EDUCATION REVIEW OFFICE
TE TARI AROTAKE MATAURANGA

Evaluation at a Glance: Transitions from Primary School to Secondary School

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Foreword

The Education Review Office (ERO) is an independent government department that reviews the performance of New Zealand's schools and early childhood services, and reports publicly on what it finds.

The whakataukī of ERO demonstrates the importance we place on the educational achievement of our children and young people:

> Ko te Tamaiti te Pūtake o te Kaupapa
> The Child – the Heart of the Matter

In our daily work we have the privilege of going into early childhood services and schools, giving us a current picture of what is happening throughout the country. We collate and analyse this information so that it can be used to benefit the education sector and, therefore, the children in our education system. ERO's reports contribute sound information for work undertaken to support the Government's policies.

This report is part of a collaborative effort by the education sector to meet the Government's target for 85 percent of all 18 year olds to have NCEA Level 2 or equivalent in 2017. Improving transition practices in schools is an important part of this process. Through highlighting the key ingredients of successful transitions, the report is intended to help schools build on and, if necessary, improve their own transition processes.

Successful delivery in education relies on many people and organisations across the community working together for the benefit of children and young people. We trust the information in ERO's evaluations will help them in their work.

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Contents

Executive summary

All students coming from Year 8 should expect to be successful at secondary school. A good start at secondary school is essential to this success and will help students achieve the foundation skills necessary for future wellbeing, training and employment. Transition to secondary school is not a one-off activity. It is a process that enables students, their parents, whānau and aiga to work in partnership with the school to help learners develop a sense of belonging and the confidence to participate within new contexts.

Education Review Office (ERO) reports and research from other agencies have found six factors that contribute to successful transitions. Effective secondary schools focus on:

- understanding the features and importance of education transition
- preparing well for successful transitions
- providing additional support for vulnerable students
- using effective transition processes
- introducing a curriculum that responds to the diversity of their students
- ongoing monitoring and review of transition processes.

Education transitions

Students' wellbeing and learning must be maintained as they transition from primary to secondary schools. A student's transition can be complicated by the social, emotional and physiological changes that can negatively impact on their learning. Teachers that understand how these changes impact on their students are better placed to help students make positive adjustments to their new school, and smoothly proceed with their learning in a new setting.

Preparing for successful transitions

Staff at both primary and secondary schools have important roles supporting the transitions of all students. Primary schools are responsible for preparing students academically and socially for secondary schools and sharing information with the student, families, whānau and the receiving school. The values, ethical orientation or culture within a secondary school is fundamental to how well it welcomes and supports students.

Support for vulnerable students

New Zealand students who are most vulnerable include Māori, Pacific, those with special education needs and those from low income families. These students and some with poor self esteem or few friends often require specific structures or approaches that are tailored to their individual circumstances. Successful approaches start early and include a range of people to support these students including parents, whānau and agia, other agencies that have worked with the student, a pastoral support team from the school and leaders and teachers from their previous school.

Using effective transition processes

Transition to secondary school is more complex than just developing orientation processes for students to become familiar with the school's environment, personnel and programmes. The time students take to transition varies for individual students and is dependent on how long each one takes to feel they are included and are learning. Relationships with and between teachers and students are critical in the transition process. Relationships and communication with parents, whānau and aiga, and the community are also important during transition.

Responsive curriculum

Transitions are more successful when students' learning is seamless as they move from primary to secondary schools. Students are more likely to stay at school, engage with learning and achieve secondary qualification when they experience a curriculum that has meaning for them. Teachers who find out about and focus on students' achievement levels, interests, cultural background, strengths and needs can provide such meaningful curriculum.

Monitoring and review

Two key self-review activities can assist secondary schools develop or improve transition processes. Firstly, teachers and deans can monitor how well individual students have adjusted and are making good progress. They do this by talking with the student, their parents, whānau and aiga and their other teachers and by checking the individual's assessment and attendance data. Secondly, the school can consider how well they are ensuring each student experiences a successful transition through their strategic self review using Year 9 and school-wide data.

Introduction

The period of schooling commonly referred to as the middle years (Years 7 to 10) can be particularly challenging for many students. Firstly, it is in these years that many students face the increased social, emotional and physiological changes of adolescence. Secondly, the period coincides with many students moving from primary to secondary school. While students report that moving to secondary school is something they are looking forward to (Kennedy & Cox, 2008), the primary to secondary transition period can for some students mean greater than usual disruption to learning (Hawk & Hill, 2004) and engagement (Wylie, Hodgen & Ferral, 2006).

The New Zealand Curriculum has a vision for young people to be confident, connected, actively involved and lifelong learners. Having the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level 2 or an equivalent qualification gives people the foundation skills they need to have better opportunities for further education, employment, health outcomes, and a better quality of life. The New Zealand Government is committed to increasing the number of students achieving qualifications, with a target of 85% of all 18 year olds having NCEA Level 2 or equivalent in 2017. To do this, we need to reduce the numbers of students leaving schools without a qualification. Effective transitions are an important part of this process. Schools need ongoing and different approaches to respond to the diversity of all the students that transition to their school.

Young people who do not experience school support during the transition from primary to secondary school are at greater risk of disengaging from learning. The most vulnerable of these students are those who do not have a history of successful primary education, students with learning difficulties, and those from low income families. There are likely to be serious implications for their achievement, employment prospects, and wellbeing if they are not well supported through their transition to secondary education.

Transitions are not just a defined period of time in which specific orientation activities are put in place to support students to know about school systems, their teachers and their peers. ERO has found that transitions are most successful for students where there is a school-wide culture that progressively supports students to adapt to the ongoing educational and social changes at secondary school. Transitions take time, and students respond differently as they adjust to a changed environment, teachers and peers.

