed**

Phase 4: Final debrief and feedback

- **Review evidence, link to earlier debriefs and questions raised, plan next steps**
- **Share findings formally or informally, as agreed, to the all participants and wider school community (for example, lower school, cluster meeting)**

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Learning walks tool

For use by teaching teams when observing each other enact age-appropriate pedagogies for the early years of schooling

Phase 1: Pre-walk meeting with facilitator and group

Ensuring group-nominated facilitator and participating teachers understand focus of the learning walk and any relevant contextual information.

Establish and clarify focus of the walk

(for example, identifying the characteristic of *language-rich and dialogic* within a Mathematics block)

Revise expectations, protocols and schedule of agreed visits

(for example, short visit/immediate debrief/repeat cycle/final debrief and feedback)

Phase 2: Observation of learning

Ensuring teacher being observed is comfortable and observing teachers are discreet and focused by pre-learning walk planning.

Participants

Agreed date/time

Observations

(for example, record teacher questioning to scaffold meaningful mathematical dialogue between children)

Phase 3: Short debrief immediately following observation

Ensuring observing teachers share non-judgemental observations, identify patterns and pose questions.

Debrief notes

(for example, discuss the questions used by the teacher that supported the children to make inferences)

Phase 4: Repeat observation and debrief

Phase 5: Final debrief and feedback

Next step actions

(for example, use shared reflections to engage with *Balancing Pedagogies: A Framework to Guide Teacher Decision-making*, to identify opportunities for enhanced teacher questioning to scaffold meaningful mathematical dialogue between children).

Where can I find out more?

Website:

<http://deta.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/about/successful-transitions/age-appropriate-pedagogies.html>

Email the AAP team:

AAPedagogies.ECEC@deta.qld.gov.au

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