

FROM CORRIMAL CHILDREN'S CENTRE TO CORRIMAL PUBLIC SCHOOL

Starting life in 'big school' was both a frightening and exciting experience for my child and myself. It seemed like a big step for both of us.

Aaron attended Corrimal Children's Centre from the age of two and a half. I believe this prepared him in basic skills such as listening to instructions, group interaction, independence, discipline, co-operation and much more. To further facilitate the pre-school transition to big school, the educators at the centre introduced Aaron and his peers to Corrimal Public School, through excursions. These excursions enabled the pre-school children to participate in the school experience.

I found by giving Aaron real experiences and to be able to talk about these experiences together very valuable. I attended these orientation days and found these casual visits gave me, other parents and the early childhood educators the opportunity to reach a shared understanding of the education system that the children were about to enter.

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Aaron's first day was full of mixed emotions. I had feelings like I was about to start a new job as we walked along the highway to the school. Aaron almost hidden by the huge school bag on his back was full of excitement, with some hesitation aboard. We knew a couple of families from Corrimal Children's Centre, of whom we met in the playground. The children were chatting, having photos taken, and taking in the playground climate along with the rest of the new starters. We said a quick goodbye as the children were called into class. I gave Aaron reassurance that I would be back to

collect him after school, then a big hug and kiss. I walked away my heart brimming with pride. That day now seems a long time ago and I now have the pleasure of my daughter starting school in 2006 and hopefully experiencing the same smooth and positive transition from pre-school to school.

Corrimal Public School now has a slightly different orientation program. This program is called the 'New Beginnings Program' to assist the new students and parents familiarise themselves with the school, mentors were introduced in 2005. Corrimal P.S believes parents whose children have already gone to school are the best people to reassure those who are about to send their children to school for the first time. I was lucky to be able to volunteer to be a parent mentor to help in the kindergarten transition. The Assistant Principal, Amanda Giles, introduced the parent mentor program into Corrimal P.S, after listening to a presentation by a teacher from Ashcroft Primary School. This was used as a basis for a training program.

Being a mentor involved attending the parent training days (2 x half day workshops), attending the student visits of Corrimal P.S transition program and welcoming the new kindy parents at morning tea on transition days.

In addition to providing supportive learning environments, these orientation days with mentors provided many incidental opportunities for children and their parents to meet and build relationships, and for families to explore the feelings associated with a child beginning school. Mentors assisted on these days by working in the classroom with the new students and welcoming and supporting new parents over a coffee at morning tea. The children got to know someone other than the teacher in the classroom, and the parents were able to talk to already experienced parents.

I felt the mentor program provided students and parents with extra support in this important time. I look forward to being part of the 2006 New Beginnings Program at Corrimal P.S and also having my second child experience this transition to school process.



The ongoing relationships that have resulted from collaboration between families, early childhood professionals and teachers is a powerful demonstration of what can be achieved when a community works together for the benefit of its children. We spent a lot of time talking about his experiences throughout the day such as with whom he played with, what they did in the classroom, what the teacher spoke about, what stories were read and so on. As a result, Aaron was able to reflect on his day. If your child sees that you have an interest in their school life, they will feel a sense of importance and naturally try to do well.

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