QKindy and early childhood

Edition 2, 2016

Make the early years count with online tips
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A new professional website placing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities at the core of teaching and learning.

- Acknowledgment of Country
- Indigenous interpretations of Belonging, Being and Becoming
- Good practice videos
- Inspirational posters and much more

www.foundationsforsuccess.qld.edu.au

Free Sally and Possum apps

Sally and Possum use Auslan and game-based learning to improve literacy and numeracy in children aged 4 to 8 years, who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Download Sally and Possum season 1 and 2 apps from iTunes.

Catch Sally and Possum on ABC4Kids (ABC2) or iView or visit www.sallyandpossum.edu.au
Welcome to the Fold

The education and welfare of our youngest children is important to us all. In Queensland, we have thousands of skilled and dedicated early childhood professionals who share a passion for nurturing the very young.

Our talented workforce is one reason Queensland is cementing its reputation as a leader in early childhood education and care. Throughout 2016, I was fortunate to meet many of these people who make a difference to our children’s future.

It’s been an exciting year in which the State Government’s commitment to early childhood education and care has been confirmed and strengthened through Advancing Education: an action plan for education in Queensland.

We’re determined to give our youngest Queenslanders “a confident start”. My department has improved community understanding about the importance of early childhood education by delivering a consistent, clear message that the early years count. This has been an important element as we lay the foundations for children’s social, physical, emotional and academic success.

We have worked hard to help families access kindergarten, with participation exceeding 95 per cent, up from less than 30 per cent in 2008. Such high participation means we can turn our attention to providing extra support for the children and families who need it most.

We increased funding to the Disability Inclusion Support for Queensland Kindergartens program for children with complex multiple disability, and boosted support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to access kindergarten with local strategies in each community.

The Deadly Kindies program, offered in partnership with the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health in South East Queensland, supports families attending local Aboriginal Medical Services to connect with local kindergartens.

We’re also delivering more exciting ways to engage young children in learning. More than 2100 families registered for free Play Stars membership in the first 100 days of our partnership with Playgroup Queensland.

Another showpiece is Australia’s first television series and apps designed to help deaf and hard-of-hearing children develop early literacy, numeracy and communication skills. I hope you have had the opportunity to watch the popular Sally and Possum series which has captivated the signing and non-signing community alike.

You can catch episodes of Sally and Possum on ABC Kids, iview or visit the Sally and Possum website at www.sallyandpossum.edu.au

The Age Appropriate Pedagogies Program continues to attract school leaders who understand the importance of balanced teaching approaches in children’s development and academic learning.

The State Government’s vision is that all children will start school well prepared. The solid foundations laid down by skilled and dedicated professionals in the early education sector are vital to realising this vision.

I would like to acknowledge and thank educators, staff and parents for the terrific achievements in 2016.

Kate Jones
Minister for Education
approximately 2 out of 4 children regularly nap at age 3

approximately 1 out of 4 children regularly nap at age 4

less than 1 out of 4 children regularly nap at age 5
Sleep routines put to bed

We all remember hearing or singing, “hush little baby, don’t say a word” to lull little ones to sleep.

But early childhood research has found kindy kids should be encouraged to talk about their sleep, rest and relaxation needs.

The old notions of early childhood services having the same set time, place and rituals for sleep for children of all ages are being well and truly put to bed. The ways educators can make sure three- to four-year-olds are able to sleep, rest or relax when they need to are as diverse as the children themselves.

Family Day Care professional, Kym Groth, said children’s sleep needs changed as they aged.

“I had two four-year-olds and a three-year-old who didn’t want a sleep during the day anymore but their parents wanted them to have a rest.

“So the children and I sat down together and talked about the things that are really important to them about rest and the things they don’t like about rest.”

Ms Groth said afterwards she shared the children’s thoughts with their families.

“Families were a part of the conversation but children’s ideas were listened to and they decided what needed to happen for them.

