A Toolkit for Transition Clusters: Primary to Secondary

THE EDUCATION STATE

VICTORIA State Government

Published by the Department of
Education and Training
©State of Victoria (Department of
Education and Training) 2015
The copyright in this document is owned
by the State of Victoria (Department
of Education and Training), or in the
case of some materials, by third parties
(third party materials). No part may be
reproduced by any process except in
accordance with the provisions of the
Copyright Act 1968, the National
Education Access Licence for Schools
(NEALS) (see below) or
with permission.
An educational institution situated in
Australia which is not conducted for profit,
or a body responsible for administering
such an institution may copy and
communicate the materials, other than
third party materials, for the educational
purposes of the institution.
Authorised by the Department of
Education and Training, 2 Treasury Place,
East Melbourne, Victoria, 3002.
ISBN: 978-0-7594-0808-1

Contents

- **A Guide to Cluster Transition Planning** 1

  The research context 2

  How to get started 3

  Become more informed about transitions 4

  Use frameworks to guide transition investigations and solutions 5

  Audit current transition practices 6

  Identify important practice gaps 6

  Identify and document strategies to address transition priorities 8

  Selected readings 9

- **Tools to Assist Cluster Planning** 11

  Tool 1: Sample Baseline Opinion Survey 11

  Tool 2: Transition Strategy Framework 12

  Tool 3: Transition Practices Audit Tool 13

  Tool 4: A Transition Data Analysis Tool 14

  Tool 5: Transition importance and implementation gap analysis survey 15

  Tool 6: Transition importance and implementation survey results 16

  Tool 7: A matrix to help with establishing transition priorities 17

  Tool 8: A Compendium of Cluster Transition Strategies 18

  Tool 9: A framework for documenting transition plans. 24

Acknowledgements

The following Victorian Government schools have participated in the transition processes described in this toolkit and contributed to the content.

Hume Central SC Dallas Brooks Community PS Broadmeadows Valley PS Broadmeadows PS Coolaroo South PS Meadows PS Bethal PS	*Parkdale SC* Aspendale Gardens PS Parkdale PS Mentone Park PS Dingley PS Mentone PS Kingswood PS Parktone PS
Wangaratta HS Wangaratta West PS Yarrunga PS Appin Park PS Wangaratta PS Oxley PS	*Warragul RC* Warragul North PS Warragul PS Buln Buln PS Nilma PS Yarragon PS Bona Vista PS Lardner and District PS Ellinbank PS
Lara SC Lara Lake PS Little River PS Lara PS	

This toolkit is a product of the Transition: Improved Literacy and Numeracy Outcomes (Professional Barriers) project commissioned from PTR Consulting Pty Ltd by the Victorian Department of Education and Training.

A Guide to Cluster Transition Planning

1. Introduction

This 'toolkit' has been developed to support clusters of schools to collaborate in the development of a comprehensive and shared primary to secondary school transition strategy. It describes a process that was used to assist five Victorian government school clusters to develop or review their cluster strategic plans for transition and provides examples of the tools that aided this process.

2. Why are Transition Clusters needed?

Whilst most schools have individually documented their transition policy and strategy, it is less common for a transition strategy to be developed and implemented by a cluster consisting of a secondary school and its main feeder primary schools.

The main concern with individual school transition strategies is that they provide no guarantee that the expectations of a feeder primary school and the expectations of the receiving secondary school will be met – even when there is good communication between the individual schools.

This concern is illustrated by:

- the confusion over what student data should be passed on to receiving secondary schools and little knowledge of what secondary schools do with the information received
- the low levels of understanding in feeder and receiver schools of each other's curriculum, assessment and pedagogical practices
- the varying degrees to which primary schools involve their students in the transition activities of significant receiving schools
- the difficulty primary schools have in collecting feedback about how well their students were prepared to make the transition to secondary school.

A school transition plan, while necessary, is not sufficient for optimising transition outcomes – a co-constructed transition cluster plan is needed.

Granted these concerns could be overcome ***if*** more time was available for transition; ***if*** more teachers became involved in transition; ***if*** there was a culture of trust between schools; ***if*** more emphasis was placed on strategies to achieve greater continuity of learning; and ***if*** transition strategies were evaluated. However, these are 'big ifs' to be achieved.

Nevertheless, experience indicates that transition goals are far more likely to be realised when schools commit to forming a cluster and working on the co-construction and implementation of a cluster transition strategy.

The collaborative cluster planning processes described in the following pages should help to:

- promote conversations, relationships, trust and collaboration between all cluster schools
- clarify the need for and use of student data to drive transition improvement
- extend transition concerns beyond the social and emotional to concerns about what needs to be done to help students adjust to different curriculum and teaching arrangements
- result in transition being seen as the shared responsibility of all schools in the cluster.

The research context

An excellent research publication that helps to increase understanding about transition issues and solutions is *Good Transitions: Through the Eyes of Primary and Secondary Principals* (2006) by Vinson and Harrison.

> Transition is movement from one set of circumstances to another with changes to environments, relationships, behaviours, routines, roles and expectations.

Their research reveals that there is very high implementation of transition measures considered to be important when it comes to the administration of transition programs and to supporting the social and wellbeing needs of transitioning students.

However, when it comes to transition strategies focused on curriculum initiatives there was a huge gap between teachers' assessment of the importance of these strategies and the implementation of these strategies in their schools.

Some examples of the gap between endorsement and implementation ratings for curriculum initiatives and for teaching and learning initiatives are provided below.