ERO has identified that information gathered at transition from primary to secondary school was not generally used well by teachers to identify what students already knew, and what teachers and students needed to work on next (Education Review Office, 2012c). This report, *Evaluation at a Glance: Transitions from Primary to Secondary School* is intended to help schools introduce practices that are likely to help students adjust and succeed when they transition to secondary school. The report combines current research and findings from recent ERO reports.

Methodology

Thirteen ERO national evaluation reports were analysed for this report. National evaluation reports make use of information gathered through regular education reviews of schools or early childhood services, or by specialist review teams. They present a perspective on what is happening nationally with identified aspects of educational practice that are of particular interest to ERO, the Ministry of Education and other education agencies.

For this report, ERO undertook a literature search to ascertain information on transitions from ERO's previous work, and what other researchers or agencies have found. Key issues and recurrent themes were identified, with a particular lens on how schools' processes and practices support students to quickly build on previous learning when they moved from primary to secondary education.

The ERO reports used for this analysis and the research included in this report are listed in Appendix 1.

Transition from Primary to Secondary School

Students' wellbeing and learning must be maintained as they transition from primary to secondary schools. A student's transition can be complicated by the social, emotional and physiological changes that can negatively impact on their learning. Teachers that understand how these changes impact on their students are better placed to help students make positive adjustments to their new school. This section shares research that explains transitions.

Understanding education transitions

What are education transitions?

Most students make many transitions in their school lives. They do so when they:

- begin early childhood education and care services
- start school
- change year levels within a school
- transfer from one school to another
- shift from primary school to intermediate school, and on to secondary school
- move from secondary school to further education, training and employment (Ministry of Education, 2010).

When students change class within or between schools, they must adjust to new surroundings, become familiar with new teachers and peers, learn new ways of working, and make sense of the rules and routines that operate in their classes (Sanders et al, 2005). While students are navigating the formal school environment, they are also adjusting to the social changes that happen when changing schools and classes.

Transitions and adolescent development

The transition to secondary school often coincides with important social, emotional and physiological changes in the lives of adolescents. The National Middle School Association (1995) identifies five key aspects occurring when adolescents move from childhood to adulthood that are useful to consider when thinking about the provision for students at transitions. The table below outlines the changes ERO has observed and includes possible implications for schools' practices.[1]

Aspects	Characteristic	Implications
Intellectual	Young adolescent learners are curious, motivated to achieve when challenged, and capable of critical and complex thinking	Students have opportunities to be curious and to have their thinking extended and challenged.
Social	Young adolescent learners have an	Students' need to be social

[1] It should be noted that there is no typical adolescent, and that their growth is rapid and uneven across development aspects – see Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989, p. 8)

	intense need to belong and be accepted by their peers while finding their own place in the world. They are involved in forming and questioning their identities on many different levels.	and to know about themselves, is met through a culturally responsive programme and a classroom culture that celebrates diversity.
Physical	Young adolescent learners mature at varying rates and go through rapid and irregular physical growth, with bodily changes that can cause awkward and uncoordinated movements.	The programme caters well for students' needs to be physically active.
Emotional and psychological	Young adolescent learners are vulnerable and self conscious, and often experience unpredictable mood swings	Teachers are sensitive to the emotional and psychological changes that are happening to students.
Moral	With their new sense of the larger world around them, young adolescent learners are idealistic and want to have an impact on making the world a better place.	There are opportunities for students to participate in decision-making that affects their life within the school.

The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989) asserts that students' academic failure can be partially accounted for by the mismatch between the schools organisational structure and curriculum and the intellectual, social, physical, and emotional needs of adolescents. Schools should be thinking about the wellbeing and learning needs of adolescents and responding appropriately to the changes that are taking place for this age group (Ministry of Education, 2010). As part of this response to adolescent students, schools should identify which groups of students are most at risk. Some of the threats to students' successful adaption to school might be as a result of 'normal' adolescent change. Other threats might be environmental. In either case, there are practices that schools can use to pave the way for students.

Why the Primary to Secondary Transition matters

Students need to make positive adjustments to their new school and classes so that their wellbeing is maintained and their learning is coherent and continuous. McGee et al (2003) found that there was a strong correlation between the extent to which students experienced difficulty following transition and their likelihood of dropping out from education. Other research indicates that poor transitions impact on students' wellbeing and on their achievement in the future. (West et al, 2008). Where students experience multiple transitions because of transience, there are identifiable negative impacts on their achievement.

In its research on transitions in New Zealand secondary schools, the Ministry of Education (2010, p. 17) found that unsettled transition behaviours could be attributed to:

- disruptions of social networks, both with teachers and with peers
- less individual attention from teachers at secondary school because of the way secondary schools are organised, making personalised relationships between teachers and learners more difficult to achieve
- Year 9 students 'testing the boundaries' as part of adjusting to the new school and growing up
- inappropriate classroom placements of some students in relation to their learning and/or social needs, diminishing the student's self-concept and ability to cope well
- less responsive teacher pedagogy leading to student disinterest and lack of engagement
- peer pressure from other students resulting in skipping classes, decreased desire to do well in academic work, smoking, drinking, using drugs, and general misbehaviour.

What do successful transitions look like for students?

From New Zealand literature on transitions, ERO identified 12 aspects that indicate students have made successful transitions (Peters, 2010), (Kennedy and Cox, 2008).

Students feel that:

- they belong in their new school, and are well included in school activities and programmes
- they are positively connected to their peers, other students in the school, and to their teachers
- their teachers know them, including their strengths, interests and learning needs, and show they are interested in them
- their teachers understand the importance of their language, culture and identity
- they have a sense of purpose in being at school
- they have an understanding and commitment to their learning pathway through their schooling and beyond
- they are making progress
- their current learning follows on from their previous learning (the curriculum is connected and continuous) and is appropriately challenging
- learning is interesting, relevant and is fun
- their families have been included in decisions
- they are physically and emotionally safe
- they have opportunities to try new, exciting things and/or extend their particular skills/interests (eg, through extra-curricular activities).

