

Age-appropriate pedagogies for the early years of schooling

Peer observation 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 peer observation 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 develop in their teaching and how.

This *Peer observation tool* may be used by teachers when observing their peers enact age-appropriate pedagogies for the early years of schooling.

What is peer observation?

- teachers observing each other's practice and learning from one another
- focused on teachers' individual needs and the opportunity to learn from others' practice
- aims to support the sharing of practice and building awareness about the impact of own teaching in order to affect change.

Why peer observation?

- supports reflective practice and professional discussions
- supports collaborative planning, sharing of ideas and expertise
- promotes reflective practice, with a focus on improving children's engagement and learning
- promotes ongoing professional learning.

What are the key elements?

- focus on the needs of the individual teacher informed by their children's needs
- agreement on protocols
- trust between the teachers observing and being observed
- mutual commitment to the sharing and ongoing development of practice.

What do I need to consider?

- there are many ways to implement peer observation
- a focus on professional growth should be maintained
- may be perceived as threatening.

What actions are involved?

Phase 1: Pre-observation planning

- **Establish and clarify focus of the observation, for example:**
 - ✓ approaches, practices and strategies employed by teacher
 - ✓ the characteristics of effective pedagogies enacted by teacher
 - ✓ teacher decision-making – social, temporal and physical learning environments
 - ✓ age-appropriate pedagogies in a multi-age setting.
- **Agree date/time and duration of observation**
- **Provide background and context for what will be observed, for example:**
 - ✓ *language rich and dialogic* conversations/interactions during small group Science project in outdoor learning time
 - ✓ the explicit characteristic enacted by teacher during play-based learning
 - ✓ the temporal environment of indoor learning time – teacher decision-making
 - ✓ opportunities for children to collaboratively plan, co-construct and reflect on their learning (*agentic* characteristic) in a P-2 classroom.

Phase 2: Classroom observation

- **Single observing teacher (note multiple observers can participate, if agreed by all. See Learning walks tool), for example:**
 - ✓ Prep teacher from neighbouring school
 - ✓ Prep teacher from Year Level Team
 - ✓ Prep teacher and teacher aide
- **Observing teacher records data – what do the adults say, do, make and write, for example:**
 - ✓ *Age-appropriate pedagogies peer observation tool*
- **Discreet interactions between observing teacher and observed children and/or adults may occur if appropriate**

Phase 3: Post-observation debrief

- **Occurs as soon as possible after observation**
 - ✓ at agreed date/time
- **Observing teacher shares data collected relevant to identified focus, for example:**
 - ✓ transcripts of teacher conversations/interactions during small group Science project in outdoor learning environment
 - ✓ anecdotal observations of *explicit* characteristic as seen during play-based learning
 - ✓ outline of observed timings for group projects, transitions etc. (the temporal environment)
 - ✓ outline of plan-do-reflect cycle observed during observation of P-2.
- **Observed teacher offers clarifying information relating to observing teacher's focus, for example:**
 - ✓ identify approaches, practices and strategies as shown in photographs
 - ✓ reflect on the *explicit* nature of play based learning as recorded in anecdotal observations
 - ✓ discuss teacher decision-making in relation to the temporal environment
 - ✓ discuss teacher decision-making in relation to groupings in P-2 classroom.
- **Observing teacher reflects on observations in relevance to their own practice, for example:**
 - ✓ *Age Appropriate Pedagogies Conceptual Framework*
 - ✓ *Age-appropriate pedagogies for the early years of schooling: Explanation of terms*
 - ✓ *Characteristics of effective pedagogies: Questions for teacher reflection*
 - ✓ *Reflecting on early years learning spaces*
 - ✓ Plan next steps – action to be taken using shared reflections to improve practice, next focus for observations, relevant professional learning required etc.

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For use by a teacher when observing a peer enact age-appropriate pedagogies for the early years of schooling

Phase 1: Pre-observation planning

Ensuring both observing teacher and teacher to be observed understand focus of observation and any relevant contextual information.

Establish and clarify focus of the observation
(for example, approaches, practices and strategies)

Background and context
(for example, small group Science project during outdoor learning time)

Phase 2: Classroom observation

Ensuring teacher being observed is comfortable and observing teacher is discreet and focused by pre-observation planning.

Participants

Agreed date/time

Observations
(for example, photographs of small group Science project in outdoor learning environment and interactions between children, Prep teacher, Prep aide, support staff)

Phase 3: Post-observation debrief

Ensuring both observing teacher and teacher to be observed understand focus of observation and any relevant contextual information.

Participants

Agreed date/time

Reflections
(for example, identify approaches, practices and strategies as shown in photographs using *Age-appropriate pedagogies for the early years of schooling: Explanation of terms*)

Next step actions
(for example, use shared reflections to engage with *Balancing Pedagogies: A Framework to Guide Teacher Decision-making*, to identify opportunities for a range and balance of approaches in future Science learning experiences)

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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