

# Reciprocal relationships

## Information for schools

A range of people and organisations may be interested and involved in supporting children as they transition to Prep. A collaborative approach will ensure each individual child has the most effective support network surrounding them as they negotiate this significant milestone.

Identifying these partners and establishing appropriate channels for frequent communication are initial steps schools can take to build trusting partnerships and realise longevity in relationships within the community.

### Transition partners

Children, families and communities have differing strengths and vulnerabilities requiring a range of contextual responses. The extent of those involved in children's transition to school will vary from one area to another. Transition partners outside of your school staff may include:

- Immediate family,  
e.g. parents/carers and other siblings
- Extended family members,  
e.g. grandparents, uncles and aunts
- ECEC service staff,  
e.g. teacher, director, teaching assistant, support worker
- Other education providers,  
e.g. Early Childhood Development Program (ECDP)
- Community organisations,  
e.g. Medicare local, Micah, The Smith Family
- Key community individuals,  
e.g. local Elders, local Member of Parliament

As schools reflect on current transition practices and identify, plan and implement new transition-to-school strategies, it is important to remember that each partner will have their own values, beliefs and expectations for a child's successful transition to school. Awareness and respect for these diverse perspectives is integral to building and sustaining reciprocal relationships with transition partners.

### Networks

Establishing and maintaining network groups is an effective strategy schools can use to connect with transition partners in their local area. Multiple networks may already exist in your region; however each group will have a slightly different focus depending on the purpose, role and function of the network. Network groups may include:

- School cluster groups – collaboration of leadership teams from other local schools
- Early Years Network group – involving local ECEC service providers, schools and community organisations
- AEDC response groups – membership will vary depending on the strengths and vulnerabilities identified in the community data

By tapping into these network groups, schools can build relationships with local individuals and organisations and leverage the diverse expertise, perspectives and experiences these partners have of the people, spaces and places in your community, for example, knowledge of local children and families, information about available services and support mechanisms, historical understanding of the local and wider community, current funding opportunities, knowledge and organisation of upcoming events.

## Stories from Queensland regions

Given the diversity of Queensland contexts, schools may find that strategies used for developing relationships with transition partners differ from one community to another.

In this fact sheet, the department's transition and partnerships and innovation officers share strategies that have been integral to building positive reciprocal relationships to support the transition to school in their regions.



**Susan Cary**  
South East Queensland

*We have found that a clear sense of shared purpose is critical to building a strong network. Before considering the 'what' of a partnership between ECECs and schools, allowing time and space for these partners to co-create the 'why' of the partnership and acknowledging what is already working well to create a shared vision, builds trust and respect.*

*Park Lake State School and community have exemplified the 'why'. Initiated by the school's Great Results Guarantee/Investing for Success agreement, their starting point was to raise awareness and address the results of their AEDC data.*

*In May 2014, the Park Lake Early Years Partnership was established, connecting the school with educators from 14 local ECEC services. The network group has planned and rolled out several programs based on discussions around the data. Some of these have included:*

- *a garden club program, partnering kindergarten and school children*
- *engaging ECEC and school staff in professional exchange site visits, sharing expertise around pedagogy and curriculum frameworks. These individuals discussed their experiences with the larger network group.*

*The school frequently communicate their transition programs to the community by sending out invitations, posters and their newsletter, which has resulted in increased community engagement.*

*Through understanding the 'why' the network realised the importance of working together to strengthen their transition strategies.*

*After our delivery of transition workshops to state schools and from conversations in one-on-one meetings with local ECEC services, it was evident to my colleague, Vicki McCaffrey, and I, as transition officers, that the department's statewide transition to school approach needed to be shared with the ECEC sector.*

*In smaller communities within the region, workshops are now being delivered with a focus on the importance of ECEC services as key transition partners and what transition means for them.*

*Schools in these communities have been the host sites for workshops welcoming local ECEC educators and other community partners. These workshops have been instrumental in starting genuine conversations about transitions and building successful partnerships and relationships. The workshops have also strengthened existing networks and assisted in establishing new ones.*

*Due to this success in small, discrete communities, our team is now planning for a scaled-up version to be delivered in larger, more complex areas.*



**Sandra Epton**  
North Queensland

*After several years of informal contact with local schools in the area, ECEC educator, Kerri Steele contacted our team to seek advice regarding further developing these relationships.*

