

Preparing Your Child For A New School

A Resource Kit for Parents
of Children with Additional Needs



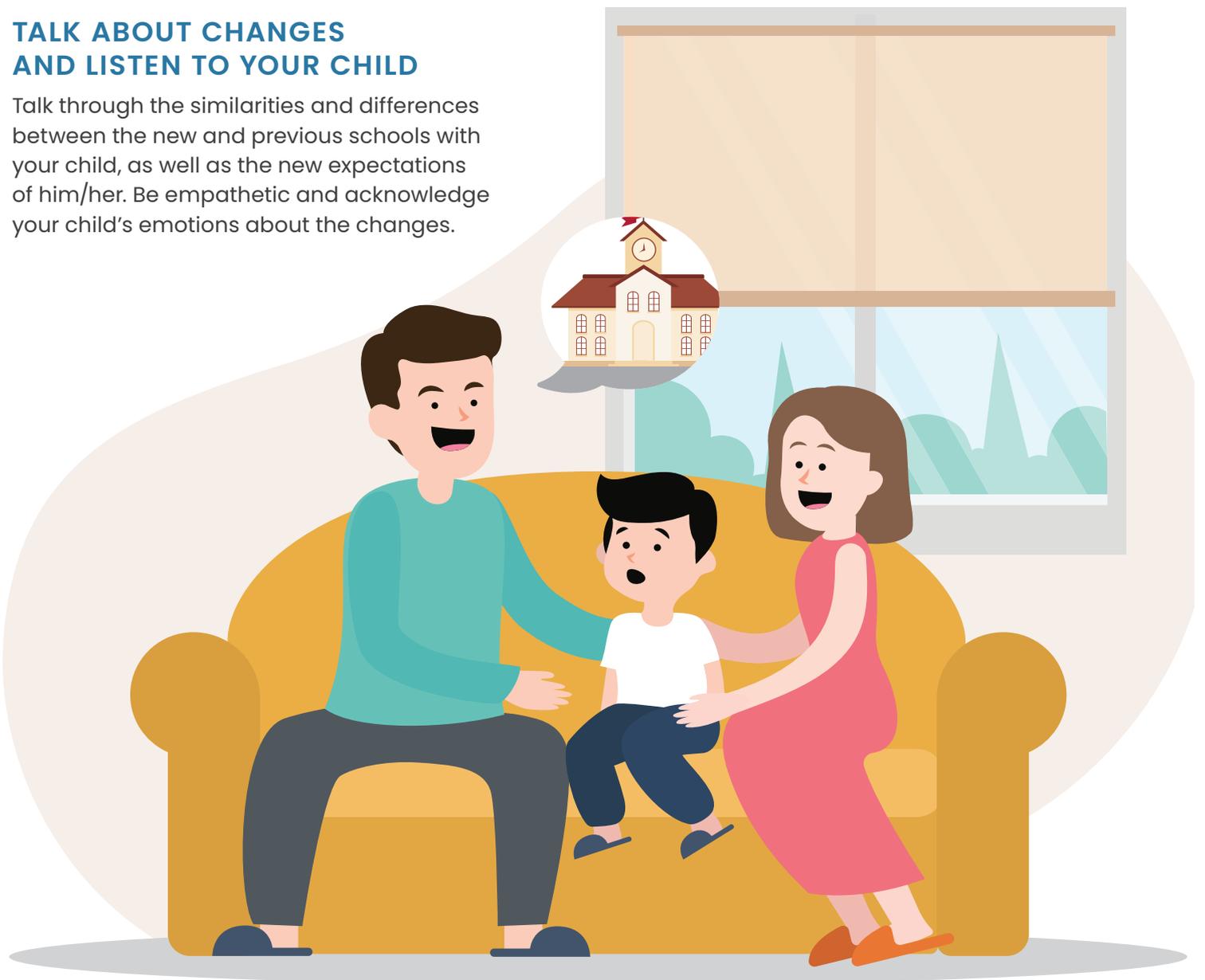
Going to a new school can be both an exciting and worrisome experience for you and your child, especially for a child with additional needs. This booklet aims to give you an idea of what to expect and how to prepare your child to cope with the transition.

Remember that some of these strategies are age-specific, so choose strategies that fit your child best. You can also modify them to suit your child.

