

Question on Notice

No. 882

Asked on 6 June 2007

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Education and Training and Minister for the Arts (Mr Welford) —

QUESTION:

With reference to Prep composite classrooms in Queensland state schools —

What assistance and resources have teachers been given to ensure that they are properly delivering the time intensive play-based curriculum and when will he commit to providing fulltime teacher aides for prep classrooms in Queensland?

ANSWER:

Prep is being implemented in state and non-state schools across Queensland following a successful four-year trial and phase-in program involving more than 120 schools across the state. In recognition of the fact that Prep would be delivered in a range of different ways across the state, small schools and multi-age classes were included as part of the trial to ensure we got the classroom settings right.

Considerable time and resources were invested to research and evaluate the views of parents, teachers and teacher aides throughout the trial and phase-in stage. Careful consideration was given to the allocation of teacher aide hours to support the Prep Year, particularly in multi-age settings.

The teacher aide allocations to support the Prep Year represent a good balance between those provided under the former preschool provisions and Year 1 allocation, and take into account the fact that children will generally be six months older than preschool-aged children. Schools have the flexibility to incorporate the Prep allocation with other primary provisions in composite classes to maximise the presence of two adults in classes with Prep students.

The general primary teacher aide allocation also recognises the needs of smaller schools and is more generous than for larger primary schools in recognition of the multi-age environment. For example, a one-teacher school of 15 students with 1 Prep student will receive 31 hours of teacher aide time, along with generous teacher relief time.

In addition to this more generous teacher aide time, specific curriculum material has been developed for teachers with multi-age classes. Our Government allocated \$1.2 million to the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA) to develop the Early Years Curriculum Guidelines, professional development material and facilitator training workshops.

Specific professional development materials, including unit plans, teacher reflections, organisational strategies and monitoring and assessment practices were developed for teachers working in multi-age classes. These materials are accessible to every teacher in state schools.

Principals, Prep teachers and teacher aides in state schools also undertook specialist training to deliver the Early Year Curriculum Guidelines, with more than \$2 million allocated for professional development programs. A further \$15.8 million has been allocated for curriculum resources.