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# **“Putting Children First” – School Readiness & School Transition**

**Strategic Directions Discussion Paper**

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In consultation with

Best Start Service Co-ordination and Access Sub-committee

**November 2005**

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## **Abstract**

The objective was to develop a framework to continue to ensure the seamless transition between the early child care and education service sector and primary schools in the Frankston municipality. Recommendations arising from the school transition forum report, and focus group and the Service Coordination and Access sub-committee discussions were linked with a review of the relevant literature. The discussion paper considered two primary foci; the processes involved in good practice transitions (professional, service and broader policy levels) and a common understanding of school readiness (child and family level). It was determined that effective preschool – school transition programs will both ensure the optimum transition into primary school education for those children who are ‘ready’ for school and also identify those children that are not ready for school (that is, do not at that time have the social, cognitive, physical and life skills required for optimal adjustment to the school environment) and permit the development of an action plan to ensure the developmental and educational needs of these children are met. A number of good practice transition models, which incorporate school readiness assessment, were documented and recommended for implementation as were recommendations with respect to broad policy and targeted local issues.

## **Introduction:**

The primary purpose of this paper is to consider the available information; from the literature, focus group discussions and recommendations, and current practices within Frankston to develop a range of 'good practice models' to continue to ensure the seamless transition between the early childhood care and education service sector and primary schools in the Frankston municipality.

School readiness and school transition have received particular attention in the literature and as an educational focus since the Victorian Ministerial Review of School Entry Age in 1992. The Directorate of School Education at this time recommended that schools develop transition programs for all children beginning school and that these programs should create links between children, families, preschool services and the school (MRSEAV, 1992). Outcomes and recommendations from the "Putting Children First" School Readiness/School Transition Forum, hosted by the Best Start Service Coordination and Access sub-committee and Frankston Integrated Health, conducted in November 2004 fully supported this position. A full copy of this report is presented in Appendix 1.

The Carrum Downs Preschool/Prep Transition Committee and a network in Langwarrin have developed transition and information sharing programs in their neighbourhoods. Spencer (2005) has reported a Leap into Learning Group has been established in a primary school in Mornington for children who were assessed as being not ready for school, but did not attract a second year of funding from the Department of Human Services (DHS). After DE&T has investigated parent requests and referred them to DHS, many children's requests are not approved as they do not fit the DHS criteria. Currently it weighs heavily upon the parents to find a school that can best cater for their child's singular needs. These children are of school age, so parents have little choice but to enrol them in a local school.

Frankston Community Health Service (part of Peninsula Health Care Network) runs a School Readiness program for children referred from mainstream services in the year prior to school entry. In other areas of the state, school transition groups to develop children's social, emotional, language and motor skills, for children referred following a school readiness observation visit by a Preschool Field Officer (PSFO) have been implemented.

## **Method:**

Information resulting from the work already undertaken under the auspice of the Best Start Service Coordination and Access Sub-Committee, together with details of transition and readiness programs already in place was collated and integrated with information gained from a review of the relevant (Australian) literature.

Recommendations of good practice transition models, which incorporate school readiness assessment, together with recommendations with respect to

broad policy and targeted local issues, based on analysis of the information documented in this process were formulated and presented for further consideration and /or action.

## **Results:**

There is general agreement in the literature (Margetts, 1996, 2000a; Howard, Dockett & Perry, 1999; Kennedy, 1996) and from the outcomes of the forum of the practices required to achieve the objective of effective transition to school. As described by Bredekamp, (1997) and supported from the outcomes of the forum these include:

- Program continuity through (developmentally) appropriate curricula which recognises and supports the needs of individual children from birth.
- Maintenance of ongoing communication between staff at the early childhood and primary levels
- Preparation of children for transition
- Involvement of parents in the whole transition process

In essence these findings correlate directly with the recommendation from the Ministerial Review of School Entry Age in Victoria (Department of School Education, 1992) that these programs should create links between children, families, preschool services and the school.

Overall principles for effective transition programs which incorporate these four agreed components are presented together with a recommendation that specific good practice models for transition be implemented. Further discussions to ascertain the most appropriate locations for these models and the most effective methodologies to evaluate their effectiveness should be undertaken.

