



Knowing children and families

Children and families are at the centre of transitions. Research tells us that decisions about transitions should be made considering:

- a holistic view of children, including cultural, physical, social and emotional capabilities and cognitive processes
- family perspectives, backgrounds and ways of knowing (kinship, voice, culture and community)
- the variable ways children and families react to change and new experiences
- children's prior experiences.

‘Queensland is culturally diverse, and learners bring different life experiences, languages and ways of knowing, being and doing to their learning.’

Transitions literature review p.14

Children and families are competent and capable.



... what you know ... shapes how they grow ...

QA 1, 5, 6

D 3, 7, 9



Knowledge and understandings

- Each child is unique and brings with them diverse knowledge, understandings, dispositions and experiences.
- Children are capable and competent.
- Children have the right to safe, secure and nurturing learning environments in which their family's cultures, histories, languages and traditions are respected.
- Children develop differently in response to their experiences.
- Children, families and communities have differing strengths and vulnerabilities requiring a range of contextual responses.
- Knowledge of children and families informs practice and supports continuity of learning.
- Families are a child's first teacher and the values and beliefs of the family shape the child's attitudes and understandings.
- Each family has expectations for their child and expectations of the service and school.

Do your transition activities respond to children's prior knowledge and experiences?

How can your teaching team get to know the children and families in the community?

How could you respond to the different needs of children and families?





Valuing the voice of children and families

Understanding children begins with listening. When children and families are invited to share their stories, strengths and perspectives, teaching teams and leaders gain rich insights into what matters most to them. These voices help build a deeper picture of each child's identity, interests and experiences across home, early learning and school.

Valuing family and child voice supports meaningful transition planning, strengthens children's confidence and lays the foundation for engagement and success in their new learning environment. Every voice helps shape a more connected and personalised transition journey.



‘Knowing learners and families involves ensuring they can actively participate and have a voice in transition conversations, recognising the importance of their prior experiences in ensuring coherence during transitions.’

Transitions literature review p.17



Knowing children and families

COMMITMENT
Honour learners' unique strengths and contexts

COMMITMENT
Build strong relationships

... capturing voice ... promoting choice ...

QA 1, 5, 6

D 3, 7, 9



How do we create opportunities for children and families to share thoughts, worries and excitement during transitions?

STRATEGIES

Create 'All About Me' books

Invite children to share their interests, family members, pets, favourite activities and special objects to build a holistic picture of who they are.

Ask children and families about past experiences

Use simple reflective questions:
What was your transition experience?
How did you feel when you started?
What could we do differently?

Their responses can guide future planning and practice.

Gather children's perspectives through play

Observe children's play, language and interactions to learn what they are curious or worried about and to understand their interests and strengths.

Build a collaborative transition space

Co-create a visual display for families to share child interests and contribute questions or insights that help guide transition planning.

Offer multiple ways for families to share their voice

Provide opportunities through face-to-face conversations, emails, phone calls, drawings, surveys, photos or digital tools so every family can contribute in ways that feel comfortable for them.

Stories about transitions

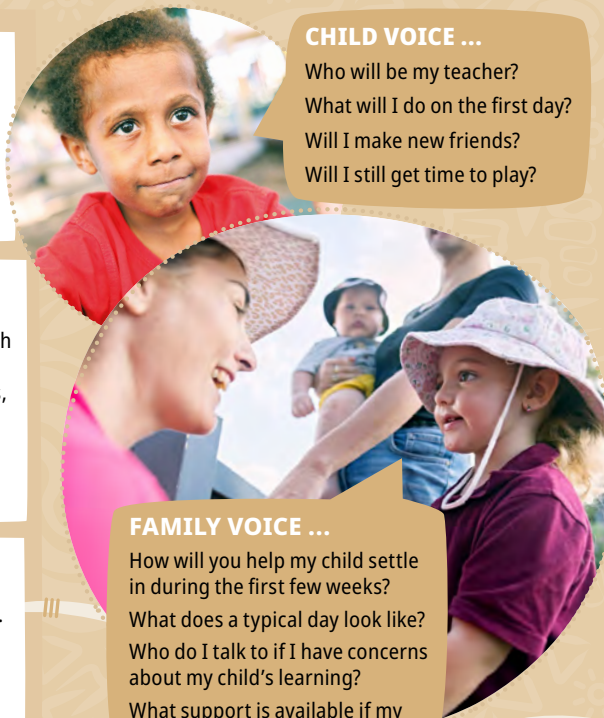
Read or create social stories about starting kindy or school. Gather children's questions, worries, excitement and ideas through drawings, role-play, conversations or storytelling.

