

# Reference Guide for School Families



Updated September 9, 2024

This guide is for parents and carers of preschool and primary age children. The links below go to online education resources that can help parents and carers support children's learning at home and school. Your feedback and suggestions are very welcome, please get in touch at: [early\\_learning@actparents.org.au](mailto:early_learning@actparents.org.au)

## Topic/Organisation Description

**ACT Education  
Directorate  
Early Childhood  
Services**

**Public School Life** Enrolling in and attending a public school.  
**Preschool Pathways** the Directorate's step-by-step guide to preschool.

ACECQAs **Starting Blocks website** for families to find and compare early childhood services by quality ratings, fees, vacancies and inclusions.

**Early Childhood  
Australia ECA**

The **Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)** provides guidance, resources and services to support the early childhood sector to improve outcomes for children.

**Early Childhood Australia**, the peak early childhood advocacy organisation, acting in the interests of young children, their families, and the early childhood sector.

## CURRICULUM & LEARNING FRAMEWORKS

### National Approved Learning Frameworks:

**The early years Birth  
to 5 years**

The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) titled 'Belonging, Being and Becoming' supports children's learning from birth to five years of age, as well as their transition to school. Watch this **5 min video** about the Framework.

**Out of school hours care  
(OSHC) & school holiday  
programs**

The **Framework for School Age (out of school hours) Care**, called '**My Time, Our Place**' provides children with leisure and play-based activities that respond to their needs and interests, and maximise their potential for recreation, socialisation, and learning.

**Preschool OSHC**

Information on OSHC **for preschool**, check individual primary school websites for more information.

**Curriculum: five years +  
Kindy to college (K-12)**

The **Australian Curriculum** sets the goal for what all students should learn as they progress through their school life – wherever they live in Australia and whichever school they attend.

**Aboriginal and Torres  
Strait Islander**

**Relations, Healing and Reconciliation.** Information about the ACT Government's commitment to voice, treaty, and truth.  
**First Languages Australia** is working toward a future where Aboriginal language communities and Torres Strait Islander language communities have full command of their languages.



Topic/Organisation	Description
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<b>Life Ed National Resources</b>	Primary Years <b>Health &amp; Wellbeing Education</b> programs
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<b>Languages and bilingual families</b>	<p>The ACT <b>Education Directorate</b> has resources for parents and carers with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.</p> <p><b>Bilingual Education Alliance (ACTBEA)</b> is a local, non-profit community group that celebrates and promotes multilingualism in the Canberra region.</p>
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<b>Parent Associations</b>	<p><b>School P&amp;C Associations</b> are voluntary organisations of parents, carers, school staff, and members of the community. They enhance the experience of students and foster collaboration between parents, staff, and the wider community.</p> <p>P&amp;Cs offer a range of opportunities to contribute to thriving school communities. Check your school's website (see the 'community' tab) for details about your school's P&amp;C.</p>
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<b>ACT Parents</b>	<p><b>ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations</b> Council is the peak body for public school parent associations in the ACT. Subscribe to the eNewsletter and receive resources and support for getting involved at your school parent association.</p> <p><b>Association of Parents and Friends of ACT Schools (APFACTS)</b>, the peak body representing parents and carers of students at ACT non-government schools.</p>
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<b>Parenting support</b>	<p><b>ParentLink</b> evidence based information to support effective parenting practices.</p> <p><b>Raising Children</b> information, parenting videos, articles and apps backed by Australian experts.</p> <p>Children's earliest and most powerful learning comes from their family. This program called <b>HIPPY</b> support's school readiness by building parents' skills and confidence in their role as their child's first teacher.</p> <p>The <b>Circle of Security Parenting program</b> based on decades of research about how secure parent-child relationships can be supported and strengthened. Available as a book, audiobook, and a course.</p> <p><b>Saver Plus</b> Co-contribution funding assistance for families to build budgeting skills and save for educational expenses.</p>
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<b>Parenting &amp; learning support</b>	<p><b>Parents Australia</b> is designed to assist families in the wellbeing, learning and education of their children.</p> <p><i>Relationships Australia's</i> <b>Family Connect</b> guides parents to help children build skills and confidence through meaningful conversations.</p> <p><b>Triple P</b> offers free, flexible and practical ways to develop skills, strategies and confidence to handle any parenting situation. Available as an online course.</p> <p><b>Let's Count</b> an early mathematics program for children aged three to five, developed by The Smith Family and early childhood researchers.</p> <p><b>NAPCAN</b> National Association for Prevention of Child abuse and Neglect: provides alternatives to smacking, how to listen to children and babies, challenges of being a dad, keeping kids safe, family and domestic violence.</p>
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<b>Helplines &amp; counselling services</b>	<p><b>AIFS:</b> The Australian Institute of Family Studies helplines page: telephone and online counselling services for children, young people and adults, related to topics such as family and domestic violence, gambling, mental health, wellbeing, and more.</p>
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<b>Diversity support</b>	<p><b>ACT Child Development Service</b> assessment, referral, and information for parents of children 0 to 6 years with development concerns. Children requiring early intervention supports are referred to the NDIA Early Intervention service.</p> <p><b>ACT Education Directorate</b> All students in the ACT can attend their local public school. If you need support with enrolment, please contact your local school for assistance.</p> <p><b>MyTime</b> for parents and carers of children with a disability, developmental delay or chronic medical condition.</p> <p><b>Down Syndrome Australia</b> Providing support and information to families with a member who has Down syndrome.</p> <p><b>People with Disabilities ACT Inc</b> (PWDACT), the peak advocacy organisation in the ACT for people with disabilities.</p> <p><b>ACT Gifted Families Support Group Assoc. Inc.</b> provides support for gifted children, their families, teachers, psychologists and other professionals.</p> <p><b>Carers ACT</b> is the peak body for ACT carers (partners, spouses, children, family, or friends assisting someone who lives with disability, is frail with age, or has an ongoing illness).</p>
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### Topic/Organisation Description

