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Literature Review
Transition: a positive start to school
RFQ Reference Number: 200809AS

November/December 2008



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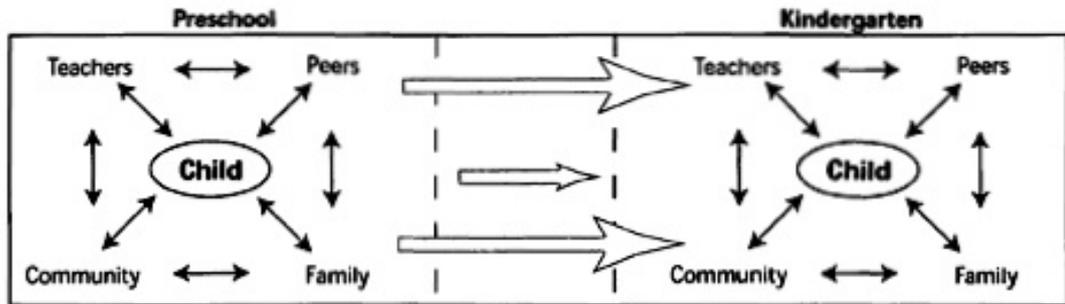
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1. Executive summary

Background

The University of Melbourne's Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood (CEIEC) undertook a review of the literature concerning young children's transition to school. The review was to address this question:

What are the key findings and issues for improving transition into prep for children, their families, local communities and early childhood education and care professionals in Victoria?

A modified Best Evidence Synthesis was used to review research literature, reports and discussion papers that focused on children's transition to school. One hundred and twenty five documents were used in this report.

The research evidence revealed that there are diverse conceptual concerns, issues and tensions regarding children's transitions to school that centre around different interpretations of what transition to school means for different children, families and communities within and across different countries. However, there is also considerable overlap and consistency in the issues raised in the research literature.

Summary of Research Evidence

In English-speaking, western, industrialised countries, the move that children make from a 'prior to school' setting (e.g., childcare, a playgroup or a kindergarten) to a school setting is referred to as a child's transition to school. Researchers are increasingly identifying what preparation is needed by a child, their family, the school they're going to attend and the wider community to ensure that a child's transition to school is a positive and successful experience. The DEECD project, *Transition: a positive start to school* is an example of this interest. There is consistent research evidence that starting school is a significant moment for children and their families and whilst a majority of children make this transition successfully, it is sometimes associated with anxiety, uncertainty and confusion. There is also strong research support to see transition to school as a process in which key individuals (children, families, professionals in prior to school and school settings) need to work in partnership to ensure a positive outcome for children.

There are four emerging tensions and issues in the literature on children's transition to school. There are tensions over whether or not transition to school is a one-off event or a bridging process; concerns about who should change in preparing children for transition to school; and doubts underpinning some of the claims about the benefits of transition to school programs. Finally, the place of school readiness in transition to school programs is a point of tension as it is a highly problematic concept and an inadequate predictor of school success.

Children's Perspectives on Transition to School

The Best Evidence Synthesis drew from twenty six documents (mainly journal articles) spread across a range of countries (primarily European) on children's views of transitions to school. From these documents, eight issues emerged concerning children's experiences and perspectives on transitions to school. Children noted that:

- experiences of transition can depend on their school's physical facilities
- they can find it hard to learn and follow school rules
- making and keeping friends can ease their transition to school

- their sense of well-being and their positive engagement in learning depend on positive relationships with their educators
- some said that they find it hard to deal with the longer days and the new responsibility for their own care associated with starting school
- they often prefer free play programs to more formal learning and associate more formal learning with being at school
- they see that going to school needs a morning routine at home.

Family Perspectives on Transition to School

The Best Evidence Synthesis examined 21 documents (mainly journal articles) spread across a range of countries (primarily the USA) on families' views of transitions to school. From these documents, six issues emerged around families' experiences of and perspectives on transitions to school. Research found:

- that parents have diverse views about what matters when young children make the transition to school
- that many parents are concerned about how their child will adjust to school, asking 'Can my child fit in, be respected, be happy and safe?'
- that parents living in rural and remote areas of Australia share the concerns of other parents, but many have additional concerns
- that many parents want contact with the school prior to their child's attendance and to understand how the school their child will attend works
- that some parents, but not all, want their children to receive formal academic instruction in their first year of school
- that parents' level of confidence in managing the transition to school affects their child's subsequent engagement with school.

Educators' Perspectives on Children's Transition to School

The Best Evidence Synthesis used 12 documents (mainly journal articles) spread across a range of countries (primarily the USA) on educators' views of transitions to school. From these documents, ten issues emerged around educators' experiences and perspectives on transitions to school. Research showed that educators believed that:

- most children have no difficulty with making the transition to school
- a smooth transition to school requires children to have specific skills
- developmental and health screening of children prior to school entry assists a child's transition to school
- socio-emotional and interpersonal development and skills assist a child's transition to school
- parent participation assists a child's transition to school
- children who have attended preschool make the transition to school more easily than those who haven't
- children with special needs, from disadvantaged backgrounds and from minority groups face particular difficulties in their transition to school.

Additionally, it was found that:

- primary school educators are concerned about whether children have appropriate academic skills prior to entering school
- educators support young children's transition to school in various ways, but face structural challenges as they do so
- communication between educators in school and prior to school settings can be problematic and may differ according to setting.

Supporting Transition to School by Children with Disabilities and/or Specific Needs

The Best Evidence Synthesis found 16 documents (mainly journal articles) on issues of transition from prior to school settings to school settings for children with disabilities. From these documents, four issues central to planning transition to school programs for children with disabilities emerged. These were:

- the importance of preschool experience for positive transition experiences for children
- the importance of long term cross-sector collaborative planning and continuity of programs around transitions
- that transition to school can be a highly complex and anxious time for families
- that there are negative long-term implications if transition problems that emerge are not addressed.

Supporting Transition to School by Indigenous Children

The Best Evidence Synthesis used 18 documents (mainly reports) to examine what might best support successful transition to school for Indigenous children. From these documents, five issues emerged concerning Indigenous children's transition to school. These were:

- few transition programs in Australia focus on the specific needs and interests of Indigenous children
- transition programs for Indigenous children focus either on changing the child or the family or on changing the school
- unsuccessful transition to school contributes to Indigenous children's disengagement from and low attendance at school
- Indigenous children who have attended culturally supportive preschool programs find school unresponsive to their needs around education
- schools and education systems need to introduce 'best practice' educational programs for Indigenous children.

Supporting Transition to School by Children from Disadvantaged Backgrounds and/or Hard to Reach Children and Families

The Best Evidence Synthesis drew from 23 documents (mainly journal articles), that raised four key issues concerning the experiences and perspectives of children from disadvantaged backgrounds and/or hard to reach children and families on transition to school. These were:

- transition to school programs can produce greater parent involvement during their child's first year of school which, in turn, contributes to successful child outcomes, especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds
- attendance by children from disadvantaged backgrounds at high-quality preschool is linked with strong outcomes in schools
- children from 'poor' backgrounds cope better in their first year of school if prior to school services and schools settings are connected through a transition process
- children's 'race' and ethnicity can impact on children's successful transition to school.

Conclusion

The Best Evidence Synthesis found no substantial long-term evidence that any specific transition to school program was better than any other, because a majority of studies of transition to school programs are not formal effectiveness studies. Consequently, making strong evidence-based judgements about which specific transition to school processes and/or activities work is not possible or is highly problematic in many instances. However, it is possible to identify a number of promising practices that draw on research evidence

concerning the perspectives of one or more of the three groups of people involved in transition programs: children, parents/carers and educators.

This report supports an ecological model of transition to school in which children's 'readiness' for school depends on how relationships form between key players in their transition to school, rather than on the development of a specific skill set in the child. Drawing on the Best Evidence Synthesis evidence base, policies, processes and activities for young children's transition to school should be established that create opportunities for children to raise questions, concerns and suggestions about their transition to school in prior to school settings and to learn about their life in school.

Policies and processes around transition to school must also create opportunities for families to be involved in shaping their child's transition to school processes and activities and to learn about their children's life in school; and that schools and prior-to-school settings build strong strategies for engaging with each other and forming partnerships with families and children about children's transition to school. This engagement should begin in the year before a child begins school and continue once a child starts school. It requires flexible models of service delivery in the preparatory and early years of schooling that acknowledge each child's needs and qualities. Transition for Children from CALI and/or Indigenous backgrounds should focus on the need for culturally respectful and responsive curricula and processes. For children from disadvantaged backgrounds, it is advised that transition to school programs be individualised.

The literature supports a combination of local initiatives that improve communication between the key players in a child's transition to school and that support professionals to build the appropriate knowledge and skills required to promote a positive transition, especially by children from CALI Indigenous and disadvantaged backgrounds. It is also important to increase the ability of staff in prior to school settings and in schools to facilitate young children's transition to school and invest in whole-of-community initiatives that could include providing a transition guide for communities, establishing community-based transition to school networks and developing information programs for all families of children entering school.

It is clear that there is a lack of research in several areas that are key to progressing evidence-informed approaches to children's successful transition to school. Most pressing is research that evaluates the relative effects of different forms of transition policies, processes and activities for all children, but especially for CALI and Indigenous children, children from disadvantaged backgrounds and children with disabilities.

2. Key Terms and Abbreviations

- **Assessment** is a way to understand each child better, reflect on one's present practice and plan for that child and for the group as a whole.
- **Best practice/s.** Strategies and practices that have been evaluated and shown to be the most effective ways to achieve a specific goal.
- **Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD).** This term is often used in Australia to refer to groups of people whose culture and/or language is other than the dominant 'Anglo' culture and/or English language. CALD implies that Anglo-Celtic cultures and languages need not be identified or named as they are the cultural/linguistic norm, from which every other culture and language differs (is 'diverse') ([1]).
- **Culturally and Linguistically Identified (CALI).** A critical alternative to CALD, CALI acknowledges that while cultures and languages other than the (Anglo-Celtic) norm are identified as such, the norm is never identified.
- **Childcare services** cater primarily for children from 0 – 5 years of age. They generally open at least 8 hours a day, 5 days a week, excluding public holidays.
- **Children's services** provide for children outside of formal schooling. They include preschools, childcare services, family day care services and out-of-school-hours care.
- **Community-centred approaches** are approaches to an issue or problem that meet a particular community's specific needs. For example, two schools within the same suburb or region may approach children's transition to school very differently, each reflecting the particular needs of children in its community.
- **Day care** generally means centre-based childcare services.
- **Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD).** The Victorian State Government department whose focus is the learning, development, health and wellbeing of all young Victorians from birth to adulthood.
- **Early childhood** is the period between 0 and 8 years of age.
- **Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS)** refers to services that provide support to children with a disability or developmental delay and to their families, from birth to school entry. Such services include special education, therapy, counselling, service planning and coordination, assistance and support to prior to schooling settings, such as kindergartens and child care services.
- **Early childhood services** or **early childhood education and care services** are care and education services for children aged 0 - 8 years old and their families. In this report, however, these terms refer primarily to services that cater for children aged 0 - 6 years old and their families. In Australia, these services include long day care, maternal and child health services, family day care, occasional care, out-of-school-hours care, kindergarten, pre-school and early learning centres.
- **Educators.** In this report, these are people who work with children between 0 - 8 years old in a setting of care and/or education, such as an early years service or the early years of compulsory schooling. An educator may have qualifications from a University or a TAFE, or may have no formal qualifications.
- **Effective Provision of Pre-School Education project (EPPE)** (UK).
- **Kindergarten**
 - The uses of the term kindergarten vary across Australia. In some states, kindergarten refers to the first year of school. In Victoria, the term refers to an educational service provided for children in the year preceding school enrolment. Kindergarten programs usually operate over school terms. Some kindergartens offer full-day programs; others operate on a sessional basis.
 - In the USA often the first year of school and children attend at 5 years old. The kindergarten year is seen as a preparation for school and focuses on children's social and emotional development. Children can also attend preschool (or pre-K) before they start formal schooling.

- **Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA).**
- **Multi-purpose Aboriginal Children's Services (Australia) (MACS).**
- **Non-parental care** for the purposes of this literature review was defined as any form of care that a child receives in addition to parental care. This included centre-based childcare, family day care and educational settings prior to the formal years of school. Terms associated with early educational settings vary from country to country but included 'preschool' and 'kindergartens'.
- **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).**
- **Orientation to the school.** A process/program in which a school presents itself, its operations and its characteristics to children who will be starting at the school and to their families. It can include touring the school, receiving copies of school policies, meeting school staff (especially the Principal and the early years educators) and participating in school activities. Orientation to school practices will differ between schools and communities. For example, one school may run a stand-alone orientation program, while another's program may be part of a wider process/program around children's transition to school.
- **Out-of-school-hours care** is care of school-aged children before and/or after the school day. In Australia, a school usually provide out-of-school-hours care on its premises.
- **Policy/ies.** The planned actions and procedures of governments, education services and other organizations and institutions.
- **Practice.** A way of doing things and carrying out ideas and plans.
- **Prep year.** In this report, the Prep year refers to the first year of their compulsory years of formal schooling; children in this first year can be between 4½ and 6 years of age. It is important to note that the Prep year is called different things in different parts of Australia. In New South Wales and in the Australian Capital Territory [ACT]), the Prep year is also known as 'Kindergarten'; in the Northern Territory, it is also known as 'Transition'; in South Australia it is also known as 'Reception'; and in Western Australia, it is also known as 'Pre-primary'.
- **Preschool.** In Australia, preschool is synonymous with **kindergarten**.
- **Readiness.** The state of being prepared for an imminent particular task or event.
- **Schooling (Compulsory).** The age at which children can start and complete school varies across Australia. In most states and territories it is compulsory for children to attend school between the ages of 5 and 15. In Victoria all children between 6 and 16 years of age must attend school.
- **School readiness.** Narrowly constructed, school readiness refers to the skills and abilities of individual children as they start school. Broader constructions of school readiness incorporate family, school and community elements as well as a focus on the preparedness of individual children as they start school.
- **Socio-Economic Status (SES).**
- **Seamless learning environments** provide a continuum in learning goals, structures and processes for children as they move from prior to school settings into school.
- **Transition to school.** In this report, this means movement from a prior to school setting (home, child care [centre-based or FDC or kindergarten]) into a primary school.
- **Transition programs** are strategies, procedures and/or activities initiated by prior to school settings or schools to support children's smooth transition to school.

3. Introduction and background

3.1 *The Project's origins and rationale*

In October 2008, the Victorian State Government's Office for Children and Early Childhood Development (Early Childhood Strategic Policy and Projects Division) invited the University of Melbourne's Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood (CEIEC) to undertake a review of the literature concerning young children's transition to school. The review was to address this question:

What are the key findings and issues for improving transition into prep for children, their families, local communities and early childhood education and care professionals in Victoria?

The literature review occurred at a time of considerable interest in how best to encourage and support young children's learning. The Victorian Government outlined its commitment to children from birth to eight years in the Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development (2008) (DEECD, 2008 #196).

3.2 *Using a modified Best Evidence Synthesis (BES)*

This report is the result of reviewing the recent research literature on children's transition to school - in particular, how best to create a positive start to school for all children. This research literature was assembled between mid-November and December 2008 and reviewed using a modified Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) approach. Appendix 1 details the scope and methodology of the modified BES and points to its limits. This report draws from 125 documents (research articles, reports and reviews) that focus primarily, but not solely, on children's transition to school, rather than on the issues that a family faces as their child makes the transition to school or on the transition of a child from home to school. This is because there is little research literature on the latter topics ([2]). The report also explores the specific issues in transition to school that are faced by children with disabilities, children from disadvantaged backgrounds, Indigenous children and children from linguistically and ethnically diverse backgrounds. The report also details how educators (in prior to school and school settings) understand the transition to school process, although the BES found very little literature on this aspect of transition to school. Finally, the report presents examples of promising practices for successful transition to school programs that show how the issues raised in the BES research review can be addressed in practice. As the majority of these promising practices have not been formally evaluated, their inclusion in this report does not represent endorsement of a specific program. Rather, it illustrates how specific issues raised in the research could be addressed in practice.

3.3 *Seeing the research on transition to school in context*

The research literature from Australia that was reviewed for this report concerns children's transition from prior to school settings (e.g., preschools and kindergartens) to the first year of compulsory schooling (known in several states as the preparatory year). Where this report refers to studies from other countries, it states the ages of the children involved, because while different countries use the same or similar terms to refer to their prior to school settings, this can nonetheless create confusion about the age of the children in a specific setting, because the age of compulsory schooling differs between countries. For instance:

- In Australia, 'preschool' and 'kindergarten' are synonymous; and children attending them will be between 3 and 5 years old.
- In the USA, children attending preschool (or 'pre-K') will be between 3 and 5 years old; while children attending kindergarten (often their first year of formal schooling and referred to as 'the prep year') will be between 4 and 6 years old ([3]).

The majority of the research literature from the USA reviewed for this report concerns children's transition from preschool (3 - 5 years old) to kindergarten/prep year (4 - 6 years old).

4. Summary of Research Evidence

4.1 What is transition?

A transition is a movement from one state to another. A person (child or adult) may experience informal transitions each day as they move from one domain of their life to another, such as the transitions from home to school and from home to work; someone may also experience more formal transitions as they move between institutions, such as the transitions from home to hospital and from pre-school to school. Major transitions (e.g., from home to school, from school to work) are often 'turning points' that change a person's role, their behaviour and what others expect of them ([4], p. 1). For example, the transition from home to hospital may change a person's role (from a family member, they become a patient), their behaviour (from active to passive) and what others (medical staff) expect of them.

In particular cultures and societies, there is more or less preparation for such major transitions. In English-speaking, western, industrialized countries, children's move from a 'prior to school' setting, such as childcare, a playgroup or a kindergarten, to a school setting is often referred to as children's transition to school. In these countries, a child's transition to school involves changes for the child, for their family and for the educators in the child's life. However, the transition to school is often regarded as involving policy makers and the broader community, who have an interest in how children should experience the move to compulsory schooling, what such schooling should produce and what it means to be a child who must attend school, perform the associated activities and meet the associated expectations of others.

In recent years, increasing attention has been given to the question of what preparation is needed by a child, their family, the school they're going to attend and the wider community to ensure that a child's transition to school is a positive and successful experience. There is increasing interest and debate in how these activities and expectations shift and change, the effects on young children and their families of those shifts and changes and whether and how they can prepare for them. The DEECD project, *Transition: a positive start to school* is an instance of this interest, showing the Victorian state government's concern that transition to school should be a positive and successful experience for young children in Victoria.

4.2 Conceptual concerns, issues and tensions in transition

Different contexts, shared concerns about transition to school

Research and policy concerning children's transition to school differs over time and between locations, because the term 'transition to school' means different things to different groups of children, families and communities in different countries. There are two reasons for this. First, transition to school happens at different ages in different countries, with each country making its particular provisions for compulsory schooling for young children. Second, key actors in children's transition to school have different assumptions about how children should start to attend school, what starting school should mean to them and what its outcomes should be.

Despite that complex mix of factors, the research literature about how to create a positive start to school for young children contains two common themes: starting school is a significant moment for children and their families; and access to high quality early childhood settings can positively influence a child's success in school. Each theme is examined below.

Starting school is a significant moment for children and their families

Studies in different countries (e.g., Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Finland, Singapore, Germany) show that starting school is a significant moment for children and their families, irrespective of the age at which the child starts school ([2]).

Access to high quality early childhood settings can positively influence a child's success in school

An OECD study of early childhood education and care across 35 countries showed that strong investment in universal early childhood education and care improves children's long-term educational outcomes ([5]). Similarly, researchers in the USA have found that a successful transition from preschool to the preparatory year of formal schooling (often called the 'prep' year) has long-lasting educational and social benefits ([6]; [7]). These findings are supported by the findings of the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) project - a major European longitudinal study. EPPE researchers studied the effects of preschool provision on the intellectual and social/behavioural development of 3,000 children between 3 and 7 years old from different social backgrounds in the UK. Whilst the project did not study the effects on those children of specific transition programs or practices, it found that attendance at high quality early childhood settings had positive effects on children's development during their years at school. The longer a child attended preschool (3 - 4 years old), the better their performance in standardised tests of reading and mathematics in their first year of school (6 years old); and the better the pre-school, the better their test results ([8]).

Emerging tensions and issues around transition to school

Children's and families' experiences of the transition to school differ between countries and sometimes within a country; and they will depend on whether schools prepare themselves to be 'ready for children (and their families)' or prepare children (and their families) to be 'ready for school' and for school practices, values and expectations. These different approaches to children's transition to school have created several conceptual tensions and issues, each of which is examined below.

Transition to school: a one-off event or a bridging process?

For some people and in some contexts, a child's first day at school is the beginning and the end of their 'transition to school'; so they aim to create programs or practices that make a child's first day at school a positive experience.

However, other people believe that events before and after that first day at school can affect a child's experience of school and their subsequent academic success. Those events include, for example, a family's choice of school, their experiences of enrolling at that school, whether and how their child's early childhood educator discusses starting school with them (if they're in an early childhood setting) and how educators in the school prepare for new students. From this perspective, a child's first day at school is just one event within a broader process.

Researchers in different countries are arguing increasingly that a transition to school program should be a bridge between settings for children and families; and that the bridge should consist of diverse activities involving the child and their family, together with educators and carers and the wider community (see [2] for a summary overview of research in different countries).

Transition to school: changing schools, preparing the child or seeking program continuity?

Any transition to school program is a response to two questions: how, ideally, should a child make the transition to school; and how can adults and institutions (e.g., schools and preschools) help individual children to make that transition successfully? The answer to each question will reflect a community's particular local circumstances.

A review of international research and practice concerning children's transition to school in the late 1990s identified three general models that underpin specific programs ([9]). Each model has its particular emphasis: preparing schools for children, preparing children for school and seeking program continuity between school and prior-to-school settings. Table 1 summarises those three models, highlighting each one's founding belief ('rationale') and how that belief is translated into practice.

