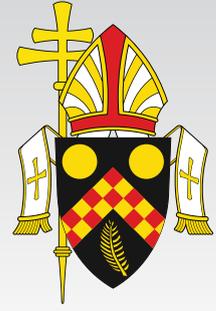


Policy Statement



ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE
Catholic Education Council

EARLY YEARS

All children in the early years of schooling in Catholic primary schools are provided with a holistic curriculum which is responsive to each child's diverse and unique spiritual, cognitive, physical, social, cultural and emotional learning needs

INTRODUCTION

The holistic development of the child in the early years provides a strong foundation for success throughout life. This policy statement is embedded in the Brisbane Catholic Education, Learning and Teaching Framework¹ and in the Vision Statement for Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Brisbane² which proclaims the gospel message and calls us to teach, challenge and transform as we connect learning and living and nurture the gifts and potential of each person. In particular, the teachings of Jesus Christ provide the motivation for the challenges contained in this document

"Let the children come to me...." (Lk18:16)

"That they may have life, life to the full...." (Jn 10:10)

In addition it is acknowledged that *The Early Years is a vital period in each child's learning and development... Childhood is a time to be, to seek and to make meaning of the world... The early childhood years are not solely preparation for the future but also about the present.*

This policy defines early years as referring to children from the beginning of school to eight years of age.

RATIONALE

The Early Years Policy is a response to contemporary directions in early childhood education. This phase of learning is crucial to the development of values, understandings, beliefs and capabilities which will underpin future learning and development.

Catholic schools value the Early Years of schooling as a time for children to celebrate their uniqueness as they develop their personal and spiritual wellbeing. All children have an innate spirituality at the heart of which is relationship⁴. A young child's sense of self, sense of others, sense of creation and sense of God or of the sacred will be based on love, kindness, patience, dependability and trust.

Within a Catholic school in the early years the diverse socio-cultural backgrounds of every child are acknowledged and provided for within an inclusive environment as children expand their knowledge, engage with their environment and make sense of the world. Each child's unique capability, creativity and curiosity are valued and nurtured. Children's learning is dynamic, complex and holistic. They use their individual capacity to initiate, lead and make decisions about their learning, actively co-construct and review their learning and contribute to the learning of others through experimentation, play and practice in the classroom and beyond.

Educators in the early years engage in *intentional teaching which is deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful*³. They recognise the interactive and interrelated nature of learning and respond to the changing contexts for learning flexibly drawing on a range of strategies as they plan to extend children's thinking and learning appropriate to their age and development. Educators and children build high quality environments that

activate and engage learning. Priority is given to language, literacy and numeracy development as these are foundational to future success in schooling and beyond.

The early years classroom reflects the family school partnership policy through a commitment to *...nurturing active partnerships with families and providing parents and caregivers with opportunities to participate in the life of the school community. The student's learning journey is enriched through positive and reciprocal relationships*⁵.

CONSEQUENCES

In enacting this policy our community of schools in partnership with families and others will promote

Learning and Teaching in the Early Years characterised by

Acknowledgement of the connectedness of young children's mind, body and spirit

Curriculum based planning that builds upon children's rich and diverse prior knowledge and experiences

Children's agency and voice as they actively engage in meaningful learning contexts in the early phase of schooling. These contexts for learning and development are:

- Play
- Real life situations
- Investigations
- Routines and transitions
- Focused learning and teaching

Providing opportunities for children to problem solve, experiment, take risks, persist, sustain interactions and co-construct knowledge

Explicit evidence based teaching that is purposeful, focused and targeted

Opportunities for sensory, concrete, creative and social engagement

Reflecting on, understanding and applying contemporary early childhood pedagogy

A combination of teacher and student initiated learning experiences

Being visible, flexible and responsive in moving children forward in their learning.

Learning Environments in the Early Years characterised by

Social environments that enable children to build confidence and independence and learn skills and strategies to sustain respectful relationships

Temporal environments that support children's engagement in sustained investigations and allow for a balance between whole class, group and individual learning

Flexible physical environments that promote learning and provoke children to explore and deepen their understanding

Welcoming and stimulating environments that build positive teacher-child interactions and reinforce a child's social and emotional wellbeing

Environments that nurture a child's sense of self, connectedness to God and their world and establishes their understanding as God's children, enriching in them a sense of mystery and awe.

A language rich environment which builds solid foundations for literacy and numeracy development

Collaboration in the Early Years characterised by

Regular communication among parents/caregivers, teachers and students focussing on children's learning, development and well being

Key partnerships within and beyond the school and parish.

Leadership characterised by

A contemporary understanding of early years pedagogy

Articulation and support of a school wide vision for and approach to phase appropriate learning and teaching

Expectation and support for teachers to build capacity to impact positively on children's learning.

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- i Brisbane Catholic Education, Learning and Teaching Framework (2012) <https://kweb.bne.catholic.edu.au/LandT/LTFramework/Pages/LearningandTeachingFramework.aspx>
 - ii Archdiocese of Brisbane 2004 Vision Statement for Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Brisbane <https://kweb.bne.catholic.edu.au/ES/EmntS/Introduction%20Kits/Vision%20Statement.pdf>
 - iii Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace. (2009). The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia.
 - iv Hay, D., & Nye, R. (2006). The spirit of the child (Rev. ed.). London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
 - v Archdiocese of Brisbane Catholic Education Council. (2012) Family School Partnership Policy.

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