Curriculum initiative	**Vital or important**	**Fully or usually implemented**
Establish joint primary-secondary curriculum teams within specific KLAs	80%	14%
Organise joint primary-secondary meetings and professional learning workshops to share curriculum information and teaching programs	78%	12%
End Year 6 – beginning Year 7: joint development, delivery curriculum projects and other learning activities	71%	9%
Teaching and learning	**Vital or important**	**Fully or usually implemented**
Arrange lesson observations, teacher visits and teacher exchanges involving primary and secondary schools	70%	6%
Years 5 - 8: learning days to develop students' skills in learning	65%	8%

When asked to explain the gaps between what teachers think is important and what is actually in place the most common reasons were:

- the lack of or inconsistent cooperation from the primary or secondary schools
- that primary schooling is devalued by secondary schools
- the lack of time and resources to do what is expected
- the complicated links between feeder schools and high schools

Clearly, the transition dip experienced by a significant minority of students will not be solved by continuing with a transition model largely based on plans made and executed by individual schools.

> The negative impact of the transition is presumably a consequence of discontinuities in the environment, educational practices, and social structures to which students must adapt.

Link: The Vinson and Harrison research is available online at http://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/handle/2123/1916.

How to get started

1. Identify the best configuration of schools to form the cluster

In some locations it is obvious which schools should form the transition cluster as there is only one secondary school to transition to. However in some areas, cluster composition may not be easy to determine as destination patterns reveal that students are exiting to a wide range of secondary schools and that enrolments are derived from small intakes of students from many primary schools.

A natural grouping is one where the majority of a primary school's exits are enrolled in a neighbouring secondary school where these exits provide the school with a 'significant proportion' of its new enrolments. However, many situations are not so clear cut as a majority exit destination from a primary school perspective may be a minority intake from the secondary school perspective. In such situations the perspective of the secondary school generally takes precedence.

To become an effective cluster, teams must become productive working groups that are built on trusting relationships. Members need to meet regularly and be engaged in cluster processes. So school proximity and membership size are factors that need to be considered. Usually clusters consist of one secondary school and between 4-8 primary schools.

2. Identify the best personnel to attend cluster meetings

In the initial stages school leadership is heavily involved in determining the strategies to be included in the Cluster Transition Strategy. Principal participation is important as transition commitments need to be negotiated to achieve cluster-wide agreement about what needs to be done to overcome transition discontinuities. As cluster strategies become accepted practice, leadership participation need not be as intense.

Schools generally nominate a staff member to be the Transition Coordinator. Their involvement is essential but not sufficient. Equally important is the participation of Year 6 and 7 teachers as they will be responsible for implementing many of the transition strategies.

> If clusters are working effectively, regardless of the school that a student is exiting from and transferring to, they should experience transition events that support their social and academic transition.

3. Resource transition planning

If the cluster is newly formed or has been meeting for several years but has never documented a cluster transition strategic plan, schools are advised to engage a Cluster Coordinator to help with the development of the cluster's plan. Release time should also be provided so Year 6 and 7 teachers are able to attend meetings and engage in discussions about transition concerns and how to address them. Resources also needed to enable the transition strategies to be implemented and evaluated. A priority without resourcing is not a priority!

Monthly meetings are generally needed to progress the development of a cluster transition strategy. Some questions that the cluster schools are advised to investigate

- How are students fairing as they move from primary to secondary school?
- What are Year 6 and 7 teachers' opinions about transition processes?
- What transition strategies are provided for teachers, students and parents?
- What needs to be done to improve transition outcomes?

Become more informed about transitions

The information gathering actions suggested below are primarily for the benefit of individual schools, but if all cluster schools share their findings this will help cluster members improve their understanding of transition perspectives and issues across the group.

1. Discover any areas where students have a performance dip

Data that tracks the performance and engagement of students as they transition from primary to secondary school is available but needs to be massaged by schools to make analysis easy. AusVELS Years 5 to 8 and NAPLAN Years 5, 7 and 9 literacy and numeracy data provide an indication of the impact of transition on learning levels and growth.

> For a significant minority of students, the transition process results in a 'dip' in both engagement with school and learning.

DET Attitudes to School Survey results tracking students as they transition from Year 5 through to Year 8 provide an indication of the impact of transition of students' engagement and wellbeing.

These data sets help to tell a story about the school – Is the Year 7 literacy intervention program meeting expectations? – and help to increase awareness of transition issues within the school and cluster.

These data will improve once individual student numbers are used to track performance across the primary/secondary divide as then the patterns of performance will be based on the actual primary years' mean scores of all those newly enrolled in secondary school.

2. Discover teachers' opinions about the quality of transition arrangements

There are five good reasons for asking all Year 6 and 7 teachers in the cluster their opinions about the quality of the cluster's and their school's transition arrangements.

Firstly, teachers teaching at the upper end of primary and the beginning of secondary school who have little experience teaching at these year levels or are new to the school can have a poor understanding of the school's transition arrangements and what role they might play in making transition arrangements more effective.

Secondly, teachers teaching at these levels may not have a good grasp of what constitutes transition 'best practice'.

Thirdly, it is a good idea to collect baseline data about transition practices so that changed transition arrangements can be monitored by administering the survey again in twelve months' time.

Fourthly, the survey results are likely to provide a pointer to areas where improvements can be made.

And finally, running a survey like this helps to focus attention on transitions and signal that momentum for improving transition arrangements is building within the transition cluster.

Tool 1 contains sample questions that could be included in a short baseline survey or a pre- and post-cluster strategy evaluation survey.

Use frameworks to guide transition investigations and solutions

1. Five transition focus areas

The literature on transitions suggests that there are five focus areas where transition strategies are needed. One version of these five focus areas is as follows:

- School policies and organisation
- Information and communications
- Social and personal orientation
- Curriculum and assessment
- Teaching and learning

These factors provide a useful framework for structuring transition survey tools and school and cluster transition strategy documents. They help to ensure that transition concerns extend beyond the first three focus areas which are generally well done by most schools, to the last two focus areas that generally are the most challenging and least well done by most schools. Some examples of focus area questions are provided below.

