



## Useful tips for transition to **BIG SCHOOL**

Starting school is a big milestone in a child's life, and their understanding of the changes will assist them to make a smooth transition.

### How does your child feel about starting school?

Talking to your child about his/her feelings about going to school can be a very positive experience. Almost all children will have some reaction to starting school. Not all children will exhibit this on the first day or even in the first few weeks. Most children will settle down and adjust to the changes starting school once a routine is established.

### How do you feel about your child going to school?

Just as some children will tackle the transition to school in different ways, so will parents. For some parents, the move to school is exciting – they are thrilled to see that their child is ready to tackle “big school”.

Other families may feel anxious and sad about their child going to school, as their child is moving independently into a larger community. Some parents may also feel worried about how their child will cope with this new setting. It is not uncommon for families to have a mixture of feelings – sadness, happiness, fear, anxiety and excitement and all in varying degrees.

It may be helpful to discuss your feelings with your partner and/or friends but remember it may not be appropriate or helpful to share or convey all of these feelings with your child, especially if this may result in your child feeling anxious or worried about the transition.

### What will the school expect of my child?

Children have already learnt a great deal from you at home and from child care before they start school. Your child has already learnt to make choices, explore materials, test new ideas, develop confidence, understand social situations and rules and discipline boundaries.

Your child's teacher will plan lessons that build on these skills and convey your child's development to you throughout the year.



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### Some useful tips for children that will contribute to a smooth transition to school:

- Children should be encouraged to carry their new and larger school bag and be comfortable with how it feels.
- For boys, it is useful to let them become familiar with urinals should their school have them.
- Encourage children to open and close their bag, putting books and lunchboxes in and out.
- It is very useful for children to become familiar with their new school uniform by practising dressing and undressing. This also gives children a sense of ownership, pride in their appearance and a sense of belonging within their community.
- Help children to practise unwrapping and opening containers in their lunchbox. Picnics are an opportunity to practise.
- Show children how to recognise the symbol for boys/girls toilets. Parents can do this by showing children the toilet signs in public places and describing the difference in symbols.
- Walk around the school grounds - as well as the pathways to and from school, this helps children become familiar with their new environment.
- If your child will be attending a before and after school care program, arrange a visit before they start and allow your child to become familiar with this environment and the staff.

### Some useful tips for parents that will contribute to a smooth transition to school:

- Label ALL belongings.
- Arrive at school with plenty of time before the bell.
- Encourage your child to play with other children before the bell.
- For some younger children a kiss and a hug is very reassuring, for other children this might be "uncool" in public. Ask your child!
- Always say goodbye.
- Be flexible at the end of the school day. Children starting school can be very tired at the end of the day. Sometimes it is beneficial to allow your child to unwind before you ask questions about school.
- When asking questions about school, it can be overwhelming to ask a general question such as "How was school today?" It may be more helpful to ask specific questions such as "Which story did you have at the library?" or "Who did you play with at lunchtime?"
- Check that your child has all their belongings when you pick them up, this can avoid any upset at home.

### Some useful picture books about starting school:

- *Tom Goes to Kindergarten* by Margaret Wild
- *I Don't want to go to School* by Christine Harris
- *Too big for your boots* by May O'Brien

**Communities@Work** Children's Services and Family Programs offer many services to families. Child Care and Education Centres, School Holiday Programs, Before and After School Care, and support and referral services to families through our Parenting Matters and Family Support Program. Our website [www.commsatwork.org](http://www.commsatwork.org) provides information and contact details for these services.

**Communities@Work** would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your child all the very best for your transition to "big school" in 2009.