**Education Research**

**ARACY:** The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth  
**ACER:** The Australian Council for Educational Research  
**Murdoch Children's Research Institute**  
**Gonski Institute** for Education  
**Harvard Education + Family & Community Engagement**

## Health & Community

**Online safety**

**eSafety Commissioner** Resources for enjoying safe and positive online experiences

**Nutrition and lunchboxes**

Information about what to pack in the **lunchbox**  
**Fresh Tastes** guides to teach children about healthy food and drink choices.

**Physical activity**

**Active Play** Resources for physical activity and screen time to help make healthy choices. **Fact sheet**  
**Physical Activity Foundation** cycling or walking are simple ways for children to incorporate physical activity into their everyday lives and adults can model this behaviour for children – at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity each day to maintain a healthy lifestyle.  
**BRAVE** This Program is an interactive, online program for the prevention and treatment of childhood anxiety. The programs are free and provide ways for children to better cope with their worries. There are also **programs for parents**.  
**Beyond Blue's Healthy Families** is all about giving you the information, knowledge and confidence to support the young people in your life – whether you're a parent, guardian, grandparent, a favourite uncle or an awesome auntie.  
**BeYou** promotes mental health and wellbeing, from the early years to 18, and offers educators and learning communities evidence-based online professional learning.  
**Perinatal anxiety & depression Australia PANDA** supports the mental health and wellbeing of expecting, new and growing families with information and services.

**Wellbeing, anxiety, and mental Health**

# Reference Guide to Books about starting school for preschool/kinder parents and carers



**Reading books together** helps children work through their anxieties about starting school – even the ones they haven't had yet! A bit like a rehearsal for starting school but with a parent by their side. It's practice for skills like opening a lunchbox, asking questions, making new friends, and talking to a teacher. See [Libraries ACT](#) catalogue for many more titles to borrow.



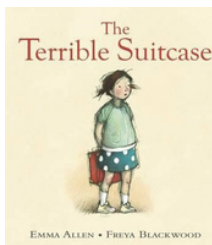
## **Starting School by Jane Godwin and Anna Walker**

Five children are off to school for the very first time. They are making friends, learning new things and discovering all that school involves. How the children feel about starting school.



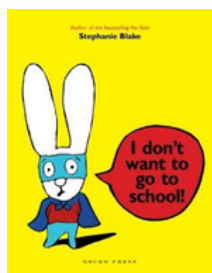
## **Maddie's first day**

A picture book about the excitement of going to 'big' school for the first time. This book is great for encouraging discussion with children about their first experiences, making friends, and growing up.



