



Showing leadership

Supporting children and families through transitions calls for thoughtful, intentional and community-centred leadership. Leadership is not limited to formal roles – every transition partner can contribute to shaping positive experiences. Teaching teams and leaders have a particular responsibility to advocate for early years transitions, connect partners and sustain this shared work over time, building strong and consistent transition practices across services and schools.

Showing leadership means creating a shared vision for how children are supported as they encounter new environments, routines and expectations. This vision is most powerful when it is shaped collaboratively with transition partners and informed by the voices of children, families and communities. By instigating and sustaining strong partnerships, leaders help ensure transitions are coordinated, responsive and focused on continuity, recognising each child's story and supporting every child to navigate change with confidence.

‘Showing leadership in learners’ transitions during the early childhood education and school years involves ensuring that the transition programs and teams are well-equipped to meet the diverse needs of learners, especially those experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage.’

Transitions literature review p.26



... responsive leadership ... empowered learners ...

QA 6, 7

D 4, 5, 9



Knowledge and understandings

- Teaching teams and leaders have a responsibility to show leadership in collaborating with the community.
- Community leaders are valued, respected and engaged in decision-making.
- Leaders instigate and sustain connections within the community for the benefit of children and families.
- Teaching teams support families to understand the connections between settings.
- Teaching and learning practices are appropriate and informed by evidence-based pedagogy for children 0–8 years.



What systems and partnerships help ensure our transition practices are consistent and sustainable over time?



How do we create and sustain a shared vision for positive transition across our setting and community?



Growing local transition leaders

Strong transitions start by growing local leaders who are passionate about early childhood and understand the importance of collaboration. These leaders work across schools, ECEC services and communities to build consistent, supportive experiences for children and families.

They foster partnerships, guide shared practices and ensure every voice is heard – especially those of children and families. By nurturing local leadership, we create a connected approach to transitions that supports belonging and continuity for children.

... plant ... grow ... thrive ...



Showing leadership

COMMITMENT
Strengthen collaborative partnerships

‘When leaders model a welcoming approach, they help establish the conditions for reciprocal communication between teaching teams and families based on mutual respect and trust, supporting families as they support learners.’

Transitions literature review p.28



How can we continue to empower and sustain transition leaders in our setting/community?

STRATEGIES

Identify staff in your setting that can lead or be involved in a team to support the implementation of transition practices.

Do they have capacity, interest and passion for early years?

Identify staff who have strong early childhood knowledge or willingness to grow their expertise.

Look for opportunities to build their capability.

Build capability across staff to share transition practices and build sustainability of practices for your context (particularly for longevity and if staff changes occur).

Consider resourcing required for your context including people, time, materials and space.



Explore + extend

TRANSITIONS TOOLKIT

Transition cards:

- Partnerships between ECEC and school settings

RESOURCES

[Supporting successful transitions: School decision-making tool](#)

[Measuring effective transitions to school: Discussion paper \(AERO\)](#)

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

Play it forward:

[Being intentional](#)

- School philosophy and purpose

Play it forward:

[Being reflective](#)

- Professional growth
- Educational leadership



Planning for a positive transition

Planning for transitions is a dynamic and constant process. It involves a range of stakeholders to ensure that plans are intentional and responsive to the needs of children, families, services, schools and communities. Building a learning community is an excellent strategy to ensure consistency in the purpose and planning of transition initiatives with stakeholders. Planning for transitions in a timely manner is also essential to the success of activities and outcomes for children.

Using a cycle of inquiry when planning for transitions:

- ensures decisions are evidence-based
- enables contextual transitions responsive to the setting
- strengthens collaboration across settings
- builds a culture of continuous improvement
- helps teaching teams and leaders respond to the diverse needs of children
- positions transition planning as a dynamic, thoughtful and evolving practice.



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COMMITMENT
Strengthen collaborative partnerships

COMMITMENT
Use evidence and build a culture of inquiry

‘To understand the impact of previous transitions and aspirations for future transitions, it is necessary for data to be shared effectively through the learning journey, and for families and communities to have direct input into both reflection on and planning for transitions with teaching teams.’

