

CASE STUDY 1

EIDOS INSTITUTE RESEARCH ADDS **LEGITIMACY** AND **CONFIDENCE** TO IMPLEMENTING THE PREP YEAR REFORM IN QUEENSLAND...



"I was very pleased when they were able to advise government after extensive evaluation that we were on the right track and that children are being prepared for school after participating in the prep year. It is an internationally recognised evaluation and what it did was add legitimacy to the idea of the prep and, along with a range of feedback that had been gathered internally within the department from the trials schools themselves, it gave us, the government, the confidence to make the investment, the very substantial investment of public funds into the program and make it universal and that will happen from 2007. I want to acknowledge the Institute's role in that and it was a very important reminder to me of the value of rigorous interdisciplinary research and the need for more of it."

The Honourable Anna Bligh MP, Queensland Deputy Premier and Minister for Finance, Minister for State Development, Trade and Innovation (Formerly The Minister for Education and The Minister for The Arts) Launches Eidos in May 2005

Objective

The Department of Education and Arts (DEA) needed to identify key success factors in Queensland's preparatory year and, to examine the effects of the preparatory year on progress of children in five development domains. Within 24 months of contracting the Institute, the research had provided strong and consistent evidence of the benefits of the preparatory year in preparation for implementation in 2007.

Approach

DEA contracted Eidos Institute to bring together its best researchers in early years to propose and develop a large-scale influential research project. The evaluation comprised all 39 school sites participating in the preparatory year trial in 2003. This provided a sample of 1831 children, their parents (n=1665) and staff involved in their education including principal (n=39), teachers (n=132) and teacher aides (n=47).

The team

Eidos Institute Members, Professor Karen Thorpe, Professor Collette Tayler, Ruth Bridgstock, Professor Sue Grieshaber, Petra Skoien, Associate Professor Susan Danby and Anne Petriwskyi from Queensland University of Technology led the research project.

Government policy benefits

1. The findings were consistent and clear. They indicated that the preparatory program is highly successful in promoting children's development in all the five domains examined. The effectiveness of the preparatory program was most notable in promoting social-emotional and communication development.
2. The needs of children were best met by the preparatory program with rates of progress of all children exceeding those of children in preschool and exceeding or equalling those of children in Year1.
3. The value of the preparatory program was particularly clear for those who are disadvantaged, or otherwise at educational risk.
 - a. Full-time provision is more successful than part-time
 - b. Focus on curriculum and teaching is important
 - c. The quality of human resource is important
 - d. Successful programs meet the needs of individual communities and individual children.

The study provided strong and consistent evidence of the benefits of the preparatory year as it was implemented in 2003.

Since this research the Department of Education and the Arts has contracted Eidos Institute to undertake a further large-scale reform evaluation in the evaluation of the ICT Curriculum Integration Performance Measurement Instrument. Most recently DETA have invited Eidos Institute to undertake research into the organisation of schooling and impacts on learning.

More information at <http://www.eidos.org.au>