“Children were part of the decision-making.”

Family Day Care Association Queensland has been an important advocate and support for QUT’s Sleep Learning for Early Education Professionals research project, conducted by researchers Karen Thorpe, Sue Irvine, Simon Smith and Sally Staton.

Professor Thorpe said it was important for parents and educators to work together to develop healthy sleep routines.

“Sleep is really a great subject to explore relationships with families, particularly because the care setting can reflect and complement what happens in the home,” she said.

“A child’s sleep is a very important issue at night, not just in the day, because it affects their parents’ sleep and how well everyone in the household functions the next day.”

Associate Professor Irvine said deciding when children should sleep and for how long could be challenging for educators and parents.

“Open, two-way communication is the key,” she said.

“Some parents believe that if a child sleeps during the day, they may not sleep at night, which, in turn, interrupts their sleep.

“Other parents believe children need a rest during the day so they aren’t cranky in the evening.

“It’s not about one approach being right and the other wrong, it’s about the diversity of needs for individual children.

“There can often be diverse expectations and therefore educators need to really listen to and work with all families.”

The SLEEP - Sleep Learning for Early Education Professionals project is proudly supported and funded by the department.

For more information, including resources for educators, visit our website at www.earlychildhood.qld.gov.au (search for “sleep”).
Four words guaranteed to drive most parents around the bend on car journeys with kids would have to be: Are we there yet?
The children and teachers at Mitchelton Pre-Schooling Centre have been developing conversation starters that help kids extend their conversational skills.
When the teaching team reviewed the latest Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data for the Mitchelton community, they reflected on what the data showed about children in the area and their knowledge of the children at their service.
As a result, they decided to create strategies to support development in communication, one of the five key domains measured in the AEDC, along with physical, social, emotional and language skills.
Centre Director Leanne Hunter said that after looking at the data, they knew a focus on communication would be the right approach to improving children’s learning outcomes.
‘So this term we’ve really put an emphasis on sharing with parents the importance of talking with and listening to children, particularly at routine times, such as during meals and driving in the car.
‘We suggest conversation starters like Remember when…, I love…, and Look… to cover a whole bunch of topics.
‘We’ve also recorded a list of the children’s conversation ideas for in the car, which includes what they do on holidays, their day at kindy and what they see out the window.’
Ms Hunter said the group have even built a pint-sized car for parents to use with the children in conversation practice runs.
Allowing children to talk about and listen to things that mean something to them is a great way for them to develop skills in making eye contact, actively listening, responding, using expression and showing their own personalities.
‘Children generally learn through language and social interaction, so it’s important for them to know how to express themselves clearly and to understand others,’ she said.
‘This can help them make friends, do well at school and take part in the community.’
Fiona Sorbello, a parent at Mitchelton, said she wholeheartedly supported this approach and said her new favourite time with her son was in the car.
‘We used to listen to music in the car but one day I asked, “Would you rather talk or listen to music?” and he said, “Talk”.
‘It’s become a really great time for learning and I can see how it’s helping him to develop his communication abilities.’

For more information, including community data, visit the AEDC website at www.aedc.gov.au.
You’re virtually there: a fly-on-the-wall look at long day care

Have you ever wondered what quality long day care looks like? Are you or your friends trying to pick an early childhood service for a little one? Not sure where to go or who to go to? We have the answer for the shy of voice, the newcomer and the curious: a virtual tour. It will give you a fly-on-the-wall insight into key elements of quality under the National Quality Framework. When you walk through the virtual gate, you will realise that no one can see you but you can experience everything they do. As you watch from afar, writing pops up on the screen, reminding you that you’re not there in “real time”. But you will probably still smile when the woman at the door turns to you and warmly says: ‘Hi my name is Kylie and I’ll be your guide on this tour.’ As you enter the foyer, you choose the direction of your adventure and where you’d like to go. It could be the toddler room or the kindy room, or maybe you’ll join one of the children in an activity. In today’s digital age, it’s important to give families information that is more accessible, digestible, innovative and engaging. In a first for the department, we’re using virtual reality as an interactive way to show what a quality long day care service can look like.

