Learning in the early years matters. It makes a difference to a child later in education, work and life. What happens to a child in the early years can affect how the brain develops.

In Victoria the government provides funding for every child to have one year of kindergarten. This is usually the year before the child starts school.

A kindergarten program can take place in a children’s centre, in a community kindergarten, in a child care centre or in some schools. All funded kindergartens will display a Kindergarten Certificate (see overleaf) and have a qualified early childhood teacher.

Further information
For more information about kindergarten programs and other services for children in your local area, get in touch with your local government by visiting www.mav.asn.au or www.vicnet.net.au/government/localgovt or visit www.education.vic.gov.au/findakindergarten
You can also visit the Office for Children and Early Childhood Development website at www.education.vic.gov.au/kindergarten or call the kindergarten information line on 1300 731 947 (cost of a local call).

A broad experience
A kindergarten program will give your child many kinds of experiences. The experiences help the child to develop and learn in all areas. Some people call this paying attention to the ‘whole child’. Among other things, your child will learn to:

• use language
• get along with others
• be confident
• draw, paint, sing and dance
• find out, explore and solve problems.

Your child will learn about
• her or himself
• other people
• the world.

Learning
A kindergarten experience gives your child the opportunity to:

• develop communication skills and skills that assist with reading and writing
• develop responsibility and independence, gaining confidence and a feeling of self-worth
• learn social skills such as listening and respecting other people’s ideas
• build self-awareness and respect for others
• learn to be creative
• do maths, social studies and science
• use technology
• discover the joy of learning
• make new friends.

Individual child
The early childhood teacher will get to know your child. She/he will get to know you and your family, and learn about your culture and community. The teacher will find your child’s strengths, interests, talents and needs. Your child will be seen as a special person not like any other.

Support for parents
You will have the chance to get to know other parents. You can talk with the teacher and get support for any worries about your child. Your child will do better in kindergarten when you let the staff know what you want and how you see your child.

Kindergarten also assists in finding out if a child needs extra help. Kindergarten programs have links to other kinds of help. Staff can help you if you need other services for your child, your family or yourself.

The next step
Kindergarten can help children make a successful transition from home or other early childhood settings to school. When children are sure of themselves they can cope with new situations.

Transition plans (introduced from late 2009) will further support children as they move from kindergarten to prep by providing families and teachers with information about a child’s learning and development.

Why should my child go to a kindergarten program?