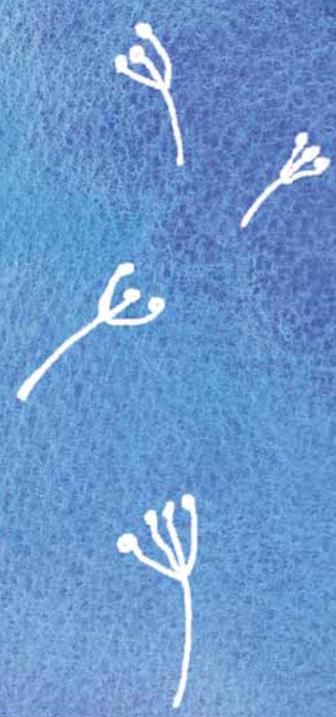


# EARLY

THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS  
OF BEST PRACTICE  
IN EARLY EDUCATION

# LEARNING

AN EARLY LEARNING STATEMENT FOR THE DIOCESE OF BROKEN BAY



## THE EARLY LEARNER

IS A CHILD OF GOD WITH BODY, MIND, HEART AND SPIRIT

IS A MEMBER OF A LEARNING COMMUNITY, WITH DIVERSE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE FROM HOME AND FAMILY

IS CURIOUS, CREATIVE AND CAPABLE, WITH IDEAS AND INTERESTS

IS UNIQUE AND FLOURISHES WITHIN SECURE AND RESPONSIVE RELATIONSHIPS AND ENGAGING ENVIRONMENTS



"CHILDREN MUST FEEL THAT THE WHOLE SCHOOL, INCLUDING SPACE, MATERIALS AND PROJECTS, VALUES AND SUSTAINS THEIR INTERACTION AND COMMUNICATION."

RINALDI, 1990

Early learning in the Diocese of Broken Bay affirms the God-given dignity and rights of each child as a human person and promotes inclusive, respectful and collaborative partnerships with families within an evangelizing community of grace. Therefore, the following principles of early learning inform practice:

## 1 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ENSURES:

- Every early learner has the right to receive an education that promotes their uniqueness, with teachers who value them as curious, creative and capable.
- A coherent vision for teaching and commitment to the continuity of learning where the Early Learning principles align with Australian Early Development Census (AEDC), the School Improvement Plan and Timperley's Spiral of Inquiry.
- Evidence based best practice transition to school programs are underpinned by high expectations for every child that involve active collaboration and are inclusive of all stakeholders.
- Transition to school policies and programs support learner-centred profiles, provide authentic and active experiences, elicit conversations, reveal learning dispositions and develop skills that guide curriculum planning.
- Relational trust is established with families, enabling timely adjustments for students who need early intervention, differentiation, and emotional and social support.
- Early Learning principles inform planning for infrastructure such as buildings, play and learning spaces, and resources.

## 2 PEDAGOGY IN THE EARLY YEARS INVOLVES:

- A seamless approach to transition, curriculum planning and teaching aligned with the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) that connects prior to school and primary school settings to ensure a continuum of learning.
- A culture of curiosity and thinking, developed through a spiral of inquiry, recognising teachers as researchers and promoting evidence-based, intentional and data-driven teaching.
- The provision of repeated, familiar experiences to consolidate concepts, inclusive of literacy and numeracy; these experiences are integrated, contextualised and authentic.
- Highly organised, challenging play and project-based experiences where educators are not only partners in learning but also investigators of learning, valuing children's interests as an integral part of curriculum planning.
- Holistic approaches that support physical, social and emotional well-being, and positive dispositions to learning.
- Using technologies creatively to facilitate, assess, support, document and share learning.
- Assessment which is integrated with teaching and learning; ensuring feedback as an integral part of the process, inclusive of formative and summative tools using a strengths based approach.



- Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships for learning and wellbeing

- Social and emotional learning integral to learning expectations and equity for all

- Strengths-based approaches and respect for diversity

- Ongoing learning and reflection

### 3 PLAY AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS SUPPORT:

- Differentiated environments that are responsive to the unique capacities of children, emerging from children's interests and a sense of belonging.
- Connections between the inside and outside learning spaces, using resources that reflect everyday life and promote a strong sense of identity and care for the environment.
- Flexibility of learning spaces for individual students and small groups to promote the co-construction of knowledge, where children develop confidence, efficacy and self-discipline.
- Creative investigation, with open ended resources that foster opportunities for processing and making sense of experiences, testing and applying new concepts and understandings.
- Purposefully-framed play opportunities and authentic choice through the provision of resources to support self-regulation, emotional maturity, social skills, fine motor development, numeracy and oral language.
- Diverse types of daily discoveries and play experiences through quality outdoor playground designs, containing multiple habitats within the overall space where children use open-ended ways to enhance natural curiosity.

