

Submission

Feedback for the Federal Government's Early Years Strategy

by Karen Curtin

February
2023

Introduction

“I am an educator with 30 years experience, teaching students aged 3-16yrs. I have worked in both the public and private school systems in NSW, Canada and England. I have team taught in a multi-aged classroom and taught in a variety of organisational structures including a special needs resource centre. My passion is early childhood studies and the holistic development of young children.”

Question 1:

Comments on the proposed structure of the strategy.

- It needs a timeline for accountability.
- Early Childhood sector is already at crisis point. The federal govt. needs to act now.
- For example, taking 4 years to roll out the Early Years Strategy and Action Plan is too long.

Question 2:

What vision should our nation have for Australia's youngest children?

- The vision needs to include a statement of commitment to the parents, carers and caregivers of children 0-5yrs, to empower them with the knowledge they need to ensure their children meet each development milestone during this critical early stage of life.
- It needs to include a holistic approach covering all areas of a child's development: physical, social, emotional and cognitive. These 4 areas of child development are all interconnected with each other so the Vision needs to ensure they are each given equal consideration and value.

Question 3:

What mix of outcomes are the most important to include in the strategy?

1. ***Ensuring physical needs are being met*** – food, shelter, fresh air, sunshine and exercise.
2. ***Ensuring Social and Emotional needs are being met*** – building positive and healthy relationships with others; building strong mental health and wellbeing.
3. ***Ensuring Cognitive needs are being met*** – building strong skills in language development, numeracy development and thinking creatively.

Question 4:

What specific areas/policy priorities should be included in the strategy and why?

- The highest and most urgent priority should be to inspire and empower parents, carers and caregivers by providing them with the knowledge and confidence they need to ensure their child/children reach each developmental milestone 0-5yrs.

Why?

1. A parent/primary carer is a child's first teacher – intervention needs to start from birth to reduce the risk of gaps by age 5.
2. Children are individuals and develop at their own rate.
3. Children have different learning styles and strengths and the parent/primary carer knows them best.
4. Many families who live in rural or remote areas are at a disadvantage due to minimum access to Early Childhood Centres.
5. The Early Childhood sector is in crisis with staff shortages and not enough places presently available in Early Childhood Centres for all children 0-5yrs. It will take time for the government to turn this around but they need to act now.
6. Experiences, expectations and cultural norms in our homes and communities are the biggest influence on children as they learn about the world.
7. Once ***the parents receive the knowledge they need***, they will discover that there are practical solutions on how to immerse their child in fun learning activities while they continue with everyday life.
8. Parents will also discover that by investing a small amount of time in daily routines, ***they can begin to assist with the development of important foundation skills needed to set their child up for a positive transition to formal schooling.***

Question 5:

What could the Commonwealth do to improve outcomes for children - particularly those who are born or raised in more vulnerable and/or disadvantaged circumstances?

- **Educate parents, carers and caregivers** so they can support their child's learning **in the home** from birth.
- "Develop and implement **nationwide transitioning to school packages** to support parents, carers, and early childhood education and care services and schools." (Proposed National Early Language and Literacy Strategy 2021)
- Provide parents, carers and caregivers with **resources** to assist their child in mastering the foundation skills they need to start school. I have already created the perfect resource called the, **Holistic School Readiness Pack**. The government could get this resource in to homes right now by providing the financial support needed to produce these on mass. **(Please see details regarding this pack at the end of this submission).**

Question 6:

What areas do you think the Commonwealth could focus on to improve coordination and collaboration in developing policies for children and families?

- Focus on the transition to school.
- Focus on all Tertiary Education Courses that involve Early Childhood development across all sectors ie. Education, Health and Social Services e.g. review key content and curriculum included in Early Childhood and Primary Education courses to ensure a cohesive and universal approach to all program development.

Question 7:

What Principles should be included in the strategy?

