

## Some stories of transition

### Refugee students: Language centre to school

Newly arrived and refugee students in an intensive Language Centre collected and discussed their peers' concerns and hopes for learning within the associated 'mainstream' secondary school. They then took the issues raised and sought answers within the secondary school. To communicate what they found, they decided to make a DVD showing how the secondary school operated, and what newly arrived students needed to know. They also decided that students and teachers in the mainstream school should see this DVD, so that they would also understand the experience, hopes and concerns of newly arrived students – and how they could assist them in making a smooth transition.



Conscious Commitment

### Students and Families

Students and families have an **active engagement** with issues of transition, in which they experience (shared) control of what's happening to them. This includes students and families knowing more about transition, but also active work by students to investigate and act on transition issues with family and school support.

### Student-controlled portfolio/passport

Students in Years 5 and 6 prepared a 'passport' to record details of their achievements and aspirations. These encouraged students to reflect on their own learning and development, and also to communicate key points of interest to their new teachers. All students, irrespective of their levels of success, were encouraged and supported to produce a positive document.

The passport enhanced the information passed on from the primary school to the secondary school, providing a view of the whole person, rather than just the 'student as worker'. It was an A4 display book and included pages addressed to Year 7 teachers: 'I learn best when...' and 'What I want you to know about me...'. Students also selected material about their interests and abilities, e.g. awards and certificates, photographs, school reports and examples of school work.



Communication

**Information** is provided for students and families about the transition process and what to expect, e.g. through booklets of information. Students are supported to express and communicate their hopes, concerns and needs.

The passports were given to Year 7 teachers in Term 4, and these teachers then wrote a welcoming letter to each student. The passports were returned to students at the end of Term 1 with a personal note of acknowledgment.

### 'Back to' days

In a cluster of local primary and secondary schools, Year 7 students return to their primary school in Term 4 to meet with Year 6 students. Various activities are organised that enable the secondary school students to discuss what they have learnt about secondary school, and to advise students on what to expect. Both Year 6 and Year 7 students are prepared beforehand, with Year 6 students discussing what they want to ask Year 7 students, and the Year 7 students discussing what sort of information they think Year 6 students need to know. The focus is on the general approach to Year 7 rather than an orientation to a particular school, so that students not attending that secondary school, or not coming from the primary schools, can still gain or provide valuable insights into transition issues.



Continuity

There is **continuity of experiences** for students and families in learning and support. Students are able to highlight how they learn, what they're good at, and what they need – and expect continued support. Students maintain strong peer relationships, e.g. by advising and supporting other students through transitions.

## Teachers and Schools

Schools develop **policies and approaches** to transition that go beyond 'choice of school' or a one-off 'taster day'.

There is a focus on transition (in all its forms) within what the school does: a transition working group is formed, a transition coordinator appointed, interschool or cluster links are developed and appropriate policies and practices are put in place. The school regularly reviews its approaches to transition.

Conscious Commitment



### Transition cluster

In several areas, pre-schools, primary schools and secondary schools have made a commitment to meet regularly to discuss and co-plan transition arrangements. These transition clusters are organised flexibly and involve, at various times, a focus on pre-school to primary school transition, and primary to secondary school transition.

Schools are regularly represented by the Transition Coordinators, Principals or Deputy Principals, but other staff members (e.g. Prep Grade teachers, Year 6 teachers, Year 7 teachers, Curriculum Coordinators) are invited and included where appropriate.

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Communication



### Orientation day for students and visit of teachers

Each year, the Year 6 students visit their secondary school for an information session. Current Year 7 students take them on a 'learning walk' around the school to physically orient them to the buildings but also to provide peer-to-peer insights into the school culture. A teacher from the secondary school also visits all Year 6 classes to answer students' questions.

### Teacher shadowing

A cluster of primary and secondary schools arranged for secondary and primary school teachers to 'shadow' a colleague for a period of time during their school day. During this time, the teachers observed how the lessons flowed, the types of instruction and class activities, the pace and changes in learning activities during classes and how teachers maintained productive learning. They were also able to identify stages of learning that students were at, and how students at different levels were catered for within one class.

Continuity



Teachers then wrote reflections on their observations, particularly about the differences between primary and secondary school settings and classrooms. They brought these observations about teaching styles, teacher-student and student-student relationships, room set-up, classroom dynamics and student learning back to their schools for discussion. In turn, this discussion prompted changes in some teaching approaches and expectations within the schools.

Such 'teacher shadowing' has also been referred to as 'teacher learning walks' which provide teachers with 'the opportunity to overcome stereotypical views about "what goes on in the other school" ' (Galton et al. 1999).

Teachers understand the learning needs of students and develop appropriate curriculum and learning continuity within classes across settings. School structures, practices, curriculum and pedagogy are designed to **maintain** as much **continuity of learning** as possible.