How well students respond to the changes is largely dependent on two key aspects – students' personal resources and coping skills (such as their acquisition of the Key

Competencies described in *The New Zealand Curriculum* framework);[2] and the school culture into which students transition. Schools can support students to make successful transitions by helping them to develop a sense of themselves as competent and capable beings characterised by:

- a 'can-do' attitude
- a sense of self capability
- Resourcefulness
- resilience
- strategies to deal with challenges
- independence
- skills relating to others such as listening actively, being tolerant and cooperation
- a sense of contribution to school and community.

Preparing for successful transitions

Staff at both primary and secondary schools have important roles supporting the transitions of all students. Primary schools are responsible for preparing students academically and socially for secondary schools and sharing information with the student, families, whānau and the receiving school. The values, ethical orientation or culture within a secondary school is fundamental to how well it welcomes and supports students.

This section provides an overview of these processes. It also includes a discussion of broad, cultural features of a secondary school that help to transition all learners effectively. The following section builds on the features discussed here and provides a more detailed description of the types of activities that specifically support vulnerable students.

Overall, the evidence from ERO's evaluations as well as that from wider education research suggests that leaders and teachers in contributing and receiving schools should carry out the following to support student transitions to secondary school. Teachers and leaders should:

- ensure that students experience success in their learning so they stay engaged in education
- identify vulnerable students before their entry into the secondary school, and as they transition between classes in a secondary school
- proactively address any likely threats to students' wellbeing and academic progress such as putting in place learning and pastoral care support for students
- have processes in place to monitor the wellbeing and progress of all students, (especially vulnerable students)
- continue to offer support to students throughout the year (not just in the initial weeks)

[2] The Key Competencies are: Thinking; Using language, symbols, and texts; Managing Self; Relating to Others; Participating and contributing

- ensure that support for students is inclusive of the appropriate specialist personnel, parents, whānau and aiga
- make plans for the sustainable wellbeing and progress for students (including helping students to acquire the Key Competencies of *The New Zealand Curriculum*, as well as positive dispositions to school and learning)
- adopt a responsive and solutions-oriented approach to working through issues of students not adjusting to their new school.

Creating a school culture focused on successful transitions

A school's values, ethical orientation or culture are fundamental to how well it welcomes and supports students. Leaders are typically important in introducing a culture that accepts responsibility for meeting student needs and developing flexible and innovative responses to all students' learning and wellbeing.

In *Including Students With High Needs* (ERO, 2010a) ERO noted that ethical leadership was one of three features of a positive school culture. The most inclusive schools operated under three key principles:

- having ethical standards and leadership that built the culture of an inclusive school
- having well-organised systems, effective teamwork and constructive relationships that identified and supported the inclusion of students with high needs
- using innovative and flexible practices that managed the complex and unique challenges related to including students with high needs.

Other ERO reports that discuss the importance of school culture and leadership in relation to either student transitions, or their wider social and educational needs, includes *Good Practice in Alternative Education* (ERO, 2010b), and *Managing Transience: Good Practice in Primary Schools* (ERO, 2007).

Hawk and Hill (2004, p. 19) echo the importance of leadership and school culture, especially for student transitions, stating 'it is what the adults, and teachers in particular, do, that makes the difference'. Achieving positive transition outcomes requires schools to be coherent in their approaches to students' wellbeing and academic outcomes. This coherence is achieved by:

- developing a whole-school approach to supporting students as they come into the school, and as they move through year levels in the school
- involving students and the community in policy and practice decisions that relate to transition initiatives
- incorporating transition practices into curriculum, and teaching and learning programmes
- looking for synergies between transitions and the school's overall approach to promoting students health, wellbeing and learning.

In practical terms achieving the above involves leaders working with staff to decide on, and implement practices that support students when they come into the school, *and* as they move through the school. To increase the likelihood that policies and practices serve students well, they should be developed, and reviewed, with

appropriate input from those most affected by the transition process –students and their parents.

The school curriculum provides good opportunities to build students' capacities to adapt well during transitions. For example, curriculum and teaching approaches can incorporate opportunities for students to develop resilience, self management, communication skills and strategies for dealing with challenges.

Preparation by the contributing school

Year 8 teachers have a significant role in providing a seamless learning transition into secondary school. The Ministry of Education publication, *Easing the Transition from Primary to Secondary Schooling: Helpful information for schools to consider* (Ministry of Education, 2010, p.25-30) outlines a comprehensive list of processes that contribute to smooth transitions. These are:

- setting up visits to the secondary school prior to students' entry
- helping parents to manage the enrolment documentation so they can enrol their children early
- teachers introducing students to approaches to learning they may encounter at secondary school. This includes providing an introduction to a more challenging curriculum
- communicating transition information to families
- sharing accurate information with the secondary school, including information about students that might be of concern
- ensuring that students have strong learning foundations, and have developed self-efficacy skills (e.g. planning, organising skills)
- preparing students for a new school culture (e.g. discipline, class work, homework)
- listening to students' concerns about going to secondary school
- encouraging students to be positive about change and to take up new challenges
- providing tailored opportunities for social and academic development.
- helping students to step up to leadership positions that help them to be independent and confident.

These steps are designed to demystify secondary school and minimise the shock students might feel when they move from a smaller environment, where they are senior, and well known, to a larger less personalised context. Cole (2005) suggests that secondary schools could be more responsive to middle years' students by reducing the number of teachers they must deal with and delivering a more personalised curriculum.

