SUPPORTING SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS

Conversation starters:
Principals and ECEC service providers

Trust, mutual respect and reciprocity are fundamental to any successful relationship; this is consistent with the partnership between prior-to-school settings and schools.

The connections between a child's current environment and their new one can have a significant impact on the child and their families as they negotiate the transition to school.

There are a range of partners involved in supporting children's transition to school. Ultimately, a strong partnership between all adults and organisations included in each child's support network is the key to providing a positive transition experience.

Conversation starters

In Queensland, there is diversity in communities with regard to connections between schools and Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) service providers. This may be for a variety of reasons including changes in staff, increase in providers or simply from shifting priorities. Through effective collaboration, clarity in expectations and shared understandings, shared decision-making can be realised which will ultimately lead to better continuity between settings.

The purpose of this document is to provide a starting point for principals, specifically when beginning to build relationships with local ECEC educators.

The suggested topics are organised according to the action areas described in the *Supporting successful transitions: School decision-making tool* and cover a range of aspects related to transitions in the early years. You may wish to use some or all of these to guide your conversations with ECEC educators.

Also included are prompting questions for each topic and a simple summary of possible actions principals can take to respond to the information provided to strengthen relationships with local ECEC services.

Resources

Before you make contact with local ECEC services, explore the following resources which provide helpful information, tips and ideas around building reciprocal relationships with transition partners.

- *Supporting successful transitions: School decision-making tool* – Queensland's framework for school transition planning and action
- Putting the AEDC into practice – DET case studies highlighting partnerships in local communities
- Professional conversations – QCAA video showing ECEC educators and school staff discussing Transition Statements
- Partners in transitions – QCAA videos highlighting the range of partners involved in children's transition to school

Engaging with your ECEC service partners

Identify services

In your community, you may have only a few or possibly multiple ECEC services operating. It is important to remember that there are a variety of settings from which children transition. These may include home, family day care, long day care, community kindergarten, kindergarten on a school site, eKindy (distance kindergarten option) or even an Outside Hours School Care (OHSC) service.

Simple tips:

- Use the My child website to identify ECEC services in your local area: http://www.mychild.gov.au/
- Access Google Maps to better understand the range of services offered in your local community: https://www.google.com.au/maps
- Review your *Early Childhood school data profile* for valuable information on the ECEC services in your area and other key data to support transition planning and action.

Partnering with services may extend beyond your geographical catchment area. This will depend on what the children attend prior to enrolling in Prep. Regardless, it may be valuable to partner with services both in close geographic proximity as well as those in the wider community to strengthen your transition processes and better support the children and families in the local community.

Simple tips:

- Connect with local ECEC educators where children are attending prior to school.
- Gain insight into where children attended prior to school, where appropriate.

Make contact with services

You might approach services on an individual basis or alternatively engage with several simultaneously.

Simple tips:

- Consider how you first make contact with ECEC services. If it is the first point of contact, a phone call, email or letter may be more appropriate than an unexpected visit.
- Invite educators for morning or afternoon tea, it may not be necessary to have a formal meeting planned. Keeping it simple, accessible and with a light tone is a strong starting point. Finding time to open up the school and welcome the ECEC educators into the school space can be the beginning of building trust and respect in the relationship.
- It is important to be clear when communicating the purpose of coming together. This will help to ensure all involved understand why they are meeting and mitigate potential risk of causing anxiety or tension.
- Communicate that an ongoing relationship is important to the school staff and ask for ideas on how this might work best going forward for everyone involved.
- Be sensitive to any historical interactions that have occurred previously and continue to communicate your purpose and interest in building a strong partnership.
- Together, identify areas of mutual interest that could be discussed in future meetings, using the conversation starters and prompting questions provided in this document.

Action Areas prompting conversations

The Supporting successful transitions: School decision-making tool describes five action areas to assist schools in organising their transition strategies.

