

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TOWARDS CONTINUITY OF LEARNING:

# Rethinking Assessment



**ourplace**  
education is the key to the door

# Executive Summary

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## ABOUT THIS PAPER

The concept of 'continuity of learning' is a key priority for Our Place. To ensure that children living in disadvantage get the best possible start in life, they must have access to high quality early learning services and schools.

The provision of high-quality education needs to involve early learning and schools coming together to support children in their learning journey. While these two systems can achieve great outcomes for children in their own right, there is more to do to ensure children experience consistency and continuity in their learning journey.

*'Continuity of Learning: Pathways from early learning to school'* (Our Place, May 2021) provides a framework, evidence and principles for a continuity of learning approach. It draws attention to the value of organisational, curriculum, pedagogical and assessment continuity that extends from early years settings into the first year of school (birth to 8 years). It presents the evidence that children's academic outcomes and social-emotional well-being benefit.

Critically, the gains from participation in early learning settings do not fade when the approaches in early learning and school settings are aligned. This is especially important for vulnerable children who have the most to lose from a fragmented approach, and the most to gain from alignment and cooperation between those that support them in their learning.

This paper, *'Towards Continuity of Learning: Rethinking Assessment'*, is the second in the series and dives deeper in into the role of assessment as an anchor for Continuity of Learning.

## WHAT WE MEAN BY ASSESSMENT

Evidence shows that a 'Continuity of Learning' approach to assessment is a key opportunity to: deliver higher learning standards; ensure that learning roadblocks are removed; and, accelerate outcomes for all children.

Assessment means discovering and documenting what children know, understand, and can do - and how they learn best. The Our Place approach to assessment is not a focus on technical tools and tests. Rather we are focused on how best to gather a range of information to equip teachers and educators to understand and enhance the learning journey of individual children.

This includes:

- assessment for learning: collecting and using information about what children know, can do and understand in an ongoing manner that can inform pedagogical practices and enhance learning
- assessment of learning: monitoring children's progress along learning pathways
- assessment as learning: engaging children to monitor in monitoring their own learning pathways.

## WHAT ASSESSMENT FOR 'CONTINUITY OF LEARNING' ENABLES

A common approach to assessment enables continuity of organisation, curriculum and pedagogy across early learning and school settings. It also enables teachers and educators to:

- build on a child's prior achievements
- inform and enable the creation of aligned curriculum
- empower and engage children as learners
- take advantage of a longer runway
- be developmentally and culturally inclusive
- be informed by the voice of the child, parents and carers



## STEPS TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION

Good assessment defies boundaries. We need policy makers, leaders, educators and teachers to work together to defy boundaries too.

With the learning journey split across multiple different education settings, effective assessment will require collaboration, consistency and harmonisation. It will also require shifts in mindset and methods.

Practical steps towards implementation for teachers and educators include:

- establishing common foundations
- creating shared commitment
- developing shared learning pathways
- selecting assessment models
- encouraging careful interpretation

Policy makers and leaders also have a critical role to play and can support implementation by:

- reducing fragmentation across both the early learning and school systems
- aligning frameworks for learning and development across the years birth to 8
- rethinking professional development for shared learning for educators and teachers across settings
- forming networks of leaders to drive the changes needed and unlock the barriers to more appropriate

If children experiencing disadvantage do not experience continuity of learning or a continuity of approaches to pedagogy and curricula, there is a risk that what they have gained in the early years may be lost when they enter the school system.

We must draw upon the strengths of both early learning and school settings in order to align assessment in a way that accelerates learning outcomes for all children, in every postcode. And we need to start now.



### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Our Place acknowledges the First Nations people of Australia and Traditional Custodians of the lands that we live and work on, and recognise their continuing connection to land, water and culture. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their Elders past, present and emerging. We are committed to working together for a brighter future.