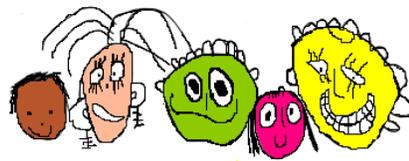


Hamilton Community Pre-School
School Readiness

Hamilton Community Pre-School



"Where discoveries, learning and fun connect."

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School Readiness Information Booklet

This book has been designed to provide you with information on - School Readiness - How to help your child before he/she starts school, starting school, lunch ideas and lots of more information.

All parents have concerns, i.e.

- ❖ "Is he/she ready for school?"
- ❖ "Will he/she cope with school?"

We hope that you find the information in this booklet useful and help you make an informed decision about school readiness.

We are always happy to talk to you about your child and school readiness

Thanks

Narelle, Jackie, Belle, Tema and Krystal



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When to start school

Children may enter Kindergarten at the beginning of the school year in NSW Department of School Education schools if **they turn five on or before 31 July in that year**. By law, all children must be enrolled in school by their sixth birthday.

Generally speaking, those *children who turn 5 between August and December will commence school as they are the right age.*

For those born January to the end of July, parents have the choice of sending children as young as four, or holding them back until they are 5, nearly 6. With increasing frequency, parents are holding their children back, and it is for those facing this decision that the issue of school readiness is very real.

SCHOOL NEXT YEAR! READY OR NOT?

School is very different to the home environment.

For a child who is young, the parents need to think seriously about why they want to send their child to school.

Readiness for school is in itself an important factor for consideration before starting school, readiness is not about schools just adapting and attempting to meet the needs of children. International research emphasises that certain areas of development and maturity are essential for children so that once at school, they are able to maximise the opportunities provided.

Social and emotional areas are the key areas of development that are most important for a child in regard to school readiness. This is in contrast to what many people believe - reading, writing and knowing colours or numbers are **NOT** readiness indicators. Though a child may be quite bright and apparently bored at home, he/she may not be sufficiently socially or emotionally mature to cope with the demands of school.

The key areas of social and emotional maturity related to school readiness can be summarised by reviewing these questions. At Pre-School does your child

- Separate easily from parent / carer at drop off
- Independently make a decision of where they are going to work / play
- Self initiate, engage and sustain engagement (6 - 8 minutes), have the skills to solve basic problems and ask for help from the educator if needed
- Work and play besides other children
- Have basic independence skills (able to put shoes and socks on, painting apron on, toileting independently)
- Sit with the group (eg mat time) and remain focused, ask questions and answer questions from the educator
- Self regulate their emotional response when they need to do something they don't want to (eg don't tantrum when it is time to pack up or when things don't go their way)

The importance of these skills related to school readiness is highlighted when one imagines a class of twenty school children who do not have these skills. The good news is that most children when they start school have these skills; unfortunately however there will be some children who start school and do not have these skills.

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This is why making informed decisions about children and school readiness is paramount to giving children the opportunity to thrive and flourishnot just cope.

The following information may help guide parents when making their decision related to when to start their child at school:-

- In making your decision, consult people who know your child well, Pre-School educators have the advantage of seeing many similarly aged children; they know your child and should have an accurate picture of his/her social, emotional and academic development
- Young boys, according to research, may benefit from having an additional year to mature before commencement. Steve Biddulph, author of *Raising Boys*, is a big supporter of boys being held back until at least the age of six years. He claims that boys on the whole are at least six to 12 months behind girls when it comes to fine motor skills and paying attention.
- Multiple births or children significantly premature may also benefit.
- Ask yourself, "Am I in a rush to send my child to school?" Children are going to be at school for a long time, so let's ensure they are great years. There is no detrimental impact of giving a child an additional year; in fact it is often viewed as a bonus year.
- Don't assume children will magically 'catch up' once they start school. In the majority of cases, they don't, and in fact the problems in maturity usually become more pronounced.
- Don't send a child to school already thinking they can repeat Kindergarten if they have to. We want the first year of school to be exciting, successful and not just one where the child attempts to 'cope' and then has to do it all again.
- Readiness for school or kindergarten is about having the maturity to make the most of these early years.
- Being legally ready to start school does not mean the child will be ready and does not mean that the child must start school at that time

The long term picture also needs to be examined. While children may cope initially, the ramifications of being 12 months younger than many of your class peers in the older grades and particularly high school can be quite serious. It is worth considering that being young for the class will mean that he/she will have to cope with the stresses of adolescence at the same time as older class peers.

