

What is important for children starting school?

How to make use of the playground

How to make use of the playground is often very important to children. Go to the school on the weekend or holidays so your child can have a go at the playground and equipment well before they start school. You may be able to visit during school hours too. Check with the school office.

Making friends

Having friends often makes a big difference to how children feel about school. Does your child have a friend at school already? You could set up some play dates before your child starts school. Ask your child's teachers to support your child to build friendships. The school may also have a buddy system for children new to school. Ask your child's teacher about this.

The teacher knowing you and your child

Teachers are keen to hear what will help you and your child settle in and feel comfortable at school. What can you share with the teacher or teachers about your child and family or whānau so that they can get to know you better?

Your family's culture and home language

Your child's teacher and school will want to support and make connections to your child's culture and home language. What could you share with your child's teacher that could support them to better understand and learn about your child's culture, languages and values?

A lot more is now known about what helps children make a successful transition to school. Here's what makes the difference for children...

Your child's learning needs

What will help your child learn at school? Do you feel your child will need extra help at school to support their learning? Talk to your child's school about what help you think that your child might need to support their learning.

School visits

Visiting the school and classroom before starting school is a great way for children to get to know some of the other children, their new teachers and what happens at school. Talk to your child's school about when and how often your child (and you) would like to visit before they start school. Some children take longer than others to settle so talk to your child's teacher about your child's needs. School visits will help your child feel emotionally settled so they are ready and able to enjoy their learning experiences.

Feeling like a school kid

Children often like to know what they'll wear to school such as a uniform or school clothes, and whether they'll have a bag or lunchbox. Help them learn the names of teachers, their classroom and their school. All of these things help children feel more like a 'school kid'.

Family and whānau connections

Does your child have siblings, cousins, family friends at school? If yes, this is a great time to connect with them. How else can your family or whānau support you and your child during this time of change?

Other things to talk to your child about starting school...



Using the bathrooms at school

- Schools often have separate toilets for boys and girls. This can be a bit different to what children are used to at home or their early childhood education centre.
- Does your child know where the toilets are at school?
- Are they able to use the toilet and wash their hands independently? Talk to your child's teacher about their needs.
- Do they need to ask permission from the teacher to go to the toilet if they need to. Ask your child's teacher about this.
- Boys toilets often have a urinal. Your child might like to practice how to use this on school visits.



The school day

Talk to your child about the routines and timetable of school. Perhaps your child's school uses a bell to let children know when to return to their classrooms or when they are allowed to play outside. Talk to your child about this.



Food at school

- Will your child be using a lunchbox at school? Have they used one before? Your child may need to make choices for what to eat at morning tea and lunchtime. It is a good idea to talk with your child about these things.
- Can your child open containers and packaging independently?
- Maybe meals are provided by the school? Is your child familiar with this? Find out what happens in your school community and have conversations with your child about what to do.
- Lunch playtime can feel long for a child new to school. Help them to think about what they will do at lunchtime and how to join in games or play with other children.



Getting to and from school

How will your child get to school and get home again afterwards?

Speak to your school about before and after school care programmes and subsidies for your child.

Find ideas about having conversations with your child at:

Te kōrerorero Talking together:
<https://tewhariki.tki.org.nz/en/teaching-strategies-and-resources/communication/talking-together/>



[newzealand.govt.nz](https://www.newzealand.govt.nz)

Starting School

What's important for children?

"I want my child to be happy at school."

Jan, mum of 5 year old.

Supporting your child to successfully transition to school

There can be long-term effects of a positive start to school on children's ongoing learning and happiness. Feeling like you belong and feeling safe in a new place is important when everything is new. Parents can be proactive in supporting their child's transition to school. This can not only help your child make a more successful transition, but can also help you build a relationship with the school too. Getting involved in helping your child before and after they start school – no matter if they are your first child, or your fifth to go to school – your contribution makes a big difference.



What is important for children to learn before and at school?

Every parent, family or whānau will have ideas about what is important for their child to learn. Each early childhood education setting and school also has a set of ideas about what is important for children to learn too.

This set of ideas, developed for all children transitioning to school and/or kura, is based on Te Whāriki and the New Zealand Curriculum. They have been guided by research and theory and reflect our society's goals and aspirations for children now and into the future.

