

Macquarie Early Learning Centre's School Readiness Information Booklet



You have a big decision to make...

When can my child start school?

The information contained in this booklet should help you with making that decision...

There is an 18 month age range for children entering kindergarten in NSW. In any discussion about school readiness, the first question to ask is: Is my child the right age to start school? Children may enter Kindergarten at the beginning of school year in NSW government schools if they turn five on or before 31st July in that year. They must be at school by age 6.

As a general rule, if the child is 5 in the year before school or in January/early February, they would usually start. If the child turns 5 between February and the end of July, then you might ask... Is my child ready for school? This can be a dilemma!

More often than not, another year of preschool is recommended for the younger cohort, but it is best to seek advice from your preschool teacher. They know your children in a different way to you. You'll be pleased to hear that children generally behave very differently at preschool than they do with their parents. Your preschool teacher is a good judge of your children's readiness. Take their advice!

Please feel free to speak to Miss Sam regarding any concerns about your child's readiness for school. You can contact her in person, on the phone or via email.

What does a quality early childhood education look like?

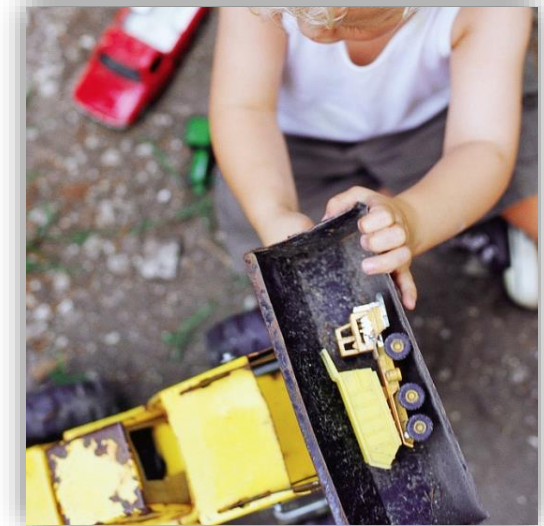


For most children, the year before they enter school, they are enrolled in a preschool or like here at Macquarie ELC, a long day care centre, which offers a preschool program. Early childhood education is a vital period in children's learning and development. A quality education program has a:

- Specific emphasis on play-based learning
- Recognises the importance of communication and language
- Is concerned with developing children's social and emotional skills

A quality early childhood education does not:

- Promote a learning to read program
- Teach a pushed-down kindergarten curriculum
- Use copious worksheets in 'busy work' (colouring-in, no creativity, no mess)
- Engage children in teacher-directed learning experiences all the time
- Have children sitting and listening for long periods of time



“When children play they are showing what they have learned and what they are trying to understand.”

You don't need to be an expert to start school!

Starting school is not about whether you can write, count to 10, say the alphabet, name your colours or even hold a pencil correctly. It is about their ability to speak confidently, to listen carefully, to concentrate and to remain on task until completion.

Don't be fooled that your child is ready based solely on academic skills.

Today's school system is more demanding than ever, and it's important that children are socially and emotionally ready so that their first school experience is a positive one.

Would another year at preschool be more beneficial?

Will my child flourish in a structured environment or does s/he need a more relaxed, unstructured one? You can't make an unready child ready, no matter how much practice and extra practice we give them. It just takes time!

Don't listen to relatives who will tell you that "you started early and you were fine". The first year of school is very different to what it was like 30 years ago.

There are higher expectations. Kindergarten has a much more rigorous curriculum than what it was 30 years ago. There's not a lot of 'down time'. There's no rest time in the afternoon. Your child needs to be ready!

So what skill do they need to start big school?

The following page will outline skills that will be useful for your child to develop before they start school. Developing these skills through play based and interested based experiences', following the guidelines of the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, is our main focus here at Macquarie ELC!

Useful skills for starting school

Confidence

- Speaks to adults clearly
- Initiates play with other children
- Attempts new tasks without seeking help
- Asks for help if they need it

Persistence

- Keeps trying even though a task is difficult
- Works until a task is completed
- Not easily distracted

Organisation

- Goes about things in an ordered way
- Understands that everything has a place and knows how to put their belongings away
- Understands instructions and asked to have them explained if they don't understand.

Social Skills

- Works co-operatively with others
- Knows how to take turns
- Has skills to include others in games and ask to join games
- Shares toys with others
- Accepts they can't always be 'the winner'
- Resolves conflicts without resorting to inappropriate behaviour
- Manages anger and frustration when things don't go their way
- Listens without interrupting
- Communicates and ask/answer questions
- Retells stories
- Work in small and large groups as well as independently
- Plays cooperatively
- Takes responsibility for their own actions
- Understands when someone is hurt and comforts them
- Engages in dramatic play

Independence

- Eats independently (can remove cling wrap, open packets and open drink bottles without help)
- Able to dress and undress themselves
- Able to use the toilet independently (public toilet, urinal for boys)
- Can say name, address and phone number

Resilience

- Separates from parents easily
- Bounces back from set backs
- Learns from his/her mistakes
- Pick themselves up if they fall
- Accepts with adults say "no"
- Happy to be told what to do



Useful skills for starting school continued...