Table 1 An international overview of existing transition models and practices and their rationale (after [9])

<p>Model 1 Preparing schools for children</p> <p><i>Transition practices may include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • getting to know the child and the family • planning a child's start at school with parents and with other relevant services • familiarising children and families with life at school • smoothing differences (teaching and learning content & processes) between children's experiences prior to school and at school. 	<p>Aim: To reduce children's stress at starting school. Rationale: Children and/or families experience difficulties (e.g. stress, failure, unhappiness, alienation) when starting school because schools do not respond appropriately to the needs of different children and families. View of the child: Vulnerable to change.</p>
<p>Model 2 Preparing children for school</p> <p><i>Transition practices may include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preparing children for their first day at school • ensuring that children have the skills needed to start school • identifying children's deficits early, then planning programs to reduce their effects on key areas of learning • teaching children about school rituals, rules, expectations, language & formal curriculum. 	<p>Aim: To make children ready for school. Rationale: Children's difficulties in starting school reflect deficiencies in themselves, in their home and/or in their pre-school setting. View of the child: Deficient. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • poor health, disability • language problems (delay or not speaking the dominant language) • cognitive delay and poor pre-literacy and/or numeracy.
<p>Model 3 Creating program continuity</p> <p><i>Transition practices</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • educator professional development and use of highly qualified specialist early years educators in the lower primary grades • developing curriculum continuity between schools and prior-to-school settings • locating schools as close as possible to prior-to-school settings. 	<p>Aim: To smooth differences between prior-to-school and school settings. Rationale: Children's experiences of teaching and learning prior to school don't match those in school. View of the child: Vulnerable to discontinuity and change.</p>

There is debate about which - if any - of those three transition models provides children with the best start to school and why. Myers ([9]) argued strongly that transition to school programs should aim to reduce children's stress as they move between different learning environments (e.g., home, school, early childhood centre, school), rather than seek to create seamless transitions between them. O'Gorman ([10]) summarised other researchers' concern that if pre-schools try to create seamless transitions to school, they may - intentionally or otherwise - focus on children's readiness for school as they orient their curriculum increasingly to the school curriculum; while Carlton and Winsler ([11]) argued that successful transition to school is the result of a process in which the child and the school adjust to each other.

Transition to school programs in different contexts and in different countries generally feature elements of each of Myer's three models, but there is strong international support for models and practices that emphasise a strength-based, 'community-centred' approach to transition to school. For instance, in the *Starting School* project ([12], [13]), researchers observed school readiness programs in several times and spaces in Australia and concluded that, 'A child's preparedness for school is a function of many relationships within the community in which the child lives and learns.' ([12], p. 280); and that a child's participation in school is influenced by people and institutions other than the school, including health care professionals, community workers and community elders. Other researchers ([14]) who examined the previous thirty years' research in the USA on children's transition to school echoed this view, concluding that:

The overarching lesson from the transition work of the last three decades is that we must all share the responsibility for creating successful transition for children ...' ([14]): p. 378)

However, such 'community-centred' approaches are not clearly defined and described and the BES search of the research literature found no longitudinal studies of whether and how these approaches improve young children's long-term educational outcomes.

The benefits of transition to school programs: claims lacking foundation?

The increasing interest in children's transition to school derives from claims that it can improve young children's educational performance in primary school (e.g. [10, 15]). More specifically, interest in children's transition to school is increasing because:

- there is increasing pressure on primary education to ensure that all children succeed at school and to do so efficiently
- in many countries, increasing urbanization and increasing school size means that many children enter schools where the educators and students come from outside their local community, which can impede these schools' ability to ensure that all children succeed at school and to do so efficiently
- in many countries, the enormous expansion in early childhood programs has focused attention on their role in children's transition to school
- the increasing inclusion of children with disabilities into mainstream schools has prompted an interest in ensuring that this is a positive experience for all concerned and - especially - that children with disabilities succeed at school ([9]).

However, a major 1998 review of the effects over a 30 year period of key federally initiated transition programs in the USA (*Follow Through and Head Start Planned Variation; Project Development Continuity; the Head Start Transition Project, the National Transition Study; and the National Head Start/Public School Early Childhood Transition Demonstration Project*) [14] suggests that such claims should be treated with caution. The review found few conclusive results about these programs' effects, reflecting the scant empirical data about their operation. Some programs were never implemented fully or were modified continually; others were short-lived; and all faced methodological issues such as

incomparable groups, contaminated control groups and turnover of participants (educators and students). The review's authors concluded that:

There simply is not enough information to determine precisely how implementing transitions affects children, who benefit the most from which transition efforts, and why. ([14]: p. 371.)

Against these findings it should be noted that this review was conducted over 10 years ago. More recent findings from a six-state study of 900 children in the USA found that pre-K experiences produced a small but positive increase in children's academic and social skills. The children in this study were representative of those attending pre-K programs in the participating states. Over half of the participants were from low-income families and nearly one quarter of the participants spoke a language other than English at home ([16]).

School readiness: a highly problematic concept and an inadequate predictor of school success

The USA literature on transition to school features considerable emphasis on 'school readiness'. However, much of this literature is problematic: school readiness is either ill-defined or there are competing definitions; and there is considerable doubt as to whether school readiness tests can predict success in children's transition to school and in their subsequent academic performance. Further, there can be considerable confusion about just what researchers are assessing, because descriptions of programs to support a child's transition to school are sometimes merged with descriptions of programs to assess a child's readiness for school. Finally, there is increasing concern that the focus on school readiness is diverting prior to school programs from their traditional, holistic focus on the child. Each of these problems is examined below.

Problem 1: competing definitions of school readiness

'School readiness' is a judgement about whether and to what extent an individual child will make the transition to school successfully. However, there is no consensus among researchers, policy-makers and communities about how this judgement should be made. In Australia, school readiness was often defined as the presence/absence in a child of a particular set of skills and abilities; and children, parents and staff in transition programs across fifteen locations in Australia were more concerned with social aspects of readiness, such as children's ability to adjust to new circumstances and to form relationships ([13]).

USA researchers ([17]) conducted a particularly comprehensive study of 'school readiness'. They interviewed 93 educators and 25 parents in focus groups and found three different views of school readiness: it is a feature of the maturing child; it is the outcome of interaction between individual and environment; it is a 'construction' by communities and schools. These researchers reported that despite the lack of a common definition of school readiness, there was wide agreement about how best to achieve it and to help a child to succeed early at school. However, this wide agreement was reached at the expense of detail and substance:

Although there is no single way to conceptualise school readiness or define it, there is growing consensus that it can be viewed as multi-dimensional, highly variable and culturally and contextually influenced over time. ([17]: p. 353.)

That view is supported other researchers [18], who noted that 17 factors influenced a child's readiness for school, but that the significance of each factor can vary between different groups of children. Similarly, assessments of school readiness should include all aspects of children's learning and all indicators of family and community support for children's development (e.g., [18]). More specifically, young children's ability to manage their emotions and behaviours and to make meaningful friendships should be seen as an important prerequisite for school readiness and academic success ([19]).

Problem 2: uncertain outcomes from school readiness programs

There is doubt as to whether and how specific school readiness programs affect children's subsequent performance at school. Part of the difficulty lies in the lack of a common definition of school readiness. For instance, a very useful review of the predictive value of school readiness tests analysed the published findings from 70 USA longitudinal studies that had reported correlations between academic/cognitive and social/behavioral measures that were administered in preschool or kindergarten and similar measures that had been administered in first and second grade of school. The authors found that there was no shared definition of 'readiness'; no common theoretical foundation for assessing young children's readiness and whether and how to promote it; and no agreement on who is responsible for a child's readiness ([20]). The authors found little data either on the effectiveness of school readiness programs or on the accuracy of the consequent predictions of a child's likely performance at school; and found also that such data as exists is unreliable and inconclusive.

Problem 3: school readiness tests are poor predictors of later school achievement

In 2000, in an extensive USA meta-analysis of 70 longitudinal studies that correlated readiness assessments with later school achievement, researchers found that school readiness tests are a poor predictor of a child's social development and of their behaviour in school ([20]). Researchers also found that such tests provided poor indicators of children who were at 'high risk' of failure in schooling. The participants in the studies examined in this meta-analysis were primarily children from Anglo-American backgrounds, so it is difficult to generalise these findings more broadly. However, the findings in this meta-analysis, when combined with several other major (federal) USA studies, sound a strong cautionary note for those who present school readiness testing as an exact science that provides accurate predictions of children's subsequent school achievement.

Problem 4: school readiness is defined increasingly as capacity for academic success

There is a trend, particularly in the USA, to judge a child's readiness for school solely in academic terms and to use screening tests to make these judgements ([20]). Under the Bush administration, in several regions in the USA an increased emphasis on pre-school literacy had increased the use of literacy standards and of tests to see whether children met them ([17]). Despite children in several jurisdictions having a legal right to attend kindergarten (at 4 - 6 years old), those who failed screening tests were being rejected; and kindergarten programs now emphasise academic success so much that they are becoming irrelevant to children with special needs, despite their legal right to inclusion ([17]). Not all school readiness programs in the USA are this narrow: some aim to increase young children's social, emotional, and academic competence ([19]).

'School readiness' can become a highly problematic and loaded discourse in specific contexts. In the USA, a focus on academic readiness for school at the expense of other forms of readiness has made educators feel pressured to 'find what's missing and fix it fast' ([17]: p. 369). This pressure has reduced the distinctiveness of kindergartens, which are increasingly paying less attention to each child's individual needs and increasingly resemble first grade classrooms. This trend is seen to impoverish early education and to reduce educators' professional autonomy.

Problem 5: readiness for school leads to a 'push down' of school curricula to prior to school programs

Some researchers contend that efforts in the UK over the past two decades to prepare children for school have led to a 'push-down' of school curricula into early childhood programs ([21]). Similar influences have been noted in Australia ([22]). The idea of 'school readiness' has influenced discussions of early childhood curricula, particularly the curriculum for the year prior to compulsory schooling ([23]).

4.3 Comparing and contrasting key actors' perspectives on transition to school

Few researchers have sought young children's views on their transition to school; and those that did aimed to compare/contrast children's views with the views of parents/carers and of educators ([2]). Researchers who have sought the views of parents/carers and of educators have found consistently that they differ. For example:

- parents and educators evaluate children's level of skills differently ([24])
- parents and educators differed significantly in how they assessed children's development when using the Canadian Early Development Index. These differences were greatest when educators had different cultural and/or linguistic backgrounds from the child. In these instances, educators under-assessed children's developmental competence ([25]).
- parents and educators differed about the information that parents need as their child begins school ([26])
- parents (N = 355) and educators (N = 166) in an Australian study differed on the importance of children developing specific skills before starting school. 12.1% of educators believed that it is important, but only 4.4% of parents held this view ([27]).
- parents and educators (N = 378) in a US study differed markedly in how they assessed children's development of social skills during their first three years at school ([28])
- in a study of 413 preschool children and their families in the USA, educators, districts, families and communities lacked an agreed understanding of what a kindergarten is and does; and only some schools offered parent education classes in which parents could learn more about kindergartens ([18]).

These findings show that (i) designers of transition to school programs cannot assume that parents and educators see education in the same way; (ii) it can be hard to reach such a shared view; but (iii) a shared view of education is a pre-requisite if a transition to school program is to be judged successful by the key actors in it.

4.4 Children's perspectives on the transition to school

Overview of the research evidence

Table 2 provides an overview of the BES research evidence on children's perspectives on transition to school.

Table 2 An overview of the research evidence on children's perspectives on transition to school

<i>Research foci</i>	<i>What children know, feel and understand about 'starting school'. Comparisons between children's views on 'starting school' and those of parents/carers and of educators.</i>
<i>Scope of evidence used in the BES</i>	26 documents - 12 journal articles, 9 fully written refereed conference papers and 5 research monographs.
<i>Research methods</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • peer interviews (Grade 5 children interviewed Grade 1 [first year of school] children) ([29]) • child discussion groups ([30]; [31]; [32]) • anecdotal field notes and videotaped interviews ([33]) • interviews with individual children ([34]; [35]; [36]; [37]; [38]; [39]) • questionnaires with a Likert-type scale ([40]; [41]) • classroom observations ([34]; [40]) • children's drawings ([27]; [42]; [38]) • children's written comments about their drawings (either the child

- or their educator wrote the comments) ([27]; [42])
- observations ([43]).

Assessing the research base

Seeking children's perspectives on their transition to school is a relatively recent practice, so little research has been done in this area. However, the BES found research studies spread across a range of countries (9 European, 7 Australian, 4 Asia Pacific, 2 USA) that sought 4 – 6 year old children's views and experiences of transition to school. Six of the Australian studies were reports of the *Starting School* research project in its different phases.

The existing research on children's perspectives on transition to school provides valuable insights into how young children experience their transition to school and what they believe would help build positive transitions to school. It does not include traditional effectiveness studies of what strategies and/or activities work best. However, despite the different contexts within which this research has been undertaken, there was considerable consistency in its broad findings, especially about young children's capacity to share valid and valuable information about their transition to school and about the issues that children raised.

Sampling procedures: Several studies (7/26) included a small numbers of participants (N=30 or less). Only 2 of the non-Australian studies included children from ethnic minority groups; the remaining studies failed to specify children's backgrounds. Only 3 studies described their sampling procedures in detail.

Research methods: A mix of methods was used to gain children's perspectives, but most studies used qualitative analysis of data. When a study reported quantitative data using simple descriptive statistics (percentages), we have included these statistics. There were two longitudinal studies that followed children through their first year of school. One study provided reliability and validity information for the measures used and one study used correlational analysis. Several studies provided very limited information about their research methods or approach to analysis, so it was difficult to judge the rigour of the research.

Issues arising from the literature

Researchers consistently found four things:

- *Children have valuable knowledge* about what matters to them in their transition to school ([42]; [27]; [29])
- *Children have different perspectives* to adults (parents and educators) on what matters when they start school ([44]; [27]; [45])
- *Children need more opportunities to speak* about what makes it easy and what makes it hard to start school ([27]; [42]; [40]; [29]). Transition programs that will benefit children will include children's views ([42]).
- *Children can experience a loss of competence and skill on entering school.* Researchers in one study found that although children engaged in a series of activities designed to bridge kindergarten and school, they were unable to draw on these activities when they started school. These children struggled with personal and social skills and found it more difficult to work with educator-oriented activities. Their educators described those children as insecure and less active at school, even though they had been independent and active enquirers at kindergarten ([34]).

The type of issues children raised about their experiences of transition to school is summarised in

Table 3.

Table 3 Issues raised by children on transition to school

The children's perspectives raised eight issues:

- Children's experiences of transition can depend on their school's physical facilities
- Children can find it hard to learn and follow school rules
- Making and keeping friends can ease children's transition to school
- Children's sense of well-being and their positive engagement in learning depend on positive relationships with their educators
- Some children find it hard to deal with the longer days and the new responsibility for their own care associated with starting school

- Children often prefer free play programs to more formal learning and associate more formal learning with being at school
- Children see that going to school needs a morning routine at home.

Children's experiences of transition can depend on their school's physical facilities

Children were concerned with how to find their way around large school buildings and grounds ([27]; [42]; [46]; [47]; [29]; [36]). In a Singaporean project, 11% of the children (35 out of 310) disliked school because it was dirty and smelly ([29]). In projects in Australia (N = 310 + 52), New Zealand (N = 23) and Ireland (N = 47), children said that areas such as the school yard and the hall were noisy and frightening ([27]; [42]; [46]; [30]; [36]).

Children can find it hard to learn and follow school rules

In research projects in Hong Kong (N = 32), Australia (N = 310 + 52), New Zealand (N = 23), Ireland (N = 47) and Europe (N = 48), children wanted to know and understand their school's rules, such as not running in classrooms and putting rubbish in the bins ([43]; [48]; [44]; [27]; [49]; [47]; [39]; [36]; [30]). They talked about who makes the rules (educators) and what happens (e.g., time out) to children who break them ([46]; [27]; [27]).

Children saw rules as negative or a source of anxiety because breaking them led to trouble. In the Hong Kong study, children (N = 32) were concerned about being punished for breaking school rules ([39]). In the Singapore project, most children (67% - 104 out of 208) saw school rules as defining what they couldn't do, rather than what they could do ([29]; [30]). In the Australian study, children (N = 310) saw learning the rules as a way to adjust to school ([27]; [46]). Adjusting to school is harder for children who don't know the rules; and children who didn't know what would happen at school felt scared or sad about starting school ([27]; [42]).

Making and keeping friends can ease children's transition to school

Children in research in the *Starting School* project in Australia (N = 300+) and research in New Zealand (N = 23), Singapore (N = 310 + 340) and Europe (N = 48) were concerned about how to make and keep friends at school ([50]; [48]; [46]; [44]; [27]; [42]; [37]; [51]; [52]; [29]; [36]; [38]). In a German study, children in kindergarten (N = 22 11 were newcomers, 11 were older) said that finding friends was something that made them feel shy and nervous about starting school ([53]). A very small ethnographic research project (N = 23) in New Zealand also found that friendships were important for children making the transition to school ([33]). In several countries, children were concerned that there would be nobody at school whom they know and with whom they could play ([50]; [48]; [44]; [27]; [42]; [37]; [52]; [29]); and children also said that they would be unhappy at school if they did not have friends at school ([46]). A UK study (N = 50) found that children who start

school with friends are happier than those who don't; and that children find it easier to settle into a class with long-term friends ([54]). In a Hong Kong study, children (N = 32) said that they were happy when they were with friends learning new things and playing in recess time; and while unstructured play reduced in importance once they had settled into school, their peer relationships were important throughout the year ([39]).

Children's sense of well-being and their positive engagement in learning depend on positive relationships with their educators

Children commented in studies in different countries on their relationships with their educators. In projects in Singapore (N = 340), Ireland (N = 47) and Australia (N = 311), children said that they wanted to please their educators and parents ([37]; [30]; [29]). In an Icelandic study, children (N = 48) attending kindergarten programs believed that educators were strict and authoritarian ([49]). In a Singaporean project, 70 out of 101 (69%) children were worried about getting into trouble with the educators, the Vice-Principal or the Principal ([29]). In an Irish study, children (N = 47) spoke of being sent to the Principal's office as a punishment for not obeying the rules ([30]). In a project in South Australia, children (N = 311) said that good relationships with their educators influenced whether they felt good at school and they gave four examples of such good relationships: being taught in fun ways, being rewarded or praised for their efforts and/or behaviour, being cared for and helped (e.g., having tasks explained and educators being patient) and being given free activities and choices ([37]).

In the Singapore and Australian studies, children said that they were unhappy and/or sad when teachers yelled and 'screamed' at them ([37]; [29]). In two studies in the USA, children (N = 4284 [41]; N = 225 [40]) said that their relationship with educators influenced how they saw the school and their own academic ability. For example, children's assessment of their competency in numeracy and literacy reflected their assessment of their relationship with their educators ([40]).

Some children find it hard to deal with the longer days and the new responsible for their own care associated with starting school

For Singaporean children (302 out of 340), school's long hours were hard during their first year of school, but 40% (142 Out of 302) of these children saw school as a place of serious learning ([29]). The children also complained that they couldn't sleep or have a nap at school and that at school - unlike at kindergarten - they had to get and/or buy their own food ([29]). (In Singapore, children attend kindergartens for 2 to 4 hours a day, but in their first year of formal schooling, they attend for 5 to 5½ hours a day - either in the morning [7.30am – 1.00pm] or in the afternoon [1.00pm – 6.30pm].)

Children often prefer free play programs to more formal learning and they associate more formal learning with being at school

Icelandic children (N = 48) attending kindergarten saw 'schoolwork' as reading, writing and arithmetic; and they saw school as more serious and difficult than kindergarten in terms of its learning, organization, size and structure ([49]). In several studies, children associated school with more formal learning and associated prior to school settings with play-based learning. For instance, in an Irish study, children (N = 47) liked 'free play' and saw the rest of their time at school as 'work' or 'listening' time ([30]). The play-work dichotomy also emerged in an Australian study in which 83 out of 100 children disliked 'work', because it involved relatively little choice or interest ([37]). Children in Germany ([53]) and in Italy (N = 21) ([43]) saw kindergarten as a place to play, but school as a place to learn. Children in a UK study (N = 70) associated school with 'work' and 'hard work' ([38]); and children in a New Zealand study (N = 23) complained that there was only limited time for play at school ([36]). In a Hong Kong study, children (N = 32) were eager to learn at school, but didn't like the structured lessons and the quantity of homework ([39]). 38 out of 340 (14%) Singaporean children complained that at school they had more work - including homework -

and that it was harder to understand and to complete their work ([29]); and 31 out of 100 (31%) Australian children said that they liked school when educators let them choose activities; but 83 out of 100 (83%) said that they did not like work that they were told to do, was boring and over which they had no choice ([37]).

Children see that going to school needs a morning routine at home

Children know why they go to school, what they do at school and what they need to know (e.g., counting and reading) in order to go to school ([27]; [42]; [46]). Children (N = 310) also know that they need a morning routine at home (e.g., doing their hair, putting on their school uniform, having breakfast and taking their lunch box) through which to make themselves ready for school ([27]).

Promising practices from the literature

Children have detailed knowledge about making the transition to school. There is anecdotal evidence that educators are involving children in planning their transition, but we found little research that links children's performance at school with their participation in planning their transition and no examples of this practice. However, drawing on pointers from the BES literature, we can suggest that promising practices around children's perspectives on transition would include those listed in

Table 4

Table 4 Promising practices around children's perspectives on transition to school

- Explore children's reactions to the changes in their physical environment.
- Help children to learn school rules.
- Help children to make (and keep) friends.
- Build positive relationships between children and their new educators.
- Explore how children cope with changes in the day length and routines at school.
- Ensure that children know whom to talk to if they are bullied during their transition to school.
- Ease children into more formal learning processes.
- Help children to feel confident about their morning routine at home of getting ready for school.

Components of transition which can inform Transition to School Statements

There is little research that links children's performance at school with their participation in planning their transition to school, but some results from research into children's perspectives on school could inform Transition to School Statements. Two large and rigorous studies in the USA (N = 4,284 [41]; N = 225 [40]) provide strong evidence that children's learning outcomes depend on how they feel about their educators and their school, suggesting strongly that schools should acknowledge children's views and feelings through, for example, including their perspectives in Transition to School Statements.

Preparing the child

Transition to School Statements could enable children to tell their parents, kindergarten educator and/or carer their feelings about starting school and what they need to feel safe and

happy there. Eliciting children's views as they are about to enter school and as they progress through their first school year could ensure that any plans for children respect their views and understandings. The research to date shows that children are likely to have views about what they find hard, easy or fun about the physical facilities of the school; about school rules, the school day and their educators; about making and keeping friends; and about getting themselves ready for school at home.

Techniques such as drawing, commenting on their drawings, completing simple questionnaires or answering broad, open-ended questions have been used effectively by researchers to elicit children's feelings (e.g. [42]). There is evidence of consistency between comments children make about their experiences and their drawings ([42]).

Preparing the school

Transition to School Statements could assist educators to acknowledge children's views of their first year of school. They could be simple conversation starters with children, such as, "What is hard or fun or easy about being at school?". Research shows that when children are invited to draw and talk about their first year of school they can give clear and substantial responses. This approach could be used regularly over the school year to show children that their views are acknowledged and valued, to explore how children's experiences of schooling are changing over the school year ([27]; [38]) and to address any loss of competence and skill that some children experience as they enter school ([34]).

