|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Case Study:** **Newport Lakes Primary School**  |
|  | Transitioning at risk students  |

**Description of context:** This case study examines the successful transition strategies for at risk students in the Hobsons Bay Network of schools with a particular focus on the experiences of students from Newport Lakes Primary School (NLPS). The Hobsons Bay Network is a network of nineteen primary schools, three specialist schools, four Prep to Year 9 schools, two Year 7 to Year 9 schools and one Year 9 –Year 12 school. NLPS is located in Hobsons Bay in Melbourne. The school has an enrolment of 405 students. The focus for this case study is the transition of at-risk students from the NLPS into secondary school as part of the Hobsons Bay Network.

NLPS is outside the zone of a major high school so the 45 Year 6 students transition to eleven high schools. In the words of the Principal, the students from the primary school ‘transition all over the place’. The strategies designed to support the transitioning at risk students into different high schools from this one primary school are the basis for this case study.

**Aims of the transition strategy:**

To form relationships between primary and secondary communities so that parents and teachers feel they are supported

To support institutional adjustment for transitioning of at-risk students by providing them with logistical strategies on preparing for classes.

**How the strategy is implemented:**

*Communicating effectively critical information*

The strategy of effectively communicating critical information to the at-risk students came from feedback from previous Year 6 students expressing concerns about being prepared for classes in the high school. Students raised concerns about working with lockers, the height of lockers and the preparation for each class they needed to attend. The teachers provided locks for the students to use in class time to get to know how to open and close these with the keys. The NLPS teachers recommended a colour-coded booklet where they could collate their texts and writing book for each unit. According to informal feedback from parents, the students who used these booklets in secondary school found them useful in preparing for classes in the secondary school.

*Nurturing positive teacher-student relationships*

Some specific strategies were targeted towards students at risk as these .students were found to benefit particularly form the development of supportive relationships between teacher and students across the transition years. The Principal worked with student support services at the Hobsons Bay Network to implement a transition program for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) students. This program was expanded to include students with behavioural and emotional needs, including students who were reserved, not socially accepted or were new arrivals to Australia. Parents were contacted and invited to participate in the program after receiving a flyer from the Network Student Support.

*Enabling new relationships*

An important aspect of these programs was the support provided to the students and their parents. As one teacher commented ‘in the primary school we build relationships with parents and the program gives the transition co-ordinator space to create a bond between teacher and the parent and the student.’ There are ongoing opportunities for discussion between parents, teachers and students about the concerns they have for their students. The program provides a network of support for the parents and the students so they know who to contact in the high school if extra support is needed. These relationships are forged through school visits where the roles of different teachers and support staff are outlined to the parents so they have a good understanding of who to go to for help when their child begins at the school.

*Strong primary and secondary connections*

NLPS also runs a transition expo day for Year 7 students. During the day different high schools provide information about their school and teachers and students from each school answer questions from Year 6 students. The narratives provided by the Year 7 to Year 10 students about their transition stories and the information about each school provided by the teachers gives the Year 6 students confidence about the transition to their preferred school.

**Evidence of learning outcomes and/or impact:**

Feedback from the students in Year 7 highlighted the success of the coloured booklets to organise their subjects. Students commented that they used these resources throughout Year 7 as a way of reducing the time they were spending atthe lockers. This strategy worked well for all students. The Principal and teachers had feedback from ASD students that this strategy supported their organisation and planning for learning which was essential for engagement in classroom learning.

Parents commented on the effectiveness of the networks developed as part of the transition program in informal feedback to the teachers and principals. The feedback provided to the Principal and teacher suggested the students were more confident in Year 7 and at an earlier stage as a result of the program.

**Steps for future improvement:**

Both the Principal and Year 6 teacher who were interviewed identified the need to run curriculum based workshops for secondary and primary teachers so they have a stronger idea of the content the students learn before they arrive at secondary schools. These understandings would help teachers plan for student learning continuity.

Working further with secondary schools to implement differentiated practice would better support at risk students in the future. Identifying students that need extra support, and providing this support in advance, would result in fewer students being at risk during the transition process.

**Advice to other schools:**

The Principal highlighted the importance of having a team to identify students who are at risk. The opportunities to identify at risk students are greatly enhanced if there are multiple teachers and counsellors collecting evidence on student behaviour and capabilities. Once the risk has been identified then a plan should be developed for transition success that includes the parents. The plan should cover the logistical and organisational challenges of transition for the individual child who may have specific social and emotional needs. For example students who are at risk of feeling isolated should be provided with more support from peers in class. These peers might work with the student across a number of subjects so the student develops a network of peer support. The success of transitioning at risk students into secondary school is based on parents and students having a strong relationship with someone they trust to discuss their plan and review it where necessary. One way this trust can develop is to have a teacher in the role of transition co-ordinator in the secondary school where part of their job is to build these kinds of relationships with the parent community.

**Contacts for more information:**

David Moss

Principal

Newport Lakes Primary School

moss.david.i@edumail.vic.gov.au