



## Minutes

Early Learning Subcommittee Meeting

Aug 24, 2023, 7.30 pm,

online via Zoom

Council's Early Learning Subcommittee is a forum for parents and carers whose children are attending (or about to attend) a playschool or preschool in the ACT. The subcommittee advocates for parents in early learning and public education, and promotes the benefits of quality early years learning. Download previous minutes here (or registration): [Meeting summaries](#).

### Open 7.35 pm

MS welcomed attendees, Acknowledgement of Country.

Announcements: Council's [free training](#) for members, Getting Grants on September 5.

### 1. Early Learning literacy foundations

Responding to recent media coverage around literacy teaching in ACT schools, the following summary of the issues: Council's recent guest speakers included the [ACT Alliance for Evidence-based education](#) (partners: Equity Economics and Snow Foundation), and the Education Directorate.

A recent report by Equity Economics highlights concerns and calls for the ACT to implement a year 1 phonics check and provide tutoring and one-on-one support for students who are falling behind (see summary/links, annex 1)

*"Balanced literacy teaching" and "systematic synthetic phonics teaching" are two distinct approaches to teaching reading and literacy skills, each with its own philosophy and methods.*

The Education Directorate response was comprehensive and included examples of how schools/teachers support preschool and kinder children's literacy development summarised:

#### Elements of Literacy Development

- **Measurements:** Include PISA (Program for International Student Assessment), [NAPLAN](#) (3,5,7,9), [AEDC](#) 2021 x 3 yrs (kinder), [BASE](#) (formerly PIPS), classroom assessment, parent engagement w learning.
- **Curriculum and Instructional methods:** and The [Australian curriculum](#). and the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) 'Belonging, Being, and Becoming' ([LINK](#)) early years are transitioning between the framework and the curriculum. Both guide approaches to teaching literacy. ACT schools are also implementing the 10 essential instructional practices in literacy.
- **Professional Learning and Learning Communities:** Learning communities in schools have a significant role in professional collaboration which impacts literacy development and includes literacy teaching champions in ACT schools.
- **Parent engagement:** Support for parents to engage with their children's learning, and communication/collaboration for building parent-school partnerships.
- **When students aren't making progress:** Schools provide guidance on ways to support students. Council (via P&Cs) and the Education Directorate provide recommendations and links for working with your school – [ACT Education Directorate 'starting School'](#).

The best thing parents and carers can do to boost children's reading and writing skills - read to your children, and ASK the teacher who can provide information about in-classroom activities and suggestions for learning.

### **Discussion/feedback from parents**

Parent connections with school and teacher are mostly helpful. P&Cs rarely hear about issues raised by parents. Parents are often more invested when their child is struggling - every classroom has diverse student needs - schools try to make reasonable adjustments for all students to access their education, and teachers differentiate practice for all learners.

If parents aren't getting the help they need, they are advised to provide feedback to the teacher, the school, or the education directorate: [supporting your child's education](#).

In general, ACT public schools support students with learning difficulties through active monitoring and Response to Intervention, (an evidence-based tiered approach that responds to the needs of different students).

## **2. Transition to School Webinar for parents of children 'Starting preschool or kinder 2024' free parent webinar - Thu, Sep 14 at 7.30pm.**

The 'Transition to School' parent webinar outlines what to expect, how to prepare, and why having a plan for starting preschool/school is important. An opportunity for parent associations (PPAs/P&Cs) to provide information to the newly enrolled parents. Speakers: Dr Kathryn Hopps, transitions researcher, Simone Hobday and Sally Johnson, ACT Education Directorate.

Please share Council's [Transition webpage](#) resources, Facebook [Event](#), and registration link with families: [Registration](#)

Council's 'resource guide' for families with children starting school and 'books to read with children about starting school' are on the Transition webpage.