Preparing the education system

Transition to School Statements could encourage all stakeholders to include multiple perspectives - including children's - on the process ([38]). Children can identify specific physical, social, cultural and learning aspects of the school that they find difficult or supportive and schools can use this information to acknowledge different children's different needs. Such information can also be shared with the children's families, so that they can see the school responding to their child as a unique individual.

4.5 Family perspectives on transition to school

Overview of the research evidence

The research on family perspectives on transition to school is summarised in Table 5.

Table 5 Overview of research evidence on family perspectives on transition to school

Research foci	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents' expectations of their children: what do parents/carers see as important for their children to know, do and feel as they prepare to start school? (E.g., [55]; [27].) • Early childhood services' expectations: how do families want early childhood services to prepare their children for school? (E.g., [26].) • Parents' experiences of transition: what are their concerns? (E.g., [26]; [56].) • Children's experiences of transition: how do families regard their children's transition to school and/or first year at school? (E.g., [57].)
Scope of evidence used in the BES	21 documents: 16 journal articles, 3 refereed conference papers and 2 reports.

Research methods

Primarily interviews and surveys (e.g., [10]; [41, 58]; [26]).

Assessing the research base

International researchers studying parents' perspectives on and experiences of their child's transition to school have shown that this is an under-researched topic (e.g. [2]; [54]). The majority of the BES studies are from the USA (7) and Australia (7). Five of the 7 Australian papers reported various phases of the Australian *Starting School* study.

To date, studies of families' perspectives on and experiences of transition to school have focused almost exclusively on parents' views, rather than other family members' views (e.g. siblings, grandparents). Two qualitative studies (1 report, 1 journal article) on this aspect of transition to school did not meet the BES criteria for rigorous reporting of methods and design, but they were included because each broadened the research base by offering European insights on this aspect of transition to school.

Sampling procedures: Overall, the data on parents' perspectives has been generated from relatively large data sets; only 3 studies had sample sizes of 50 or less. Four of the USA studies have sample sizes in excess of 500 with ethnically mixed participants and well-specified sampling procedures. However, the BES found very little research on the effectiveness of transition to school programs for children from Culturally and Linguistically Identified (CALI) backgrounds or on parents'/carers' perspectives on these programs. Such data as exists on the experiences of CALI families was generally from sub-samples within larger studies in the USA, rather than from studies concerning CALI families specifically.

Research methods: The large studies in the USA and Australia relied primarily on self-reported survey data. The BES also included two smaller (N = 20 – 30) studies and a UK study (N = 50) that used mixed methods, including in-depth interviews; but their small, non-representative sample, can only provide pointers to the issues families raise about transition to school.

A summary of the key issues arising from the literature

In the BES studies, parents differed in what they believe their children should know, do and feel as they make the transition to school. There were some common concerns, but there were also important differences between specific groups of parents (refer to Table 6). One concern common to all groups of parents in the Australian *Starting School* project was the importance of establishing their own networks through which to support each other, share information and enable their children to get to know each other before they started school ([59]).

A USA study of 537 pre-school children and their families found no common understanding of just what a kindergarten is and what it does, which acted as a significant impediment to the development of effective readiness programs ([60]).

The key issues in a child's transition to school raised by parents in the BES research is summarised in

Table 6.

Table 6 A summary of key issues from parent perspectives on children's transition to school

Researchers found that:

- Parents have diverse views about what matters when young children make the transition to school.
- Many parents are concerned about how their child will adjust to school, asking 'Can my child fit in, be respected, be happy and safe?'
- Parents living in rural and remote areas of Australia share the concerns of other parents, but many have additional concerns.
- Many parents want contact with the school prior to their child attending it and to understand how school works.
- Some parents want their children to receive formal academic instruction in their first year of school.
- Parents' level of confidence in managing the transition to school affects their child's subsequent engagement with school.

Parents have diverse views about what matters when young children make the transition to school

Parents' diverse concerns about their children's transition to school included:

- the quality of their children's education at school. In a study of 26 parents in Queensland whose 4 ½ to 5 ½ year old children were in their preparatory year, parents said that they wanted the program to meet their child's needs appropriately; and that they were interested in the possible benefits the program might give their children at school and afterwards ([10]).
- the need for a sense of belonging. An Australian study found that children's and parents' success at making the transition to school depended on whether they felt part of the school community ([27]). The researchers were especially interested in whether this was the case for children from Culturally and Linguistically Identified (CALI) families, so subsequently they explored results from 3 Sydney suburban elementary schools that had, between them, over 1,300 students, the majority (89%, 95% and 97%) from CALI families. They found that some of these children and parents felt unconnected to and indeed, alienated from the school community. This was because there was no information in their languages about the school and no one to talk to in their languages about the school ([59]).
- the need for schools to accept diverse child-rearing practices. A study of 25 African-American parents and carers in the USA found that they were concerned about schools' and educators' narrow views about what constituted a proper family and about who should care for children ([61]).
- the new demands and risks associated with starting school. An Australian study found that 6.5% of parents were concerned about the new demands on them associated with their child starting school, such as helping with homework and helping at the school; while 10% of parents worried about their child's safety at school (e.g., bullying, proximity to busy roads) ([27]). Their concerns were echoed in another study of 132 parents, almost half of whom were concerned about their child's safety at school, helping with homework and helping at the school; while almost 80% of these parents wanted more information about the academic program of their child's school ([26]).

Many parents are concerned about how their child will adjust to diverse facets of school, asking 'Can my child fit, be respected, be happy and safe?'

A large USA study (N = 4,582 children and their parents) found that 45% of parents anticipated difficulties as their children started school. Whilst their anticipations did not determine how well their children settled into school, researchers found that for 25% of children, there was a strong link between the problems they encountered and their parents' specific concerns, suggesting that schools should attend more to parents' concerns [41]. The same study also

found that parents worked hard in diverse ways to ensure that their children experienced a smooth transition to school. Another study of parents (N = 132) in the USA found that over half of them were concerned about their children's capacity to follow rules, behave in appropriate ways, demonstrate appropriate academic skills and form good relationships with their peers ([26]).

Parents in the Australian *Starting School* project had similar concerns. They were concerned that children should have the capacity to settle into the group and be a good group member whilst maintaining their individuality ([27] [N = approximately 300]). Parents in an earlier phase of this project found that parents (N = 243) believed that children starting school should be happy, should settle comfortably into school routines and should feel positive about themselves as learners ([48]). Parents in later phases of the project were also concerned about how children starting school would handle their separation from home and family ([48]); and about how the school would handle children's responses ([27]). These parents were concerned about whether educators would appreciate how special their child was and respond positively to them, but were also concerned about whether their child would 'fit in' with the group and classroom mores ([48]).

Parents whose children did not have English as their first language had additional concerns. They were concerned about the need for their children to learn English and worried that their children would not be well-regarded if they did not ([27]; [48]). Bangladeshi parents in the *Starting School* project were concerned about their children's limited or lack of proficiency in English and its possible effects on their learning and on their relationships with teachers and peers. These parents were also concerned about the possibility of their children being isolated, bullied, and victimized because of their skin colour, accent and limited English. CALI parents were concerned about their children's wellbeing in school, as children can see themselves as different because of their accent and skin colour and can feel less powerful in contexts where English is the dominant language ([62]). An additional concern raised by Black parents in a small USA study (N = 25) was the need to teach their children about culture and race because they believed that their children would encounter racism at school from peers and adults ([61]).

Parents living in rural and remote areas of Australia share the concerns of other parents, but may have additional concerns

In the *Starting School* project, parents from rural and remote areas of Australia were concerned about whether their child's abilities were comparable with other children's and suggested that this may be because these parents often lack contact with other children of the same age as their own with whom to make comparisons ([48]). Additionally, the time needed to travel to a new school could disrupt established family routines ([7]).

Many parents want contact with the school before their child starts to attend it and to understand how school works

In studies in the USA, UK and Australia many parents wanted contact with the school prior to their child attending it and were keen to understand how school would work for their children. Specifically:

- An interview based study of 132 parents in the USA whose children were making the transition to the first year of school (a preparatory 'kindergarten' year in the USA) found that more than 50% would have liked - but did not receive - written communication with the educator and a visit to the school prior to their child starting there; and almost 40% would have liked to attend a transition meeting ([26]).
- 8.9% of parents in the Australian *Starting School* project asked what their child's educator would be like and how their child would be taught, suggesting that they would have liked some contact with the school before their child started there ([55]). Similarly, a desire for parents to meet the educator early in a school induction process and to understand how the school works was also reported in an interview-

based UK study of parents of 50 children in their first year of school ([2]). However, no details were provided on the percentage of parents for whom this was an issue.

- In the *Starting School* project ([13]), when a transition program enabled parents to observe their child in the school, the parents said that this helped them to assess their child's readiness for the transition.

Some parents want their children to receive early formal academic instruction in their first year of school

Across 3 studies, some parents wanted their child to have early academic instruction. Two of these studies were relatively small qualitative studies. The first was an exploratory, interview-based study of 26 parents with children in their preparatory year in Queensland. It found that parents felt that a formal curriculum in this year would give their children an academic advantage in later years of schooling and in the workforce ([10]). Similarly, some parents in a small study (N = 25) in the USA supported their children to develop academic skills at home through excursions, pre-literacy activities, helping with homework and reading; and these parents wanted the school to tell them about any other forms of academic support that they could give to their children ([61]).

The *Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Kindergarten Cohort* (ECLS-K) (USA) is an ongoing study of kindergarten children as they make the transition to formal schooling. It has shown significant differences between different groups of parents academic expectations for their children. Asian-American parents (N = 309) had higher academic expectations for their children than European-American parents (N = 9,471); and Asian-American parents wanted their children to receive formal academic instruction in their first year of school more so than did European-American parents ([63]).

Parents' level of confidence in managing transition affects children's school engagement

USA researchers found that a majority of parents from diverse educational, 'race' and SES backgrounds (N = 132) felt uncertain about how best to handle their children's transition to school ([26]). Research with 75 USA parents from diverse cultural and social backgrounds found that this uncertainty and alienation often resulted in parents totally removing themselves from the transition process ([64]). Australian researchers have also found that groups of parents differ in their confidence that they can manage their children's transition to school successfully. Whilst this is not a well-researched area there is strong evidence from an Australian study of 763 mothers whose children were starting primary school using the *Parent Self-efficacy in Managing the Transition to School Scale* (PSMTSS) that parental confidence in the transition process, especially for families whose first language is not English, is associated with children's academic and social outcomes. In particular, children whose parents lacked confidence in managing the transition process were more likely to show greater resistance to attending school ([56]). Families from Indigenous backgrounds were underrepresented in the study and families whose first language was not English were overrepresented in the sample.

Promising practices from the literature

The research examined in the BES showed a variety of practices that schools and prior to school settings use to involve parents in their child's transition processes. It also shows that many parents want to engage in their child's transition to school. However, evidence of which practices work best is scarce. Drawing from the BES research literature on parental experiences of and views about their child's transition to school, some promising practices are outlined in Table 7.

Table 7 Promising practices from parental experiences of and views about their child's transition to school

- Acknowledge the diversity of views and concerns of different parents.
- Enable parents to ask questions and raise concerns about their child's transition, such as, 'Can my child fit in, be respected, be happy and safe?'
- Acknowledge the specific transition issues and concerns faced by parents living in rural and remote regions of Australia.
- Offer parents the opportunity to have contact with the school prior to their child attending it and to understand how school works.
- Explore with parents the pros and cons of their children receiving formal academic instruction in their first year of school.
- Support parents to build their own confidence in managing the transition to school, paying special attention to families in Australia whose first language is not English.

The following exemplars have been selected to illustrate of one or more of these promising practices. They have been sourced through online searches generated as part of the BES. It should be noted that this literature did not consider issues of power relations between teachers and parents (see, for example, {Mac Naughton, 2004 #195}) and how transition processes may be structured to ensure that parent's knowledge of their child is valued as much as educators. This is an important omission in the literature that warrants consideration in the preparation of transition programs.

Preparing the child

Contact with the school prior to children attending: the *Shared Summer School*

As detailed above, many parents want contact with the school prior to their child attending it. Research (see above) suggests this should be initiated by the school and should help parents to see that their child will be welcomed into school and be respected for their unique strengths and ways of being. In the USA a *Shared Summer School* between an elementary school and a preschool created extended contact between parents and the school prior to attendance. Educators were paid an additional salary to provide a series of *Shared Summer School* activities during the 3-month summer school break in the local elementary school. The program provided for a mix of preschool and elementary school pedagogies and established a daily School-Home message process in which educators and children wrote messages for the children's parents about what they were doing and learning in the program (See [65]) for a detailed description of the program). No formal evaluation of the program has been conducted.

Preparing the parents

Involving parents in their child's transition to school

Different parents have many different concerns about how their children might adjust to school and about the implications for their family. There should be special efforts to ensure that transition to school programs are accessible to parents from rural and remote areas and to parents whose first language is not English. Research (see above) suggests that a best practice transition to school program will invite parents to share their concerns, will acknowledge and respect them and will suggest how to deal with them. This could involve one more of the following activities:

- inviting parents to participate in the program ([64]; [66]; [13]; [12])
- including parents' views in the program's design and operation ([62]; [13]; [59])
- giving parents advice about their child's transition to school that is culturally appropriate and that builds their confidence in the transition processes
- allowing parents to share their ideas and information about their child's transition with educators early in the transition process ([54])
- acknowledging and supporting parents' roles actively ([64])
- making information available in appropriate community languages and in printed form as well as online.

Providing easily accessible information that addresses parental concerns: *Set for Prep*

The Queensland government's state-wide *Set for Prep* program builds from the Early Phase of Learning Action Plan (2007) ([67]). This Plan emphasises supporting children's transitions from preschool services into primary school. *Set for Prep* program provides parents with advice online on 'Getting your child ready for prep', 'Making the first day a success' and 'How to get involved'; and answers 'Frequently Asked Questions'. The advice provided on the site and within downloadable one-page flyers provides parents and carers with practical suggestions on how to help prepare children for school and how they can best work with the school and educators to support their child in the school. Much of this advice mirrors the findings within the transition to school literature discussed above about offering suggestions to parents on ways to familiarise their children with the school and likely routines, as well as more practical suggestions including buying school requirements (e.g., bags, lunchboxes) with the child and suggestions on what to include in school lunches. The *Set for Prep* program has not yet been formally evaluated.

Providing easily accessible information that addresses parental concerns: *Terrific transitions in multiple languages*

Terrific transitions is a website (funded through the USA *Head Start* initiative) that offers parents information and advice in diverse languages about their children's transition to school (see http://www.serve.org/TT/fp_tips.html). Connected to the *Head Start Association*, this site is a resource that parents can access and holds both research articles about transition programs as well as checklists for school readiness and practical information on making the transition for children easier. Parents can also access resources including Tip Sheets and a Calendar of Activities in preparation for the transition period. This site states that it draws on US based research on what makes transitions successful, but the site itself has not been evaluated.

Preparing the school

The research on parents' perspectives on and experiences of their child's transition to the first years of schooling provides several broad pointers to successful partnerships with parents. They include:

- identifying educators who are responsible for providing a comprehensive range of transition to school programs. These programs may include home visits before and after children enter school; visits to early years settings and schools; family meetings to discuss educators' expectations; connecting new families with families currently enrolled in the school; dissemination of information to families on the transition to school and family support groups; ongoing communication strategies ([13]; [12]; [66]; [64]).
- providing professional development for educators on how to build relationships with parents during their child's transition to school ([59]; [64]) that acknowledge and support diverse views of transition
- developing a whole-of-school approach to acknowledging and supporting a child's home language and culture and to building culturally relevant curricula ([64])
- developing and implementing flexible models of service delivery in the preparatory and early years of schooling. For example, a mobile preschool setting was established where parents could ask staff about their children's readiness for school ([59]).

A promising example of professional learning and change: Kingsgrove Public School (NSW)

This school had a high percentage of parents whose first language was not English. It won a Transition to School seeding grant and used it to establish a collaborative action research project on rethinking its approaches to transition and to develop a community based approach to transition ([68]). The school used *The Guiding Principles for Transition* ([48]) and *The Transition to School Planning Cycle from the Families and Schools Working Together* ([68]) as a framework for its planning and its actions. (A detailed description of educator learning and change processes highlights how educator involvement in funded

professional learning with a change-based focus can generate flexible, community-oriented and flexible approaches to transition to school. Go to: www.det.nsw.edu.au/proflearn/docs/pdf/mkidd.pdf

Preparing the education system

There are many reasons why parents may not engage with schools during the transition process. Some of these have been explored in research with specific groups of parents: parents from disadvantaged backgrounds, CALI parents and Indigenous parents. The extent to which parents engage with school appears to be linked strongly to the extent to which the school culture and practices welcome diversity and adjust their programs and practices to the diversity of their local community. Parental engagement also requires active work by school to build relationships with its local communities. Developing transition programs that address a range of parents' concerns and needs requires active effort to build a partnership approach to children's transition to school that can be supported through a range of system-led initiatives:

- Strengthening the link between schools, early years services and communities to support partnerships between home, school and community ([59]; [64]). For example, in Australia this could be the co-locating of early years services on school grounds. In Canada, the *Toronto First Duty Initiative* integrated several services into primary school settings. The evaluation of the Initiative demonstrated significant and strong parental support for it and enhanced school readiness (academically, emotionally and socially) for children involved in the Initiative. The evaluation also found that parents whose children were in an integrated service were more relaxed talking to kindergarten educators about their children (age 5 – 6 years) and more engaged in their children's learning ([69]). However, co-location in and of itself may not create communication between settings, program integration or ensure that parents and other family members feel comfortable accessing services. It is, therefore, important to link co-location with active bridge building between services and between communities. The evaluation of the first phase of the *Toronto First Duty Initiative* found that successful integration required space and time for meetings and planning, clearly agreed goals, joint professional development for the professionals and strong local leadership and system support ([69]).
- Up-skilling the early years and early years of school workforce on strategies and skills in building cross-sectoral relationships and partnerships ([61]; [64]).
- Dedicating funding and resources for schools to work with families and early years educators before the children reach school ([13]; [64]) and for families, schools and community to share leadership in this ([64]). An example of this is the Tasmanian Department of Education's *Launching into Learning* program ([70]). The benefits of this model include the capacity for schools to develop prior knowledge about the needs of particular children who are commencing, put in place support strategies to meet their needs and encourage family involvement.
- Providing resources for schools to establish family-friendly early years services and schools that contain spaces where families and staff can mingle ([71]).

The *Countdown to Kindergarten* initiative (Boston City Council)

Researchers ([15]) have identified *Countdown to Kindergarten* as a promising practice for improving parent involvement in transitions. It is a year-long program supporting children and families in the transition to school. Every month, parents of children transitioning to school in the following year receive information linked to their child's transition to school, including registration information, calls from school parent volunteers, and written information on what they can do to prepare their children for school ([15]). The Boston City Council claims that the initiative has increased child attendance at kindergarten (the year before compulsory schooling) and that schools are more willing to engage actively with families on transition issues (<http://www.countdowntokindergarten.org/about.htm>). However, it has not been possible to find any independent evaluation of the initiative.

School-based migrant advocates for recently arrived immigrants (Okeechobee County, Florida)

US researchers reviewing successful family involvement practices have identified work by Okeechobee County, Florida, with its large recently arrived immigrant population as having promising practices for engaging immigrant families in the early years of schooling ([15]). The County provides resources to ensure that all classrooms are staffed with bilingual aides and that schools employ a Migrant Advocate who helps families to link to appropriate support services ([15]).

Components of the research that can inform Transition to School Statements

Including parents’ views and experiences in Transition to School Statements may assist parents and schools to get to know each other and may assist prior to school settings and school settings to exchange information relevant to individual children. Such Statements produced in the appropriate community languages would be a support and resource for parents as they introduce their children to their new schools; and a focus for sharing between parents and educators in prior to school settings. Inviting parents to describe what they see as their children’s special qualities and strengths could encourage parents who feel anxious about how schools might respond to their child to share their concerns. Whilst the transition to school literature did not specifically discuss the need for parents to feel control over the information that they shared, other literature on teacher-parent partnerships emphasises its importance (e.g, {Miretzky, 2004 #197}).

4.6 Educators’ perspectives on children's transition to school

Overview of the research evidence

Key aspects of the research evidence about children’s transition to school from an educator’s perspective is summarised in

Table 8

Table 8 Overview of research evidence on educators’ perspectives on children’s transition to school

Research foci	What educators do with children and families during a child’s transition to school? What do educators see as barriers to a smooth transition?
Scope of evidence used in the BES	12 documents: 8 journal articles and 2 conference papers, 1 technical research report, 1 paper.
Research methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured surveys ([72]) • Structured surveys ([73]) • Questionnaires ([27]; [74]) • Social Skills Rating Scale - Teacher Form ([75]).

Assessing the research base

The research base on educators’ perspectives on children’s transition to school is very limited but contains some substantial studies of interest. The BES found 7 USA studies, 1 European study and 4 Australian papers (3 reporting on the *Starting School* project).

Sampling procedures: Of particular note is a large study (N = 3,595) using random population samples throughout the USA; and the EPPE study (UK) where the sample was stratified by type of prior to school setting and by geographical location in urban, inner city,

suburban and rural areas and communities that represented a range of ethnic diversity and social disadvantage.

Research methods: The BES found that most studies of educators' perspectives on transition used surveys or questionnaires and relied heavily on self-reported, quantitative data from by educators. Overall, the studies had clearly detailed methodologies and there were clear descriptors of the approach to analysis. So, whilst there is only a small research base on educators' perspectives on transition, the findings from the larger studies are robust and offer some clear pointers to issues that should be addressed in building a holistic approach to transition to school.

A summary of the key issues arising from the literature

Table 9 summarises the key issues arising from the literature on educators' perspectives on children's transition to school.

Table 9 A summary of educators' perspectives on transition to school

The literature we examined on educators' perspectives of transition to school said that:

- USA kindergarten educators believe that most children have no difficulty in making the transition to school.
- Primary school educators are concerned about whether or not children have appropriate academic skills prior to entering school.
- Many USA primary school educators believe that a smooth transition to school requires children to have specific skills.
- Educators believe that socio-emotional and interpersonal development and skills assist a child's transition to school.
- Educators in the USA believe that developmental and health screening of children prior to school entry assist a child's transition to school.
- Educators support young children's transition to school in various ways, but face structural challenges as they do so.
- Educators believe that parent participation assists a child's transition to school.
- Communication between educators in school and in prior to school settings can be problematic and may differ according to setting.
- Educators believe that children who have attended preschool make the transition to school more easily than those who haven't.
- Educators believe that children with special needs, from disadvantaged backgrounds and from minority groups face particular difficulties in their transition to school.

