

Intentional teaching in early childhood

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Co-designed research project produces new intentional teaching model for Australian early childhood educators

The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) has released new research to help early childhood educators better understand intentional teaching and how it can be embedded within everyday practices, from pretend play to mealtimes.

The [early childhood intentional teaching model and accompanying resources](#) were developed in partnership with ECEC educators and services as part of a research project. The project sought to understand and support the uptake of effective intentional teaching practices in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings.

Intentional teaching refers to the considered and deliberate actions that educators take to respond to 'teachable moments', such as when to guide children's play versus when to step back and observe.

AERO CEO Dr Jenny Donovan said research had consistently shown that intentional teaching makes a significant difference to young children's learning and wellbeing, particularly for those experiencing disadvantage.

"Research shows that play-based learning in early childhood education and care is enhanced when educators take on an intentional role in facilitating, guiding or responding to children's play," Dr Donovan said.

"AERO's new intentional teaching model and supporting resources combine evidence-based approaches with insights from Australian educators and teachers to ensure they are both rigorous and useful for everyday practice across various contexts.

"They are designed to build an understanding of what intentional teaching is and what it looks like when it's used effectively so that teachers and educators can seize upon those 'teachable moments' that occur every day in early childhood settings."

The early childhood intentional teaching model was developed and tested over nine months in partnership with more than 50 educators from 13 diverse ECEC services across the country.

Participants in the research project initially reported varied understandings around intentional teaching and what this looked like in practice.

However, after engaging with the model and resources, the participants reported a better understanding of their role in children's learning, how intentional teaching is

enacted in play-based environments, and how to connect teaching strategies with learning intentions.

Resources supporting the model include fact sheets and 'play and learning' packs to guide effective intentional teaching in a variety of scenarios, including pretend play, nature play, sand play, and during mealtimes.

The packs include practical examples for how adults can support children's learning by modelling and demonstrating how to use play equipment, asking open-ended questions to encourage curiosity, creativity and problem-solving, and introducing vocabulary or concepts.

The early childhood intentional teaching model, research summary, and resources can be downloaded for free from [AERO's website](#).

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