



Australian Government

Preschool Profile

Indigenous Education



What is the Preschool Profile?

The Preschool Profile is a guide that early childhood teachers can use to measure the literacy and numeracy awareness and understanding of Indigenous and non-Indigenous preschool¹ children, and therefore ascertain their level of preparedness for school in these particular areas.

The image shows a screenshot of the 'Preschool Profile' form. The form is divided into two main columns. The left column contains an 'Attendance Record' table with columns for Term 1, Term 2, Term 3, and Term 4, and rows for 'Number of sessions attended' and 'Number of possible sessions to attend'. Below this are sections for 'Comments/reasons for absences', 'Health/Physical Development', 'Any specialist contact/support and outcomes', and 'Overall assessment for entry into primary school'. The right column features the 'Preschool Profile Indigenous Education' logo and several input fields: 'Name of preschool' and 'Date', 'Child's name' and 'Date of birth', 'Family details', 'Contact details', 'Position in family', 'Other languages at home', 'Medication', and 'Dietary needs'.

“I make lots of **observational** notes on my **children**. But what do I know about their awareness and **understanding of literacy and numeracy?**”

The Preschool Profile – Historical Background

Before the Profile was published, a significant number of preschools found it difficult to assess the literacy and numeracy skills of the children enrolled in their sites as an aspect of preparing them for school. Preschools were not sure if the assessment processes they were using were adequate or up-to-date with the requirements for ensuring Indigenous children had the best start at school in the areas of literacy and numeracy.

In 2000 the staff in the Performance Evaluation Team of the Indigenous Education Branch (IEB) determined it would be useful for SRA funded preschool providers to have an assessment tool that was generic and useful Australia-wide.

The first task was to put in place a consultation process. The Department consulted with a broad cross section of representatives of SRA preschool providers to be part of a Steering Committee to start the development of the newly named 'Preschool Profile'. Advice was also sought from early childhood academics who were also members of the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee members were invited from each of the preschool sectors' State and Territory Departments of Education. Representatives were also sought from the National Catholic Education Commission and a number of State/Territory independent organisations. The Committee would decide on the process required for creating the developmental scales, assessment measurement tools and a teacher's guide or Profile package. Incorporated in this would be information relating the links between current theory and the practical application of the Profile.

The guide was initially developed with the assistance of Professor Bridie Raban and Dr Marilyn Flear, two experts in Early Childhood Education.

The Preschool Profile was piloted in a number of preschools across Australia, including remote, rural and urban areas, with students from diverse language backgrounds. The purpose of piloting the Profile was to determine its validity and reliability as an assessment instrument.

The Department engaged a consultant, Professor Patrick Griffin, University of Melbourne to conduct the pilot. Professor Griffin had extensive experience in testing assessment instruments for children at all stages of schooling. With the assistance of preschool teachers who profiled all of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous children in their preschools, Professor Griffin analysed the completed profiles of 385 children in four States: Tasmania, Victoria, Western Australia and Queensland.

The Profile returns yielded a large amount of data. Teacher responses and reflections were also noted in the Preschool Profile Report.

¹ The term Preschool is used to refer to early childhood education programs delivered to children in the year or two before formal schooling.



Another necessary step was to determine the compatibility of the Preschool Profile with the School Entry Assessment (SEA) documents each State and Territory used to determine childrens' achievement in the early years of compulsory schooling.

Several members of the Steering Committee linked the Preschool Profile and SEA documents and concluded that the Preschool Profile overlaps with many of the indicators in SEA documents. The Preschool Profile also provides the framework for children to achieve the skills and knowledge being assessed by the SEA documents to make their transition into compulsory schooling more familiar and successful.

Preschool Profile – in relation to other developmental aspects of preschool children

As a result of discussions conducted by members of the Steering Committee, it was recognised and agreed that the literacy and numeracy success rate of Indigenous children is greater when the children are in a preschool environment that values and includes their social and cultural backgrounds.

It is generally acknowledged that there are many facets of a child's growth that are important and impact on their positive learning experiences. International research, which reflects the practical experience of SRA providers, has ascertained that if children's early learning experiences are positive then they are less likely to require intervention at a later time in their education and are more likely to remain at school for a longer period.



Since there is such an important connection between the social and cultural development of Indigenous children, their health and physical well-being, their awareness of literacy and numeracy and attendance levels, members of the Steering Committee did not wish to ignore this holistic association.

