

# TRANSITION TO SCHOOL NEWSLETTER APRIL 2011



Welcome to our First Transition to School Newsletter for 2011.

The transition from an early learning centre to school for many parents and children is a very stressful time and one that is filled with many different questions. The following information is designed to answer some of those questions - what your child needs to know before they go to school, how we achieve this at Top Ryde Early Learning and what you and your family can expect once you get to primary school. We thank those families who came along to our information night - we know that there was lots of information discussed, and we've made a summary on the following page for you.

We are now well and truly into the first half of the year. It has been a very busy and exciting few months. It is amazing how much the children are learning from playing with friends and turn-taking, to sports days with team games and co operative play. They've had an interest in clocks, numbers and timetables - so we've developed their early maths skills, and we're also able to do this through the fantastic cooking (measuring, predicting etc) they have been doing. We are focusing on group games and extending our social skills that will enable your child to make friends easily in the playground at school.



## Our Teachers in the Waratah class



**Amy Stibbard** has a Bachelor of Education and many years experience working with children - Amy is more than happy to answer your questions regarding schools, school readiness and your child's development.

**Bryn Williams** has a Bachelor of Education and more than 10yrs experience working with children in both primary and Early Education environments. Bryn is also happy to help with any questions you have about going to school.



You will also see **Shaun Vengoa** in the Waratah classroom who has a Certificate III in Sports and Fitness and is our centre's 'Health and Wellbeing' specialist teacher, running our health and wellbeing program and all monthly sports days.

## Transition to School Information Night

At our recent transition to school information night we had Michelle Collyer (the principal) from Ryde Public school come in and talk to our families here about what is important for your child to know and be capable of when they go off to school. Michelle also discussed some things that would help prepare your children that you can do at home.

Following is a list of things Michelle discussed:

1. Children do not need to be proficient in writing their names but it will help if they are able to recognise it and attempt to write it.
2. It is very important that children have the confidence to ask questions, make their needs known and take care of themselves in an environment where there may be one teacher for up to 35 children.
3. There is no expectation that children need to be able to read and write before school as long as they have an understanding of what letters mean and how they are used. Many parents teach their child differently to how a school will teach and therefore the child will become very confused and/or bored if they know too much.
4. There is an expectation that children are independent at toileting, dressing themselves and looking after their belongings.
5. Children should be encouraged to maintain their home languages. When you speak a language well you are teaching children to speak and understand it well and they will look for corresponding words in English so you are much better off teaching them the language you know best.
6. Children need to understand the way recess and lunch work as they are used to being given hot nutritious meals during the day when here. (we focus on this as a part of our experiences in November)
7. Children need to show an interest in learning
8. It is important that children are able to make friends, share and negotiate with others.
9. Concentration skills are important so that children learn to sit in groups.
10. Children should have realistic expectations of school.
11. Children should be able to follow basic instructions and see a task through to completion.
12. Play is still a crucial part of a child's day and they learn mostly through play. This is how many of a child's critical thinking skills are developed.
13. Children will be tired when they go to school and need to be able to cope emotionally which is why sending them young can be detrimental as they are just not mature enough to cope.

Another **important tip** for parents is that if you are going to need **before and after school care** at your child's school next year, book in as early as possible as spots fill up incredibly fast. We do before and after school care here at Top Ryde Early Learning for children at Ryde Public School with Siblings here at Top Ryde Early Learning. Talk to Nicole for details.



**Each year we hold a school reunion for the children who attended Top Ryde Early Learning the previous year.**

The pictures above show the children directing questions to their old Waratah friends who have now been at primary school for several weeks.

The current class asked questions like; *What do you do at school? What do you learn at school? What do you eat at school and where do you play?*

The answers came thick and fast in from the old Waratahs who were very keen to share their new found knowledge of school.

They told us at school they still have time to play and their teachers still read them lots of books. They eat lunch from a lunch box with their friends and they start learning to read words, just little ones! They have a uniform and all pointed to the crest on their shirts and they still do sports and they wear sports clothes for that. They said it's important to listen to their teachers, the same as at Top Ryde Early Learning and finally, some of them go to after school care where they can play more games and their mums and dads come after work.

### **PREPARE YOUR CHILD FOR SCHOOL...SOME TIPS**

- Encourage your child's curiosity by asking questions and by encouraging questions in return
- Read to your child- 10 minutes each day is highly recommended as the best way for children to learn literacy and language skills.
- Discuss the who, what, when, where, why, how questions to promote discussion and reflection
- Be positive about school and learning (regardless of your own experiences)
- Visit your school with your child
- Visit the local library
- Attend orientation days as a family
- Encourage children to assist and help out with odd jobs eg setting table, sorting clothes, using 1 and 2 step instructions
- Encourage children to look after their own belongings perhaps leading up to packing their own bags with spare clothes and hat
- Encourage children to start going to the toilet independently (In schools teachers do not enter bathrooms), this includes flushing and washing hands
- Discuss things about school like the bell and it being the same ring for different meanings
- Prepare them for coping with the tiredness of 5 days of school - go to bed early (7pm) and stay in bed for at least 11 hours (up to 13!)

