### An example of one early childhood education service’s experience of supporting transition to school during COVID-19

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##### What does transition under COVID-19 mean for you?

We have 160 children heading off to school and 10 schools they can transition to in our area. I guess for us a lot of our school readiness has not changed a great deal, however, what we do has become more important in preparation for schooling. This year we are looking at children not completing a transition program in schools in our area so we are re-visiting what we do and what the children will miss out on and working out how we can cover that.

There are things we normally do that the children will miss this year. We normally run excursions to two schools in our area on a bus. Walking there we teach road safety rules, bus safety rules and stranger danger. This year we won’t get to see bubblers, libraries, halls, assembly areas, canteens, toilets, gardens and play equipment.

##### How are you supporting children in the transition to school this year?

Self-help and organisational skills are developed and practiced early. Like carrying your back pack and unpacking what you need for the day, drink bottle, hat etc. We also discuss the weather and when to take off our jumpers or put on a jacket.

We also help children to gain confidence and learn new communication skills, like saying your full name, remembering what class you are in, what your teachers name is and what school you are going to. We send children on jobs to the office and the children bring in or discuss different topics in front of their classes with support for ‘news’. We also deliver a literacy program throughout the year. We also deliver social skills programs to address friendships, social rules and skills. The SAFE series of protective behaviour books are also delivered to all of our children transitioning to school.

We use our daily routines as opportunities to practise school readiness skills. For example, we use lunchtime to:

* group children from across the preschool under their school banner where staff facilitate and support new relationships with children they will go to school with
* encourage asking friends for help at meal times to open packets or containers
* discuss what things can happen at school that they may need to cope with, like their parent/carer not packing a spoon or forgotten lunch boxes. What would you do?
* hold pretend canteen day where all children order their lunch and learn the process of placing an order, collecting an order and choosing healthy options
* talk about and practise timed lunches and when bells go what they mean so you need to eat your lunch before the bell then you can go play.

Many of our transition activities familiarise children with what to expect in a school environment. We promote school readiness on our ‘jobs’ tables where we have short but structured skills-based activities amongst free play, which mirrors the work stations children use in kindergarten. We have school uniform and classroom set ups in the home corner. We also discuss (and usually we would visit) the girls’ and boys’ toilets at school. We talk about how door locks open and shut and, with boys, what urinals are.

We have miniature versions of all aspects of school life to explain and teach children what will happen and how and what they can do, such as fete days, water play days and discos. We even have a fun run day. Classes have a colour to dress in and we practice races and events that would be held at a school athletics carnival. We learn about winning and losing and trying your best. Winning a big class trophy or not.

##### How do you collaborate with local schools to support transition?

We use social stories that local schools have made for us showing all of the places at school. We also have meetings with every Kindergarten teacher across Dubbo that our children are going to at our preschool, or via Zoom this year, to pass on our information to smooth transition.

We also share school group lists with permission so parents know which other children are going to their child’s school to arrange playdates, new friendships or support.