



A guide for teacher aides

Age-appropriate pedagogies for the early years of schooling

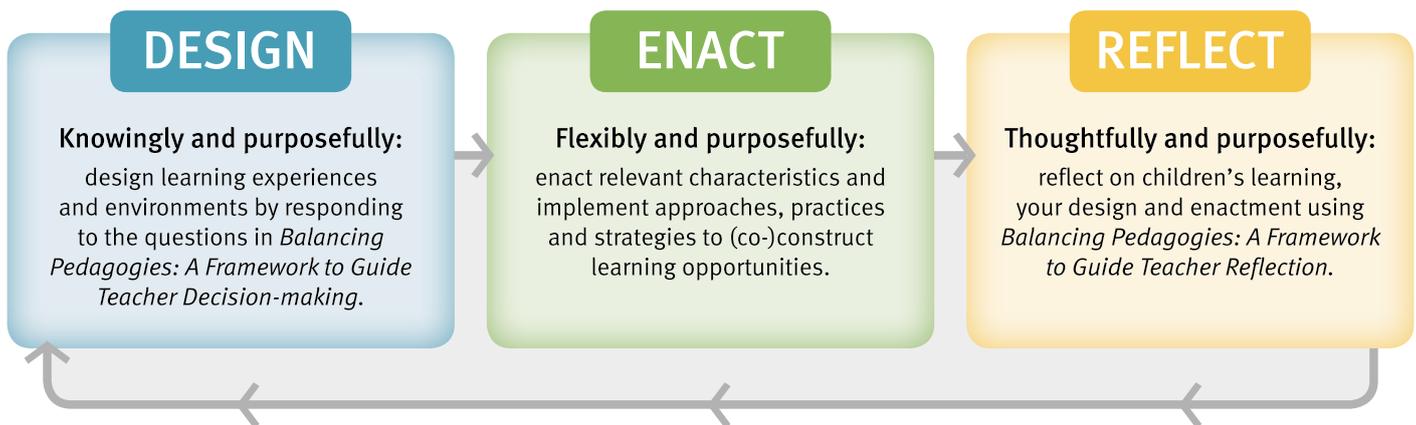


This document is based on the *Explanation of terms* which was created for the Department of Education and Training's Age Appropriate Pedagogies Program pilot in 2015.

Age-appropriate pedagogies for the early years of schooling

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) sets out the curriculum (**what** is taught), leaving teachers to make decisions about pedagogies (**how** the curriculum is taught). Age-appropriate pedagogies in the early years are learner-centred, involve the scaffolding of learning and engage children actively in learning. As seen below, in the *Age-appropriate pedagogies in action: A process model*, teachers will:

- design learning experiences and environments
- enact relevant characteristics and implement approaches, practices and strategies
- reflect on children’s learning.



Age-appropriate pedagogies in action: A process model

Working in collaboration with teachers, teacher aides make valuable contributions to the daily life of early years classrooms. When selecting an approach for teaching the Australian Curriculum, teachers consider the participants, context, purpose and duration of the learning experiences, while also taking account of the interest, age, background and abilities of individual learners. Teacher aides may be asked to use a variety of associated strategies when supporting teachers in enacting these approaches. When using these strategies, teacher aides enrich children’s learning and deepen their experiences.

While not an exclusive or exhaustive list, the following pages provide:

- a description of approaches that may be used in early years classrooms
- example scenarios that may occur in early years classrooms
- possible strategies that teacher aides may be asked to employ in early years classrooms.

‘It’s good to look at what the kids are doing in the class and how we can make it more appropriate for them in a fun way’.

— Melissa Griffiths, Teacher aide, Rossville State School



Inquiry learning

Inquiry-based learning begins with a question, problem or idea. It involves children in planning and carrying out investigations, proposing explanations and solutions, and communicating their understanding of concepts in a variety of ways. Throughout the inquiry process children observe, raise questions, and critique their practices. It is an approach that encourages collaboration and can be used effectively in a trans-disciplinary way or in most subject areas.

If utilised effectively, possible characteristics may include: active, agentic, collaborative, creative, scaffolded.

Inquiry learning

Scenario	Examples of teacher aide strategies
<p>In Term 1, because of news reports about a cyclone hitting the Australian coastline, the children have the idea of being weather scientists at school. The teacher recognises the opportunity this provides to engage the children and assist them in achieving and demonstrating the ‘suggest how the environment affects them’ aspect of the Foundation Year Science achievement standard. The teacher decides to use an inquiry learning approach and asks the teacher aide to co-construct learning experiences with the children by employing the strategies outlined here.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record children’s current understandings using the <i>See, Think, Wonder</i> strategy. Collect and manage resources including weather books, websites, neutral response sheets. Provide opportunities for active learning, for example, exploration of weather-specific clothing. Use questioning to challenge children’s thinking, for example, ‘Can you think of another way to record your weather observations? Why have you brought your raincoat today?’

Play-based learning

Play-based learning provides opportunities for children to actively and imaginatively engage with people, objects and the environment. Symbolic representation is a critical aspect. When playing, children may be organising, constructing, manipulating, pretending, exploring, investigating, creating, interacting, imagining, negotiating and making sense of their worlds. It promotes the holistic development (physical, social, emotional, cognitive and creative) of a child and depending on how it is utilised, may also support a broad range of literacy and numeracy skills. The teacher's role in scaffolding play is pivotal.

If utilised effectively, possible characteristics may include: active, agentic, collaborative, creative, scaffolded.