[https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/languagesupport/start\\_school/strt\\_english.pdf](https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/languagesupport/start_school/strt_english.pdf)

## SOME QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK WHEN DECIDING TO SEND YOUR CHILD TO SCHOOL

- Is my child emotionally ready for the challenges of school?
- Can my child mix well with others?
- Does my child separate from me easily?
- Will my child flourish in a structured environment? or does s/he need a more relaxed, unstructured one?
- Does my child listen well and respond appropriately to instructions?
- Does my child communicate effectively?
- Do I want my child to go to school because it will be more convenient for me, or because s/he is ready?

### What we do here at Top Ryde Early Learning to ensure your child is ready for school

#### 1. Name Writing and Recognition

Children are surrounded by their name here at the centre, from as early as the Lilli Pilli Room, although it becomes more obvious once they move through to the Acacia and Waratah Rooms. Children have labelled lockers as well as individual lunch cards for meal times. Inside the room they have large resource cards which they use as a guide when they want to write their name. There is a writing centre where children can practice writing and children are always encouraged to write their own names on their artwork. The Waratahs also enjoy literacy games where they get to find their own name in the room.



#### 2. Confidence



Building a child's confidence is extremely important to their continual success at school and beyond. Here at the centre children are given lots of opportunities to succeed in front of their peers and teachers. 'Show and tell' is a great opportunity to get up in front of their group and talk about something that is important to them. They are then given the chance to answer questions from their peers. Children are also given the responsibility to be 'helpers' in a variety of tasks throughout the day where more confident children are paired with less confident.

The Early Years Learning Framework that we use fosters the mastering of skills which in turn builds confidence by continuing to add to the children's experience of success.

### 3. Reading and Writing

The children are surrounded by language and literature throughout the day. There is a wealth of story books, resource books, signs and labels for the children to learn that letters and words mean something. The children have access to a variety of writing materials that are available to them all day. Children are not forced to write, but when an interest is shown, children are encouraged to extend it by writing their names - eg invitations for events, information from interest projects, words for the day book and excursion notes to parents. Children are read to throughout the day and often get an opportunity to 'read' to their friends or younger children either when they visit other rooms or in the garden during outdoor play. When children 'read' they analyse the pictures in the story and make up the appropriate words - this is a fantastic exercise as it shows that children are understanding that words make meaning, and they are building on their confidence and imagination.



### 4. Toileting and Dressing

Here at the centre we encourage children to become independent at toileting by close supervision of the bathroom, especially whilst toilet training so that they can ask for assistance if required. Children are also encouraged to dress themselves before and after sleep time and any other times throughout the day, including during dramatic play with dress up clothes. They are given many opportunities to develop self help skills, from making their own beds to cleaning up after themselves at lunch time. We'd rather encourage them to put their own shoes on (sometimes on the wrong feet) than tell them they got it wrong and do it for them. We label the toilets in the Waratah's bathroom as 'boy' and 'girl' toilets so that children learn to identify those words for when they start school.

### 5. Home languages



This is extremely important for us to continue to encourage and we ask parents to give us some basic words in home languages so that the staff can communicate with the child whilst they are here. In addition, the staff between them, have over 6 different languages that they fluently speak. Maintaining a home language will make it easier for the child at school to learn English and other languages. We also have books in other languages, educational computer games in different languages and celebrate a range of cultural events so that even those children who do not have a second language are exposed to different ones. We incorporate this through the transitions, mealtimes and the language group times.

### 6. Gross motor activities

We have a lot of gross motor equipment at the centre for children to play in and we also program for specific gross motor games, such as parachute games etc. We have been running monthly Sports Days for the children where they get the opportunity to try sports that they may be less familiar with. In order to continue to build the children's confidence, these activities always remain competition free and all children are encouraged to participate. This is also a good opportunity for children to learn about games with rules which can be quite complex for them to understand. We know that ball sports are a great way for children to make friends at school and so provide many opportunities for them to play with different balls in the garden. To complement gross motor activities, our Specialist 'health and wellbeing' teacher, Shaun, plans and oversees daily wellbeing activities for all children alongside our sports days.



## 7. Recess and Lunch

Towards the end of the year the Waratahs will be asked to bring in a lunch box that will be filled by our cook with nutritious snacks, a sandwich and a drink. Many children start school without understanding the concept of recess and lunch and not being able to open the wrap on the sandwich or get the straw out of the plastic on the drink. This exercise gives them the opportunity to learn these skills in a much smaller environment where they will get assistance from staff at any time.

