



Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism and Major Events

16 SEP 2016

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Mr Neil Laurie
Clerk of the Parliament
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to Petitions 2581–16 and 2619–16 tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 17 August 2016 regarding age-appropriate education for happy, healthy children and teachers.

I would like to thank the petitioners for raising these issues and concerns with me regarding the education of our youngest students and the implementation of the Australian curriculum. I would like to reassure them that the Palaszczuk Government is well aware of these issues and has undertaken to address them through a number of initiatives.

Age-appropriate curriculum

From 2017, the Queensland Government is seeking to make Prep the first year of compulsory schooling, to ensure all children are provided with important foundational knowledge and skills to support their future learning. This proposed change will not alter the compulsory school age, with parents retaining the flexibility to either enrol their child in Prep from the year they turn five and six months or from the year their child reaches the compulsory school age of six years and six months, giving consideration to their child's developmental, behavioural and emotional readiness for schooling.

The curriculum taught in Queensland is the Australian Curriculum. This curriculum is a developmental continuum of learning from Prep to Year 10 and clarifies what students should learn at each year level, and the quality of learning expected.

The Australian Curriculum is aligned with the Early Years Learning Framework (prior to school) and builds on its aim to extend and enrich children's learning from birth to five years and through the transition to school.

The Australian Curriculum does not outline the pedagogical approaches to be used — this decision is made by teachers. Queensland teachers continue to be encouraged to use a range of pedagogical approaches to ensure that the needs of all students are met.

In Prep and in all year levels, teachers use their knowledge of children's capabilities, interests and motivations to identify the most effective way to teach curriculum content in an age-appropriate way, including inquiry learning, play-based learning and explicit teaching.

To support Queensland schools and teachers to implement the curriculum and make choices about effective ways to teach young students, our *Advancing education: An action plan for education in Queensland* includes a focus on age-appropriate learning in Prep.

In 2015, the Department of Education and Training funded Griffith University to conduct research into age-appropriate pedagogies in the early years. Based on the key characteristics of effective early years teaching and learning identified, 46 Queensland state schools in Central Queensland, Far North Queensland and Metropolitan regions, were supported to implement evidence-based approaches to teaching and learning in the early years.

In 2016, the pilot has been extended to a statewide program of over 110 schools to complement the Department's transition to school initiative with its focus on continuity of learning for young children. All Queensland state schools are able to benefit from this work through the development of resources and further professional development in the near future.

The Department's *Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C)* resource also supports teachers and schools to implement age-appropriate teaching and learning with advice and suggestions about appropriate contexts for learning.

Data collection

Schools and teachers make decisions about the type and frequency of data collection to monitor and personalise student learning. They are encouraged to be selective and purposeful about the collection and analysis of data.

Reporting

Queensland state schools are required to report twice yearly. The *P–12 curriculum, assessment and reporting framework* outlines the requirements for reporting. Schools and teachers make decisions, in their whole-school curriculum and assessment plans about what assessment they will undertake, and data to be collected, to ensure they can assess, monitor and report on students' learning.

Curriculum review

A request was sent to the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) to identify a core P–10 Australian Curriculum for Queensland schools, in response to concerns raised in relation to workload pressures on teachers implementing the Australian Curriculum.

Following receipt of a report provided to the Department from the Board of the QCAA, a new approach to implementing the P–10 Australian Curriculum for Queensland schools was announced. Revised units for Mathematics and English will be made available from Term 4, 2016 to provide greater clarity to teachers around what to teach.

I would strongly encourage any teachers with health issues related to work pressures, or parents with children suffering anxiety, to contact their school Principal to begin discussions about actions to address these issues.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further, I invite you to contact Ms Leanne Nixon, Assistant Director-General, State Schools – Performance, on telephone 3513 5803 or by email at leanne.nixon@det.qld.gov.au.

Thank you again to the petitioners for raising their concerns regarding the education and welfare of Queensland teachers and students.

Yours sincerely



KATE JONES MP
Minister for Education and
Minister for Tourism and Major Events