Play-based learning	
Scenario	Examples of teacher aide strategies
<p>During outdoor learning, a group of children decide that they want to act out a story they have been reading in class. The teacher recognises the opportunity this provides to engage the children and assist them in achieving and demonstrating the 'recall one or two events from texts with familiar topics' aspect of the Foundation Year English achievement standard. The teacher decides to use a play-based learning approach and asks the teacher aide to co-construct learning experiences with the children by employing the strategies outlined here.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-construct the play environment with children including costumes and props that scaffold recall of events from the text. • Adopt a character role, focusing on vocabulary from the text, to support the children's socio dramatic play. • Add resources to the socio-dramatic play space including writing and drawing materials that encourage story-mapping. • Encourage post play discussions to investigate characters, setting and sequence of story.

Project approach

A project approach is an in-depth exploration of a topic that may be child or teacher-initiated and involve an individual, a group of children, or the whole class. What differentiates the project approach from an inquiry one is that within the project approach there is an emphasis on the creation of a specific outcome that might take the form of a spoken report, a multimedia presentation, a poster, a demonstration or a display. The project approach provides opportunities for children to take agency of their own learning and represent this learning through the construction of personally meaningful artefacts.

If utilised effectively, possible characteristics may include: active, agentic, collaborative, explicit, learner-focused, responsive, scaffolded, playful, language-rich and dialogic.

Project approach	
Scenario	Examples of teacher aide strategies
<p>In Term 2, the teacher asks the children to create a class book about their families. The teacher recognises the opportunities this provides to engage the children and assist them in achieving and demonstrating the 'identify similarities and differences between families' aspect of the Foundation Year History achievement standard. The teacher decides to use a project approach and asks the teacher aide to co-construct learning experiences with the children by employing the strategies outlined here.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the children's ideas and plans during small group discussions, focusing on the differences and similarities between families. • Provide resources to support the project approach. • Work in collaboration with the resource teacher to provide narrative and information texts about families. • Assist in the presentation of the class book by collating the children's text and illustrations.

Explicit instruction

Explicit instruction is a structured and systematic approach to teaching academic skills. Archer and Hughes (2011, p.1) explain that it is “characterized by a series of supports or scaffolds, whereby students are guided through the learning process with clear statements about the purpose and rationale for learning the new skill, clear explanations and demonstrations of the instructional target, and supported practice with feedback until independent mastery has been achieved”.

If utilised effectively, possible characteristics may include: active, explicit, learner-focused, responsive, and scaffolded.

Explicit instruction	
Scenario	Examples of teacher aide strategies
In Term 2, the teacher asks the teacher aide to support small differentiated writing groups. The teacher recognises the opportunities this provides to engage the children and assist them in achieving and demonstrating the ‘understanding that their texts can reflect their own experiences’, ‘writing shows evidence of letter and sound knowledge, beginning writing behaviours and experimentation with capital letters and full stops’ and ‘they correctly form known upper- and lower-case letters’ aspects of the Foundation Year English achievement standard. The teacher decides to use an explicit instruction approach and asks the teacher aide to co-construct learning experiences with the children by employing the strategies outlined here.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use the <i>I do, We do, You do</i> model.• Ensure the efficient use of children’s time, for example, <i>Think, Chat, Draw, Write</i>.• Provide supports for writing including alphabet strips, word wall, shared pen.• Use feedback to support and guide learning, for example, ‘You have used a capital letter at the start of the sentence. Don’t forget to use a capital letter at the start of people’s names’.



Event-based approach

Children's ideas and decision-making are central to an event-based approach. They are encouraged to plan and enact events in real-life contexts drawing on their experiences. An event-based approach may include investigations, problem-solving, and play. It provides a context for learning that is sustained for the short or long-term and provides opportunities for children to connect knowledge and practice. They draw on knowledge and experiences that are socially and culturally significant from home and the community when planning and enacting events. This approach has been identified as having positive impacts on literacy and numeracy learning.

If utilised effectively, possible characteristics may include: active, agentic, collaborative, creative, explicit, language-rich and dialogic, learner-focused, narrative and playful.

Event-based approach	
Scenario	Examples of teacher aide strategies
In Term 2, the teacher and children decide to hold a Mother's Day event. The teacher recognises the opportunities this provides to engage the children and assist them in achieving and demonstrating the 'recognise how important family events are commemorated' aspect of the Foundation Year History achievement standard. The teacher decides to use an event-based approach and asks the teacher aide to co-construct learning experiences with the children by employing the strategies outlined here.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support children's designs and ideas by co-constructing lists, plans and maps for the event.• Model appropriate language and behaviour for the event.• Use questions/statements to extend and challenge children's thinking, for example, 'Tell me why Mother's Day is important to you and your family.'• Provide open-ended resources for children to construct cards using the vocabulary associated with the event.

Direct teaching/instruction

Direct teaching/instruction is a step-by-step, lesson-by-lesson approach to teaching which is scripted and follows a pre-determined skill acquisition sequence. The aim of using direct teaching/instruction is to take local variation and teacher/child idiosyncrasy out of instruction (Luke, 2014) and for children to learn through imitation. It is also used as a general term for the teaching of skills by telling or demonstrating. It is a common approach used for the teaching of handwriting, as well as phonics, letters and numerals.

If utilised effectively, possible characteristics may include: explicit and scaffolded.

Direct teaching / instruction	
Scenario	Examples of teacher aide strategies
From the beginning of Term 1 onwards, the teacher implements the Australian Curriculum English and focuses on opportunities to engage the children and assist them in achieving and demonstrating the 'drawing on their developing knowledge of concepts about print and sound and letters' aspect of the Foundation Year English achievement standard. The teacher decides to use the direct teaching/instruction approach and asks the teacher aide to co-construct learning experiences with the children by employing the strategies outlined here.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use letter flash cards with small groups.• Practise letter chants/songs.• Use letter warm-ups as daily transition routine.• Monitor the children's progress through the use of letter recognition checklists.

