

# Linking Schools and Early Years

Project Newsletter  
June – August 2009

Welcome to the sixth edition of the **Linking Schools and Early Years (LSEY)** project newsletter. Firstly, we would like to welcome those who have joined the LSEY Newsletter mailing list. There have been a lot of new subscribers since the newsletters have become available online. In this edition you will read about the new DEECD policy directions, meet the newest member of the LSEY team and hear about some innovative activities that are happening across the three LSEY sites. Information in this newsletter will be helpful for everyone involved in **Linking Schools and Early Years** and those hoping to learn from it.

## What's new?

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) have launched the **Transition Learning and Development Statements** that offer the opportunity for early education and care services and families to formally share information about children's early learning experiences with the schools they transition to school.

To support the three LSEY communities in implementing the Transition Statements into their current practice, each site's local partners (early years services, schools, community services) will come together to discuss information that could be included in the DEECD template. Consideration will be given to information already regularly collected by early years services and information that will enable schools to be responsive to the individual learning needs of children.

For more information see:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/transitionschool/transitionstatement.htm>

## Welcome Angela

We would like to welcome Angela Morcos to the Linking Schools and Early Years team. Angela will be taking over from Bella Laidlaw, as project contact for the Hastings site.



Bella is taking on a new role at CCCH around supporting communities to develop locally relevant systems and structures that enable them to implement a more integrated approach to supporting children and families. Bella will also be staying on as Manager of the LSEY project.

## 'GOOD PRACTICE'

### in Linking Schools and Early Years

#### *'Engaging families'*

Across all sites there are great examples of 'good practice' around engaging families in early years services and schools:

- Parents invited to contribute to the learning curriculum and activities
- Early years services and schools communicating an open door approach to parents being involved in their children's learning environment
- Parents employed as parent liaison officers and literacy supports within in schools
- Informal opportunities for parents to chat with teachers/carers at pick-up and drop-off times
- Formal three-way 'conferences' between teachers, children and parents where parents and children have an opportunity to share their thoughts with teachers/carers
- Teachers, principals and other school staff regularly visit playgroups that are held on school grounds to meet parents and children and to support them to feel welcome and comfortable in the school
- Early years services and schools have commented that the most well attended events and activities are child focused and often parents are invited by their children through written and drawn invitations

Try these approaches in your early years services and schools and please feel free to contact us with your examples of 'good practice' in successfully engaging families.

## What's been happening?

There have been some exciting and innovative activities planned and implemented across the three project sites. As relationships within the Partnership groups continue to strengthen and flourish, so do the creative ideas around how to engage families, strengthen transition programs and share information across the early years profession (0-8 years). Some strategies and activities planned and being implemented are detailed below under each of the project goals.

**Goal One:** Children and families make a smooth transition between early years services and school

- **Footscray** kindergarten and prep teachers have recently completed 'Peer Swaps' with 100% participation across the schools and early years services involved in the project. Those involved have identified they would like to come together as a group of 'practitioners' to see how they can, as a group of early years professionals, play a key role in supporting children and families in Footscray.



Brenbeal Children's Centre visits Footscray PS prep class

Prep teacher from Footscray City PS visits Hyde Street Kindergarten

- **Corio/Norlane** recently held a community forum where schools and their feeder early years services had the opportunity to sit together and develop a 'Coordinated approach to transition'. Their transition programs recognise that consistency in relationships and familiarity with the new environment are key aspects of a successful transition to school. Their transition program activities include prep teachers visiting the kindergartens & childcares to start getting to know their incoming children prior to them arriving at school. Parents and children are also being supported to spend time in schools to become familiar with the new environment before children enter prep.

**Goal Two:** Early years services and schools actively connect with families

- Recognising that parent's involvement in their child's education has a positive impact on their early learning and development, the **Corio/Norlane** partnership is currently using the findings from their 'Family Friendly Review' to identify ways they can support families to feel more welcome and comfortable in their

schools and services. Some of the activities that are being planned and implemented include:

- Parent spaces within schools/services encouraging parents to spend time in the environment
  - Regular family lunches and days from which to build a culture of involvement
  - Relationship building between current prep and incoming prep parents
- The **Footscray** project partnership is currently focusing on engaging families in schools. This process recognises that engagement strategies used by schools are responsive to the needs of their schools community. As a result strategies being implemented differ between schools. An example of one strategy being implemented is the establishment of a parent space within a school. The school is working with its families to support them to create and own the space.

**Goal Three:** Schools are responsive to the individual learning needs of all children

- By reflecting on local AEDI data and community consultation findings, the **Hastings** project partnership has identified the need to implement strategies that aim to support children's speech and language development in Hastings. It was identified that external expertise would be needed to support the identification of appropriate strategies. As a result the **Hastings** partnership has established a partnership with The Education Institute & Murdoch Children Research Institute. The Institutes will consult with local families and service providers with the aim to inform the development of locally relevant strategies for improving children's speech and language development in Hastings. The recommended strategies will then be used to inform future **Hastings** partnership activity delivery.

### Contact the team

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