Early Childhood Education and Care Authorised Officer Mark Jeffery said it was important for parents to be aware of what to look for in a quality service and what questions to ask educators. ‘Choosing a service can be an overwhelming experience for many parents,’ Mr Jeffery said. ‘It is important parents know what to expect when visiting prospective services. ‘Interactive videos that highlight quality elements of the National Quality Framework show parents things they need to look for, demystify the experience and help parents to make more informed decisions.’ Recent 2015 Australian Early Development Census data shows that out of Queensland’s 2917 nationally approved early childhood services, 1444 are long day care, most of which offer a kindergarten program. Thank you to Love Street Child Centre, which has an Exceeding National Quality Standard rating, for allowing us to shoot our virtual reality tour at their service. You will be able to take the tour early in 2017 to see what to look for in choosing quality long day care.

For more information on long day care, visit our website at www.earlychildhood.qld.gov.au (search for “long day care”).
Children shape their early learning

As a parent sending your child off to school for the first time, you may feel nervous excitement about this phase of their education.

It’s not uncommon to wonder whether your child will feel welcome, safe and confident in the formal school environment.

To walk into the school and see your child happily playing, exploring and investigating as a core part of their early learning can be comforting.

Benowa State School is one of 115 state schools across Queensland participating in a program focused on supporting children in the early years to be actively engaged, creative and successful learners.

Teachers are using age-appropriate teaching practices, or pedagogies, a holistic approach to teaching and learning.

They focus on developing a child’s academic, social, emotional, physical, cognitive and creative skills, taking into account the age and background of the individual learner.

Jonathan Thorburn is one of Benowa’s teachers using age appropriate pedagogies.

‘When learning is meaningful and children are engaged, they are more motivated to participate,’ Mr Thorburn said.

‘Every child is different and children learn in many ways so using only one method won’t get the best result for all children.

‘We need to use a range and balance of teaching approaches that make learning exciting and relevant for all.’

Mr Thorburn said the way teachers taught children was carefully planned and the entire school was thought of as a learning environment, not just the classroom.

‘We use water troughs, agile climbing equipment and the sandpit during our outdoor learning time.

‘We also go on “positional language walks” around the school to practise using our “ups, downs, unders and overs”.’

Colleague Karen Devlin said having strong relationships with parents was part of the holistic approach to teaching and learning at the early years level of schooling.

‘It’s great to have parents involved in understanding the teaching approaches we use here because they can be very different from when they were at school.’

Ms Devlin said resources developed by the department gave them a common language for teaching they could share with families.

‘Parents know that we are using an event-based approach to teach history this term and we are focusing on being responsive and playful in our teaching.

‘They also understand the children are engaged in child-initiated as well as adult-initiated learning experiences which give the children freedom to express ideas and make decisions that affect their own learning.

‘This also enables teachers to teach the required curriculum content.’

Ms Devlin said that when learning was meaningful, it was interesting and valuable to the children.

‘In effect, our students both shape their learning environment and are shaped by it.’

With the success of applying age-appropriate pedagogies in Prep this year, Benowa State School plans to extend this practice through to Year 2 in 2017.

Additional schools across Queensland will have the opportunity to be part of this initiative in 2017.

For more information, visit our website at www.earlychildhood.qld.gov.au (search for “age-appropriate pedagogies”).
An early childhood educator is a highly skilled social engineer working in the field of human potential ensuring the world becomes a better place.

A grand statement from author and parenting specialist Maggie Dent that highlights the impact early childhood educators have on children in the early years.

Ms Dent was one of a number of speakers at the inaugural Australian Council for Educational Leaders Early Childhood Conference in Brisbane last July.