School policies and organisation
Does your school have a school policy on transition?
Information and communications
Do former students return to the school to answer Year 6 students' questions about what to expect when starting Year 7?
Social and personal orientation
Are parents with a Year 6 child who has enrolled in your school consulted about their transition concerns and needs?
Curriculum and assessment
Is your cluster building continuity between Year 6 and 7 in literacy/English curriculum and assessment?
Teaching and learning
Is your cluster developing an instructional model for use across the cluster?

2. Four transition phases

Literature also describes transition as having the following four stages.

- Preparation
- Transfer
- Induction
- Consolidation

Some examples of transition phase questions are:

> Transition to secondary school is not a point-in-time event, but rather an experience that can extend beyond the last two years of primary school and the first two years of secondary school.

Preparation
What events are provided in Years 5 and 6 to help students better understand secondary education?
Transfer
Is there a common understanding about what student data to transfer?
Induction / orientation
What programs are run at the start of the year to orientate students to their new school?
Consolidation
What arrangements are made to support students who at mid-year are still unsettled?

A well-structured Cluster Strategic Plan would contain strategies that are targeted at the five focus areas and the four distinct phases of transition.

Tool 2 provides a strategy framework based on the 5 transition focus areas and 4 stages

Audit current transition practices

It is important that a clear picture of transition activities in each of the schools is gained and that gaps in transition activities are identified. This is best done through a survey that is a combination of direct questions and open-ended questions asking respondents to describe what is done, what is in place, what is used, what is provided, and when and how something is done.

This approach will make it easier to identify the range of transition practices; the most common transition practices; possible gaps in practices; and differences in practices across the cluster schools.

These surveys can be designed, administered, and scored online by using Survey Monkey or a similar online tool. Responses can be produced for each school or collated to give a cluster picture perspective.

An audit survey should to be completed by the principal or their nominee. The completed survey should reflect the general perspective of each school. To achieve this, the person completing the survey on behalf of the school might seek the advice of a few other key staff before responding.

A comprehensive transition audit is very helpful when you are developing a new transition program or modifying an existing one.

Tool 3 provides sample questions for a transition practices audit.

Whilst an online tool like Survey Monkey helps to significantly streamline the process of conducting an audit it still takes time to design and administer, answer the questions, and produce reports of the findings. Similarly the task of analysing and interpreting the audit results can be time-consuming, particularly when the audit has many questions and generates responses from several sources. But the biggest waste of all is collecting data without then using them to inform decisions.

Tool 4 provides a template to guide the analysis and discussion of survey findings.

As well as providing a snapshot of cluster members' transition practices, the audit results can be used to inform the design of a survey tool to measure the gap between a transition strategy's importance and its level of implementation. A gap analysis is needed as the audit reveals what is and is not a feature of a school's transition program, but not whether what is being done or appears to be missing is considered to be of little or vital importance. The use of a gap analysis tool is discussed in the next section.

Identify important practice gaps

There are many transition processes and activities that nearly all schools have adopted in some form or other. These include the appointment of a transition coordinator, the establishment of a transition committee, a school transition policy, a school transition timetable, orientation days for students, information sessions for parents, open days for families, transition publications and online information. Many schools also participate in the work of transition clusters.

However, as the research reveals, and what is often revealed through conducting a transition practice audit is that many schools have had little success in implementing

strategies designed to smooth the curriculum and teaching differences between primary and secondary schools.

1. Administer a gap analysis survey

A survey based on the transition practices that research indicates are important and that asks respondents to rate the level of importance of the practice and the extent to which it is implemented in their school provides the data needed for a gap analysis.

Tool 5 contains an example of a survey designed to provide gap analysis data.

Whilst the data produced by a gap analysis survey can be time-consuming to analyse the report of findings is a powerful stimulus for conversations about and reflections on school practice. It also provides stark evidence of instances where practices that cluster teachers have rated as being vital are not being implemented.

Tool 6 contains an example of a how the gap analysis data can be reported

2. Review all data findings to identify where practices need to be strengthened

The process described so far provides clusters with a significant amount of data from which cluster transition priorities and strategies can be identified.

The student performance data helps to reveal:

- the numbers of students who are likely to face transition difficulties
- the numbers of students who have experienced a dip in learning
- the areas within the curriculum, where a learning dip is most pronounced
- dips in students' social and emotional wellbeing and attachment to school

The data analysed from teacher opinion, school audit and gap analysis surveys helps to reveal:

- the strengths and weaknesses of the school's (and cluster's) transition plans
- areas where teachers believe action needs to be taken to improve the transition program
- the likely degree of support for a particular course of actions

It will also reveal that many of the gaps in practice that have been highlighted are beyond the capacity of any one school to solve. Only through a concerted and coordinated effort by all schools in the cluster will those hard to implement but vital transition practices be realised.

Identify and document strategies to address transition priorities

Many strategies that are a component of an individual school's transition strategy plan will also be relevant for a Cluster Transition Strategic Plan. Discussions of the implications of schools' student data and the findings from the teacher opinion survey, school practice audit and gap analysis survey will have surfaced many ideas and proposals for improving cluster transition arrangements.

These transition priorities emerging from the data need to be collated, discussed and tested for their likely benefits and implementation issues.

Link: Transition strategies categorised by the 5 transition focuses and 4 transition phases are provided in Appendix B of the Victorian Auditor General's 2015 report on Education Transitions.http://www.audit.vic.gov.au/publications/20150318-Education-transitions/20150318-Education-transitions.html#s50

Once strategies have been identified as meeting an important transition they need to be marshalled into a Cluster Strategic Plan. Questions to ask in order to ensure the strategy becomes actionable include:

- What priority is the strategy addressing?
- Will it have a strong impact?
- Is it practical – can it be implemented?
- Do its benefits outweigh implementation difficulties?
- What is the expected timeline for implementation?
- How will it be implemented?
- Who will be responsible for implementation?
- What resources will be needed?
- How will the strategy be evaluated?