... dynamic ... intentional ... responsive ...



How do we use a cycle of inquiry to ensure our transition decisions are collaborative, responsive and informed by the needs of children and families?

STRATEGIES

Create a local transition plan that outlines the transition activities across the whole year, and year levels.

TIP You can use the planners referred to in the 'Explore + extend' section.

Use reflection and evidence to guide decisions – engage teaching teams in using data, observations and child voice to set realistic and informed priorities.

Embed transitions in everyday planning – link transition strategies to ECEC quality improvement plans and school annual improvement plans, ensuring progress is monitored and celebrated.

Complete community mapping to understand your transition partners within your local context.



TIP This can be a great activity to do with an early years network.

Facilitate joint planning sessions with local partners – invite ECEC services, schools, health services, local councils, First Nations organisations and community leaders to co-design transition supports and review what's working and new opportunities.

Nominate a 'Transition Champion' – someone who can take a lead on the work, coordinate actions, maintain communication between partners and track feedback from children and families.



Explore + extend

TRANSITIONS TOOLKIT

School transitions planner

ECEC transitions planner

Community services transitions planner

RESOURCES

[How to series: Plan Effective Transitions for Children in Education and Care Services](#)

[Transitions: Moving in, moving up and moving on](#)

[Supporting successful transitions: School decision-making tool](#)



Collaboration for shared decision-making

... is vital in supporting early years transitions as it fosters a holistic approach to understanding and meeting the needs of children. By actively involving children, families, teaching teams, leaders and community services, this process ensures that diverse perspectives and expertise are considered, creating a supportive transition into and through educational settings.

Shared decision-making builds trust, strengthens relationships and empowers all transition partners to contribute meaningfully, promoting a sense of belonging and continuity for children. For teaching teams and leaders, this approach enhances their ability to tailor practices to individual needs, ensuring every child feels valued and supported during these critical early years.



Showing leadership

COMMITMENT
Strengthen collaborative partnerships

‘Leaders can positively influence the culture of their early childhood services and schools when they model collaborative practices. This involves building strong, respectful relationships with learners in transitions, their families and their communities.’

Transitions literature review p.28

How can we foster collaborative decision-making during transitions?

STRATEGIES

Use co-design processes with families

- Invite families to help design transition activities, offering multiple ways to contribute (e.g. surveys, informal conversations, digital platforms).
- Provide materials that are culturally responsive and available in home languages.
- Treat families as experts on their children, not as recipients of information.

Involve community partners in decision-making

- Include health professionals, cultural leaders, disability services and local organisations in transition planning.
- Invite community voices to co-design culturally grounded transition rituals or events.

Create joint professional learning opportunities

- Bring ECEC and school staff together for shared professional development, for example, on play-based learning, child development, trauma-informed practice or cultural safety.
- Use inquiry cycles where both sectors investigate a transition challenge and test solutions together.

Centre children's perspectives

- Use child-friendly tools (e.g. drawings, photos, play-based interviews) to gather children's views on what helps them feel safe and confident.
- Co-create transition activities with children, asking them, *'What would help you feel comfortable moving into school/Year 1/Year 2?'*



Explore + extend

TRANSITIONS TOOLKIT

- School transitions planner
- ECEC transitions planner
- Community services transitions planner
- Individual transitions guide
- Transition cards:
 - Partnerships with families
 - Partnerships with community
 - Partnerships between ECEC and school settings

RESOURCES

[Strengthening parent engagement to improve student outcomes](#)

[Local government & early years networks](#)

[QCAA: Transition to school resource list](#)

Play it forward:

[Being connected](#)

- Collaborative partnerships



Promoting early learning pathways

Early learning pathways help families build confidence, connection and a strong foundation for lifelong learning. Rich, play-based experiences support children's social, emotional and communication development, making later transitions feel familiar rather than overwhelming. These settings also help families understand how learning unfolds, strengthening partnerships between home and education.

By promoting early years programs such as playgroup, an ECDP and kindergarten, teaching teams and leaders connect families with the right supports at the right time. Guiding families through the system ensures they feel informed and empowered, while early intervention builds protective factors that support children's wellbeing and long-term development. Championing these pathways leads to smoother, more confident transitions into formal education for children.

