

Age-appropriate pedagogies in the early years

Approaches in action

The Australian Curriculum sets out the curriculum (what is taught) leaving teachers to make decisions about pedagogies (how it is taught). Age-appropriate pedagogies in the early years are learner centred, actively engage young learners in learning, and involve the scaffolding of learning.

When selecting from a range of teaching approaches considered appropriate for teaching the Australian Curriculum in the early years, teachers consider the participants, context, purpose, and duration of the learning experience. In addition they reflect on the age, prior learning experiences and strengths of individual learners, and the interests of young learners and teachers. When choosing pedagogical approaches teachers also deliberate on the requirements of the assessment tasks in relation the approaches and strategies selected.

Age-appropriate pedagogical approaches in the early years include:

- Inquiry learning
- Event-based approach
- Project approach
- Explicit instruction
- Play-based learning
- Direct teaching/instruction
- Blended approach

In the *Approaches in action* resource, each of the seven approaches for age-appropriate pedagogies is unpacked to provide teachers with:

- a description of the approach
- information about decision-making and planning considerations
- the principles underpinning each approach
- the skills and dispositions young learners require to engage in the approach
- the strategies that teachers may use to implement a specific approach
- a series of reflective questions related to each approach.

Where appropriate, links are made between the Australian Curriculum personal and social capability and the pedagogical approaches as the development of social and personal capability is foundational to learning and active citizenship. The Australian Curriculum describes personal and social capability as young learners participation in ‘a range of practices including recognising and regulating emotions, developing empathy for others and understanding relationships, establishing and building positive relationships, making responsible decisions, working effectively in teams, handling challenging situations constructively and developing leadership skills.’ These skills and dispositions underpin the capacity of young learners to ‘manage themselves, relate to others, develop resilience



and a sense of self-worth, resolve conflict, engage in teamwork and feel positive about themselves and the world around them' (Australian Curriculum, 2018). In other words, the development of personal and social capability is beneficial for the wellbeing of the individual learner, and within the context of a community of young learners.

When providing teachers with examples of how skills and dispositions from the personal and social capability learning continuum may be modelled within an age-appropriate pedagogical approach in the classroom, not all sub-elements were selected. This decision reflects the fact that some sub-elements link to broad, long term expectations of how classrooms are managed and the social climate established. For example, the goal for young learners to, 'become confident, resilient and adaptable' is not linked to a specific approach but rather a social learning environment in which a sense of belonging is nurtured.

Of the seven age-appropriate pedagogical approaches, four of the approaches also have strong links to the Critical and Creative Thinking Capability, they include; inquiry learning, event-based approach, project approach and play-based learning. The active, agentic, collaborative, inquiring and participatory nature of these four approaches aligns with the goal of developing young learners' capability in critical and creative thinking for life in the 21st century. Developing the capacity for critical and creative involves young learners learning how to 'generate and evaluate knowledge, clarify concepts and ideas, seek possibilities, consider alternatives and solve problems'. Critical and creative thinking includes young learners' 'thinking broadly and deeply using skills, behaviours and dispositions such as reason, logic, resourcefulness, imagination and innovation in all learning areas at school and in their lives beyond school' (Australian Curriculum, 2018).

In unpacking age-appropriate pedagogical approaches for early years teachers the objective of the *Approaches in action* resource is not to provide an exhaustive 'how to' for teachers, instead this resource serves as a focus for teacher discussion, planning and reflection.