- Child and family centred
- Inclusivity
- Diversity
- Accessibility
- Affordability
- Needs of children over time

Question 8:

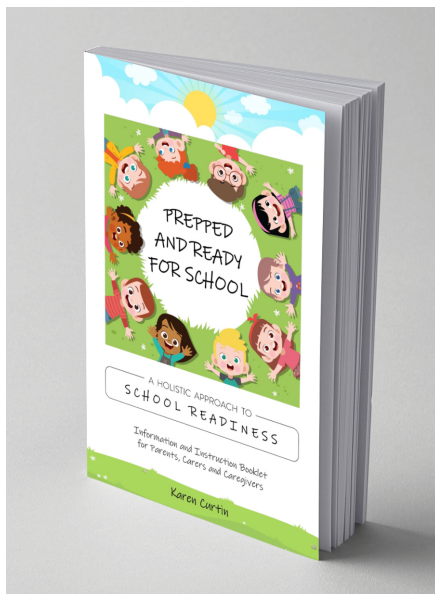
Are there gaps in existing frameworks or other research or evidence that need to be considered for the development of the Strategy?

- I think all evidence-based frameworks and research should be considered in the development of the strategy.

A Nation Wide Transitioning to School Resource for Parents, Carers and Caregivers

The ***Holistic School Readiness Pack*** is a product created by Karen and John Curtin designed to inspire and empower parents, carers and caregivers by providing them with the knowledge and confidence they need to ensure their child is 'school ready'.
Please visit: www.holisticschoolreadiness.com.au

Holistic School Readiness Pack - The Contents



Information and Instruction Booklet

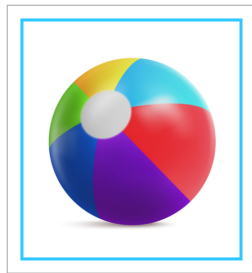
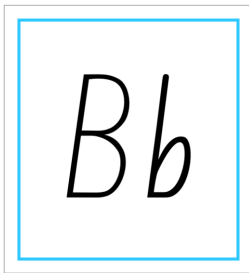
Prepped and Ready for School

- A Holistic Approach to School Readiness

Our 68-page A5-sized book includes an Introduction to a Holistic Approach to School Readiness and includes chapters on: Emotional, Social, Physical and Cognitive Development. It is designed in an accessible, easy-to-read format. There are Hints and Tips, Resources as well as many practical ideas and information for parents, carers and caregivers to help ensure their child is 'school ready'.

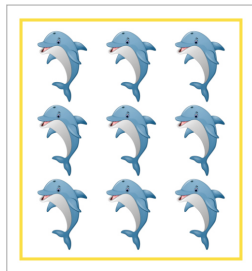
<p>CONTENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Introduction to a Holistic Approach to School Readiness.....4 Emotional Development.....10 Social Development.....18 Physical Development.....27 Cognitive Development.....41 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language Development.....42 Attention Development.....44 Thinking Creatively.....46 Other Tips and Hints.....53 Resources.....61 References.....64 About the Author.....66 	<p>Is school readiness important?</p> <p>Yes, very important. School readiness is an accumulation of all the learning and skills a child has picked up since birth and the parent/primary carer is a child's first teacher.</p> <p>Although many children today attend a preschool or family day care and learn many things, parents and care-givers can also play a big role in helping young children prepare for school.</p> <p>WHAT do children need to be ready for school?</p> <p>The most important thing is:</p> <p>Feeling happy and confident about going to Big School!</p> <p>6 INTRODUCTION</p>	<p>How do adults build and role-model healthy relationships for young children?</p> <p>The most important activity children can engage in, in order to develop healthy relationships, is play. Adults can provide opportunities for children to play that involve interaction and cooperation.</p> <p>The two most important things:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remain calm and positive Be yourself and be fully present when you are engaging with young children. Being thoughtful and effort in relationships helps create a strong bond. <p>Ways that parents and primary carers can assist:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put away the phones Limit screen time <p>20 SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT</p>	<p>Other Tips and Hints</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Nutritious food for growing and developing bodies and minds. Plenty of water to stay hydrated. Regular exercise. Some sunshine and fresh air. Limited and monitored screen time. A good night's sleep. (More info: Parenting: The Science of Sleep by Dr. Matthew Walker) <p>OTHER TIPS AND HINTS 53</p>
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The Contents of Pack continued...