Tool 7 provides a matrix to help with establishing transition priorities.

Tool 8 contains a compendium of transition strategies

Those strategies that will produce high gain and are easy to implement should be earmarked for short–term implementation and those that have high benefit but are hard to implement should be given to a small group to work on with the intention of them being implemented mid-term once the best way to implement them is determined.

Tool 9 provides a framework for documenting transition plans.

Once the Cluster Transition Strategy Plan is drafted, and an estimate of the resourcing needed to implement the plan is undertaken, it should go back to each school to be ratified by the leadership. Ratification confirms that the school agrees to the strategies in the Cluster Transition Strategy Plan and is willing to contribute resources (funds/time/expertise) to support the plan's implementation.

The Cluster strategy is an overarching document that includes strategies that all cluster schools have agreed to implement. Individual school transition strategies will include all those actions from the cluster strategy that the school has committed to implementing and actions that are a part of the school's response to local transition circumstances.

Selected readings

The following articles have helped to inform the processes described in this transition toolkit.

Barber, M. (1999) *Taking the Tide at the Flood: Transforming Education in the Middle Years*, the Middle Years of Schooling Conference, Melbourne, 28th March 1999

Barber observed that most students begin secondary school with a wave of enthusiasm so the problem of a drop in performance between Year 6 and 7 is not about the stress of change and loss of friendships, and 'the problem is better attributed to misunderstandings between primary and secondary teachers and low expectations of what students in the first years of secondary school can achieve'.

Evangelou, M., Taggart, B., Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P. and Siraj-Blatchford, I. (2008) *What Makes a Successful Transition from Primary to Secondary School?*, Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education 3-14 Project, Department for Children, Schools and Families
http://www.ioe.ac.uk/successful_transition_from_primary_to_secondary_report.pdf

This report concluded that to ensure that children's transitions are successful (and improved where needed), all three areas (social adjustment, institutional adjustment and curriculum interest and continuity) need to be taken into account when planning transition strategies at Local Authority and school levels.

Galton, M., Gray, J. and Ruddick (1999) *The Impact of school Transitions and Transfers on Pupil Progress and Attainment*, DfEE, London
http://www.musicalbridges.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/The-Impact-of-School-Transitions-and-Transfers-Galton-et-al-1999-.pdf

The overall finding is that students regress between the last year of primary and the first year of secondary school. They identified five transition bridges (to cross the 'river' between Year 6 and 7:

- Bureaucratic
- Social
- Curriculum
- Pedagogic
- Management of learning

They found that the bureaucratic and social bridges were in place in the vast majority of schools but only a small proportion of schools were building the other three bridges.

Holdsworth, R. (2010) *Transition and Engagement*, Research Document 6, Student Wellbeing Unit, Catholic Education Office Melbourne
www.cem.edu.au/workarea/downloadasset.aspx?id=17202

This document provides a framework within which transitions should be considered and planned, and draws particularly upon work being carried out by schools on the transition of students from primary to secondary school. It cites research indicating that transition planning is most likely to be successful when it supports students with:

- Developing new friendships and improving self-esteem and confidence
- Settling well into the new school life, so there are no concerns for parents
- Showing an increasing interest in school and school work
- Getting used to new routines and school organisation
- Experiencing curriculum continuity.

Victorian Auditor-General's Report (March 2015) Education Transitions
http://www.audit.vic.gov.au/publications/20150318-Education-transitions/20150318-Education-transitions.pdf

This audit assessed whether the Department of Education and Training (DET), government schools and early childhood education and care providers are effectively supporting children to transition into Prep and from primary to secondary school. It found that DET does not have a strategy or framework for managing middle-years transitions and despite some pockets of improvement, engagement and academic outcomes continue to decline as children move into secondary school.

It concluded that system-wide change is required if consistent long-term gains are to be made, and if issues such as the uneven impact of transitions on male and female students are to be resolved. The report makes seven recommendations, including that DET provide better advice to schools on middle-years transitions and develop better systems for monitoring children's outcomes as they progress through school.

Vinson, T. (2006) Good Transitions: Through the Eyes of Primary and Secondary Principals
http://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/bitstream/2123/1916/1/Good_Transitions_Paper.pdf

Transition from primary to secondary schooling provides one of the most consistent challenges to the majority of young adolescents, as students face physical and social dislocation, and an entirely new learning program. Vinson observed that more energy is spent on efforts at acclimatising students and smoothing the transition process than ensuring that pupils' commitment to learning is sustained and their progress enhanced. However it is fairly rare that attention is given to discontinuities in teaching approaches and helping students to manage their own learning.

- # Tools to Assist Cluster Planning

Tool 1: Sample Baseline Opinion Survey

This opinion survey includes several items that according to transition research and discussions are not well addressed in many transition plans and strategies. The purpose for including these items is to open up fresh discussions within the transition cluster about how these items might be addressed as they cannot be resolved by the actions of an individual school. It is to be completed by Years 6 and 7 teachers

Transition Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Our cluster has a shared and vibrant formal transition program.					
Detailed Literacy and Numeracy frameworks are available to assist teachers and our school, including intervention strategies to support highly capable and struggling students.					
Professionals in my cluster are able to provide strong support to teachers in literacy and numeracy.					
There is a shared understanding among professionals in my cluster about transition arrangements which assist literacy and numeracy growth.					
Capacity building in literacy and numeracy of Year 6/Year 7 teachers (whichever applicable) has been a consistent concern for our school over recent years.					
Opportunities for Year 6 and Year 7 teachers to share understandings about literacy and numeracy are prevalent in our cluster.					
Our cluster has a shared understanding of assessment data and student performance and the instruments being used at Year 6 and Year 7.					
There is a standard process among our schools to handover literacy and numeracy information for individual students.					
There is a standard process among our schools to handover special needs information for individual students.					
There is a standard process among our schools to handover well-being information for individual students.					
Our school provides/receives (whichever is applicable) formal literacy and numeracy information of individual students.					