01. Prepare Your Child for The Changes

TALK ABOUT CHANGES AND LISTEN TO YOUR CHILD

Talk through the similarities and differences between the new and previous schools with your child, as well as the new expectations of him/her. Be empathetic and acknowledge your child's emotions about the changes.



Conversation topics can include:



SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

- Daily routines (e.g., flag-raising ceremony, assembly, recess)
- Classrooms (e.g., class seating, class size, different venues for some subjects)
- New facilities (e.g., canteen, sports hall, Food and Consumer Education Room, Design and Technology Workshop)
- New teachers and school staff



NEW EXPECTATIONS

- School rules and why it is important to follow them
- Things your child needs to do independently (e.g., packing school bag, taking care of belongings)



PEER RELATIONSHIPS

- Meeting new classmates
- Making new friends
- Keeping in touch with old friends
- Resisting negative peer pressure



FEARS/CONCERNS ABOUT NEW SCHOOL

- Possible difficulties your child may face (e.g., getting lost in school, coping with increased academic demands, making new friends, making own decisions, what to do if he/she needs help)

BUILD EXCITEMENT

Make starting school something that your child looks forward to.



For example, you can:

INVOLVE YOUR CHILD IN PREPARING FOR SCHOOL

- Shop for school supplies and school uniform together
- Teach your child to pack his/her own school bag and organise materials
- Practise the route to take to and from school or where to wait for the school bus, and what to do if he/she gets lost or misses the school bus
- Explore the new school environment together and imagine what it might be like to study there

CREATE A LIST OF THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO TOGETHER

- New school environment, new CCA, new subjects, new friends

SHARE POSITIVE STORIES ABOUT STARTING SCHOOL

- Read from books, share your own positive experiences, let your child meet and hear about positive experiences from older peers



Strategies To Support Your Child During Various Transition Periods

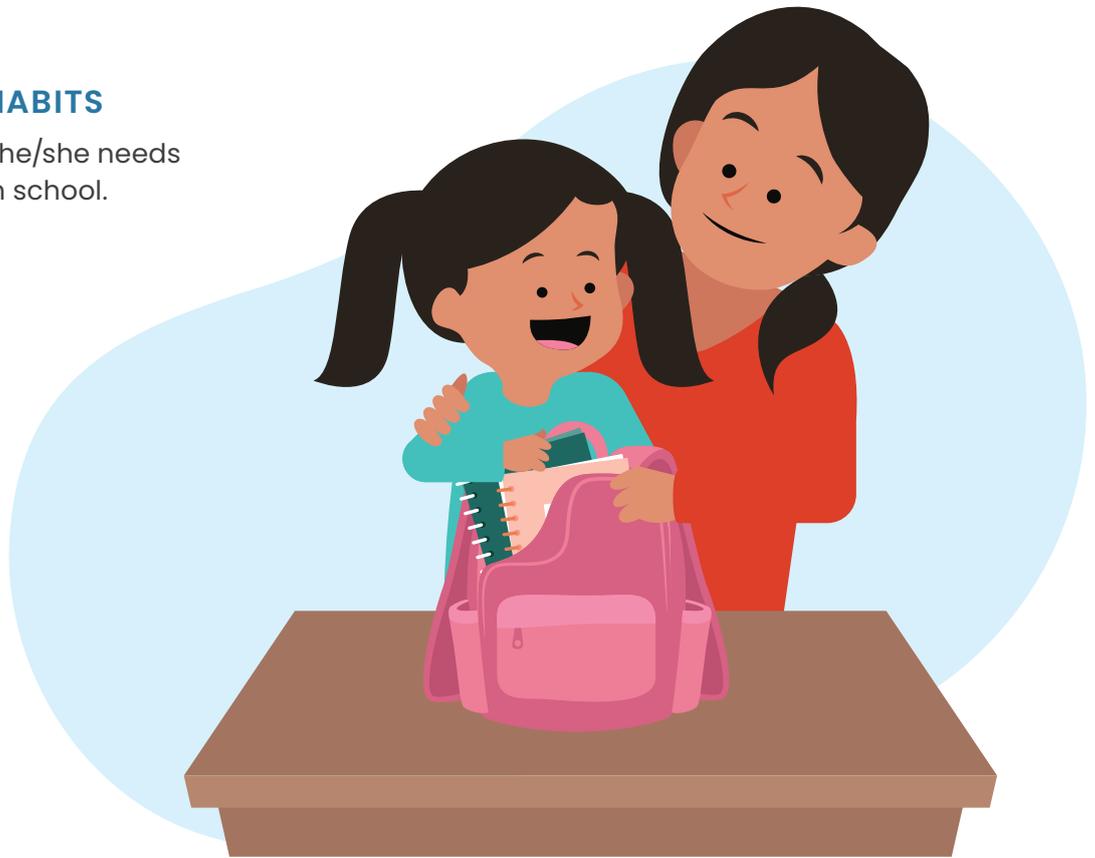
<https://www.schoolbag.sg/story/supporting-your-child-during-transitions>