CHILD VOICE ...

Who will be my teacher?
What will I do on the first day?
Will I make new friends?
Will I still get time to play?

FAMILY VOICE ...

How will you help my child settle in during the first few weeks?
What does a typical day look like?
Who do I talk to if I have concerns about my child's learning?
What support is available if my child struggles with change?



Explore + extend

TOOLKIT RESOURCES

Transition cards:

- Feedback to inform future transitions
- Hero... the Harristown bear
- Kindy... here we come!

VIDEOS

[200 children voices](#)

RESOURCES

[Voice of the Child toolkit](#)

[Starting school: Perspectives of Australian children, parents and educators](#)

Play it forward:

[Being agentic](#)

- Children's voice



Honouring children's prior knowledge and experiences

Every child arrives with a rich foundation of knowledge, skills and experiences shaped by family, culture and community. Recognising and building on what children already know fosters confidence, curiosity and a strong sense of identity as a learner.

When teaching teams and leaders take time to listen, connect and collaborate, they create continuity between home, ECEC services and school. Honouring prior learning and experiences helps each child feel valued, capable and ready to grow.

‘...
a strengths-based
approach recognises
learners' wisdom,
resilience, and
capabilities in making
decisions about issues
that directly
affect them.’

Transitions literature review p.21



Knowing children and families

COMMITMENT
Honour learners' unique strengths and contexts

COMMITMENT
Nurture continuity of learning

... recognise ... build ... extend ...

In what ways do we acknowledge and value each child's prior learning and experiences to support transitions?

STRATEGIES

Gather insights from families and previous teaching teams to understand each child's interests, learning strengths and areas for growth.

Use transition statements, portfolios or conversations to inform planning and ensure continuity between ECEC services and school.

Acknowledge and celebrate children's achievements and experiences from home and prior settings as part of their learning journey.

View each child as capable and competent, promoting confidence and ownership of their learning.

Invite families and children to share their stories, cultures and experiences through photos, drawings or classroom discussions.

Build on children's interests and strengths when designing learning experiences that connect familiar ideas to new concepts.

Use open-ended questioning and observation to uncover what children already know and can do.

Collaborate across settings – ECEC services, school and family support teams and services – to align expectations and create smooth learning pathways.



Explore + extend

TOOLKIT RESOURCES

Transition cards:

- Responsive planning using transition statements
- Continuity of curriculum and pedagogy

VIDEO

[Embedding culture in practice for kindergarten teaching and learning](#)

RESOURCES

[Interest-based learning](#)

Play it forward:

- [Being agentic](#)
- Child-centred



Families as first teachers

Families lay the foundation for every child's learning, wellbeing and sense of identity. Through everyday routines, play and interactions at home, children develop the skills and understandings that shape how they engage with new learning environments.

During transitions, recognising families as their child's first teachers helps create continuity, trust and shared purpose. When teaching teams and leaders actively seek, value and build on the knowledge families bring – their insights, cultural wisdom, hopes and priorities – children experience smoother transitions and a stronger sense of belonging across home, ECEC services and school.

... connect ... celebrate ... continue ...



