



Back to School

From Life Without Barriers Education Unit



Acknowledgement

Life Without Barriers acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this country and their connection to land, water and community.

We extend that acknowledgment to the local Awabakal people, on which our National Office is located. We pay our respect to them, their culture and customs and to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We believe that reconciliation must live in the hearts and minds of all Australians.

We are committed to an ongoing journey towards truth telling and reconciliation and pay our respect to all Elders past, present, and emerging. We also recognise and value the contribution of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, carers, people we support and communities to our continued reconciliation journey together.

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Connection before content

Going back to school can be both an exciting and daunting experience. Change is challenging. Going back to school after holidays is another change and you might see escalated behaviours or emotional hick ups as a result.

The most important thing is to establish or re-establish a positive relationship for your young person and their school.

It is only when your child feels safe and connected at school that learning will be able to happen.

Your child might need time and support to re-learn some of the skills they had mastered last year.

Good relationships with school and open communication is the best way to support positive school experiences for your child.

Talk to your child's teacher and contact person before going back to school

Questions to ask and visits to organise:

- Who are my child's teachers?
 - Let's meet before school starts.
- Where is my child's classroom and where are they sitting?
 - Let's have a visit before school starts.
- Who is my child's mentor or go to person who looks out for them?
 - Let's meet them before school starts.
- What happens in break times – morning tea and lunch time?
 - Let's look at these spaces.

Some more things to talk about:

- Make sure the school knows the contact details and roles of all the people who support your young person
- Talk about any changes you might have seen in your child – behaviour, learning etc
- Remind the school that coming back to school is another change for your young person and that this can be challenging – be prepared for some escalations
- Talk about strategies that have been working for your young person
- Talk about what strategies might work at school for your young person

Take your child with you on a school visit before school starts

- Visit the school, look at the classroom, where are you going to sit, meet the teacher/s, talk about morning tea, lunch breaks, where can I play, where is pick up and drop off, where are the toilets, where can I fill up my water bottle
- You can take photos to build up a picture story board or just use the photos to have a conversation about going back to school

Organise a regular check in

Make a time to check in with the teacher or contact person monthly, weekly or daily if needed.

If you need help talking to your school let us know – Life Without Barriers is happy to help.

Carers are a key member of your child's education support team

- You know your child and will be key in helping them settle into school
- You can help teachers understand trauma and how it might be impacting on your child (others in the team can help with this too)
- It is important to talk positively about school and teachers with your child
- Work to find solutions with your teacher and school – keep advocating for a better