US kindergarten educators believe that most children have no difficulty in making the transition to school

A nationally representative sample of 3,595 kindergarten educators said that approximately half of all students make the transition to kindergarten smoothly and approximately half do not. Within those who do not make the transition to kindergarten smoothly, approximately one-third experience minor difficulties and the remaining 16% experience major difficulties ([57]). Neither a major nor a minor difficulty was defined, but educators reported children having these difficulties with following directions, communication and language, working independently, working in groups, their social skills, their level of maturity, academic skills and a disorganized home environment. The most commonly reported difficulty (46% of all teachers in the project) was that children were unable to follow directions.

Primary school educators are concerned about whether children have appropriate academic skills prior to entering school

Primary school educators in the USA and in Australia said that academic skills (e.g., counting to 10, naming colours and shapes and recognising the alphabet) and pre-writing activities (e.g., tracing and drawing) influenced children's transition to school ([72]; [27]; [45]). Australian educators also said that children make the transition better when they are well nourished and well rested ([27]; [45]).

Many US primary school educators believe that a smooth transition to school requires children to have specific skills

Primary school educators in the USA said that children make the transition to school more easily if they can follow directions, cooperate with the educator and work independently ([72]). Primary school educators in the USA and in Ireland said that a child's failure to follow directions showed that they were unready for school ([57]; [74]).

Educators believe that socio-emotional and interpersonal development and skills assist a child's transition to school

Primary school educators in the USA said that children make the transition to school more easily if they can play co-operatively, recognise feelings and appreciate their own and others' cultures ([72]). Primary school educators in Australia and in Ireland said that children make the transition to school more easily if they can play co-operatively, go to the toilet independently, dress themselves, fasten their shoes and recognise their belongings ([27]; [45]; [58]; [74]). Primary school educators in Ireland also said that children found the transition to school hard if they had a low self esteem and/or difficulty in concentrating, sitting still and listening ([74]). This was reinforced in a study in the USA, in which half the educators believed that children's transition to school was hindered by poor socio-emotional development, such as an inability to separate from parents and to sit and concentrate for an extended period of time ([72]); and educators cited problems with attachment and separation as impediments to transition ([27]; [45]; [58]).

Educators in the USA believe that developmental and health screening of children prior to school entry assist a child's transition to school

Most educators in a study in the USA said that they assessed children's speech (70%), hearing (36%), vision (33%), and development (61%) prior to school entry to assist a child's transition to school ([72]).

Educators support young children's transition to school in various ways, but face structural challenges as they do so

Two studies in the USA ([72]; [73]) examined transition to school programs that included communication between school, child and family. Such communication included:

- meeting the family and child
- sending a brochure, flyer or letter to the child and/or the family
- phoning the child and/or the family
- coordinating kindergarten registrations and bringing children from preschool to visit the school
- informing parents about school readiness and expectations
- visiting the child's home
- visits by school principals and kindergarten educators to community preschools and programs for four-year-olds
- making informal contact with kindergarten educators to discuss children's social and academic skills
- joint training for pre-K and kindergarten educators
- holding 'open house' for parents and children.

These practices link with a US study (N = 81) which found a strong belief amongst educators that preparing a child for school involves addressing the child, their home, their prospective educators and educator-parent relationships ([76]).

Educators' ability to develop extensive transition programs can be impeded by two factors: educators receive their class lists late in the year, preventing them from initiating transition programs until the beginning of the next year; and, educators with large classes had to spend more time on planning at the expense of transition activities ([73]).

Educators believe that parent participation assists a child's transition to school

Researchers in the USA found that children's transition to school was smoother when their parents participated actively in it by, for example, learning about school deadlines, preparing their child for school, seeking information and being advocates for their child ([72]); and this was also the result of research in Australia ([27]; [45]). In another study in the USA, educators said that parents' participation in transition helped educators to learn more about children's experiences prior to starting school ([75]).

Communication between educators in school and in prior to school settings can be problematic and may differ according to setting

A New Zealand study ([77]) found that preschool and school educators disagreed about what children should have achieved by the time they start school; and in a study in the USA, 27% of educators said that lack of communication between kindergarten and pre-K impeded a smooth transition to school ([72]). In contrast, there is some evidence that a majority of Victorian primary school educators (87%) contacted kindergarten educators prior to a child's entry to school, but only 2% of schools contacted a child's child care centre (Margetts, 1996 cited in [78]).

Educators believe that children who have attended preschool make the transition to school more easily than those who haven't

Educators in Ireland and the USA said that children who have attended preschool make the transition to school more easily than those who haven't ([74]; [72]). Similarly, researchers in the EPPE study in the UK found that involvement in preschool improved children's school performance (e.g., [8]).

Educators believe that children with special needs, from disadvantaged backgrounds and from minority groups face particular difficulties in their transition to school

In a study in Ireland, educators believed that children with special needs (unspecified), from disadvantaged backgrounds and from minority groups face particular difficulties in their transition to school ([74]).

Promising practices from the literature

The majority of BES research focused on primary educators' wide range of beliefs, experiences and concerns about young children's transition to school. However, there is less research that focuses on how educators deal with their concerns; and there is a major gap in the literature on the relationships between educators from the school and preschool sectors.

Drawing from the BES literature on educators' perspectives, promising practices would engage with educators' concerns and support them to innovate in their work. Table 10 outlines specific ways to do this.

Table 10 Promising practices based on educators' perspectives on children's transition to school

- Support educators to reflect on specific children's specific difficulties in making the transition to school
- Engage with educators' concerns about whether children have appropriate skills prior to entering school.
- Ensure systemic support to educators as they support young children's transition, including using whole of school approaches.
- Support activities that build communication between key actors - parents, children, educators in prior to school settings and educators in schools.

The following promising practices were found through online searches of practices that could illustrate the above points. Where these practices have been evaluated this is noted. There are limited evaluations of these specific practices.

Preparing the child

None identified specifically.

Preparing the school

Educator action research for reflection and innovation has been used to support teacher reflection and change in relation to transition processes within schools in Australia ([68]). Action research based professional learning provides educators with the opportunity to critically reflect on their current practices and build a strategic approach to change that is responsive to their local communities. A small number of educators within one school used action research to rethink their approach to transitions after asking questions about school retention rates, engaging in research and collecting data from students. By responding to student concerns about the transition from middle school, the teachers were able to implement more successful middle school transitions in which the students felt more supported.

Developing a whole of school approach: the Northchapel Primary School (West Sussex, UK). In rethinking its transition processes, this primary school developed a transition timetable that details the different processes and actions that will be taken to support a whole of school approach to transition to school during a whole year (available at http://wsgfl.westsussex.gov.uk/ccm/cms-service/stream/asset/?jsessionid=a7BgpvToXt74?asset_id=2507516). It is online and thus accessible to all stakeholders involved in the process. This is a practical resource available to all stakeholders of the Primary School, but it has not been formally evaluated. Resources such as this could support teachers to engage in diverse transition activities. There is some Australian evidence that children who engage in a range of transition activities have a more successful transition to school ([78]).

Preparing the education system

The Continuity for Success: Transition Planning Guide (USA)

This Guide provides educators and schools with detailed checklists and tools on how to plan successful transitions ([79]). It includes information on establishing partnerships, managing effective transitions and measuring increases in parent involvement.

Wollongong Transition to School Network: developing a community approach to transition (Australia)

A network was established between key stakeholders in children's transition to school. It included local early childhood services; not for profit and for profit prior to school services; educators from public and Catholic school sectors; Wollongong City Council; Illawarra Children's Services; Families First; New South Wales Tertiary and Further Education colleges; and other interested parties. Activities included regular monthly meetings,

establishing key questions to explore, a strategic planning day and an action plan. Some successful activities were: 'Big School 2006' Parents Expo, a Design a Mascot competition for school aged children and a 'Starting School 2006' Picnic in the Park ([80]). Evidence that children who engage in a range of transition activities have a more successful transition to school ([78]) supports this approach.

Components of transition which can inform Transition Statements

Preparing the child

Opportunities for educators to speak with children as part of the transition process

Educators focus transition processes strongly on communicating with parents. They might also engage with children's perspectives on transition, given the research explored previously on this domain of transition. However, the research does not point to this being a major concern for primary school educators.

Developing a Web Cast or a Slide Show that children can access at different times

A Web Cast or Slide Show can include pictures of the school and other information linked to children's issues and concerns and can be accessed by children who cannot, for one reason or another visit school prior to their first day (Early Childhood Educators forum USA – see <http://users.stargate.net/~cokids/transition.html>).

Preparing the school

Partner parents to seek their input and to respond to their need for information

Partnering parents enables schools to acknowledge educators', children's and parents' different historical, cultural and social expectations.

Implement transition programs before school entry and through the first year

Some research suggests that transition programs occur just prior to school entry and the beginning of school to allow some interaction between educators in the two sectors.

Preparing the education system

Establish two-way communication/dialogue between the sending and receiving settings

Early childhood services and schools need to work in partnership to develop and support transitions ([72]).

Provide resources for early childhood and early years school educators to develop transition programs with children and families that are contextual and that reflect their communities' needs

Educators need time and resources to develop inclusive and appropriate transition programs. Educators need time to enter into dialogue with all the key stakeholders to do so.

4.7 Creating a positive start to school for all children

Much of the research on what creates positive transitions for children from specific groups, such as children with disabilities, children from disadvantaged backgrounds and Indigenous children highlights policies and practices that can assist all children to make a successful start to school. It is important to note that these are strongly emphasised in specific literature for each group. Where additional points are noted, these have been highlighted below.

4.8 Supporting transition to school by children with disabilities and/or specific needs

Overview of the research evidence

Table 11 provides an overview of the research foci and scope of the evidence used in the BES to explore approaches to supporting transition to school for children with disabilities.

Table 11 Overview of research evidence on supporting transition to school for children with disabilities and/or specific needs

Research focus	<i>Exploring how to improve communication and coordination between the various sectors (e.g. health professionals and educational services) (e.g. [3]; [81]).</i>
Scope of evidence used in the BES	16 documents: 14 journal articles (5 commentary papers), 1 technical research report and 1 evaluation report.
Research methods	Primarily parent surveys, educators' reports and some field observations. A large UK mixed methods study used individual assessments of children's cognitive capacities, pre-school workers' and educators' assessments of children's social behaviours, parent interviews and questionnaire data, and information about the pre-school centres children attended ([82]).

Assessing the research base

Although the education of children with disabilities in preschool and school is an area of significant study internationally, there is little research that focuses on issues of transition from prior to school settings to school settings ([83]). Therefore, it is not surprising that the BES identified only 9 research studies that specifically explored issues of transition for children with disabilities and their families. None of these studies explored the perspectives of children. The studies focused almost exclusively on the experiences of transition for children and their families with a focus on administrative issues in transition. Of most note is the large UK Early Years Transition and Special Educational Needs (EYTSEN) project that provides robust findings due to its rigor.

Sampling procedures: The largest study was EYTSEN (N = 2857) that over sampled areas with ethnic diversity and included above national average proportions of low SES families. Seven (7) of the remaining studies did not report in any detail on sampling processes and involved cohorts of less than 70. EYSTEN is the only study that specifically reported on ethnic diversity in the sample and on SES.

Research methods: The empirical studies used survey methods, focus groups and observational data. Reliability testing and descriptions of approach to validity were only present in three instances - two papers from the EYTSEN study and one US study ([84]).

Key issues in the literature

Four issues central to planning transition to school programs for children with disabilities are outlined in

Table 12.

Table 12 Issues centre to planning transition to school programs for children with disabilities

The literature search showed that four issues are central to planning transition to school programs for children with disabilities:

- Children with disabilities have a more positive transition if they have had

preschool experience.

- Children with disabilities often experience multiple transitions across multiple sectors so long term cross-sector collaborative planning that ensures continuity and alignment across sectors and programs is critical to their successful transition to school.
- Transition to school is especially complex and anxiety-laden for families of children with disabilities.
- There are negative long-term implications of neglecting problems of transition.

Children with disabilities have a more positive transition if they have had preschool experience.

The Early Years Transition and Special Educational Needs (EYTSEN) study follows a large group of UK children (N = 2857) from pre-school to the end of Year 1 in primary school. It focuses especially on children with various 'at-risk' factors including children with disabilities. The research found strong evidence that children who are considered cognitively 'at risk' in preschool and who attend high quality settings do better than similar children who do not ([82]).

Children with disabilities often experience multiple transitions across multiple sectors, so long term cross-sector collaborative planning that ensures continuity and alignment across sectors and programs is critical to their successful transition to school

While transition to school is important for all families, most families of children with disabilities have experienced many stressful transitions by the time their child has reached traditional school age (e.g., 4 or 5 years of age): e.g., from hospital to home, from one early childhood program to another and from home-based services to pre-school ([85]; [86]). These multiple transitions in the lives of young children with special needs continue to be cited by administrators, practitioners and families as an area of concern ([41]). Strategies that support an interagency process involving multiple parties required supportive infrastructure, use of transition policies, dedicated personnel for transition planning, interagency relationships, continuity in services across programs and alignment of curricula ([85]). Effective transition practices and activities required preparation of families and children for transition, program visitation, child-specific instructional activities and making community resources available for family members to support transition. Therefore, the transition by children with disabilities into the preparatory year needs to be a long-term, specialist program spanning both the pre- and post-preparatory years, rather than just a few months ([3]).

However, educators shouldn't act alone in preparing these children for a transition. Instead, Spencer ([77]) reported that all key actors involved should collaborate in assessing a child and taking decisions about them. This is especially important for children with an intellectual disability, whose particular cognitive and adaptive issues make them susceptible to weaknesses in a transition program ([87]). A collaborative approach will also reassure the families and carers of these children, who fear that they will be excluded during transitions ([88]); and who are, in general, less satisfied with transition programs than parents of other children ([84]; [38]).

Transition to school is an especially complex and anxiety-laden for families of children with disabilities

The transition from special centres to preparatory level schooling is considered the most challenging for children with disabilities and/or specific needs and for their families. This is because it entails increased class and school populations, unfamiliar environments and less focus on the individual child ([83]). Researchers ([84]; [81]) also found that evaluations of

transition programs focus primarily on curriculum and operational matters, rather than on whether and how children and schools adjust to each other.

Parents of children with significant disabilities share concerns with other families. In addition, they typically have questions relating to how, when, where, and by whom their child's special services will be provided ([89]). The possibility of losing strong support systems established through preschool programs may also cause parents to worry ([89]). Thus, the transition to school for children with disabilities can be exceedingly complex and anxiety-laden for their families. Demonstration models for children with disabilities in USA schools suggest the following best practices:

- using a collaborative team approach to involve families, both sending (preschool) and receiving (kindergarten) educators and related services staff, and school administrators
- setting transition goals and outlining anticipated outcomes
- encouraging active empowerment and involvement of families in the process and enhancing communication between all involved staff
- focusing on the needs and strengths of individual children and the services and supports they need to be successful in kindergarten ([89]).

There are negative long-term implications of neglecting problems of transition

Children with disabilities and/or specific needs who experience social, cognitive and developmental problems will find the transition to school especially hard - both in the preparatory level and beyond; and, this may affect relationships with their educators ([90]; [87]). In London, 3 to 7 year old children's cognitive and social/emotional development improved considerably if they attended a high quality preschool prior to school entry ([91]).

A USA study of the transition to school by 67 children between 5 and 6 years old, some of whom had an intellectual disability, found that the children with an intellectual disability had fewer positive early school experiences than did children without an intellectual disability. This was because they lacked the social skills required to adapt to new circumstances ([87]).

Promising practices from the literature

Drawing on the literature above, promising practices for children with disabilities will use the strategies outlined in Table 13.

Table 13 Promising practices for transition to school for children with disabilities

- Increase the opportunities for children with disabilities to attend preschool.
- Actively plan for children with disabilities to make the transition to school.
- Ensure long term cross-sector collaborative planning for a child's transition to school.
- Reduce the complexity of the process of transition for families through interagency co-operation.
- Reduce the anxiety of the process of transition for families by having clear goals developed in partnership with families.

These strategies reflect an emphasis in the literature reviewed on the challenges faced by children with disabilities in transition processes.

Preparing the child and the family

Developing clear structures and processes for communication between all those involved in the year before schooling begins

Timelines for Early Successful Transitions (TEST) is a birth-to-three transition program that involved all stakeholders (children, parents, pre-primary and preparatory educators) ([3]).

Participants each reflected on each step in the transition process to ensure that it met everyone's needs. This approach is consistent with earlier literature from the USA, in which transition is regarded as a long-term process that starts in the early years ([92]; [85]).

A study of 3,000 families in Australia who had four to seven-year-old children in transition to school placed children in two groups: one in a *Care As Usual* intervention program, the other in a *Positive Parenting Program*. Parents were interviewed randomly pre-intervention and two years after intervention. Parents in both groups reported reductions in the rate of behavioural and emotional problems in their children; but such reductions were significantly greater in families in the *Positive Parenting Program* ([93]).

The Family Held Record (SA – Department of Education and Children's Services)

A Family Held Record has been used in the transition process by parents to organise information about their child with a disability and/or developmental delay. It is a file or a folder in which parents can add, change or delete information and the family chooses what information they share with whom and when. Contents may include information that may be helpful to those supporting the child, the child's interests, services used by the child, plans for the child, records of assessments or tests, correspondence with different agencies, key documents, information about support services, information sheets and/or readings and resources.

Preparing the school

Mapping and evaluating regular contact with families during the transition process

A study in the USA ([81]) examined the continuity and length of services provided to 235 families whose children were making the transition from early childhood special education to school. The study recommended that parents should be kept up to date on the services provided throughout the transition and that these services should be assessed continually.

Preparing the education system

The Transition Conceptual Framework (USA)

Researchers at the National Early Childhood Transition Center proposed a cohesive framework called The Transition Conceptual Framework ([85]). The Framework utilizes an ecological approach to show how transitions for young children with disabilities are influenced by the complex interactions of child and family characteristics, as well as by the multiple systems of community and state level in which children and families are embedded. Three factors influence the child's successful transition to new environments: 1) engagement, 2) adaptation to both the structure and culture of the setting, and 3) continued growth and development ([85]).

Time is an important variable in achieving successful transition outcomes for children with disabilities ([85]). It takes time for the child to actively engage in and adapt to the new setting or program, so a program should give families time to adjust. Therefore it is important for new or receiving program to recognize that families need time to adequately adjust. Within the Framework, both the system and the family play a role and have responsibilities for the outcomes. Families have the responsibility to do their best to try to be prepared for and adjust to their child's new situation. The following are the desired family outcomes: informed families, family competence, meaningful participation, self-efficacy and preparation time for the transition.

The Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities (South Australia) – a sector wide response

South Australia has initiated a Ministerial Advisory Committee on transitions in the life of children with disabilities. It is working across the three education sectors in South Australia - State, Catholic and Independent school systems. The Committee aims to articulate a model of transition that supports the shifts between services for children with disabilities and is

focusing on the types and levels of service provision for children and their families. The Committee is yet to report on its findings.

(<http://www.childrenscentres.sa.gov.au/pages/ecconnections/MAC/?reFlag=1>)

Transition Co-ordinators to support children with disabilities (USA and Australia)

Some transition programs for children with disabilities have a Transition Coordinator, while other programs may enlist an education manager to serve in this role or divide the transition duties between several management team members. Transition Co-ordinators are responsible for creating, implementing and evaluating transition programs in prior to school and school settings ([80]).

A Transition Coordinator's major role is to make sure that parents and children feel supported and have the information that they need to make a successful transition to school. For instance, in The Department of Education in Tasmania, a Transition Coordinator develops transition plans, organizes meetings with families and other professionals and manages and informs the professional team. Often, transition in school settings is a team matter. Educators, directors, family service workers, home visitors, and many other staff members come together to create a smooth transition to school for children and their families. Although many staff are involved in the transition process, each program is required to identify an individual(s) to be responsible for overall transition planning. The Victorian Government's DEECD provides an outsourced assessment service for potential applications on behalf of students in the categories of Intellectual Disability and Severe Language Disorder with Critical Education Needs. Further information is available at: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/disability/integrated.htm>

In the USA, the federal government provides funds to support the inclusion of children with disabilities in schools. 75% of states in the USA have used these funds to employ Transition Co-ordinators to be responsible for overall transition planning for children and families ([94]).

Providing information for families: acting as a clearinghouse

Several organizations provide transition to school information online for parents who have children with disabilities. For instance, *Vision Australia* has advice online on preparing children with vision impairments for their transition to school (see <http://www.visionaustralia.org.au/info.aspx?page=1490>). There has been little formal evaluation of the use or impact of these clearinghouses. The challenge for DEECD is to not duplicate this effort but to ensure that parents, teachers and schools are aware of the support resources that exist.

Components of successful transition to include in Transition Statements

Preparing the child and family

It could be helpful to use Transition Statements to document the different sectors and professionals involved ([85]).

Preparing the school

Transition Statements could form part of a longer term transition process that engages the school with other services with which a child with disabilities is involved ([85]; [86]).

Preparing the education system

Transitions Statements could be used to clarify the type of detailed documentation that travels with a child with disabilities through different transitions and to clearly address issues of communication and co-ordination between those involved with that child ([3]; [85]).

4.9 Supporting transition to school by Indigenous children

Overview of the research evidence

Table 14 provides an overview of the scope and nature of the BES literature on supporting transition to school for Indigenous children.

Table 14 Overview of research on supporting transition to school by Indigenous children

Research foci	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The ingredients of a successful transition to school by Australian Indigenous children.</i> • <i>Indigenous children's readiness for school.</i>
Scope of evidence used in the BES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 documents: 3 research articles, 5 reports, 2 conference papers and 8 other non-refereed papers in various formats.
Research methods	One of the two research studies investigated Indigenous Australian children's transition to school by examining 10 case study sites and 5 trial sites ([23]). A New Zealand study surveyed 35 Pacific Islander families about their experiences of transitions from early childhood services to primary school ([95]).

