Welcome back to school everyone. This year we intend to regularly contribute parenting support and information through the school newsletter. This week we have included some information that might assist you in supporting your children through their start to the school year.

STARTING SCHOOL:

Starting primary school is an important time for children and their families. Children who make a positive start to school are more likely to feel:

• Comfortable, relaxed and valued
• Good about themselves as learners
• A sense of belonging within the school community

Making a positive transition to school

Transition is not just about the first day; it is a process that happens over time as children and families start to think about and prepare for beginning school. This process continues once children have started school as they adjust and settle into the new environment, form new relationships, and learn about new rules and routines.

Transition to school involves a number of changes for children and their families which can be associated with a mixture of feelings. Children can often feel excited about going to ‘big school’ or into a higher grade, making new friends and learning new things, but it is not unusual for children to also feel nervous about these changes as they move from one setting to another. Supporting children during transition is important because research suggests that having a positive start to school promotes children’s capacity to learn and make and maintain friendships.

Parents and carers play an important role in supporting children to manage the transition into primary school. You can help your child to feel confident about starting school which will assist them to cope with the new social and educational challenges that starting school often brings.

Things you can do to help your child:

Speak positively and enthusiastically about school. Listen to your child’s concerns and reassure them that it is okay to feel nervous about change, Answer any questions they may have.

Supporting your child’s strengths and skills

Personal skills

Personal skills are those things that help children to become more independent and to manage a range of situations. You can continue to help your child to develop their personal skills by:

• Encouraging self-help skills
• Promoting a sense of responsibility
• Encouraging your child to care for their belongings
• Involving your child in making decisions
• Developing your child’s understanding of social rules

Relationship skills

Building relationships involves a range of skills that help children to make and keep friends. As they grow and develop, children learn more and more complex social skills from those around them. You can continue to help your child develop these skills by:

• Joining in, sharing and taking turns
• Inviting children to play together
• Talking with your child about their friendships
• Teaching your child friendship skills
• Involving your child in conversations
• Getting to know other families in the school community.

Learning skills

At this age children will be at many different stages in their learning journey. Some children will be starting to read and write others will be just beginning to show some interest in letters and numbers. Through various early childhood settings and experiences they will have been exposed to opportunities to experiment with letters, numbers and symbols as well as learning to write their names. All these skills will help children in making the transition to school. It is important to remember, however, that children starting school are not expected to be able to read and write. Most importantly, they need skills that will help them to learn. These skills include the ability to:

• Focus for a period of time
• ask questions
• Follow simple instructions
• Complete tasks

You can continue to help your child to develop their learning skills by:

• Encouraging your child to focus on small tasks
• Encouraging listening skills
• Reading books with children is a great way to help develop their listening skills - audio recordings of stories are good for this too
• Promoting curiosity
• Promoting a positive attitude to learning
• Sharing your own interests - a love for learning can be passed on!
• Helping your child to follow instructions
• Encouraging your child’s play
• Encouraging hand-eye coordination.

How is your child feeling about starting school?

Talking with your child

Supporting your child to talk about their thoughts and feelings about starting school will help you to find out and understand how they are feeling and what help they may require. At this age, children can find it difficult to put their thoughts and feelings into words. Through gentle encouragement and guidance over time they will learn to share what they are thinking and feeling.

Wishing everyone a smooth and enjoyable beginning to the 2013 school year!

Adelle Haire and Caroline Vakaci
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