Tool 2: Transition Strategy Framework

The following grid that incorporates the 5 transition focus areas and the 4 transition phases could be used as a framework to categorise current school and cluster transition arrangements or to guide the identification of new school and cluster transition activities and strategies.

Phase / Focus	Preparation	Transfer	Induction	Consolidation
School policies and organisation				
Information and communications				
Social and personal orientation				
Curriculum and assessment				
Teaching and learning				

Tool 3: Transition Practices Audit Tool

This is an illustrative audit tool that uses the five transition focus areas as a framework. The actual tool used to survey schools might include lists of items accompanied by rating scales and open-ended questions that ask respondents to describe particular transition tools, practices or events.

An audit survey would be completed by each school in the cluster and the results for each school would need to be collated into a cluster report as the cluster members need to know the strengths and weaknesses of the transition practices across the cluster.

School policies and organisation
We have a school policy on transition
There is a cluster transition group of which the school is a member
All schools have nominated a Year 5/6 transition leader to attend cluster meetings
The transition cluster members meet at least once a term to monitor transition implementation
Information and communications
All schools promote opportunities for reciprocal visits between settings
All Year 6 students participate in secondary school orientation days
The transition cluster has an agreed transition plan/strategy
There is an agreed position on what Year 6 student data to handover to secondary schools
Social and personal orientation
Does your school identify the transition concerns and needs of Year 6 students in feeder schools?
Parents with a Year 6 child who has enrolled in your school are consulted about their transition concerns and needs
Year 7 students are invited to evaluate the usefulness of major transition events hosted/administered by your school prior to them exiting Year 6
Parents with a Year 6 child who has enrolled in your school are invited to evaluate the usefulness of major transition events provided for them.
Curriculum and assessment
Is your cluster building continuity between Year 6 and 7 in literacy/English curriculum and/or assessment?
There are regular opportunities to share pedagogy between cluster schools.
Are there agreement between the schools as to the assessments to be used and how student performance data is to be reported and transferred?
How is your cluster building continuity between Year 6 and 7 in numeracy/maths curriculum and/or assessment?
Teaching and learning
Years 5/6/7 teachers meet to develop a common understanding of each other's teaching approaches.
How is your cluster building continuity between Year 6 and 7 pedagogy?
Are opportunities for shared professional learning explored?
What specialist support and learning aids are available for students with special learning needs?

Tool 4: A Transition Data Analysis Tool

This tool is to be used in conjunction with a report of audit/survey findings. It is best used by pairs or a small group who discuss the data findings and draw conclusions about the findings, and then consider the implications of the findings. The sharing of comments and insights within and between groups/pairs helps to build greater clarity about the findings and understanding about their implications.

Conversation	Your Comments
Findings What factual statements can you make based on the data?	We found that:
Implications Where should improvement efforts be focused?	We need to focus on improving:

Tool 5: Transition importance and implementation gap analysis survey

Importance			
1.Vital	2. Important	3. Unsure	4. Unimportant
Implementation			
1.Fully evident	2. Consolidating	3. Beginning	4. Not evident

