



Early Childhood Australia
Professional Learning

Spend a minute ...

... on transition to school

The first year at school is a big milestone for children, as well as families, educators and other professionals involved in a child's life. Some children may be ready to transition to school and do so happily with little support, while others may need more support, guidance and reassurance. The transition to school is different for each child, but as we move towards 2021, it's worth spending some time thinking about the needs of children and families transitioning to school next year.

This week, spend a minute on transition to school and help children and families have the best start.

1. School ready

There has been a strong shift away from 'preparing children for school' in early learning services—it directly contrasts with the idea of 'being' in the early years. While we can support children to develop skills they may need for school under the 'becoming' focus of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), this should not hinder or impact negatively on the experience of being.

Dr Kathryn Hopps emphasises this in her *Research in Practice*

Series title, *Transition to School: Communication and Relationships*:

'When we make children's learning visible ... we advocate for the ways in which we support children's transition to school without the need to introduce specific readiness activities. Making connections between the EYLF and the Australian Curriculum is a useful way to communicate about the links between learning in prior-to-school and school settings.'

2. Relationships are key

For several years, Early Childhood Australia's bestselling resource, [First Year at School](#), has been used to build relationships between new families starting school and primary school teachers. Authors Pam Linke and Jenni Connor discuss how strong relationships underpin meaningful conversations about children and enable educators to understand the expectations of families.

Another important part of the process is to build partnerships with educators at local schools. Inviting them into your 'team' and sharing knowledge is an especially important step in supporting the transition to school for children with disability or additional complex needs, as they may have unique schedules or receive multidisciplinary support.

Learn more with the ECA Learning Hub modules, '[Professional Partnerships for Early Childhood Inclusion](#)' and [Partnerships with Families for Inclusive Practice](#)'.

3. Not ready for school

There are many reasons why families delay the transition to school. They most commonly relate to disruption or trauma during childhood, support for disability or developmental needs, or time to develop stronger social and emotional skills. In all cases, the transition to school is a collaborative discussion and approach between families, educators and other professionals in the child's life, with the best interests of the child at the centre.

ECA's *Research in Practice Series* title, [Working in Partnership with Families Facing Adversity](#), examines how collaborative relationships that tap into strengths can provide the best outcomes for children and families.

Our next *Spend a Minute* will examine transition to school during the COVID-19 pandemic and how it has affected the way children experience school across Australia.

Internationally, there is ongoing research about the right time for children to transition to school. You may be interested in [this article from The Conversation](#) on delayed school entry in Australia, and [this article exploring education in Finland](#), where the age for compulsory schooling is seven.

4. What's a positive transition?

What does success look like? Dr Kathryn Hopps suggests children who have transitioned successfully:

- have a positive approach to school
- are excited to learn
- have a positive sense of identity and culture
- feel respected and safe
- have a sense of belonging
- can see connections between their school, home and community.

5. Sharing in the excitement

Going to school is a big milestone. Sharing in the excitement involves not only recognising that change can be something to look forward to, but also acknowledging it is okay to have mixed emotions about leaving early learning and starting school. Children's books such as *Maddie's First Day* provide a narrative about what to expect.



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