02. Build Skills

Teach your child the following skills to help him/her cope with the demands of the school:

POSITIVE WORK HABITS

Teach your child skills he/she needs to successfully learn in school.



Skills include:

SELF-CARE SKILLS

- Toileting, wearing uniform, counting money, taking care of his/her belongings, managing time

ORGANISATION SKILLS

- Packing school bag according to time table, writing down important information (e.g., homework deadlines, school/CCA activities and schedules)

DEVELOPING AND PRACTISING ROUTINES

- Create a personalised schedule with your child (e.g., waking up and preparing for school, meal times, study time, play/rest time, bedtime)
- Set up a study corner at home to help your child get used to studying at a fixed place

SOCIAL AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Allow him/her to practise these skills by providing them with opportunities to interact with other children. Model and role-play these skills with your child.

Resolving Conflicts

Asking for Help

Being a Good Listener and Empathising With Others

Communicating Needs And Wants

Initiating and Having a Conversation

Turn-Taking

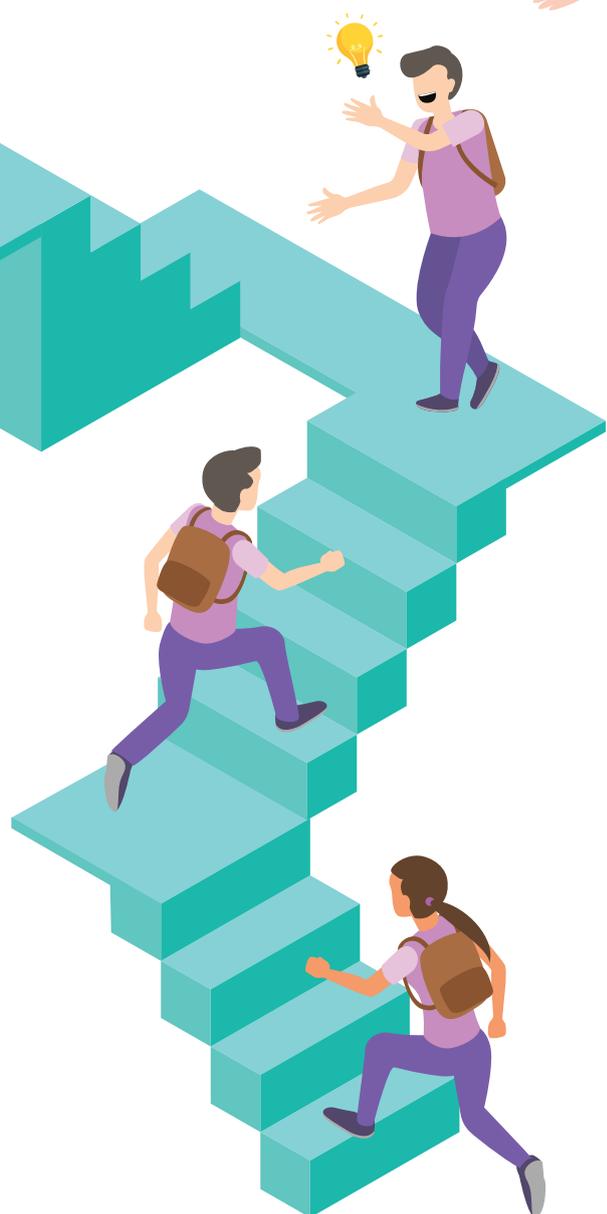


SELF-DETERMINATION AND SELF-ADVOCACY SKILLS (Especially for Older Children)

As your child grows up, he/she will need to learn to make decisions, set goals, problem-solve and speak up for him/herself. These skills will enable your child to take charge and influence important aspects of his/her life.

