



Session 1

Schooling in Australia

Schools in Australia aim to create successful learners – those who utilise creativity, logic and strategy in their thinking, are tolerant, optimistic, responsible, self-aware and able to manage their own emotions and behaviours. Key features of the Australian education system include; the promotion of lifelong learning, multiple subjects for a variety of pathways to success, a student-centered teaching and learning model and a full range of assessment methods.

The Australian school system includes:

- Preschool.
- Primary school.
- Secondary school.
- Senior secondary school.

The ability to adapt to school is influenced by child characteristics (personality, social skills, intelligence and other factors), parent characteristics (parenting practices, relationship status, other) and community characteristics (the services available in the community and the relationship families have with these services).

Primary school

Primary schools in NSW currently follow a curriculum based on different stages of learning.

- Early Stage 1 : Kindergarten.
- Stage 1: Years 1 and 2.

- Stage 2: Years 3 and 4.
- Stage 3: Years 5 and 6.

Children in primary school learn English, Mathematics, Creative Arts, Human Society and Its Environment, Science and Technology and Personal Development, Health and Physical Education.

In addition to subject-based content, primary school learning addresses important contemporary themes and general capabilities as students prepare to live and work successfully in the 21st century. These include; information technology, critical and creative thinking, personal and social capability and ethical understanding. Many of the important themes of the curriculum cannot be learned from a text book and intensive study but are developed through participation in sport, art, music and social experiences.

What is expected of students?

Students are expected to have:

- Appropriate social and communications skills.
- The ability to contribute to and participate in the class and school environment.
- An understanding and respect for cultural diversity.
- A good level of physical wellbeing and development.
- Good problem solving skills and resilience.
- The ability to cooperate with school rules and with teachers and peers.





- Personal responsibility and self-leadership.
- Decision making ability.

Parental expectations

Parental expectations need to be realistic, age-appropriate and relevant to their child's experience of attending an Australian school. Parents should aim to base expectations on the following:

- Their own expectations.
- Other parent expectations of children.
- School expectations of children.
- Their own expectations of themselves.
- Their ability to model the behaviour that they expect from their child.

Problems can occur when parents expect too much of their children, or for their children to be perfect. No one is perfect. Expecting perfection from a parent or child can lead to disappointment and conflict.

Parents who feel that they don't understand what appropriate expectations may be or are concerned their expectations may be too high should speak to their child's school for support and guidance.

Rights and responsibilities of parents

Include:

- Ensuring that children attend school each day, and are appropriately supervised before and after school.
- Helping children to get enough rest and free

time/play time to support their physical and social development.

- Providing a safe environment in which children are free from violence and abuse, understanding the difference between discipline and child abuse.
- Complying with all relevant school policies, procedures and guidelines, and the principals' directives that pertain to visitors when they enter a school.
- Communicating any concerns they have to the classroom teacher or school principal.
- Being involved with and participating in their child's schooling.

Key roles within primary schools

- Principal - has overall responsibility for the whole school.
- Deputy Principal - responsible for the day-to-day organisation of the school and for the welfare of all students and staff.
- Classroom Teacher - responsible for child learning and welfare at school.
- ESL Teacher (English as a Second Language) - assists students from non-English speaking backgrounds.
- School Counsellor - provides counselling and psychological assessment of students with specific needs.
- Parents & Citizens (P & C) associations/committees – a group of parents, caregivers and citizens who work on activities within the school including policy development and fundraising.





In order to communicate with the school it is best for parents to firstly make an appointment with, or speak to their child's classroom teacher. Administrative matters can be discussed with school administrative staff who are usually located in the school's front office area. Appointments can also be made with the school counsellor or principal. If an interpreter is needed contact Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 131 450.

Selective schools and opportunity classes

Selective schools and opportunity classes are part of a special education program and are designed to provide an appropriately challenging learning environment for highly gifted and talented students.

Opportunity classes are classes in some government primary schools for students in Years 5 and 6 that cater for highly-achieving, academically talented students. In NSW opportunity class entry involves students participating in the Opportunity Class Placement Test.

For (NSW) selective high school entry, students are considered on the basis of academic merit which is determined by student performance at school and in the Selective High Schools Placement Test which is held each year.

Family Focus Activity 1

Family organiser

Families are often involved in lots of meetings, appointments and activities outside the home. Going to school adds dozens of excursions, sports days, carnivals, exams and special events to the family calendar.

Having a system for keeping track of important dates can help families function more effectively. It can help parents to be more aware of key events in their child's diary that may be causing stress (such as a big test), or that may require special planning and preparation (such as the completion of an art project).

This activity will help families communicate clearly and coordinate schedules with one another, ensuring that each member of the family is supported and prepared for the day, week and month ahead.

Materials required

- Notice board
- String
- Thumb tacks or pins
- Blank pad of paper or small whiteboard
- Pen
- White board markers and eraser
- Calendar with good-sized blank squares





Instructions

1. Create a communication space – Use string, thumb tacks or pins to attach either a blank pad of paper or a small whiteboard to your notice board. Tape some string around one end of a pen (if you have attached a blank pad of paper) or a white board marker (if you have attached a small whiteboard). Attach the other end of the string to the notice board. This section of your family organiser is for telephone messages, last minute updates, and writing notes to family members.

2. Important phone numbers section - Make a list of important phone numbers and post it on the notice board. Numbers to Include:

- Emergency number (000)
- Doctor and dentist numbers
- Parent work numbers
- The number of a person to call in an emergency
- Names and phone numbers of children's friends
- School office number

3. Calendar section - Attach a calendar to the notice board. Make sure family members write down meetings, appointments, after school activities, excursions, parties and other important dates.

4. Monthly family meeting – Host a family meeting at the beginning of each month. Bring school notes, newsletters and calendars, parent diaries, and other important information. Spend time discussing the upcoming month and the priority activities for each family member. Input all important dates into the calendar. Talk to your children about upcoming events and activities. Remember to consider:

- Do they need your support in preparing for any key dates?
- Are there any weeks when someone is overloaded and might need some extra help?
- Is there sufficient time in the calendar for all members of the family to enjoy rest and unstructured recreation?
- Are there any low-priority activities that could be removed from the schedule to reduce stress and time-pressure?

Be sure to check the calendar each week and talk to your children before the week begins, about what is upcoming. This will help you to monitor their activities, ensure they are not overloaded and assist them in mentally preparing for what is ahead.