## **Discussion:**

As stated in the results section there is general agreement on the practices required for effective transition. Please note the information presented to support each of these practices together with the implications of these findings will be in dot point format. The information documented from the available literature is not extensive, but presents a précis of the relevant data.

- 1. Program continuity through (developmentally) appropriate curricula, which recognises and supports the needs of individual children from birth.**

### Supporting Evidence:

“The immense variety in children’s development and experiences makes each child’s transition to school unique. Children enter school with differing experiences and skill levels and it is vital that children continue to be planned for as individuals within the school environment “(Edgar 1986 as cited in Margetts, 1996, p86).

“In acknowledging the qualitative differences between programs at preschool and school that may disrupt the learning process, there has been growing consensus that program continuity through developmentally appropriate curricula will lessen the transition adjustments and consequential problems for young children.” (Bredenkamp, 1987; Lombardi, 1992 as cited in Margetts, 2000a).

“Smooth transitions occur when sufficient time is allowed for planning and action through negotiated curriculum planning and other planning processes” (Barker, Grant & White, 1999).

For children with additional needs a smooth transition and the provision of a relevant curriculum is particularly reliant upon links with the new environment, exchange of information to build on the knowledge skills and experience of the child and monitoring to ensure the new educational environment is responsive to the needs of the child. (Barker et al, 1999)

“Transition programs should also include activities prior to and during the commencement of school. In this way the unfamiliar will become familiar, continuity of experiences will be facilitated and the child will feel more secure in the new environment, schools will have valuable knowledge of children's prior experiences, and the speedy adjustment of children and families into the new setting will be facilitated.” (Margetts, 2000a, p8)

Support for this position was also evident from the forum where it was noted an individualised targeted approach to vulnerable and at risk children, including children in Early intervention programs, with additional needs, CALD, and Indigenous children was required. Other recommendations from the forum in this area included a specific support band consultation for parents, consistency in terminology, integration of government department policies (DE&T, DHS), review of the application process for a second year of preschool and, importantly, a focus for intervention services to support transition across the age range 0-8 years.

### Implications for Practice:

Individualised and targeted approaches to transition will support the integration of children into the school environment.

Negotiated curriculum planning between services as part of the transition process will ensure program continuity and recognition of the developmental and educational needs of individual children.

## **2. Maintenance of ongoing communication between staff at both levels**

It should be noted for the purposes of this paper that staff 'at both levels' refers to primary school staff, allied health professionals and all teaching staff working with children in early childhood programs from 0-5 years, not just teachers and trained staff in kindergarten and child care programs.

### Supporting Evidence:

"Preschool teachers need a greater understanding of a prep classroom to determine whether a child will succeed in that environment. Close proximity of the preschool and school may increase the understanding of each others educational programs and the philosophies underpinning these." (Spencer, 2005, p7).

A New Zealand study (Timperley, McNaughtin, Howie & Robinson, 2003 as cited in Spencer, 2005) supports this position as they found preschool and school teachers were unable to resolve underlying differences about their educational expectations following exchange visits.

Anecdotal evidence from the Langwarrin Network Group supports the importance of information sharing, joint professional development opportunities and regular meetings that can assist staff to understand each others programs and beliefs.

According to Mashburn and Henry (2004) (as cited in Spencer, 2005) some teacher ratings of school readiness can be biased by their own definition and understanding of school readiness. This highlights the importance of meetings between staff, as well as ongoing communication to ensure increased objectivity and decreased bias.

"Increased communication between each sector ... would facilitate sharing the best components of each others programs to meet the needs of the children in their care." (Spencer, 2005, p12).

"Networks between early childhood services and schools have been established throughout Victoria to plan, implement and evaluate transition programs for school beginners and their families. As these services cooperate there is a growth in the understanding of the philosophy and practice between each of the settings." (Kennedy, 1996, p116)

Ongoing communication strategies such as the exchange of newsletters; joint inservicing of staff at both levels; and staff visiting each others' programs to learn about curriculum and programming could be beneficial in promoting and developing ideas for program continuity. (Margetts, 2000a).

Professional development and information sharing needs of staff were given high priority in the forum. Suggested methods to achieve this included:

- ~ Release opportunities for staff to visit services. The constraints on available time of child care staff for this were noted.
- ~ Joint professional development opportunities.
- ~ Increased connections (connectedness) between schools, preschools and child care. Preparatory, kindergarten and child care networks should be fostered.
- ~ Improved coordination between school readiness groups, Early Intervention and school transition services.