More than 500 early childhood leaders, teachers, administrators, academics and providers attended the conference, themed *Leading in the early years in a new era*.

Some of the world’s leading early childhood educational professionals presented keynote addresses showcasing best practice initiatives and research helping education leaders and practitioners make a positive difference for children and early childhood development outcomes.

Dr John Medina, a molecular biologist and US-based author of *Brain Rules* and *Brain Rules for Baby*, set the scene with a lively presentation about neuroscience and what that tells us about children’s learning.

His key message: it is critical to develop educators that understand and adapt their interactions with children to each child’s individuality.

Other international and Australian speakers shared insights on systems and policy development, and experiences in optimising education and social development from early childhood.

Delegates shared ideas and explored the challenges and opportunities of leading in the early years through targeted sessions with industry leaders and practitioners.

Sessions included researchers from Griffith University, Queensland University of Technology and the University of the Sunshine Coast showcasing innovation by the early childhood education sector.

After such a successful conference, planning has already started for next year’s event from 2–3 August 2017.

For information on next year’s program, including speaker line-up and how to register, visit the ACEL website at www.acel.org.au.

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Successful forum leads to second hosting gig

Photography credit: Photographer at Large
There are people who have jobs; something they're doing just to earn a living.

There are people who have careers; a planned approach to achieving their long-term goals.

And there are people like early childhood educator Patricia Armstrong, from Burketown in the Gulf of Carpentaria, who have a vocation: a career that is deeply satisfying, fulfilling and brings happiness; a dream job.

For Ms Armstrong, known in her community as “Laylee”, the decision to work in early childhood was a natural next step from caring for the many nieces and nephews in her big, extended family.

‘I always wanted to be in early childhood, working with children and moving up and achieving my goals,’ she said.

‘My dad encouraged me to push hard and achieve my dreams to make change in early childhood.

‘That was something that really inspired me along the way and has helped me to stay strong.’

Ms Armstrong, who is a descendant of the Arrernte people of central Australia, started work as a kindy assistant in 2004 in Alice Springs before leaving to start her own family.

In 2009 she returned to early childhood education, becoming a kindy assistant at Burketown kindy.

Seven years later, Ms Armstrong has a Certificate III qualification, is close to finishing a diploma and plans to gain her early childhood teaching degree.

Ms Armstrong said her role as an educator included getting feedback from the children, including talking to them about their lives, and helping them to feel they belong through different learning activities and experiences.

She loves being an early childhood educator, especially talking with children about what their families do and what they want to be when they grow up.

‘I always tell my children, “When I was smaller I always wanted to be a teacher, and I am achieving my dream. Anyone can do it, so don’t think you can’t”.

‘And they look at me like, “Really?”

‘And I say, “Yes”. I just love it.

‘I love my job daily and I wouldn’t change it for anything else.’

Ms Armstrong’s story is one of several in the department’s Future Makers series promoting careers in early childhood education.

Its goals are to encourage Queenslanders, particularly Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people, to consider a career in early childhood and to highlight the important role educators have in their communities.

To find out how you could inspire the next generation and become a future maker, visit our website at www.earlychildhood.qld.gov.au (search for “future makers”).
Jack the bush kindy kid

While city kids play make believe with toy horses, Jack Jones rides to kindy in a cart pulled by his real horse, Charlie. Unlike in the city, where four-year-old Jack lives there aren’t many kids his age so he goes to kindy at Pentland’s “big school”.

Jack is one of 35 children across 11 rural and remote schools in Queensland to have enjoyed a great start to their education this year as part of the Remote Kindy Pilot.

Schools participating in the pilot were at least 50 kilometres from an approved kindergarten program provider and delivered kindy in a composite class with Prep and other primary school children. On kindy days, Jack can hardly wait for his father, Jesse Jones, to pull back Charlie’s reins before bursting through the gates of Pentland State School to greet his teachers and the nine older students he joins for part of his day.