Knowing children and families

COMMITMENT
Honour learners' unique strengths and contexts

COMMITMENT
Build strong relationships

“In the early years, this involves teachers and families working together to plan transitions, including the learners' perspectives and experiences and exploring what they would like to know about the transition.”

Transitions literature review p.21



How can we recognise and strengthen families' role as their child's first teacher during times of transition?

STRATEGIES

Early literacy

- Invite families to share favourite songs, stories and home languages to build familiarity during transitions.
- Ask about children's early literacy experiences to connect new learning with what is already familiar at home.
- Offer simple literacy ideas families can use before and after transition, such as reading books about kindy or school.

Health and nutrition

- Talk with families about routines that support children's wellbeing to help ease transitions into new environments.
- Provide transition tips around healthy habits such as practising lunch routines or active play before starting kindy and school.
- Partner with families and local community health services to share ideas for outdoor play, balanced eating and emotional regulation.

Early numeracy

- Use familiar home routines (e.g. cooking, shopping, gardening) to connect home experiences with new settings.
- Share ways families can explore numeracy through everyday play – counting, sorting, building – to support continuity of learning.
- Highlight how early numeracy skills developed at home support confidence in new learning environments.

Cultural identity

- Invite families to share cultural practices, stories or celebrations that reflect their child's identity and sense of belonging.
- Incorporate home languages, symbols or family artefacts into learning spaces to build connection and belonging.
- Acknowledge and celebrate the cultural knowledge families bring, recognising that this shapes each child's confidence, values and learning journey.



Explore + extend

TOOLKIT RESOURCES

Transition cards:

- Promoting early learning pathways

RESOURCES

[Supporting children to develop emotional maturity](#)

[Families as first teachers](#)

Play it forward:
[Being responsive](#)

- Cultural responsiveness
- Growing readers and writers
- Making it count
- Making chatter matter
- Physicality
- The power of play



Warm and welcoming enrolment conversations

Enrolment conversations are more than just gathering information – they are meaningful opportunities to connect, listen and begin building relationships. A warm, welcoming approach helps families and children feel valued, heard and confident about beginning their new journey.

These conversations focus on strengths, interests and aspirations, creating a shared understanding of each child as a capable learner. When transition teams listen deeply and communicate with genuine care, enrolment becomes the starting point for strong, ongoing partnerships between families, schools and ECEC services.



... connect ... listen ... welcome ...

Knowing children and families

COMMITMENT
Honour learners' unique strengths and contexts

COMMITMENT
Build strong relationships

‘Effective transitions create a welcoming atmosphere for all families, suspending judgement, harnessing the power of word-of-mouth and connecting families.’

Transitions literature review p.35



What small changes could we make to our enrolment processes to make them feel child-centred and welcoming?

STRATEGIES

Create a welcoming environment – set up the space with toys, books or play materials to help children relax and engage naturally.

Offer families time to ask questions and express hopes, goals or any concerns about their child's transition.

Invite families to share their story – ask about the child's interests, strengths and experiences at home or in previous settings.

Include key staff in the conversation (e.g. educators and teachers, early years coordinators or inclusion staff) to support continuity and shared understanding.

Use positive, strengths-based language that highlights what the child can do and how the service or school will support continued growth.

Begin with connection, not paperwork – greet families warmly, introduce staff and focus on getting to know the child before collecting information.

Provide opportunities for learners to connect – allow children to explore the environment, meet teachers and build comfort through play.

Follow up with a friendly message or resource to thank the family for attending and reinforce that their voice and partnership are valued.



Explore + extend

TOOLKIT RESOURCES

Transition cards:

- Partnerships with families
- Accessible transitions
- Invisible transitions

RESOURCES

[Supporting positive transitions](#)

Quality area 6:

- [Enrolment and orientation \(ACECQA\)](#)
- [Enrolment and orientation – family day care \(ACECQA\)](#)

Play it forward: [Being connected](#)

- Sense of belonging



Promoting social and emotional wellbeing

Supporting children's social and emotional wellbeing is essential for positive transitions. When children feel safe, valued and connected, they are able to adjust to new environments, build relationships and approach change with confidence.