*With careful planning, the Noosa and Hinterland Early Childhood Alliance was established. The Alliance emphasises the philosophy, "It takes a village to raise a child." The village is now meeting together to form partnerships between multiple ECEC services, schools and the local library.*

*The Alliance has had several meetings focused on developing shared understandings around early childhood and the importance of transitions, planning for how partners might work together to support successful transitions to school.*

*The group has collectively organised events focused on supporting local children and families, including a celebration for World Educator Day.*



**Michele Reber**  
North Coast



**Marie Stuart**  
Metropolitan

*Camp Hill State School invited our transition team to deliver a workshop for their staff and other local schools around the statewide approach to transitions. In attendance were Prep teachers from Camp Hill and Mayfield State Schools.*

*This workshop has seen the formation of the Mayfield State School Transition Working Party (deputy principal and Prep teachers). The Party has since organised a cluster group, inviting educators from local ECEC services, staff from Camp Hill State School and our regional transition team to an evening session.*

*The purpose was to form a collaborative group to focus on strategies for ensuring successful transition into school for children in the local community.*

*The Transition Working Party prepared a PowerPoint which provided information on transitions and included effective open questions, generating fruitful discussion about curriculum, Transitions Statements and possible joint future activities.*

*Sometimes the smallest decisions can make the biggest difference. In our region, we have observed that outward facing schools with a strong commitment to a shared understanding of reciprocal relationships within the whole community have led to more effective transitions for children and families.*

*An example of this is within the Mareeba community, where an existing early year's network was exploring how to strengthen their transition strategies. This sharing of ideas as equitable partners has strengthened the network and now they are planning more tailored transition practices based on community data and centred on the ecology of a young child's world through the conception of early year's champions.*

*Clear, collaborative leadership by Mareeba State School Principal, Mandy Whybird, has led to a strong transition strategy. Unique to this network is the appointment of champions, in a school, ECEC service and community context. These champions hold an important role, advocating for continuity in the transition from home to ECEC settings and into school.*



**Irene Goodrich**  
Far North Queensland



**Rowena Shirtcliff**  
Darling Downs South West

*To strengthen their transition strategies, Pittsworth State School focused on building a transition network. The school identified partners supporting local children and families in the 0-8 age group, which included child health, ECEC services, a local Early Childhood Development Program (ECDP), a district alliance organisation, the community library and neighbouring schools, both state and cross-sector. These partners shared a commitment to regularly attend meetings.*

*To initiate conversations, the school engaged with education and health providers in order to better understand the community AEDC data story. From this analysis, the network chose to focus on service system alignments, parenting support for families, oral language development for children and early literacy and numeracy development.*

*To date, many activities have derived from this collaboration, including:*

- *an Art Show for Under 8s day – to further discussions about supporting children and families with complex needs aged 0-8*
- *the Under 6's orientation session for prior-to-school aged children and their families – these sessions involved an introduction to school and classroom routines and expectations with a focus on intentional teaching through games and activities.*

*It has been wonderful to watch Pittsworth building strong, respectful connections with their ECEC colleagues and community services through shared planning and learning. This has been the cornerstone for strengthening the school's transition strategies and for supporting local children in the community to experience a successful transition to school.*

*Our team was invited to send a representative to speak at a recent Early Childhood Teachers' Association (ECTA) district meeting. Also present were staff from Biloela State School, including the principal Matt Sahlqvist, who we had been working closely to support school transition planning. Reconnecting at the ECTA meeting highlighted the importance of transitions for Matt as the school level conversations aligned with discussions at a district level. This was key in solidifying the school's commitment to strengthening their approach to transitions.*

*The principal's support and his willingness to empower and respect his early years' team and their expertise is clear. The effective collaboration within the school and between other stakeholders has provided a great platform on which to build.*

*The enthusiasm from the school has inspired all transition partners, now keen to evaluate this year's outcomes and improve their strategies for next year. This type of enthusiasm spreads quickly as their successes continue to breed more success.*



**Lynette Hughes**  
Central Queensland

## More information

Your regional Transition and Partnerships and Innovation officers can help you to identify appropriate local networks to connect with, or alternatively, can support your school to establish a new network group focused on transitions in the early years.

Find the contact details for Transition and Partnerships and Innovation officers in your region on [One Portal](#).

[www.qld.gov.au/transitiontoschool](http://www.qld.gov.au/transitiontoschool)