‘Jack would come every day if he could,’ Mr Jones said.

“It’s a great experience for him to learn with teachers face to face and play with other children in the area.” Being the only kindy kid at the school isn’t a problem for Jack.

He spends lots of time reading with the Prep students and mixing with the older children who all enjoy spending time with him.

Jack isn’t shy to join in, especially when the children create rhymes.

‘Have you ever seen a frog sitting on a log?’ one Prep student announces.

‘Have you ever seen a roo say peek-a-boo,’ Jack chimes.

Pentland Principal Ella James said she has loved watching Jack’s growing confidence, social skills and curiosity as a result of attending kindy at school.

‘Going to kindy has been easy for Jack,’ Ms James said.

‘Attending our playgroup last year meant he was already familiar with us and the school environment.

‘Attending kindy here will also make Jack’s move to Prep next year much easier.

‘We’re so fortunate to be offering a kindy program in a small town like Pentland.

‘It really benefits our school community and meets the needs of rural and remote families’.

Following the success of this year’s pilot, the Queensland Government is expanding state school based kindergarten delivery in 2017 and has invited another 26 state schools in rural and remote locations to participate.

Next year, Jack will be one of the older students at the gate welcoming the newest Pentland bush kindy kids.

Visit our website at www.earlychildhood.qld.gov.au (search for “remote kindergarten pilot”) to find out the schools offering kindy next year.
More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are sending their children to kindy. Culturally relevant learning experiences, greater awareness of kindy’s benefits and strengthened connection with communities has helped increase enrolments by 20 per cent in 2015. This increase to 85 per cent shows Queensland has made significant progress in increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kindy participation.

Cairns community member Ray Sambo said he was encouraged by growing enrolments, having seen the benefits of kindy in his own children and grandchildren.

‘It’s so great when you look at them and see how they’ve changed through social interaction, and how they’ve learnt through fun.

‘Their behaviours change; they’re reading, counting, they know their colours, and they’ve gained confidence and communication skills.

‘They’re like little sponges.

‘They pick up so much and you can see the excitement on their faces when they come home.

‘It convinced me that kindy is important for all kids in the community.’

To connect more with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, the department commissioned the creation of the Kindy Songline.

This visual story illustrates a child’s life, those closest to them and their growth through the journey of kindy.

The artwork represents important kindy elements: the child, family, community, educator, play, learning, growth, trust and culture.

It was developed in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and communities throughout Queensland.

Mr Sambo said more early childhood services employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators had made a big difference in encouraging families to enrol their children and get involved in early education.

‘Most kindies are trying hard to be welcoming of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and children, including employing more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff,’ he said.

‘This helps create a feeling of cultural inclusiveness where the children can be themselves but learn to push themselves too.’

Mr Sambo encouraged all parents to head down to their local kindy, have a chat to the educators and look at the Early Childhood Education and Care website.

‘It can be the start of a great journey where kids really enjoy learning.’

For more information, visit our website at www.qld.gov.au/biglearninglife

The department’s initiatives supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolment include:

10 Children and Family Centres
- Helping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families with children from birth to 8 years.
- Early childhood education and care, family support, and child and maternal health services in one location.
- Helping families to enrol in kindergarten, long day care, outside school hours care, family day care or transition to school programs.

Kindy is a Deadly Choice campaign
- Improving connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.
- Focusing on increasing kindergarten participation.
- Helping families to register at Aboriginal Medical Services at Caboolture, Goodna or Deception Bay.
Pre-Prep in Indigenous communities

• Kindy program for children who turn 4 by 30 June.
• Available in 35 remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
• Delivered in schools, community kindergartens and long day care services.

Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme (QKFS) Plus kindy subsidy

• No or low-cost kindy for eligible families including those identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Educator support

• Foundations for Success website – resources to inspire educators to deliver high-quality early learning programs that reflect Indigenous perspectives and connection to Country.
• Remote Indigenous Professional Development program – builds understanding of the Early Years Learning Framework in cultural ways to enrich children’s learning.