Currently, SRA-funded preschool providers are required to report on children's literacy and numeracy outcomes as part of the SRA reporting process. The combination of social skills, health and wellbeing and a recognition of the cultural background an Indigenous child brings to preschool are important factors in their achievement in literacy and numeracy awareness and understanding. Preschools are welcome to provide further information on children's social and health outcomes in their annual SRA Performance Report to DEEWR if they wish.

The Steering Committee discussed at length the importance of acknowledging children's cultural and social backgrounds and how preschool supports children to build on their own cultural and social backgrounds in the context of other cultures. Preschools can be the venue where children learn to develop an awareness of their social and cultural heritage and explore different aspects of their own culture. The preschool experience can also help children to recognise and relate to other cultures and see that all cultures are valued for their similarities and differences.

Directors and teachers could also work closely with Indigenous families to ascertain the level of development of the child's social skills. Positive preschool experiences can contribute to effective lifelong learning practices for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children alike.





Using the Profile

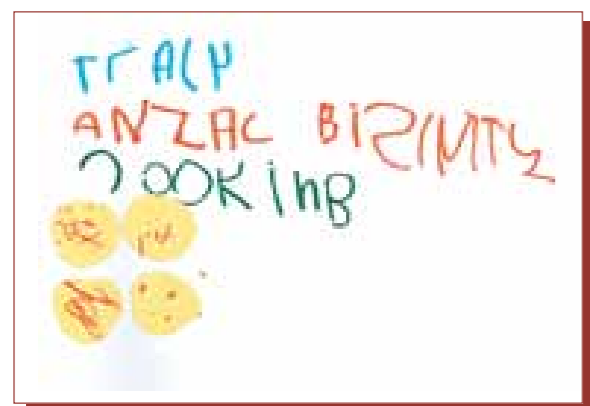
Everyday cooking experiences provide one example of how literacy and numeracy outcomes can be plotted for each child.

This example shows three children's responses. For the purposes of reporting, each child's response would be recorded on their own copy of the Profile.

In this example it is possible to see that Rowan is achieving letter writing through **modelling**. He draws the ingredients and participates in the experiences. Freya is writing along with the teacher. She writes those letters she knows and the teacher writes the rest. The task is undertaken jointly (**shared**).

Independent letter writing is shown in the sample by Tracey.

3. Tracey



1. Rowan



Child makes book after cooking experience. Adult models writing. Child draws ingredients.

2. Freya



Child says: "I do half red and half a different colour".

PROFILE OF LITERACY AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING		WITH ADULT/PEER SUPPORT AND MINIMAL CHILD INPUT (MODELLED)	JOINTLY UNDERTAKEN BY CHILD AND ADULT/PEER (SHARED)	CHILD TAKES LEADERSHIP AND/OR WORKS INDEPENDENTLY
Shows awareness of the print literacy they see in their home	In child's first language In English			
Shows awareness of the print literacy they see in their community	In child's first language In English			
Shows awareness that printed texts vary according to purpose	In child's first language In English			
Shows understanding of the link between experience, oral language and written text	In child's first language In English			
Understands that texts are 'read' from left to right and from top to bottom of the lines	In child's first language In English			
Can recognise own printed English/Skin/nick name	In child's first language In English			
Can 'write' some letters of own English/Skin/nick name	In child's first language In English			

PROFILE OF NUMERACY AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING		WITH ADULT/PEER SUPPORT AND MINIMAL CHILD INPUT (MODELLED)	JOINTLY UNDERTAKEN BY CHILD AND ADULT/PEER (SHARED)	CHILD TAKES LEADERSHIP AND/OR WORKS INDEPENDENTLY
Demonstrates an understanding of time	In child's first language In English			
Demonstrates an understanding of measurement	In child's first language In English			
Demonstrates an understanding of number	In child's first language In English			
Recognises and uses symbols appropriately	In child's first language In English			
Applies understanding of spatial awareness in a number of contexts	In child's first language In English			
Predicts on the basis of experience	In child's first language In English			
Can group things together	In child's first language In English			

Adult writes with child writing the letter they know.

During cooking, child places mixture onto tray evenly and equal distant along tray.

Applies understanding of spatial awareness in a number of contents.

Numeracy outcomes are also evident in this cooking example. Freya demonstrates through her drawing of the biscuit tray and her actions during cooking that she can independently use spatial awareness knowledge in two contexts during cooking.