Assessing the research base

Research on Indigenous Australian children's transition to school has had two foci: the ingredients of a successful transition to school by Indigenous children; and Indigenous children's readiness for school. Literature on the impacts and/or experiences of transition to school processes on families and/or communities was scarce - only two studies were found. Consequently, the BES was widened to include:

- Case studies and reports that described successful practices in educating Indigenous children overall, including successful and unsuccessful transition, but that had not been formally evaluated.
- Policy documents outlining how schools can engage successfully with Indigenous children, families and communities and/or Indigenous children's transition to school and their subsequent school performance.
- Research (predominantly from Canada and New Zealand) that explores Indigenous children's transition to school. A search of the social science data bases from Canada identified some research exploring Indigenous children's and youth's transition between primary and high school and then between high school and paid employment, but there was no research literature found that focused on young Indigenous children's transition to school. The search of literature originating from New Zealand found 1 research article focusing on the experiences of transition to school of young Pacific Islander children and families ({Podmore, 2003 #184}).

This next section uses the BES literature to discuss Indigenous children's transitions to school. Due to the scarcity of research studies on this topic, there is not strong research evidence on what makes Indigenous children's transition to school successful, but there is remarkable consistency about what would work and this informs the discussion of promising practices.

Key issues in the literature

Five key issues on Indigenous children's transition to school are outlined in Table 15.

Table 15 Key issues in Indigenous children's transition to school

The literature we examined on Indigenous children's transition to school said:

- Few transition programs in Australia, either Indigenous-specific or as an element of a wider initiative, focus on Indigenous children.
- Most transition to school programs for Indigenous children seek to change the child and family; the remainder seek to change the school.
- For many Indigenous children and families, the transition to school is unsuccessful and contributes to Indigenous children's disengagement from school and low attendance.
- Indigenous children from culturally relevant and supportive pre-school programs find schools unresponsive to their educational needs.
- 'Best practice' educational programs for Indigenous children call for change in schools and in education systems.

Few transition programs in Australia, either Indigenous-specific or as an element of a wider initiative, focus on Indigenous children

A study of successful transition programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (10 case studies and 5 trial sites in NSW) highlighted the strengths and possibilities in creating successful Indigenous-specific transition programs. It found that a successful transition program served local needs (so no two programs were alike) and was based on positive relationships between school, educators, children and families ([23]). Similarly, a study of an Indigenous-specific transition to school network in the Wollongong area of NSW found that the most effective transition to school programs were based on positive relationships between participants and featured several cross-sector strategies ([80]).

Anecdotal evidence of successful transition programs for Indigenous children and their families in metropolitan and rural areas of Australia echo these research findings. In these programs, individual prior to school settings build relationships with their local primary schools to support Indigenous children's transition to school. In the Birrelee transition program, Aboriginal Education Assistants in local primary schools support this linking; in Albury, a preschool educator attends orientation sessions with families to assist their children's transition to school; and in Mooroopna, transition programs include several meetings at the school between educators, parents and children before the school year begins ([96]).

The few transition programs that acknowledge Indigenous children are focused on Indigenous children specifically. There is systematic and anecdotal evidence that Indigenous children and families benefit from these programs. These benefits include greater attendance and retention, a stronger sense of community and more positive behaviour and attitudes to school.

Most transition to school programs for Indigenous children seek to change the child and family; the remainder seek to change the school

The MCEETYA Taskforce Discussion Paper 'Effective Learning Issues for Indigenous Children Aged 0-8 Years' ([97]) argues that transition programs tend to make the children ready for school, without making the school ready for the children; and that if schools were more flexible and responsive to Indigenous children's needs, the children would achieve more.

A review of eight research projects on Indigenous children's readiness for school found that those projects sought to change the child and/or the family (e.g. Indigenous positive parenting, child health and education, pathways to prevention), without changing the school. Some reported modest successes in preparing children for school ([98]). A number of Indigenous services also prepare Indigenous children and families for school through, for example, improving child and family health and children's literacy ([96]).

For many Indigenous children and families, the transition to school is unsuccessful and contributes to Indigenous children's disengagement from school and low attendance

The NSW Aboriginal Education Policy ([99]) argues that well-resourced transition to school programs could improve Indigenous children's success in school, although our search of the literature found no research evidence to support this argument. However, research into Indigenous children's absence from school ([100]) found that whilst Indigenous children's success in transition to school depended on how much time they had spent at preschool, there was significant absenteeism in preschool; and that Indigenous children were absent from school partly because they believed that the school and its curriculum were irrelevant to their lives and experiences and that schools couldn't or wouldn't tailor learning to individual and cultural needs and styles. Similarly, many Indigenous students lack the particular cultural capital schools assume and find their cultural assumptions puzzling, frustrating and alienating ([101]).

Indigenous children from culturally relevant and supportive pre-school programs find schools unresponsive to their educational needs

There is some anecdotal evidence (but little research evidence) from key Indigenous agencies that early childhood programs specific to, or supportive of, Indigenous cultures help to give Indigenous children strong identities that support them at school ([96]; [102]; ([103]; [104]; [9]) and concern that similar programs are not being developed in schools. An Indigenous community kindergarten in Queensland that developed a curriculum relevant to the cultures of children attending it achieved higher than average attendance rates and pre-literacy outcomes, only to see the children make poor transitions to primary school ([101]).

'Best practice' educational programs for Indigenous children call for change in schools and in education systems

There are strong calls for schools to change so that they can support Indigenous children's successful transition to school more effectively; and there are key policy commitments to such change in schools ([105]; [96]; [106]; [107]).

Whilst some research explores the need and effects of school's response to Indigenous young children's transition to school, other research that has investigated outcomes of school responsiveness in schools has helped to identify promising practice. A study of 98 Indigenous children across thirteen schools within all Australian States and Territories found that Indigenous children's educational outcomes were improved if the school supported Indigenous engagement, learning and self-identity ([108]). This improvement resulted from shifts and changes at child and family level and at individual school and education system levels. Changing the atmosphere and management of school classrooms can decrease the Indigenous absenteeism associated with an irrelevant curriculum ([100]); and increasing the number of Indigenous staff can bridge cultural differences across staff and children within schools ([109]). Such changes are supported by findings from the *Starting School* project which showed that the most successful transition programs for Indigenous children and families include changes in curriculum and in educational systems ([23]).

Promising practices from the literature

Several promising practices were found but they have not been formally evaluated. A recent review of transition to school programs for Indigenous children in Australia found that

practices and/or approaches that supported successful transitions included: creating a safe space at school for Indigenous children (e.g., a designated room or space); early care settings increasing educational content, especially in regards to pre-literacy; supporting families and children's health well before attendance at school; and implementing maternal and child health interventions to improve health and well being ([31]). The promising practices outlined in Table 16 address key issues identified in the literature about how best to support Indigenous children's transitions between early childhood services and/or home environments and schools.

Table 16 Promising practices for transition to school for Indigenous children

- Actively engage Indigenous communities in building transition programs and activities.
- Create culturally relevant and supportive schools responsive to Indigenous children's particular educational needs.

Preparing the child

Taking a proactive approach to transition at Kempsey South Public School, NSW

Successful transition programs for Indigenous children promote the general wellbeing of children and families ([23]). Kempsey South Public School shows this principle in action. Over half of this school's students are Aboriginal (most are Dhangatti people) from poor families in rural and urban areas. The school has taken a proactive approach to transition that includes establishing an Aboriginal Resource Room; regular meetings between preschool and school-based educators, an Aboriginal Education Worker who does home visits; involvement of a Community Liaison Officer; and a 6 week transition program which involves careful mapping and tracking of children's involvement, a buddy system for children and developing the school as a community resource centre. Detailed descriptions of this work are available at *What works: Improving outcomes for Indigenous children*. Kempsey South Public School is committed to implementing processes that 'use knowledge to ease transition and deal with every child as an individual' and aims to increase Aboriginal attendance and retention as a result (http://www.whatworks.edu.au/4_4_4.htm).

The Bodallamu transition backpack (NSW)

The backpack's name comes from the Dharawal word meaning 'a safe place for little children to learn'. It includes a variety of materials and information designed to smooth the transition to school for Aboriginal children. It includes pencils and pavement chalk, a library bag and drink bottle, name cards using the foundation font, Salisbury sight words, X-ray art Australian animal tracing cards and boomerang threading cards, colours and shapes. It was launched in 2008. Very little other specific information is available at this stage but anecdotal reports suggest it has been well received. (see <http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/news/schoolstories/yr2008/apr/transbackpacks.php>)

Preparing the school

The *Starting School* project ([23]) and others writing on this topic have argued that successful educational and/or transition programs for Indigenous children:

- actively involve children and families ([110])
- use diverse strategies to involve and engage children and families ([110]; [100]), including becoming part of the Indigenous community outside of the school, home visits, an Indigenous Advisory Panel as part of school structure, breakfast programs and employing Indigenous education workers
- focus on the development of positive and respectful relationships and partnerships ([110]; [97])

- engage children and families in meaningful, relevant and challenging curriculum ([110])
- promote a sense of Aboriginal identity within the school ([110]).

Successful educational and/or transition programs for Indigenous children also:
represent Indigenous cultures through artwork and flying the Aboriginal flag to create a welcoming environment ([100])

- include Indigenous people on committees and within the school and in the classroom ([108]; [100])
- employ a Principal and educators who know and are engaged with the local community and local issues ([108]).

Preparing the education system

Successful educational and/or transition programs for Indigenous children:

- actively involve a wide range of stakeholders in the various stages of planning, implementation and evaluation ([110])
- focus specifically on building relationships across and between stakeholders including: families and school, children and school, communities and school educators in different settings ([110]; [97])
- recognize the complexity of transition and respond in flexible and meaningful ways ([110])
- create and maintain bi-lingual and/or multi-lingual environments that support Indigenous languages ([108]; [100])
- support schools to implement a culturally respectful and inclusive curriculum ([108]) with an Indigenous cultural program and multi-age classrooms ([100])
- increase cross-cultural competence of educators and teach non-Indigenous educators about historical and current issues and their impacts on Indigenous communities ([100]).

Successful educational and/or transition programs for Indigenous children also:

- employ Indigenous educators ([100])
- focus on the family and adopt a holistic approach ([97]; [100]).

Components of transition for Indigenous children which can inform Transition Statements

The BES found a lack of research literature that investigated components of transition for Indigenous children so there is little formal research evidence available to inform Transition Statements. However, the discussions of best practice outlined in practice and policy documents can inform this work.

Preparing the child

- Ensuring Indigenous children can be involved in representing their transition journey and what concerns and/or excites them in the process ([80]; [96]).

Preparing the school

- Supporting schools to map, implement and evaluate processes that:
actively involve and build relationships and partnerships with Indigenous families and children throughout the transition to school ([80])
co-design transition programs for Indigenous children with their families and the local Indigenous communities([23])

support the implementation of meaningful and culturally relevant curriculum from the first days of school that includes bi-lingual and/or multi-lingual learning environments as appropriate to local Indigenous families ([96]; [102]; ([103]; [104]; [9])

develop clear strategies to show Indigenous families and their children that their Indigenous ways of being, knowing and doing are acknowledged and valued within the school throughout the transition process ([96]; [102]; ([103]; [104]; [9])

engage with the local Indigenous community and build knowledge of local issues for specific Indigenous communities into the transition processes ([23]).

Preparing the education system

- Mapping, implementing and evaluating processes that:
 - encourage and support schools to adopt a holistic approach based on engaging with the Indigenous communities to identify the strengths and to meet the needs of Indigenous children ([105]; [96]; [106]; [107])
 - increase the numbers of Indigenous educators and staff within the school system and co-design transition programs with them ([109])
 - ensure that Indigenous elders are funded to be involved in developing and evaluating transition processes for Indigenous children ([108])
 - increase cross-cultural competence of educators and teach non-Indigenous educators about historical and current issues and their impacts on Indigenous communities that will influence how Indigenous children and their communities engage with schooling ([100]).

4.10 Supporting the transition to school of children from disadvantaged backgrounds and/or hard to reach children and families

Overview of the research evidence

An overview of the nature and scope of the research evidence used in the BES on supporting the transition to school of children from disadvantaged backgrounds and/or hard to reach families is provided in

Table 17.

Table 17 Overview of research on supporting the transition to school for children from disadvantaged backgrounds and/or hard to reach children

Research focus	Children's readiness for school.
Scope of evidence used in the BES	22 documents: 15 peer-reviewed journal articles, 3 reports, 1 issues paper and 3 other papers.
Research methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation ([12]; [13]; [19]) • Readiness scoring ([111]; [112]; [113]; [18]; [17]) • Program-analysis ([60]; [17]) • Individual interviews ([76]) • Group interviews ([17]) • Meta-analysis of previous studies ([114]; [11]; [14]; [20]; [115]; [116]; [117]).

Assessing the research validity

There is a strong research base that shows positive school outcomes for children from disadvantaged backgrounds who attended preschool. A majority of this research tracks children's school progress on a variety of outcome measures. However, the BES found very

little research that examined transition to school specifically from the perspectives and experiences of children and families from disadvantaged backgrounds. A recently released Australian study focuses on the risk factors associated with children from financially disadvantaged backgrounds but does not focus specifically on transition processes that might overcome these risks ([118]).

Sampling procedures: There were 8 meta-analysis articles that drew from substantial research bases, because they examined studies whose data, between them, came from hundreds of children from diverse locations in the USA. The other research articles had variable research bases, ranging from 81 educators ([76]) to 5,071 children ([111]). Research findings from the USA concerning school transition for children from disadvantaged backgrounds must be approached with considerable caution, because they are concerned almost exclusively with various cohorts of children in cities in the USA where 'school readiness' and 'school transition' are sometimes used interchangeably.

Research methods: There was a lot of meta-analysis of prior research. Of the 15 research articles we found on children from disadvantaged backgrounds and transition to school, 7 reviewed previous research and 11 reported new research.

The new research and the research in the review articles varied in their findings and their conclusions, because they didn't all ask the same questions. Nonetheless, there was sufficient consistency in the findings for them to be grouped under one of four key issues (examined in the next section). The conclusions generally had firm foundations in the data.

Key issues in the literature

The literature on children from disadvantaged backgrounds and transition to school raised five key issues that are outlined in

Table 18.

Table 18 Issues in transition to school for children from disadvantaged backgrounds

The literature on transition to school by children from disadvantaged backgrounds raised five key issues:

- Transition to school programs for children from disadvantaged backgrounds in the USA often focus narrowly on getting the child ready for school.
- Transition to school programs can produce greater parent-initiated parent involvement during the child's first year of school. In turn, this contributes to successful child outcomes in the first year of school, especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Attendance at high-quality preschool is associated with stronger outcomes in school for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Children from poor families adjust better to their first year of schooling when prior to school settings and school settings are well connected through the transition.
- A child's ethnicity and 'race' can affect their transition to school.

Transition to school programs for children from disadvantaged backgrounds in the USA often focus narrowly on getting the child ready for school

Several large USA studies use school readiness testing to identify the effects of skill-based school readiness programs on young children's successful transition to school. These programs are generally rather narrowly focused on specific academic or cognitive skills. For instance, Barnett et al ([111]) tested the academic skills of 5,071 children entering kindergarten who had attended state-funded preschool programs. They found that the programs had enhanced the children's academic skills significantly, with some evidence that they had enhanced aspects of literacy among children from poor families.

Transition to school programs can produce greater parent-initiated parent involvement during the child's first year of school. In turn, this contributes to successful child outcomes in the first year of school, especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds

There is very strong evidence from a large USA study (N = 17,212 children from 992 schools) ([119]) that having a transition to school program is associated with successful outcomes for all young children in their first year of formal schooling. However, the effects from this work were stronger for children from low and middle SES backgrounds than for children from high SES backgrounds. This suggests it may be especially important to ensure the effectiveness of transition programs for children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Child outcomes from transition processes were tracked across the kindergarten school year in a large correlation study using hierarchical linear modelling to identify those school-based transition practices that were associated with positive academic outcomes for children. The researchers controlled for SES and other demographic factors including parents'/parent's level of education and home language. They tracked several transition practices: information from the school to parents by phone or letter, visits to the classroom by children only and by children and parents, shorter school days at the beginning of the year, home visits and orientation sessions for parents. They found that parental involvement in transition processes led to greater self-initiated parent involvement in the first year of school and that this involvement was strongly correlated with successful outcomes for children in their first year of school. This is an important finding, given the study's rigour and internal validity of the study.

Researchers in several countries have found that the transition to the formal years of schooling is a difficult period for many young children ([7]; [120]; [121]), with children from disadvantaged backgrounds having additional challenges ([122]). An Irish study of 4 - 5 year old disadvantaged children's transition to the Junior Infants class found that many children's transition was less successful because they lacked school readiness - itself associated with whether they had attended preschool and with their parents' support and skills ([122]). However, this begs the question of how school readiness was defined and understood.

Attendance at preschool is associated with stronger outcomes in school for children from disadvantaged backgrounds in several countries

Head Start is a U.S. Government funding body begun in 1965 that grant-aids the provision of preschool services to economically disadvantaged three- and four-year-old children and their families. It aims to improve the literacy and numeracy of children making the transition to school. However, school readiness programs and the *Head Start* program are based on a 'whole child' approach that offers health, nutrition, social and other services. In addition, parents are heavily involved in the administration of the syllabus. *Head Start* children have been involved in research over time that investigates models of transition for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Robust findings come from a study of 4582 kindergarteners' perspectives of school after their involvement in *Head Start* with 76% reporting that they liked school 'a lot'. Over two-thirds of children (68% of respondents) stated that their schoolwork was 'great', 78% reporting that doing well in school was 'very important'. Eighty-one per cent (81%) rated their educator as 'very good'. Parent's opinion of how they were faring was important to children: 80% stated that it was 'very important' to their parents how well they were performing at school

([41]). An examination of a *Head Start-to-Public School Transition* intervention with an emphasis on school readiness showed that building children's social competence in their year before formal schooling resulted in more positive transition to school outcomes (N=337 children [127 intervention and 210 comparison] participating in a Head Start Public School Transition HSPST project) ([123]).

Several large meta-analysis studies support the link between school readiness, attendance at preschool and subsequent performance in school. A meta-analysis of early intervention programs in the USA found that children from poor and undereducated families are less likely to be (academically) ready for school due to less knowledge and skill; but that this can be countered through a high-quality preschool program. For children who came from disadvantaged backgrounds, these results are encouraging ([116]). Similarly, an examination of data from the US Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (N = 12,800 children) concerning the 1998–1999 kindergarten class found that children who attended a centre-based or school-based preschool program in the year before school entry performed better academically; and that this improved performance persisted in their first grade. In most instances, the effects were largest for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, raising the possibility that promoting preschool enrolment of such children narrows the class-based school readiness 'gap' ([113]).

There is also strong evidence from the OECD's work on early childhood education and care that strong investment in universal coverage is better for all children, including those from low SES status; and that the quality of early education has an impact on the nature of children's on long-term educational outcomes ([5]). In particular, the transition process from preschool to the preparatory year for formal schooling (often referred in the literature as the 'prep' year) has long-lasting educational and social outcomes ([6]; [7]).

Children from poor families adjust better to their first year of schooling when prior to school settings and school settings are well-connected through the transition process

There is evidence from the USA ([124]) that children from poor families (N=722 enrolled in 214 kindergartens across 6 states) can adjust to school better when there is strong investment in co-ordinated transition activities between school settings and prior-to-school settings.

A child's linguistic background, ethnicity and 'race' can affect their transition to school

A child's ethnicity and 'race' can affect their transition to school for two reasons. First, the quality of the preschool programs attended by children can vary according to 'race' and ethnicity. A meta-analysis of research on children in centre-based preschool programs in the USA showed that they entered school more ready to learn; but the quality of these programs and the numbers attending varied according to 'race' and ethnicity. White children were more likely to attend than Hispanic children; black children were more likely to attend than white children, but can experience lower quality care; and both black and Hispanic children are more likely than white children to attend a *Head Start* program. The research suggests that substantial (rather than incremental) increases in black and Hispanic children's enrolment in preschool programs (alone or combined with increases in preschool quality) can decrease race-based gaps in school readiness ([115]). Whilst this research originated in the USA, its links between SES, ethnicity 'race' and pre-school experiences may also operate in Australia.

Second, children from immigrant groups may need longer attendance at preschool to be 'ready for school' and experience a successful start to school. A German study of school entry data (2000–2005) found that attendance at preschool improves school readiness, even when controlling for family background; but that immigrant children score lower on school

readiness and benefit particularly from longer attendance at preschools ([112]). These findings may reflect the lack of an inclusive school culture and a school's lack of preparedness for children with diverse ethnic and language backgrounds. There is evidence that building parent involvement into preschool programs can improve the school readiness of children from diverse linguistic backgrounds ([114]).

Promising practices from the literature

There is a lack of literature that investigates specific components of transition for children from disadvantaged backgrounds and so again there is a lack of research evidence on best practice. However, much of what will be helpful for all children will be helpful for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

From the research literature reviewed for the BES it is important that transition programs for children from disadvantaged backgrounds have the emphasis outlined in Table 19.

Table 19 Promising practices for transition to school for children from disadvantaged backgrounds

- Bridging processes and activities between prior to school settings and school that involve parents
- Ensuring good access to and participation in high quality preschool programs.

Preparing the child and the family

Developing broad indicators of school readiness that focus on all children being capable learners ([119])

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds are often seen as not school ready, rather than schools being seen as not ready for children from diverse backgrounds. It is important that indicators of school readiness seek to highlight the capacity of all children to learn in diverse contexts and through diverse experiences.

Preparing the school and the education system

Engaging in individualized transition programs in schools with children from disadvantaged backgrounds ([119])

Schools should be encouraged to map, implement and evaluate individualized transition processes that actively involve and build relationships and partnerships with families from disadvantaged backgrounds throughout the transition to school process. This means relying less on impersonal written communication and developing opportunities for more on face-to-face communication and relationship building with parents of children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Funding individualized transition processes in schools with children from disadvantaged backgrounds ([119])

It is clear that impersonal, occasional contact with families from disadvantaged backgrounds is least likely to generate their involvement in their children's transition to school. Finding resources to support schools to engage in active community out-reach and relationship building with disadvantaged families in their area is critical.

Develop transition to school programs that do not narrowly focus on school readiness but emphasise schools preparing for diverse childhoods ([119])

It is a continuing deception that 'better education' can overcome the systemic disadvantage and discrimination associated with class, race or ethnicity. Schools, by themselves, cannot do this.

Even education systems, by themselves, cannot do this. Instead, unless schools and education systems take explicit steps to counter existing patterns of disadvantage and discrimination, they will merely reinforce and repeat them. Studies (see above) have shown that school readiness programs are implicated in these patterns and so schools need to recognise this and counter it. A first step would be to acknowledge that the term 'the child' implies a universal child who is the same always and everywhere, transcending historical, geographical and social differences. 'The child' is often a model against which to assess the ability and behaviour of real children; but lots of real children in real social categories fail systematically to meet the expectations that the model embodies. Consequently, school transition programs need to acknowledge explicitly the educational failure that has been associated with children's class, 'race' or ethnicity and to include components designed specifically to counter that failure. Schools or even education systems cannot do this successfully by themselves. They need to collaborate with children and parents who experience disadvantage and discrimination; and with organizations and agencies within and outside of the education system that have been established to counter disadvantage and discrimination. A transition to school program offers a clear focal point for such collaboration.