#### Implications for practice:

The strengthening of existing networks and the development of further networks across the municipality is of primary importance in fostering ongoing communication between service sectors. Membership of these network groups should not be confined to teaching staff alone.

### **3. Preparation of children for transition and school readiness**

According to Dockett and Perry (2003) in their investigations of children's views about starting school, children said the two most important things were making friends and understanding/knowing the school rules in order to manage the environment. Knowing and understanding the school surrounds - playgrounds, toilets, library, canteen, sick bay etc, was also important to children. They further suggest that effective transitions to school involve all stakeholders, particularly children.

This position is supported by Potter & Briggs (2003) who suggest that knowledge of and understandings of school rules are most important for children progressing to school. They advocate that the concerns of young children about their early experiences at school should be addressed by moving away from the discussion about children's readiness for school to focus on schools' readiness for children.

Transition is a process occurring over a long period of time, not a brief period with a clear cut beginning and end and transition programs are most effective when systems and people work together and share the experience. (Kennedy, 1996).

"Results of the study indicate that a high number of transition activities conducted by schools, positively interacts with adjustment to the first year of school as measures of the absence of problem behaviours both at home and school. Therefore it can be implied that transition programs with multiple opportunities for children and parents to familiarize themselves with school environment and expectations, have an effect on children's adjustment." (Margetts, 1996, p85).

"... It is imperative that effective transition programs are developed so that children are provided with many opportunities to experience the school environment ...and that programs are responsive to local community needs." (Margetts, 1996, p90).

Research from the Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE) longitudinal study, conducted through the Sure Start program in the United Kingdom found that:

- ~ An earlier start (2-3years) in preschool is related to better intellectual development.
- ~ Where settings view educational and social development as complementary and of equal importance, children make better all round progress.
- ~ For all children the quality of the home learning environment is more important for intellectual and social development than parental occupation, education or income. What parents do is more important than who parents are.
- ~ Disadvantaged children do better in settings with a mixture of children from different social backgrounds rather than in settings catering mainly for children from disadvantaged families. (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford & Taggart, 2004).

According to Oberklaid and Wright (2003) about 15% of children have developmental delay, but many of these are not detected before they start school primarily because the disabilities are mild or they relate to tasks only then attempted by the child. They further state that "...fewer than 30% of children with serious developmental and behavioural difficulties are identified before they start school." (p2).

The Frankston Community Health Service has reported a significant increase in referrals to their School Readiness program. In 2002, 26 children were referred to the program, while in the first six months of 2005, 104 children were referred. A 300% increase over a three-year period. Clearly without this program many more children with developmental delays would not be identified prior to school entry.

School Principals also report many children beginning school with developmental or behavioural difficulties that have not been assessed, identified and tracked prior to school entry.

"Children's adjustment to school is influenced by a multiplicity of factors and in overcoming the discontinuities that have the potential to disrupt children's adjustment to school it is imperative that effective transition programs are developed so that children are provided with many opportunities to experience the school environment." (Margetts, 2000a, p8).

How well children make the transition from kindergarten, child care or home to the school environment can be a critical factor for children's adjustment to the demands of the school environment and in determining future school success (Thompson, 1975; Ladd & Price, 1987 as cited in Margetts, 1996).

Adjustment to the new situation is seen as a critical outcome of successful transition. Adjustment ...can be seen as a combination of social skills, behavioural responses and academic competence. (Margetts, 1996; 2000a).

Specific research conducted in Melbourne in 1997 by Margetts suggests that a number of factors influence children's early adjustment to the first year of schooling. "The study suggests that relative age impacted on children's academic competence, with older children rated more academically competent than younger children. Children who did not speak English at home had more difficulty adjusting to school. These children were rated as having fewer social skills, more problem behaviours and being less academically competent than children who spoke English at home. Gender impacted on children's adjustment to school with girls rated as having more social skills and less problem behaviours than boys. Boys were rated as having more externalising and hyperactive behaviours than girls." (Margetts, 2000b, p24).