Coming soon...

• Jess’s Big Learning Life animations
• Ngana Waguna Woori Mumba (We grow children together) - Indigenous artwork
Family’s double exposure to kindy

It’s a familiar scene at kindy: a group of kids are playing in the sandpit among a motley collection of buckets and spades. The kids are barefoot and laughing. Who doesn’t love the feel of sand between the toes?

But for Danielle Fink, the first time she waved goodbye to her girls at kindy drop-off was a milestone because Emily has multiple disabilities, including cerebral palsy, vision impairment and epilepsy.

‘I’ve always wanted the twins to experience kindy together and have the same great start to their early learning,’ Mrs Fink said. ‘I didn’t know if this was possible until I approached the director of Dayboro Community Kindergarten, Robyn Hoban. ‘I was so happy when Robyn said she and the other educators would work with us to make it happen.’

Ms Hoban said she met with Cerebral Palsy League and Noah’s Ark representatives, and an occupational therapist, to determine how to best accommodate Emily’s needs.

She applied for the Queensland Government’s Disability Inclusion Support for Queensland Kindergartens (DISQK) funding to make changes at the centre to allow Emily to safely take part in everything kids do at kindy. ‘In my experience, this funding is changing the outlook for children with a suspected or diagnosed disability,’ Ms Hoban said.

‘This funding has helped our educators get professional development, training and guidance from allied health professionals, and allowed us to borrow or buy specialised equipment and resources for Emily.’

Ms Hoban said the kindy, which has an Exceeding National Quality Standard rating, employed a full-time support worker to help Emily take part in learning and social activities and attend to her personal care.

In Queensland over the past nine months, funding of $4 million has helped more than 600 children with a disability participate in a kindergarten program. Applications for next year will open on 23 January 2017.

Some of the specialised equipment was borrowed through the Specialised Equipment and Resources for Kindergarten (SERK) program, which is proudly supported by the Queensland Government. ‘Emily has a specialised Tumble Form chair so she can sit supported on the floor and enjoy group activities, such as art and music,’ she said.

‘Emily loves playing the chimes.’ Emily has a communicator with recorded messages so she can ask to have her sunscreen applied or say happy birthday to one of her friends, and a specially adapted iPad so she can choose the activities she’d like to do.

Mrs Fink said, like a lot of kids, Emily had taken a little while to settle into kindy but now happily went, and each week brought new experiences and milestones. ‘Emily has taken part in many fun activities, such as slip and slide day, music lessons, playing outdoors and swinging in her specialised swing with a little help from her friends. ‘Like any four-year-old, she loves the company of other kids her own age.

‘I’ve noticed positive changes in Emily’s development and have started thinking about what school she will go to next year.’

For more information about DISQK and other initiatives the department offers to help services deliver programs for all children, visit our website at www.earlychildhood.qld.gov.au (search for “disability”).
Resources translate well at multicultural kindy

Winnie-the-Pooh (Pooh) once said, ‘The things that make me different are the things that make me.’
Pooh knew that being different to Piglet the timid pig, Tigger the trouble-making tiger, and Eeyore the gloomy donkey was what made him and his friends so much more interesting.
Just like Pooh, the children at Sinnamon Park Creative Garden Early Learning Centre know that it’s their differences that make them who they are, especially when it comes to their cultural backgrounds.
Aleshia Miles is one of the passionate educators who work at the centre which has up to 15 cultures represented in the current group of 100 children.
‘Our children come from several different cultures, many from Chinese, Indian, Japanese, African and German backgrounds, in particular.