Numeracy

- Sorts objects into categories
- Demonstrates concept of opposites
- Understands position words (behind, in front, middle, end)
- Recognise shapes and colours
- Counts up to 10 or 20
- Counts backwards from 5 or 10
- Begin to recognise numbers
- May write some numbers
- Touches objects to count
- Starting to understand relationship between numbers and objects and that numbers are used to count



Language and Literacy

- Recognise own name
- Begin to write own name
- Begin to recognise some letters of the alphabet
- Can copy some letters
- Distinguish between letters and numbers
- Draw pictures with increasing detail
- Hold writing implements with correct grip
- Use scissors with safety and increasing control
- Understands sequencing of events
- Answers simple questions
- Tells stories
- Can recount a recent story
- Speaks in sentences
- Asks lots of questions
- Follows simple instructions
- Follows simple rules
- Exhibits hand preference

Starting school is a big step. Why?

In January your child will be entering a whole new world. Your child needs to be prepared to cope without having you by their side.

The environment at school is very different to Pre-School, especially the playground.

You need to make attending the transition and orientation days at the end of 2016 a

There is more structure and there are more routines in a Kindergarten classroom.

Children who are used to routines in the home and at preschool cope better with the transition to school.

Children will need to make new friends. They need to be able to play in a playground that has many more children who are usually bigger than they are.

Your child will need to be able to play in a playground that has little or no play equipment.

TIP: Practice this on a family picnic... no equipment, no balls, just other kids. Find out who else from preschool is going to the same school as you and perhaps organise a play date with their parents.

Your school teachers will be a new face to you and your child.

So you and your child need to know the teaching team by, again, attending the orientation days.

Your child will attend school for a longer amount of time compared to here at Macquarie ELC. Your child will become tired, so a suggestion is that you reduce your family's social engagements and your child's activities during first term of school. Be prepared for "I don't want to go to school"

Best start...what is it and why does my child need it?

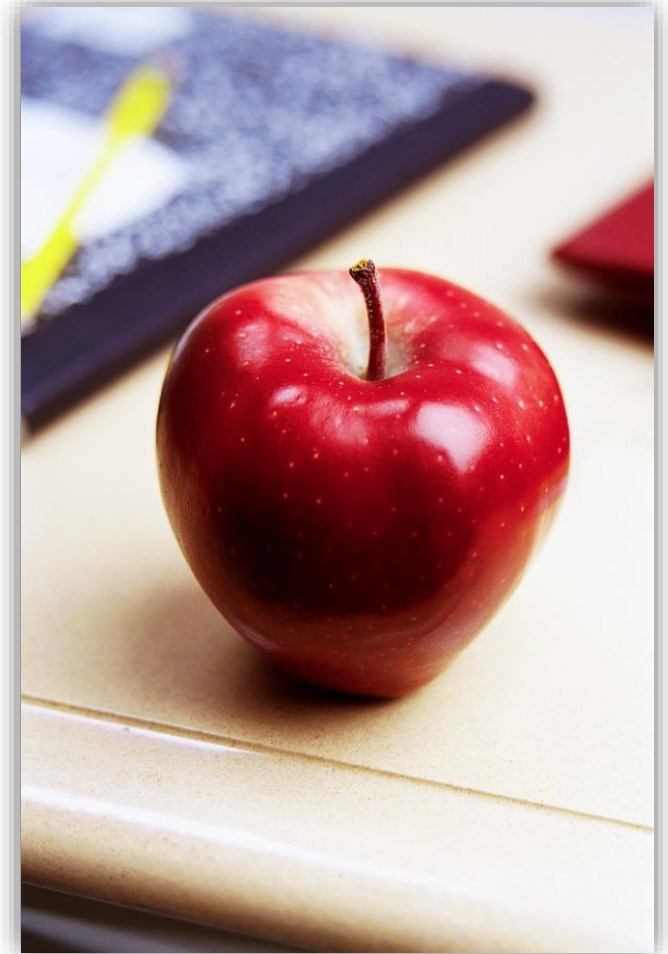
When your child enrolls in school, particularly government based public schools, they will participate in a Best Start interview. This is where your child will have an interview for the school to assess their literacy and numeracy skills.

It is important to remember that the Best Start interview is NOT A TEST!

It gives teachers valuable information that will benefit your child's learning and support quality teaching and learning in Kindergarten classrooms. Its purpose is to help the teacher gather information to guide the teaching of your child. The key idea is to find a baseline capability of all children to inform curriculum planning.