Components of transition for children from disadvantaged backgrounds which can inform Transition Statements

Much of what will be helpful in Transition Statements for all children will be helpful for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Preparing the child

Sharing their capabilities, desires and experiences

As with all children it is important that children from disadvantaged backgrounds can be involved in representing their transition and what concerns and/or excites them in the process.

Preparing the school and the education system

Using portfolios to support intensive, personal and individualized transition processes in schools with children from disadvantaged backgrounds

Portfolios could be used to map how intensive, personal and individualized their transition processes are and to build relationships and partnerships with families from disadvantaged backgrounds. If appropriately resourced the portfolios could act as a lever for greater face-to-face out-reach to families.

4.11 Linking transition to school with the Early Learning Framework

The literature review has been undertaken to support the Victorian government's transition to school plan. *The National Early Years Learning Framework* and *The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework* will support the transition plans. The *National Early Years Learning Framework* is for children aged from birth to 5 years of age. It is being developed through the Council of Australian Governments and is being written by a consortium of academics led by Charles Sturt University. The *National Early Years Learning Framework* is informed by six principles for children's learning: The Rights of the Child; secure relationships and positive interactions; genuine partnerships with families; respect for diversity; commitment to equity; and reflective practice. It describes children's learning through 4 outcomes: children have a strong sense of identity and wellbeing; children are confident and involved learners; children are effective communicators; children actively participate in relationships and communities. It maintains an emphasis on early childhood pedagogy, including play based learning, and provides guidance to early childhood educators about optimizing children's learning. The *National Early Years Learning Framework* will be supported by a practitioners' handbook and a guidebook for parents.

The *Victorian Learning and Development Framework* is for children aged from birth to eight years of age. It will build on the *National Early Years Learning Framework* and the Maternal and Child Health Services and will dovetail into the *Victorian Essential Learning Standards*. It will support service integration by providing all people working with children (maternal and child health workers, childcare workers, kindergarten educators, early intervention professionals and school educators) with a common language and understanding of how children learn and develop. It will also provide professionals with greater information about the role of other professionals, so they can support families to access assistance for their child, if and when necessary.

Both the Victorian and National Frameworks will be implemented from July 2009.

5. Conclusions

The BES found no substantial long-term evidence that any specific transition to school program was better than any other, because a majority of studies of transition to school programs are not formal effectiveness studies using large-scale representative data sets that investigate causal effects and can be used to generalize to the wider population.

Experimental and quasi-experimental research designs used for making causal inferences have not been used to study transition processes. The BES found a predominance of research that either describes how a program is working or explores the processes of transition from the perspective of three key actors – parents, children or educators. Within this, most studies (nearly 50% of the studies) are based on small (less than 100 participants), non-representative samples. A majority of the 10 longitudinal studies identified by the BES study were of cohorts in the USA and a majority focused primarily on studying the predictive value of school readiness tests rather than evaluating the specific effects of transition to school programs, activities or processes on children's well-being and school outcomes.

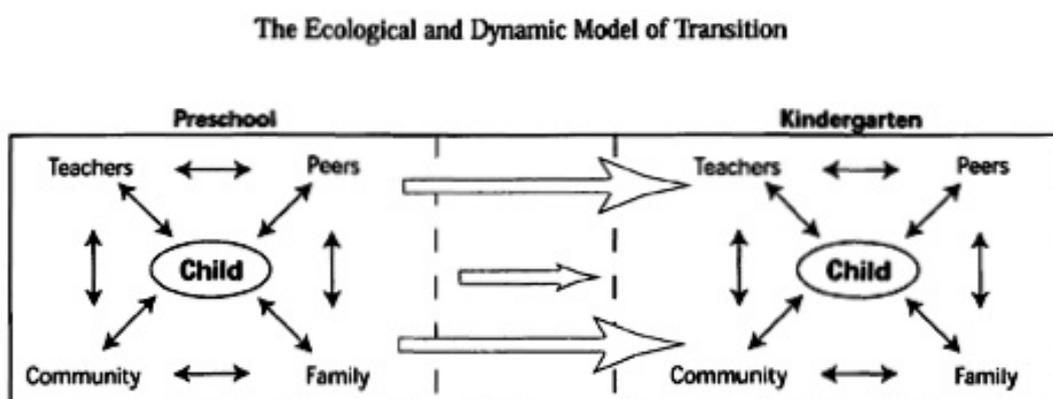
The lack of rigorous effectiveness evaluations of transition to school processes and programs may result from the fact that conducting such evaluations can be highly problematic. For example, the standard experimental format of comparing and contrasting results from a randomly-chosen 'test' group of children who experience a transition to school program with another randomly-chosen 'control' group who don't is unethical, because it could disadvantage children in the 'control' group ([125]) and therefore is rarely used in the research. Further, longitudinal studies that track children from pre-school through school often experience considerable participant drop-out; and it can be hard to compare programs because they often reflect unique local needs and services ([15]).

Subsequently, making strong evidence-based judgements about which specific transition to school processes and/or activities work is not possible or is highly problematic in many instances. For these reasons, Bohan-Baker and Little [15] advocate seeking 'promising practice', rather than 'best practice'; and a feature of many such 'promising practices' is that they draw on research evidence concerning the perspectives of one or more of the three groups of people involved in transition programs: children, parents/carers and educators.

5.1 Towards an ecological model of transition to school

An ecological model of transition to school is an example of 'promising practice' ([15]) that is suggested by several transition to school researchers ([2]). It expresses the belief that a child's transition to schooling is more likely to succeed if relationships between people (e.g. children, parents, professionals) and contexts (e.g. home, school, and programs) are established before the transition starts ([12]; [61] [64]). Diagram 5.1 represents such an ecological model.

Diagram 1 The Ecological and Dynamic Model of Transition



(Diagram from {Kraft-Sayre, 2000 #155}: p. 8.)

Within an ecological model of transition, children's 'readiness' for school depends on relationships between the key players in their transition to school, rather than on a specific skill set in the child. Children's skill level may be important but it is not the main or sole determinant of their successful transition to school and successful progress through school ([126]; [64]). Thus, strategies to facilitate children's transition to school should aim to:

- create respectful relationships between children's home, their intended school and - if relevant - any preschool services they attend
- meet the additional and specific needs of Indigenous children, children with disabilities, children from disadvantaged backgrounds and children from culturally and linguistically identified backgrounds.

Within the caveats about the nature of the research evidence on transition to school programs, the BES evidence provides broad support for an ecological model as a policy frame to build strength-based and holistic transition to school programmes. The following strategies drawn from the BES findings offer direction on how best to do this.

5.2 Strategies to engage children

Policies, processes and activities for young children's transition to school be established that create opportunities for children in prior to school settings to raise questions, concerns and suggestions about their transition to school and to learn about their life in school ([42]). For example, activities should enable prior to school settings, families and schools to:

- seek children's perspectives, questions and ideas on their transition to school ([27]; [42]; [29]; [40])
- support children to initiate contact with school prior to the year before school ([27])
- arrange visits to the school by the child before the school year begins ([27]; [42])
- initiate 'Buddy' systems between children entering school and older children at the school ([29]; [33])
- acknowledge children as capable learners, irrespective of their background ([27]; [42]; [29])

5.3 Strategies to engage families

Policies and processes around children's transition to school should create opportunities for families to be involved in shaping their children's transition to school and to learn about their children's life in school. For example:

- create indicators of school readiness that assume that each child is a capable learner (rather than looking for 'deficits' in the child) ([23]; [13]; [66]; [64])
- create a means of evaluating the transition to school program that includes regular contact with families and children ([119])
- arrange meetings in prior to school settings and school settings before and after the child starts school to discuss the expectations, hopes, experiences and questions of the key actors – children, parents/carers and educators ([73, 72, 2, 55])
- create clear, accessible and appropriate lines of communication between schools, prior to school settings and communities ([26])
- invite parents/carers to participate in parent/carer fora to explore how to participate in and share their children's learning ([100, 15, 54, 56])
- invite parents/carers to join a support group for others whose children are making the transition to school. ([61]).

5.4 Strategies to engage schools and prior-to-school settings (e.g. kindergartens and child care settings)

Each school and prior to school setting should:

- identify a staff member who is responsible for developing, evaluating and modifying a range of transition to school strategies ([80]; [12]; [13]; [66]; [64])
- provide and/or seek professional development for educators on how to build relationships with parents/carers during their children's transition to school that acknowledge that there can be a diversity of views on transition ([59]; [64])
- plan each child's transition to school in the year before it will happen, inviting all those involved to participate in ways that are culturally and linguistically relevant and appropriate (see '5.3') ([85]; [112]; [77]).

In addition, each school should:

- develop and implement flexible models of service delivery in the preparatory and early years of schooling that acknowledge each child's needs and qualities ([59]).

Schools with children from CALI and/or Indigenous backgrounds should:

- develop a whole-of-school approach that acknowledges and supports children's home languages, cultures and cultural identities ([27]; [64])
- develop culturally relevant curricula ([110]; [100])
- represent and celebrate diverse cultures in its physical environment ([100]; [110])
- actively ensure that families from Indigenous and CALI backgrounds are present on school committees and in the classrooms ([108]; [114])
- become familiar with the interests and concerns of local Indigenous and CALI communities ([63]; [62]; [26]; [58]; [27]).

Schools with children from disadvantaged backgrounds should plan and implement transition to school programs that are individualized.

5.5 Further Strategies to engage the Community

- relationship-building by prior to schools settings, schools, parents/carers and communities to underpin transition to school programs ([73]; [72]; [127]; [97]; [70]; [68])

- family-friendly early years services and schools that include spaces where families and staff can mingle ([81])
- stakeholder involvement in the design and evaluation of transition to school programs that reflect local communities' interests and concerns ([119])
- communication and co-ordination support for children with disabilities and their parents/carers ([85]; [77]; [3]; [86])
- individualized transition to school programs for children with special needs ([108]; [124]; [9]; [104]; [103]; [102]; [96])
- Indigenous educators and other school staff who are encouraged to participate in the design and evaluation of transition to school programs ([100]; [110]; [109])
- bi-lingual or multi-lingual environments that recognize Indigenous languages ([100]; [110]; [15]; [108])
- Indigenous elders who participate in the design and evaluation of transition to school programs for Indigenous children ([100]).

Increase the ability of staff in prior to school settings and schools to facilitate young children's transition to school by, for example, informing them about:

- ways to build relationships with colleagues in other sectors of the education system ([110]; [108]; [100])
- historical and current events and issues that may affect how Indigenous children and their communities regard schooling ([100]).

Whole-of-community initiatives that could include a combination of the following:

- providing a transition guide for communities
- establishing community-based transition to school networks ([110]; [97])
- developing a yearlong program for all families whose child will enter school that informs them about the process and invites them to participate in planning their child's transition to school.

5.6 Developing a Transition to School Statement

The following are built from the BES findings:

1. A Transition to School Statement should:

- take children's perspectives into account during their first year of school.
- invite parents'/carers' views and answer their questions
- be available before children start school and during their first school year
- maintain contact between the school and any prior to school settings.

2. A Transition to School Statement should enable children to:

- speak to educators (in prior to school settings and schools) who will be involved in their transition to school
- state their own needs and concerns around starting school in their preferred language and format. This might include what excites them, the questions they have and what they want their educator to know.
- show themselves as capable learners.

3. A Transition to School Statement for children with disabilities should also specify forms of communication and co-ordination between those involved with the children, as was done in the Family Held Record (SA) and in the TEST program (USA). Further, everyone involved in the life of a child with a disability - including the child her/himself - should be invited to participate in developing a Transition to School Statement.

4. A Transition to School Statement for Indigenous children should enable these children to share their cultures and identity with their school and to learn about their school. A

Transition to School Statement for these children can also help schools to:

- actively build relationships with Indigenous children, their parents/carers and their communities and involve them in designing the transition to school
- design and implement curricula in early childhood settings and school settings that are culturally and linguistically appropriate to local Indigenous families and their children
- show local Indigenous communities that early childhood programs and schools value Indigenous ways of being, knowing and doing.

5. A Transition to School Statement for children from disadvantaged backgrounds should support planning for an individualized transition to school.

5.7 Areas for further research

It is clear that transition to school is of growing interest and concern to researchers in several countries. However, it is also clear that there is a lack of research in several areas that can underpin evidence-informed approaches to children's successful transition to school that support and acknowledge the key actors in the process – children, parents/carers, educators and communities. The most pressing need is for research that evaluates the effects of different transition policies, processes and activities for all children, but especially for CALI and Indigenous children, children from disadvantaged backgrounds and children with disabilities.

Appendix 1

The Review's Methodology: A Best Evidence Synthesis

This review followed a modified Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) approach. A BES uses explicit criteria to systematically select and review literature on a topic ([128]; [129]). Rather than review all the literature on the topic, a BES selects only the literature that describes strategies that improve outcomes for key actors in a specific area (e.g., of education). It was necessary to modify this BES, as very few studies on transition to school systematically study what works over time to improve outcomes for key actors. Instead, much of the literature describes strategies and processes that enhance relationships between the key actors. This is important to know, as it highlights what key actors see as critical factors in successful transition to school for young children and/or what they believe can be done to improve young children's transition to school. In the absence of effectiveness studies of specific strategies or techniques, this evidence (often qualitative) has been especially important in producing the requested 'toolkit' for communities developing transition plans (Request for Quote for Literature Summary, p.3).

In summary, a 'Best Evidence Synthesis' approach consists of the following features:

Using a review of the literature to answer a clear question

In this instance, the question developed by DEECD was:

What are the key findings and issues for improving transition into prep for children, their families, local communities and early childhood education and care professionals in Victoria?

Using clear criteria concerning research quality and relevance

In this instance, the research was judged to be methodologically sound, relevant and robust in its findings if it included clear descriptions of sampling procedures, research methods and conclusions to support the data presented; and if it had been subject to external and independent review, either by peers, by independent examination or by external examination (e.g. for a thesis) and used diverse methodologies. These criteria were identified in the initial DEECD brief and were confirmed with DEECD prior to the BES. However, several single method studies were included in the BES review if they met each of the other criteria and added important insights on what works to improve transition to school for young children, because there are fewer mixed-methods studies in the area. There were several difficulties in applying the criteria rigorously because of inconsistent reporting in several peer-reviewed studies of details for participants, sampling procedures and research methods.

Explaining how the relevant literature will be identified and evaluated and how the results of that process will be collated

We searched on-line databases for literature concerning these populations:

- children making the transition to school from various settings (principally, long day care, family day care, playgroup, kindergarten and home)
- children between 4 and 6 years old
- children with disabilities or additional/special needs
- children and families across socio-economic categories and from diverse backgrounds and communities (including those from culturally and linguistically diverse groups and from Indigenous groups)

We then combined those populations in various ways with these search terms:

- transition(s)
- school readiness
- transition to school
- starting school
- beginning school
- models of transition
- early childhood
- children
- young children
- preschool
- preparatory year
- kindergarten
- teacher(s)
- educator(s)
- parent(s)
- portfolios
- transition statements
- documenting transitions.

We also undertook a synonym search by placing '~' in front of each search term in Google Scholar.

In line with the project brief, we prioritised literature that included - and, preferably, compared and contrasted - the views of children, parents/carers and early childhood practitioners on transition to school; and literature that identified models of transition to school that improved children's performance at school. Having identified this literature, we examined:

- the key issues arising from the literature and their implications for children, parents/carers, educators and communities
- examples in the literature of 'best practice', including the roles of children and of parents/carers
- the implications of the research for Transition to School Statements
- the implications for strategies/actions to facilitate the transition to school by all Victorian children, including those with disabilities, those from Indigenous backgrounds, from culturally and linguistically identified (CALI) backgrounds or from disadvantaged backgrounds
- the implications for schooling.

Examining as much relevant recent research from sources as diverse as possible, including theses and government reports

Online databases were searched via 'Supersearch' - the University of Melbourne's gateway to electronic journals, scholarly databases and other resources. The databases searched were:

- PsychINFO
- Web of Science
- JSTOR
- ERIC
- Education Complete – PROQUEST.

These databases provide full text access to diverse forms for literature including:

- recent literature reviews in reports and other organizational documents (these reviews may or may not be peer reviewed)

- academic peer-reviewed journals and other publications (including the literature reviews and reports outlined in the tender document)
- local, national and international electronic databases housing abstracts of relevant research.

The initial web and academic database searches produced several hundred documents. The abstracts of these documents were scanned for relevance and to identify potential papers to include in the review. Given that the review had a short deadline, we selected:

- peer-reviewed journal articles available on-line, as these were accessible most easily
- peer-reviewed research literature published within the last 10 years. This meant that descriptions of programs that had not been evaluated through research were not prioritised.

Australian literature that was available electronically and that met the BES criteria agreed in advance with DEECD. As many theses, reports, books and book chapters are not available online, research and programs reported in these formats was generally excluded in the review.

Overview of BES results

The initial scan of the abstracts produced 227 documents that met one or more of the criteria concerning sample size, participant demographics, research methods and research foci. Full text documents were then obtained, examined and then culled. Another 18 studies appeared relevant to the review, but we were unable to access them in the time available.

The final BES is based on 125 documents sourced via these methods. 76 of the BES documents reported on research. 49 documents included in the BES did not report on a specific research project but they examined key issues and research in the area. Those documents were as follows:

- Review of research (14)
- Reports (11)
- Issues Papers (3)
- Non-refereed Papers (19)
- Discussion Papers (3)
- Policy Frameworks (2).

Appendix 3 summarises each piece of research used in this document under these headings: Aims, Design and Approach, Participants, Key findings.

Table 20 summarises the research designs, participant diversity and participant numbers in the research studies that have been included in the BES.

Table 20 Overview of studies included in the BES

Methods		Participants						
Research approach	Longitudinal	Ethnic Diversity	< 10	11-50	51-100	101-200	201 - 1000	1001 +
Qualitative	0	5	2	7	6	2	3	0
Quantitative	9	14	0	5	2	5	10	14
Mix Methods	1	4	0	4	4	4	7	1
Total	10	23	2	16	12	11	20	15

Interpreting the literature and highlighting contradictions, gaps or disagreements

Scope of the review

The literature review's scope was limited by the relatively short time available. The literature that was reviewed consists primarily of studies over the past 10 years of how to create a positive start to school; and these studies are overwhelmingly from the USA, Australia and, to a lesser extent, Europe and Canada. Consequently, this review of the current research literature reflects current issues and concerns within those particular countries. Unfortunately, some key research that has been reported in books and in book chapters and that could not be accessed in time for inclusion in this review has been omitted.

The methods used to source literature for this BES led initially to a predominance literature from the USA and a strong bias towards school readiness research. Given the differences in educational structures, policies, processes and priorities, this literature should be read with caution in Australia.

Gaps in the literature – Australian research base

The research literature concerning young children's transition to school features significant gaps on what works and how to produce positive long-term outcomes for children. This is especially true in the literature from Australia, where only a few research studies have examined children's transitions to school.

The research literature from Australia is dominated by outcomes from the *Starting School* research project based at the University of Western Sydney from 1997-2006. (It is now based at Charles Sturt University.) Researchers from this project have asked children, parents and educators about their needs, wants and desires around children's transition to school; and the project has aimed to create, implement and assess transition programs based on these discussions (e.g. [48]; [55]; [45]).

The *Starting School* project is referred to at several points throughout this report, because it is one of the few significant Australian research projects of significance on young children's transition to school. Consequently, it is hard to use the Australian research literature to state definitively how best to facilitate the transition to school by specific groups of children, such as Indigenous children, children with disabilities, children from rural and remote areas, children from disadvantaged backgrounds and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. However, this research has shown consistently how not to facilitate transition, so it is still valuable to policy-makers and practitioners.

Gaps in the literature – lack of effectiveness studies of specific practices

In addition, to the normal search strategies detailed above, the CEIEC team used Google and Google Scholar to search the World Wide Web for items (e.g. government reports) that lack a formal research base and, therefore, appear less often in academic databases. This strategy identified a number of Internet sites that housed descriptions of transition to school programs and/or practices. We have included information from these sites in the BES because they offer practical suggestions about how some of the principles identified by researchers might be put into practice, although each site differed in the level of detail it provided on the mechanisms involved. Often, only very sketchy information was available and in the timeframe available for the BES it was not possible to get more detailed information.

It is important to emphasise that the majority of these programs and/or practices have not been independently evaluated. Where evaluations are available they have been discussed. This is a major issue in making judgements about promising practices or best practices in this area and it highlights a great need for rigorous evaluation of transition to school programs.

Appendix 3

Table 21 Summary of research used in the BES review on transition to school

Reference citation details	Participants & sampling methods	Research methods & techniques	Research design & data approach	Main findings
Aboriginal Education Unit. (n.d.).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Research review	Calls for educational achievements by Aboriginal students to be promoted while educating all students about Aboriginal Australia. No findings linked to specific research projects.
ABT Associates (2006).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Report	Reports States' and Districts' progress toward helping children with disabilities make the transition from preschool to school over the 2002-2003, 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 school years. No significant changes were found in the 2002-2003 school year. An increasing proportion of States employed Coordinators to support transition by children with disabilities from preschool to school, but each State employed very few Coordinators.
Alexander, K. L., Entwisle, D. R. & Kabbani, N. S. (2001).	Number: 301. Age: specific ages not given. Ethnicity: African American & White Americans. SES: Lower, Middle-level & Higher.	Questionnaires & interviews of families & students	Quantitative longitudinal study	Experiences at home & at school, together with caademic, parental & personal resources affect children's dropout rates at school. Children who made a poor start to school were more likely to drop out.
Aubrey, C. (2004).	Number: 1,551 teachers (799 head teachers & 752 reception class teachers). Ethnicity: not specified. SES: not specified.	Survey	Quantitative	A significant number of educators were concerned about the pedagogical approach in the Foundation Stage (FS) for 3 to 5 year olds. Class educators were able to provide a curriculum that supported planned activities & child-initiated learning.. Flexible & multiple teaching strategies ensured smooth transitions to school.
Bailey, D. B., McWilliam, R. A., Darkes, L. A., Hebbeler, K., Simeonsson, R. J., Spiker, D. & Wagner, M. (1998).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	An issues paper	Identifies 8 questions with which to determine whether a family-centred approach to early intervention can succeed. These questions explore the effects of early intervention on the child & family, & on the family's relationships with professionals & services.
Barnett, W. S., Lamy, C. & Jung, K. (2005).	Number: 5,071 children. Age: 4-4 years., Ethnicity: Unavailable. SES: Not specified.	Survey	Quantitative	Programs had enhanced children's academic skills significantly. There was some evidence that the programs had enhanced aspects of literacy among children from poor families.
Bennett, J. & Tayler, C. (2005).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Review	Endorses 8 elements: systemic integrated approach to ECEC policy; a strong partnership with the education system; a universal approach; public investment in services & infrastructure; a participatory approach to quality improvement; appropriate training & working conditions for staff; attention to data collection & monitoring; & a foundation for research & evaluation.
Biedinger, N., Becker, B. & Rohling, I. (2008).	Number: 8,061 children (analysis only on 6777). Age: 6-7 years old. Ethnicity: Children born in Germany & children born outside of Germany (countries not specified). SES: Not specified.	Survey	Quantitative, single case	The amount of preschool experience improves school readiness. Immigrant children exhibited lower scores on school readiness, but benefit from longer attendance at preschools.