### 4 PARTNERSHIPS FOR LEARNING AND WELLBEING VALUE:

- Shared expectations between families and schools, enabling parents and educators to support students in learning and wellbeing.
- Positive and trusting parent-teacher relationships built upon authentic student profiles which influence children's learning outcomes in the early years.
- Extending transition processes to build connections between the different spaces in which children learn (home and school).
- Social and emotional play-based experiences at home and at school which build strong foundations for lifelong learning, self-efficacy and academic resilience.
- Collaborative interactions with families, prior to school settings and intervention services which can support the transition to school and all subsequent learning trajectories.
- An inclusive community, respecting the diversity of cultures, languages, traditions and practices of families.



"IN A TRULY TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING SYSTEM, THE FOCUS IS ON HIGH QUALITY AND HIGH EQUITY FOR EVERY LEARNER, REGARDLESS OF THEIR STARTING POINT."

TIMPERLEY, ET AL., 2014

# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF SCHOOLS AND THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CATHOLIC CARE

The Diocese of Broken Bay is committed to a deeply held belief in the God-given dignity of each person and the ability of every student to have life to the full. Consistent with the National Early Childhood Development Strategy, the diocese is committed to supporting all children so they can get the best start to create their own, and our nation's, future.

The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia reminds us, "From before birth, children are connected to family, community, culture and place. Their earliest development and learning takes place through these relationships, particularly within families, who are children's first and most influential educators. As children participate in everyday life, they develop interests and construct their own identities and understandings of the world."

The early years of schooling is a critical period of intense growth, deep learning and development, providing the foundations for later academic and social success. Through their engagement with the world, their parents, families and teachers, young learners form the values and attitudes that will guide their life journeys.

The Early Learning Statement for the Diocese of Broken Bay promotes the essential elements of best practice in early education, which nurtures the lifelong learner underpinned by play-based pedagogies. The approach is based on authentic learning and intentional teaching. It provides a coherent vision, founded on contemporary understandings of learning and well-being underpinned by our Catholic Worldview.

We commend the statement, confident that it will support early learning and school communities in their work in these vital years of a child's life and learning in our Diocese.

PETER HAMILL  
DIRECTOR OF SCHOOLS  
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE

TRISH DEVLIN  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
CATHOLIC CARE

"A PATH THAT LEADS TO THE THREE LANGUAGES THAT A MATURE PERSON NEEDS TO KNOW: THE LANGUAGE OF THE MIND, THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART, AND THE LANGUAGE OF THE HANDS, ALL IN HARMONY. IN OTHER WORDS, THINK OF WHAT YOU FEEL AND DO: LISTEN TO WHAT YOU THINK AND WHAT YOU DO: AND DO WELL WHAT YOU THINK AND DO. THE THREE LANGUAGES IN HARMONY AND TOGETHER."

POPE FRANCIS, MAY 2014



POPE FRANCIS

## KEY TERMS

**AEDC:** The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) is a nationwide data collection of early childhood development at the time children commence their first year of full-time school.

**Early Years Learning Framework:** A guide which provides general goals or outcomes for children's learning and how they might be attained. It also provides a scaffold to assist early childhood settings to develop their own, more detailed curriculum.

**Learning Dispositions:** Enduring habits of mind, actions, and tendencies to respond in characteristic ways to situations, for example, maintaining an optimistic outlook, being willing to persevere, approaching new experiences with confidence.

**Play-based learning:** A context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social worlds, as they engage actively with people, objects and representations.

IN THE EARLY YEARS, CHILDREN REFLECT A SPECIFIC PERIOD IN THEIR LIFESPAN KNOWN AND INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNISED AS 'EARLY CHILDHOOD'. FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS STATEMENT EARLY LEARNING IS DEFINED FROM 3-8 YEARS OF AGE.