Through nurturing interactions, predictable routines and environments that promote belonging, teaching teams and leaders help children develop emotional awareness, resilience and empathy – key foundations that support smooth transitions and set children up for lifelong learning.



‘Learners who feel supported by teachers are found to have a positive motivational orientation to schoolwork and they experience positive social and emotional wellbeing.’

Transitions literature review p.17



Knowing children and families

COMMITMENT
Respond flexibly to learners and their contexts

COMMITMENT
Foster a sense of belonging

... safe ... connected ... confident ...

QA 1, 2, 5

D 3, 7



How do we support social and emotional learning, and build resilience so children can navigate transitions with confidence?

STRATEGIES

Build trusting relationships

– greet children warmly, use their names and show genuine interest in their thoughts and feelings to help them feel secure during times of change.

Create predictable routines that support stability and help learners understand what to expect throughout the day.

Model and teach emotional language – talk about feelings to help children recognise, express and manage emotions that may arise during transitions.

Encourage play and social connection by offering cooperative games, role-play and shared problem-solving to strengthen relationships as children adjust to new environments.

Acknowledge and celebrate effort and kindness to build confidence and empathy, supporting children as they navigate new routines and expectations.

Use calm, consistent approaches when responding to challenging emotions during transitions, prioritising connection before correction.

Create safe, inclusive environments with quiet spaces and sensory tools that help children regulate and refocus when transitions feel overwhelming.

Work in partnership with families and support staff to share strategies and promote consistent messages across settings.



Explore + extend

VIDEO

[Executive function](#)

RESOURCES

[Early Years Health and Development \(EFI catalogue\)](#)

[Social and emotional learning \(AERO\)](#)

Centre for Early Childhood:

- [The Shaping us Framework](#)
- [Cultural diversity and the social and emotional development of young children in early childhood](#)

[Supporting babies' social and emotional wellbeing \(ACECQA\)](#)

[Student wellbeing hub](#)

Play it forward:

[Being responsive](#)

- Connecting hearts and minds



Culturally safe spaces

Creating culturally safe spaces means ensuring every child and family feels respected, valued and seen. When children see their identities, languages and cultural traditions recognised and celebrated, they develop a sense of belonging that helps them navigate change with confidence.

When teaching teams and leaders listen deeply, reflect on their own perspectives and embrace diversity in daily practice, they create spaces where families feel welcome and children feel safe to learn, connect and thrive through every transition.

‘Supporting diverse cultural and linguistic identities begins with creating culturally safe spaces and using culturally responsive practices in education settings.’

Transitions literature review p.14

... respect ...

Knowing children and families

COMMITMENT
Honour learners' unique strengths and contexts

COMMITMENT
Foster a sense of belonging



... belonging ... connection ...

QA 1, 5, 6

D 3, 7, 9



Do children and families see their cultures, languages and stories reflected in our environment?

STRATEGIES

Welcoming environments

- Create entry and learning spaces that reflect the cultures, languages and identities of the children and families in your community.
- Use greetings, signage and displays in home languages to make families feel recognised and included.
- Include diverse materials, books and images that authentically represent many cultures and ways of life.



Respectful relationships

- Engage with local community and cultural leaders and Elders to support culturally safe transition practices.
- Take time to learn about each family's background, values and traditions through genuine, two-way conversations.
- Celebrate cultural events and practices in partnership with families and community members, ensuring authenticity and respect.

Inclusive curriculum and practice

- Embed diverse cultural perspectives intentionally across the curriculum – not just on special occasions.
- Use books, songs, stories and play experiences that reflect a widerange of cultures, languages and family structures.
- Encourage children to share their own stories and experiences to build pride and understanding of identity.