If you have made the decision to start your child at school, be confident about your decision.

The beginning of school marks a new phase in the life of your child. Education today is an exciting, learning experience for both you and your child. School readiness is an important factor as your child takes the first steps into the educational world. You should wait until he/she is ready to send him/her off to school.

READY FOR SCHOOL?

There are many considerations that you, as a parent must make about sending your child to school. The list below is a guide ONLY, but may be useful when making your decision.

Considerations	✓ If applicable
Does your child mix happily with friends at Pre-School or home?	
Can go to Pre-School without tears?	
Can your child separate from you?	
Can your child cope with the unexpected?	
Can your child self regulate (that is not have tantrums)	
Is your child social and emotional development mature to cope in a classroom situation?	
Can understand rules.	
Can share and take turns.	
Can self engage in activities or experiences for approximately 10 minutes	
Can talk to adults other than just parents and family.	
Is your child toilet trained?	
Can dress self, including buttons.	
Can open food packets and unwrap plastic wrapped lunches.	
Can your child sit still and listen?	
Can your child complete tasks alone?	
Can your child talk in sentences?	
Can your child recognise their own belongings?	
Will your child ask for help if required?	
Can your child recognise their name?	
Does your child know their full name?	
Does your child speak clearly?	
Know basic colours, numbers and shapes?	
Can your child follow more than two step instructions?	
Has the correct pencil grip	
Able to draw recognisable pictures	

Watching your child at home, Pre-School and friends' homes is an easy way to help you make your decision if your child is 'ready for school'. If you have any concerns, do not hesitate to talk to the Pre-School educators. Hamilton Community Pre-School educators are more than willing to complete a detailed school readiness checklist for you.

TOO YOUNG FOR SCHOOL

The early school years for a child will determine their life long attitude to learning, and perhaps affect their self-esteem.

All children will not necessarily be ready for school at 5, as children need to be ready in many areas of their make-up. They need to be....

- ❖ Physically ready; can they cope for a day without sleep?
- ❖ Emotionally ready; do they feel secure by having reliable adults around who love them?
- ❖ Socially ready; are they frightened by the school group?
- ❖ Intellectually ready; have they already learnt to do many things successfully?

Studies have shown that the development of children is not related to age, as boys develop more slowly than girls, and by the time girls are commencing puberty, boys are at least 2 years younger in their development, and in reality, are still children.

Many children commencing kindergarten are only four and a half at the start of the school year, and the motor development of young boys has not kept pace with that of young girls. As a consequence, boys may have difficulty keeping still for any longer than a few minutes, where girls can usually sit for considerable periods of time; consider the situation of a boy who cannot sit still rushing around a playroom or rolling on the floor while a story is being read, causing disruption and sometimes being reprimanded - unfair considering the child is really unaware that he is doing anything wrong.

The law in Australia does not require children to attend school until they are six years of age and sometimes that extra year can make a world of difference to a young child. This is sometimes better than having them repeat a year if they are not coping. If they have poor concentration, cannot sit still, won't co-operate, won't share, won't play as a group, or are emotionally undeveloped.

Commencing school at four and a half the child may appear to be coping well, but could perhaps perform twice as good had they commenced a year later. Paediatrician Dr. Simon Clark (Head of Outpatients Paediatrics at Westmead Hospital) advised parents to use their own knowledge of their child's development in deciding whether their boy or girl is truly ready for school.