It is important to remember that all children learn at different rates and start school at different ages. Don't be concerned if your child can't answer all of the questions.

The Best Start interview is designed to provide teachers with information on each student's ability so they can plan effective learning programs during the early years of school.



Transition to school calendar

June – Time to enrol in school

- ~ Visit your local school and fill out an enrolment form.
- ~ Find out about open days and transition programs
- ~ Take your child's birth certificate, immunisation record and proof of address with you.
- ~ If your child has an allergy, medical condition, takes medication or has any special needs, inform the school as early as possible and make an appointment to see the school principal.
- ~ When your child's immunisations are due, ask to have your child's sight and hearing checked.

July - November

- ~ Attend orientation or transition to school programs.
- ~ Organise out of school hours care.
- ~ Fill out a travel pass application form if this applies to you.
- ~ Purchase school uniforms and other requisites.



December/January – Preparing for school

- ~ Make sure you have the schools phone number.
- ~ Find out when your child will have their best start interview.
- ~ Pack a lunch box and have a picnic outside.
- ~ Label EVERYTHING with your child's name.
- ~ Practice getting dressed and wearing the school uniform.
- ~ Let your child wear their school shoes so they get used to them.
- ~ Practice using a public toilet and recognising the symbol for boys and girls.
- ~ If you have a son, make sure he knows how to use a urinal.
- ~ Practice walking or travelling to school.
- ~ Set a regular bedtime routine.

Transition to school calendar continued...

The night before school starts

- ~ Be prepared! (have your camera ready)
- ~ Help your child pack their school bag
- ~ Pack a change of clothes in a plastic bag
- ~ Pack recess separate to lunch and talk to your child about the difference.

The first day of school

- ~ Be confident yourself.
- ~ Let your child dress themselves as much as possible.
- ~ Tie back long hair
- ~ Apply sun cream and take a hat.
- ~ Take photos
- ~ At the school, when your child is settled say goodbye and leave without fuss.
- ~ If your child gets upset, stay calm, tell them the facts (example that they are old enough to go to school, friends to play with, teacher will help, going to have fun, you will return in the afternoon when the little hand is on the 3 on the clock.)
- ~ Pick your child up on time in the afternoon.
- ~ Greet them enthusiastically and talk to your child about their day.

February

- ~ Make a list of important days at school eg Library and sports.

School preparation activities at MELC

Towards the end of the year, we will be organising some special activities for your child to participate in that will aid in the preparations for school. These include but are not limited to:

- Dress in your school uniform week – we will dedicate a whole week to wearing all or part of your school uniform to Macquarie ELC to show all your friends and teachers your new ‘big school’ uniform.
- We will ask for families to bring in a lunch box which we will fill with different food and drink that they are likely to get in their lunch boxes at school. We will ask for suggestions closer to the time. Through this they will learn to unwrap a sandwich, get the straw out of the plastic for their drink and put it in the hole and learn not to eat everything at morning tea and save some for lunch etc.
- Picnic lunches outside encourage your child to eat their lunch sitting on the floor instead of at tables.



Tips for packing school lunches...

- Organise food and drink according to the timetabled breaks and explain to your child that snack items are for the morning break and lunch items for the longer break.
- Clearly label your child's lunch box, drink bottle and containers with their name on it.
- Let your child help prepare healthy lunches and snacks.
- Pack food that is ready and easy to eat and not too messy. Pre-cut items such as oranges, celery and carrot are ideal.
- Use a lunch box that keeps food cool. Perhaps you could freeze a drink bottle to keep food cool.
- Ensure your child is able to open containers, yoghurts, fruit cups or plastic tubs.
- Try different types of breads, rolls or muffins for variety.
- Limit sweets, chips and treats.
- Water could be flavoured with a slice of lemon or orange.

Allergies: If your child suffers from any food allergies it is important that you inform the school.

If a child at your school suffers from anaphylaxis, then some schools may ask all children not to bring those foods to prevent other children from being put at a serious health risk.



And finally...

Your child will be fully prepared for school with a quality early childhood education...a language rich, play-based curriculum that focuses on communication, physical, emotional and social skill development.

Here is a little poem for the first day at school

*I wonder what you're doing now,
And if everyone is treating you kind.
I hope there is a special person,
A nice friend that you can find.*

*I wonder if the teacher knows
Just how special you are to me.
And if the brightness of your heart is something she can see.*

*I wonder if you are thinking about me,
And if you need a hug.
I already miss the sound of your voice
And how you give my leg a tug.*

*I wonder if you could possibly understand
How hard it is for me to let you grow
On this day know that my heart breaks
For this is the first step in letting you go.
-Anonymous*



If you have any questions regarding this booklet or about your child's readiness for school, then please do not hesitate in speaking with Miss Sam to discuss further.