Video 1: Thinking about transition to school

Leaders Guide
This KidsMatter resource was written and produced by the Australian Psychological Society on behalf of KidsMatter.

Acknowledgement

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Video 1: Thinking about transition to school

This document aims to provide Session Leaders with information to assist in the presentation of Video 1: Thinking about transition to school to parents and carers as part of the KidsMatter Starting School information sessions.

Starting School: Tips for facilitating sessions contains more detailed tips and hints for planning and facilitating information sessions. Session Leaders may find it helpful to read this document before delivering the sessions as it offers valuable information that may assist in efficient facilitation. It contains four warm-up activities designed to provide parents and carers with the opportunity to meet without placing too much pressure on them to introduce themselves to a larger group. The four warm-up activities (Meet and greet, Your child’s highlights, Carousel introductions and Discovering what we have in common) can be found at the end of Starting School: Tips for facilitating sessions and can be used at the start of any Starting School session.

For more background information and ideas for how your setting can support children to make a positive transition, see Transition matters: A resource about starting school for early childhood educators and school staff.

Video 1: Learning objectives

- To help parents and carers understand that transition to school is an important time for children.
- To help parents and carers be aware of the changes children might experience as they start school.
- To increase awareness of skills children already have and can continue to develop as they start school as well ways to support them.
Outline

The following table provides an outline of Leaders Guide for Video 1: Thinking about transition to school. Starting School: Tips for facilitating sessions contains warm-up activities that Session Leaders can use at the beginning of any session to provide parents and carers with the opportunity to meet each other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
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</table>
| 10 minutes | Introduce Video 1  
Show Video 1: Thinking about transition to school  
Summarise Video 1 |
| 5 minutes | Questions, comments and discussion                                   |
| 10 minutes | Activity: Starting school and your child                             |
| 10 minutes | Activity: My child’s strengths and skills                             |
| 5 minutes   | Summary                                                             |

Checklist

☐ Starting school and your child activity sheet
☐ My child’s strengths and skills activity sheet
☐ Starting School Thinking about transition to school information sheet
☐ Blank paper, pens
☐ Additional KidsMatter information sheets

Further resources

You might like to have additional KidsMatter information sheets available for families. See the Starting School Thinking about transition to school information sheet that lists other KidsMatter resources you might find helpful.
Introduce Video 1

Start with a brief introduction before presenting the video. For example:

Starting school is a process of change for children and their families. Families play an important role in assisting their child to prepare for and adjust to school. Families, early childhood education and care (ECEC) services and schools can work together to help children feel supported and confident during transition. This first video developed by KidsMatter looks at common changes children experience when they start school and skills that help children manage these changes.

Show Video 1

Summarise Video 1

After the video you may like to summarise the key points. For example:

Children can experience many changes when they start school. Children have already begun developing skills that will assist them to manage the transition to school. Families, ECEC services and schools can assist children to continue to develop these skills.

You could relate the content of the video to your ECEC or school setting. For example, ECEC services could talk about skills they have worked on with children this year. Schools may wish to talk about the skills they focus on when children first start school and processes the school has in place to support children to learn about their new setting (eg the physical environment, rules and procedures).

Questions, comments and discussion

After the video you might like to invite parents and carers to break into groups to discuss the content. Some example prompts for the discussion include:

What did you like about the video? What did you find interesting? What are the main changes for your child starting school?

Activity: Starting school and your child

Go to page 6 for instructions to facilitate this activity.

Activity: My child’s strengths and skills

Go to page 10 for instructions to facilitate this activity.

Summary

If you plan to show Video 2 after Video 1, link to the next video and accompanying activities. For example:

Now that we have looked at the changes children might experience and the skills that will assist children to start school, we will focus on strategies parents and carers can use to prepare and plan for starting school. The next session will look at what parents and carers can start to do now to help make starting school easier.
Background information for Session Leaders

This section contains background information for Video 1 and the accompanying resources. It is not necessary to present this information to parents and carers; however, it may assist you to answer questions and provide some additional information during discussions. For more information on transition to school, see Transition matters and Transition to Primary School: A Review of the Literature. Parents and carers who are interested in the research behind the video and resources can also access these documents online at www.kidsmatter.edu.au

The importance of a positive start to school

Why develop resources to support parents and carers during transition?

