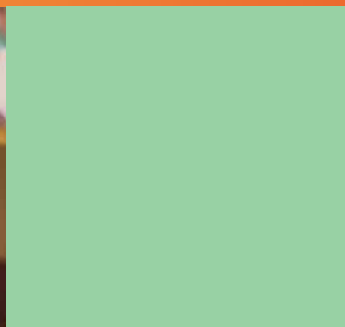




First Year at school

ESSENTIAL TIPS FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

BY JENNI CONNOR AND PAM LINKE



**Early Childhood
Australia**
A voice for young children



APPA
Australian Primary
Principals Association

The publication of this book is an exciting joint initiative by Early Childhood Australia and the Australian Primary Principals Association to support parents and schools in making the first year of school a successful and happy one for young children.



Early Childhood Australia is the peak non-profit, non-government early childhood advocacy organisation. It actively promotes the provision of high-quality services for all young children from birth to eight years and their families, and supports the important role of parents.

Early Childhood Australia works with government, early childhood professionals, parents, other carers of young children and various lobby groups to secure the best range of options and outcomes for children as they grow and develop.

Australian Primary Principals Association (APPAA) is the national professional association for primary school principals.

APPAA represents state/territory government, Catholic and independent primary school principals across the nation, and has approximately 7200 members.

The purpose of APPAA is to be the national voice for all primary school principals.

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Access additional online materials including fact sheets, up-to-date contact details for government and school-related organisations and links to a range of further information, useful for parents and carers.

www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/firstyear

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CHAPTER ONE

GETTING READY TO START SCHOOL

Starting school is a significant milestone for young children and for their families. In their first year at school, children form a view about whether school is a happy place where they belong and about whether they are a capable learner. A child is most likely to thrive in school when adults work together with shared goals and a commitment to the child's wellbeing and success.

Australian research¹ has found that children, families and first years' teachers each focus on different issues about starting school:

- Children are concerned about the rules at school and friendships—being able to remember and follow the rules and making friends.
- Parents emphasise children adjusting socially to the school environment—being able to separate easily from their parent and to interact and respond appropriately with unfamiliar adults. Parents want the teacher to appreciate the 'specialness' of their child.
- Teachers give priority to children being able to operate in a large group, demonstrating independence as required and being able to follow directions.

International researchⁱⁱ reveals two key factors that underpin learning success in the first years of school and beyond:

1. Self-regulation—enables a child to control inappropriate behaviour, to pay attention and to respond positively to changing circumstances.
2. Language development—enables a child to listen, participate in different conversations, interact socially with peers and grasp important information the teacher gives them.

By the time they are getting ready to go to school, children may have experienced various transitions. They may have been to a local playgroup or preschool, or been in a childcare environment. However, starting school is still a major change in their lives.

In school, children will be mixing with a much larger group, in a playground shared with older students and with basic facilities such as toilets in unfamiliar places. Routines will be more structured, with set times for meals, play and lessons in different locations around the school.

As a parent, it's important for you to think ahead about how to prepare your child for this big, new world.

Children who make a positive start to school are more likely to feel:

- comfortable, relaxed and ready to learn
- good about themselves as learners and social beings
- a sense of belonging to the school community.

Parents encourage 'a sense of belonging' when they get to know their child's teacher and when they help the child to know where things are and how things are done in that class.

Schools create 'a sense of belonging' when they make time to get to know each child to find out their strengths and needs. They spend time with the family, to benefit from their deep knowledge of the child, and to learn their hopes and dreams for their child's future.

