**SUPPORTING SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS**

# Respect for diversity
# Information for schools

Current research and practice highlights the importance of considering both diversity and inclusive practices in developing transition-to-school strategies. 'When educators, families and other professionals work collaboratively and have access to organisational support, potential exists for individualised, responsive practice that addresses the diverse capabilities of all children' (Dockett and Perry, 2014).

Developing strategies as a school, in collaboration with other key community partners will support children's positive transition to school and ultimately their long-term outcomes. Evidence also recognises that all children are best supported when new learning builds on their interests, knowledge and previous experiences.

This fact sheet highlights current research, policy and curriculum frameworks informing inclusive practices relevant to schools and early childhood services.

## Respect for diversity

Recently the definition of diversity has expanded, including a multitude of individual differences. Diversity can characterise not only culture, but also various linguistic, location, social, economic, learning, abilities, gender or other distinctive characteristics. This definition of diversity encourages us to see differences as a strength and recognise that diversity is present in some way in all children.

Respect for diversity is entwined with the principles of equity; that is providing children with access to fair, just and non-discriminatory education and care. As a signatory to the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Australia is committed to a policy of inclusion. All educational settings uphold children's rights to accessible and affordable education, non-discriminatory practices, and practices in the best interests of each child. The Convention also provides educators with guidance on principles of equity and diversity.

## Policy

The department is committed to a policy of inclusion where all educational settings uphold children's right to access quality, inclusive education and care that supports them to reach their full potential. An integral element of this commitment is the need to recognise and respond to all children's diversity in respectful ways.

The table below outlines a selection of key policy documents and curriculum frameworks. These documents were developed to support principals, teachers and educators to embed inclusive education practices.

| Policy | Position statement | Where to find |
|---|---|---|
| Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (2008) | 'All Australian governments and all school sectors must provide all students with access to high-quality schooling that is free from discrimination based on gender, language, sexual orientation, pregnancy, culture, ethnicity, religion, health or disability, socioeconomic background or geographic location.' | http://www.curriculum. edu.au/verve/_resources/ National_Declaration_on_the_ Educational_Goals_for_Young_ Australians.pdf |
| Early Years Learning Framework (2009) | 'The diversity in family life means that children experience belonging, being and becoming in many different ways. They bring their diverse experiences, perspectives, expectations, knowledge and skills to their learning. Children's learning is dynamic, complex and holistic. Physical, social, emotional, personal, spiritual, creative, cognitive and linguistic aspects of learning are all intricately interwoven and interrelated.' | https://docs.education. gov.au/system/files/doc/ other/belonging_being_and_ becoming_the_early_years_ learning_framework_for_ australia.pdf |
| The Australian Curriculum (2012) | 'Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is committed to the development of a high-quality curriculum for all Australian students, one that promotes excellence and equity in education. All students are entitled to rigorous, relevant and engaging learning programs drawn from a challenging curriculum that addresses their individual learning needs. Teachers will use the Australian Curriculum to develop teaching and learning programs that build on students' interests, strengths, goals and learning needs, and address the cognitive, affective, physical, social and aesthetic needs of all students.' | http://www. australiancurriculum.edu. au/studentdiversity/student-diversity-advice |

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| Policy | Position statement | Where to find |
|---|---|---|
| Catering for diversity – Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (2012) | '*The Shape of the Australian Curriculum v3.0* (December 2012) describes the ACARA's commitment to:<br><br>• supporting equity of access to the Australian Curriculum for all learners<br>• developing a curriculum that will equip all young Australians with the essential skills, knowledge and capabilities to thrive and compete in a globalised world.<br><br>All young Australians include students with multiple, diverse and changing needs that are shaped by individual learning histories and abilities as well as personal, cultural and language backgrounds and socio-economic factors.' | https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/p-10/catering-diversity |
| Valuing diversity and Inclusive education – Department of Education and Training (2014) | 'Queensland children come from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, participate in a variety of social, cultural and religious belief systems, and have different knowledge, skills, abilities and needs. They live in different places: in urban, rural or remote areas.'<br><br>'Inclusive education ensures that schools are supportive and engaging places for all school community members. It builds communities that value, celebrate and respond to diversity. It is underpinned by respectful relationships between learners and school community members. It is supported by collaborative relationships with parents and communities through communication, learning partnerships, participation and consultative decision-making.' | http://deta.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/service/access-kindy/valuing-diversity.html<br><br>https://oneportal.deta.qld.gov.au/Students/InclusiveEducation/Pages/Default.aspx<br><br>http://education.qld.gov.au/schools/inclusive/index.html |

## Research into practice

We know that in relation to transition to school, it is also important to consider continuity of learning. Research highlights that in the area of inclusive transitions, Prep teachers and early childhood educators can work collaboratively with each other and their community to ensure that there is continuity in teaching practice and pedagogy.

'Enacting inclusion principles means personalising transition-to-school programs in ways that build confidence in individual children and families with diverse characteristics, abilities and backgrounds. This means taking time to understand the children and families in the community, so as to personalise transition by building on their prior experiences, strengths, relationships and aspirations' (Petriwskyj, 2016)



The key to successful transition strategies is to build understandings and work towards practices that include and value all. Here are a few starting ideas to support your school to foster an inclusive learning environment:

• become familiar with and discuss the department's position on diversity, inclusive education and transition to school with your networks
• critically reflect and engage in professional conversations to assist teachers in aligning transition strategies
• co-design transition strategies with children and their families, empowering them in the process and building a sense of belonging well before the first day of Prep
• consult with families, local early childhood services, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, community leaders and Transition and Partnerships and Innovation officers to ensure your transition-to-school strategies suit all children
• use the matrix (pages 11 – 13) in the *Supporting successful transitions: School decision-making tool* to reflect on whether your transition to school strategies are school-centred, consultative or collaborative.

### More support

For contact details for your region's Transition and Partnerships and Innovation officers visit:
https://oneportal.deta.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/forschools/Pages/Transitiontoschoolsupportcontacts.aspx

For more information and resources on supporting successful transitions visit:
www.qld.gov.au/transitiontoschool

Reference: Dockett, S. & Perry, B. (2014). *Continuity of Learning: A resource to support effective transition to school and school age care*. Canberra, ACT: Australian Government Department of Education.