While there is general agreement throughout the literature on what constitutes 'school readiness' (Mashburn & Henry, 2004 (as cited in Spencer, 2005); Margetts, 2000b; Dockett & Perry, 2002 and others) and a number of school readiness measurement tools (Clift, Stagnetti & DeMello, 2000;) it is acknowledged that there can be broad differences in interpretation of readiness between parents, preschool and primary teachers, other professionals and, in fact, children.

There was common agreement, evidenced from the outcomes of the forum, between educational services on the criteria, which must be considered when assessing 'school readiness'. These were:

- ~ social & emotional maturity/resilience
- ~ self esteem
- ~ physical, cognitive, language skills
- ~ life skills.

According to Spencer (2005) there is ambiguous research evidence on the value of a second year of preschool of children, especially with respect to raised confidence and self esteem.

#### Implications for practice:

The ability of children to optimally adjust to the new (school) environment presupposes two complementary areas. First, that the transition process must be smooth and effective. Second, that the child must possess the appropriate "social, behavioural and academic" skills to be ready for school.

Early identification of children's ability to make friends (social skills) and understand and work within group rules is highly important. Review and strengthen identification and support processes to develop children's social skills especially in playgroups, 3 year old kindergarten, and other programs for children under 4 years of age.

Specific intervention programs, such as the Frankston Community Health School Readiness Program, to support the needs of 4-5year old children with developmental delay need to be expanded and fully resourced.

Strengthen parent support and education facilities to develop and enhance parent-child interaction skills.

Review literature on benefits (or otherwise) of second year of preschool.

Rather than present a prescriptive checklist or other tool to assess school readiness, it is recommended that the readiness of individual children should be discussed as part of the interactions between staff (preschool and primary), other professionals and parents as part of formal meetings in the transition process.

A summary of the important areas to be considered with respect to school readiness, as identified in the literature are presented in Appendix 2.

#### **4. Involvement of parents**

“Parents often express anxiety about their child’s ability meet the list of requirements printed in a school handbook. The lists can include attributes such as being able to tie shoe laces, write their name, be independent in all aspects of self care, be able to count and recognize colors” (Spencer, 2005, p6).

Common practice in Frankston for schools to request checklists from preschool staff outlining each child’s strengths and weaknesses. Parents often request that no contact is made between the school and the preschool regarding their child’s development, preferring their child to begin school as an unknown to their new teacher and without being labeled as school ready or unready. (Spencer, 2005). The notion of a parent-owned portfolio of child information was raised at the forum. However we must consider who will own this process in terms of facilitating continuity of action.

Parents, when surveyed, commented that they preferred an incorporation of methods used when assessing their child’s readiness. Written evidence in all areas – written observations, portfolio of children’s work, or developmental checklists. (Lockwood & Fleet, 1999).

“The consensus from these schools is that whilst planning comprehensive transition programs takes time, the programs are really worthwhile. Staff are familiar with the children. The parents seem more relaxed and less stressed about their children starting school. The children are calmer and the transition to school is more successful.” (Margetts, 2000a, p8).

Outcomes from the forum with regard to parents and transition focused on the need to meet child and family needs, (not, for example, to use transition as a method to increase enrolment numbers). It was noted that transition was for parents as well as children and a seamless view and community approach where there was a consistency of approach for parents across services was important. The development of a consultation process as part of the transition ‘system’ would build partnerships with parents and develop increased

understanding of processes involved in school readiness and transition. Directories and guides for parents should be available (link to CD ROM).

Anecdotal evidence from the Langwarrin Network Group supported the importance of both providing information for parents, and fully involving them in the transition process. Program evaluation found high ratings by parents that attended. However parent numbers are generally low and engaging parents is an issue. Anecdotal information from school Principals supports this position and also highlighted that few children attend all the transition sessions available.

Similarly, information obtained from the completed parent surveys from the Carrum Downs Preschool to School Transition Network distributed to parents participating in Transition Programs in the Carrum Downs area provided evidence that parents that attended transition/information sessions derived positive benefits for their transition to school.

#### Implications for practice:

A parent owned portfolio of child and family information which can be used as an information sharing and planning tool could alleviate privacy issues for parents, ensure children are not 'labelled' and provide marked assistance to the success of the transition process and the identification of the planning and programs required to meet individual child needs.