- ❖ If your instincts tell you to hold them back, do so if at all possible.
- ❖ If your child is already at school, think about if they may need to repeat.

Children who are not developmentally ready to begin school are facing disadvantages that can last a lifetime.

School Daze

Being bright, and being ready to begin school, are not necessarily the same thing.

By holding back you don't disadvantage your child, you give him or her the chance to get off to a good start.

When to enrol

Kindergarten enrolment begins around April the year before your child will start Kindergarten. Schools will often advertise when they are taking enrolments or you can contact the school you are interested in attending to find out about enrolling your child.

For young children - It is important to remember that you if you choose to enrol your child you are able to change your mind - just because you fill in the enrolment form it does not make it compulsory.

When to start your child at school is an individual decision.

Children develop at different rates and learn skills in different ways. It is the school's task to respond to the needs, learning styles and rates of progress of individual students.

Specialist advice and support is available to parents/caregivers of children with additional needs to help them access appropriate educational services. Talk to the school as early as possible about these services.

Orientation Day

Most schools have orientation days towards the end of the previous year to welcome children to Kindergarten. The duration and procedures of orientation depends on each school.

BEFORE THEY GO TO SCHOOL

Parents are their child's first teachers and during the years before school the role they play in shaping their child's intellectual and emotional development is crucial. The learning experiences that take place in the home during these early years will later have a great impact on the child's success at school.

There are literally hundreds of ways parents can help children learn. Very young children are usually eager to learn. Their curiosity about the world around them is insatiable.

If your child makes a mistake, don't dwell on it or become upset. Learning involves making mistakes - let your child know this; offer reassurance.

Be patient: don't pressure your child to perform faster.

Offer as much praise and encouragement as possible. Recognise your child's accomplishments, no matter how small. Nothing succeeds like success, and children are certainly not motivated by failure. If a child has frequent successful learning experiences, a sense of self-esteem will gradually develop.

Above all remember learning should be fun - don't turn the activities into a chore, or your child will turn off and become unco-operative. So relax and have fun sharing many hours of enjoyable learning with your child.

Some Simple Experiences to do at Home

Remember while at Pre-School your child is constantly involved in similar experiences

- **Follow the Path** - Draw a wavy line across a page and have your child follow the path with a toy car (or something similar). Such activities assist children in developing left-to-right orientation. Keep the pattern the child is to trace simple.
- **Drawing** - Give your child ample opportunity for drawing by making sure the necessary materials are handy - coloured crayons and pencils, paints and lots of paper. Encourage your child to tell you about it in her own time. Using books as a reference can inspire children to create wonderful art and help them understand artistic concepts, such as background, perceptions
- **Cutting and Pasting** - Give your child plenty of opportunities to cut and paste - for instance, searching through old magazines for pictures of things that begin with a certain sound.
- Take every opportunity you can to read to your child. Try to make story-telling part of the routine of going to bed. Children who are read to frequently soon learn the language of books, just as they learnt the language of speech from their parents. When reading to your child, encourage him/her to turn the pages and discuss what's happening in the pictures. Let him/her read the story back to you - 'reading the pictures' is fine.

- **Listening** - Listening is just as important a skill as reading, talking and writing. Children can and should be taught how to listen in preparation for their schooling. Good listening habits include realising when attention is expected, and understanding the necessity for taking turns at listening and talking.
- **Directions** - Give your child a number of simple directions to follow:
- As the child's confidence grows, the number of directions and their difficulty can be increased.
- **Co-ordination of Eye and Hand** - The co-ordination of eyes and hands is vital for the achievement of many learning experiences - writing for instance.
- **Snake** - Wiggle a skipping rope back and forth across the ground and have your child jump over the "snake" without touching it.
- **Loops** - Lay a piece of rope in a loopy pattern on the floor and challenge your child to step in the loops without touching the rope.
- Write your children's names using foundation print not capitals, on the top left hand of the paper so that they become familiar with what they'll be seeing at school. If they are interested, help them write their names themselves - have a name card so they can copy
- Encourage your children to finish tasks they have commenced.
- Encourage independence whenever possible. Independent children are likely to cope best of all in the school situation.
- Encourage them to be responsible for their belongings and try to respect their independence by relying on them a little more. After all they are going to school next year



