

## Linking Schools and Early Years (LSEY)

# Research Snapshot

### Snapshot two

## Supporting smooth transitions to school

The LSEY project has been working towards children and families making a smooth transition to school. Smooth and successful transition is important for all children (CCCH, 2008) because children who experience a smooth transition are more likely to enjoy school, attend regularly and experience steady growth in their academic and social skills. However, negotiating the changes and challenges that come with transition to school can be a time of particular vulnerability for children (CCCH, 2008).

## Place-based action for transition

The LSEY project community partnerships used family and service consultation information, local data and baseline LSEY evaluation information to identify focus areas for place-based action. They found:

- Not all children and their families were fully participating in transition to school programs.
- Schools were competing for enrolments.
- 90% of parents were getting information about school from their child's early years service, which helps target information provision.
- Parents were getting conflicting information about the transition to school.
- Early years services and schools only had limited connections.

Each LSEY community has worked together to enhance their support for a smooth transition to school for children and their families through a place-based collaborative planning approach. This approach recognises that a smooth transition is best supported by a partnership between families, early years services, and schools, as well as child/family and community services.

## Practice change in LSEY communities

**Transition programs and information:** are now planned by both early years services and schools to ensure information and programs are consistent. This has enabled communities to provide coordinated and cohesive transition support, and consistent information to children and families.

**Relationships:** schools, early years services, and child, family and community services have developed strong cross-sectoral relationships. These relationships supported their capacity to jointly plan and deliver local transition supports.

**Information sharing:** Schools and early years services have established local processes to create a common language and formal information sharing across sectors.

The LSEY external evaluation has found positive practice changes in the provision of and participation in transition programs for children and their families. The findings below show change over time between 2008 and 2010.

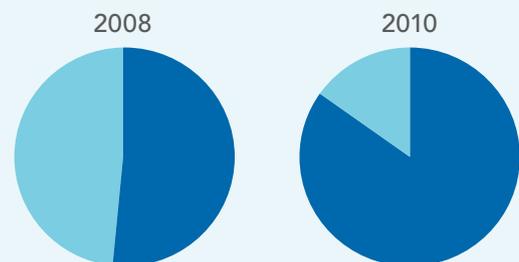
Key evaluation findings include (SPRC, 2010):



18% increase in children participating in transition activities

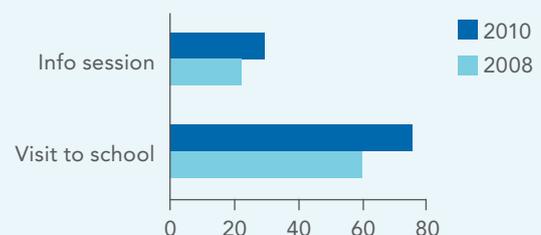
33% increase in children visiting the school more than once before formally starting school.

■ = Visited the school more than once



Increased parent participation in transition experiences:

- 16% increase in parents visiting the school before their child started
- 7% increase in parents attending an information session at another service



*“LSEY has fostered greater awareness of the importance of school transition activities, which has increased orientation activities and opportunities for children and families to familiarise themselves with the school”*

## Contributing activities

A range of activities have contributed to enhancing the transition to school for children and families in LSEY communities.

**Transition calendars and information:** early years services and schools developed a Transition calendar that aligned school tours and transition programs. This enabled parents to visit all schools and ensured that transition programs did not overlap with local kindergarten programs. Jointly, the LSEY community partnerships developed transition information to accompany the calendar and distributed it through all early years services, schools, child/family community services and local government. The information was also displayed in local community spaces, such as shopping centres and community houses.

**Formal and informal transition programs:** in addition to formal transition to school programs, the LSEY community partnerships developed informal transition programs. These start from term one and provide regular informal opportunities for children and families to spend time in the school environment and for early years and prep educators to get to know the children and each other.

**Transition Learning and Development Statements:** Transition Statements were introduced in Victoria to enable information sharing between families, early years services and schools in the transition period. LSEY community partnerships developed local collaborative responses to ensure the information sharing was meaningful for all involved. The process varied across the LSEY communities, but included one or all of:

- meeting to discuss what information would be useful to share
- developing a common language tool
- using a personal handover between early years services and schools (and at times specialist services) as an opportunity to discuss (with parental consent) the information contained in the Statements.

## Implications:

### Policy, research and communities

- Communities can rethink the way the transition to school is approached by dedicating more time and funding and involving a wide range of stakeholders, including early years services, schools, child and family community services, and local government.
- Developing a locally relevant and coordinated approach to providing a positive transition to school needs a foundation of strong relationships between key stakeholders in transition.
- A 'common language' across the 0-8 early years profession supports relationship development and information sharing across community service systems.
- Information sharing between early years services, schools, community services and families needs to be multi-faceted to include information about children's learning, health and interests, as well as educators' practice, pedagogy and learning environments.
- When communities take a universal, evidence-informed and locally responsive approach to transition, children and families of all backgrounds and abilities can benefit.
- Early years community partnerships are well placed to jointly plan and deliver coordinated transition supports for children and their families.
- Further research can identify capacity and processes around ways key stakeholders in transition can work together to deliver collaborative, well-resourced and high-quality transition supports.

## About LSEY snapshots

The LSEY snapshot series aims to share findings from LSEY's approach and activities. Findings are based on the experiences of three Victorian communities: Corio-Norlane in the City of Greater Geelong, Footscray in the City of Maribyrnong and Hastings in the Mornington Peninsula Shire.

The LSEY pilot has a cross-sectional external evaluation being conducted by the Social Policy Research Centre at the University of New South Wales. Data was collected in 2008, 2010 and 2012. These research snapshots explore the 2008-2010 data.

This time-limited series of snapshots will run from 2012 into early 2013 to communicate evaluation findings and highlight examples of good practice from six years of community implementation.

The series will explore:

- The LSEY approach
- Supporting smooth transitions
- Engaging families
- Responsive schools
- Sustainability
- The final findings

For more information about the LSEY project see:

[www.rch.org.au/lsey](http://www.rch.org.au/lsey)

## References

Centre for Community Child Health. (2006). *Rethinking the transition to school: Linking schools and early years services*. The Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne.

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