## 8. Interest in learning

Our program is designed to ensure that children are interested in learning and have an inquisitive mind about the world around them. We want to foster their natural curiosity at this stage in their lives. All of our day to day programs and projects are based on the children's interests and therefore they are much more likely to invest the time to explore, investigate and learn. These experiences give ownership to children and encourage problem solving and decision making. We use realistic materials and equipment so that their experiences are more genuine. At the transition to school information night, Michelle Collyer, Ryde Publics school principle explained that at the school they aim to use as many of the childrens interests in teaching their curriculum as possible as they find children are so much more enthusiastic to learn that way.



## 9. Making friends

In an environment with such great staff to child ratios, it is easier for staff to see a child who finds it difficult to make friends and join a group. Teachers can work to build these skills for a child by group games, name games, buddying children up and role play activities where children are encouraged to challenge biases, prejudice and stereotypes.

## 10. Concentration skills

Group times are a great opportunity for children to build on these skills of sitting and listening. Whilst at the centre children will learn about the '5 L's' which are

*Legs crossed,*

*Hands in Laps,*

*Listen with your ears; and*

*Look with your eyes.*

*Lips still and quiet*



Other activities such as group projects, games with rules and the computer also enhance these skills.

## 11. Realistic expectations

Towards the end of the year we will take small groups of children go to visit Ryde Primary school so they can see and experience what it is like. They will spend a morning at the school in a class, take morning tea in a lunch box and learn in a school environment. We will also invite some school aged children to come and talk about what it is like at school and offer some handy tips and hints for our Waratahs to get started. We also utilise a photo book that the school made for us showing all the things you may see and do at school.



## 12. Follow basic instructions

There will not always be a teacher on hand to guide a child step by step through a task when they are at school so it is important that they learn this skill when a supportive environment such as ours. Children are encouraged to take on responsibilities and over time the complexity of the tasks are increased. For instance, children may start the year by being asked to put forks on the table for lunch, then as the year progresses the task would change to the children being asked to 'count the number of children sitting on the mat, then go to the lunch trolley and 'count' the same number of forks and then set the table for lunch'.



## What can you do?

### - Tips for parents on preparing your child for the classroom

- Read the **Day Book** every day and ask your child open ended questions about their day to encourage descriptive answers.
- Enrol your child at your school of choice now, so that they know to expect you next year, go to their orientation days, buy the uniforms etc
- When we put up the schools listings later in the year, try to make a connection with at least one other family who are going to the same school - just leave a note in their communication pocket. Before the school year starts, organise play visits for the children so they have a close friend to start off their great new adventure with.
- Read to your child as much as you can from a variety of sources including story books, reference books, signs, labels etc. 10 minutes per day is all it takes to help them build strong positive associations with reading - a quick story before bed is a great way to 'wind down' and spend the time together.
- Visit your school with your child
- Go past the school regularly and point it out to your child
- Share with your child good stories and memories of your own school days
- Be positive about school, teachers and learning
- Talk with your child about the kinds of activities they will take part in during the school day
- Talk about friendships and how to be a good friend
- Take your child with you to your local library and help them choose books
- Encourage your child to spend time playing with themselves as well as with others so they are able to play independently of others
- Give your child tasks to do around the house (even if they don't always do a perfect job), including setting the table for dinner, clearing away after dinner and putting their clothes away.
- Support children's attempts at dressing themselves and encourage their independence with toileting.
- Encourage your child's curiosity by asking questions and by encouraging questions in return

## Progress reports



In June and July this year, we will distribute the midyear reports and you will have the opportunity to meet with your child's teachers at that time. If you would like to discuss your child's progress at any other time, please feel free to make an appointment to talk with Amy.

## Play Based Learning

### *Why do Early Childhood Experts keep going on about 'play based learning'?*

Play is essential for optimal development – Play enhances every aspect of children's development and learning. It is children's window to the world. Play is so important that its significance in children's lives is recognized by the United Nations as a specific right in addition to, and distinct from, a child's right to recreation and leisure.

When you ask 'what did you do today?', if they tell you 'just played' ask what they learned whilst playing...

Play and Literacy – There are consistent findings in research about the close relationship between symbolic play and literacy development and good evidence that increasing opportunities for rich symbolic play can have a positive influence on literacy development. Pretend play with peers engages children in the same kind of representational thinking needed in early literacy activities. Children develop complex narratives in their pretend play. They begin to link objects, actions, and language together in combinations and narrative sequences. They generate language suited to different perspectives. The new pre-school learning framework is one of play-based learning, rather than relying on tools such as 'stencils' that you might remember from 'old fashioned' preschools when you were young! Scientific evidence based research has been showing for years that children absorb the most information when they're having fun.

Your children learn best through play.....and our teachers are skilled in the art of 'teaching through play' – so most of the time, what your child thinks is good clean 'fun' is a rich learning experience!

**We have a whole folder of information available in the foyer that covers all aspects of play based learning and why it's so crucial for the development of critical thinking skills for your children – take a look when you're in next!**