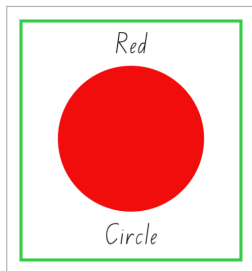
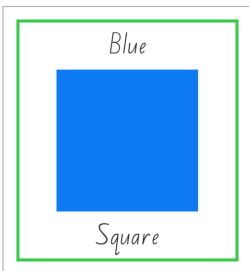
118 Letter & Sound Cards

These colourful cards support children with their language development. Activities listed in the book describe how parents can use this resource to develop their child's phonemic awareness, identification of rhyme, syllables and upper and lower case letter recognition.



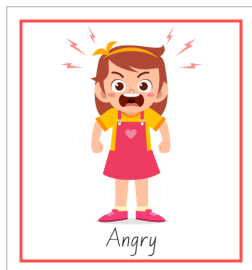
20 Number Cards

This fun set of cards features ten Australian animals and provides parents with a multitude of learning opportunities, which are all outlined in the book, such as: rote counting, forwards and backwards number sequencing, numeral identification and one-to-one correspondence.



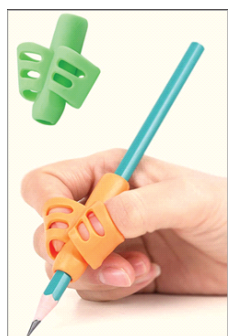
10 Shape & Colour Cards

This is a stimulating set of cards designed to assist children with their early numeracy development, including spatial awareness and colour and shape recognition.



6 Emotion Cards

Regulating emotions is the key to having positive and healthy interactions with others. These cards will assist children with their understanding of basic emotions.



1 Pencil Grip

This rubber pencil grip will make a huge difference in ensuring fingers rest in the correct position from an early age. It is an effective way of teaching children how to use a tripod grasp before an incorrect habit is formed.

Product Potential

The Holistic School Readiness Pack (HSRP) is a fast, effective, and affordable solution for a wide range of issues on both a state and national level.

Effectiveness

The HSRP covers all five of the developmental areas measured by the Australian Early Development Census: 1) physical health and wellbeing, 2) social competence, 3) emotional maturity, 4) language and cognitive skills, 5) communication skills and general knowledge. The HSRP can therefore make a significant contribution in reducing the number of developmentally vulnerable children in Australia. The HSRP addresses and fulfills strategies as outlined in the ***Proposed National Early Language and Literacy Strategy 2021***, developed by the National Early Language and Literacy Coalition.

The HSRP demonstrates intercultural understanding and is racially and culturally inclusive in the way that it is written and designed. As it is easy to read and digest, it transcends challenges of disparity and inequity in outcomes between individuals, areas, and different sections of the population. As Professor Tom Calma, Co-Chair of the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation stated:

“All Australian children, from all walks of life and from all postcodes, deserve equity of access to quality early years learning environments that include and celebrate their families, communities, home languages, their cultures and their uniqueness.” (ALNF 2021).

Affordability

In February 2022, the cost of raw materials, printing and manufacturing of the HSRP was \$21 AUD. This does not include any human labour costs to produce and assemble the pack. We also chose to support local small businesses to provide us with the resources we needed. We are presently selling the HSRP for \$39.95 (Incl. Free standard postage within Australia), which we believe is a very affordable investment for the majority of Australian families.