solution if its not working – hang in there and reach out for help

- See checklist for more details

Solving a problem or worry

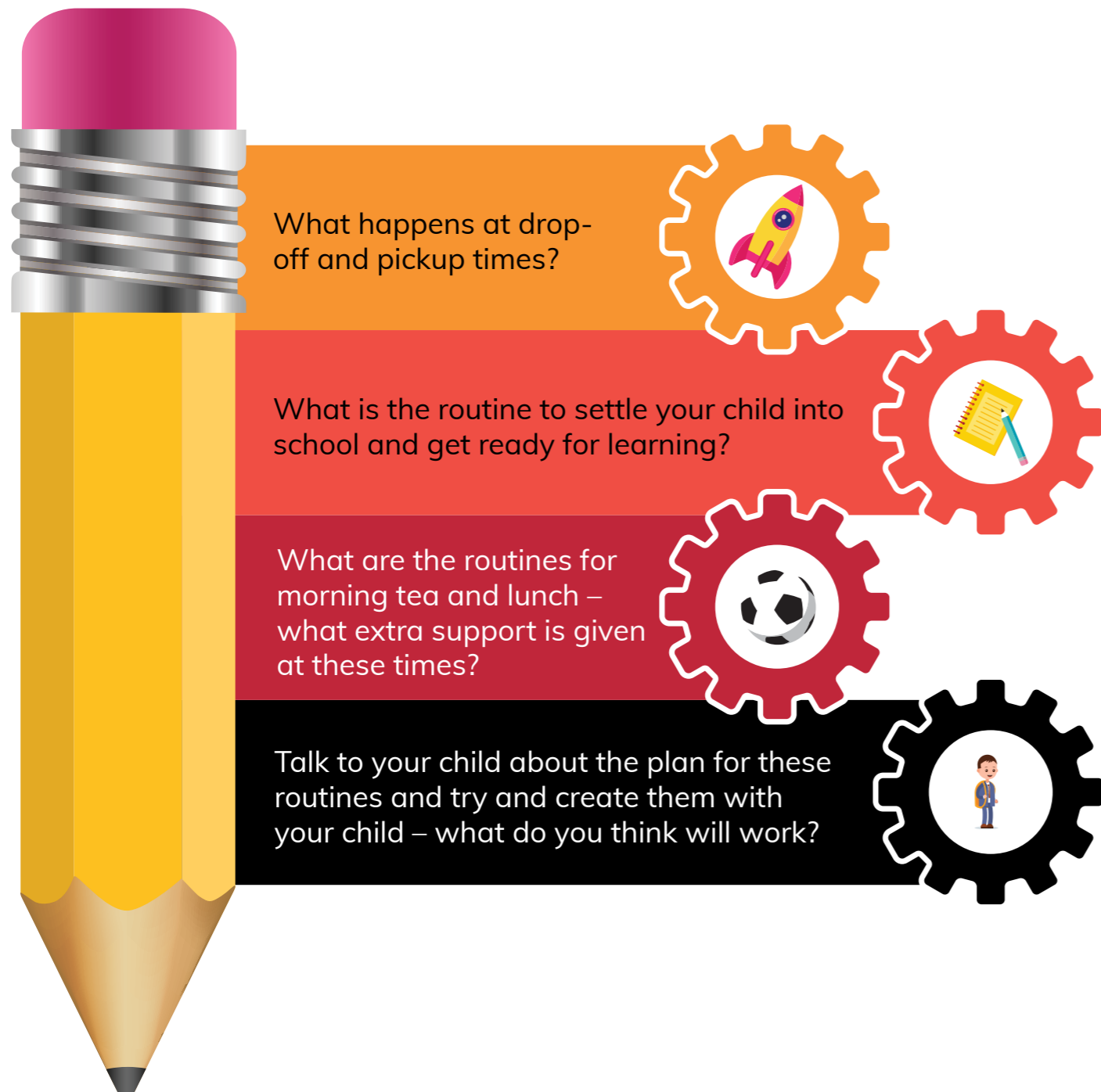
- Meet with the teacher as soon as possible
- Think about how to solve the problem e.g. I am worried that Tom is starting to not want to come to school. Have you noticed anything at school? Do you have any ideas about how we can help Tom want to come to school?
- Try to be calm and open in the meeting. If you feel you are getting upset, take a breath, ask for a little break
- Find one thing to try and make a time to come back/ring and see how it is going
- Ask for help (e.g. Life Without Barriers worker, cultural support advisor, school counsellor)



$F=ma$

$E=mc^2$

Make sure you know the routines and you have a plan with your child:



At home – consistent, predictable, routine

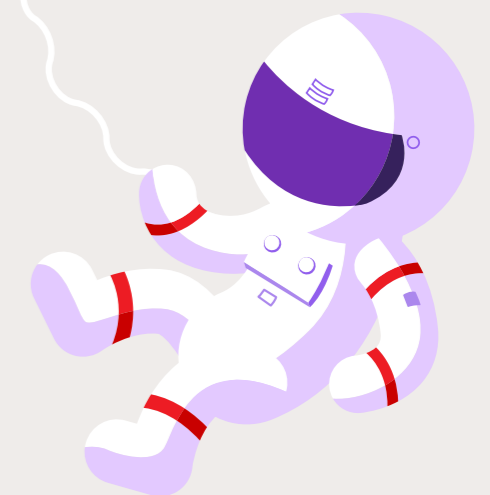
All young people do better when they know what to expect

- Re-establish evening and morning routines before the start of the new school week
- Be prepared (pack the school bag the night before)
- Plan and pack healthy school lunch and snacks with your child
- Problem solve with your child;
 - listen to the young person's concerns and develop support strategies
 - for example, "if (xxxxxx) happens, what could you do?" or "let's think of some ways you could handle that situation."

