

Getting ready for school over the summer holidays

Starting a child at school is an exciting time for parents.

Many also feel anxious about the change, but remember: you have been learning and building skills with your child, early childhood and ECI professionals during the preschool years for this. There will still be new things to learn, but a foundation is there.

Drawing from their transition to school experience, parents who have graduated from our Now & Next program share some tips on getting ready over the summer holidays.

Read social stories

Regularly reading a social story about the new school over the holidays will help familiarise your child with the transition. If you haven't created a social story yet, school access for taking pictures may be different this year. Ask the school to supply some photos to use.

They can include:

- » What the school looks like: the entrance, playground, library and toilets
- » Children lining up in the morning for class
- » The class teacher and classroom
- » Lunchtime in the playground

Book Creator is a handy iPad app for making social stories and other visual documents.

Create a document about your child

A one-page letter about your child's strengths, hobbies and favourite things can help educators start conversations. They can be incorporated into schoolwork for more engagement. Also mention supports, such as using earmuffs for children who are sensitive to loud noises, or helpful sensory break activities. If the class teacher is away, the letter is a big help for stand-in teachers to quickly get familiarised with your child.



Build parent networks when school starts

Ask about Facebook groups or other social networks created for the class by parents or the school—or set one up yourself. They help create opportunities for parents and children to build relationships, like playdates or meetings at the local park. Also consider becoming a member of the school's Parent Management Committee (PMC) to get to know other parents. Your child can also become involved with school events, get assigned a role and enjoy being a part of a team.

Hold off on therapies

It's a new place with new people and schedules. Putting therapy on hold can be a good idea, especially if your child is tired after school. However, some supports, such as a behavioural therapist, can help your child get settled into the new environment if needed.

Share strategies and resources with teachers

Think about the visuals, schedules and other techniques you are using at home, and prepare a copy for the teacher. Sharing successful strategies and resources with educators will create a consistent approach to achieving positive outcomes for your child. In fact, teachers have used some of them for the entire class, continue to use them and thanked parents for the professional development—a fantastic outcome!

Get in touch with peers

Our community is here to help you. If you are a part of the Plumtree Now & Next alumni group, or linked in with Reframing Disability, or Reframing Autism, you have a community of families to ask about their school transition experience. Plumtree and Reframing Disability hold regular MyTime Online groups where parents often talk about schools and share ideas.

Plumtree also holds regular School Readiness workshops. Contact us to see when the next one is held.

Download transition to school resources for parents and professionals at Reimagine Australia.



Resources

Learning and building skills: <https://plumtree.org.au/blog/starting-school-useful-skills-to-work-towards-for-your-child/>

Now & Next: <https://plumtree.org.au/plumtree-community/now-next/>

Reframing Disability: <https://www.reframingdisability.com.au/>

Reframing Autism: <https://www.reframingautism.com.au/>

Transition to School Resources: <https://re-imagine.com.au/practitioner/transition-to-school/>

Contact us: <https://plumtree.org.au/contact-us/>