

Play School

Early Education Notes

Special episode: Ready, Set, Big School

School bag, check! Lunch box, check! Hat, check! What else?

Starting big school is an exciting time of change for children and families. Come along with Little Ted and Kiya as they prepare for their first day at primary school. In this new special episode, 'Ready, Set, Big School', Play School explores helpful transition to school strategies – helping to build social and emotional readiness, nurture resilience and encourage independence. Being ready together for the next big adventure.

Background

Starting primary school for the first time is one of the first big transitions for a child. It can be a time of expectation, excitement, and trepidation for children and families alike. With each new cohort of pre-schoolers, there is discussion amongst families and communities about 'school readiness' and how best to prepare for the inevitable changes ahead. Successful transition to school programs are based on strong partnerships and open communication between the child, their family, early education and care settings, schools and the community.

Play School is delighted to have collaborated with early education expert and researcher, Anthony Semann (Semann and Slattery) on 'Ready, Set, Big School'. Anthony has worked as a consultant regarding transition to school across Australia and predominantly in Victoria. He has researched the ways in which children and teachers experience transitions and how this experience for children can be made more child centred and less stressful for all involved. If you are keen to learn more about this research, check out [Transition: A Positive Start to School Initiative](#).

This episode reflects some of the common experiences for children starting school for the first time, sharing helpful 'tried and tested' strategies to incorporate at home and in early learning settings.



The Play School toys look very smart in their new uniforms on their first day at school.

Engaging with this episode and follow-up learning experiences will link to Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) Learning Outcomes including:

- Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity (1.1 and 1.2)
- Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world (2.1)
- Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing (3.1 and 3.2)
- Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners (4.1 and 4.3)
- Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators (5.1, 5.3, 5.5)

What is 'school readiness'?

According to the Australian Government website [Learning Potential](#), school readiness is "a measure of the knowledge, skills and behaviours that enable children to participate and succeed in school. Parents sometimes think that school readiness means being able to read, write and do basic maths before starting school. But this isn't the case! School readiness is about the development of the whole child – their social and emotional skills, physical skills, communication skills and cognitive skills."



Abi helps Kiya to make sure she can open her new school bag and lunch box with confidence.

In the ABC Kids Early Education article '[School Readiness During a Pandemic](#)', the important 6 'C's of school readiness are discussed; **Confidence, Creativity, Curiosity, Cooperation, Commitment, & Communication** and the 3 'I's; **Improvisation, Investigation, Imagination**. The following play-based experiences are highly recommended during the preschool years!

- Play, play and play some more.
- Encourage open ended play (no right or wrong), playing in the sandpit, playing with water, dress ups, songs, dancing, climbing trees, drawing, painting, pasting and playing with blocks, playdough, dolls and cubbies.
- Encourage lots of physical activity outside.
- Puzzles or games such as UNO, Memory, age appropriate board games and charades.
- Sing songs and rhymes and read lots and lots and lots of stories.
- Cook and follow recipes such as playdough, pizza, cakes etc.
- Walk around your local neighbourhood and follow a map. Talk about the numbering on the letterboxes and houses, the flowers, animals etc.
- Walk or catch public transport (when allowed) to the local school. Encourage discussions about school.
- Encourage independence and self-help skills such as tying shoelaces and putting clothes away.
- Encourage children to set the table, how many people, how many place mats are needed?
- Have conversations around the dinner table and allow your child to answer.

Most of these experiences make up a large part of high-quality early learning programs and will also occur as children play and spend time with you around the house. The complex learning that occurs through play (with peers and individually) is considered fundamental in becoming ready for formal learning to begin.



Little Ted chooses his first pair of school shoes!

1 Points from ABC Kids Early Education article by Louise Dorrat (Sept 2020).



Abi helps Kiya to make healthy lunch box choices! A rainbow fruit salad and a delicious cheese and salad wrap.

