

Preschool Field Officer Service

Integrated Child, Family and Youth Services



Helping Children Transition from Kinder to School

What is transition to school?

The term 'Transition to School' refers to the period of time where children move from a familiar kinder/preschool setting to a new, less familiar school environment. The transition time commences when families first decide upon and commence conversations with a child about the new school. The transition period usually concludes sometime during the first year of school, when a child is feeling settled and comfortable in the school environment.

Why is a school transition process important?

Starting school is often an exciting prospect for young children, however sometimes it can also be daunting and children may feel overwhelmed, anxious, frustrated or insecure. Starting school means that children will encounter new teachers, peers, expectations, social issues and daily schedules.

Research shows that a positive start at school is linked to positive school outcomes in academic achievement, psychological confidence and social competence. Families can play an important role in helping their child to begin preparing for school to ensure the transition period is a positive one.

How do kinder and school differ?

- Children experience a change of identity when moving from being a child in preschool to a student in school. This change often means they are expected to behave in a certain way, understand the classroom rules and develop a relationship with a new teacher/s.
- School is often a larger physical and social environment; bigger buildings mean it may be difficult for young children to find their way and the greater number of children can be overwhelming for some children.
- In the final year of preschool the child belongs to the eldest group of children, whereas when starting school he/she is the youngest and will usually be expected to have the ability to relate to the older children.
- School brings a shift in the academic demands of children and they will regularly meet new, unfamiliar challenges.

- School playgrounds are much bigger, children at kinder/preschool are closely supervised in a small space by 2 or 3 adults – at school there may be one adult supervising a much larger group of children over a bigger area.

What can I do to help my child transition to school positively?

- Take the time to carefully complete the Family Section (Part 1) of the 'Transition Learning and Development Statement' that your child's early childhood educator will provide you with. The more information the school knows about your child, the better equipped they will be to support him/her.
- Support your child to attend all School Orientation Day(s) and positively ask them to share their experience with you. Request additional orientation session if you feel your child may need it.
- With the school's permission, take a few photos of the Prep area (classroom, bag area, toilets, playground) and create a simple photo book for your child to explore at their own pace.
- Be patient with your child and understand that your child will transition differently to others - Children experience transition in different ways as each child brings a variety of experiences and understandings with them.
- Find out as much information as you can about the school, such as how the school day is run, how behaviour is guided and what the school policies are. Share and role model this information with your child at an age appropriate level. Children who experience similar environments and expectations at home and school are likely to find the transition to school an easier process.
- Ask the school how they can cater for / meet your child's individual needs (if any). It is important that the school is ready for and well prepared for each child.
- Communicate with your child's teacher about how he/she is settling in and ask if there is anything you can do at home to help.
- Maintain a positive attitude to school and try not to discuss any of your negative school experiences in front of your child.
- Have realistic expectations of your child and what they will achieve. For example, it may take them a few weeks before they can say goodbye without crying, or it may take over a month or more before they make a good friend.

Where can I find more information?

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/learning/pages/transition.aspx>
<http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/parent-resources/transition-school/>
http://ncac.acecqa.gov.au/educator-resources/factsheets/qias_factsheet_13_school_transition.pdf
<https://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/families/starting-school>

References:

Transitions from Preschool to Primary School, Vrinioti, Einarsdoir and Broström (2010)