Help your child identify his/her strengths and needs by:

1. Asking what your child thinks he/she is good at, and what areas he/she needs more help in.
2. Modelling the vocabulary needed (e.g., I am good at _____. However, I need more help in _____).
3. Focusing on problem-solving and solutions. Avoid criticising your child when talking about difficulties.



03. Collaborate With The School

A strong partnership between the home and school is important for your child's transition and learning. The school can better support when you:



SHARE INFORMATION TO HELP THE SCHOOL UNDERSTAND YOUR CHILD'S NEEDS

- Share about your child's areas of difficulties, as well as his/her strengths and interests
- Provide relevant documents (e.g., psycho-educational report, medical records)

COMMUNICATE REGULARLY WITH YOUR CHILD'S TEACHERS

- Find out how your child is coping in school, and if he/she has settled in well

DISCUSS WITH THE SCHOOL ABOUT APPROPRIATE STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S NEEDS

- Find out how you can work with teachers to better support your child
- Use the strategies at home with your child

Additional Strategies for Children Who Find New Situations Challenging

Some children may need extra preparation to better cope in a new environment. Choose strategies that best suit the needs of your child.



MANAGING ANXIETY

For some children, changes may be extremely uncomfortable and bring about feelings of worry. To help your child manage these worries, you could use the following strategies:

PRIMING

Priming prepares your child by allowing him/her to preview events before they take place. Some ways to do so include using:



PICTURES

Show pictures of what to expect on the first day of school (e.g., carrying school bag, walking to the hall, sitting with the class, taking out a book to read).



VIDEOS

Take a video from your child's point-of-view to familiarise him/her with the environment and steps of a particular routine (e.g., how assembly or dismissal time will be like).

TRANSITION OBJECTS

Transition objects are comfort objects your child could bring to the new environment to provide a sense of familiarity, stability and security. Here are some tips:



CHOOSE OBJECTS THAT ARE SUITABLE FOR HIS/HER AGE AND SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Discuss with the teachers what can be brought to school. For example, younger children may bring small toys, while older children may bring items they used in the previous school (e.g., pencil case, water bottle), pictures from the previous school, or items that are important to them.

TEACH HIM/HER HOW TO USE THIS OBJECT APPROPRIATELY

Discuss appropriate situations in which your child can use the object in school. For example, while it is okay to turn to the object for comfort before lesson starts, it is not respectful to play with the object during lesson time.



INFORM TEACHERS

Share about this object with your child's teachers so that they understand why your child brings it to school.



MANAGING SOCIAL SITUATIONS

Social situations, which may be complex and unpredictable, can be stressful for some children. To help your child better understand and navigate social situations, you could explore the use of social story boards.

SOCIAL STORY BOARDS

These are short and personalised stories you can use to help your child familiarise with the social situation, and help manage his/her emotions and behaviours. They are used to explain the sequence of events that occur in a particular situation (e.g., what to do when buying food) through pictures or videos.

Resources To Craft Social Stories About Going To A New School



Starting Secondary School

http://supportingautismspectrum.weebly.com/uploads/7/3/2/4/7324834/starting_high_school.pdf



Writing a Story to Help Your Child Get Ready for School

<https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/personal-stories-help-children-get-ready-school>



Social Stories

www.sess.ie/sites/default/files/Categories/ASD/SocialStory.pdf

Apps To Craft Social Story Boards



Book Creator (iPad)

To piece together your social story board



Toca Life: School

To craft the scenes for your social story board



COPING WITH UNSTRUCTURED TIME

Some children prefer to know what exactly will be happening, and may feel worried when things are less structured or unexpected.

VISUAL SCHEDULES

Provide your child with a visual schedule to show what he/she can expect, and what he/she needs to complete. This will also help him/her to be more independent and be less reliant on prompts and guidance.

Resource To Craft Visual Schedules



Visual Schedules

<http://do2learn.com/picturecards/visualSchedules/index.htm>

App To Craft Visual Schedules



Choiceworks



Ministry of Education
SINGAPORE

Psychological Services Branch
Special Educational Needs Division

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