Consultation and full involvement of parents in the transition process is primary to the success of transition programs. Methods and strategies to target parents to increase attendance at information sessions and in transition programs is warranted.

Methods and strategies to engage more parents in the formal process and at school information sessions need to be explored.

A similar focus, style and methodology in transition programs between schools, dependant on their available resources, would assist in meeting parental needs for consistency of approach across services.

Information contained in school and preschool handbooks regarding school readiness should be reviewed to ensure consistency for parents.

#### **Conclusion:**

It was determined that effective preschool – school transition programs will both ensure the optimum transition into primary school education for those children who are 'ready' for school and also identify those children that are not ready for school (that is, do not at that time have the social, cognitive, physical and life skills required for optimal adjustment to the school environment) and permit the development of an action plan to ensure the developmental and educational needs of these children are met.

### ***Broad Policy Recommendations:***

These recommendations are directed to the Victorian Government departments directly responsible for service policy and provision for children from 0-8 years of age across the state.

Formal submissions should be developed and representations made to the Department of Human Services (Office for Children) and/or the Department of Education and Training with respect to the following broad policy and planning issues.

1. Assessment, identification and support services for children with developmental delay who do not meet the criteria to obtain early intervention services. Children in this category, which comprise at least 15% of all children (Oberklaid & Wright, 2003) receive little or no Government support in terms of support and intervention services. Lisa Knightbridge, Occupational Therapist at Frankston Community Health has begun documentation of the issues, including impact on children and families, school readiness and achievement, and future cost to the community, related to this area. It is recommended that a Working Group under the auspice of the Access and Coordination Sub Committee is formed to continue this documentation and develop a formal submission regarding the need to develop support services for children with mild to moderate developmental delay and their families.
2. Funding and resources to evaluate, through both longitudinal and cross sectional research studies, the outcomes for children (social, behavioural and academic) of targeted programs already operating in the municipality. For example, the Leap into Learning program at Mornington Park Primary School, the School Readiness Program at Frankston Community Health and the Peers and Learning Program conducted by the Preschool Field Officers which has recently started.
3. Review of all the relevant information available on the benefits (or otherwise) of a second year of kindergarten, the current method of assessment for children applying for a second year of funded preschool education, and the implications for children that have been recommended to defer kindergarten attendance. These should be considered with reference to the research from the Early Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE) research (Sylva et al, 2004) and the benefits for children, the community and the Government of funding 3 year old kindergarten programs.
4. The development and implementation of flexible models of service delivery in the preparatory and early years of schooling, to ensure the social; behavioural and academic needs of all children are met, should be fully supported by the Department of Education & Training.

Consideration should be given to ensuring the specific needs of

Indigenous, CALD and vulnerable children and children with additional needs are met. Individual schools will need to consider their funding allocation for school readiness and transition within the DE&T Student Resource Package (S.R.P).

5. Review of the academic outcomes expected for children at the end of the Preparatory year in line with the spirit of the new Victorian Essential Learnings Strategy (V.E.L.S). This includes the developmental appropriateness of the specified outcomes, and how they best meet the social, developmental and academic needs of individual children, which will ensure long-term positive educational outcomes for these children.
6. The role of allied professionals in early identification of, and development of support programs for, children who may require additional support and/or deferral of entry to preschool/school be further explored. For example, strengthening resources and roles in relation to outreach for Playgroups and 3 year-old kindergarten programs.

### ***Targeted Local Recommendations:***

These recommendations apply only within the boundaries of the municipality of Frankston City Council. While there may be application to other areas, they are based on the service, child and family needs within the municipality.

1. Review, develop and strengthen formal school transition network groups. Ensure parents, preschool and primary school staff, and allied health and education professionals are all represented.
2. Obtain, document and evaluate all existing transition and readiness programs operating in Frankston such as
  - ~ co-location of preschool and school services
  - ~ Mornington Park “Leap into Learning” program
  - ~ Langwarrin & Carrum Downs transition programs
  - ~ Transition groups overseen by Preschool Field Officers/Children’s Services Resource and Development Officersand incorporate effective strategies and processes from these programs into good practice models which reflect child, parent and school needs for a consistency in approach to transition and readiness.

Transition programs that give children and parents multiple opportunities to experience the school environment should be developed through this process.