‘So we organise activities that help children learn more about each other’s cultures and to understand they are all different, but that is what makes them interesting.’
Ms Miles and her colleagues organise learning activities that specifically acknowledge and celebrate the children’s varied multicultural backgrounds.
‘We’ve hosted a lantern show which helped our children and families understand more about Asian cultures, and we have also held multicultural week celebrations.
‘We are beginning a pen pal relationship with a few centres in Singapore to encourage our children to communicate with children and other centres, and to learn about Singapore’s culture and traditions.
‘The parents are the teachers too.
‘We invite them in to teach educators and the children about their culture and background.
‘We receive a lot of family input when we are involving different cultures, as it is learning they love to contribute to.’
Ms Miles said these activities helped build children’s sense of identity and knowledge of the world around them, which set them up for a more positive transition to school.
‘Our cultural celebrations teach the children about diversity and respecting other’s beliefs or traditions,’ she said.
‘This then prepares them for school, where they will mix and work with children from a range of cultural backgrounds.’
To provide extra support to children and families with their transition to school, Ms Miles plans to use the department’s transition resources, which have been translated in 20 languages.
‘The translated resources will benefit my centre greatly,’ Ms Miles said.
‘Not only will they support the children with their transition to school but also the parents who have very limited English.’
The resources include a chatterbox which has fun activities and tips for parents and children who are getting ready for their first year of school.
A school community poster is also included, providing key information on the school approach to transitions.

For more information about transitions and to download a copy of the translated resources, visit our website at www.qld.gov.au/transitiontoschool.

For more information about transitions and to download a copy of the translated resources, visit our website at www.qld.gov.au/transitiontoschool.
Did you know a person’s brain is at its busiest before their third birthday? Until age three the brain is busy building the foundations of a person’s learning and development: their physical, emotional, social and language skills.

In the first three years of life kids learn how to crawl, walk and run. They work out how to make sounds, say words and talk, and figure out what it means if mum or dad is smiling or scowling.

At this stage a kid’s brain is like Google, taking in information from all sorts of places, things and people, processing it and working out answers that build an understanding of the world.

While brain development is at its peak families and carers can do a range of things with their child to promote learning and development.

You can make the early years count by going online to the Early Years Count website.

You will find out what is important at different stages of a child’s development, ideas for learning activities at home, how early learning programs can benefit children and the types of services there are in Queensland.

An easy-to-use content filter helps you search for information relevant to your child’s age, where you live, the type of activities you and your child like to do together and any special needs your child may have.

There are articles on a range of topics and practical tips on how to aid early development and make the early years count through play, care, talk and listen, read and count and encourage.

The website features artwork that was curated and designed by acclaimed artist Suzanne Thompson, who is a proud Kabi/Wakka, Bidjera/Iningai Kunngerri woman.

The artwork tells the story of early years learning and was crafted for the department to help raise awareness with families and communities about the importance and benefits of early learning.

The painting includes themes and motifs taken from creations from five Queensland Indigenous communities involved in the project.

This artwork will come to life in animation that will also feature on the website in the near future.

For more tips and activities on making the early years count, visit www.qld.gov.au/earlyyearscount

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**Tips to aid early development**

| **A nurturing relationship with your baby supports learning.** | Respond to baby’s cries warmly and comfortingly. Give love and protection. Play with baby and make sounds, gestures and facial expressions they can copy. Hold, cuddle, sing and talk to baby. |
| **Children’s well-being is critical to brain development and learning.** | Hold and stroke young children. Look for and affirm their strengths and positive behaviours. Support your child to form relationships with other adults and children. |
| **Children learn from watching and copying.** | Play games and make gestures that baby can copy such as smiling, blowing kisses, waving bye bye and clapping hands. Show them how to do things and be a good model for behaviour. |
| **Children are born ready to learn maths.** | Counting games, rhymes and songs using fingers help infants and toddlers explore maths. |
| **Children learn language by listening to it and using it.** | Making sure babies can hear is important. Talking, listening, and positively responding to baby talk, reading aloud, telling stories and singing help infants and young children develop their language skills. |

*Derived from Engaging Families in the Early Childhood Development Story
The Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs*
Make the early years count with online tips

2017 ACEL EARLY CHILDHOOD CONFERENCE

2–3 AUGUST 2017
BRISBANE CONVENTION & EXHIBITION CENTRE

INFORM
CREATE
REALISE

LEADERSHIP IN THE FIRST 8 YEARS

Photography credit: Gilimbaa
Join the fun like Ollie and his mum

Being a new parent offers some of the most thrilling and sometimes daunting experiences. Caught up in the wonders of their new child, parents can often feel cut off from the outside world.

