



Radio Stations : **All Community Radio Stations**
Subject : **Early Childhood Development**
Audience : **Parents, caregivers and educators**
Program Topic : **Preparing your child to start school (Grade R)
(LOVE)**

Guidelines to the presenter

- Presenter – please familiarize yourself with the brief and the use the facts effectively by referring to them from time to time during the show.
- You should be seen as a peer rather than an authority.
- Offer guidance or opinion rather than telling people what to do.
- Encourage people to seek further information
- Always keep the objectives and outcomes in mind and drive these.

Topic:

Preparing your child to start school (Grade R)

Objectives:

- Generate awareness of the importance of preparing your child for school
- Understand how to offer children appropriate support and development to assist their transition to school
- Encourage parents to look out for challenging behaviours in children and assist children to cope

- Encourage parents to offer ongoing space for children to talk about their emotions, and support them both academically and emotionally

Introduction

Starting big school is a big transition for children and parents need to prepare and support their children through this. A child’s first experience can influence their experience of learning for life – so make it as positive as possible!

The transition to school can be challenging for some children and can result in some challenging behavior. Preparing for the first day beforehand, and being more available for your child at this important time, will really help make the transition smooth and enjoyable. Parents continued support of their child in school – through creating a good place for learning at home – is essential for ongoing success.

| Questions | Facts/Information |
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| <p>1. <i>School is a big deal! It is often a time of big transition for children and families. What are some of the changes that children have to deal with when they start big school?</i></p> | <p>Starting school involves a number of changes for children and families. This includes the differences between your child’s current setting (eg home, long day care, preschool) and the primary school they will be attending. When children start school they experience changes in the following areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical environment: For example, the size of the playground, classroom and school buildings, the location and types of toilets, the number of other children and |

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| <p>2. <i>How can you help a child manage this big transition?</i></p> | <p>teachers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rules and procedures: For example, more structured times for attending class, eating and going to the toilet, rules for different places such as the classroom and playground, lining up and putting up a hand to speak.• Relationships: For example, meeting new children and adults, responding to children of different ages, leaving an early childhood educator, getting to know a range of teachers for different subjects and from different grades.• Learning: For example, more formal learning experiences, structured times and set tasks, increasing independence. <p>There are many things that families can do before school starts to make children’s transition easier. Practicing changes to your daily routine will help build your child’s sense of security and reduce the stress of getting to school. Visits to the school will help familiarize your child with the school and build their confidence.</p> |
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| <p>3. <i>How can you practice some of these new routines?</i></p> | <p>You can practise what going to school will be like for your child by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Travel to and from school several times as a practice run.• Practise the school day routine – for example the morning routine of getting up early, putting on your child’s uniform and packing their school bag.• Practise lunch time routines - like setting up a pretend picnic in the backyard or park. Help your child practise getting their lunchbox out of their school bag and guide them to open it by themselves. You may also assist your child with identifying what to eat for playtime and lunchtime.• A fun way to prepare is to write a story with your child about their new school and what happens during the day. You can draw pictures or include photographs in the story and read it together. This may help to ease their anxiety about what happens during the day. |
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4. *Preparation is key in the time leading up to school starting. Your child's experience of school can depend greatly on how you help them prepare for school. What can you do to help them prepare well in the weeks leading up to school starting?*

In the lead up to starting school, you may be concerned about how your child will cope with being separated from you. Perhaps they took a long time to adjust to being without you when they started attending preschool or day care.

Things that can help to:

- Talk to your child's early childhood educator and new school teacher – they can help to put some ideas in place to support your child to separate from you.
- Develop a positive goodbye routine together (e.g. sharing a 'high five', special goodbye hug or a funny or loving gesture like a bear hug).
- Always say goodbye and reassure your child of when you will collect them (eg that you will be back at home time to pick them up, or what arrangements are for after school care). This helps build their trust and sense of security.
- Avoid lengthy goodbyes as they may increase separation distress.
- Talk positively and enthusiastically about what your child will be doing when they are away from you (e.g. "you will have a story", "you're