3. Further to Recommendation 2. above; there are numerous references in the literature to the need for a high number of transition activities or many/multiple opportunities to experience the school environment, but no quantitative data is given on what constitutes ‘many’ or ‘high number’. Parents and schools should be surveyed to ascertain the appropriate number of transition sessions, and this information should be used to strengthen the consistency of approach to transition.
4. Further to Recommendation 2 above, a common application process between DE&T (Southern Metropolitan Region) and preschool services for parents documenting submissions for early or delayed entry to school should be developed. A common list of requirements between local schools and preschools on what constitutes school readiness would assist this process.
5. Incorporate all decisions regarding individual children’s readiness for school into the meeting and discussion processes between parents, preschool and primary school staff, and allied health professionals. To alleviate parental concerns regarding confidentiality and labeling of children, the concept of a parent owned portfolio of child information, which meets child, parent and school needs, should be more fully explored and working documentation developed.

6. Transition programs for children with additional needs who are receiving support and/or attending early intervention programs to follow program outlined by Barker et al (1999) which is used as a best practice model in the South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services. Refer Appendix 3.
7. The difficulty of staff working in child care programs to fully participate in the transition process needs to be recognised and addressed. Options to facilitate the release of qualified staff working in 3-5 year old programs in child care centres to attend transition network groups, visit schools and attend professional development programs needs to be fully explored on a Local, State and Commonwealth Government level.
8. With respect to Recommendation 1 in the Broad Policy Recommendations, it is further recommended that the School Readiness program operating at Frankston Integrated Health receives a significant increase in funding, in line with the 300% increase in referrals to this service. This is to ensure the identified children with mild to moderate developmental delay receive the appropriate secondary service support programs required to meet their developmental and educational needs.

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## **Glossary**

**School Readiness** – For the purposes of this paper school readiness is defined as the measurement of a preschool child's ability to effectively learn in a primary school setting. (Cuskelly & Detering, 2003).

**School Transition** – For the purposes of this paper school transition is defined as the change in experience and environment when children move from home, child care, kindergarten and specialist services to school

**Universal Service** – Family and children's service reasonably accessible to all community members on an equitable basis, wherever they reside. Primary services include antenatal services, maternal and child health services, child care centres, kindergartens and schools. The goal of primary services is to provide support and education for children and families before problems arise.

**Secondary Service** – Services providing specialist programs, personnel and services for children and families with identified additional needs. Secondary services include Early Intervention programs, Frankston Integrated Health Service, speech, occupational and physical therapy services and psychology and social welfare services.

**CALD** – Culturally and linguistically diverse

**Developmental Delay** – When a child does not meet developmental milestones at the expected age, with adequate variation among normal children.

**Indigenous** – This term refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

## Appendix 1: School Readiness and School Transition Forum Report

# PUTTING CHILDREN FIRST

## SCHOOL READINESS AND SCHOOL TRANSITION FORUM REPORT ON FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

### BACKGROUND

**Date:** 16 November 2004  
**Venue:** Frankston International

**Attendance:**

### **Focus Group Minutes**

During the evening, participants divided into six groups, each given three questions to consider. Of the six questions around school readiness, every group was asked to address question one, as well as two out of six other questions. One participant scribed as the others discussed each of the three questions. Group participants numbered on average 10 from a range of children's services agencies including child care, primary schools, preschools, family support and health agencies. The name of each participant in each group was recorded however individual comments have not been ascribed to individual participants.

The service access and coordination sub committee meet on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2004 to analyse the focus group notes, identify themes and formulate recommendations. Initially the comments have been combined and organised under the six specific questions. Recommendations have then been organised under the emerging themes.

### RESULTS.

#### **1. As a group develop two statements to define school transition and school readiness (10 minutes).**

- Transition by definition describes a change or a movement from one area to another, ideally this should be seamless.
- Statement about school transition
  - Change in kind of movement between environments
  - Complementary environments
  - Linkage between two.
  - Connectedness along journey
  - before,/ during / after

Statement about school readiness

- Resilience ion social and emotional development
- Physical, mental, cognitive, language development
- Expectations. Different for all, diversity measurements
- Healthy body, mind, home environment and parents knowledge and acceptance of these ideas
- Readiness
  - Social and emotional; maturity
  - Ongoing process
  - Ability to cope – not to necessarily have formal skills
  - Maturity, not age
  - Education of what makes ready

Transition

- Continuity
- Working team between parents, teachers and school
- Smooth process
- Open communication and constant communication
- Education of what to possibly expect from school
- Cultural awareness of how this can be achieved (Blue)

- Readiness
  - Socially and emotionally equipped
  - Childs self esteem, child feels secure
  - Feeling comfortable
  - Value learning and education

Transition

- A seamless move from Pre School to prep where the child and family notice as little change and experience as little anxiety as possible.