Reference citation details	Participants & sampling methods	Research methods & techniques	Research design & data approach	Main findings
Bohan-Baker, M. & Little, P. M. D. (2004).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Review	Reviews literature on transition to kindergarten & how the practice of involving families is developing. No findings presented that are linked to a specific research project undertaken by the authors.
Bourke, C. J., Rigby, K. & Burden, J. (2000).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Report	Explores attendance rates of Indigenous students at all levels of schooling, their variation over time and a range of variables, together with a description of the contributing factors. No findings are presented that are linked to a specific research project undertaken by the authors.
Brandes, J. A., Ormsbee, C. K. & Haring, K. A. (2007).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Paper	Discusses the use of The Timeline for Early Successful Transition (TEST) in the transition to school by children with special needs & their families. No findings presented that are linked to a specific research project undertaken by the authors.
Bromstrom, S. (2003).	Number: 4 Children. Age: not specified - kindergarten. Ethnicity: Not specified. SES: Not specified.	Observations of children & interviews with children	Qualitative	Children had problems transforming their personal & social competencies in the transition from kindergarten to school, creating low self-esteem & insecurity.
Brooks-Gunn, J. & Marman, L. B. (2005).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Review	There are racial & ethnic variations in several parenting behaviors, especially language use: black & Hispanic mothers talk less with their children & are less likely to read to them daily, which affects children's readiness for school. Home-based & centre-based programs with a parenting component improved parental nurturance & discipline & reduced the difference between black & white mothers' parenting.
Carlton, M. P. & Winsler, A. (1999).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Paper	Calls for outreach programs to preschools, smaller class sizes, more comprehensive & dynamic assessment practices, increased educator training & parent involvement to support transition to school. No findings presented that are linked to a specific research project undertaken by the authors.
Centre for Community Child Health. (2008).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Issues paper	Summarizes research evidence regarding children's transition to school & outlines strategies for making a smooth & successful transition to school for children & families.
Chan, D., Ramey, S., Ramey, C. & Schmitt, N. (2000).	Number: 378 children (larger sample data set of 1,688 children). Age: Kindergarten to Grade 3 (ages not specified). Ethnicity: 24.6% African American, 3.4% Hispanic, 57.4% White & 14.6% other ethnic backgrounds (not specified). SES: relatively disadvantaged (average income \$12,000-18,000 p.a.).	Questionnaire with parents & teachers	Quantitative	Between-settings differences in children's social skill development were found initially in transition to kindergarten. Parents perceived the children's social skills at home to increase as children moved from kindergarten to Grade 2; school educators perceived a decrease in social skills over the same period.
Clarke, C. & Sharpe, P. (2003).	Number: 500 families & 270 families on a follow-up six months later. Ethnicity & SES: not specified.	Structured Interviews & questionnaires (mainly open-ended questions); surveys & Interviews with rating scale. Children were interviewed by their parents	Qualitative	Children talked clearly about the differences between preschool & primary school, including play, friendships, relationships with educators, routines, environments & bullying.

Reference citation details	Participants & sampling methods	Research methods & techniques	Research design & data approach	Main findings
Corsaro, W. A. & Molinari, L. (2000).	Number: 21 children. Age: not specified (preschool); 8 parents & elementary school educators. Ethnicity: Italian. SES: not specified.	Observations of children & interviews with parents & teachers	Quantitative, longitudinal study	Children's early experiences in preschools' priming events for school contributed to their adjustment to new rules, schedules and instruction in first grade.
Corter, C., Bertrand, J., Pelletier, J., Griffin, T., McKay, D., et al. (2006).	Number: 80 children. Age: not specified (preschool); 46 parents. Ethnicity: not specified. SES: not specified.	Parent, staff & community surveys, child interviews & assessments & an economic analysis	Mixed methods	Charts the benefits, challenges & changes of locating seamless early childhood integrated sites (child care, kindergarten & family supports) in primary schools. Benefits included improvement in quality of program, in children's social & pre-academic growth & in parent satisfaction.
Craig, C. (2003).	Number: - 69 educators, administrators & parents; 235 children., Age: not specified (Early Childhood Special Education). Ethnicity: not specified. SES: not specified.	IEP plans, surveys & focus group interviews	Comparative, quantitative	Speech & language therapy had the greatest impact on education improvement; parents felt there was less communication with special services personnel once their children had made the transition to school.
Dail, A. R. & McGee, L. M. (2008).	Number: 60 children, 4 educators. Age: not specified (entering kindergarten). Ethnicity: not specified. SES: not specified.	NOT AVAILABLE	Qualitative, case study	Two specific activities from the program - small group instruction and school-home morning message - had the most influence on parental involvement & on prep educators' curriculum.
Dockett, S. & Perry, B. (1999).	Number: 50 children. Age: not specified., Ethnicity & SES: not specified.	Focus group interviews with children & questionnaire for parents & educators	Quantitative	Children talked about the rules they encountered at school & their feelings about going to school.
Dockett, S. & Perry, B. (2001).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Discussion Paper	Presents guidelines for effective transition to school programs. No findings were presented that were linked to a specific research project undertaken by the authors.
Dockett, S. & Perry, B. (2002a).	Number: 149 parents, 102 school educators, 33 prior-to-school educators. Ethnicity: not specified. SES: not specified	Questionnaires	Quantitative	Participants agreed that children can be ready for school but not ready to learn, depending on physical maturity or age. Children's readiness is contextual & contingent on the individual child.
Dockett, S. & Perry, B. (2004b).	Number: 355 parents, 108 school educators. Ethnicity: not specified. SES: not specified.	Questionnaire	Quantitative	Parents & educators shared some (but not all) beliefs on issues of importance in children's transition to school. Educators in schools rated adjustment & dispositions as important in the transition to school, but parents & educators in prior to school settings did not place as much importance on this.
Dockett, S. & Perry, B. (2004c).	Number: 52 children., Age: not specified (first year of school). Ethnicity: multi- cultural, including Aborigines. SES: not specified.	Child interviews & children's drawings	Qualitative	Focus on disposition, friends & feelings of anxiety about starting school. The children liked school & being members of a school community.
Dockett, S. & Perry, B. (2008).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Paper	Discusses school readiness' by looking at two programs. No findings linked to a specific research project undertaken by the authors.
Dockett, S. & Perry, B. (2002b).	Number: 280 educators, 298 parents. Ethnicity & SES: not specified.	Interviews with children & interviews & questionnaires with parents & teachers	Mixed methods	Educators' and parents' judgments about children's readiness for school differ, due to different perspectives & expectations.

Reference citation details	Participants & sampling methods	Research methods & techniques	Research design & data approach	Main findings
Dockett, S. & Perry, B. (2003).	Number: 321 children. Age: not specified (first year of school). Ethnicity: not specified (culturally diverse). SES: not specified.	Classroom discussions, photography, creating classroom books	Qualitative	Children's perspectives on what matters when starting school differed from their parents' & educators'. Children were concerned with rules & their feelings about school, particularly the importance of having friends.
Dockett, S. & Perry, B. (2004a).	Number: 310 children who were starting school and 197 children who had started school. Age: - not specified 298 parents & 280 educators. Ethnicity: not specified. SES: low, middle, high.	Questionnaires with parents & educators, interviews with children	Mixed methods	Children's perspectives on what matters when starting school differed from adults'; the latter highlighted rules, child disposition, knowledge, skills,, family issues & the educational environment.
Dockett, S., & Perry, B. (2005).	Numbers: 60 parents. Ethnicity: Arabic, Bengal, Chinese, Samoan, Turkish & Vietnamese. SES: not specified.	Focus group interviews	Quantitative	Parents believed that it is important for their child to learn & use standard English in preparing for school. Parents did not feel they had a good knowledge of the school environment and expectations.
Dockett, S., Perry, B., Howard, P. and Meckley, A. (1999).	Number: 243 parents & 240 educators. Ethnicity: not specified. SES: - not specified.	Questionnaire and interviews	Mixed methods	Participants had differing beliefs about how to ensure a smooth transition to school, but wanted children to be happy to go to school, to enjoy learning, and to settle into the school routine.
Dockett, S., Perry, B., Howard, P., Whitten, D. and Cusack, M. (2002).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Paper	Summary of research conducted in the <i>Starting School</i> research project, including vignettes about various transitions to school. No findings were presented that were linked to specific research projects.
Dockett, S., Perry, B., Mason, T., Simpson, T., Howard, P., Whitten, D., et al. (2007).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Report	Improved student learning outcomes depend on building positive relationships with children, families and communities; facilitating children's skills; engaging children and families in co-creating the curriculum; involving the whole school and developing a positive sense of Aboriginal identity within the school.
Doucet, F. (2008).	Number: 25 parents/family., Ethnicity: African American. SES: not specified.	Structured, naturalistic child observations; parent questionnaires and interviews	Longitudinal, mixed methods study.	Professional development programs for early childhood educators should include teaching about bridging cultural and philosophical differences between home and school to facilitate a smooth transition to formal schooling for young children.
Early, D. M., Pianta, R. C., Taylor, L. C. & Cox, M. J. (2001).	Number: 3,595 kindergarten educators. Ethnicity: American Indian, Native Alaskan, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black not Hispanic, Hispanic, White not Hispanic. SES: not specified.	Survey	Quantitative	Transition to school is supported by individualized practices that engage the child, family and preschool setting prior to starting school. Transition training supports the implementation of transition strategies in schools. Children's transition to school has long-term implications for children's cognitive and social development and for high school drop out rates.
Einarsdottir, J. (2003).	Number: 48 children. Age: 5 & 6 years old. Ethnicity: - not specified. SES: not specified.	Semi-structured interviews with children	Qualitative	Preschool children had definite ideas about the differences between preschool and elementary school, including routines, size of the environment, and relationships with children and educators.
Fabian, H. (2000).	Number: 50 children. Age: not specified (first year of school). 50 parents and educators. Ethnicity: not specified. SES: not specified.	Interviews	Qualitative	1) Teachers are an important element in the transition to school for parents and children. 2) Communication and information supports children and parents to feel welcome at the school. 3) Making friends is a concern for children. 4) Social and emotional well-being is important.
Fabian, H. and Dunlop, A.-L. (2006).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Paper	An overview of the international research literature on children's transition to school. No findings were presented that linked to a specific research project undertaken by the authors.

Reference citation details	Participants & sampling methods	Research methods & techniques	Research design & data approach	Main findings
Fenlon, A. (2005).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Issues paper	Alludes to research and demonstration models to highlight best practices for assisting children with disabilities to make the transition to school successfully.
Frigo, T. & Adams, I. (2002).	Number: 266 children (119 1st year & 147 2nd year). Age: not specified (first year of school). Ethnicity: Aboriginal & Torres Straight Islander. SES: not specified.	Interviews, questionnaires and observation	Longitudinal, mixed methods study	Highlighted important teaching practices when working with Indigenous students: modeling standard Australian English and explicitly teaching children to code-switch between languages and dialects; understanding students' cultural and social backgrounds; providing training and support for AIEWs; and schools and parents working in partnership.
Giallo, R., Kienhuis, M., Treyvaud, K. and Matthews, J. (2008).	Number: 922 families. Ethnicity: not specified. SES: not specified.	Survey	Quantitative	Preliminary analysis revealed a significant relationship between parents' ability to manage the transition to school and children's adjustment to school.
Gill, S., Winters, D. and Friedman, D.S. (2006).	Number: 37 administrators & 9 classroom educators. Ethnicity: not specified. SES: not specified.	Semi-structured survey	Quantitative	Barriers to successful transition to school were: lack of school readiness (related to socio-emotional development); lack of communication among preschools, kindergartens, and parents; and parent involvement in the transition process.
Griebel, W. & Niesel, R. (1997).	Number: 11 children. Age: not specified (kindergarten). 133 kindergarten educators, 20 parents. Ethnicity: German. SES: not specified.	Interviews with children and parents, questionnaires with kindergarten educators, document analysis.	Mixed methods	Educators were aware that parents' emotions influenced their children's transition to school, but seemed hesitant to talk about personal matters with parents. Parents considered that the kindergartens were responsible for their children's social integration, acceptance of limits, becoming independent and getting ready for school.
Griebel, W. & Niesel, R. (1999r).	Number: 27 children. Age: not specified (kindergarten). 162 parents and kindergarten educators. Ethnicity: German. SES: not specified.	Questionnaire with parents and kindergarten educators, interview with parents & interview with children	Mixed-method. Retrospective	Parents felt a strong responsibility for their child's accomplishments in school and therefore they involved themselves in children's homework. Parents acted as the school's agent by giving children positive perspectives about school and used the educator's criticisms to make children obey parental expectations and commands.
Griebel, W. & Niesel, R. (2000).	Number: Study 1 - 11 children. Age: not specified (kindergarten). 133 kindergarten educators & 20 parents. Study 2: 27 children. Age: not specified (kindergarten). 162 parents and kindergarten educators. Ethnicity: German. SES: not specified.	Questionnaire with parents and kindergarten educators, interview with parents & interview with children	Mixed- method. Retrospective	Children's perceptions of themselves changed as they made the transition to school. Children who looked forward to school felt nonetheless that nervousness and insecurity and changing relationships with educators and with other children were concerns.
Hard, L. & O'Gorman, L. (2007).	Number: 52 adults. Research project 1: Number: 26 parents. Research project 2: Number: 26 adults (long day care directors, preschool directors, early childhood students, family day care coordinators, early childhood academics & people in organisations providing ECEC services in New South Wales, Tasmania, Victoria &	Interviews, artifacts and focus groups	Qualitative	Many early childhood educators find it difficult to meet the diverse and often contradictory demands and expectations of the school system and of parents. There is a tension between time for formal instruction and time for play and exploration.

Reference citation details	Participants & sampling methods	Research methods & techniques	Research design & data approach	Main findings
	Queensland). Ethnicity: not specified. SES: not specified.			
Indigenous Education Programs Taskforce. (2006).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Report	There remains a large difference between attendance rates of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. There was a significant increase in school enrolments, but there has been little improvement in attendance and the differences are wide in both primary and secondary schools. Indigenous people should be involved in educational decision-making and employment.
Janus, M., Kopechanski, L., Cameron, R. and Hughes, D. (2008).	Number: 40 parents (20 with children with special needs in kindergarten and 20 with children with special needs prior to school entry). Ethnicity: German. SES: not specified.	Survey and individual semi-structured interviews	Mixed methods	Parents whose children had made the transition to school reported generally lower quality of care and long waiting periods for school-based support than parents whose children had yet to make the transition to school. Most parents reported satisfactory linkages between prior to school services and school. Lack of communication between services for children was one of the major barriers to successful transition to school for children with special needs.
Janus, M., Lefort, J., Cameron, R. and Kopechanski, L. (2007).	Number: 2,624 parents of children with special needs; 5 professionals who facilitate children's transition to school. Ethnicity: German. SES: not specified.	Literature review, survey with parents, interviews with parents	Mixed methods	Administrative issues (such as lack of integration and evaluation of services available to children and families) and advocacy issues affect children's successful adjustment to school. Common themes included lack of 'case management' for each child's records; lack of communication between the school and parent, and between the preschool and school; lack of seamless funding; and lack of flexibility in switching from one set of supports to another.
Kagan, S. L. & Neuman, M. J. (1998).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Review	Lack of empirical data makes evaluating transition to school programs extremely difficult. No findings were presented that linked to a specific research project undertaken by the authors.
Kidd, M. (2007).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Paper	Description of a school's review and refinement of past school practices. No findings were presented that linked to a specific research project undertaken by the authors.
Kiernan, G., Axford, N., Little, M., Murphy, C., Greene, S. and Greene, M. (2008).	Number: 89 parents & 89 educators. Ethnicity: Irish. SES: 36% dependent on welfare allowances.	Questionnaires and structured interviews	Mixed methods	Factors likely to predict school readiness were the parents living situation and children's cognitive abilities, socio-emotional skills and attendance at a preschool. Educators believed that children's transition to school is helped by supportive families and by having parents/older siblings who promote learning.
Kirk-Downey, T. and Perry, B. (2006).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Paper	Children's transition to school is assisted by kindergartens and schools that have 'transition champions' and programs with a strong focus on the child that value parents/carers as partners and encourage their involvement in school work. Building strong relationships among all participants is critical to children's successful transition to school.
LaParo, K.M. and Pianta, R.C. (2000).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Review	Individual differences in children's academic/cognitive and social/behavioral development, as assessed through a variety of methods before or just after the children enter school, account for a small to moderate portion of the variation in these qualities when they are assessed in the early school years.
Lara-Cinisomo, S., Fuligni, A. S., Ritchie, S., Howes, C. & Karoly, L. (2008).	Number: 81 early childhood educators. Ethnicity: non-Hispanic whites (14%), Hispanics (53%), non-Hispanic blacks (14%), Asian/Pacific Islander (6%), and	Focus group interviews	Qualitative	Educators believed that children need to be emotionally, physically, socially and cognitively ready for school; and that educators' relationships with parents are also important.

Reference citation details	Participants & sampling methods	Research methods & techniques	Research design & data approach	Main findings
	"other" (9%, SES: not specified.			
Larcombe, C. (2007).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Paper	Reports an initiative to encourage schools to support each other, share practice, and learn together. The evidence of networks forming, interschool visits and other connections being established indicated that the initiative was effective.
Ledger, E., Smith, A. and Rich, P. (2000).	Number: 16 children. Age: 4-5 years old. Ethnicity: not specified. SES: not specified.	Observation and interviews	Qualitative	Children tended to use the word 'friend' for people they shared an activity with or planned to spend time with. Having established friendships on entering school did not guarantee an easy transition to school.
Li, J., D'Angiulli, A. and Kendall, G. E. (2007).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Paper	The Education Developmental Index is not a culturally appropriate instrument for monitoring the early development of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
LoCasale-Crouch, J., Mashburn, A. J., Downer, J. T. & Pianta, R. C. (2008).	Number: 722 children. Age: not specified. Ethnicity: Black (22%), Hispanic (23%), Other Race (10%) and Caucasian (4%). SES: 54% of families were considered 'poor'.	Site visits and educator surveys	Quantitative	Pre-kindergarten educators' use of transition to school practices was linked to their assessments of children's skills when they began kindergarten.
Magnuson, K. A. & Waldfogel, J. (2005).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Review	Children in preschool programs enter school more ready to learn; but the quality of these programs and the numbers of children who attended them varied with children's race and ethnic background. Black children were more likely to attend preschool programs than white children, but they may experience lower quality care in those programs; and Hispanic children were less likely to attend programs than were white children.
Magnuson, K. A., Meyers, M. K., Ruhm, C. J. & Waldfogel, J. (2004).	Number: 12,800 children. Age: not specified (kindergarten). Ethnicity: Black (15%), Hispanic (12%), Asian (4%). SES: not specified.	Surveys of parents, educators and administrators; skills test for children	Quantitative longitudinal study	Children who attended a centre or school-based preschool program in the year before starting school performed better on reading and math skills assessments when beginning kindergarten. This advantage persisted in their spring term of kindergarten and in their first grade class. Children who attended early education programs were also less likely to be held back in their kindergarten year.
Mangione, P.L. and Speth, T. (1998).	Number: 75 adults (early childhood and primary school educators, health and social service providers, representatives from local and state government, local affiliates of the NAEYC and of community/advocacy groups).	Structured and focus group interviews	Mixed methods	Materials on children's transition to school and on parent-educator partnerships should be family centred and should address parents' and educators' concerns in languages they understand. Educators were adopting a family focused, comprehensive, long-range approach to children's transition to school.
Mantzicopoulos, P. (2004).	Number: 337 (127 intervention, 210 comparison) child reports and adult reports	Document analysis of reports on children and adults participating in a Head Start intervention program	Quantitative	One year's participation in a Head Start intervention program improved children's social competencies.
Margetts, K. (1999).	Number: 197 children. Age: not specified (first year of schooling). 8 teachers. Ethnicity: not	Survey	Quantitative	Children who participated in several transition to school activities had less behavior problems at school; girls' social behavior was better and older children were rated more academically competent than younger children. Children who did not speak English at

Reference citation details	Participants & sampling methods	Research methods & techniques	Research design & data approach	Main findings
	specified. SES: not specified.			home had greater difficulties with their social skills, behavior, and academic outcomes; and children attending preschool for more than 12 hours or childcare for 19 hours had fewer behavior issues. Children who knew another child on entering the classroom adjusted better than children who did not.
Margetts, K. (2006).	Number: 54 children. Age: not specified (first year of schooling). Ethnicity: not specified. SES: not specified.	Focus group interviews with children	Mixed methods	Children discussed what was important to know when entering school - prosocial skills to develop relationships, school rules, school and classroom procedures and academic skills. Children also noted the importance of physical and emotional safety.
Margetts, K. (2007).	Number: 155 children and their parents. Age: not specified (preparatory first year of schooling). Ethnicity: not specified. SES: not specified.	Questionnaire	Quantitative	Children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds and children with parents employed full-time generally participated less in transition to school activities. However, families where the mother was in full-time employment were more likely to attend informal family functions. Participation rates were lower for children and families from homes where English was not spoken.
MCEETYA Taskforce on Indigenous Education. (2001).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Report	5 issues related to Indigenous education: poor early childhood education and care; an uneven transition from early childhood to primary school curriculum; the need for educators to have a better understanding of children's diversity of experience so that early childhood services could reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of Australian society; the issues for Indigenous children in meeting national literacy and numeracy benchmark; and the fact that Indigenous children learn most effectively when there is a partnership between families and educators.
McIntyre, L. L., Blacher, J. and Baker, B. L. (2006).	Number: 67 children. Age: 3 years. 60 mothers and 60 educators. Ethnicity: - not specified. SES: not specified.	Questionnaire with children, checklist with educators, videotapes of mother/child interactions	Quantitative	Children with an intellectual disability had significantly more educator-reported problem behavior, poorer relationships with educators, fewer parent- and educator-reported social skills and fewer self-regulation skills than typically developing children. Social skills significantly predicted adaptation to school, even after accounting for the effects of child IQ and adaptive behavior. Children with intellectual disability had less positive school experiences.
McIntyre, L. L., Eckert, T. L., Fiese, B. H., DiGennaro, F. D. and Wildenger, L. K. (2007).	Number: 132 parents/caregivers. Ethnicity: White/Caucasian (62%), Black/African American (21.7%), Hispanic/Latino (10.1%), Other (6.2%). SES: annual family income - \$14,999 or less (30.1%), \$15,000 - \$34,999 (30.1%), \$35,000 - \$64,999 (18.7%), \$65,000+ (21.1%).	Survey	Quantitative	A majority of families wanted more involvement in planning their children's transition to kindergarten. They also wanted information about the school's expectations of children's readiness for school and of their behavioral and academic abilities.
McTurk, N., Nutton, G., Lea, T., Robinson, G. and Carapetis, J. (2008).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Review	Explored the literature on school readiness and effective assessment techniques for school readiness for Indigenous children. No findings linked to specific research projects were presented.
Mitchell, L. and Cubey, P. (2003).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Research review	Educators' participation in professional development in areas such as literacy, mathematics, and scientific learning, knowledge about effective pedagogy affected children's learning outcomes.