Parents can help to make a child's day at school happier by:

- Purchasing a large school bag, let your child select it, make sure that it is easy to open and close: zips are easier for some children than buckles. Add a colourful novelty key ring for easy recognition
- Making sure your child can recognise his/her lunchbox, morning tea and drink bottle
- Labelling everything
- Sending your child to school in clothes that are easy to manage e.g. coats and cardigans with loops, shoes with Velcro. Children should be able to put on and take off outer clothing without help.
- Purchasing your child's shoes at the beginning of January to wear them in



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- Allowing your child to be responsible for packing his/her bag and organising school clothes - do this the night before
- Sending your child to school on time each day
- Making sure your child can unwrap his/her "little" and "big" lunch. Sandwich or paper bags, alfoil or greaseproof paper are easier than gladwrap
- Explaining and show your child what is eaten at "little" and "big" lunch. Children are often confused - encourage them to select their own healthy food

School Daze Arrives

The early days and weeks of school are exciting but can also be very tiring. Getting off to a good start at school takes a joint effort, and teachers and staff are trained to help your child.

Try these suggestions:

- ❖ Prepare yourself, if you are going to cry, be strong and don't do it in front of your child. Hold back the tears until you're in the car. If you are positive, the child will also be. Discuss any fears about school before the first day and be reassuring.
- ❖ On the first day, arrive on time but not early enough for the child to get "cold feet" - a long wait for class to begin may create anxiety.
- ❖ Arrive on time to collect your child as he/she may become fearful of being left when other children are going home.
- ❖ Notify the school if late collection cannot be avoided so your child can be informed of what is happening and what arrangements have been made
- ❖ Tell your child and their teacher if anyone other than the usual person is to collect your child otherwise they can become very upset
- ❖ Do all you can to make your child happy and confident about entering the new world of school life. Encourage your child to openly discuss feelings about school with you, and take a keen interest in what the child does at school.



HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD AT SCHOOL

It is important to realise that your role is FAR from over when your child is settled into school!!!

You can have a marked effect on your child's schooling by:-

- Introducing yourself to the teacher
- Letting the teacher know that you intend to be a supportive parent.
- Helping on canteen duty, listening to children read, if you are able
- Join the "P & C" or equivalent body.

Benefits for your Child:

- ❖ Your child sees you as part of the school 'TEAM'.
- ❖ Young children usually get quite a thrill when parents visit the school for special occasions.
- ❖ Your child will feel proud that you are able to help the school by organising special activities.

Parents who work during school hours:

Many parents CAN'T help out at school, no matter how much they'd like to. There are still ways you can be involved and show your child you care.

- ❖ Even if you are able to visit the school only once a year, DO IT!
- ❖ Take time at home to show interest in your child's daily activities, look at school work, help with learning words, daily reading, homework etc.
- ❖ Send items of interest or information for a Special Day.
- ❖ Don't forget at the end of the day, to ask your child how it all went.

THE LUNCH BOX

Starting kindergarten is an important step in your child's life.

With your child attending Pre-School you are already aware of the importance of healthy foods, therefore nothing will change keep referring to our Nutrition Policy as it reflects the National Dietary Guide for children (see table below the number of serves is applicable for children aged 5 to 7 years). Activity can be strenuous; your choice of food for lunch boxes can help to maintain a good level of energy throughout the day.