... the right support at the right time ...



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COMMITMENT
Strengthen collaborative partnerships

“Strong local connections enable playgroup leaders to refer families to community child health checks, library programs and services. Playgroup leaders also report acting as an information gateway for health professionals. Such leadership is crucial for families unfamiliar with local resources...”

Transitions literature review p.25



How are we fostering trust, effective communication and strong partnerships with families, and how can we ensure these efforts are truly meeting their needs and making a positive impact?

STRATEGIES

Create an Early Learning Pathways map

for your community showing playgroups, ECEC services, kindergartens, ECDPs, health and family support services and schools. Identify supports and gaps that affect children's transition experiences.

Create a visible 'early years information hub'

- Display brochures, posters and QR codes for local services in high-traffic areas.
- Use simple signage like: *'Thinking about kindy?'* or *'Local playgroups'* to spark curiosity.

Run early learning information sessions jointly with community partners to help families understand the birth to Year 2 learning journey and the importance of early participation.

Run a supported playgroup

at your service or school for children aged birth to five, where families can enjoy quality play experiences and connect with their community and early years support services.

Offer guidance to help families navigate the system

- Walk families through enrolment steps, forms or key dates.
- Provide short checklists or visual timelines to make the process feel manageable.

Build partnerships with local playgroups, ECDPs, ECEC services and schools by sharing newsletters, inviting reciprocal visits and co-hosting play or story time events.



Explore + extend

TRANSITIONS TOOLKIT

Transition cards:

- Partnerships with community
- Supported playgroups

RESOURCES

[Center on the Developing Child](#)
(Harvard University)

[Early Childhood Development Story](#)
– Resources for communities

[The Heckman Equation](#)

[Evidence summary: Why children and their early years matter](#)

[Options for care and early learning](#)



Continuity of curriculum and pedagogy

Continuity of curriculum and pedagogy ensures that educational experiences build progressively on prior knowledge, promoting confidence, engagement and a sense of belonging. When teaching approaches and learning expectations are aligned across early childhood and primary education, children experience smoother transitions, positive wellbeing and stronger foundations for academic and social success. This continuity also enables teaching teams to collaborate more effectively to tailor environments, routines and pedagogies to meet the developmental needs of children.



Transitions literature review p.30

‘When learners’ transitions involve moving from one learning environment to another, at least two ‘sides’ are engaged: a ‘sending side’ and a ‘receiving side’. Thus, joint ‘buy-in’ involving collaboration between the leadership of the two ‘sides’ is vital.’

Showing leadership

COMMITMENT
Nurture continuity of learning

‘... curriculum continuity influences and is impacted by pedagogy, structures, and processes in different environments, and these aspects can be managed at a local level. Collaborations between early childhood and school teams can identify continuity in some of these approaches and lead inquiry into curriculum.’

Transitions literature review p.40

... aligned learning supports seamless transitions ...



How intentionally are we drawing on the strengths, cultural identities and lived experiences that children bring with them when designing our transition programs?

STRATEGIES

Develop inclusive and accessible ways to meet with children and families prior to the start of their childcare/kindergarten/school year to understand their skills, strengths, interests, cultural practices and needs.

Host joint professional learning for ECEC service and school teaching teams on:

- the links between the QKLG and Australian Curriculum
- evidence-based pedagogies for teaching across birth to Year 2
- evidence-informed transition planning across settings.

Engage in genuine collaboration through shared inquiry projects across ECEC and school settings (e.g. 'How do children show curiosity across kindergarten and Prep?') to explore continuity of learning through observation and reflection.

Organise visits between ECEC service and school teaching teams to observe each other's settings to see classroom environments, routines and teaching in action.

This might extend to individual planning and observations for children requiring tailored support in their transition to school (refer to the individual transitions guide in 'Explore + extend').