Reflective practice

- Reflect on personal and team assumptions and how they influence relationships and teaching practice.
- Engage in ongoing professional learning to strengthen cultural capability and responsiveness.
- Seek feedback from families and colleagues to identify ways to make your setting more inclusive and culturally safe.



Explore + extend

TOOLKIT RESOURCES

Transition cards:

- Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives
- Partnerships with families

VIDEO

[Learning through environment](#)

RESOURCES

[Engaging with families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds \(AERO\)](#)

[Belonging, being and becoming: Cultural responsiveness \(ACECQA\)](#)

[Cultural responsiveness in education \(AERO\)](#)

[Cultural diversity: Kindergarten research insights](#)

Play it forward:

- [Being responsive](#)
- Cultural responsiveness

Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives

Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives strengthens transitions by helping children and families feel recognised, respected and connected to place. In ECEC services and school settings, this means creating spaces that honour Country, celebrate identity and invite families to share their stories as children move into new environments.

Through everyday practices – songs, stories, art and meaningful connections with community – educators and teachers nurture belonging, cultural pride and understanding. Embedding these perspectives is not a one-off activity; it is a way of being and learning together that supports confident, culturally grounded transitions.

‘... affirming cultural identity and enabling learners to express their culture through various practices can foster a sense of belonging, learners’ agency and development.’

Transitions literature review p.15

Knowing children and families

COMMITMENT
Honour learners’ unique strengths and contexts

COMMITMENT
Foster a sense of belonging



... ways of being ... knowing ... doing ...

QA 1, 5, 6

D 3, 9

Are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives intentionally visible in our transition practices?

STRATEGIES

Display the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags in meaningful ways and explore their significance with children as they transition into new environments.

Create a welcoming, **culturally responsive space** that reflects Country, local language and community identity.

Invite local Elders, Traditional Owners or cultural liaison officers to share stories, songs and connections with Country.

Include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander **books, stories and artworks** that reflect local and national voices, building familiarity and continuity through transitions.

Incorporate age-appropriate **Acknowledgment of Country** into daily routines, so children feel connected as they move between settings and spaces.

Develop an ECEC service or school **Reconciliation Action Plan** to continue to strengthen embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.

Engage children in **yarning circles** to listen, share and build respect – supporting confidence and connection during times of change.

Embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives across **planning and practice**, ensuring this is part of everyday learning rather than a one-off event.

Explore + extend

VIDEOS

QLD Department of Education:

- [Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives starts at the gate](#)
- [Being proud and strong – Developing cultural identity in Indigenous early childhood education](#)
- [Embedding culture in practice for kindergarten teaching and learning](#)
- [Acknowledgement of Country](#)

RESOURCES

[Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Education](#)

[Belonging, being & becoming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives](#)

[Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives: Play-based learning and intentionality \(AERO\)](#)

[Promoting, exploring and celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures](#)

[Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural capability framework](#)





Invisible transitions

Not all transitions are planned. Sometimes children and families experience sudden or unexpected changes – a move to a new school, a change in care setting or disruptions to familiar routines.

These invisible transitions can be challenging for children, families and teaching teams alike.

By responding with empathy, flexibility and strong communication, teaching teams and leaders can help children feel safe, supported and connected as they navigate change. Every moment of adjustment is an opportunity to rebuild trust, belonging and continuity of learning.

‘... invisible transitions occur when new settings lack familiarity for learners and families, potentially leading to significant adjustment challenges.’

Transitions literature review p.9



Knowing children and families

COMMITMENT
Foster a sense of belonging

COMMITMENT
Build strong relationships

... notice ... nurture ... respond ...

QA 1, 5, 6

D 3, 7, 9



What adjustments can we make to our transition processes to better support children and families during unexpected or invisible transitions?

STRATEGIES

Acknowledge change early – recognise when a child or family has experienced a sudden shift and offer calm, reassuring support from the first interaction.