Food Group	Example	Serving size	Number of Serves per day
Meat or Meat Alternatives	Includes: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Lean cuts of beef or lamb ▶ Lean cuts of chicken, fish, pork, veal 	30-50g cooked meat ¼ cup lean mince 1 slice roast meat 40-50g fish 30-50g chicken, pork or veal	1
Vegetables	Includes all: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Dark green vegetables ▶ Orange vegetables e.g. pumpkin, sweet potato ▶ Cruciferous vegetables e.g. broccoli, cauliflower ▶ Starchy vegetables e.g. potatoes ▶ Salad vegetables e.g. lettuce, tomatoes 	¼ cup of cooked vegetables ½ cup salad vegetables ¼ cup of legumes e.g. cooked dried beans, peas or lentils ½ medium potato	2
Fruit	Includes all: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Citrus fruits ▶ Tropical fruits e.g. bananas, pineapple mango etc ▶ Stone fruits e.g. apricots, peaches, plums etc ▶ Melons ▶ Berries ▶ Grapes ▶ Apples ▶ Pears ▶ Canned, fresh and dried fruits 	1 small piece of fruit e.g. apricot, kiwi fruit, plums ½ medium fruit e.g. apple, orange, pear ½ cup diced pieces or canned fruit 2 dried apricots ¾ tablespoon of sultanas	1

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Food Group	Example	Serving size	Number of Serves per day
Breads, cereals, rice, pasta or noodles	Includes: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Breads – loaf, pita, Lebanese, fruit loaf ▶ Rice ▶ Pasta ▶ Noodles ▶ Breakfast cereals ▶ Cous cous ▶ Filo pastry ▶ Crumpets ▶ Pikelets/pancakes ▶ Low fat savoury biscuits 	1 slice of bread ½ medium bread roll ½ cup cooked rice, pasta or noodles ½ cup breakfast cereal	5-7
Dairy	Includes: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Plain milk ▶ Yoghurt ▶ Cheese ▶ Custard 	½ cup of milk (125ml) 1/3 cup of yoghurt (small tub) 1 slice of processed cheese or 20g block cheese ½ cup custard	2
<i>Preferred drink</i>	Water	To be made available all day	

It is important to respect children with severe allergic reactions and you should talk to the school concerning foods that are not allowed.

No Sweets

Many kindergartens wisely discourage sweet foods in the lunch box. There are plenty of tasty alternatives which children enjoy.

Fruity Choices

Remember the way your Mum may have cut fruit for you - oranges with the skin cut into a spiral that peeled away at lunch? It worked then and is still a favourite.

HOW TO KEEP KID'S LUNCHES COLD

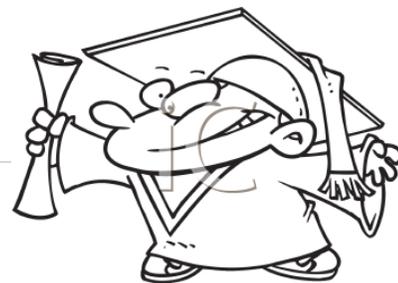
- ❖ Place ice bricks in lunch boxes
- ❖ Use insulated boxes or a small esky
- ❖ Freeze a drink bottle containing water or half freeze the water and then fill it to the top with water just before the child leaves for school



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To learn more about getting ready for kindergarten, see these Web sites:

- ❖ Going to school: Starting school
Handy step-by-step advice for parents, from preparation and the first days of school, to settling in and dealing with parental-separation pangs.
- ❖ School readiness
A practical analysis of what school readiness means, including examples of children's social and emotional maturity.
- ❖ NSW Community Services parenting site
Advice and guidelines for parents and carers on a huge range of topics.
- ❖ Starting school with a smile (PDF)
Important things children, parents and teachers can do together to prepare for school.
- ❖ Starting school
A helpful list of things for parents to do with their children just prior to starting school and during the first few week
- ❖ Kidspot - <http://www.kidspot.com.au/Back-to-School-For-parents-Is-your-child-ready-to-start-school+3926+153+article.htm>
- ❖ Kids matter - <https://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/families/starting-school/1-thinking-about-transition-school>
- ❖ Hamilton Community Pre-School has information available for you to read



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