## **The Terrible Suitcase by Emma Allen and Freya Blackwood**

It's the first day of school and all the children have a special backpack, except one. A story about imagination CBCA award winner about making the best of things.

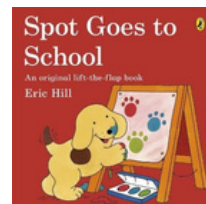


## **I Don't Want to Go To School by Stephanie Blake**

Simon the Bunny is about to face his first day of school and he is scared. He says he is not going, no matter what his parents say. When Simon eventually faces school he has such a good time that he does not want to come home at the end of the day.

## **First Day by Andrew Daddo**

This children's picture book captures a modern first day of school – Iphone pictures and all. Covering the anticipation and nerves of a first day and that both mother and child may have to be a bit brave. This school starter assures her mum that tomorrow will be easier.



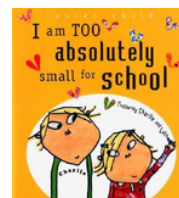
## **Spot Goes to School by Eric Hill**

Spot starts school and finds singing, playgrounds, painting and story time. A great introduction for littlies on the adventure school will be. Interactive lift-the-flaps makes school sound like lots of fun.



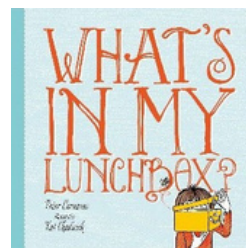
## **Wombat Goes To School by Jackie French**

In between sleeping, scratching and chasing carrots, Mothball the wombat manages to go to school. A book for preschoolers.



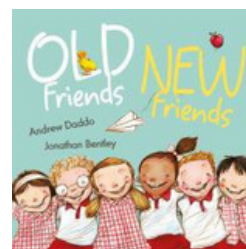
## **I am Too Absolutely Small for School**

Lola is a bit anxious about school, she thinks maybe she is still too small and doesn't really have time to go. She wonders whether she will have people to talk to and whether learning might be too hard. Charlie assures her it will be fun.



## **What's In My Lunchbox by Peter Carnavas**

Today in my lunchbox, I happened to find an apple, a sister, a fish, an egg, a bear and a dinosaur. Full of lunchbox silliness this is a funny look at school lunches. The little boy in the story does not want to eat the apple until he realizes it is his best option after all. For children age 3-6.



## **Old Friends New Friends by Andrew Daddo**

A brand-new school year! I can't wait! Hang on... None of my old friends are in my new class. This empowering and relatable picture book is about making friends and being yourself.





**ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations**

*The parent voice on public education*

# PLAY

## Resources

for parents and Carers

**Childhood & Nature**

David Sobel



ACT Education  
Directorate  
**Kids at Play**  
**Active Play**

Play-based learning

**Find a Playgroup  
in the ACT**

Membership is free



Some primary school communities have a local playgroup, check with your school to join

**Preschool  
Pathways**



**Early Childhood Australia**

A voice for young children



Building a healthy  
Australia through play



**raisingchildren.net.au**

the australian parenting website

Fathers  
&  
Play

**Loose Parts  
Toolkit**

**Emerging Minds.**

Nature & Play

Risk & Play

Self-care  
for families  
**HEADSPACE**

Play  
Spaces  
**PARKS  
ACT**

ACT  
PLAY  
SPACES



international  
play  
association

*promoting the child's right to play*

Christina Keeble  
**Neurodiversity**



# PLAY

the marvellous  
brain building benefits



## Speaker links

Ali Sewter, Director, Forrest Out of School Hours Care

Gabby Millgate, Woden Valley ELC Nature Pedagogy Leader

Sally Johnson and Belinda Lum, Assistant Directors, Early Childhood Pedagogy Team, ACT Education Directorate,



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**ACT**  
Government

**LIBRARIES ACT**

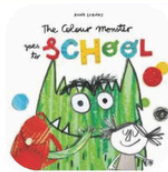
[www.library.act.gov.au](http://www.library.act.gov.au)

