

# Aligning curriculum, pedagogies and assessment, an example of practice in Prep/Year 1

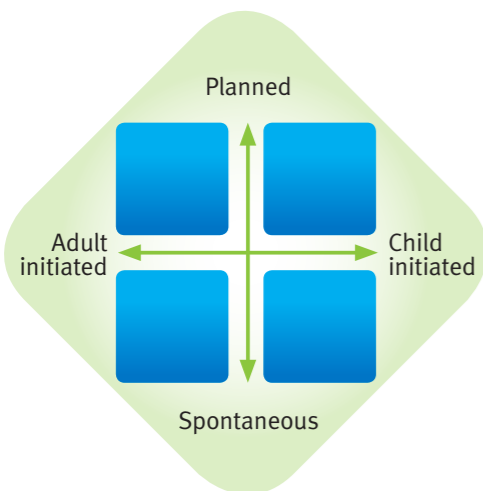
## Play-based learning/Direct instruction - 'Fiddle bags and handwriting'

Australian Curriculum - English

### Sequencing teaching and learning

How do I teach it?

Achieving range and balance\*



#### Approach

- Play-based learning
- Direct instruction

#### Practices

- Manipulative play
- Use of technology

#### Strategies

- Provision of open-ended resources
- Provision of targeted resources
- Provision of targeted ICT resource

#### Characteristics of age-appropriate pedagogies\*

- **Active**
- Agentic
- Collaborative
- Creative
- **Explicit**
- Language rich and dialogic
- **Learner focused**
- Narrative
- **Playful**
- Responsive
- **Scaffolded**

\*See over for an explanation of approaches, practices and strategies, and the characteristics of age-appropriate pedagogies evident in this Example of practice.

### Our students

Working together to ensure that every day, in every classroom, every student is learning and achieving

This is an example of how one teacher incorporated **play-based learning** and **direct instruction** when implementing the Australian Curriculum English learning area in a Prep/Year 1 classroom.

In response to Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data related to the *Physical health and wellbeing* domain, the teacher utilised both direct instruction and play-based learning to implement learning experiences providing opportunities for the young learners to build a sense of wellbeing by using and extending fine-motor skills when integrating movements and manipulating equipment, tools and objects.

It should be noted that, although this play-based learning and direct instruction example occurred as discrete, weekly lessons across the year, fine-motor opportunities were embedded in learning across each week.

On one afternoon per week, the young learners were able to play with *Fiddle bags*. These *Fiddle bags* could be used independently, in pairs, or small groups of three learners. The bags were labelled according to the number of users. There were enough bags for each young learner in the class of

twenty-five to access. The bags contained both open-ended and commercial materials to support motor skill development for fingers, wrists, hands, lower and upper, arms and shoulders, in particular:

- strength building, accuracy and control of movements when manipulating tools, objects and materials
- refinement of visual perceptual skills,
- refinement of hand-eye and tracking coordination skills.

(Adapted from *Early Years Curriculum Guidelines, The State of Queensland 2006, p. 66*).

After approximately thirty minutes of manipulative play with the *Fiddle bags*, the young learners came together as a class group. During this time they participated in a whole class direct instruction lesson on letter formation, using the learning object, *Write on*. This Department of Education and Training resource was accessed through the Staff Learning Place. These direct instruction learning experiences followed the sequence of the school's handwriting program.

### Assessment

What do my students already know? How well do they know it?

**Assessment for learning** - enabling teachers to use information about learner progress to inform their teaching, including anecdotal notes, photographs, handwriting samples

**Assessment as learning** - enabling learners to reflect on and monitor their own progress to inform their future learning goals, including peer feedback on letter formation

**Assessment of learning** - there was no summative assessment task attached to this play-based learning/direct instruction

### Making judgments

How will I know how well my students have demonstrated the Achievement Standard?

Although there was no summative assessment task attached to this play-based learning/direct instruction, by monitoring learning through the use of assessment for and as learning, and providing feedback to the young learners, decisions could be made by the teacher relating to what:

- the young learners knew and understood
- strengths, misconceptions and misunderstandings were evident
- were the next steps for learning.

### Feedback

What do my students already know?

What do my students need to learn next?

The teacher used anecdotal notes, photographs and handwriting samples to inform feedback.

The feedback provided the young learners with progress on their learning to date (*Nate, I noticed that you are using your thumb and pointer finger to firmly grip the mini-bots*), and gave specific information about what to do next (*Remember that this is great practice for holding your pencil firmly between your thumb and pointer*).

Ongoing, informal verbal feedback was given during *Fiddle bag* and handwriting sessions, as appropriate to this play-based learning and direct instruction.



### Curriculum intent

What do my students need to learn?

#### Australian Curriculum - English

The English curriculum is built around the three interrelated strands of language, literature and literacy. Teaching and learning programs should balance and integrate all three strands. Together, the three strands focus on developing students' knowledge, understanding and skills in listening, reading, viewing, speaking, writing and creating, including the **development and consolidation of a handwriting style that is legible, fluent and automatic, and that supports sustained writing.**

**Foundation (Prep) Year Content Descriptions (as applicable to this play-based learning/direct instruction)**

#### Literacy

- **Produce some lower case and upper case letters using learned letter formations (ACELY1653)**
  - adopting correct posture and pencil grip
  - learning to produce simple handwriting movements
  - following clear demonstrations of how to construct each letter (for example where to start; which direction to write)
  - learning to construct lower case letters and to combine these into words
  - learning to construct some upper case letters

**Foundation (Prep) Year Achievement Standard (as applicable to this play-based learning/direct instruction)**

By the end of the Foundation year, students correctly form known upper- and lower-case letters.