The literature suggests that one in seven children experience mental health difficulties\(^1\). Early life transitions and the early years of school can potentially set the scene for later life. Starting school is an important time for ECEC services and schools to work with parents and carers to support a positive start to school. Transition to school is a process of change for children and their families. Managing these changes requires a period of transition and adjustment. Adjustment to the first year of school and the patterns of behaviour and achievement that are established during transition have been shown to have important implications for the future course of children’s academic and social success\(^1\).

Why is a positive start important and what factors influence transition?

A positive start helps children to have a positive view of school. It helps children to feel good about themselves and to view themselves and their ability to learn positively. It can also support the development of positive relationships among children, families, school staff and others within the school community. These relationships help children and their families feel connected and develop a sense of belonging to the school community. In the past, transition looked mainly at the qualities children have that make them ready for school. More recent literature on transition recognises all of the factors that influence transition, starting with the child, family, school and local community as well as society at large. All of these factors play an important role in supporting children to make a successful transition.
Negotiating transition to school

How does this transition relate to past and future transitions?

It is highly likely that parents and carers will already have supported their child through one or more transitions (e.g., moving house, starting preschool or child care, the arrival of a new sibling). Children will continue to experience many more transitions throughout their lives. Sharing ideas and learning strategies to support children during transition to school will enable parents and carers to support children now and into the future.

What makes transition challenging?

All children will be moving into school from different settings such as preschool, long day care and home. All children will experience changes to their physical environment, rules and procedures, relationships and learning experiences. Differences between settings can make adjustment more challenging. The greater the number of changes that need to be negotiated, the more challenging it can be. However, not all children from settings that are significantly different to primary school will have difficulties and require additional support. All children will benefit from support regardless of the setting they have come from.

What role do children’s skills play during transition to school?

Researchers have suggested that children who are socially and emotionally ready for school may be better placed to meet the challenges associated with the transition to school. Children’s early childhood settings and families will have already started to support them to develop a range of skills; for example, personal, social and emotional, and learning skills. These skills will assist children to manage the changes involved in starting school.

However, it is important to remember that recent views of transition look at many factors that influence transition—not just the skills of an individual child. Children are individuals with their own strengths, and particularly at this age there will be great variation between children in the skills they have learned and are developing. Assisting parents and carers to identify their child’s strengths and skills can help them to work out how they can further support their child to feel confident and comfortable as they start school.

References


Activity: Starting school and your child

Aims

- To help parents and carers be aware of how their child has coped with change in the past.
- To reinforce skills that parents and carers have used in the past to support their child.
- To help parents and carers feel confident in supporting their child during the transition to school.

Preparation

- Photocopy the required number of activity sheets.

Materials

- Activity sheet: Starting school and your child
- Pens

Instructions

Estimated time: 10 minutes

Part 1: Your child and change

1. Introduce the activity to parents and carers. For example:
   As discussed in the video, there are a range of changes children experience as they start school. Children can respond to change in lots of different ways. For example, some children will be more cautious and need more time to adjust to a new situation, while others will be outgoing and enjoy the challenge. You may already have some idea about how your child tends to cope with change. Understanding how your child has reacted to change in the past and what helped them can help guide you to support them as they transition to school.

2. Hand out pens and the activity sheet and let parents and carers know that it is a personal reflection activity. For example:
   What you write down for this activity will not be shared unless you choose to share it. You may find it helpful to look at the activity worksheet again at home as the discussions in the group might trigger other ideas and strategies.

Part 2: Supporting your child through change

1. Introduce the second part of the activity. For example:
   Thinking about how children have responded to change in the past can help us to be aware of how they might respond during the transition to school. Not only will your child have experienced change and gone through transitions before now, you will also have given your child support. Please turn over the page.