- Adaptation of learning from one area to another

**2. Are children being adequately readied for school? What are the current barriers to children being ready for school? What are the barriers to families and children accessing school transition programs and support services which are both responsive and high quality?**

- Barriers to children being ready for school – school entry age, cost, genes, home environment, curriculum, age, 2 government departments, prep and kinder teacher expectations, parental education/understanding.
- Barriers to families – language, location, cost, inconsistency, time, confusing system, lack of transition programs, getting children in child care to transition programs. Parents unaware of changes in schooling expectations. Parents encouraged to send child to school when not ready to make up numbers, funding issue.

**3. Currently what programs and services are available to support children in being ready for school and in the transition to school process? What is currently working and how could this be improved upon.**

○

**4. Currently what services, resources, supports or processes are missing from the school transition system?**

- Speech pathology
- Link between kinder and school
- Release time for teachers for kinder school information sharing
- Transition reports (privacy issues)
- Continuity in services
- Easy access to second year preschool funding
- Parental consultation and support of their concerns
- Common understanding of transition
- Consistency between programs, government departments, curriculum/pedagogy
- Common terminology
- Outlining of choices to parents
- Funding for EC educators to attend in-services

**5. How do community service provider partnerships affect the success of the school transition process? What is currently working well and where do improvements need to be made?**

- Partnerships between providers need to be fostered and developed.
- Improvements needed- More time release to experience other environments, contact, and communication. Increased connections between CC and schools.
- What's working- Community forums, expos, Best Start. Understanding and respecting each others work
- Improvement- Distribute Children's Services directory more freely.

**6. How well does the school readiness and school transition process work for children and families with additional needs (e.g. CALD, indigenous, additional needs and vulnerable families and children). How can the network of service partners develop practices that are inclusive of diversity and cater for these special needs?**

- Not individualised enough, funding and translation issues, staff education, attitudes of staff and other professionals. EI and school services not integrated or seamless. Children finishing with EI then waiting months before re establishing services through school. Second year late notice from DEET.

- Develop practices through – more funding, sharing the information, linkages, families together, and education to change attitudes.  
Parental

**7. What other issues face families and children at this life stage? What other issues do we as service providers need to consider when working with children of school transition age and their parents (eg intervention for later mental and physical health issues, family isolation, parent child relationships, parenting problems, domestic violence.)**

- Expectations of the families and child are huge; parents expect more of kinder in terms of literacy and numeracy.
- Parent education
- Assessments of children at preschool and school.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommendations have been analysed and organised into four distinct themes. These four themes are consistent with a systems approach i.e.

Level / theme 1: Child specific

Level / theme 2: Parent and family

Level / theme 3: Professional and service

Level / theme 4: Government department

**Level / theme 1: Child specific**

- Age groups targeted in ST and EI programs to be increased to 8 years
- Individualised programs for all children but especially those with additional needs
- Take each child as unique and letting them explore and develop at their own rate

**Level / theme 2: Parent and family**

- More consistent system, easier access to guidelines for parents, child care centres.
- Parent owns and is responsible for portfolio
- Improved understanding of the school integration and GO process
- Education programs for parents on developmental readiness.
- Development and distribution of directories and guides for parents in navigating the system.
- Families to get together
- Parent education informing parents of what happens in each section.
- Address privacy issues such as parent owning portfolio
- More support and consultation with parents regarding their concerns
- Choices outlined and explained to parents
- More communication regarding expectations

**Level / theme 3: Professional and service**

- Develop Best Practice models

- Coordinate EI and school transition services using PBFM
- Improved communication and coordination between schools and EI programs
- Address staff attitude issues
- Increased release opportunities for school and kinder teachers to attend professional development and visit each others environments to improve understanding and integration of school and preschool programs.
- Foster prep / kinder networks
- Improve coordination between existing and proposed school readiness groups.
- Sharing information
- Linking preschool, schools and other professionals
- Increased connections between preschools, schools and childcare.
- Increased understanding and respect of each others work. Funding to attend in-services together to cross learn
- Consistency in approach to school transition
- Partnerships between partners need to be fostered and developed.