Responding to student expectations

Students' expectations about secondary school and their experiences often differ. Ministry of Education research (2010) found that some students looked forward to having option subjects because they thought they would be interesting and fun, but did not find this to be the case. For example, students expected science to be full of interesting experiments and were disappointed when their programme only included

theory, book learning and note taking. Some students found that the lunchtimes they thought would be as enjoyable as they had been at primary were challenging because students were uneasy about claiming a place in the school grounds for activities with the older students around. As part of their transition processes, schools should explore with students the expectations they have of their new schools, and consider how these can be acknowledged.

Ministry of Education research (2010, p. 17) found that students experienced mixed feelings about their transition to their new school. Many Year 8 students were anxious (albeit often excited as well) about moving to secondary school. Wylie, Hodgen & Ferral (2006) reported that some students were apprehensive about "negative social climates and work that would be too hard to do".[3] Most students also felt that there were or would be beneficial aspects of their move to secondary schooling. These included:

- increased and/or different sorts of opportunities to socialise with peers, and to meet new people
- having defined subject areas and being able to move around the school for their classes
- learning new things, being challenged
- being able to choose interesting, fun option subjects
- extra-curricular activity
- having the chance to work with a range of teachers with whom they can form positive relationships.

Schools with successful transitions align their approaches to fostering students' wellbeing and learning (such as pastoral care systems, mentorship, careers services and learning support programmes) with their planning for transition support. They take stock of what is already happening that could be adapted to improve the transition experiences of students.

The following is a case study from a co-education secondary school.[4] It is illustrative of one approach to supporting students to make successful adjustments to school.

> *The school has a changing profile, with 40% of the students new to the school in any given year. Only 50% of students by Year 12 started at the school in Year 9. Many students enrol in Years 11, 12 and 13 and year level numbers increase between Years 9 and 13. A significant number of students previously disengaged from education enrol at this school.*
> *An innovative class structure in the junior school provides opportunity for teachers to work together to provide students with an integrated*

[3] Interestingly, about one third of students found that they were going over work that they had done in their primary schools. This indicates that some secondary schools could use achievement information better to provide programmes that matched students' learning needs

[4] This information is sourced from the school's latest education review report available on ERO's website www.ero.govt.nz

curriculum. The timetable is flexible to enable teachers to team plan and teach. Thus maximising opportunities to support individual students' learning.

Teachers in the junior school effectively support students' academic and pastoral needs at all levels of the school. Participation by all staff, including the principal and other senior managers, in the small groups provides a high adult/student ratio. This enables students to be closely monitored and individually mentored with a particular focus on support for Māori students. Teachers supervise individual students to reflect weekly on their progress and learning. There is a particular focus on their development of the key competencies from The New Zealand Curriculum. This progress is recorded on digital learning logs. Junior students share these digital records with parents and whānau at student-led conferences.

A well-coordinated pastoral care and guidance network effectively monitors student wellbeing. Deans follow their year groups through from Years 9 to 13 and they know students well. Their weekly student-focused meetings include senior leaders, guidance counsellors and Learning Services staff. Students at risk of not achieving are identified and an appropriate key worker is assigned to address their specific needs. Māori students' progress as a target group is reviewed and tracked in order to promote their success and achievement.

What is clear from this example is the extent to which the teachers and leaders had thoughtfully incorporated a pastoral care approach across many systems in the school with the purpose of supporting students to learn and feel a sense of wellbeing. The systems included and linked curriculum design and management, interactions between staff and students, interactions between staff members, assessment, reporting and learning.

Support for vulnerable students

New Zealand students who are most vulnerable include Māori, Pacific, those with special education needs and those from low income families. These students and some with poor self-esteem or few friends often require specific structures or approaches that are tailored to their individual circumstances. Successful approaches start early and include a range of people to support these students including parent, whānau and aiga, other agencies that have worked with the student a pastoral support team from the school, and leaders and teachers from their previous school.

Students with lower abilities and students with low self image or poor self-esteem are at risk of not successfully transitioning to secondary school (West et al, 2008). Some of these students may already have a history of schooling that undermines a positive sense of themselves as learners. Some teachers may also find it difficult to relate to these students and establish positive learning relationships. Some of these students may need particular health and support strategies to be working before they can become fully engaged in schooling. There can also be factors outside of school that can impact on a student's engagement with school.

ERO's evaluation of school responses about vulnerable students suggests that high quality pastoral systems, supportive relationships within the school, links with families, and connections with other support agencies can be vital in ensuring that these students establish and maintain the idea that they will succeed at school. The connections that schools develop with other agencies can be especially effective in supporting families to deal with social, health, financial and accommodation issues that can affect a student's transition.

The teamwork and collaboration between schools, families and other agencies has been observed by ERO in a variety of settings. In *Including Students with High Needs* (ERO, 2010a), ERO identified the following practices as effective in transitioning students into a primary school. These practices can apply to students with high needs moving from primary to secondary school. The practices ERO identified are:

- having pre-entry visits to the school over one or two terms (for students and their family)
- having meetings between the staff of the new school and the previous education setting
- drawing on the expertise of [in full] GSE and other agencies working with the student and family
- putting into place, ahead of time, any necessary building or equipment needs
- hiring and training teacher aides that can quickly support the specific high needs of the young person
- ensuring the individual student's education plan was completed with short and longer term goals established.

ERO also identified teamwork as a key aspect in the transition of students from alternative education (AE) back into mainstream schooling. In 2011, ERO published *Alternative Education: Schools and Providers* which combined the 2010 report *Good Practice in Alternative Education* (ERO, 2010b) with *Secondary Schools and Alternative Education*. . In examining transitions from alternative education back to mainstream secondary schools ERO considered the extent to which:

- the student's whānau, family or caregivers were involved in the development of the transition plan
- there were suitable strategies for helping the student to successfully transition from AE
- the exit transition included clear roles and responsibilities for those supporting the student
- support from external agencies was coordinated (e.g. for any ongoing health and welfare issues of the student)
- the exit transition was based on the progress students had made in AE.