An example which reflects an Indigenous child's experience, in terms of cultural knowledge, could be a discussion about families. The preschool group has been talking about families, names of family members, including Skin names and nicknames as well as English names. The discussion has also included the relationships and relationship terms between the child and other members of their extended families. The number of brothers, sisters, cousins, uncles, aunties etc. As with the previous example, each child's response would be recorded on their own copy of the Profile.

In this example it is possible to see that Jordan is making the connection between experience, oral language and written text at the **modelling** stage. He draws the members of his family and talks about their names while an adult writes their names underneath the pictures.

Briodie is writing along with the teacher. She writes those letters she knows and the teacher writes the rest. The task is undertaken jointly (**shared**).

Independent letter writing is shown in the sample by Nathaniel.



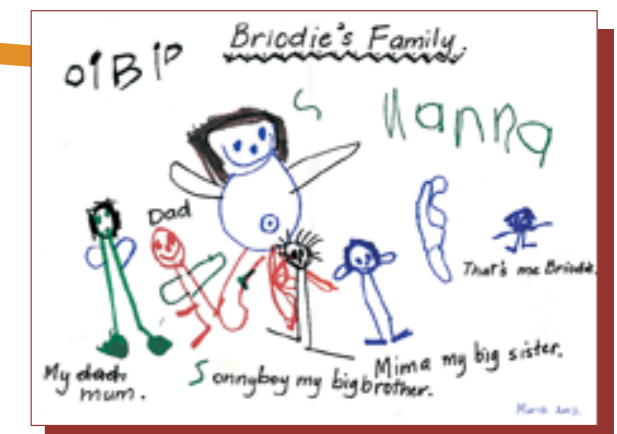
PROFILE OF LITERACY AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING		WITH ADULT/PEER SUPPORT AND MINIMAL CHILD INPUT (MODELLED)	JOINTLY UNDERTAKEN BY CHILD AND ADULT/PEER (SHARED)	CHILD TAKES LEADERSHIP AND/OR WORKS INDEPENDENTLY
Shows awareness of the print literacy they see in their home	In child's first language In English			
Shows awareness of the print literacy they see in their community	In child's first language In English			
Shows awareness that printed texts vary according to purpose	In child's first language In English			
Shows understanding of the link between experience, oral language and written text	In child's first language In English			
Understands that texts are 'read' from left to right and from top to bottom of the lines	In child's first language In English			
Can recognise own printed English/Skin/nick name	In child's first language In English			
Can 'write' some letters of own English/Skin/nick name	In child's first language In English			

PROFILE OF NUMERACY AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING		WITH ADULT/PEER SUPPORT AND MINIMAL CHILD INPUT (MODELLED)	JOINTLY UNDERTAKEN BY CHILD AND ADULT/PEER (SHARED)	CHILD TAKES LEADERSHIP AND/OR WORKS INDEPENDENTLY
Demonstrates an understanding of time	In child's first language In English			
Demonstrates an understanding of measurement	In child's first language In English			
Demonstrates an understanding of number	In child's first language In English			
Recognises and uses symbols appropriately	In child's first language In English			
Applies understanding of spatial awareness in a number of contexts	In child's first language In English			
Predicts on the basis of experience	In child's first language In English			
Can group things together	In child's first language In English			

1. Jordan



2. Briodie



3. Nathaniel





Showing Progress over the Year

A list of literacy and numeracy criteria (seven in each) and the progress made on each of the criteria has been put onto an A3 sheet of paper for easy access and use by teaching staff. The criteria for each are not ordered by importance. Each of the criteria is important to the overall awareness and understanding of literacy and numeracy.

The Profile is designed to show a child's progress in each of the criteria in terms of the following: (this is illustrated by going across the page)

Modelled (a teacher/Aboriginal and Islander Education Worker (AIEW)/parent/helper shows a child how to do a task related to the criteria)

Shared (a teacher/AIEW/parent/helper and even another child undertakes the task with the child)

Independent (the child can undertake the task by him/herself)

Children who move most successfully between preschool and school are those who are operating at the Independent stage against all criteria. Outcomes provided from the pilot and subsequent analyses, supported by the analysis of the SEA documents substantiate this conclusion.

Some of the criteria may be easier for preschool aged children to achieve than others. The difference in achievement is related to age groups. Older children, that is the 4-5 years age group, find most criteria at the independent stage easy to achieve.