**Level / theme 4: Government department**

- Review of school entry age.
- Integration of government department policies especially DEET and DHS
- Education allowance available at preschool.
- More funding
- Education to change attitudes
- Review 2<sup>nd</sup> year preschool application process
- Seamless transition for children and families with additional needs, no time gaps
- Improve consistency in terminology
- Improve consistency between DEET and DHS such as curriculum and pedagogy.

## Appendix 2: School Readiness Indicators

“For the purposes of this paper school readiness is defined as the measurement of a preschool child’s ability to effectively learn in a primary school setting”. (Cuskelly & Detering, 2003 as cited in Spencer, 2005); Dockett and Perry, 2003)

As supported by research in Australia (Margetts, 2002; Clift et al, 2000; Cuskelly & Detering, 2003) and overseas (Mashburn & Henry, 2004) there are a number of factors that determine a child’s readiness for school and which should be considered at meetings between school, preschool, other professionals and parents. These include:

- Age  
~ children more likely to be successful at school (increased academic competence)if they are not the youngest in their class
- English skills (Non English speaking home/ESL do not adjust as well to the first year of school)
- Gender (especially with regard to social readiness of boys)
- Socio economic circumstances      Extra info from Sure Start program in UK to be included.
- Eldest child
- Time spent in child care
- Social skills  
~ self confidence  
~ self esteem
- Life skills
- Physical skills

Note this is not a prescriptive checklist, but a reference to be used as a basis for discussion.

## **Appendix 3: Transition to School Process**

### **1. Discussion of schooling options and enrolment**

When: In the child's first 2 terms of preschool attendance  
Location: Preschool  
Participants: Parents, teachers, principal/director, departmental and allied health professionals as required  
Purpose: To inform and support parents in relation to schooling options

### **2. School enrolment occurs**

### **3. Negotiated Curriculum Plan transition planning meeting**

When: At 4½ years of age  
Location: Preschool  
Participants: Parents, teachers, principal/director, departmental and allied health professionals as required  
Purpose: To review the child's education needs  
To document planning and actions in relation to:  
~ preschool curriculum progress  
~ preparation for schooling (eg assessments, facilities, other agencies, timelines, training and development, further meetings, support requirements)  
~ early school based planning concerning support requirements

### **4. Negotiated Curriculum Plan review meeting**

When: One term before school entry (or earlier as required)  
Location: School  
Participants: Parents, teachers, principal/director, departmental and allied health professionals as required  
Purpose: To develop specific planning regarding  
~ transition visits  
~ first term of school attendance  
~ support arrangements, time of school entry, personnel involved, attendance, training and development, school support programs.

### **5. Implementing and monitoring transition plan**

When: From the start of the transition process until second term of school attendance

### **6. Negotiated Curriculum plan or other review**

When: By the end of the second term of school attendance  
Location: School  
Participants: Parents, teachers, principal/director, departmental and allied health professionals as required  
Purpose: To review  
~ curriculum arrangements as documented in the Negotiated Curriculum Plan  
~ the need for a further assessment (eg by guidance officers and/or speech pathologists etc.)

Adapted from: Including children with disabilities and developmental delay in preschools.

## **Appendix 4: Child/Family Portfolio**

Example of contents:

1. Information that may be helpful to those supporting my child
2. Child's interests
3. Services used by my child
4. Plans
5. Record of assessments and tests
6. Correspondence
7. My notes
8. Documents
9. Information about support services
10. Departmental and agency pamphlets and information sheets
11. Reading and sources of information.

Source: Barker, Grant & White, 1999

## **Appendix 5: The Early Provision of Preschool Education Study**

The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) project is the first major European longitudinal study of a national sample of young children's development (intellectual and social/behavioural) between the ages of 3 and 7 years. To investigate the effects of pre-school education for 3 and 4 year olds, the EPPE team collected a wide range of information on over 3000 children, their parents, their home environments and the pre-school settings they attended.