**Starting school podcast**

**Tips for parents**

Announcer: This is a Queensland Department of Education podcast.

 Classroom noise

Virginia B.: Starting school is an exciting time for every child and their family. It's the beginning of a lifelong adventure that will give your child incredible opportunities. I can take them to amazing places. It is often said a good education provides the foundation for a better future. In Queensland, most children start school the year they turn five, after a year of kindy. This move is an important milestone in your child's life.

 Hi, I'm Virginia Bowdidge, and in this podcast, we will look at how you can make your child's move from kindy to school, a great one. There are so many ways to support your child starting school and to foster a love of learning. We will talk to some experts, look at the similarities between kindy and prep, and get some practical tips. Let's begin by asking our expert panel of kindy kids what they think the most exciting thing about starting school will be.

Kindy kids

Virginia Bowdidge Kindy and prep teachers as special. Anyone who has older children would tell you how remarkable they are. Kindy teacher, Desley Jones and prep teacher, Marie Frederickson, have each been teaching the next generation of Queenslanders for more than 30 years. Both are committed to early childhood education. Desley believes that kindy and prep years are a valuable time.

Desley Jones: I really appreciate the opportunity to share in children's wonder and curiosity about their world, and I never tire of that. I really do firmly believe that this is a crucial time of their development, and we see that as we watch them grow. And that I think, with really committed practice, we can actually help to scaffold their development and give them … you know participating in giving them a strong foundation for later learning in partnership with their parents. So I do think it's such a valuable time of life.

Marie Fredrickson: My name's Marie Frederickson and I've been teaching little people for 32 years and a prep teacher since prep was introduced into Queensland schools in 2007. I absolutely love it. Teaching prep is a real passion of mine, and my favourite part of teaching prep is definitely the relationships that I build with children and their families.

Virginia Bowdidge: There are many similarities between kindy and prep, which help the transition to school for our young children. Marie and Desley highlight these.

Marie Fredrickson: Giving all children a great start is like a common priority in kindy and prep. And our goal, whether kindy or prep, is always to encourage children to develop confidence as learners. In kindy and prep, families will see high quality teaching and learning, safe and supportive learning environment and partnerships with families, community and other agencies.

Announcer: For more information, visit qed.qld.gov.au.

Virginia Bowdidge: Kindy kids often visit prep before they start school. Kindy teacher Desley said the visits built a sense of certainty and excitement. When her students get back from their prep visit, Desley ask her students about the similarities and differences between kindy and prep.

Desley Jones: So they'll come back and say puzzles were the same or books were the same, or they used to play dough. Some of them will come back and say they had bigger monkey bars. So it's really great to see the children noticing those connections. But other things that I talk to the parents about, things like school days will be organized with a routine to follow. And at kindy, we have followed a basic routine each day for the year. Prep days will consist of teacher-planned and child-initiated activities. And our kindy days consist of group times and opportunities for child-initiated play. And while the group times are often driven by the children's ideas, they're always teacher-managed.

Virginia Bowdidge: Just like a kindy, there are rules and expectations to follow in Prep. Prep learning experiences are hands-on, which is similar to kindy. And they often use similar materials such as construction sets and books, and puzzles.

Marie Fredrickson: So they're the main ways that I see. There's quite a lot of similarity between what will be happening so that children feel, "Oh yes, that's similar to what I did at kindy at the start of the year". But then prep, we'll continue to build on that over time.

Announcer: Got a question, email the podcast at qed.qld.gov.au.

Virginia Bowdige: Once you become a parent, everyone has advice, but often the most valuable advice is from someone who has been there before you. Mum of two, Iona Tait share some of the best advice she was given when her eldest daughter began prep.

Iona Tait My neighbor said to me, "Just enjoy prep. It's so much fun. It's the funnest year they'll have at school." And she was right. It was just a beautiful year with her.

Virginia Bowdidge: Iona also offers some of her own tips.

 It's really important to get to know the space because it makes everyone feel a lot more comfortable. If you can visit the school and joining some of the Facebook pages or other groups that the school might have for parents, that was really helpful for us just getting to know the route. If we're walking from home down there. So it didn't feel like as much of a big new deal as it might otherwise. Let your child be part of the preparation and share your nerves and anxiety. So little things like packing lunchboxes for fun and letting them pick out the exciting new lunchbox or covering their books, picking a school bag. So that's probably one.

 Another one I think would be think about what your new routine's going to be. Something that really surprised me was just how exhausted Valoria was every day. And I thought, she's been going to kindy and long daycare, but it was just a title change up for her. So I think, think about that new routine and make sure you're building in time to still play and hang out, and have relaxing time together.

 And the third one would be to talk to the teacher whenever you can. So always feel welcome in that classroom, particularly in that prep year. Go and visit them, talk to your kindy teacher about what they know about the school, go to some of the events, and perhaps, get your little person to go along to vacation care before they start prep. It's a nice way to get familiar with the classroom environment and some of the other stuff, and support groups in the school. Practice wearing uniforms. That was big one for us.

Virginia Bowdige: Prep teacher Marie also offers some advice about starting school.

Marie Fredrickson: The number one thing that families can do to help make the move from kindy to prep as smooth as possible is to be positive about the experience. Talk to your little one about starting school as an exciting adventure and take time to listen to their thoughts.

Virginia B.: Thanks for listening to this podcast and enjoy the wonderful stage you're about to embark on.

Announcer: You have been listening to the Queensland Department of Education Podcast.

Vox pop with Kindy kids.