Early years focus a boost for students



The National Quality Standard (NQS) is a framework in Australia that sets a high benchmark for the quality of education and care services for children. It was established under the National Quality Framework to promote continuous improvement and ensure that children receive high-quality education and care.

The *National Quality Standard in Action: Western Australian Schools* (the Resource) was launched on 10 September 2024. This resource is a collaboration between the Department of Education (DoE), the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia and Catholic Education Western Australia and has been developed to support schools in implementing the NQS.

Within the pages of this wonderful resource, elements of the NQS in action from over 100 schools across the state can be found. Each chapter shares stories about a quality area in different settings, starting with an introduction that encourages both individual and team reflection for ongoing improvement.

It promotes and showcases what quality practice looks like to optimise the learning and development of children in the early learning years.

The resource states: “The stories are a celebration of early childhood and the commitment of Western Australian schools to continually uphold quality practices that enable every child to flourish and succeed.”

Public schools across the state will be provided with a copy of the resource but it can also be downloaded from the DoE at: myresources.education.wa.edu.au

The SSTUWA’s own *Facing facts: It’s time to fix education in Western Australia* position paper outlines the importance of early childhood education (ECE) and the need to fully resource ECE to support those who work in the early years of learning.

Section 9 of the document states: “To meet the needs of children, a whole-of-system program must be implemented to improve school readiness and deliver effective early intervention where it is required, especially among children from disadvantaged backgrounds.”

The paper goes on to state that the SSTUWA seeks:

- Pre-primary classes resized to 24.
- Delivery of universal access to affordable, quality early learning opportunities by the WA government in concert with the Commonwealth.
- The importance and value to a child's early development of play-based instruction is strategically recognised by DoE and funded through high quality teacher professional learning opportunities.
- Implementation of support for the successful learning of children from disadvantaged backgrounds through play-based education in small groups conducted by qualified educators.
- Implementation of coherent human services policies to reduce family and child poverty and reduce educational disadvantage, especially in the early years.
- Improved child development services, including the provision of more child and parent centres (and hubs), the inclusion in centres of services to support mental health and wellbeing, as well as collaborative support for transitions.
- Kindergarten students to be counted as one whole in the annual census count.
- Expansion of parenting programs, with funding for each school as a targeted initiative based upon the number of pre-primary families, to deliver contextually appropriate programs.
- Doubling of school-based health service, nurses and a broadening of their community liaison and interaction responsibilities.
- Provision of imputed diagnosis funding made available immediately upon enrolment or principal identification until formal diagnosis processes are complete.
- Community library enrolment provided as part of school enrolment procedures.
- Targeted initiative funding for students identified through Year 1 phonics assessment.

The section concludes: "Addressing children's needs, especially in the earliest years, has implications for and beyond education. It goes to the growing complexity of needs as well as the impact of growing disadvantage and challenges in communities."

"The SSTUWA calls for a joined-up response across government. Better school engagement and educational achievement will ultimately assist in reducing harms and improving the prospects of children to thrive, as well as decreasing costs across all human services."



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