Reference citation details	Participants & sampling methods	Research methods & techniques	Research design & data approach	Main findings
Myers, R. G. (1997).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Discussion paper	Emphasized the links needed between children's home, early childhood care and school environments to make transition to school less stressful for the children and families.
Myers, S. M. and Pianta, R. C. (2008).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Discussion paper	Understanding factors linked to children's behavioral difficulties is important to assisting children's success at school. Positive early student-educator relationships can reduce children's behavior problems at school and assist their transition to school.
National Head Start Association. (1999).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Report	Successful transition to school occurs when children understand the expectations of school, when parents are actively involved, when , educators provide programs that meet the diverse individual needs of the child and when there are partnerships between parents, educators, services and the community.
O'Kane, M and Hayes, N. (2006).	Number: 249 preschool educators and 250 educators in junior infant classes. Ethnicity: not specified. SES: not specified.	Two questionnaires	Mixed methods	Educators believed that the children most likely to experience a difficult transition to school are those with low self esteem, those with difficulty concentrating, sitting still and listening, and those with behavioral problems. Educators believed that children starting formal schooling need social skills, independence, language and communication skills and the ability to sit, listen and concentrate.
O'Gorman, L. (2008).	Number: 26 parents. Ethnicity: not specified. SES: not specified.	Semi-structured interviews.	Qualitative	Parents said that their children were prepared for Year One through fostering social and emotional development and positive dispositions. They believed that an early start to academic learning gave their children a head start over children who attended play-based government preschool programs or childcare centres.
O'Kane, M. (2007).	Number: 47 children. Age: not specified (entering school). Ethnicity: not specified. SES: not specified.	Discussion groups	Qualitative	Children expressed views on rules and power systems within the school. No formal conclusions, as only preliminary data analysis has been done.
Penman, R. (2006).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Review	Literature review that examined Australian Indigenous children. No findings were presented that linked to specific research projects.
Perry, B., Dockett, S. & Howard, P. (2000).	Number: 55 children. Age: not specified (just started school). Ethnicity: not specified. SES: not specified.	Interviews with children and surveys with teachers and parents	Qualitative	Children's, parents' and educators' attitudes to children's knowledge, adjustment, skills, disposition, rule development and physical wellbeing as they start school sometimes resembled each other and sometimes differed. This paper investigated these differences and explores possible explanations for them.
Peters, A. (2000).	Number: 23 children. Age: 4 - 8 years. Ethnicity: New Zealand European (17), Asian, Polynesian and Arabic (6). 33 Adults (23 caregivers of the children, 3 new entrant educators, 1 representative of the Board of Trustees, 1 Assistant Principal, 1 Principal, 1 School Secretary and 3 early childhood educators).	Observations in kindergarten and school classroom, semi-structured interviews with adults	Qualitative, case studies	Connections between family, educators and peers affected children's transition from kindergarten to primary school in New Zealand. The children's experiences in early childhood bore little relationship to their transition to school. Children adapted to the more controlled school day..
Pianta, R. (2004).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Commentary	Reviewed 70 published studies on children's transition to school and found that children perform inconsistently in school assessments, casting doubt on whether formal assessments of children's skills prior to school can forecast their performance at

Reference citation details	Participants & sampling methods	Research methods & techniques	Research design & data approach	Main findings
				kindergarten entry.
Pianta, R. C., Kraft-Sayre, M., Rimm-Kaufman, S., Gercke, N. & Higgins, T. (2001).	Number: 127 adults (110 families in 1998 dropped to 90 families in 1999). Ethnicity: African-American (70), Caucasian (31), Hispanic (3), 'Other' (6). 10 preschool educators. Ethnicity: Caucasian (8), African-American (2). 7 family workers. Ethnicity: Caucasian (6), African-American (1).	Questionnaire with preschool and kindergarten educators, , family workers and principals; interviews (by family workers) with mothers/families	Mixed methods	Preliminary analyses of data identified three themes: participants' views of transition to school practices differed; parents and educators of children in their preschool year regard each other positively; and parents regard preschool staff as an important and helpful source of support.
Podmore, V.N., Sauvaio, L.M. & Mapa, L. (2003).	Number: 27 children, 35 parents (23 mothers, 12 fathers), 11 early childhood educators and 22 school educators. Age: Children (5 to 5.8 years) & parents(21 to 50 years). Ethnicity of children: Cook Islands (6), Samoa (6), Tonga (6), Tokelau (6), Niue (3). Ethnicity of school educators: European (19), Maori (3).	Semi-structured interviews (in families' and children's first language if desired)	Qualitative	Children at school disliked loneliness and bullying wanted to have a family member stay with them and liked the larger playgrounds and the better facilities and play equipment at school. Parents were concerned about the absence of Pacific languages and cultures at school and the use of inappropriate language. Early childhood educators reported that schools and early childhood environments differed in the use of ethnic language, in discipline, in routines in the nature of the physical environment and in the involvement of family members. Primary school educators discussed parent involvement at the school.
Potter, G. & Briggs, F. (2003).	Number: 100 children. Age: 5 - 6 years. Ethnicity: - Australian with no other ethnic link (34%), Australian with ethnic link (25.5%), Aboriginal (11%), 'other ethnic group' (30%). SES: not specified.	Interviews	Mixed methods	Whilst most children settle into school well, many fear punishment, being bored and having a lack of choice. There is a need to move away from discussion about children's readiness for school to focus on schools' readiness for children.
Pramling, I. & Williams-Graneld, P. (1993,).	Number: 25 children. Age: 7. 12 preschool educators. Ethnicity: not specified. SES: not specified.	Semi-structured interviews	Qualitative	Preschool educators linked the purpose of their work with their didactic and psychological goals.
Queensland Government. (2007).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Report	Transition to school programs were more successful when they addressed individual social and cultural contexts. Planning and decision-making should assist schools to reflect on and evaluate teaching and learning practices, as part of defining a vision for school accountability, local planning and teaching and learning pathways.
Ramey, C. T. & Ramey, S. L. (2004).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Review	Children from poor and undereducated families are less likely to be (academically) ready for school due to less knowledge and skill, but this can be countered through a high-quality preschool program.
Ramey, S. L., Lanzi, R. G., Ramey, C. T. and Phillips, M. M. (1998a).	Number: 4,582 children. Age: 5.5 years. Ethnicity: White/Non Hispanic (53%), African American (27%), Hispanic/Latino	Questionnaires	Quantitative	74% of children had very positive perceptions of school. Parents had more favorable impressions than the children on their early school adjustment. Educators' ratings of children's adjustment were higher for children who reported positive school experiences.

Reference citation details	Participants & sampling methods	Research methods & techniques	Research design & data approach	Main findings
	(9%), American Indian (3%), Asian/Pacific Islander (1%), Native Alaskan (<1%), 'Other' (7%). This group includes children with parents from different ethnic/cultural groups). SES: not specified.			
Rimm-Kaufman, S.E., Pianta, R.C. and Cox, M.J. (2000).	Number: 3,595 kindergarten educators. Ethnicity: non-Hispanic White (79.8%), African American (7%), Hispanic (5%), Native American (9%), Asian/Pacific Islander, Multiple Origins or 'Other' (0.2%). SES: not specified.	Survey	Quantitative	Educators reported that 16% of children found making the transition to kindergarten difficult; and that half or more of the children in their class had specific problems arising from their transition. The rates of these problems varied according to schools' demographic composition and to districts' levels of poverty.
Rosenkoetter, S.E., Hains, A.H. and Dogaru, C. (2007).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Paper	Named 9 roles for social workers in children's transition to school. No findings were linked to specific research projects.
Rous, B., Myers, C. T. and Stricklin, S. B. (2007).	Number: 43 Adults (administrators, practitioners and family members). Ethnicity: not specified. SES: not specified.	Focus groups using questionnaires	Mixed methods	Highlighted the importance in children's transition to school of inter- and intra-agency collaboration, a supportive infrastructure (including guidelines and policies), personnel dedicated to planning children's transition and clear support from administration.
Royal Children's Hospital (2006).	Number: 1kindergarten educator. Ethnicity: not specified. SES: not specified.	Case study	Qualitative	Described the need for a flexible approach to transition that takes into consideration the needs of individual children and families, continuity, communication and parent involvement.
Rudasill K.M. and Konold, T.R. (2008).	Number: 1,364 children. Age: 4.5 years 2,728 Adults (1,364 mothers, 1364 educators). Ethnicity: not specified. SES: not specified.	Questionnaire and rating scale	Quantitative	Children's shyness contributed to their social competence ratings and their shyness and attention span contributed to their assertiveness in kindergarten. Children's assertiveness declined by almost 10 points between kindergarten and second grade; and both inhibitory control and attentional focusing contributed to children's social competence.
Sammons, P., Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Siraj-Blatchford, I., Taggart, B. & Elliot, K. (2002).	Number: 2,800 children. Age: not specified (preschool). Ethnicity: not specified. SES: not specified.	Surveys	Quantitative	Children's transition to school is linked with their background and their cognitive development. Preschool is important to children from disadvantaged backgrounds, especially for their ability to negotiate social inclusion and inclusion.
Sammons, P., Taggart, B., Smees, R., Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Siraj-Blatchford, I. & Elliot, K. (2003).	Number: 2,857 children. Age: not specified (preschool). Ethnicity: White UK (74.5%), White European (4.1%), Black Caribbean (4.1%), Black African (2.2%), Black 'other' (0.8%), Indian (1.9%), Pakistani (2.6%), Bangladeshi (0.9%), Chinese (0.2%), 'Other' (2.2%), Mixed heritage (6.5%). SES: not	Survey	Quantitative, longitudinal study	Children with special educational needs in cognitive development who have not attended preschool are at greater risk of failing in school. High quality pre-school centres can help improve cognitive development, but multiple systems for identifying children with special educational needs across preschools may result in missed opportunities for early intervention.. A majority of parents of children with special educational needs were happy with the support their children received; those who were unhappy wanted more learning support on an individual basis for their child.

Reference citation details	Participants & sampling methods	Research methods & techniques	Research design & data approach	Main findings
	specified.			
Sanagavarapu, P. and Perry, B. (2005).	Number: 10 parents and 4 children. Age of children: 4.5 - 6 years. Ethnicity: Bangladeshi parents and children, from non - English speaking backgrounds, speaking Bengali as their first language. SES: not specified.	Semi - structured interviews	Qualitative	Parents were concerned with their children's limited or lack of proficiency in English conversational skills and its impact on their social or emotional adjustments. Parents were also concerned about the possibility that their children might be isolated, bullied and victimised because of their skin color, accent and limited skills in conversational English.
Sanders, M. R., Ralph, A., Sofronoff, K., Gardiner, P., Thompson, R., Dwyer, S. and Bidwell, K. (2008).	Number: 12,874 children. Age: 4 - 7 years. Ethnicity" not specified. SES: not specified.	Surveys	Quantitative, longitudinal study	Children in an intervention program were significantly less likely to suffer clinically elevated and borderline behavioral and emotional problems.
Schulting, A. B., Malone, P. S. and Dodge, K. A. (2005).	Number: 17,212 children. Age: 5 - 7 years. Ethnicity: White (57%), Black (14%), Hispanic (17%), Asian (6%), Native Hawaiian and other Pacific islander (1%), American Indian and Alaskan Native (2%), Mixed race (3%). SES: 20% of the children were reported as living below the poverty line.	Questionnaires and surveys	Quantitative, longitudinal study	Kindergarten transition policies at schools have a modest positive effect on children's academic achievement and parent involvement during the first school year but these effects are linked to a child's SES. Transition practices enabled children from low and moderate income families to do better academically, but had little effect on children from higher SES, who performed well academically regardless of transition policies.
Severeide, R. (1998).	Number: 413 families with a child entering kindergarten). Ethnicity: White (78%), Hispanic (11%), Asia/Pacific islander (0.3%), Native American (0.1%), 07 % Other (0.7%). SES: not specified.	Questionnaire (children and parents) and survey (educators)	Quantitative	Seventeen factors concerning the child, their family, the school or the community contributed to an acceptable level of 'school readiness'.
Severeide, R. (2007).	Number: 537 children. Age: not specified (entering kindergarten). Ethnicity: White (57%), Hispanic (28%), Pacific Islander (8%), African American (1%), Mixed race (5%). SES: not specified	Questionnaire (children and parents) and survey (educators)	Quantitative	Children's learning outcomes were high with the exception of literacy development, which was moderately low. There was an increase in developmentally appropriate programs for children.
Sharpe, P. (2002).	Number: 38 parents with children aged 6-7 years. Ethnicity: not specified. SES: (combined annual income) <\$2,500 (28.9%), \$2,500 - \$3,500 (21.1%), \$3,500 - \$5,000 (15.8%), \$5,000 - \$6,000 (7.9%), \$6,000 - \$8,000 (13.2%), >\$8,000 (13.2%).	Questionnaire	Quantitative, longitudinal study	Parents saw mathematics as important to their child's future educational success, so they tried to assist their children's transition from kindergarten to primary school by offering their children numeracy support. .

Reference citation details	Participants & sampling methods	Research methods & techniques	Research design & data approach	Main findings
Shepard, L.A. (1997).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Review	Current child assessment practices (e.g. educator observations, records and portfolios) seek to guide children to increasing proficiency, although educators often don't know what to do with the data they collect. Educators have sought to improve curriculum through staff development to ensure that schools respond to children's diverse needs without labeling any 'unready'.
Shepherd, C. & Walker, R. (2008).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Review	Indigenous Australian children make the transition to school successfully if there is a safe space at school for them (e.g. a designated room or space), increased educational content (especially pre-literacy) and if they and their families receive appropriate health care before they start school.
Shonkoff, J. (2004).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Paper	An evaluation of early childhood services. No findings were presented that were linked to a specific research project undertaken by the authors.
Smart, D., Sanson, A., Baxter, J., Edwards, B. and Hayes, A. (2008).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Report	Considers the roles of families, schools and communities as facilitators and inhibitors of children's readiness for school. No findings were presented that linked to specific research projects.
SNAICC. (2004).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Report	Current research priorities for Indigenous children are health, best practice in Indigenous childcare, licensing requirements, the impact of culture and of family practices on child development, and the effect on Indigenous children of a strong, positive cultural identity.
Spencer, S. (2005).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Paper	Discussed the realities of educators collaborating to deliver special education services. No findings were presented that were linked to a specific research project undertaken by the authors.
Sutherland, D. (2003).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Discussion Paper	Examined why an Indigenous school can ensure that Indigenous children succeed at school. No findings were presented that linked to specific research projects.
Sy, S.R. and Schulenberg, J.E. (2005).	Number: 8,371 children and their parents. Age: 58 - 87 months. Ethnicity: 514 Asian-American parents, 7,857 European-American parents. SES: not specified.	Interviews with parents	Quantitative, longitudinal	The effects of parent expectations and cultural values about early education are only indirect predictors of children's achievement at school. Asian-American and European-American parents' significantly different beliefs, expectations, and involvement in their children's education did not predict their children's achievement at school.
Taggart, B., Sammons, P., Smees, R., Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Siraj-Blatchford, I., Elliot, K. and Lunt, I. (2006).	Number: 3,000 children. Age: 3 - 7 years. Ethnicity: not specified. SES: not specified.	Assessments of children's development, interviews & questionnaire with parents	Quantitative, longitudinal study	High quality preschool experiences contribute to a <i>Sure Start</i> at school. Children 'at risk' of developing special education needs, may gain from integrated care and education at preschool.
Tripcony, P. (2002).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Report	Reviews several projects concerning Indigenous educational policies and strategies. No research was conducted for this review.
Tudge, J.R.H., Odera, D.A., Hoganc, D.M. & Etz, K.E. (2003).	Number: 20 children, parents and educators (numbers of each not specified). Age: - 28 - 45 months, Ethnicity: European-American. SES: annual income \$10,000 - \$85,000.	Observation and rating scale.	Quantitative, ecological	Middle-class preschoolers engaged in more school-relevant activities than did working-class preschoolers. Educators regarded preschoolers who initiated and engaged in conversations as more competent than those who didn't.

Reference citation details	Participants & sampling methods	Research methods & techniques	Research design & data approach	Main findings
VAEAI. (2001).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Policy paper	Recommends the active involvement of Koori people in decision making, increasing their participation and outcome rates, providing a supportive and culturally relevant learning environment, providing all Victorian students with an understanding and respect for Koori traditional and contemporary cultures and making Koori education central to all sectors of the education and training system by increasing the number of Koori people employed at all levels..
VAEAI. (2007).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Report	Multi-function Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS) provided an environment that developed children's cognitive and social skills while maintaining an Indigenous focus. As a result, the children's transition to school was easier, cultural protocols and values were taught and reinforced, buildings reflected Koori culture and provided a sense of belonging. This all helped to build pride and resilience in Koori children and prepared them to cope in the broader community. Overall, MACS strengthened Indigenous communities, supported families and children while helping children to prepare better for school.
Valeski, T. N. and Stipek, D. J. (2001).	Number: 352 children. Age: not specified (225 kindergarten & 127 first grade). 259 educators (170 kindergarten educators & 89 first grade educators). Ethnicity: African American (35%), White (34%), Latino (28%), Asian (2%), Native American (1%). SES: - annual income mostly below \$15,000.	Assessment of children, teacher questionnaires, classroom observations	Quantitative, longitudinal study	Children's feelings about school were associated with their academic skills. Kindergarten children's attitudes towards school were more negative in structured, teacher-directed classrooms, while first grade children's attitudes towards school were more negative in classrooms lacking structure and control. First grade children's perceptions of their competence were linked to their academic engagement.
Victorian Government. (2008).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Paper	Aims to make early childhood settings places of children's belonging, being and becoming by using the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Aims to provide high quality, accessible and affordable education and health care and to make transition to schools effective.
Vogler, P., Crivello, G. & Woodhead, M. (2008).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Working paper	Reviews the major perspectives driving research on children's transition to school and argues that multidisciplinary collaboration and culturally sensitive interventions can create better transitions for children and parents. Calls for transparent policy and programming for children.
Webster-Stratton, C. & Reid, M. J. (2004).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Paper	Young children's ability to manage their emotions and behaviors and to make meaningful friendships is a prerequisite of school readiness and academic success. Children with strong social skills were more academically successful than those with poor social skills. Describes a program to teach young children social and emotional skills and how to succeed at school.
Wesley, P. W. & Buysse, V. (2003).	Number: 25 parents, 32 pre-kindergarten educators, 36 kindergarten educators, 25 elementary school principals. Age: not specified. Ethnicity: African American (24%), Caucasian (64%), 8% Latino/Hispanic (8%), 4% 'Other' (4%). SES: not specified.	Focus Groups	Qualitative	Educators had different personal philosophies of teaching and learning, different expectations of the state and different ideas about eligibility and about the pressure on children, educators and families to perform. The authors call for increased professional responsibility and for social and emotional development to be seen as critical to school readiness.

Reference citation details	Participants & sampling methods	Research methods & techniques	Research design & data approach	Main findings
White, G. and Sharp, C. (2007).	Number: 70 children, 53 parents, 80 school staff. Age: not specified. Ethnicity: not specified. SES: not specified.	Literature review, interviews, case studies, and children's drawings	Qualitative	Most children reported a smooth transition to school. They understood the difference between reception and year one and what will take place in each. They were positive about developing skills to undertake work that they identified as harder and they enjoyed the changes in curriculum and pedagogy.
Wildenger, L. K., McIntyre, L. L., Fiese, B. H. and Eckert, T. L. (2008).	Number: 132 parents/carers with children entering kindergarten. Ethnicity: White/Caucasian (62%), Black/African American (21.7%), Latino/Hispanic (10.1%), 'Other' (6.2%). SES: annual family income <\$14,999 (30.1%), \$15,000 - \$34,999 (30.1%), \$35,000 - \$64,999 (18.7%), >\$65,000 (21.1%).	Survey	Quantitative	Parents anticipated that their child's transition to prep would be a significant change to routine. Children were often late completing various parts of their getting to school routines. Children of single parents were less likely to wake on time and to eat lunch.
Wong N. C. (2003).	Number: 32 children. Age: 3 - 6 years. 32 parents, 8 primary school educators. Ethnicity: not specified (Hong Kong). SES: not specified.	Focus groups with children, questionnaire with educators and parents	Mixed methods	Children found the transition to school difficult because of the difference in pedagogies.. Children were concerned about making friends and didn't like school rules and regulations and homework expectations.
Yeboah, D. A. (2002).	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE	Review	Some children found the transition to school difficult, but formal administrative and professional links between early childhood and primary schools made it easier. No research conducted for this review.
Yeo, L. S. and Clarke, C. (2005).	Number: 340 children. Age: mean age of 6 years and 8 months. Ethnicity: not specified (Singapore). SES: not specified.	Questionnaire administered by older child 'buddies'.	Qualitative	The majority of children reported being happy at school. They were concerned about making friends, knowing school rules, negotiating the physical space and pleasing educators and parents; and were worried about being reprimanded by educators or principals.

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