The information provided in Conversation starters is shaped around these five action areas to prompt collaboration between schools and ECEC educators and support shared thinking and decision-making, with a view to strengthen continuity between settings.

Respect for diversity

Conversation starters	• Demographic profile of local children and families • Findings from research about how to respect diversity in transition processes • Prioritising social and emotional wellbeing in the transition process • Strategies that have been effective with specific cultural groups or individual families • Sharing general knowledge and expertise gained from interactions with families in the local community
Prompting questions	• How can we share knowledge to better communicate with local families? • What research is available to learn more about inclusivity in transition processes? • What is the range of cultural backgrounds of families accessing your service? • How can we encourage the participation of children and families who are not accessing any educational setting? • Are there any local services that can support our interactions with the families living in the community? • What do children think and feel about the transition to school? How can we use their thinking to guide our transition processes and strategies?

Effective use of data

Conversation starters	• Understanding where children in our community are transitioning from • Identifying data sources, e.g. *Early Childhood school data profile*, ABS, AEDC, Transition Statements • Understanding and using local data
Prompting questions	• What data is available that can support our collaborative planning? • How can we share knowledge to gain further insight into our unique community? • What does the data tell us about children and families who are not accessing any educational setting in our community? • What information can we share to best support children in their transition to school? • What can we learn from ECEC educators to build strong relationships with children and families before they start Prep? • How can we support the process of families sharing Transition Statements? • Given the data, what actions do we need to take for our community? • Are there any other community partners who can help deepen the knowledge around areas of vulnerability identified in the data?

Responsive environments

Conversation starters	• Streamlining the transition process from multiple ECEC services to school • Effective environments in the early years (0-8) • Being responsive to family knowledge
Prompting questions	• How can our transition processes be more inclusive or individually tailored? • What changes can we make to better support children in the transition period to feel more comfortable in their new environment? • How can we work alongside families more effectively to support the continuity between home and educational settings? • How can we learn from each other to better support the children in our community?

Effective pedagogy and practice

Conversation starters	• Philosophy of the service/school • Curriculum comparisons and discussions • Range and balance of pedagogies • A community and holistic approach to school readiness • Sharing current strategies to support transitions
Prompting questions	• What can we learn from each other about the curriculum and pedagogy implemented in our diverse settings? • How can we provide stronger continuity as children transition? • What strategies do ECEC educators employ towards the end of the year to support children's transition? • What strategies do we currently use at the start of the school year to support children's transition to Prep? • How can we work together to offer a stronger transition experience for all children? • What information and resources have been provided by the state government and other organisations to support transition planning?

Reciprocal relationships

Conversation starters	• Sharing concerns, issues, hopes and expectations about transitions • Shared decision-making • Partnering to hold community events
Prompting questions	• What do we do well? What has worked in the past? • How can we work better together to make shared decisions about transitions? • Collectively, what resources can we access? • How can we utilise our collective resources to partner and hold a community event? • What actions can each partner take responsibility for and lead? • What professional learning can we benefit from as a group to support our community priorities? • Who can support us to strengthen our transition planning? • Are there any network groups currently running in the community that we can join? • Is it plausible to establish a new group focused on continuity in the early years for the children in our community? Who else might we include?

Where to from here?

Although each Queensland community is different and will require individual planning and tailored transition strategies, there are always opportunities to strengthen relationships with transition partners.

To act on the information provided in this resource, follow these simple steps and begin the transition conversation with ECEC educators in your local area.

1. Identify your local ECEC services

2. Make contact with local ECEC educators

3. Ensure the first meeting has a light tone with the purpose clearly communicated

4. Explore the potential to build an ongoing relationship, including discussing the frequency, location and purpose of future meetings

5. Use the prompting topics and questions provided to guide conversations at meetings

6. Work together to respond to the emerging priorities and help children in your local community enjoy a positive start to school.

More information

Visit the DET Transition to school web pages for information on Queensland's approach to transition to school.

Contact your regional Transition and Partnerships and Innovation officers for local implementation advice and strategies.