In early childhood education

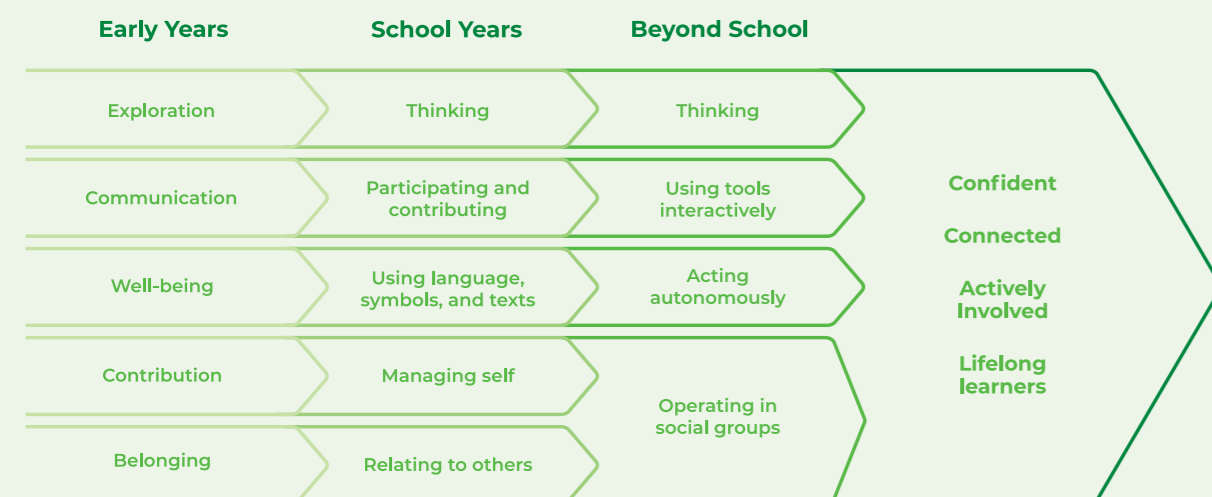
Before children start school these goals revolve around children's well-being, belonging, contribution, exploration, and communication. These goals (or strands) include things like literacy, mathematics, science, the arts, technology and so on, as well as dispositions that help children learn how to learn. Children are confident, and competent learners, especially in their own familiar settings. They know their capabilities and these are interwoven and built into their experiences as they transition through their learning pathway to a new environment.

At school

At primary and secondary school these goals relate to a set of key competencies for all learners, as well as how learning happens. There are also sets of goals for literacy, the arts, science, mathematics and statistics, health and physical education, learning languages, and technology.

Learning dispositions and key competencies are like attitudes to learning. They are important because they help your child in all learning including reading, writing, and mathematics.

Te Whāriki sets the foundation for continuity throughout the learning pathway from early years through school and beyond. Children bring with them their own prior holistic knowledge, approaches, and experiences of learning, sense of identity – physically, culturally, linguistically, and spiritually and build on these throughout their lives.



How can I help my child develop these competencies at home?



You could:

- Encourage your child to stick at tricky tasks and praise their effort when they persist and problem-solve.
- Use open-ended questions and conversations to help your child to think and listen as they tell you their ideas e.g. "I wonder why...?", "Why do you think...?" "What's a good idea for how to solve this problem...?" "What do you think...?"
- Give your children time. Play with them, talk with them, and listen to their ideas.
- Show your child how to work with others by doing things like baking, gardening or making something with them.
- Encourage your child to take responsibility for small jobs around the house like tidying their toys and making their bed (even though it might not be as neat as when you do it!)
- Give your child real choices when you can so that they can learn to make decisions for themselves.
- Help your child to be curious about the world around them. Take the time to slow down and talk about interesting objects or things.

How does early learning link to school learning?

There are strong links between what your child learns at home, through attending an early childhood education service, and what they will learn at school. While some of this early learning might not always be obvious to you at the time, what your pre-schooler learns and experiences now provides important foundations for school learning as well as for the rest of their lives.



Here are some examples:



When children play for a long time with other children in the sandpit, making and creating something like a city or roads, they are learning things like:

- How to collaborate and work with others
- How to work at something without giving up
- How to problem-solve and think creatively
- How to express their ideas to others

Thinking, problem solving, and creativity are important at school too.



When a child takes responsibility for jobs like cleaning up all the toys they have been playing with, they are learning things like:

- How to manage themselves and their belongings
- How to contribute and take responsibility
- How to complete a task

Experiences like these will help your child manage themselves at school.



When a child gets time to create, play, and talk with adults and other children who are interested in their ideas, they are learning things like:

- How to think for themselves
- How to work things out
- How to communicate with other people

This learning will help give them the confidence to contribute their ideas at school.



Literacy and mathematics is important.

- Read to your child
- Make up stories with them
- Teach your children songs and rhymes
- Encourage them to draw and paint
- Count with them
- Look for patterns together

Activities like these will help your child develop skills needed to become a competent learner.