Use predictable routines and visual supports to help children understand what to expect and reduce anxiety.

Create a welcoming environment – prepare a safe, inviting space with familiar routines and gentle introductions to people and places.

Monitor wellbeing and progress over time, checking in regularly with families and colleagues to adjust supports as needed.

Take time to listen – allow families and children to share their story, experiences or concerns at their own pace.

Work collaboratively with families, teaching teams and leaders to plan next steps and ensure a shared approach to settling in.

Gather key information from previous settings, support services or family insights to help maintain continuity of learning and care.

Assign a buddy or key educator/teacher to provide consistent connection and help the child feel secure and included.



Explore + extend

TOOLKIT RESOURCES

Transition card:

- Partnerships with families

RESOURCES

[Invisible transitions – Supporting students who enrol unexpectedly](#)

[Invisible transitions for school: A hidden concern](#)

[Evaluating transition to school programs: Learning from research and practice \(Sue Dockett and Bob Perry\)](#)



Accessible transitions

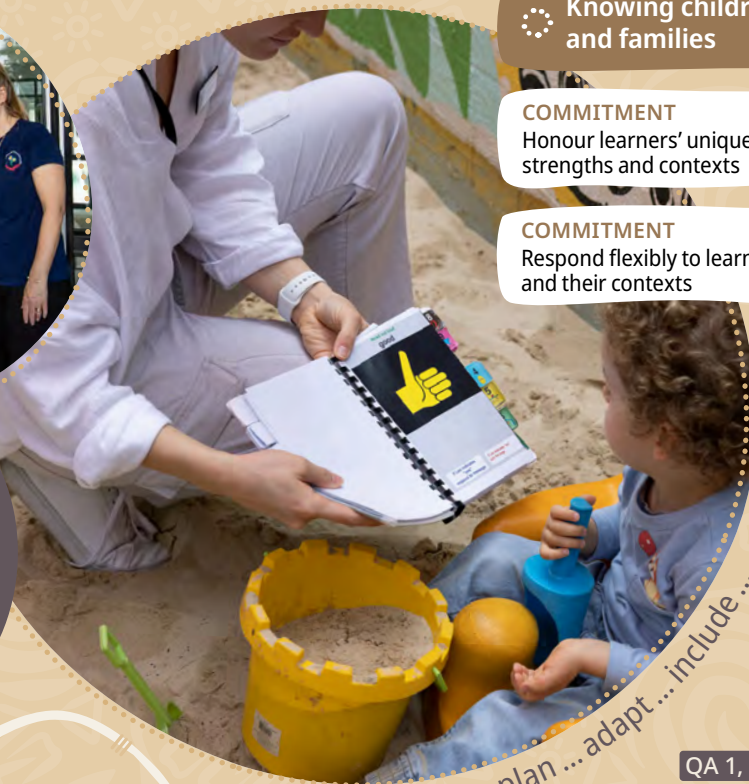
Accessible transitions ensure that every child can participate, feel included and experience success as they move into new learning environments. For children with additional needs, transitions may require more time, flexibility and multiple opportunities to explore, practise and build connection.

Using visual supports, clear routines and predictable timetables helps children understand what to expect and builds confidence in new settings. When teaching teams and leaders, families and support services work together, they create inclusive pathways that honour every child's strengths and needs.



‘... strengths-based approaches invite us to move beyond assessments of what learners can – or cannot do ... looking instead to their strengths, capabilities and potentials.’

Transitions literature review p.21



Knowing children and families

COMMITMENT

Honour learners' unique strengths and contexts

COMMITMENT

Respond flexibly to learners and their contexts

... plan ... adapt ... include ...

QA 1, 5, 6

D 3, 7, 9



How do our transition practices remove barriers and create opportunities for every child to succeed?

STRATEGIES

Plan early and collaboratively – involve families, ECDP staff and allied health professionals to identify strengths, needs and focus areas.

