

# A STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH TO TRANSITION

This quick reference guide aims to support a shared understanding of the strength-based approach to Transition Learning and Development Statements (TLDS), for children transitioning from kindergarten to school.

It has been written for teachers in early childhood and school settings, but may also be helpful for outside school hours care educators supporting children in the transition to school.

## TRANSITION TO SCHOOL AND THE TLDS

**Transition to school is a process, and the TLDS is a critical component.**

Starting school is a major life transition for children and their families. Both challenging and exciting, it is a time of change in which children and their families and educators adjust to new roles, identities, expectations, interactions and relationships.

Transition is a process, not a point-in-time event. It starts well before, and extends far beyond, the first day of school. It involves and affects children, families, early childhood services, schools, outside school hours care services, and other professionals working with children and families during this time.

A key component of the Transition Initiative is the TLDS. The TLDS is a tool for the consistent sharing and transfer of information about a child's early learning and development, to support continuity of learning as children transition to primary school. The TLDS:

- summarises a child's learning and development (what the child is able to do)
- identifies their individual approaches to learning and their interests (how the child learns)
- indicates how the child can be supported to continue learning (what the school can do to extend upon the child's current level of learning, based on what has worked previously).

## WHAT IS THE STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH?

**Early childhood teachers identify *what works* for the child, and *when* and *how* it works, so that those strategies can be continued and developed at school.**

A strength-based approach is a collaborative and solutions-focused way of working. It encourages educators to draw on their knowledge and understanding of a child's skills, capabilities and learning dispositions to scaffold the child's learning and development. When used effectively, this information supports educators to set high expectations for children by offering rich learning opportunities that motivate and interest them, and help them to see themselves as learners.

Early childhood and school teachers understand the concept of 'distance travelled'. That is, that every child will be at a different place in their learning and development as they grow and experience more of the world. This means that progress is the focus, rather than getting each child to the same point. Understanding what each child can do and planning for 'what's next' is essential to developing differentiated learning strategies that will result in confident and engaged learners.

The strength-based approach contrasts with a deficit-based approach, which can lead to a long list of things considered to be 'wrong' with a child's learning and development, or things a child 'cannot' do. The deficit-based model fails to provide sufficient information about what a child can currently achieve and strategies to support their continued learning and development.

## The strength-based approach is fundamental to the way Victorian teachers work.

Leading early childhood and school teachers will find they are already using a strength-based approach. Such teachers value each child's abilities and differences and communicate high expectations to them. They reflect on their practice and use integrated approaches to build on skills and interests, starting with the competences children demonstrate rather than focusing on what children can't yet do.

In essence, the strength-based approach is about being reflective and intentional in all areas of practice to support each child's continued learning and development.

## WHAT DOES THE STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?

### Outcome descriptors are paired with intentional teaching strategies.

The TLDS was updated in 2017, to strengthen the focus on continuity of learning by including outcomes and intentional teaching practices, and to make it more useful for teachers in the early years of school.

The update resulted in the inclusion of editable 'pick lists' of outcome descriptors taken from the VEYLDF and the first three levels of the Victorian Curriculum F-10, as well as the addition of a section where educators include specific, individual intentional teaching strategies.

Examples of strength-based intentional teaching strategies are below, alongside the deficit-based statements which are discouraged. More examples can be found in *Strength-based approach: A guide to writing Transition Learning and Development Statements* on the Department's website.

Deficit-based statement	Strength-based intentional teaching strategy
Rosie doesn't communicate often with peers or educators.	Rosie is a quiet and reserved child who responds well to encouragement to communicate with trusted people. She is beginning to initiate conversations with her peers. Setting up small group learning experiences will support Rosie's growing confidence.
Robert has trouble settling in the morning, often taking around 10 minutes.	Robert settles best in the morning if given time to say goodbye to his mum and then by taking his hand and leading him to the mat for an activity. This was taking up to 10 minutes but is becoming shorter in duration as he grows in confidence.
George speaks Greek at home but can't yet speak English at a level expected for his age.	George's first language is Greek and he communicates confidently in Greek with family members. Some things that have helped George's English development include: using pictures and objects to show him what you are talking about; repeating simple phrases related to what he is doing; partnering him with a friend during new and whole group activities. Other children also learnt some simple Greek words for greetings, colours and numbers, to share in his culture and have him feel a part of the group.

## WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

Further information about the Transition Initiative, the TLDS and the strength-based approach is available on the Department's website:

[www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/learning/Pages/transition.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/learning/Pages/transition.aspx).

For help with specific queries, email the Positive Start to School inbox at:

[psts@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:psts@edumail.vic.gov.au).