The younger age group, 3 year olds, can still undertake the criteria, but at the modelled or shared stage of progress. This has been verified through the analysis of the data obtained from the pilot of the Profile.

Preschool provides a way of calculating the literacy and numeracy outcomes for individual children and the class group for end of year reporting to DEST.

Criteria	Language	With adult/peer support and minimal child input (modelled)	Jointly undertaken by child and adult/peer (shared)	Child takes leadership and/or works independently (independent)
Shows awareness of the print literacy they see in their home	In English			
Shows awareness of the print literacy they see in their community	In English			
Shows awareness that printed texts vary according to purpose	In English			
Shows understanding of the link between experience, oral language and written text	In English			
Understands that texts are 'read' from left to right and from top to bottom of the lines	In English			
Can recognise own printed English/Skin/nick name	In English			
Can 'write' some letters of own English/Skin/nick name	In English			
Class Summary		25/2	12/6	1/12
Can write some letters of own English/Skin/nick name		afid	rbl	absent
		15/2	15/2	15/2

The following two pages shows the Profile with dates and comments in some of the boxes indicating possibilities of how a child in several contexts may achieve some of the criteria throughout the year.

Profile of Print Literacy Awareness and Understanding

		With adult/ peer support and minimal child input (modelled)	Jointly undertaken by child and adult/ peer (shared)	Child takes leadership and/ or works independently (independent)
Shows awareness of the print literacy they see in their home	In child's first language In English			Pointing out road signs, symbols in sand painting, shops signs freely when going on excursion (3/3/2005)
Shows awareness of the print literacy they see in their community	In child's first language In English			
Shows awareness that printed texts vary according to purpose	In child's first language In English			
Shows understanding of the link between experience, oral language and written text	In child's first language In English			
Understands that texts are 'read' from left to right and from top to bottom of the lines	In child's first language In English			
Can recognise own printed English/Skin/nick name	In child's first language In English	Identifies own name on locker but picks out name from list, 1st letter only (3/3/2005)		Can recognise own printed name on work and in a class list. (5/10/2005)
Can 'write' some letters of own English/Skin/nick name	In child's first language In English	Observes adults writing own name-talks about name (1/2/2005)	Writes first letter of name (7/6/2005)	Writes first name using lower case letters and capitals name (2/11/2005)

Profile of Numeracy Awareness and Understanding

		With adult/ peer support and minimal child input (modelled)	Jointly undertaken by child and adult/ peer (shared)	Child takes leadership and/ or works independently (independent)
Demonstrates an understanding of time	In child's first language In English	Talks about when asked about being a baby, being at preschool and going to school (3/4/2005)	Asks questions about time e.g. "when is it fruit time?" (4/6/2005)	Can sequence pictures relating to time independently (1/7/2005)
Demonstrates an understanding of measurement	In child's first language In English	Identifies longest, biggest, etc. in story books, block building and sand pit work (2/2/2005)	Uses measurement language "my dog has 1 metre long teeth" (4/11/2005)	
Demonstrates an understanding of number	In child's first language In English	Can count up to 10 using most digit names (3/4/2005)	Points to each child during singing game (with adult help to get 1 to 1 correspondence) and counts each child (6/6/2005)	Talks about and counts the number of legs on a spider (4/11/2005)
Recognises and uses symbols appropriately	In child's first language In English			
Applies understanding of spatial awareness in a number of contexts	In child's first language In English			Skilfully covers surfaces during the painting of box collage and uses terms such as side, underneath, top etc.. (3/4/2005)
Predicts on the basis of experience	In child's first language In English			
Can group things together	In child's first language In English			

Profile of Print Literacy Awareness and Understanding

	With adult/ peer support and minimal child input (modelled)	Jointly undertaken by child and adult/ peer (shared)	Child takes leadership and/ or works independently (independent)
Shows awareness of the print literacy they see in their home	In child's first language In English		
Shows awareness of the print literacy they see in their community	In child's first language In English		
Shows awareness that printed texts vary according to purpose	In child's first language In English		
Shows understanding of the link between experience, oral language and written text	In child's first language In English	Participates in group painting and story of excursion to collect bush foods (6/4/2005)	
Understands that texts are 'read' from left to right and from top to bottom of the lines	In child's first language In English	Reads group story of excursion with parent helper pointing to pictures and saying what they were (10/6/2005)	
Can recognise own printed English/Skin/nick name	In child's first language In English		Can recognise own printed English name and Skin name on work and in a class list. (15/11/2005)
Can 'write' some letters of own English/Skin/nick name	In child's first language In English	Writes first letter of English name (7/6/2005)	