Where these transitions worked well ERO found that staff from schools and AE providers worked together to discuss a student's strengths and needs and planned for his or her ongoing development. There were high levels of commitment to attaining the best possible outcomes for students. Families were involved in these processes, as were the deans, counsellors, mentor teachers and form teachers who directly

supported a student returning to school. At one school students were placed in the form class of the AE coordinator because of the positive relationship that had already been developed. At another school a student was placed in a form group with the school's careers counsellor, who also taught a life skills programme on the student's timetable.

ERO's findings about transition outcomes mirror those found in other research settings. Wylie et al (2006), commenting on vulnerable students in New Zealand, state:

> *There are signs of a growing mismatch and discontent with schools among the lower-income group, and overlapping that to some extent, among attending low-decile schools. There were indications that students in these [low decile] groups were aware that they may not be doing as well as they would like...We sees some of these trends, but not to the same extent, among Māori and Pacific students. In our sample, Year 10 Māori and Pacific boys seemed more likely to experience decreases in performance.*

Evidence also shows that it is crucial that students experience success in their primary schools *before* they come to secondary school. Students with a history of poor success and social difficulty are at great risk of disengagement from learning and subsequent lower achievement levels. Kennedy and Cox (2008) state that the more vulnerable students in terms of transitions are those:

- who had difficulty with their studies when they arrived at secondary school and who mostly continued to find class work too challenging
- who were particularly upset by disruption to their friendships from previous years
- who did not find it easy to develop successful relationships with other students or interact well with teachers or other adults.

Hawk and Hill (2004), reporting on a cluster of Christchurch schools trialling a transition programme,[5] noted that the target students (26% of the total intake into the secondary school) lacked a range of skills and dispositions that were crucial to their successful transition to secondary school. These included students who had poor social and organisational skills, lacked social and learning independence, and had behavioural issues. Information gathered from these students showed that many had misconceptions about secondary school life.

Most of the students' social and organisational issues mentioned above relate to the Key Competencies of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Schools could prepare vulnerable students by actively helping them to acquire the Key Competencies through the curriculum they provide. These students should also be encourage to undertake some of the extra-curricular opportunities that the school has to offer so they develop good relationships with their peers and increase their connection to their new school (Ministry of Education, 2010).

[5] The Resource Teacher Learning and Behaviour organised support for these students that included students, their whānau/families, the Year 9 dean and the Special Education Advisor.

Using effective transition processes

The transition to secondary school is more complex than just developing orientation processes for students to become familiar with the school's environment, personnel and programmes. The time students take to transition varies for individual students and is dependent on how long they take to feel they are included and are learning. Relationships with and between teachers and students are critical in the transition process. Relationships and communication with parents, whānau and aiga, and groups within the community are also important during transition.

Transition processes

Many schools follow a set of transition procedures when students move from primary to secondary school. These procedures are based on an assumption about the period of time students will take to settle into their new schools. The state of being 'settled' is a somewhat contested notion and evidence suggests that transitions are more complex than teachers may think. For instance, Ministry of Education research indicates that while most students felt they had adjusted well after some weeks in their first year of secondary school, later in the year it became evident that these same students had experienced many ups and downs as they adjusted (Ministry of Education, 2010).

It is essential that schools think about transitions as processes of adaption that students and teachers have go through, rather than as an event defined by a typically short period of time. Wylie et al's (2006) research found that students were still adapting to their new environment many months after they had entered Year 9. However long the adjustment period is, teachers should be aware that transitions typically mean substantial change for students that can divert their attention from their learning. Helping students to make sense of what is happening, and supporting the change is critical to minimising interruptions to their education.

Dockett and Perry (2001) draw the distinction between 'orientation to school' and 'transition to school'. The former process has a procedural focus in which students and parents become familiar with the school environment, meet school personnel, and find out about aspects of the programme. While these activities are important features of helping students to adjust, they should not be the extent of schools' provisions for transitioning students. Students can take varying lengths of time to adjust, and are likely to have different needs during this adjustment. It is useful for schools to view their role in supporting transitions in terms of the provision of pastoral and academic care systems developed as part of an ethic of care and responsibility for students.

Good pastoral care is a fundamental aspect of effective schools. While many secondary schools have a formal pastoral care provision, ERO suggests that pastoral care is something that is integral to all aspects of the culture in the school, including wellbeing, curriculum content, teaching and learning.

Pastoral care is not the only element critical to adjustment during transition to secondary school. Many students have to adjust to the different expectations of teachers in relation to their learning within different classes and subjects, finding work too difficult or not challenging enough, learning how to cope with homework

assignments, and in particular, managing to juggle timelines for multiple assignments from different teachers.

Connectedness and inclusion

According to the Youth 07 report (Adolescent Health Research Group, 2009), school environments have been shown to influence a range of health, emotional wellbeing, social and academic outcomes. One of the most influential aspects of school environments is the extent to which students feel connected while they are at school (Jose and Pryor, 2010). In the Youth 07 study, connectedness was defined in terms of students feeling that they:

- belonged
- felt included (regardless of their ethnicity, ability, gender or sexual orientation)
- had a contribution to make to the school
- were cared for by their teachers
- were accepted by their friends
- were physically and emotionally safe
- were learning.

In their research on social connectedness and psychological wellbeing, Jose and Pryor (2010, p.30) found that the degree of belongingness, being valued, and valuing other people is predictive one year later of higher levels of wellbeing. The researchers claim that connectedness 'acts as a protective factor for adolescent health and development'. This indicates that if schools foster connectedness through their transition processes there are likely to be substantial benefits for students.

The following case study illustrates how a school developed a culture that nurtured students' sense of connectedness and belonging. The case study is from *Boys Education: Good Practice in Secondary Schools* (ERO, 2008a).

