

# Understanding your child as a learner

Many people think of school as the beginning of their child's education but your child has been learning since they were born.

Your child has been learning from their play and kindergarten experiences, from family members and from you their whole life. They will continue to learn from family and their lived experiences, and they will also have an opportunity to learn other things at school.

All children can learn and teachers recognise that children learn differently. The development of an Individual Learning Plan allows for changes to the curriculum so that a child can successfully participate in all class activities and progress at their own pace. The first step to achieving this is to understand your child as a learner.

## Focus on your child's strengths

By identifying your child's strengths, learning preferences and interests you can make the most of opportunities for your child to be an active participant in all aspects of school life. Develop and encourage this strength-based approach which expands on what your child can already do and focuses on progress. This can also help you maintain a positive outlook on your child's education.

## Parents as teachers

Teachers and consultants bring particular expertise to the Student Support Group however parents have a unique contribution to make to a shared understanding of your child. There are many things that only you, as a parent, know about your child.



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Part of your role as a parent is that of teacher. Parents teach many things to their children and you can share important information with the school about how your child learns.

Information about your child's likes and dislikes and about their personality can help others to understand your child as a learner. Teachers can also use your child's interests to capture your child's attention and motivate them to learn.

The Student Support Group can use this information to develop goals that expand on your child's strengths, skills and abilities. A holistic approach will ensure that your child's academic, social and emotional needs can be identified and planned for.

## Independence

Developing independence is a strong focus at school. Your child's needs will continually change as they develop and gain new skills.

Discuss with the school what support your child will need, whether it is a visual schedule or assistance with personal care. A therapist may be able to assist with this. Continuing previously established routines, such as toileting, at school is also important.

Children with a disability may need assistance with certain tasks but it is important that they are active participants in their learning. Adults assisting children with physical and intellectual disabilities need to understand the importance of providing assistance without creating dependence. Sharing your insight about how your child progresses with these tasks can help others to develop this understanding.

### Tips for identifying your child's learning preferences

- Does your child enjoy listening to stories or prefer looking at a book?
- Does your child prefer to watch you do something first and then copy?
- Does your child enjoy drawing and colouring?
- Does your child respond well to humour?
- Does your child prefer small groups or enjoy the hustle and bustle of a large group?
- Does your child have sensory issues?
- Does your child get distracted easily in a noisy environment?

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## Using your support networks

Although you are the person who knows your child best, there will be other people who know your child well and who can contribute to developing an understanding of your child as a learner. This may include extended family, close friends or carers. Each person will be able to give a different perspective on your child.

Your child's kindergarten teacher and health care practitioners, such as speech therapists, may also know your child well and be able to contribute to this information. This may be in addition to preparing a professional report for the school. These people are often invited to Student Support Group meetings to contribute to the Individual Learning Plan. Talk to the school about who you want to attend.

## Your role as a parent

Continuing your role as a partner in your child's learning by reading at bed time or asking them about their school day reinforces what they learn at school. Many things that you do together as a family, from playing 'eye spy' in the car to helping around the house, will continue to shape your child's knowledge and learning.