Profile of Numeracy Awareness and Understanding

	With adult/ peer support and minimal child input (modelled)	Jointly undertaken by child and adult/ peer (shared)	Child takes leadership and/ or works independently (independent)
Demonstrates an understanding of time	In child's first language In English		Able to talk about the wet season and what foods are collected, also talks about the season which comes after (28/1/2005)
Demonstrates an understanding of measurement	In child's first language In English		Knows own shoe size and that they are bigger than some others in the group. (20/6/2005)
Demonstrates an understanding of number	In child's first language In English		
Recognises and uses symbols appropriately	In child's first language In English		
Applies understanding of spatial awareness in a number of contexts	In child's first language In English		Able to successfully negotiate obstacle course independently (21/1/2005)
Predicts on the basis of experience	In child's first language In English		
Can group things together	In child's first language In English		Can sort bush foods collected on excursion (fruit, seeds, honey) (3/4/2005)

Literacy Awareness and Understandings

During a child's early years, the literacy practices of the their home and community need to be recognised and valued, and provide the basis of the preschool programme. In preschool, children build on their home language to develop concepts and construct meaning to convey and receive information with purpose, increasing accuracy and confidence. They begin to see the relationship between these personal forms and shared systems of meaning.

The home language of each child is the means by which the child makes and creates meanings and accesses the meanings of others. Teachers use the child's ability to communicate orally as a basis for broadening their linguistic range and support the beginnings of print literacy with children.

In preschool, children need to begin to understand the purposes and functions of written language (the detail and the 'how' will come later in school) and how, as we do with oral language, vary it to suit audience and context. Children are assisted in this process if their preschool environment reflects and more closely matches the environment of the home and community. The children then become more rapidly aware of the range of purposes and functions of print in the lives of literate people in real-life, authentic contexts.

The following examples may help preschool staff to determine if a child has met a Literacy criteria on the Profile.

<p>Shows awareness of the print literacy they see in their home Talks about experiences in home and community in the language patterns of their culture Draws and make stories from their culture (e.g. tapestry, collage) Talks about the meaning of symbols in own cultural artefacts Plays and communicates with peers (e.g. sand pit and home corner) in own language Recognises familiar labels and brand names of goods (ie, if asked to get the peanut butter – knows the jar/label)</p>	<p>Shows awareness of the print literacy they see in their community Interprets individually what gesture and facial expressions mean Builds bridges between school culture and home culture Interprets information regarding routines and rules Interprets information from different sources Recognises, locates and names favourite shops/places – Toy World, Hungry Jacks, Cinema, Town pool Locates items of family shopping list in the supermarket Recognises different types of tickets gathered in every day life, cinema, bus tickets, shop docket, ATM receipts</p>
<p>Shows awareness that printed texts vary according to purpose Adjusts speaking tone and pattern for different situations and people Writes on paper rather than other surfaces Uses phone books, lists, write letters, use recipes (including back of packet); computer menu, TV guide</p>	<p>Shows understanding of the link between experience, oral language and written text Understands that print meaning remains constant Draws and makes symbols and reads it back Re-tells story from shared book experience Re-tells story from symbolic pictures (e.g. dot art work or other cultural picture)</p>
<p>Understands that texts are 'read' from left to right and from top to bottom of the lines Tells an elaborate story in 'pretend reading' of a book Role plays "schools" (pointing to words and telling detailed story) Writes or begin to take on forms of conventional alphabet symbols Re-tells story from drawings, maintaining meaning</p>	<p>Can recognise own printed English/Skin/nick name Demonstrates understandings with different kinds of text Follows words on page with finger In writing starts from left side, top Turns book right way up to 'pretend to read' Differentiates between words and sentences Begins to read puzzles Writes and recognises own name</p>
<p>Can 'write' some letters of own English/Skin/nick name Knows some authors, titles and genres Applies letter knowledge from own name Hears oral sounds of rhymes (alliteration)</p>	<p>Retells familiar rhymes, songs, stories when seen in print Recognises and uses first letters of word Uses the picture to 'guess the story' Innovates on a familiar rhyme</p>



One of the ways in which we can support young children’s increasing awareness and understanding is by using oral language in such a way that it enables the child to ‘tune-in’ to the meanings we wish to share with them. This is a strategy typically used by parents when they draw young children’s attention to aspects of their surroundings. It might be helpful to use the acronym **SAID** to capture some of this particular type of talk, either in “language”, Kriol or Standard Australian English.