Explore + extend

TRANSITIONS TOOLKIT

Individual transitions guide

Transition cards:

- Honouring children's prior knowledge and experiences
- Responsive learning environments
- Engaging early years pedagogies

RESOURCES

[Age-appropriate pedagogies](#)

Departmental staff can access practical teaching and learning resources via the [Curriculum Gateway](#), including the [K2 capability suite](#)

Play it forward:

[Being intentional](#)

- Pedagogy

Play it forward:

[Being reflective](#)

- The Continua of learning and development





Transition programs: more than orientation

Transition is a long-term process that supports children and their families as they move into and through different educational settings. It begins well before the first day and continues until children and families form relationships and feel a sense of belonging in the new setting or routine. Transition involves ongoing collaboration between ECEC services, schools and families, along with gradual introduction to new routines, social and emotional support and relationship building.

Orientation is a short-term set of activities designed to help children and families become familiar with a new setting. It usually includes activities like tours, meeting key staff and spending time in the classroom. Orientation to a new setting is part of transition, but it should be supported by additional strategies that help children feel safe and connected to their new environment.

Transitions literature review p.33

‘Successful transitions lead to learning and growth; they hinge on continuity of relationships and practices across educational settings, whereby transitions should support learners’ social and emotional wellbeing.’

... time ... intention ...



... continuity ...

Showing leadership

COMMITMENT
Build strong relationships

COMMITMENT
Foster a sense of belonging

Transitions literature review p.22

‘Successful transition programs are not based on a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach; they consider each learner and family’s uniqueness.’



In what ways does your setting support children before, during and after transitions — not just at orientation?

STRATEGIES

Orientation ▶ Transition



One-off visit: Children attend a single half-day session to meet the teacher and see the classroom.

Late-year timing with limited lead-up.

Minimal relationship building: Brief interactions with teaching teams, leaders and peers at an interview or school tour.

Limited emotional preparation: Few tools to support confidence or familiarity.

Basic information sharing: Families receive general school information via letter or one-off session.

School-only focus: Minimal involvement from community or early childhood sector.

Planned sequence of visits: Gradual, scaffolded experiences starting with low-pressure play and building to classroom experiences.

Playgroup-style sessions: Weekly gatherings where teaching teams, children and families build relationships and teaching teams observe children in familiar settings.

Year-round connection opportunities: Transition begins early and continues throughout the year.

Consistent adult connections: The same teaching teams or buddies support children across visits.

Emotional regulation supports: Social stories, 'Wonderful Me' posters, Meet My Teacher videos.

Collaborative information sharing: Learning portfolios and transition statements shared; parents attend workshops; children join play-based school visits.

Community involvement: Elders, cultural groups and community leaders contribute to culturally meaningful transitions.



Explore + extend

TRANSITIONS TOOLKIT

School transitions planner
ECEC transitions planner
Community services transitions planner
Individual transitions guide

RESOURCES

[Continuity of learning: a resource to support effective transition to school and school age care](#)

[Transitions: Between groups, settings and beyond](#)

Play it forward:
[Being agentic](#)

- Planning with children



Families transitioning together

Strong, trusting relationships with families are central to positive transitions, helping parents feel confident, informed and recognised as valued partners in their child's learning.

When teaching teams and leaders genuinely listen to families' questions and concerns, they can shape communication and engagement in ways that feel practical, respectful and accessible. This matters because not all families feel comfortable in formal education settings, and some may experience ECEC services or schools as inaccessible or 'hard-to-reach'.

As services and schools, we want to support families to navigate their child's transition with confidence - understanding the process, who their partners in transition are, and practical ways they can support their child.

... positive transitions start with families...



'... all families should feel they are welcome partners in learning.'

Transitions literature review p.35

Showing leadership

COMMITMENT
Build strong relationships

'Opportunities for engaging learners and their families during transitions can increase the likelihood of continued engagement and attendance at kindergarten and school.'

Transitions literature review p.35



How well do we understand the diverse experiences, hopes and perspectives that families bring to the transition process?

STRATEGIES

Host welcoming events at various stages throughout the year that invite children and families to be part of the service or school community (for example: welcome BBQs, fetes, book week, NAIDOC celebrations).