> *School A is a large, urban, mid decile, Year 9 to 13 boys' school located in a big city. It has a multi-ethnic roll made up of approximately 30 percent Pākeha/European, 15 percent Māori, and over 30 percent of students from Pacific ethnicities. The remaining 25 percent represent other ethnic backgrounds.*
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> *The school's vertical form classes and the regular house competitions support the positive relationships evident throughout the school. Of central importance is the school's culture of 'big brother little brother'. Everyday interactions between students are consistently framed by the concept of senior students supporting junior students. This approach has meant that there are low levels of bullying at the school and the relationships between senior and junior students are predominantly nurturing and supportive. Students told ERO that the school's reputation for safe and positive interactions between boys has encouraged many fa'afafine students to enrol at this school.*
>
> *Positive senior-junior interactions amongst boys have also been supported through the school's peer support programme. Year 13 boys*

have been given good quality training in how to support their 'little brothers'. Each year, Year 13 boys use their training as the basis of the way they organise a camp to induct Year 9 boys. Most Year 13 boys also use one of their weekly study periods to support junior students in class. In addition, the school has recently started a paired reading programme that involves Year 13 boys taking time out from a study period to read with a junior student.

The ERO report also notes:

Belonging involved creating an atmosphere where boys felt connected to the traditions, events, staff and students of the school. In turn, a sense of belonging enabled boys to commit to life at the school and to value their involvement in learning, sporting and cultural activities.

In *Including Students with High Needs* (ERO, 2010) schools were also innovative in facilitating the social context for students with high needs. Some students with high needs required additional support to develop friendships at school. At the most inclusive schools teachers and teacher aides had developed student networks oaround students with high needs to promote their social inclusion in the school. At some schools this involved developing a lunchtime and interval buddy system. One school established a friendship group who worked with the student to help him learn how to relate to his peers.

Below is a list of practical steps for helping students to manage their social relationships and for fostering their sense of connectedness. Most are sourced from Ministry of Education (2010) and Pereira and Pooley (2007).

Practical steps for managing social relationships and fostering a sense of connectedness

Placing a more social focus on orientation processes by:

- building into orientation activities opportunities for students to interact with their peers or with teachers in non-academic activities e.g. out-of-class, teambuilding activities for the first few days with participation by deans and form teachers; providing students with an orientation hand/workbook where they are provided with key information and complete activities which increase their knowledge of their new school
- students meeting with their new teachers before they begin at the school e.g. open days for Year 8 students after the seniors have left for the year; visits by deans and some teachers to the students' Year 8 schools; encouraging students during these visits to talk about their concerns about secondary school
- setting up long term social support activities such as peer support programmes e.g. allocation of 'buddy' students; senior students involved in an orientation/team building programme; some senior students accompany deans on feeder school visits
- encouraging students to become involved in sport, arts and other extra- curricular activities (ECA) e.g. surveying incoming students on their

ECA interests and then facilitating their involvement; orientation programme 'expo' on ECA activities

Establishing school processes that focus on students' emotional and social wellbeing such as:

- deans knowing about vulnerable students ahead of their arrival at the school e.g. deans meet with Year 8 teachers to gather information about such students; deans brief form and class teachers
- deans working with vulnerable students e.g. early face-to-face contact with students who have been identified, with regular follow-up and monitoring
- implementing processes for monitoring all students e.g. regular meetings of Year level teachers and deans to discuss students causing concern
- preparing students by explaining that their social relationships might change e.g. Year 8 teachers have a role in this as part of alleviating anxiety about the transition process
- teaching students about how to manage unpleasant encounters e.g. Year 8 teachers have a role in this; ongoing support at secondary school as part of the health programme, including role playing; forms part of a structured programme for form meetings
- integrating into the curriculum opportunities for social learning. e.g. providing opportunities for cooperative learning.

Belonging in the peer group

Kennedy and Cox (2008) found that having friends at the new school helped students to settle. Before transition some students were concerned that they would not make friends at their new school. While students often found that their friends were not always in their classes, this did not appear to be a problem for them as most of them had made new friends. For some students who had previously not made many friends, the move to secondary school meant that they could meet up with like-minded other students who shared their interests.

The implication of this is that teachers need to be aware of the students for whom there is a concern about acceptance in the peer group. Knowing about vulnerable students ahead of time will help schools to know how they can best support these students to make new friends.

Pereira and Pooley's study noted that adolescent social relationships were a key area of focus for students and were 'a long term adjustment issue' (Pereira and Pooley, 2007, p166). The strongest motivation for students was to belong to the peer group, and social and emotional issues often took precedence over academic attainment. Pereira and Pooley concluded that 'developing a deeper understanding of the importance of social relationships in the school context, particularly in relation to sense of belonging, could benefit the academic function of schools' (Pereira and Pooley, 2007, p.172).

Relationships

Relationships are the most critical factor in the transition process. Wylie et al (2006) found that relationships with others were a significant reason that students felt that they settled and that they belonged at the school. Relationships and connectedness to peers, teachers and the school, are strongly linked to students' motivation, engagement and attendance that in turn impact on academic achievement and student wellbeing (Joselowsky, 2007).

Teacher and student relationships

The relationships students have with their teachers are of critical importance to students' ability to do well at school. Research indicates that most Year 9 students reported they liked many of their teachers and felt that their teachers cared about them. This is despite the fact that they often had fewer opportunities to build the kind of close relationships they had with their teachers at primary school due to the compartmentalisation of subject areas and the school timetable.

Students' views of a subject area (specifically the way this was taught) were strongly linked to their feelings about the teacher. Students valued teachers who could connect with their world view. They particularly appreciated it when teachers made learning interesting, understood and enjoyed them as teenagers, and had a sense of humour (Ministry of Education, 2010).

