



Early Childhood Australia
Professional Learning

Spend a minute...

...on transition to school during COVID-19 with Rod Soper

The coronavirus pandemic has changed the way we work, learn, connect and educate. It's affected our livelihoods, routines and wellbeing. Transition to school is already a big change for children and families but with the complexities of COVID-19, what should be an exciting milestone might be anything but.

This week, spend a minute on transition to school during COVID-19, with Thinkers.inq co-founder Rod Soper. Feel free to forward this email to families who may find this resource useful.

1. Being trauma-informed

COVID-19 has disrupted the lives of educators, children and families, and some children are facing yet another disruption to their routine: the transition to school.

In response to sector feedback, the ECA Learning Hub is hosting a [live online masterclass](#) this Wednesday 4 November. [Transition to School in COVID-19](#) introduces you to Australia's foremost researchers in transitions and gives you an opportunity to explore practical strategies, research and frameworks to support children's successful transitions into school during this time.

[Mental health issues among children are on the rise](#) due to the impacts of the pandemic and while all children will respond to trauma differently, it's important to understand trauma and be trauma-informed to best support children who are experiencing difficulty.

Judith Howard's *Research in Practice Series* title, [Trauma-aware early childhood education and care](#), can provide strategies for developing trauma-aware practice, and [Early Signals. First Responses](#) is a free professional learning program to help educators support children experiencing violence and other trauma.

2. A sensitive approach

[Research from the University of Calgary](#) showed that families facing transition to school experienced greater levels of anxiety and stress. Understanding the source of stress is key to managing it. Don't discount the trust and respect the child has for you as their educator. You can open up a conversation about fears and worries by asking questions like: 'Are you excited to go to school next year? What do you like about it? What don't you like?'

It's important to take children's concerns seriously and provide realistic assurances. 'Everything will be ok!' may seem like a reassuring response, but it doesn't address the child's specific worries or provide them with strategies to cope with their fears.

Stories and narratives can help children understand what comes next. Try the following children's books:

[How Big are Your Worries Little Bear?](#) by Jayneen Sanders

[Maddi's First Day](#) by Penny Matthews

[Invisible Jerry](#) by Adam Wallace

[The Great Gratitude Surprise](#) by Rod Soper

[Daisy's First Day](#), a free online book from the NSW Department of Education.

3. Starting school

Routines and life rhythms help us feel safe and secure, and encouraging families to start a school routine can help smooth transitions. As educators, you may like to encourage families to practice how children will get to school. Families might also involve children in shopping for their new uniform, preparing their lunch and packing their bag—as they may already do for your service.

[First Year at School](#) is ECA's bestselling resource for families seeking advice and strategies ahead of their child's first year at school. Now, it also comes in a bundle with the *Research in Practice Series* title, [Transition to School: Communications and Relationships](#).

4. Gratitude in action

Practicing gratitude as part of life rhythms can have a significant effect on our world view—growing evidence suggests gratitude reinforces thinking pathways, which supports a growth mindset and releases hormones such as oxytocin, helping to increase the

positive feedback loop in the body. It can help us understand and prepare for change and support the development of resilience and healthy coping strategies for when things become difficult.

The more often we practice gratitude, the deeper the impact is on the child's life. As educators, you might like to invite families to practice gratitude with you at drop-off or pick-up times, and encourage families to form their own gratitude habits at home as they prepare and move through the school transition. Practicing gratitude may be a small action but it can create an incredible outcome.

Rod Soper's webinar [Playing with Gratitude](#) examines the science of gratitude and how combining it with the powerful influence of co-play enables positive change in the wellbeing of children from birth up to the age of five.



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