National Reach and Impact

The HSRP represents an innovative and context-appropriate solution to provide education remotely for children aged 2-6 years. The HSRP is highly flexible in that it can be formatted into hi-tech, low-tech, or no-tech formats (i.e. as an app, a web-platform, or a physical product). The HSRP is suitable for families from all socio-economic backgrounds and can be translated into multiple languages to reach non-English speaking communities.

Availability

The HSRP is already available in hard copy format and we have 230 packs ready for dispatch! Alternatively, the HSRP could be formatted digitally and be made available within weeks.

Summary

Given the virtually timeless nature of the information provided in the HSRP and its flexibility and adaptability to meet a range of needs across a range of contexts in both state and national early childhood education sectors, it represents a fast, effective, and affordable solution that will remain relevant for many years to come.

About Us & Our Qualifications



KAREN CURTIN

"I am an educator with 30 years experience, teaching students aged 3-16yrs. I have worked in both the public and private school systems in NSW, Canada and England. I have team taught in a multi-aged classroom and taught in a variety of organisational structures including a special needs resource centre. My passion is early childhood studies and the holistic development of young children."

EXPERIENCE & ACCOLADES

- Author of the book: *Prepped and Ready for School - A Holistic Approach to School Readiness* (2022).
- Family Partnership Coordinator for The Smith Family (Oct 2017 - Feb 2022)
- Business Owner/Director of Serendipity Learning - Tutoring & Early Childhood Service, Coffs Harbour NSW (Jan 2015 - Dec 2016). Winner of the New Business Award - Serendipity Learning, 2016 Sunny's Business Awards.
- Junior Primary Coordinator K-2, Bishop Druitt College Coffs Harbour (2008 - 2014)
- Primary Learning Support Coordinator/Teacher K-6, Bishop Druitt College Coffs Harbour (2012 - 2014)
- Primary Learning Support Teacher, Whaley Bridge, England (2011).
- Primary School Teacher Yr1, Peterborough Ontario Canada (2003).
- Experienced teacher of all grades K-6.
- Nominated for a Quality Teaching Award.
- Workshop presenter at State and Regional Association of Independent School Conferences.
- Co-wrote an article printed in the 'Independence' education magazine called, *"Success Breeds Success."*

QUALIFICATIONS

- 2017** *Certificate III in Business Administration*
First Choice Training, Full Accreditation in Education & Training
- 2006** *Bachelor of Education, Primary*
Southern Cross University - Lismore, NSW, Australia
- 1984** *Diploma of Teaching, Primary*
Northern Rivers College of Advanced Education - Lismore, NSW, Australia



JOHN CURTIN

“I am a Graphic Designer who has worked in both the Print and Advertising Industries for many years. I have also been a Teachers Assistant for 7 years and worked in a High School providing support for students with Special Needs. My other passion is music and I have been a professional musician for 30 years.”

EXPERIENCE & ACCOLADES

- Designed the Holistic School Readiness Pack and Prepped and Ready for School Book (2022).
- Website Design - Holistic School Readiness (2022), John Curtin Music (2020).
- Design projects include: Album Covers, Logos, Ads, Flyers etc. (1984-2022).
- Creator of a number of personal artworks.
- Winner of the G.J. Gardner Homes Jingle Competition in Coffs Harbour (2008).
- Winner of the Coca Cola Battle of the Bands in Coffs Harbour (2007).

QUALIFICATIONS

2007 *Tesol Foundation Course – Certificate III*

Teach Anywhere, Sydney NSW, Australia

2004 *Teachers Aide Special – Certificate III*

North Institute of TAFE, Macksville, NSW, Australia

1999 *Lifeline Telephone Counselling Course*

9 weeks Part-Time, Coffs Harbour, NSW, Australia

1992 *Desktop Publishing Course*

TAFE Coffs Harbour, NSW, Australia

1984 *Certificate in Graphic Design*

Randwick Technical College, Sydney, NSW, Australia