## Children's books from the collection



### **The Wild Guide to Starting School**

Phillip and Laura Bunting



### **The Colour Monster goes to School**

Anna Llenas



### **Going to Big School**

Laura Sieveking



### **Hello Crayons and other School Friends**

Hannah Eliot



### **Let's Get Ready for School**

Jane Porter



### **Old Friends, New Friends**

Andrew Daddo



### **The Runaway Hug**

Nick Bland



### **Brain is not always right**

Stuart Scott



### **Nice and slow**

Sarah Ayoub



### **I love me**

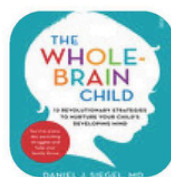
Sally Morgan

## For parents and carers



### **The Power of Showing Up**

Dan Siegel



### **The Whole Brain Child**

Dan Siegel



### **Girlhood**

Maggie Dent



### **Parental as Anything**

Maggie Dent



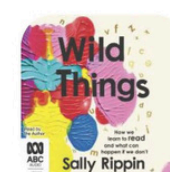
### **9 Things**

Maggie Dent



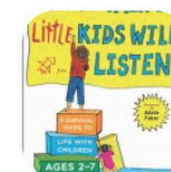
### **10 Things Every Parent Needs to Know**

Justin Coulson



### **Wild Things - How We Learn to Read...**

Sally Rippin



### **How to talk so little kids will listen**

Joanna Faber





**ACT**  
Government

**LIBRARIES ACT**

[www.library.act.gov.au](http://www.library.act.gov.au)

**Libraries ACT has many programs, resources and books to support you and your child through the transition to preschool and kindy.**

Library membership is completely free for you and your child and enables you to borrow up to 50 books at a time, and to access a range of online and digital resources. Non-members are welcome to attend any of our programs.

## Programs and events

**Story Time** - Sharing stories, books and songs to support literacy development and social connections.

**Sensory Story Time** - A neuro-diversity affirming session to support children with sensory needs, or who just benefit from a quieter approach.

**Bilingual Story Time** - Stories and songs shared in a variety of community languages.

**Speechie Library Talks** - Held in November each year, these talks are presented by a local Speech Pathologist to help families support language development.

**National Simultaneous Storytime** - Held in May each year, we celebrate reading and Australian stories with guest readers and fun activities.



## Online & Digital Resources for Library Members



### Story Box Hub

Quality picture books read by celebrities and authors.



### Comics Plus for Kids

E-comics and graphic novels.



### Borrow Box

E-books and audio books.



### Busy Things

Educational games and activities.



### Libby for Kids

E-Audiobooks, E-books and E-magazines.



### National Geographic for kids

Explore science and nature.



### The Canberra Times

Local news.



### The Saturday Paper

National and international news.

# 6 TIPS TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD WITH THE TRANSITION TO SCHOOL

## Visit the school

Take advantage of open nights, school events, and playground visits during Term 4 or the holidays. Familiarising your child with their school, its people, and its environment can help them feel more comfortable. You might even make the school playground your regular stop during the summer break (some schools now open their playground to local community during holidays).

## Talk about their school

Use language that fosters a sense of belonging. Instead of saying, "This is the school you'll go to," try "This is your school." Highlight familiar aspects, like how their new school also has a playground or a teacher, just like preschool or daycare, to make the transition feel less daunting.

## Arrange playdates

If you know which of their friends will be attending the same school, organise playdates over the summer. Mention their peers by name when talking about school to help build a sense of familiarity and reduce anxiety.

## Involve them in buying supplies

Encourage your child to help pick out their school items like a pencil case, uniform, or lunchbox. Let them try on their new uniform or use their school hat and lunchbox in day-to-day activities to create excitement and help them feel prepared.

## Use everyday conversations to address anxiety

Rather than focusing on anxiety directly, bring it up naturally through incidental situations. You could say, "I felt nervous finding a car park at the shops today, but I stayed calm and figured it out." You can also remind your child of a time they overcame nerves, like their first day at preschool/daycare.

## Reassure with familiarity

Emphasise the similarities between preschool/daycare and school. You might say, "At school, you'll have a lunchbox just like at preschool" or "You'll have a teacher and playtime, just like before." This helps reduce the fear of the unknown by reinforcing that school is just another learning setting they'll grow familiar with.