This was the case for Tahlia Dixon who felt the need to get out of the house and do more with her seven-month-old son, Ollie. Originally from Tasmania, Ms Dixon knew a few other mums living close by on the Gold Coast but found it was hard for them to get together as often as she would like.

‘I just wanted to meet new people and make more friends,’ she said.

‘I saw the Play Stars offer on Instagram and thought, “I am going to give that a go”.’

Play Stars is a Queensland Government initiative providing every family with a child under one a free 12-month family membership to Playgroup Queensland.

Delivered in partnership with Playgroup Queensland, Play Stars is helping all Queensland children access quality early learning experiences no matter where they live or their circumstances.

‘I called Playgroup Queensland to join and found out there was a playgroup only five minutes away from me at Robina that met every week,’ Ms Dixon said.

‘I was nervous about going the first time but as soon as we arrived our coordinator made us feel like we were with old friends.

‘Now I wouldn’t miss it.

‘It is something I look forward to every week.’

Ms Dixon said she had made great friends with whom she shared funny parenting moments and war stories.

‘We are now meeting up outside playgroup.

‘In fact, Ollie and I just went to the first birthday party of one of our playgroup friends.’

Ollie loves playgroup too.

‘Before he could sit up I would put him on his belly and surround him with as many toys as possible to see what grabbed his interest,’ Ms Dixon said.

‘I even went out and bought the toys he really loved so he can continue the fun at home.

‘Now that he is sitting up he is having great conversations with other babies in the group.

‘I think every mum or dad should try going to playgroup at least once.

‘I think many would be surprised to find out just how great it is.’

For more information and to register before your child’s first birthday, visit Playgroup’s website at playgroupqld.com.au or phone 1800 171 882.

What are playgroups?

Playgroups provide a great opportunity for babies, young children and families or caregivers to get together and enjoy play activities.

Playgroups are usually held once a week in a community venue such as a hall, a park or a local school.

Participating regularly in a playgroup can help children develop important social skills.

Playgroups are also great for parents and carers. In addition to offering parents time for one-on-one play away from home and everyday distractions, playgroups can help parents and carers to connect and share experiences with other families in your community.

Whether you are a mum, dad, carer, grandparent or family member, everyone is welcome at playgroup.
The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) supports people with disability across Australia, and children from birth to age 6 with significant developmental delays.

Get ready for the NDIS as it rolls out and becomes available everywhere in Queensland by 2019:

- Check when NDIS is coming to your area (use the online suburb search at www.qld.gov.au/ndis).
- Make an access request to the NDIA six months prior to the scheme being available in your area. Call 1800 800 110 or you can make a request online.

Authorised by the Queensland Government, Mary St, Brisbane

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TRIPLE P – POSITIVE PARENTING PROGRAM
THE PROGRAM PROVEN TO WORK!

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FREE FOR ALL QLD PARENTS
Your regional office support team

The Department of Education and Training’s authorised officers are here to help all services meet their legislative requirements.

- Need information about maintaining your Quality Improvement Plan?
- Preparing for assessment and rating?
- Looking to establish a new service?
- Have a question about the national requirements?
- Need to know more about the Education and Care Services Act 2013?

Contact your nearest regional office for assistance.

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rockhampton.ecec@det.qld.gov.au
Mackay .................................................. (07) 4842 8354
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