Bishop's (2007) research on Te Kōtahitanga emphasizes the importance of reciprocal and respectful relationships between students and teachers. Central to these relationships are the principles of Manaakitanga (building and nurturing a supportive, loving environment), Ngā Whakapiringatanga (the creation of a secure and well managed learning environment), Wānanga (engaging in effective teaching interactions with Māori students as Māori) and Ako (using a range of strategies that promote effective teaching interactions and relationships with their learners). In classrooms:

- decision-making is shared by teachers and students
- learners' cultural knowledge is valued
- learning is interactive and includes conversations between learners and teachers
- teachers are connected, and accountable to their students, students' whānau and communities
- there is a shared vision and agenda for promoting excellence in Māori education.

These principles are clearly indicated in practice in the ERO case study included in this report.

Building relationships with parents and communities

Parents, whānau and aiga are key players in the transition process. Blatchford et al (2008) state: "The extent and quality of communication amongst ... schools and families has shown to impact considerably in successful transition". Findings from research carried out by the Ministry of Education, however, show that about a third of teachers had no contact with parents during the year. Disappointingly, teachers were "more likely to have had infrequent contact with the parents of low achieving students" (Ministry of Education, 2010, p.114).

In *Partners in Learning: Parents' Voices* (ERO, 2008b), ERO highlighted what parents expected schools would do in terms of engaging them in a partnership. The perspectives were gathered from Māori, Pacific, refugee and migrant parents, and parents of children with special needs. The findings show that parents:

- regardless of their background, had high expectations of schools, especially of the teachers whom they expected to help their children achieve success (across a range of aspects) and be engaged in learning
- parents wanted to have good relationships with school personnel and this was particularly so for minority groups where the potential to feel marginalised was more apparent.
- desired two-way sharing of information, and having good access to someone to talk with
- wished to be valued and to be involved
- appreciated teachers who valued the cultural backgrounds of their children, and created opportunities for their culture to be celebrated
- valued guidance and support about how to help their children
- enjoyed being involved with the school (for example, in supporting the learning programme)

These aspects were also found in the Ministry of Education research (2010) that emphasised parents needed to know about what was happening for their children at school, whether there were any discipline issues, and how they were progressing and achieving. The research indicated that while some parents thought their children were achieving well in some subjects, this was sometimes not the case. Exacerbating the communication gap were issues of language, lack of time for communication face to face, parents' own negative histories of schooling, and a cultural belief that education was the school's responsibility (and not that of parents). Further compounding the problem was that these issues were found to be more prevalent amongst lower socio-economic communities – the very communities where a learning and wellbeing-focused partnership could be most beneficial for vulnerable students.

In *Partners in Learning: Parents Voices* (ERO, 2008b) parents of children with special needs expected that their child (and family) would be valued as part of the school community and treated with respect. Parents expected schools to welcome their child for his or her difference. They felt that engagement was enhanced when staff were approachable, accessible, and interested in them and their child.

Being part of an inclusive school community where difference was accepted was a key factor supporting parent engagement. When their initial contact with their child's school was welcoming and reassuring, it was easier for parents to feel comfortable about coming to school.

In *Partners in Learning: Schools' Engagement with Parents Whānau and Communities* (ERO, 2008c), ERO noted that transition processes were pivotal in the development of positive relationships. Contact on or before the first day of school established the link between home and school. Many parents confirmed the importance of feeling welcome, particularly on their first contact with the school, and praised school personnel such as office or reception staff for making this happen.

Parents liked to be well informed and have opportunities to meet a range of school personnel. Parents benefited from effective transition processes that quickly enabled them to become part of the school community.

In some secondary schools, ERO found enrolment and transition practices were a key part of establishing successful partnerships. Orientation activities included all students and their parents, and these helped to reduce anxiety and strengthen relationships.

> *Transition to Year 9 begins at the end of Year 8. An interview is held involving the principal, student and their parents/whānau/families. This is followed by a phone call from the dean and tutor teacher. Prior to the start of school, students receive a letter, calendar and newsletter. Parents feel involved, know what to expect and have met or spoken to some key personnel at school. They begin to form positive relationships with staff. Students are welcomed and generally settle well into their new school.* Decile 4, urban secondary school

Some secondary schools established and sustained partnerships with parents, whanau and families through staff being accessible, personal contact, special events and celebrations, and community meetings and activities.

Ministry of Education interviews with whānau members, teachers, and leaders in eight schools with successful relationships with whānau, showed a real belief that whānau can understand educational practices and support their child's learning. (Ministry of Education. Ruia Tools 2012). School leaders actively planned for relationship building and parent and whānau-friendly engagement processes included the selection of times, approaches, and venues for engagement.

In *Education on the East Coast: Schools and Kura Kaupapa Māori* (ERO, 2011) ERO found that a school's strong partnership with the wider community contributed to the sustainability of good practice in many schools and kura. A significant feature was how well the relationships with parents and whānau and the wider community were developing and strengthening. Most schools were supported strongly by their community and had developed a clear sense of identity, including valuing and acknowledging the historical, cultural and physical aspects of the community. Commitment to shared values and desire for their children to be part of the tradition and the future of the school was evident. Whānau valued the longstanding, inter-generational connections with schools and were proud of their school and its achievements.

Practical steps for building relations with parents and communities, and to facilitate students' transition into secondary school include:

- individual meetings with parents as part of the enrolment process to gain a better understanding of students' needs
- meetings with parents as a group at the feeder schools to explain what to expect and to help them support their students through the transition
- inviting parents to an orientation powhiri
- form teachers ringing all students' homes during the first fortnight of the school year to introduce themselves

Responsive curriculum

Transitions are more successful when students' learning is seamless as they move from primary to secondary schools. Students are also more likely to stay at school, engage with learning and achieve secondary qualification when they experience a curriculum that has meaning for them. Teachers who find out about and focus on students' achievement levels, interests, cultural background, strengths and needs can provide such a meaningful curriculum.

