



ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations

The parent voice on public education

Minutes

Early Learning Subcommittee Meeting
Thursday, August 18, 2022, 7.30pm
online via zoom

Subcommittee background

Council's Early Learning Subcommittee (ELC) was established in 2018 to continue the work of Canberra Preschool Society (1943-2018). Representing the parent voice, promoting the importance of preschool education, and supporting parent engagement in public education.

Contact: Early Learning Officer [email](#) P&C Council [website](#) [EL](#)

1) Open/Apologies

acknowledgement of country

2) Approval of previous minutes - meeting June 2, 2022. Approved [via email](#)

Mardy/Nichola

3) Parent Survey Results - *starting school in 2022*

Council's first EL survey seeking parent feedback on: enrolment process, communication, and activities undertaken to prepare for starting school. Results summarised [here](#), and selected comments re 'concerns/helpful actions' follow.

WHAT CONCERNED YOU? comments

Covid: restrictions, remote learning, anxiety

Parents aren't allowed inside school buildings so we have never seen the classroom our child spends the day in. The school has been really welcoming and supportive but it would be much nicer to be more connected... limited contact with other parents at drop off and pick up... No activities to bring the upcoming parents and carers together.

Not having opportunities for conversations with teachers...The lack of opportunity to engage with teachers and be in our child's classroom...Covid policies not allowing parents to enter classrooms and limiting interaction with teachers for feedback... Not having access to the school to settle my child in and not meeting her teacher until term two.

Communication - engagement

Not being able to engage with the school via volunteering, not knowing who my child's friends were, not being able to get to know the teacher...Not having an easy way to communicate with the teacher...dealing with late notifications about things happening in the school.

Managing big emotions after school, not knowing any parents or having seen the classroom, child confidence to speak up, making friends, no opportunities to be involved in the classroom, getting used to all the different communication channels from the school.

Teacher inconsistency

In Preschool our child's class ended up having multiple teachers in one year, and again in kindergarten this year, they have had class interruptions with teachers changing.

Peers - making friends

Initially making friends as my child did not go to the same preschool as her classmates... Difficulties with child settling into school and making friends... We were nervous about our child not being able to make new connections.

Hours - work – OSH (lots of feedback on this)

Aligning work hours, particularly the alternating Wednesdays (preschool) is an ongoing challenge... Not having any options for after school care. The drop off and pick up times are very challenging... work hours are challenging... Preschool hours and

out of hours care. We changed our working times to accommodate.

We have also had to rely on negotiating new work hours along with after school care to manage work and school.

Settling into unfamiliar surroundings, interactions with other children, confidence with independent toileting in an unfamiliar place - exacerbated by no experience in daycare, COVID lockdowns and little engagement with preschool teachers.

Lunchbox

Packing a healthy lunchbox is the most challenging for us, especially as there's no microwave at school

WHAT WAS HELPFUL?

Teachers and staff

My daughter's preschool teachers and her kindy teacher now... The teachers themselves have gone above and beyond to try to make things as good as they can... Very caring teacher.

Information

Access to classroom teacher and information from school regarding daily structure and programs used in the school... Teachers coming to talk to me, the

teachers being positive... Experience going to childcare.

Connections, friends, and prior experiences

Talking to the teacher before day 1 of preschool. Informal get together of new families so kids and parents could meet each other.

My kindy child already knew the school thanks to older siblings attending, and the preschool connection to the main school, so we all felt very comfortable with the transition to a familiar environment... establishing routines with children who were all by themselves in the first couple of weeks wasn't bedded down... Having an older child at the school already, along with playgroups (pre-covid) had allowed my child to build confidence in the school environment.

Already knew her classroom before starting school having visited last year in preschool transition... Being able to walk him on his first day of school

Orientation or tours

An orientation afternoon to meet the teachers, children and get a tour around the school.

4) Children's Week 'Welcome-PLAY-Connect' grants

Council supports P&Cs to consider opportunities for a 'welcome' activity or event involving families with children starting preschool or kinder next year. Engaging early and positively with parents helps to build enduring relationships among the wider school community. Connected communities support parent and family engagement and children's transition to school.

To help with costs we've prepared [GRANT TEMPLATES](#) to support P&C Parent Representatives to submit a grant application. This event or activity should be held between Monday 10 October – Sunday 6 November to align with the Children's Week grant (Children's Week 22-30 Oct). Contact Council's ELO to be part of a collaborative application, or for assistance with individual applications.

5) WEBINAR Preschool/Kinder Transition to School Parent Forum, 15 September 7.30pm
[Registrations are open](#) for this online event. A positive 'transition to school helps establish good foundations for children's learning.

Presenters:

Dr Kathryn Hopps, Adjunct Research Fellow, Charles Sturt University; Be You Consultant, Early Childhood Australia; from ACT Education Directorate, Anne Gummow and Simone Hobday, Learning and Teaching Policy and Service Design

6) Upcoming Events

National Child Protection Week 4-10 September

The theme for this year's National Child Protection Week is "Every child, in every community, needs a fair go", with a particular focus on children growing up safe and supported. [See the program here.](#)

Next meeting: October 27, 2022

Meeting closed 8.30pm

**ACTION LIST
EARLY LEARNING SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING**

18 August 2022

Minute	Action	Who	
	Distribution Minutes Summary Points to members and stakeholders EL reps, presidents and EDU	MS	Aug 24
	Transition to school - Registration and invitations	MS	Aug 24
	Children's Week grant funding invitation distribution to ELPRs	MS	Aug 24
	National Children's Commissioner Survey results https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/childrens-rights/publications/mental-health-shapes-my-life-covid-19-kids-wellbeing-2022	MS	Aug 25