

A Parents Guide: Your child's path to school



When do I enrol my child?

The Facts

- Children may legally enrol in Kindergarten at the beginning of the school year if they turn five years of age on or before 31 July in that year.
- All children must be enrolled in school by their sixth birthday.

When to enrol your child in school is often one of the toughest decisions parents have to make throughout the transition process. A huge range of factors including financial, home/work pressures, the child's age, maturity or friends often play a part in the decision of many parents when deciding to send their children.

The **most important factor** however, is whether they are **physically, socially and emotionally ready** for the primary school setting, and this should be at the forefront of all decisions. If children are not, there is a huge risk that they will not be at their best for these vital early years in the classroom.

How do I know if my child is ready to start school?

This is the question that many parents ask once their child hits school age, and unfortunately there is no easy answer. **Every child is different**, and will cope in different ways when entering a school setting.

There are things you can do however, to ensure you are making an informed decision and setting your child up on the path for success over the next 13 years of schooling.

These include:

- Talk to your early childhood educators, carers or doctor. They are the experts, and know the ins and outs of your individual child. Ask them about their opinion on your child's school readiness. Are they physically ready? Are they socially and emotionally ready?
- Visit your local school and attend orientation days or transition programs before you decide. Talk to the teachers in your local school about your child's needs. Our teachers are trained to work with your child regardless of their age or level of development.
- Aboriginal families may also seek support through the local AECG.

It is definitely worth having discussions if your child is born from April-July as this is where the decision gets the hardest.

I have decided to send my child, when do I enrol them?

- The Kindergarten enrolment process begins the year before your child will start Kindergarten. Schools will often advertise when they are taking enrolments or you can contact the school you are interested in attending to find out about enrolling your child. *It is good to let your local school know your intention to enrol as early as possible as schools will often try to involve you and your child in early transition activities including family picnics, book fairs, etc.*
- All schools have transition/orientation days or programs to welcome children to Kindergarten. These range from yearlong programs to set sessions at the end of the year. Contact your local school for details of these programs and when to get involved.



How can you help your child to be "ready" for school?

Parents/caregivers can do a lot to help prepare their child for Kindergarten before the big 'first day'. Below is a list of skills that will be useful for children starting Kindergarten. We recognise that not all children will have these skills as everyone develops at a different pace, so this is intended only as a guide so that starting school may be just a little easier.

Encourage your child to attempt the things mentioned below, but don't worry if your child can't do all of them. Talk to the Kindergarten teacher, and together you can support and assist your child's learning.

It would help your child to be able to:

Language/Literacy Skills

- talk to other people about familiar objects and events
- answer and asks simple questions
- make needs known
- follow simple instructions
- use books for enjoyment or for looking at pictures
- identify pictures in books, magazines, on television or video
- use a variety of things (pens, pencils, textas, paintbrushes, sticks in the dirt) to draw, to scribble or to write
- join in singing familiar songs



You can help your child develop these skills by:

- **reading**... everything from books to recipes to signs etc. Start Early! Early exposure increases the chances of Literacy success in future years. Reading to them every night is a great start!
- talking with your child as often as you can about...everything!
- asking deeper questions, not just yes/no answers.
- telling them family stories; make memories.
- making memory books using photos from trips etc and let your child tell you the story.
- playing make believe and use *fantastical* words.
- giving your child simple instructions to follow; build on this over time to make the tasks more complex
- Recite nursery rhymes, leave words out of favourite stories and let kids fill the gaps, sing together
- use post-it notes ...for everything

Mathematics/Numeracy Skills

- recognise that numbers can be used to count - uses words such as many, a lot, more, less
- identify things in a group that are different
- see differences in shapes
- differentiate between opposites - up and down, under and over, in front and behind, day and night



You can help your child develop their Numeracy skills by:

- **counting** ... everything ...by 1's, 2's, 5's and 10's...and backwards
- talk about time, the days of the week, the months, the seasons
- measure for recipes, in the bath, in the sand pit, in the garden etc. Talk about full/empty etc.
- experiment to see what floats and sinks and why
- look at the shapes of things, what rolls, what stacks
- build with blocks and talk about why certain structures are steady and why others are not
- provide opportunities to handle money
- playing cards and board games
- sorting objects (e.g. socks into colours), make patterns with beads, sounds, shapes, size.