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| <p>5. <i>It helps for parents to know about the school environment so that they share as much information with their child as possible. What sort of information should they find out?</i></p> | <p>going to have fun meeting new children”). Children will pick up on your cues if you are feeling nervous so try to be mindful of what you communicate about your own emotions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The layout of your child’s school and how it differs from their early childhood setting. Where are the classrooms and how are they organized. Where are the toilets, drinking taps, out of school hours care rooms and play equipment.• How the school day is organised. What time does school start and finish? When and how long are the play times? How does this routine differ to your child’s previous routine at home or in their early childhood setting?• What children are expected to bring to school each day• How communication between the school and home will happen the before and after school care arrangements for working families |
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6. *I am sure it helps for children to be fairly independent before they start school – how do you help develop this?*

Encourage to develop self-help skills like dressing and undressing themselves, eating from their lunch box, going to the toilet and asking for help. Encouraging your child to develop these skills will give them lots of confidence in being able to do things for themselves. Also give them responsibility for small tasks (e.g. setting the table for dinner, putting their clothes in the wash basket) will help them feel useful and build their self-confidence.

Importantly involve your child in making decisions: Providing your child with simple choices will give them practice for decisions they may need to make at school. Start with giving two choices such as the red or the blue top when getting dressed or an apple or banana for a snack. This will give them the confidence to make bigger decisions.

7. *Schools are big places that are full of new routines and rules. How do you help your child adjust to these?*

It is important to talk to your child about how different settings have different rules and expectations (e.g. rules at preschool, rules around a swimming pool to keep everyone safe). This will help them adjust to some new rules they will need to learn to remember and follow at school. Discuss with your child some of the rules that they can expect at school to help them prepare.

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| <p>8. <i>What about meeting other children or families?</i></p> | <p>If you can, get to know other families in the school community, before starting school will help develop relationships and a sense of connectedness to the school community.</p> |
| <p>9. <i>What should you do or know about the first day?</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allow extra time in the morning. You may want to take photos to capture the moment!• Talk positively about the day ahead on the way to school and remind your child where you will be at pick-up time.• Manage your own anxiety. You may like to plan a relaxing activity the night before or arrange to have coffee with another parent after the school drop-off.• Have a small snack ready at the end of the day to help your child re-energise.• Remember that your child might be exhausted when they get home. Give them some down time and try not to overwhelm them with too many questions about the day. Grandparents and extended family members might need to be reminded about this too. |

10. Starting school involves a big change for your child. It is normal for children to have strong feelings as they start to think about these changes, such as excitement about the prospect of going to school as well as nervousness about what lies ahead. Might you see changes in their behaviour around the start of big school?

- Celebrate the first day of school as it is a huge milestone to achieve. You may like to organise a special activity or dinner together as a family on the weekend to celebrate.

Yes. Young children often have difficulty explaining in words how they feel. Instead they may show their feelings through their behaviour. Some behaviours may be easier to spot like tantrums and crying, while others may be more difficult to notice like being quieter than usual. During the transition to school you may notice:

- clinging behaviour (eg not wanting to separate from you)
- restlessness (eg difficulty settling at activities, easily distracted, fidgeting)
- withdrawing (eg not participating in familiar activities, less engaged, less willing to persist)
- being anxious (eg shyness, fidgeting, stomach aches, needing excessive reassurance around the routines or plans for the day)
- refusing to comply (eg not wanting to follow rules and routines)
- increase in crying and tantrums (eg more often or in more situations)

11. How do you deal with these?

- changes in eating habits (eg loss of appetite, becomes fussy with food, overeating)
- sleep difficulties (eg trouble falling or staying asleep, nightmares)
- regression to younger behaviours (eg bedwetting, thumb sucking, baby talk)
- aggressive behaviours (eg hitting, kicking, shouting).

Because of the changes associated with starting school, your child may benefit from some extra nurturing and understanding to help them feel secure and confident. Being open and receptive to how your child is feeling as well as providing comfort and attention when needed will help to support them through these changes. If you can spend more time with your child during these times, and always remember that their behavior is trying to communicate a feeling. Trying to understand and support this will help your child settle in. Labelling feelings is also one of the first steps in helping children understand and manage emotions. So help your child label their emotions. For example: "I can see that you're worried about making new friends."

12. Once they have started school, I imagine even if this is all going smoothly, they will encounter new challenges over the coming years. How do you help them with this?

