The Linking Schools and Early Years (LSEY) project is developing practice-based evidence to inform policy and community action that will contribute to ensuring every child has the best start in life.

**LSEY Project Goals**

- Children and families make a smooth transition between early years services and school
- Early years services and schools actively connect with families
- Schools are responsive to the needs of all children

Central to the LSEY approach is the development of strong and effective relationships and a community partnership approach to planning, implementing and evaluating activities.
### Vision

By the time Victorian children start school they will be ready to learn at school and schools will be ready for them.

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All children arrive at school ready to engage in the learning opportunities offered.

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#### DEECD

- Improved transitions
- Accessible early childhood services
- Better planning and coordination
- Cross-sectoral strategies

#### LSEY

- Creates a platform for a shared understanding of diverse community needs
- Develops place-based approaches that are informed by local data and an understanding of identified needs
- Provides opportunities for collaborative work between new and existing partners

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### SYNERGIES

#### Government Strategies

**System improvement through:**
- Improved transitions
- Accessible early childhood services
- Better planning and coordination
- Cross-sectoral strategies

**Strengthen partnerships by:**
- Working with families and communities
- Focusing on parents as partners
- Developing place-based approaches
- Ensuring diverse needs are met

**Reforming the workforce through:**
- Leadership development
- Building capacity in early childhood services
- Professional learning

#### LSEY Project

- Strengthens relationships and improves collaborative planning and action between communities, families, services, schools
- Empowers communities to collectively improve transitions, access to services and engagement of families
- Creates a platform for a shared understanding of diverse community needs
- Develops place-based approaches that are informed by local data and an understanding of identified needs
- Provides opportunities for collaborative work between new and existing partners
- Builds capacity in early childhood services, schools and communities through strengthening local leadership, shared professional learning activities and collaborative planning and action

#### VEYLD

- Transitions are a key element
- The importance of early childhood professionals working with families and children is highlighted

## LSEY Project

- Transitions and partnerships are key elements, as reflected in the LSEY approach and goals
Best Practice

No one transition program has been found to be more effective than any other. How relationships form between key players affects children’s ‘readiness’ for school.

Transition literature review, 2009

LSEY strengthens relationships. Network groups work together to plan and implement local activities to improve transitions for children to school.

SYNERGIES

Transition Literature Review Findings

Project initiatives include:

- Foster the development of partnerships between families and schools and early years services and create opportunities for families to be involved in the transition process.

- Involve engagement strategies between Early Years Services and Schools

- Improve communication to support professionals to build knowledge and skills required to promote a positive transition.

LSEY Project

- Implementation of a range of new measures to improve relationships with parents in each LSEY community, thus targeting the accessibility of services and engagement of parents.

- Network groups that have provided the opportunity to strengthen relationships, and in turn, partnerships between Early Years Services and Schools.

- Peer swaps, which have been effective in building a mutual understanding of others’ roles and programs and to share information.
## Transition Initiatives

There is no ‘one size fits all’ solution for a positive start to school for all children. Investment in whole-of-community initiatives that could provide a transition guide for communities, establish community-based transition to school networks and develop information programs for all families is recommended.

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**LSEY Project**

LSEY communities identify, plan, implement and evaluate [transition] strategies that respond to the needs of children and families in their community.

LSEY initiatives have included community transition programs, local networks and information sharing.

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### Transition: A Positive Start to School

#### Transition Pilots

Thirty state-funded pilots trialled a range of transition approaches from October 2008 to May 2009. Transition activities, processes, information and resources, relationship-building strategies, professional development programs and the use of transition-to-school statements were all investigated.

#### Transition Learning and Development Statements

To improve transitions, LSEY communities develop locally relevant processes for collaboratively planning and using the Statements through their partnership approach.

#### Additional support

Transition programs for children from culturally diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds should be individualised.

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#### All three LSEY project communities were included as pilot sites trialling specific transition activities. The LSEY project continues to provide information about relationship-building strategies, transition activities, processes, information and resources, professional development activities and a partnership approach to using transition-to-school statements.

#### To meet the diverse needs of children and families, LSEY communities have targeted engagement of local cultural leaders. Professional development about developing meaningful partnerships has been another strategy implemented to work towards achieving active engagement between all families and early years services and schools.

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### SYNERGIES

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Ten ‘Promising Practices’ were identified in the Transition Evaluation report, with 3 of these practices currently being trialled. Eight ‘Promising Practices’ are currently implemented by LSEY communities as activities to assist achievement of project goals.

The Promising Practices will ‘work best when delivered as part of a comprehensive and tailored local transition strategy’.

LSEY communities identify, plan and respond collaboratively to the identified needs of children and families in their community.

The overall rationale should encourage better connections, conversations, and relationships between key players in the transition process.

Pivotal to the LSEY approach is investment in building relationships.
The building of relationships has enabled an understanding of different roles and provided the opportunity for developing new, and strengthening existing, partnerships (LSEY Project Evaluation, 2010). This in turn has led to the implementation of successful transition programs and activities.

Strategies for building relationships have included establishment of a practitioner leadership group, ‘knowledge bank’ partnership structure, joint planning of transition programs and peer swaps.

Strategies LSEY communities have implemented to overcome such challenges, have included:
• Time-release for practitioners
• Incorporating activities into existing workloads
• Creating a shared understanding of each others practices to address philosophical differences
• Developing consistent practices, which is promoting cross-sector collaboration and coordination
• Longer time frames