Physical skills

- use scissors to cut along a straight line
- enjoy a variety of indoor and outdoor play
- can put on and take off jumpers, shoes, socks independently
- make and design things using a variety of materials
- can go to the toilet independently



You can help your child develop their Physical skills by:

- choosing activities which strengthen and refine fine motor control, including drawing, stamping, finger painting, play-dough, cutting, tearing, scrunching, beading, stickers,
- taking a ball to a park to throw, catch and kick together
- walking your child along a low wall
- sitting together doing activities like card games, puzzles etc for extended periods of time (children may - be required to sit for extended periods of time in class and this is a skill/behaviour that they need to learn over time)
- playing observation games to strengthen visual and aural skills eg: I spy, "Spot What", Kim's Game, Snap, "guess what I am?"

Social/Emotional/Personal Development

- Can share with others
- Can work independently on simple tasks
- Can work as part of a small group
- Can share the attention of a teacher with others
- Asks for help when needed
- Is beginning to develop resilience when things don't always go to plan



You can help your child develop these skills by:

- setting up play dates for your child to play with a friend
 - having time away from parents with carers, grandparents, friends etc.
 - showing them what resilience looks like (modelling)
 - encouraging them to pack and carry their own bag to childcare
 - allowing them to make some of the decisions, like - what the family will have for tea (healthy options), what clothes they would like to wear, etc.
 - having family play-time ... and get into character
 - organising a picnic with a packed lunch and encourage your child to open it and eat the food by themselves
 - encouraging your child to do simple things for themselves, like blowing their own nose, pulling on their own socks, etc.
 - encouraging your child to help with simple household tasks like setting the table, watering plants, helping to unpack groceries, helping siblings etc.
-and give them lots of praise for trying!!*

What can parents do to help with the transition process?

- Talk to your child about the types of things they can do to express their needs.
- Use photos to help your child become familiar with the school environment as well as routines. **Talk to the school about this*
- Have positive conversations with your child about school; talk about the types of things they will get to do, routines, special things like bus trips, friendships etc.
- Make school-based friendship groups so that your child has familiar people around them when they start school.
- Make contact with the school as early as possible and be involved as much as you can. Ask grandparents along to visits where possible so that they can have positive conversations with your child also.

The 'Best Start' Program

Each school conducts an initial "Best Start" Assessment within the first few weeks of your child starting school. Children develop at different rates and learn skills in different ways, and it is the school's task to respond to the needs, learning styles and rates of progress of individual students. Schools also plan learning experiences based on the skills students bring to school.



The purpose of the Kindergarten Best Start process is to provide information for Kindergarten teachers to:

- build on each child's current knowledge and experiences in literacy and numeracy.
 - develop quality teaching and learning programs that support students in achieving Early Stage 1 (Kindergarten) syllabus outcomes.
- Best Start has special accommodations for children with disabilities.

Children starting Kindergarten in a CCGPS (Public) school will also receive free speech assessment.

Children with disabilities

Specialist advice and support is available to parents/caregivers of children with disabilities to help them access appropriate educational services. Talk to the school as early as possible about these services. *Specialist support is available to students with a vision/hearing loss. Support can begin prior to school in some circumstances.*

Across NSW, the Department of Education and Communities (DEC) provides a wide range of services to support students who have special needs.

As a parent or carer of a child with a confirmed disability you can consider the following educational options:

- Your local school
- A special class in a regular school
- A special school (School for Specific Purposes)

If your child has a disability or special learning needs, it is important that you speak to your child's local school early, so that support structures are in place by the time your child arrives. This will ensure that your child successfully transitions into the school setting. These processes can take time to get right.



So where to now?

After you have had discussion regarding your child's readiness with your pre-school, contact your local school to find out what their specific transition to school program's involve. They will be able to answer a wide range of questions about school life and what this will involve for your child.

A child's first steps through the school gates are momentous. They leave behind the relationships, routines and structures of early childhood education and care settings and step in to a brand-new environment. It is an important milestone for parents, children and educators alike and the "big move" should be as easy and smooth as possible.

We look forward to working with you and your child to make this happen. See you soon!