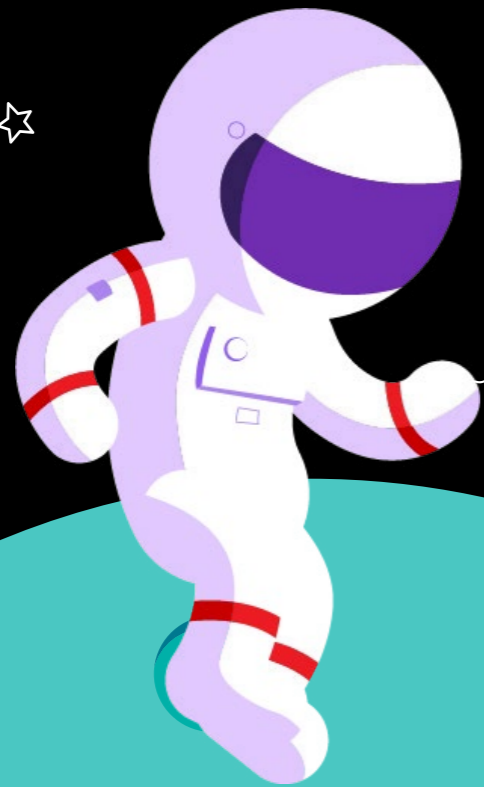
Get things ready – involve your child in this as much as possible

Checklist

- Getting Up Routine e.g.
 - Get Up
 - Shower
 - Breakfast
- Get your uniform ready – do your school shoes still fit you?
- Get all your learning materials together and pack your bag
- Make sure you and your child know the drop off routine
- Ask your teacher for a daily plan which you can share with your young person the day before so they know what to expect
- Problem solve for if things go wrong e.g. if your child starts to feel anxious, what can they do
- Create a care plan with your child and teacher (see attached)
- If you need help setting these things up let Life Without Barriers know



Great things
are achievable
through
planning






I'M OK PLAN FOR

This plan helps me to be ok and stay calm.



DATE


I get angry  or frustrated  or worried  when these things happen.

When I get angry or frustrated or worried I might...

My physical response is often (I feel this in my body)...

Some of the things I can do to help me de-escalate (be calm) are...

Some of the things a worker can do to help me de-escalate (be calm) are...

I know I'm calm when I look and feel like this... 

I'm going to review this plan on

Be patient, Be kind, Be realistic

Every young person is going to feel differently about going back to school.

- There is no right or wrong way to feel and most children will have a mix of reactions. We will need to respond to each of their reactions with care
- Some young people will be excited to be going back to school (yay!)
- Some young people will be anxious (understandable)
- Some young people may even be refusing to go back (you might need some help from school and Life Without Barriers to support a safe transition back)

Celebrate your last few weeks of holidays and get ready for what's next!

One thing we can do to prepare our young people is to talk about the last few weeks e.g.

- What is one thing we did at home that was fun?
- What was one thing you missed about not going to school?

Then we can talk about going back to school e.g.

- What is one thing that you are looking forward to?
- Is there anything that worries you?
- What is something fun we can do when you come home from school?

You are a great support person for your child's education

Some things you can do:

- Establish a morning routine
- Read to and with your child
- Support homework (if its stressful – talk to your teacher)
- Know the important dates coming up – you will find them in school newsletters
- Support after school activities and catch ups with friends

Issues at school - its okay to reach out for help:

If you are worried about something; if your child is not happy at school; if your young person is starting a new school. Some examples might be.

- Attendance: If your child is not attending school full time or is starting to not want to go to school
- Learning: If your child is having any difficulty keeping up at school
- Behaviour: If behaviour is causing issues; your young person has been suspended
- New school: Starting a new school or even a new grade
- Social: If your child struggles with lunch time; If your child seems to not have any friends

You can reach out to the:

- Teacher
- Mentor
- Life Without Barriers Worker
- Cultural Support Worker
- Education Unit



Education plan meetings

Before the meeting – be prepared:

- Collect information before the meeting so you have time to look at it e.g. ask the school for information on how he/she is going, any assessments or work samples. Know the questions you want to ask.
- Your young person will have some ideas: Talk to your child about what is working well, what isn't working so well, any ideas for how to improve things at school. Ask if there anything they like/don't like at school.
- Support person: If you are feeling at all worried about the meeting take some-one with you who knows schools.
- Cultural Plans: If your child has a cultural plan bring this to the Education Plan meeting.

At the meeting - keep coming back to the best way to support education for your young person.

Look for solutions:

Sam says he hates the noise at lunch time. Have you noticed anything? What can we do so that Sam is happy at lunch time?

