

Question on Notice

No. 694

Asked on 12 May 2005

MR ENGLISH ASKED THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND THE ARTS (MS BLIGH) -

QUESTION:

Will she provide an update on the Prep Year trial across the State and in my electorate?

ANSWER:

An evaluation of the 2004 trial was conducted by the Department of Education and the Arts. The evaluation of the trial aimed to inform planning for the state-wide implementation of the Preparatory Year and involved principals, teachers and parents from all trial schools.

A report on the evaluation findings has been prepared and is currently available on the departmental web site. In order to encourage honest and open feedback, findings about specific schools are not reported under the school name. Teachers and parents were informed that the information supplied would be reported on an aggregated basis to ensure the anonymity of the respondents.

As part of the evaluation a representative sample of parents of children taking part in the trial were surveyed. 81.6 per cent of parents responding to the survey indicated they were very satisfied and 16.5 per cent were satisfied that the Preparatory Year was meeting their children's needs.

Parents, teachers and principals also reported through the evaluation that one of the significant benefits of the Prep Year was that children were better prepared for Year 1 and were more confident and independent when making this transition. The fulltime nature of the Prep program was also seen as a benefit because it promoted continuity of learning, allowed more time for learning and was more convenient for parents.

Parents and teachers have expressed support for the curriculum, including the play-based nature of the curriculum and the balance between formal and informal learning.

Other positive aspects of the Preparatory Year identified include the opportunity for children to:

- interact with others and develop social skills;
- familiarise themselves with school activities and routines;
- develop self-confidence and self-esteem; and
- improve skill development for example communication skills, motor skills and academic skills.

Thornlands State School (2005) in the Redlands Electorate is currently offering the Prep Year.

Principals and teachers are demonstrating a high level of professional leadership within their community as part of the Prep implementation.

Thornlands State School commenced Prep in 2005 with 25 children, including two children who also attend from Redlands Special Education Developmental Unit (SEDU). Staff and parents are very satisfied with the program and consider the curriculum innovative, exciting and engaging for all children. The Prep teacher has been creative and shown exceptional initiative in fostering a very positive learning environment as well as establishing a parent

support group. The continuity of the Prep program, with children attending five days each week, is making a genuine difference with children showing gains in reading and writing, as well as social skill development. The Prep children participate in classroom music, physical education and assemblies, and share a playground with Year 1 students. The facilities are child friendly and well designed. Interest in the 2006 Prep class is already very high.