An important skill you can provide your child with is coping skills to manage the difficult times in life. Coping skills are what we think and what we do to help us get through difficult situations. Your child will begin to learn and use different coping skills from the time they are born. You can build on the skills they are already using, as well as assist them to learn new ones. This may include asking for help, talking with friends, problem solving and taking time out when they need a break. Your child might be facing a challenge or worry that seems too overwhelming for them to tackle all at once. Breaking down the worry or challenge into small steps will help your child to slowly face their fear. You can devise a plan with your child where you work out small steps to help them reach their goal.

13. Are there other ways to support settling in?

When you take your young child into the classroom, ask to see some work. If your child misses you a lot, choose a special object together that she can bring to school. If your child says, "I don't want to go," remind him something you know your child loves to do, or likes about school. If your child says, "I hate school," ask her what is wrong and don't be surprised if your child is

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| <p><i>14. Are there ways you can help children prepare for the academic requirements of school – like developing learning skills?</i></p> | <p>upset at the end of the day. Kids often save up their hard feelings for the parents — because it feels safer to let these feelings out at home than at school.</p> <p>To help your child prepare for the academic environment of school, there is nothing you have to teach them, but more it is about all the support you can give them in the years before school to encourage learning through play. Important skills they can learn through this is how to focus on an activity for a period of time (eg making a house from blocks, building a racing track, drawing a picture, doing a puzzle) or to develop listening skills by reading books or listening to CD or DVD recordings of and then asking questions about the story.</p> |
| <p><i>15. Should you teach literacy and numeracy?</i></p> | <p>You don't need to formally teach — remember Learning occurs through everyday play and experiences. Providing opportunities to experience new places, such as going to the library to look for books, visiting places in the community and following your child's interests (eg looking for bugs with lots of legs), will show them that learning is fun. However you can help them with literacy and numeracy by making</p> |

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| | <p>sure that in your daily conversation you help your child recognise numbers and letters, and counting and writing their own name. Introduce the concept of counting and letter recognition through everyday activities. For example, count the number of toys on the floor, point to words when reading aloud to your child, sing songs, say nursery rhymes and foster an enjoyment of listening to stories. Remember, children will get plenty of practice with reading and writing once they start school.</p> |
| <p><i>16. Are there other skills?</i></p> | <p>A number of these we have talked about in previous shows, but things like encouraging ‘Make-believe’ play, such as when children pretend to be characters, encourages their imagination and creative skills and developing hand-eye coordination through using scissors and glue, drawing, building with blocks, helping with cooking (stirring and pouring), and throwing and catching balls, is important as they learn to read and write.</p> |
| <p><i>17. Once they start school, what if they say they don’t like their teacher?</i></p> | <p>A good student-teacher relationship can contribute immensely to a student’s long-term feelings about school, attitude toward learning, and motivation for success. If your</p> |

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| <p><i>18. How can parents support their children once they start school?</i></p> | <p>child is struggling with their teacher, try to figure out why the child claims not to like the teacher. Remind the child that many teachers are very strict at the beginning of the year until expectations and rules are established. It may also help if your child sees you and the teacher working together by building a good parent-teacher relationship. Sometimes all the situation needs is a little time and extra encouragement on your part to resolve the issue but if things don't improve over time, a parent-teacher conference may be in order.</p> <p>The supportive role of parents should not stop once school has started. Once your child has started school and as they progress in school it remains very important that parents remain involved in their child's school and continue to support them. They can remain involved by attending school meetings, getting to know teachers and trying to understand their child's work. They can support them by ensuring that children are well rested every day, that they have a special space and time in the house every day to focus on their homework and that they keep a look out for behaviourous</p> |
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| | that show their child is struggling and then take action to support them. |
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Learning outcomes

After listening to this show the audience should:

- Be aware of how to prepare their child for school
- Understand that routines and discussing the new environment and expectations of school with their child is helpful.
- Understand that appropriate support and development to assist their transition to school includes talking about feelings and teaching children to express themselves
- Be aware that challenging behaviours can be associated with these new transitions
- Be aware about adequate rest for each school day
- Know to create a 'homework space' for children where they can be supported to learn and have quiet undisturbed time to do their school work