Jo's latest reading assessment says she is reading at a Grade 3 level. What can we do to help her catch up before she starts high school?

Ask for clarification:

If you don't understand something it is okay to ask for it to be explained. (Schools can use a lot of "school" terms and it can be confusing)

Ask for another meeting:

If you don't feel like you have got a good plan in place that meets your child's needs – ask for another meeting and more support.

Key school transition times that need lots of planning and support

- Starting a new school
- Starting the first year of formal schooling – Prep
- Going into Year One
- Moving between Primary and Secondary
- Going into the Senior Years
- Leaving school

Key hints for transitions

Transition can be a major change which is stressful for the child

- Lots of planning, care and support is needed
- Start as early as possible e.g. transition planning should start in Term 4 before the next year
- If the change is sudden – arrange meetings after school time with the teacher, to walk through the school etc before the child attends
- Create a transition plan – getting ready, getting to know the school, first day at school, first week at school, how to get help
- Involve your child
- Use transition booklets/passports that might already be in place
- Lots of people can help with transitions (School, Life Without Barriers workers) so reach out

Look out for more information coming from the Education Unit in the future. Meanwhile these links have loads of great education (and other) information.

www.lwb.org.au/foster-care/support/carer-guide/

www.austparents.edu.au/information-and-advice/supporting-childrens-learning/

www.raisingchildren.net.au/

www.community.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/319790/par_deadly_healthy_bubs.pdf

www.learningpotential.gov.au/



Remember, Life Without Barriers can help. If you have any questions, need some ideas for your child or would like us to join in a school meeting, we are happy to help:

Sydney:

lorna.genoud@lwb.org.au

SE Qld:

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SW Qld:

mick.orton@lwb.org.au

North Coast Qld:

clea.north@lwb.org.au

National Education Unit:

dale.murray@lwb.org.au

National Education Unit:

michelle.murray@lwb.org.au

Carers Primary School Checklist

This school checklist has been created to help support Carers with going back to school.

We have met with the class teacher			
Name:			Contact
Teacher/s have my contact details			
We are going to touch base			
Daily	Weekly	Fortnightly	Other...
Our first catch up is scheduled			
I gave the teacher helpful information about my child – strengths, needs, strategies, likes, dislikes			
The teacher is giving me the timetable for the day/week/term and it is on the fridge			
We understand the pickup and drop off routine for the school			
We have a plan to help my child start the day well at school			
We have met with other school support people (e.g. learning support, cultural support, counsellor)			
Name:	Role:	Contact:	
Name:	Role:	Contact:	
We have another key contact person in the school (not the class teacher)			
Name:	Contact:		
We have walked through the school and looked at the classroom, lunch areas, play areas, library, toilets			
We (school, carer, child, other supports) have a plan if any issues arise			
The school knows all the members of my child's care team, their roles and have their contact details (carer, Life Without Barriers workers, cultural support advisor, departmental contacts, other support roles e.g. counsellor)			
We have a meeting scheduled with the Care team to look at the Education Plan			
We have everything ready at home – books, pencils, bag, uniforms			

Carer and Young Person Secondary School Checklist

This checklist can help make sure everything is in place for the start of school.

We have met with the year level coordinator			
Name:			Contact
We have met with the home room teacher/pastoral care teacher			
Name:		Contact:	
We have met with other school support people (e.g. learning support, cultural support, counsellor)			
Name:		Role:	Contact:
Name:		Role:	Contact:
Teacher/s have our contact details			
I have a "go to" person in the school who will support me			
Name:		Contact:	
Young Person - I am going to touch base with...			
Daily	Weekly	Fortnightly	
We will meet after school/before school in the			
Our first catch up is organised			
Carer - I am going to touch base with...			
Daily	Weekly	Fortnightly	Other...
We will:			
meet after school/before school in the...		by phone	by email
Our first catch up is organised			
I have my timetable and I know my subjects and where to go for class			
We have walked through the school and I know where the library, canteen, toilets, lunch areas are			
We have a plan if any issues arise			
The school knows all the members of my care team, their roles and have their contact details (carer, Life Without Barriers workers, cultural support advisor, departmental contacts, other support roles e.g. counsellor)			
We have a meeting scheduled with the Care team to look at the Education Plan			
We have everything ready at home – books, timetable, computer, school bag, uniforms			

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