SAID

- S**timulate Introduce the activity and stimulate interest.
- A**rticulate Be quite clear that the child understands what is being talked about and knows what is expected of them.
- I**ntegrate Make links between what the child already knows and any new ideas and/or experiences.
- D**emonstrate Review the new understanding in action and model what is expected, supporting the child in having a go.



Numeracy Awareness and Understandings

During their early years, children’s attempts to deal with numeracy ideas in their own ways, and in the ways of their community, should be valued and used as the basis for building more conventional numeracy applications.

One of the difficulties in this practice will be identifying the level of depth and complexity of young children’s understandings. It would be useful for teachers or AIEWs to talk with families so they can work collaboratively in extending their understandings of the child’s numeracy skills. This relationship may also enable educators to better gauge the wealth of understandings that the child already has as a result of being a part of family, community and cultural group².

In preschool, children need to investigate number and the construction of symbols and patterns in their play, and understand, analyse and critically respond to and use mathematics in different social contexts. Numeracy, like literacy, is culturally constructed so programmes and assessment tools need to reflect this.

The following examples may help preschool staff to determine if a child has adequately met a Numeracy criteria on the Profile.

<p>Demonstrates an understanding of time Role plays using shopping lists and shopping Recognises and points out daily routines – time to go to school, time to come home from school, time to feed the dog Demonstrates a sequence of events (e.g. bath time) Participates in pattern work such as threading shells Is aware of the times of the year (seasons) – when specific trees bear fruit, when turtles hatch, when cyclones are prevalent Is aware of sports seasons - football or cricket Is aware that businesses (shops, pools, banks, schools) are open to public for specific times</p>	<p>Demonstrates an understanding of measurement Participates in rhythm and patterning in music Has an understanding of half full, more than, less than, longer than etc and can use these in context May use metric measurement language in context but in exaggerated terms</p>
<p>Demonstrates an understanding of number Talks about self in relation to being a baby, being at preschool and going to school Participates in and anticipate centre-based routines Discusses sequenced events in books, dreamtime stories Demonstrates and talks about longer, wider, taller in relation to self or objects (e.g. blocks, box construction) Discusses the best fit of materials when involved in art and craft Uses number terms in the context of insect legs, spider legs, five fingers, candles on a birthday cake, own birthday, and role play with money Shares out food to others Discusses the cost of something sold in shops (e.g. sweets, drinks) Uses number in role play (e.g. ATM machine, phone numbers) Identify pages in books</p>	<p>Recognises and uses symbols appropriately Finds numbers on birthday cards Outlines the use of speed signs Talks about the weather map on TV, using some measurement terms Demonstrates hand signals/gestures Participates in card games Recognises the animal tracks they see Sings the Alphabet song and has awareness that these symbols are for writing words such as their names Recognises, interprets and responds in appropriate ways to locally understood and recognised hand signs and body language Locates where bush tucker can be found relying on knowledge of local environment and past experience gathering the same food with family members</p>
<p>Applies understanding of spatial awareness in a number of contexts Uses position words effectively to give explanation or directions “I’ve left my shoes next to the slide” Responds appropriately to directions “Stand next to the hoop”, “Walk around the hoop” Independently and successfully negotiates own local environment without requiring assistance from adults</p>	<p>Predicts on the basis of experience Uses language to compare height, weight etc Discusses relative size of things in stories (e.g. the three bears or characters in cultural stories) Recognises and talks about changes in weather by noticing changes to clouds, drops/rises in temperature and then able to predict onset of rain, storms changes in seasons</p>
<p>Can group things together Crosses road safely in a variety of contexts Puts on painting smock or other items of clothing on self Works out family groups according to local kinship system Makes and plays in cubbies Effectively participates in pack-away</p>	<p>Uses art and craft materials purposefully Participates in patterning in art work Positions self on mat for group time Sorts bush tucker into groups, (ie, meat, fruit, seeds, honey) Successfully puts belongings/art work into school bag/plastic bag</p>



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