Develop consistent transition information packs across local services and schools so families receive the same key messages about transition. See *'Explore + extend'* for links to Department of Education resources. You may also like to make your own.

Provide targeted supports for families who need additional support with their child's transition. This might include interpreters, translated materials or inviting trusted community members to be part of transition sessions and conversations.

Offer transition sessions (i.e. 'stay and play') where parents/carers and children can participate in the daily activities of the class together. These can be a great opportunity to have informal conversations with parents/carers about their child and family.

Share child-made storybooks and videos that show what kindergarten, Prep, Year 1 and Year 2 look like from children's perspective.

Deliver short, practical family workshops on topics such as social and emotional development in children and building independence and self care routines. This could be a collaborative initiative with your early years network and involve community agencies such as the local health service.



How do we ensure families feel invited into decision-making, not just informed about decisions?



Explore + extend

TRANSITIONS TOOLKIT

Families transitions planner
Individual transitions guide

RESOURCES

[Parents and carers: Parent and community engagement guide](#)

Early years:

- [Early learning at home](#)
- [Transitions in the early years](#)
- [Starting school resources](#)

Building a shared language



Building a shared language

Developing a shared language around early childhood transitions is essential for promoting consistent communication, collaboration and mutual understanding among teaching teams, leaders, families and community service providers. These transitions are pivotal moments that influence children's emotional, social and cognitive growth and a unified approach ensures that all stakeholders can support children's developmental continuity in meaningful and coordinated ways.



... shared understanding ... builds collaboration ...

Showing leadership

COMMITMENT
Strengthen collaborative partnerships

‘... creating opportunities for joint professional development pathways and interprofessional exchanges is foundational to the effective leadership of transition teams ... Such activities contribute to collaborative professional relationships involving mutual respect and shared understanding that are crucial to the success of learners’ transitions.’

Transitions literature review p.26

QA 6, 7

D 3, 5, 9



In what ways does a shared language help us create predictable, positive transition experiences? Where are our opportunities to strengthen this?

STRATEGIES

Establish regular cross-sector conversations

- Hold joint professional learning sessions each term.
- Create mixed working groups (ECEC + Prep–Year 2 teaching teams) to discuss curriculum, transitions, and pedagogy.
- Use protocols for dialogue (e.g. ‘I notice/I wonder’) to keep conversations constructive and consistent.

Align curriculum language

- Map EYLF outcomes to the school curriculum in plain language.
- Identify shared concepts (e.g. identity, belonging, literacy and numeracy dispositions).
- Facilitate conversations between kindergarten and school teaching teams about unpacking kindergarten transition statements.

Involve families in the shared language

- Provide simple, consistent explanations of key learning concepts and transition information in newsletters and conversations.
- Gather feedback from families about what they want to know more about.
- Offer joint family information sessions about learning and transitions in early years settings and schools.

Co-define key terms and concepts

- Develop a short glossary of agreed terms (e.g. ‘play-based learning’, ‘assessment for learning’, ‘quality frameworks’, ‘curriculum’).

	ECEC services	Schools
Quality framework	NQF	School Improvement Tool
Curriculum and frameworks	EYLF, QKLG and My Time, Our Place.	Australian Curriculum

- Use real examples from both settings to illustrate each term.
- Revisit and refine the glossary annually with both early childhood and school teams.

Create shared experiences for children and teaching teams

- Plan joint play sessions between kindergarten and school.
- Invite school teaching teams to observe in ECEC settings, and ECEC teaching teams to observe in school settings.
- Use shared routines (e.g. morning meetings, inquiry questions) to build continuity.

Focus on dispositions, not just skills

- Agree on a shared set of dispositions (e.g. curiosity, resilience, collaboration). Use the same words to describe them in both settings.
- Celebrate these dispositions in children’s work, displays and conversations with families.



Explore + extend

TRANSITIONS TOOLKIT

Individual transitions guide

Transition cards:

- Shared transition experiences between settings
- Responsive planning using transition statements

VIDEO

[Ready Together](#)

RESOURCES

[Early Years Learning Framework \(postcards of key terms\)](#)

[Transitions in learning communities](#)

[One giant leap together](#)