Use visual supports such as social stories, photo books, schedules, symbols and maps to help children understand routines, spaces and expectations.

Adapt learning environments with sensory-friendly spaces, quiet zones and accessible materials that support focus and engagement.

Provide reasonable adjustments and differentiated support so every child can participate meaningfully in routines, play and learning.

Provide multiple opportunities for transition – offer short visits, small-group sessions or gradual entry to help children and families become familiar with new environments, teaching teams and leaders.

Build predictable routines that provide comfort and structure while allowing for flexibility and individual pacing.

Communicate clearly and consistently with families using visuals, plain language and multiple modes (written, verbal, visual) to share information.

Monitor and review transition progress through ongoing conversations with families and support teams, adjusting strategies as needs evolve.



Explore + extend

TOOLKIT RESOURCES

Individual transitions guide

VIDEO

[Inclusive learning environments: promoting accessibility](#)

RESOURCES

EFI catalogue:

- [Early Years Connect](#)
- [Investing in Teachers: Boosting Teacher Capability – Students with Disability](#)

[Transition to school](#)

[Disability and inclusion resources \(QLD government\)](#)

[Inclusive enrolment processes in ECEC services](#)

[Inclusion and diversity: Kindergarten research insights](#)

Play it forward:

[Being connected](#)

- Inclusive practice



Daily transitions

Transitions happen many times throughout a child's day, for example: arriving at school or care, and moving between lessons, play or home routines. These moments can be exciting, busy or sometimes challenging, especially for learners who thrive on predictability and structure.

Supporting children through daily transitions helps build confidence, independence and a sense of calm. When teaching teams and leaders use consistent routines, visual supports and clear communication, children learn to manage change with growing resilience and trust.



‘Viewing transitions as both vertical and horizontal can offer a more holistic and nuanced understanding of pathways between the different settings and contexts navigated by learners and families.’

Transitions literature review p.9

Knowing children and families

COMMITMENT

Respond flexibly to learners and their contexts



... predictable ... supportive ... calm ...

QA 1, 5, 6

D 3, 7, 9



How do we design everyday transitions that feel calm, predictable and supportive for all children?

STRATEGIES

Predictable routines

- Establish clear, consistent daily routines so children know what to expect and when.
- Use visual timetables, picture cards or simple symbols to represent the sequence of the day.
- Give advance warnings or countdowns (e.g. 'Five minutes until pack-up') to help children prepare for change.
- Introduce transition songs, cues or signals to make routine changes familiar and calm.



Inclusion and collaboration

- Adjust routines and pacing to meet individual learner needs and processing time.
- Use visuals, gestures or key words alongside spoken instructions for accessibility.
- Work with families, support teams and OSHC staff to align routines and expectations across settings.
- Use buddy systems or peer support to help children feel confident and connected during change.



Supporting emotional regulation

- Acknowledge children's emotions during transitions and offer comfort or reassurance when needed.
- Provide 'calm-down' strategies or spaces for children who find change overwhelming.
- Use social stories or photo books to explain transitions like drop-off, lunchtime or moving to OSHC.
- Maintain predictable goodbye routines to build security and reduce separation anxiety.



Smooth movement between activities

- Allow time for children to shift focus between structured, play-based or independent learning.
- Provide clear instructions and model expected behaviours (e.g. walking safely, packing away materials).
- Offer choices and movement breaks to promote independence and regulation.
- Keep learning spaces organised and accessible to support smooth, independent transitions.



Explore + extend

VIDEOS

[Routines and transitions](#)
[Shared rituals and routines for kindergarten](#)
[Indigenous teaching and learning](#)

RESOURCES

[K2 sandpit teaching and learning resources](#)
 ■ [Make our day: Visual timetable](#)
 ■ [Sing and say: Songs/games to support daily transitions](#)

[Plan effective transitions for children: In education and care services \(ACECQA\)](#)

Play it forward:
[Being responsive](#)
 ■ Daily transitions