

The ASQ–STEPS for measuring Aboriginal child development



The ASQ-STEPS study—what was it about?

In 2018 and 2019 we worked on a research study to make the ASQ-STEPS. This study was about making a better way to see:

- How Aboriginal children are developing how they talk, play, learn and think.
- If early childhood programs are good at helping children learn and develop.

The ASQ-STEPS will let education and health workers look at changes in a child's development. They might do this to see if a program the child is attending is doing what it says it does, or to check if a child is growing well.

Why did we do it?

The first few years in a child's life are really important for the path their life will take. We need to make sure young children get the best start and that they have healthy development.

Measuring children's development helps us make sure they do well at school and later as adults. It also helps us see if early childhood programs are working. This is important for all communities because we want to make sure the best programs for kids are available.

What did we do?

To make the ASQ-STEPS we had to change questions from an American tool called the ASQ-3.

We had meetings and interviewed community representatives, early childhood health and education experts, and the team who developed the ASQ-3; and added pictures to all the questions .

People told us what they thought needed to be changed in the ASQ-3 to come up with the ASQ-STEPS that would be more relevant for Aboriginal people.



The Consensus Group (from left): Charmaine Hull, Cheryl Campbell, Jeannie Campbell, Alison Wunungmurra, Marjorie Naylon, Anita D'Aprano and Marion Swift.

When we had spoken to enough people we met with a Consensus group who made the final decisions about the changes.







An example of the changes we made:

ORIGINAL ASQ-3 ITEM

When talking about something that already happened, does your child use words that end in "ed," such as "walked", "jumped", or "played"? Ask your child questions, such as "How did you get to the store?" ("We walked.") "What did you do at your friend's house?" ("We played.") Please give an example. Does your child change words to make them sound right? For example, "I am kicking the

ball", and "I already

kicked the ball."

Please give an

example.

LINGUIST VERSION

FOCUS GROUP VERSION

Think about a time when your child tells you a story about something that happened yesterday. Does he use the right words? For example, ask your child "Tell me a story about what you did yesterday", does he use the right words? (The story can be in Language).

CONSENSUS GROUP VERSION

Think about a time when your child tells you a story about something that happened yesterday. Does he use the right words? (The story can be in Language). Please give an example.



What will we do next?

We have an Indigenous Reference Group who will be guiding us in the next steps of this research. Now we have made the tool we need to test that it works. We want to collaborate with communities, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Government Departments to test that the ASQ-STEPS works. This means we need to use the ASQ-STEPS with health and education practitioners, children and families to see if they like it and if it is easy to use.

If you want to be part of this next research or know more about the study you can contact Anita D'Aprano on 03 9345 6959 or at anita.daprano@unimelb.edu.au

Who are we?

Chief Investigator: Dr Anita D'Aprano Co-Researcher: Isabel Brookes Co-researcher: Alison Wunungmurra The ASQ-STEPS will be better for Aboriginal children and easier to understand.

We wish to gratefully acknowledge the community members who participated in the study, particularly those in Yirrikala and Ntaria, and community leaders who supported participant recruitment—Djapirri Mununggirritj and Marion Swift.

We would also like to thank the Northern Territory Government Department of Education for making this important work possible.

KEY CONTACT: Dr Anita D'Aprano, anita.daprano@unimelb.edu.au