Follow-up ideas

- Reduce the number of squashed sandwiches coming back home! In the weeks leading up to starting school, check online for some yummy, healthy lunch box ideas. Encourage children to help you decide on favourite filling combos for sandwiches and wraps. Visit [Raising Children Network](#) for lots of helpful information about packing healthy lunches for children. Get off to an environmentally friendly start by choosing sustainable lunch packaging and reusable containers.
- Using new school equipment can be tricky. Encourage children to practise opening and closing their bags, lunch boxes, clothing zippers and buttons, lunch boxes, pencil cases and shoes.
- Role playing is a great way to help children feel ready for new things. Try role playing as Abi and Maurice did and pretend to meet a new friend. You could also try scenarios such as asking to go to the bathroom, or you could play out other daily routines e.g. Where will we meet when the bell goes? What to expect at out of school hours care (OOSH)? If you are not sure about some of these things yourself, the transition to school information provided by your school should help. Read through information provided together in short snippets and encourage children to ask questions as you read.
- There will be lots of variation in how different children react to starting school. Provide opportunities to talk and think together about the changes ahead. When considering how much time to spend discussing and 'preparing' together, remember to be guided by your child. Talking *too much* about anticipated change is not beneficial and can sometimes create unnecessary worry.
- Most early education settings plan a series of intentional transition to school learning experiences. These may include lunch box days, wearing new uniforms to preschool, telling news about school visits, inviting special guests to talk about school (such as Kindergarten teachers or school aged students). Keep up to date with the things your child is doing around school readiness at their early learning setting - you might like to try those ideas at home over the summer school holidays.



Creating a handy 'ready for school checklist' can help both children and parents feel confident with new morning routines.

Storybook suggestions

There are MANY great children's stories available about starting school. Here are some of Play School's favourites.

- 'First Day' (2017) by Margaret Wild and Kim Gamble
- 'Starting School' (2013) by Jane Godwin and Anna Walker
- 'My First Day at School' (2013) by Meredith Costain and Michelle MacIntosh
- 'Starting School' (2013) by Janet and Allen Alberg
- 'First Day' (2013) by Andrew Daddo and Jonathan Bentley

Starting school information from your State or Territory

Australian Capital Territory: [Starting School – A guide for families.](#)

New South Wales: [Getting Ready for School](#) pdf booklet.

Northern Territory: [Transitioning to School Package.](#)

Queensland: Early Education and Care [resources for parents.](#)

South Australia: [Starting School.](#)

Tasmania: [Department of Education - Transitions.](#)

Victoria: [Tips for Starting School](#) and [Starting Prep](#) pdf.

Western Australia: [Starting School.](#)

Many additional resources are available from the independent school sector. Follow up with schools in your local area to find out more.

Additional resources

- Learn the music and lyrics to the song 'Ready, Set, Big School' by Kylie Montague (lyrics) and Peter Dasent (music) included on page 4.
- More from Play School about 'first-time experiences' for children in [Maurice's Big Adventure](#) on ABC iView or on the ABC Kids app.
- Learn more about choosing a school or moving to a new school with [Raising Children Network.](#)
- Find out about the road safety considerations when your child starts school with [Kids and Traffic: The Early Childhood Road Safety Education Program](#) at Macquarie University.
- Many educators will be familiar with the ongoing work around transition to school by Sue Dockett and Bob Perry. Check out reference books 'Strong Foundations' (2020) and 'Families and Transition to School' (2017) for more information.



Credits

Series Producer: Bryson Hall

Executive Producer: Jan Stradling

Episode Outliner: Kylie Montague

ABC Kids Early Education Notes: Laura Stone

Ready Set Big School

♩ = 112

Kylie Montague

C F C Am⁷ D⁷ G

Rea-dy Set Big School Here I come I'm a lit-tle bit ner-vous But it's gon-na be fun Got my

5 C F C Am⁷ D⁷ G

bag on my back Shoes on my feet All the new friends I'm rea-dy to meet

9 C F C Am

Lots to ex - plore So much to learn So Rea-dy Set Big School

13 C Am C F G C

I'm off to big school Rea-dy Set Big School here I come!