



Early Childhood and School Partnerships

School fact sheet

Background

The years between birth and entering primary school are a period of intense learning and development for children, where the foundations are laid for future social, emotional and intellectual development.

Creating positive learning environments for babies, toddlers and preschoolers is one of the key elements of giving every child the opportunity to reach his or her full potential throughout life.

For this reason, developing strong, positive and effective partnerships between schools and early childhood service providers is vital to the achievement of children's successful learning and development.

Partnerships between schools and early childhood service providers frequently involve the integration of children's services on school sites, such as maternal and child health nurses. However, partnerships can take many forms, and the nature and extent of each partnership will vary according to the needs of the child, the school and the early childhood service providers.

Partnerships between school and early childhood service providers help children be prepared for school by allowing children to become familiar with the school environment.

Conversely partnerships help schools be prepared for children entering their school by establishing appropriate programs, such as learning and development plans, that accommodate the needs of these children.

The benefits of partnerships

Partnerships between schools and early childhood service providers can offer benefits such as staff professional development opportunities, or providing a single location to deliver maternal and child health services. Other benefits can include:

- a smoother transition to school for children by allowing them to gain confidence and become familiar with the school setting during pre-school years
- families becoming familiar with their child's future school and the learning and support programs that will be provided for their child
- families able to access services in a coordinated, supportive environment
- a point of contact for all families in the local area, particularly those who may not already be accessing early childhood services
- the development of a solid foundation of social and emotional and oral language development that children require to be ready for school.

In addition, partnerships between schools and early childhood service providers can contribute to early identification of children who may require additional support to reach their full potential.

Practical steps to establishing partnerships

Create

When establishing a partnership, schools need to take into consideration these vital steps:

Identify an issue to be addressed by the school and early childhood service provider partnership.



Review the partnership proposal with your school council (as the school's governing body), students and families to ensure that the partnership is relevant, and will be beneficial for the school. You should also consider the following policies concerning partnerships between schools and early childhood service provider.

- The [Victorian Government School Policy and Advisory Guide](#) – provides guidelines on how to establish effective partnerships with schools.
- The [Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework](#) – designed to assist families and early childhood professionals to guide children's learning and development in partnership in the first eight years of life.
- [Growing, Learning and Thriving: Building on Victoria's Achievements in Early Childhood](#) – outlines the Victorian Government's vision to achieve increased access to high-quality early childhood health, education and care for all Victorian children and to improve outcomes for disadvantaged young Victorians.
- [Transition: A Positive Start to School](#) - provides practical strategies to facilitate a child's smooth transition to school for early childhood and school professionals and families to work in genuine partnership.
- [Improving Victoria's Early Childhood Workforce: Working to Give Victoria's Children the Best Start in Life](#) – provides rationale for early childhood practitioners to value and prioritise partnerships in their work.

Discuss the partnership proposal with neighbouring schools and existing local networks in the first instance to identify other schools in the region that are working on similar initiatives. This provides an opportunity to investigate similar initiatives in the region, other schools that may also want to get involved and to brainstorm opportunities and concerns.

Implement

Following initial conversations, plan a strategy to achieve your goals, which includes:

- agreement on clear and realistic objectives
- agreement about how resources will be provided
- inviting organisations and people to contribute to the partnership
- equitably assigned responsibilities between the partners
- a dispute resolution mechanism, just in case things go wrong
- an evaluation process.

Grow

It is important for schools and early childhood service providers to understand and recognise the important differences in organisational structure, operations, responsibilities and the wide range of stakeholders each partner may have.

Even well planned partnerships can encounter barriers that may impede the ability to achieve the partnership's objectives. Tackling problems early and developing ongoing communication, trust and respect can help resolve any issue as it emerges.

Visit the '[Addressing problems](#)' section of the Education Partnership Resource website and the '[Troubleshooting](#)' fact sheet which details some common barriers and tips to overcome them.

More information

- [The Victorian Government School Policy and Advisory Guide](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/spag) (http://www.education.vic.gov.au/spag)
- [The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/eyldf/) (http://www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/eyldf/)
- [Growing, Learning and Thriving: Building on Victoria's Achievements in Early Childhood](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/directions/ecgrowlearnstrategy.htm) (http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/directions/ecgrowlearnstrategy.htm)
- [Transition: A Positive Start to School](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/transitionschool/guide.htm) (http://www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/transitionschool/guide.htm)
- [Improving Victoria's Early Childhood Workforce: Working to Give Victoria's Children the Best Start in Life](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/directions/ecworkforce.htm) (http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/directions/ecworkforce.htm)