2. Ask parents and carers to reflect on sources of support for their child. For example:
   Please think about some of the things you have done to support your child in managing change in the past. Other people may have also supported you and your child during these times. Read the questions on the activity sheet aloud. Allow three to four minutes for parents and carers to write down their responses.

Conclusion

Conclude the activity. For example:

Children can react to change in lots of different ways and you may already have provided support in the past. You may have also found that support from others – for example, your family, friends or early childhood educators – may have been helpful during these times. Many of the ways in which you have supported your child in the past will be very useful as your child makes the transition to school.
Activity
Starting school and your child

Part 1: Your child and change
Think about one or two past transitions or times of change.

1 Circle any of the stepping stones in the river that describe how your child reacted during the change. If none are appropriate fill in any of the blank stones.

2 Think about:
• How did your child react to the change?
• What behaviours did they display?
• Does your child tend to react the same way to change or differently each time?

Think about:
• How did your child react to the change?
• What behaviours did they display?
• Does your child tend to react the same way to change or differently each time?
Part 2: Supporting your child through change
Think about ways in which you have supported your child during past transitions or change.

What sorts of things did your child need?

What did you do to support your child?

What did others do to support your child and yourself during the transitions?

Things I know help my child to manage change well.
Activity: My child’s strengths and skills

Aims
- To help parents and carers recognise that their child already has a number of skills that will support them to manage change when starting school.
- To provide some practical ideas for how parents and carers can help their child to develop or continue to develop some of these skills.

Preparation
- Photocopy the required number of activity sheets and information sheets.

Materials
- Activity sheet: My child’s strengths and skills
- Information sheet: Thinking about transition to school
- Pens

Instructions
Estimated time: 10 minutes

Part 1: Identifying strengths and skills
1 Introduce the activity. For example:

   As discussed in the video, there are a range of skills that your child has been developing that will also help them as they transition and settle into school. The video looked at social and emotional, independence and learning skills.

2 Hand out the activity sheet. Ask parents and carers to list the strengths and skills that their child has developed in each category. Emphasise that it is not necessary for children to have all of the skills and the development of these skills is ongoing. The purpose of the exercise is for parents and carers to recognise that their child already has strengths and skills that can be helpful when starting school. Provide three to four minutes for parents and carers to think about or fill in the activity sheet.

Part 2: Supporting the development of skills
1 Introduce the next section of the activity. For example:

   We are now going to look at how we can support children to develop or continue developing skills in each of the three areas: social and emotional, independence and learning.

2 Ask parents and carers to turn over their activity sheet. Explain that you are going to ask them to identify a skill they would like to support their child to develop.

3 Ask parents and carers to take out the information sheet. Explain that some ideas for how they can support children to develop skills can be found in this information sheet. Suggest that parents and carers have a look at the ideas. For ease of understanding you could read some of the suggestions.

4 Ask parents and carers to think about the ideas and suggest they choose one or two they might like to try with their child as a take-home activity. Provide three to four minutes for parents and carers to identify something they would like to work on and to write it on the handout.

Conclusion
1 Invite parents and carers to share something they would like to work on with their child, if they are comfortable to do so. For example:

   Would anyone like to share something they would like to work on with their child?

2 Summarise the activity. For example:

   Every child has their own strengths and skills that they can draw on as they start school. Knowing your child’s strengths and the areas they can work on will help you to know how you can best support them. The skills that your child has developed in the areas discussed are likely to have been taught and supported by you and other people in your child’s life. This support from parents and carers is important as children start school.
Activity
My child’s strengths and skills

Part 1: Identifying strengths and skills
Your child has already developed many skills that will help them with the transition to school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social and emotional skills</th>
<th>Independence skills</th>
<th>Learning skills</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</table>
Part 2: Supporting the development of skills
Choose one or two ideas from the information booklet that you would like to try with your child and write these down below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which idea are you going to try?</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When might be a good time to try this idea out?</th>
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<tr>
<th>How did it go?</th>
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If you are having trouble choosing an idea, you could start by picking one that will be easy to fit into your normal routine.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Which idea are you going to try?</th>
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It can be helpful to pace activities until your child has started to get the hang of the first one.