



FRANKSTON BEST START PROJECT

“Putting Children First” School Readiness and
School Transition Initiative.

*The aim of Frankston Best Start is to improve the health, development, learning
and well being of children in the Frankston municipality from pregnancy through
to eight years of age*



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Best Start Frankston Project:

- Project commenced in 2003;
- Four key locality areas were identified as priority areas to trial new initiatives and service enhancements (Frankston North, Carrum Downs, Karingal and Seaford).



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Service Co-ordination and Access Sub Committee:

- Initially formed as a **Best Start** Sub-Committee with the purpose of identifying issues for the community around accessing universal services and to provide information that will enhance service delivery and the community's ability to engage;



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Service Co-ordination and Access

Sub Committee: continued.....

- Members are from a diverse range of services from within Frankston including: Community Health, Inclusion Support Facilitator, Specialist Children's Services, School Nurse, Pre School Field Officer;
- Developed the Parent Survey to identify how to assist parents to make the best use of services available to them in their local community and identify additional services that may be required.



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Data collected showed that school readiness and school transition were important issues for families in Frankston.

School transition was also identified as an issue of concern by almost all professionals working in the early childhood field.



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The School Transition Journey:

- In response, a forum(2004), was facilitated for early years professionals to discuss school readiness and transition issues within Frankston;
- A project worker was then engaged to investigate school transition and readiness practices in Frankston; and
- A Discussion Paper was developed which addressed the issues raised at the forum and included current research into best practice in school readiness and transition .



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The Discussion Paper:

- “Putting Children First” School Readiness and School Transition was published in November 2005;
- Written by John McCartin, M.Ed, an experienced early years teacher and university lecturer who is highly regarded by all sectors of education;
- Provided broad statewide policy recommendations and targeted local recommendations.



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The Local Recommendations:

- Review, develop and strengthen formal school transition network groups;
- Develop the concept of a parent owned portfolio of child information;
- Develop a common understanding of school readiness by parents, kindergarten teachers primary teachers and child care staff;



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The Local Recommendations: Continued.....

- To engage not only primary and kindergarten but also the child care staff in their local transition networks;
- Document and evaluate all existing transition and readiness programs operating in Frankston;



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The Local Recommendations: Continued.....

- Develop protocols for children with additional needs making the transition to school, and
- Develop a Discussion Paper concentrating on the unique issues for children with mild to moderate developmental delay (MMDD).



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The School Transition Journey Continues.....

- The Frankston **Best Start** Partnership committed to the continuation of the **Best Start** project for a further twelve months to support the local recommendations outlined in the discussion paper;
- As school transition is a common interest in all three sectors it was recognised as a positive way to engage with kindergartens, child care and primary schools;



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School Transition Plans for 2006:

- Establish a prep/preschool teacher forum to explore transition practices from the perspective of both sectors;
- Establish links with child care centres encouraging them to participate in their local networks;



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School Transition Plans For 2006: continued.....

- Continue to investigate current research on transition practices in Australia and overseas; and
- Conduct discussions with parents of children with additional needs to gain their perspective on transition practices in Frankston.



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School Transition Plans For 2006:continued.....

- Consolidate the transition networks in Langwarrin and Carrum Downs with the inclusion of the child care centres;
- Develop new networks between the preschools, primary schools and child care centres in Seaford and Karingal;
- Extend these transition networks into other areas of Frankston under the Municipal Early Years Plan eg. Frankston South, so that all areas of the municipality have access to local transition networks.



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School Transition:

Successes:

- Positive response from kindergarten, child care and prep teachers in establishing the Karingal and Seaford transition networks;
- A well attended prep/preschool teacher forum in September 2006;
- Information gathering from parents of children with additional needs has begun;



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School Transition

Successes: continued.....

The Carrum Downs network has been successfully operating for eleven years and has provided us with a model for the development of the new transition networks across the rest of the municipality;

Well attended parent information nights held in Carrum Downs and Langwarrin;



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School Transition:

Barriers:

- Engagement of child care staff due to time release issues;
- Professional barriers and at times philosophical differences between early years and primary school staff;
- Engaging vulnerable families in early years services.



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The journey continues.....

School Transition Discussion paper is
available on:

www.scholar.google.com



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MMDD Paper

- Written by Lisa Knightbridge(Paediatric Occupational Therapist) in consultation with the Service Co-ordination and Access Sub-committee;
- Highlighted particular issues surrounding children with mild to moderate developmental delay.



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The key issues addressed in the paper were:

- The importance of early intervention for children with MMDD;
- Local situation in Frankston for children with MMDD;
- Best practice model.



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Recommendations:

- Ensure there is a new intersectoral coming together in planning to meet the needs of children with MMDD;
- The need to avoid searching for and using diagnostic labels for convenience;



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Recommendations continued.....

- Fund separate, evidence based and targeted intervention models for children with MMDD – these models need to be provided at a cost the families can afford;
- Put in place the necessary secondary specialist services for identified children to be referred to;



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MMDD Recommendations

continued.....

- Ensure services are able to provide a family friendly and family centred practice as this is more likely to attract and maintain parent interest and involvement;
- Instigate a comprehensive needs assessment focusing on children with MMDD to continue to inform key directions in meeting the needs of this group.



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