**SUPPORTING
SUCCESSFUL
TRANSITIONS**

Responsive environments
Information for schools

Current research highlights the importance of high quality, responsive environments and the role they play in supporting a child's successful transition to school. High quality environments create opportunities for learning and play that facilitate children's cognitive, social, emotional and physical development (Berris and Miller, 2011).

While it is important to consider the impact of the environment on children's learning and development throughout their schooling, this focus is particularly crucial during transition to school. In their transition to school, the environment plays an important role in supporting a child's development of friendships, engagement in learning and emerging sense of belonging (Berris and Miller, 2011).

Therefore, it is important schools reflect on the physical, social, temporal and procedural environments which can support children and families to feel welcome, secure and significant as they transition to school.

Responsive environments

The *Supporting successful transitions: School decision-making tool* recognises not only the importance of responsive environments, but the connection of the environment to other action areas. Specifically, the ways in which a responsive environment supports effective pedagogy and practice, facilitates the development of reciprocal relationships and demonstrates respect for diversity.

Recognising this interplay between the environment, teaching and learning; it is important that the environment adapts and responds to the individual and whole class needs of children, both as they transition to school and continue to develop over the Prep Year. As a result, the environment at the beginning of the year may be very different at the end of the year.

Policy

The department is committed to a policy of collaborative empowerment. It is important that schools are seeking out and considering the voices of children, families and teachers, to create environments that are relevant and meaningful to their interests, learning styles and abilities.

Inherently, this has implications for transition to school strategies. The table over page outlines a selection of key policy documents and curriculum frameworks that have been designed to support principals, teachers and educators to consider and explore different approaches to optimise the environment.

Queensland
Government

Policy	Position statement	Where to find
National school improvement tool (2016)	'The school is driven by a deep belief that every student is capable of successful learning. A high priority is given to building and maintaining positive and caring relationships between staff, students and parents. There is a strong collegial culture of mutual trust and support among teachers and school leaders, and parents are treated as partners in the promotion of student learning and wellbeing. The school works to maintain a learning environment that is safe, respectful, tolerant, inclusive and that promotes intellectual rigour.'	https://www.acer.edu.au/files/NSIT_3rd_domain.pdf
Learning and wellbeing framework (2015)	'The core business of schools is to provide students with a rich learning environment that is open, respectful, caring and safe. This ideal learning environment optimises wellbeing. It reflects a positive school ethos that makes the school an exciting, stimulating and welcoming place.'	http://deta.qld.gov.au/initiatives/learningandwellbeing/resources/learning-and-wellbeing-framework.pdf
Parent and community engagement framework (2014)	'Learning is not limited to the classroom. The beliefs, expectations and experience of parents are a powerful determinant in student's achievement. Understanding the school, home and community contribution to student learning helps cultivate a holistic learning environment.'	http://education.qld.gov.au/schools/parent-community-engagement-framework/resources/pdf/parent-community-engagement-framework.pdf
Early Years Learning Framework (2009)	'In a supportive active learning environment, children who are confident and involved learners are increasingly able to take responsibility for their own learning, personal regulation and contribution to the social environment. Connections and continuity between learning experiences in different settings make learning more meaningful and increase children's feelings of belonging.'	https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/belonging_being_and_becoming_the_early_years_learning_framework_for_australia.pdf
Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (2008)	'School principals and other school leaders play a critical role in supporting and fostering quality teaching through coaching and mentoring teachers to find the best ways to facilitate learning, and by promoting a culture of high expectations in schools. School leaders are responsible for creating and sustaining the learning environment and the conditions under which quality teaching and learning take place.'	http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_Australians.pdf

Research into practice

We know that in relation to transition to school, it is important to consider continuity of learning. Research highlights that in the area of responsive environments, continuity can be enhanced by careful attention to observation and assessment of children. Identifying and being responsive to the needs of children, in terms of physical, social, temporal and procedural environments, will enhance the motivation, engagement and ultimately the achievement standards of the children.

Here are a few starting ideas to support your school to foster a responsive environment:

- Examine your goals and values collaboratively as a staff, leadership group and school community to come up with a shared vision that is reflective of the perspectives representative of your community.
- Work together with your transition partners to develop a responsive environment, building a sense of ownership.
- Use the Early years learning spaces tool to reflect on the form, function and aesthetics of early years learning spaces.
- Adapt your plans and make changes as needed, to be responsive to the transition partners.
- Use the matrix (pages 11 – 13) in the *Supporting successful transitions: School decision-making tool* to reflect on whether your transition-to-school strategies are school-centred, consultative or collaborative.

More support

For contact details for your region's Transition Officers and Partnerships and Innovation Officers visit:
https://oneportal.deta.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/forschools/Pages/Transitiontoschoolsupportcontacts.aspx

For more information and resources on Supporting successful transitions visit:
www.qld.gov.au/transitiontoschool

References:

Berris, R and Miller, E. (2011). How design of the physical environment impacts early learning: Educators and parents perspectives. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 36(4).