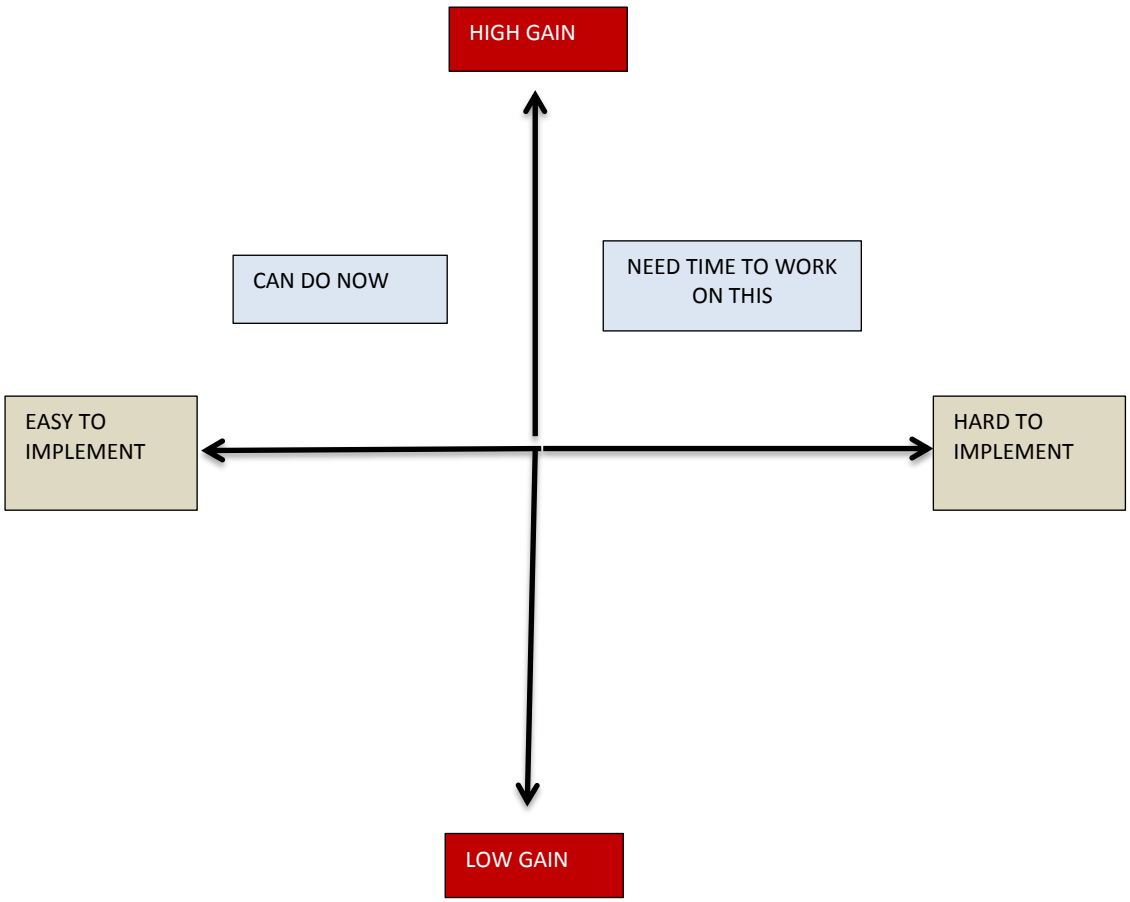
Transition Statement	Importance				Implementation			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
School policies and organisation								
Our school sustains clearly defined practices to ensure students successfully move from primary to secondary school								
A strong working relationship developed between transition coordinators in cluster primary schools and secondary schools								
Processes are in place for Years 6 and 7 teachers to share understanding of literacy & numeracy teaching & learning approaches								
A shared agreement by schools within the cluster on a coordinated approach and practices to ensure effective transition of students								
There is a standard process used within the cluster for handover of literacy and numeracy achievement information for individual students								
Information and communication								
The secondary school is provided with Information about those students participating in special programs due to specific needs								
The secondary school is provided with Information about those students receiving support from education support staff								
Year 6 teachers know that the information & data passed on to the secondary school is effectively used for teaching and learning purposes								
There is a standard process used by cluster schools for handover of information for individual students about special learning needs								
Secondary teachers are sufficiently informed about the capabilities of entering Year 7 students who underperforming								
Social and personal								
Year 6 students participate in "taster" secondary school lessons and experience secondary school performances and other events								
Opportunities are provided for Year 6 students to explore concerns about moving from the primary school to the secondary school								
A program of learning is arranged at the commencement of Year 7 designed to provide academic & social orientation for new students								
The secondary school is provided with Information about the performance levels of individual students in literacy and numeracy								
Opportunities are provided for students, parents & teachers to obtain detailed secondary school transition and orientation information								
Curriculum and assessment								
The secondary school is provided with Information about the literacy and numeracy curriculum content provided to Year 6 students								
The secondary school is provided with Information about Year 6 literacy and numeracy assessment procedures and instruments								
A shared understanding within the cluster of the literacy and numeracy assessment instruments used in Years 6 and 7								
Meetings of primary & secondary teachers are organized to share curriculum, teaching programs, units of work and assessment practices								
Teaching and learning								
The secondary school is provided with an outline of the pedagogical approaches used by Year 6 literacy & numeracy teachers								
There is a shared understanding within the cluster of pedagogical approaches used to improve student learning in literacy and numeracy								
Joint meetings & professional learning workshops are organized to develop shared understandings about student learning and pedagogy								
Teacher visits, classroom observations and teacher exchanges are arranged between cluster schools								

Tool 6: Transition importance and implementation survey results

Importance			
1.Vital	2. Important	3. Unsure	4. Unimportant
Implementation			
1.Fully evident	2. Consolidating	3. Beginning	4. Not evident

Transition Statement	Priority				Implementation			
School policies and organisation								
Our school sustains clearly defined practices to ensure students successfully move from primary to secondary school								
A strong working relationship developed between transition coordinators in cluster primary schools and secondary schools								
Processes are in place for Years 6 and 7 teachers to share understanding of literacy & numeracy teaching & learning approaches								
A shared agreement by schools within the cluster on a coordinated approach and practices to ensure effective transition of students								
There is a standard process used within the cluster for handover of literacy and numeracy achievement information for individual students								
Information and communication								
The secondary school is provided with Information about those students participating in special programs due to specific needs								
The secondary school is provided with Information about those students receiving support from education support staff								
Year 6 teachers know that the information & data passed on to the secondary school is effectively used for teaching and learning purposes								
There is a standard process used by cluster schools for handover of information for individual students about special learning needs								
Secondary teachers are sufficiently informed about the capabilities of entering Year 7 students who underperforming								
Social and personal								
Year 6 students participate in "taster" secondary school lessons and experience secondary school performances and other events								
Opportunities are provided for Year 6 students to explore concerns about moving from the primary school to the secondary school								
A program of learning is arranged at the commencement of Year 7 designed to provide academic & social orientation for new students								
The secondary school is provided with Information about the performance levels of individual students in literacy and numeracy								
Opportunities are provided for students, parents & teachers to obtain detailed secondary school transition and orientation information								
Curriculum and assessment								
The secondary school is provided with Information about the literacy and numeracy curriculum content provided to Year 6 students								
The secondary school is provided with Information about Year 6 literacy and numeracy assessment procedures and instruments								
A shared understanding within the cluster of the literacy and numeracy assessment instruments used in Years 6 and 7								
Meetings of primary & secondary teachers are organized to share curriculum, teaching programs, units of work and assessment practices								
Teaching and learning								
The secondary school is provided with an outline of the pedagogical approaches used by Year 6 literacy & numeracy teachers								
There is a shared understanding within the cluster of pedagogical approaches used to improve student learning in literacy and numeracy								
Joint meetings & professional learning workshops are organized to develop shared understandings about student learning and pedagogy								
Teacher visits, classroom observations and teacher exchanges are arranged between cluster schools								

Tool 7: A matrix to help with establishing transition priorities



Those strategies that will produce high gain and are easy to implement should be earmarked for short–term implementation and those that have high benefit but are hard to implement should be given to a small group to work on with the intention of them being implemented mid-term once the best way to implement them is determined.

