Purpose

The Early Learning Procedure aims to support and inform the Early Learning Policy.   It reflects a system -
wide commitment to Early Learning and respects the rights, capabilities and needs of the Early Learner
to achieve success and build the successful foundations to flourish in their learning   and wellbeing .

Catholic Schools Office

The Catholic Schools Office is responsible for providing support and guidance in the development and implementation of this policy including professional Early L   earning opportunities and resources.

Relevant system personnel   within a Catholic school context   are responsible for:

- x   overseeing the implementation of this policy including advice, support, resourcing and budgetary considerations

- x   supporting schools within their own context to implement   the K ey Elements of Early Learning

- x   coordinating the collection of relevant data for system and school use from the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) and other data sources   , to inform practice and decision making

- x   disseminating   information and research

- x   facilitatin g professional learning opportunities   , parti cularly in the areas of Data, Play, Environments and Transitions.

Schools

School leaders   within a Catholic school context are responsible for:

- x   overseeing the implementation of this policy including advice, support, resourcing and budgetary considerations

- x   implement ing the K ey Elements of Early Learning   by ensuring Data, Play, Environments and Transitions are an integral part of pedagogy and practice

- x

- x implementing a curriculum that meets and furthers individual student rights, needs and capabilities

- x supporting well- plann ed and articulated educational and transition programs utilising a variety of approaches and best practice appropriate to the Early Learner

- x meeting the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers including NESA requirements

- x actively engaging in profess ional learning opportunities to educate themselves about contemporary understandings of the rights, needs and capabilities of Early Learners .

Key Elements

Under Guiding Principles of the Early Learning Policy, four Key Elements are identified. The Early Learning Policy commits to evidence -based research in relation to the following Key Elements of Early Learning:

> Data that informs and builds rich learning opportunities and capacity to know the Early L earner
>
> The importance of play as a pedagogy and the importance of self-determined play
>
> Indoor and outdoor environments that invite, enable and enrich learning and support environmental sustainability
>
> Transitions from home and prior to school settings to school and transitions ac ross the early years of school.

Data that informs and builds rich learning opportunities and capacity to know the Early Learner

Understanding of the right s, capabilities and needs of the E arly Learner and the importance of providing appropriate learning opportunities is embedded in the diocesan

learning is correlated with having higher levels of physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills and communication skills and general knowledge.

Census information gathered under the five domains includes:

x   physical health and wellbeing – whether a child is healthy, independent, ready for school each day;

x   social competence – looks at how a child plays and gets along with others;

x   emotional maturity – whether a child is able to concentrate, help others, share, is self-confident;

x   language and cognitive skills – whether a child is interested in reading and writing, can count and recognise numbers and shapes;

x   communication skills and general knowledge – whether a child can tell a story, communicate with adults and children, articulate themselves.

Census data is collected and maintained at a national level in order to help communities, governments and policy-makers pinpoint the types of services, resources and support needed to improve the health, wellbeing and learning of Australian children.

School principals receive an AEDC School Profile which provides information about the number of children attending the school who are considered to be developmentally vulnerable and those performing well, compared with all other children across Australia. The data provides significant information for school planning. Schools are encouraged to access and analyse the Community Profile for their area.

The AEDC has now introduced a new measure of early childhood development to complement its current suite of indicators. The Multiple Strength Indicator (MSI) is a strength based measure that provides information on children's developmental strengths as they commence full-time school. By highlighting what is going well for children, the measure enables communities, schools and policy makers to seek a solution driven approach that builds on children's existing capabilities to give them the best start in life.

Challenges remain for some schools in relation to awareness and analysis of the AEDC, uncertainty about how it fits with school improvement and best practice, or uncertainty about how to address challenges faced by children and families. A range of resources are available to schools to guide how to use the data and support a deepening understanding of the children and families in their schools and communities. Examples of how others have used the AEDC can provide a starting place for schools to engage with the data.

2. Transition to School Data

The NSW Transition to School Statement

x   welcoming spaces which invite children to

There are increasing concerns about the disconnection between children and nature. There are also concerns about risk adverse approaches to play, sedentary technology experiences and lack of time for unstructured outdoor play and their likely negative consequences for children's long tere a8a (e)4.4 (r)4.8 (s)7.5T20t1B55

how best to engage children, extend their thinking, access curriculum and ensure that children are active participants in their learning.

Transitions from home and prior to school settings to school and transitions across the early years of school

Transitions are a process of continuity and change as children move into and through one state of being and belonging to another . The transition to school is one of the most important transitions a child will make. As well as the child , the family undergoes the process of transition and this places great responsibility o n the school to engage in best practice to ensure succ essful transitions. Transitaanuransithe sTj 7005

Kindergarten teacher or assistant who the child ha s just met. These c hecklists are often completed many months before a child begins school making any information gathered outdated. Skill re lated checklist s do not align with the image of the child as a competent, capable individual. Research sug gests we need to change the traditional child maturation and development focus of school readiness checklists.

The checklists need to be thoughtfully reconsidered and possibly eliminated from the important process of transition.

3. Play as a transition practice

Embedding play as a transition practice support s the child becoming familiar with a new environment throug h a lens which is familiar and appropriate for the Early Learner. Play as a part of transition not only supports the child but also has positive outcomes for families and educators.

Parents/caregivers may engage in play with their child and can also be pro vided with opportunities to observe their child in play. Using play as a transition practice enables teachers to engage with the child and make meaningful observations of the child's capabilities and needs. Observations can be made a bout the child's litera cy and numeracy, socially interactions, communication skills, problem solving, self - regulat ion and emotional needs. Play as a transition practice provides more authentic and relevant information about the child compared to a readiness checklist and at the same time supports the child to make connections with others and the environment.

4. Transfer of information via the NSW

While cross secto r communication by educators is recognised as one method of best practice to support positive transitions to school, communication between educators in schools is also extremely important for the child t ransition ing across the early years of school .

The sharing of information about children's capabilities and needs as they transfer between the early years of school, the importance of pedagogical continuity, best practice in relation to facilitating curriculum as well as the development of professional relationships assist the transitioning child. Transition across the early years is an important time that affords both opportunities and challenges as the child assumes new roles and identities.

6. The traditional o rientation day is only one part of trans ition

The purpose of the traditional orientation day is usually to provid e the child, but mostly the family with information about the school community. While this remains important , orientation is only one part of the transition process and is not an isolated day.

7. Individual school practice to support successful transitions

Practices such as buddy programmes , social stories , welcome letters etc. are specific to the culture of the school as well as to the needs and capabilities o f the children transitioning to school. They