

# Linking Schools and Early Years

Project Newsletter  
June - August, 2008

Welcome to the second edition of the **Linking Schools and Early Years** project newsletter. As the project moves forward some exciting activities are being delivered in each the three project sites. In this edition you will find information on the progress of the project and what's up next for everyone involved in **Linking Schools and Early Years** and those hoping to learn from it.

## What is the project working towards?

The Linking Schools and Early Years Project has been established with the aim that schools are prepared for children of all abilities and backgrounds when they first attend, and that families, services and communities are ready to support the development of children, so that:

**All children enter the formal education system ready to engage and be successful**

## What are the project goals?

There are three specific goals for the project;

- Children and families transition smoothly between early years services and schools.
- Early years services and schools actively connect with families.
- Schools are responsive to the individual learning needs of all children.

## What's been happening?



Corio/Norlane Working Group planning local activities

In **Corio/Norlane** – After a 6 month development period the Phase I Action Plan has now been finalized and activity delivery is about to begin. The Corio/Norlane Partnership Group has chosen to support the

implementation of a locally developed Transition Kit as one of their project activities. It is anticipated that the Transition Kit will be on the ground in schools and early education and care services by January 2009.

A buzz of activities have been happening in the other project sites since our last newsletter. Some of the activities currently being put in place by the local Partnership Groups for each project goal are:

### Goal 1: Children and families transition smoothly between early years services and schools:

In **Hastings and Footscray** – childcare, kinder and prep teachers have been spending a day in each others services to build a shared understanding of each others practices. Some quotes following their visits:

*"I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. It gave me an insight into the Primary School sector and it gave them an insight into a play based curriculum in the Early Childhood field. I look forward to forging stronger links."*

**Kerry Kempster, kinder teacher in Hastings**

*"It was a very worthwhile exercise. With kinders and schools now under the same department I can see opportunities for kinders and schools to share resources, buildings and activities."*

**Matt Dodson, prep teacher in Footscray**

Visiting each other's workplaces has also highlighted the opportunity for resource sharing. For example Hastings Primary School is now helping establish a library at Hastings Pre-school, by sharing books from their school library.

### Goal 2: Early years services and schools actively connect with families:

Each primary school in **Hastings** has been busy organizing and running family activities at their school. The activities are all different but share

the common aim of making schools a familiar and welcoming environment where families and children feel comfortable

Hastings Primary School had a great turn out for their May "Arts Expo" evening – a night of celebrating the arts and getting in touch with your artistic side, with mask making and a talent show.

St Mary's Primary School, have established a facilitated playgroup for current and incoming families. The playgroup is about providing activities for the children, as well as an opportunity for the existing and new families to socialise and get to know school staff.

Hastings West Park has invited both school families and families from their neighbouring kindergartens for a story telling and pajama party evening in the school library. This is one of the many great ways they will be celebrating literacy and numeracy week.

### **Goal 3: Schools are responsive to the individual learning needs of all Children:**

In **Footscray** a newly developed Working group will use the findings from the 'Information sharing' forum to investigate ways of sharing information across early education and care services and schools.

### **Thank-you and welcome**



Welcome to Tracey Clinch, who joined our project team in June. Tracey has been working closely with Hastings kinders, childcares and schools towards creating stronger local partnerships and links. With support from Tracey the workplace swaps have been very successful and a

Transition Network Group made up of local childcare workers, kinder and prep teachers and the Hastings Pre-school Field Officer has been established.

### **The R.E. Ross Trust**

The R.E. Ross Trust continues to support the Linking Schools and Early Years project and the Centre for Community Child Health. **The next R.E. Ross Trust Seminar will be....**

### **Early Identification: Working in partnership with families**

**Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> September**

Follow the link for a registration form:  
[http://www.rch.org.au/emplibary/ccch/RT\\_Seminar.pdf](http://www.rch.org.au/emplibary/ccch/RT_Seminar.pdf)

**Subscribe to the CCCH mailing list:**

<http://www.rch.org.au/ccch/list/>

The November R.E. Ross Trust seminar will focus on Linking Schools and Early Years and will showcase the three project sites. To find out more about this seminar and other early years events subscribe to the CCCH mailing list (see box above).

### **The external evaluation**

Baseline evaluation data from the project sites is still being collected for the external evaluation team at the Social Policy Research Centre, University of NSW. A special thanks to the schools, kinders, childcares and community family and children's services who completed and returned the evaluation questionnaires. Your responses will be very valuable and go towards building Australian based research evidence around effective strategies for linking schools and early years.

### **What's coming up?**

The **Hastings** Partnership Group is hosting their second 'Linking Together' forum. It's about understanding and celebrating the important role early years services, schools, community services and families play in supporting all children to reach school ready to engage.

### **Hastings 'Linking Together' Forum**

**If you work with 0-8 year olds – come along.**

**Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> September, 5-7pm**

**Hastings Community Hall**

### **Contact the team**

**Bella Laidlaw**, Project Manager

Hastings Contact

Ph 03 9345 6517 [Bella.laidlaw@mcri.edu.au](mailto:Bella.laidlaw@mcri.edu.au)

**Jen Lorains**, Project Officer

Footscray and Corio/Norlane Contact

Ph 03 9345 6144 - [Jennifer.Lorains@mcri.edu.au](mailto:Jennifer.Lorains@mcri.edu.au)