## **3. Already started preschool or kindergarten 2023 - parent survey**

*Have you sent a 'check in' message to new parents?*

Invite your preschool and kindy parents to share how they're going with Council's 'Starting School Survey'. It's approx. 5 minutes via the survey [link](#) and parents can access 'Books about Feelings' for children as a thank you to respondents. Closes Oct 31. [Survey promo link](#)

## **4. Recognising early childhood education in ACT law**

In the ACT's EC strategy *Set up for Success*, one of the actions is to 'recognise early childhood education in ACT law'. To be achieved by amending the Education Act 2004 to recognise that early childhood education and care has a central role in the realisation of the rights of the child:

1. February 2019, the Child Safety in Schools Amendment Bill 2018.
2. August 2020, the Education Amendment Bill 2020
3. The Education Amendment Bill 2022 currently being considered by the ACT Legislative Assembly, and
4. aims to recognise the importance of early childhood education.

For details of the four phases of [legislative amendments](#).

## 5. Council Submissions

Council provides submissions to official inquiries and government bodies representing the views of ACT public school parents. School P&Cs and Council subcommittees (such as this one) provide input to inform submissions. Most recently the 2023 Submission to the [Senate Inquiry](#) into the rising national trend of school refusal.

## 6. ACT Koori Preschools Tour Invitation - September 13, 9.30am

Council's most recent general meeting guest speaker, Simone Hobday from the Education Directorate, presented information about ACT's Koori Preschools. Parents and EL reps who are interested in hearing more about Koori Pre are invited to tour the Narrabundah Koori Preschool on September 13 at 9.30am. Spaces limited so please reply by Tue, Sep 5.

## 7. Networking foundations: Mailing list of new & early years parents

A P&C MailChimp subscription allows for opt-in parent participation (opting to subscribe to a cohort-based mailing list) without privacy concerns around personal contact lists. A QR code can be generated from the opt-in link and included in the school mailout to new enrolments.

## 8. ELO report since May 25 meeting

- a. Parent engagement grant acquittals meeting
- b. Early Learning subcommittee review [Meeting summaries](#) and
- c. Subcommittee [Meeting summaries](#)
- d. Annual Report draft content
- e. Promote 'Transition to School' Parent Webinar

**Meeting closed 8.40pm**

## Early Learning Subcommittee Terms of Reference

- Promote the importance of preschool education to ACT families,
- Support parent engagement in early years learning,
- Support families to complete online enrolment for preschool,
- Provide information, training and support services to associations
- Advise Council Executive and meetings on policy and matters relating to ACT preschool/early childhood education,
- Provide input to Council submissions on preschool issues,
- Provide representatives on behalf of Council to related external forums, committees, advisory/working groups or task forces.
- Provide updates to the Education Directorate on activities
- Maintain the early learning subcommittee.

**19/6/2023 Jessica Del Rio, Kristy Jones**  
**[ACT government schools needs to change the way they teach reading](#)**

Equity Economics report findings.

The report said the ACT government should invest in a high-quality, low-variance curriculum, monitor progress through a year 1 phonics check, create systematic interventions for struggling readers, and provide training and coaching for principals and teachers to change the way children are taught to read to align with evidence-based methods.

The Science of reading identifies five specific reading sub-skills of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension, which should be taught explicitly and systematically so all children become capable readers.

**[Version 9 of the Australian curriculum](#)** references to the cueing system and predictable texts removed.

Public schools follow the 10 Essential Instructional Practices in Literacy to provide a systematic, evidence-based approach to early

Education Directorate

Weblink: [https://www.education.act.gov.au/schooling/resources-for-teachers/literacy\\_and\\_numeracy](https://www.education.act.gov.au/schooling/resources-for-teachers/literacy_and_numeracy)

literacy instruction. ACT literacy levels worse than 20 years ago. Calls for reform.

Learning to read proficiently is critical to a student's success in the rest of their education and is a predictor for their future education, health and employment outcomes.

**ACT Education Minister Yvette Berry says [teachers should use balanced approach for reading](#)**

How can parents find out about their child's reading and writing skills?

In response to a report from Equity Economics which recommended urgent intervention to align the **[teaching of reading with scientific evidence](#)**, Australian Education Union ACT branch president Angela Burroughs said the union supported teacher's ability to decide which teaching methods to use.

**Jen Cross | [We must confront the myths surrounding education in the ACT](#)**

There are strongly held myths about how schools in the ACT are performing when it comes to teaching literacy that do not align with research and data.