Tool 8: A Compendium of Cluster Transition Strategies

The examples below have been culled from actual cluster strategy plans.

Transition focus area	Strategies
School Policies and Organisation	**Transition support** • Develop a Cluster Transition Program consisting of published dates, key tasks and strategies and protocols, aligned with DET guidelines • Each school to have a nominated Transition Coordinator • Transition team to meet during terms 2, 3 & 4 as required to develop a common understanding of approaches at secondary school. •
	Ongoing improvement of transition program • Survey students, parents and transition coordinators on success of transition program. • Evaluate numbers of students enrolling in government and non-government schools – explore trends, • Keep up to date with current research in transition practice
	Develop a common, consistent transition policy that fosters positive working relationships • Identification of a transition co-ordinator at each of the feeder Primary Schools and Secondary School. • Establishment of a small team to work on the policy. • Establishment of minimum requirements to be included in the policy e.g. number of visits Primary Schools are required to attend at the Secondary School.
	Evaluate: Establish processes for collecting feedback from students and parents on the strengths and weaknesses of the school transition program. • Post assessment of program effectiveness via student and parent surveys and/or focus groups of parents and students.
	Formalise agreed transition processes through documenting a cluster strategy plan (current and proposed actions) and establish a transition Event Timetable and transition checklist • Transition Strategic Plan agreed upon by all stakeholders within each of the cluster schools and signed off by Principals. • Events timetable established as an appendix to the Transition Strategic Plan via consultation with all stakeholders.
	Formalise extended transition program for 'special needs' students • Extended program established for two student groups - PSD and high anxiety. • Additional welcome orientation session for students attending from small schools and individual students from schools outside of the cluster.
	Establish Annual Transition Plan and/or calendar of events. • All agreed events within the transition strategic plan to be documented in an annual calendar of events. • Plan and calendar will also include primary/secondary school interactions including "Connections" programs, Science, Maths extension, use of specialist facilities.
	Transition Policies and role responsibility statements • Cluster meetings used to share current transition policies • Feedback emailed to Cluster Coordinator • Agreement of roles and responsibilities (and then allocate)
	Evaluation of Transition Program through feedback from students, parents and teachers • Hard copy and phone surveys completed • Development of feedback tools

	• Collation of responses • Evaluation of responses and data at transition meetings • Feedback sought from end of Year 5 up until the end of Year 7

Transition focus area	Strategies
Information and Communication	**Cluster data** • Common data collection tools (Compass) • Send attendance and SOS data to SC • Transferal of information on social/emotional needs • Possible survey creation based on transition. Students complete a survey at the end of Year 6- results to be passed on to the secondary school. Secondary schools complete a survey half way through Year 7 – results to be passed on to primary schools. • List of assessment types, standardised tests – triangulation
	Information • Provide information for students, teachers and parents to promote positive understanding of the ethos of the different stages of schooling and how our schools cater for this.
	Provide opportunities for potential transition students and families to become familiar with the environment and culture of the next stage of their schooling. • Familiarisation visits - All schools to promote opportunities for reciprocal visitations between settings during the year. • Open days – Expo night' Fun Night • Orientation days - All primary schools committed to the three days including state-wide transition day for Orientation in December
	Medium and High needs students to be engaged in transition SSG with their parents / guardians and the support staff from the new school setting. Support strategies could include: • Additional time in new setting • Introductions to teachers • Early engagement with support / wellbeing staff • Enrolment meetings • Professional handovers • Visits to the students' school setting • Involvement in SSG's in primary schools • Testing for Extreme Reading
	Common secondary curriculum documents supplied to primary schools, parents and students • Information provided at information evenings. • Curriculum handbook provided to each enrolled Year 6 student. • Copies of booklets to be provided to primary schools • Scope and sequence would ideally be provided in the booklet also.
	Establish processes for consulting students and parents about their transition concerns and needs • Orientation program to address student concerns as identified via classroom discussion: • A series of open ended questions that classroom teachers will administer in the classroom • Survey Monkey: parents of Year 6 students • Base line data for future comparison established
	Establish processes for Year 6 teachers to meet with Year 7 teachers to share student progress • After school session to discuss targeted / nominated individual students.

Transition focus area	Strategies
Information and Communication	**Establish processes for transferring student information from primary to secondary schools** ***Information gathering:*** • Transition visits to primary schools in November for consultation with Year 6 teachers re all individual students on academic achievement and student wellbeing • 45 minutes will be allocated per class to share information on each student. Information to be collated in a spreadsheet by SC. In the last 10 minutes of each meeting whole class meeting with SC teachers. Photos of Year 6 students to be available during these discussions • DE&T transition form comments not to be written by primary schools but shared (as above) in meetings. ***One hour activity with SC teachers/ students:*** • Year 7 students who attended a specific primary school to return to the school to meet with incoming Year 6 students. (This will occur on the same day as sharing information at PS) ***Data sharing*** • NAPLAN (which would be good to track from Years 3 to 9 for individual growth) • AUSVELS • PAT-R/ Pat Maths /On Demand/Probe testing (whatever the school uses will indicate age level appropriate)
	Transition events (Transition days, school visits, parent transition sessions on how they can support their children be effective learners etc.) agreed on and a timetable of these events is published • Meeting time allocated to discuss yearly events • Published in newsletters, local paper and websites. • SC staff profiles to be put into primary newsletters in term four. • A brand and logo is designed and used

