NSW GOVERNMENT | Education & Communities

Getting ready for school

A guide for parents of a child with disability

Starting kindergarten is an exciting step in every child's life. Choosing a school for your child is a big decision and for parents of children with disability, this process may be more involved.

This guide is designed to help you through the process of preparing for and choosing a school that best meets your child's needs.

Where to begin

- If you have a child with disability it is recommended that you make contact with either your local school or your regional office 12 months prior to your child starting school. This will give you the opportunity to discuss your child's specific educational and support needs with relevant staff.
- Where your child has specific physical access needs it is recommended that you make initial contact with your local school or regional office two years prior to starting school. This will give the department time to ensure your schooling options are identified and any infrastructure ready when your child starts school.
- When you meet with the principal take with you any relevant recent medical and therapeutic assessments to share.
- Talk with members of your support network (e.g. family, friends, GP, paediatrician, advocacy group, disability network, physiotherapist, psychologist, occupational therapist, speech pathologist) and other parents who have children with disability at school about their experiences.
- Your preschool or other early childhood service can also assist with transition to school. If your child is not supported by these services you can contact your local school or regional office which may offer a special transition to school program in your area. You can contact your regional office from your home phone on Ph: 131 536.

Enrolment options

- Across NSW, the Department of Education and Communities (DEC) provides a wide range of services to support students who have special needs.
- As a parent or carer of a child a confirmed disability you can consider the following educational options:
  - Your local school
  - A special class in a regular school
  - A special school (School for Specific Purposes)

Finding the right schooling option

The school principal, in consultation with the school's learning and support team, will assist you to find the right schooling option for your child, taking into account your choice, your child's specific additional learning needs and proximity to local specialist services. Your local regional DEC office can also help you to find the right option for your child.

Enrolling a child with disability

- Enrolment in a regular class is done through your local school.
- Enrolment in a special class or in a special school is done through a process known as a regional placement panel.
- Information about this can be obtained by contacting your regional office on 131 536 from your home phone.

Making a shortlist

- You can use the online school locator to identify your local school www.schools.nsw.edu.au/schoolfind/locator/ . Here, you can search by school type for special schools known as schools for specific purposes but remember enrolment in these facilities needs to be processed through your regional office. You can contact your regional office on 131 536 from your home phone.
- Make an appointment to meet with your local school principal to discuss options and your child's specific needs. Many parents find support in taking a friend or relative with them.
- Bring all recent medical assessments with you to this meeting so that you can share them with departmental staff.
- You might like to prepare a list of questions or concerns you have about the educational needs of your child to discuss at the meeting.

Additional support

If your child has a disability or learning difficulty and needs additional support at school please contact the principal at your child's school or your local regional office.

Parents and carers are an important source of information about their children's strengths, abilities and needs. Effective partnerships between parents and schools are more likely to lead to better outcomes for students.

The learning and support team in each school assists classroom teachers to meet the educational needs of their students. Parents and carers have a vital role to play in the work of the learning support team by taking part in discussions and planning for their child's needs.

NSW public schools provide additional support for students with a disability or a learning difficulty in a range of ways, according to the individual needs of each student.

This support may include:

- changes that teachers make in the classroom to their teaching and learning programs every day
- access to a wide range of personnel with specialist expertise who support students and their classroom teachers
- additional assistance in the classroom from support staff
- the provision of specialist materials and equipment
- access to specialist training for teachers and support staff.

Getting the most from school

- Once you have chosen a school setting for your child, be as involved as you can. Foster a positive relationship with your child's teachers and the school. It will help the school staff to know you and your child better.
- Be in regular contact with your child's teacher so that you can continue to discuss your child's learning program and progress and any new issues that may arise for you or the school.
- Discuss the most effective way to maintain good communication between your home and school. As a parent you know your child best. Be your child's biggest supporter.

Further resources

- www.schools.nsw.edu.au/gotoschool/enrolment/index.php
- *Who's Going to Teach My Child?* (DET 2008) www.schools.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/schoolsweb/studentsupport/programs/lrngdificulties/whoteach.pdf
- Critical Bridges DVD: www.det.nsw.edu.au/detresources/critbridges_YKSeRaDPnn.pdf

NSW Department of Education and Communities

Regional contact numbers

Hunter/Central Coast	4924 9999
Illawarra & South Coast	4222 2929
New England	6755 5934
North Coast	6652 0500
Northern Sydney	9886 7690
Riverina	6937 3871
South Western Sydney	9796 5446
Sydney	9217 4877
Western NSW	6841 2110
Western Sydney	9208 9359

My contacts

Local school:

Principal name:

Phone:

Notes:

Regional office:

Contact name:

Phone:

Notes:

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