**Year 1 Content Descriptions (as applicable to this play-based learning/direct instruction)**

#### Literacy

- **Write using unjoined lower case and upper case letters (ACELY1663)**
  - using correct posture and pencil grip
  - learning how each letter is constructed including where to start and the direction to follow
  - writing words legibly using unjoined print script of consistent size

**Year 1 Achievement Standard (as applicable to this play-based/direct instruction)**

By the end of Year 1, students use capital letters and full stops and form all upper- and lower-case letters correctly.

## Characteristics of age-appropriate pedagogies evident in this example of practice

The young learners' engagement with the *Fiddle bags* was active, enhancing the learning through moving, doing, and interacting with a range of hands-on resources. The young learners were made conscious of the relationship between engaging with the *Fiddle bags* and the manipulative play, and the impact that this would have on their handwriting development. The use of the *Fiddle bags* and ICT resources, recognised that learning is a highly individualised process. The manipulative play allowed the young learners the freedom they needed to innovate and enact new learning. The play-based learning and direct instruction was scaffolded through modelling, encouraging, adding challenges and providing feedback.

Although only five of the characteristics of age-appropriate pedagogies have been highlighted here, there were opportunities to embed each of the eleven characteristics.

### Characteristics of age-appropriate pedagogies

#### Creative

Inviting children to consider "What if?" They encourage investigation, inquiry and artistry to explore new possibilities and ways of thinking.

#### Narrative

Acknowledging the important role that personal, written, oral and digital stories play in all our lives. They support both the production and comprehension of narratives through active processes, especially play.

#### Active

Requiring physical and embodied engagement across all areas of learning. Whether this is indoors or outdoors, activity is essential in order to activate children's full potential. Their focus, concentration, motivation and self-regulation are enhanced through moving, doing and interacting within a range of learning environments.

#### Explicit

Making conscious for both learner and educator the relationships between the learning purpose and processes employed and the skills and understanding these processes support.

#### Playful

Encouraging children to make connections through imagination and creativity to explore alternate worlds and ways of thinking. These worlds, not bounded by reality, offer the freedom children need to innovate and enact new possibilities.

#### Agentic

Ensuring that children have voice in their learning. Their ideas and interests initiate, support and extend learning possibilities in order to build on their real-world understandings and experiences.

#### Language rich and dialogic

Ensuring that learning occurs in environments where rich language is modelled and employed by both children and educators. Meaningful dialogues between children, as well as between children and educators, are created to support thinking, learning, engagement and imagination.

#### Responsive

Incorporating a willingness to be flexible, to ensure that learning is always child, context, content and discipline appropriate. To achieve this, educators will balance opportunities for structure and spontaneity, open-ended and specific tasks, and child-led and educator-led learning.

#### Collaborative

Being social and co-constructed. Children and educators work together to identify ways of learning and understanding through sustained shared thinking and action.

#### Learner focused

Recognising that all children learn in different ways and that learning is a highly individualised process. They also acknowledge differences in children's physical, intellectual, cultural, social and personal experiences and perspectives.

#### Scaffolded

Including such actions as modelling, encouraging, questioning, adding challenges, and giving feedback, provide the support needed to extend children's existing capabilities. Effective scaffolding by both educators and other children provides active structures to support new learning; it is then progressively withdrawn as learners gain increasing mastery.

## Approach - Play-based learning/Direct instruction

### Practices\*

#### Manipulative play

Manipulative play developed control and strength in the young learners' fingers and hands. Manipulative play fostered through the use of the *Fiddle bags* included using puzzles, threading, play dough, blocks, finger puppets, construction sets and dressing dolls.

#### Use of technology

While all of the young learners were assembled at the interactive whiteboard for engagement with the *Write on* online handwriting program, a small group practised their *Write on* skills on a class set of tablets. These young learners were chosen by the teacher in response to their particular handwriting needs (for example, building strength, accuracy and control of movements). All other class members chose to use either individual whiteboards and whiteboard markers or clipboards, crayons, pencils and pens.

*\*These are examples of the Practices implemented, and not intended as a finite list.*

### Strategies\*

#### Provision of open-ended resources

Using non-traditional, open-ended resources, including dress-ups, cutlery and natural materials, was beneficial for those young learners not interested in conventional fine motor experiences, or those who may have been self-conscious of their fine motor abilities.

#### Provision of targeted resources

Targeted resources, including commercially purchased materials, allowed for the teacher to provide experiences that were aimed at achieving specific teaching goals.

#### Provision of targeted ICT resources

Providing access to ICT resources created high-interest play and learning opportunities for the young learners. The ICT resources removed barriers to learning experienced by some young learners, making it meaningful and relevant.

*\* These are examples of the Strategies implemented, and not intended as a finite list.*

### Questions for teacher-based reflection

- How is an array of effective pedagogies ensured?
- How are holistic development and academic goals balanced?
- How is a balance between child-initiated and adult-initiated learning experiences fostered?
- How are positive personal relationships with children nurtured?
- How is playfulness in learning and teaching interactions embedded?
- How are high-quality, verbal interactions encouraged?
- How are interactions to scaffold cognitive challenge and develop higher order thinking incorporated?
- How are real-life, imaginary, spontaneous and planned experiences integrated?

### Questions for school-based reflection

- How is the provision of training, resources and support considered?
- How are the professional demands on teachers, and the lead-in time required to establish new approaches, recognised and supported?