Transition focus area	Strategies
Social and Personal	**Establish processes for improving students' academic & social orientation to secondary school** • Two day orientation program established in consultation with primary schools
	Involve students • Year 7 students return to their primary schools to discuss what they have learnt about secondary schools and advise students on what to expect.
	Frequent sessions on wellbeing, stress, self-management and study skills • Student sessions with school chaplain, nurse or other appropriate person. • Scope and sequence developed to be delivered in all cluster primary schools and secondary school. • Class lessons based on learning outcomes identified in a devised Scope and Sequence.
	Letters written to primary school students from SC students • Year 7 students to write letters to primary school students • To begin with, these letters will be generalised and not addressed to a particular Year 6 student – there is a possibility of evolving these to become personalised and reciprocal and perhaps even online, opening up an opportunity for dialogue between primary students and secondary school students. • A possibility of peer support students to be involved

Transition focus area	Strategies
Curriculum and Assessment	**Moderation/ Assessment** • Moderation across the school particularly at Year 6 – with the secondary school • List of assessment types, standardised tests – triangulation • Online assessment • Revisit learning continuums with and across the schools • List of the essential skills, the non-negotiables e.g. times tables, specific genres etc. they need in Year 7 • Consistent testing of basics e.g. times tables and the what to do with those who don't know them
	Continue to build on the common curriculum links between primary and secondary school, i.e. readers' and writers' notebooks, fluency tasks, etc. • Triad classroom observations to improve consistency with instructional model/ pedagogy - readers/writers notebook, fluency tasks, learning intention, success criteria
	Establishment of common assessment task and common assessment instrument tools across the cluster • Identification and agreement of what essential assessment task and assessment instrument tools are across the cluster. • Moderation of assessment task samples. • Inclusion of common assessment task and assessment instrument tools to be included in the Cluster Transition Policy.
	Monitor academic and engagement outcomes – particularly for at risk students / groups • Use transition meeting time to share and analyse our agreed data sets. • From the analysis of the data, the Cluster Transition Team, creates actions based on the needs presented in the data.
	Dialogue and discussion on adapting Year 6 and 7 assessment specifically to match the needs of vulnerable students • Meetings designed especially to address this area (e.g. one joint PLT per term). • Data analysis • Identification and development of common assessment tasks and practices • Moderation of writing • Agreement of adoption of a common strategy to address areas of need • Develop common language for writing assessment • Work towards inter-rater reliability with writing between primary and secondary school

Transition focus area	Strategies
Teaching and Learning	**Pedagogy** • Visits between primary and secondary teachers for focussed literacy and numeracy observations of teaching methods and strategies -with common observation pro-forma and reflection time for teachers following observations • One to one mentoring/partnership • Building relationships between secondary and primary schools • Informal discussion re best practice • Buddy program
	Foster a shared understanding of pedagogical approaches used across the cluster • Leaderships teams to meet and discuss pedagogical practices in each school. Agreement to be established for a workshop of teachers to further investigate each school's practices. • Peer Observations to be arranged between feeder Year 6 teachers and Year 7 teachers at the secondary school to observe pedagogical practices being implemented. • Discussion groups to be established to reflect on the differing practices being implemented at each of the schools and implications this may have on the Cluster.
	Establish processes for developing a clearer understanding of the different learning environments. • One observation per semester between primary / secondary setting. • Start of year visits in term one (week 5) including after school session to discuss individual students • Term two visits – PS to visit SS. Debrief to occur on the same day as visit, after school. • Term three visits – SS to visit PS. Debrief to occur on the same day as visit, after school. • End of year for planning for transition support – by November 1st with visits from secondary school to primary schools • All observations sessions to have built in planning time for debrief/discussion • All information re Professional Development organised by individual schools will be shared with cluster schools with an opportunity for cluster school involvement.
	Establish processes for developing a clearer understanding of the different learning environments, especially in Literacy and Numeracy • Meeting to be arranged with Literacy and Numeracy leaders to share current practice.
	Secondary and Primary school teachers observe and team-teach in each other's classrooms • Each year has a new focus for reciprocal visits which is set at the year's first transition meeting • Approx. 2-4 secondary staff visit P.S. for short period in the day. • Staff to engage and interact with students • First visits to focus on routines and procedures with a view to moving towards curriculum and assessment in the coming years • Protocols will be set for visits • There will be time for feedback and debrief (also a proforma)

Tool 9: A framework for documenting transition plans

Transition focus area: School Policies and Organisation

Key Goal	What **(actions)** will be required to achieve the goal?	How **(resources)** will items be used to meet the set goal?	Who **(individuals and cluster team)** will be responsible for the set goal?	When **(timeline)** will the goal be met?	What are the achievement **(changed behaviour or practice)** milestones?
Develop a common, consistent transition policy that addresses identified transition needs	Strategy 1				
	Strategy 2				

Transition focus area: Information and Communication

Key Goal	What **(actions)** will be required to achieve the goal?	How **(resources)** will items be used to meet the set goal?	Who **(individuals and cluster team)** will be responsible for the set goal?	When **(timeline)** will the goal be met?	What are the achievement **(changed behaviour or practice)** milestones

Transition focus area: Social and Personal

Key Goal	What **(actions)** will be required to achieve the goal?	How **(resources)** will items be used to meet the set goal?	Who **(individuals and cluster team)** will be responsible for the set goal?	When **(timeline)** will the goal be met?	What are the achievement **(changed behaviour or practice)** milestones

Transition focus area: Curriculum and Assessment

Key Goal	What **(actions)** will be required to achieve the goal?	How **(resources)** will items be used to meet the set goal?	Who **(individuals and cluster team)** will be responsible for the set goal?	When **(timeline)** will the goal be met?	What are the achievement **(changed behaviour or practice)** milestones

Transition focus area: Teaching and Learning

Key Goal	What **(actions)** will be required to achieve the goal?	How **(resources)** will items be used to meet the set goal?	Who **(individuals and cluster team)** will be responsible for the set goal?	When **(timeline)** will the goal be met?	What are the achievement **(changed behaviour or practice)** milestones
Foster a shared understanding of pedagogical approaches used across the cluster	Strategy 1				
	Strategy 2				