The New Zealand Curriculum expects teachers to ensure that a student's journey through school 'connects well with the next ... [and lays] a foundation for living and for further learning' (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 41). It is critical that students experience seamlessness in their learning as they transition from their primary to secondary school. While a degree of discontinuity is to be expected where students move from one physical environment to another, this can be minimised by:

- knowing students' interests, strengths and next steps well, their prior learning and areas where they experience difficulties in their learning, and using this information to ensure that learning programmes are appropriately challenging and engaging[6]
- working with students (and their parents, whānau or aiga) to plan learning pathways that progressively build students' knowledge and skills.

An important outcome of these processes is that students experience a curriculum that has meaning for them and this in turn leads to deeper engagement in their learning. In this context, engagement is defined as students' participation and intrinsic interest in learning (Akey, 2006), as well as their feelings of self capability and enjoyment of school and learning (Gibbs and Poskitt, 2010).

In these important years, students should encounter a curriculum that appropriately addresses their learning needs. Teachers must have an accurate and clear understanding of what each student can do, needs to learn next, and how this new learning will be achieved. This means teachers at contributing schools need to

[6] ERO's 2012 evaluation on year 9 and 10 students found that teachers were not using information about students' achievement, strengths and interests to develop a curriculum that met their learning needs (Education Review Office, 2012c).

provide secondary teachers with valid and reliable information that can be used to plan programmes for students coming into their classes.

In *Literacy and Mathematics in Years 9 and 10: Using Achievement Information to promote Success* (ERO, 2012c), ERO evaluated how schools sought and used achievement information at key transition points. ERO considered schools were highly effective when their practices:

- led to the exchange of useful information between teachers, school leaders and other relevant parties about the learning needs and strengths of all students
- resulted in the identification of learners who required additional help to progress to their full potential, and the subsequent development of appropriate programmes to meet their learning needs
- included occasions for students and their families to discuss and plan learning pathways through the school, and career possibilities beyond the school
- focused on all student groups (ethnic, gender, students with learning needs, students with disabilities and students who are gifted and talented)
- were reviewed to improve future transition approaches.

In *Literacy and Mathematics in Years 9 and 10: Using Achievement Information to promote Success* (ERO, 2012c) ERO found that some schools did not use the result from contributing schools. Instead they retested students[7]. Such retesting can create additional anxiety and a disruption to students learning.

Focusing on students' interests

Students are interested in learning when the curriculum connects to their prior achievement, is relevant, and they can learn something new and exciting (or in an exciting new way). Experiencing a curriculum that is interesting 'compels learners to invest time and effort" (Gibbs and Poskitt, 2010, p. 17) and is critical for short term learning and for developing students' disposition to be lifelong learners. Hattie's meta-analysis of 327 studies indicates that interest in learning (motivation) has a medium-high effect size (0.48) on student achievement. Hattie notes that it is 'highest when students are competent, have sufficient autonomy, set worthwhile goals, get feedback, and are affirmed by others' (Hattie, 2009).

When teachers know what students' interests are they can be incorporated into the programme. The interests become a springboard for the curriculum, and an especially powerful way to prevent vulnerable students from disengaging.

Knowing what students can do and planning future learning

While students' interests can provide the basis for an engaging programme, knowing students' strengths can help to shape teachers' work in setting the appropriate level of challenge for students. All students come to school with a 'virtual schoolbag' of competencies, experiences, knowledge and dispositions (Peters, 2010, p. 21). There is

[7] ERO has since found that some secondary school teachers were not aware of how to access Year 8 e-asTTle data for students enrolling at their school for Year 9. Advice about this process is included in Appendix 1 of this report.

significant value in building into transition processes opportunities for students and their teachers to explore the potential students have in relation to their learning.

Pathway planning is the formalised process of unpacking the 'virtual schoolbag' so that relevant and appropriate planning can happen with, and for, students. The critical point about knowing what students can do is that teachers can pitch new learning at a level where students experience success. Being successful helps students to stay engaged in learning. A history of failure leads to alienation from schooling. Many of the most vulnerable students have typically not experienced the success they need to keep them at school. Careful attention to planning appropriately pitched, yet challenging learning pathways as those students progress through the school might well make a substantial difference to their desire to learn.

The following example is from the ERO report *Careers Information and Guidance Education* (ERO, 2012a).

> *During Week 1 of Term 1 each student focuses on developing or reviewing their Learning Plan. At Years 9 and 10 there is a broader approach and the plan becomes more focused and specific as students move through Years 11, 12 and 13. Students spend a day on developing the plan during the first week of the school year and the students then have an additional three weeks to develop this plan. Teachers help individual students to:*
>
> *identify their passions*
>
> *refine these into more specific goals*
>
> *list their achievements to date*
>
> *identify what their next steps are in order to achieve their goals*
>
> *identify potential mentors for workplace internships (Years 11 – 13)*
>
> *list the 'big questions' they are still seeking answers for associated with their aspirations*
>
> *list subjects needed and numbers of credits they need to acquire*
>
> *develop indicators of success (how will I know I have achieved?)*

The following example illustrates the principle of partnerships and the attention to helping student achieve success at their level of ability right from the time they started secondary school.

> *The coordinated Careers Information and Guidance in Education processes of these schools were also evident in how they worked with priority or 'at-risk' learners. Kaiarahi (mentor teachers) see their role as helping students to gain the skills needed to manage their Learning Plans rather than making decisions for them. Teachers provide advice on subject prerequisites and on drawing up an individual timetable plan. The timetable at the wharekura is in modules so students can study in classes at, below or above their year level. Students choose the combination of courses and modules that will support their future plans. As a result, a student may only take the modules required by*

their Learning Plan. This means that if they do not need a full year's course they are free to take other modules in the school's timetable.

In *Including Students with High Needs* (ERO, 2007) ERO found that teachers that implement inclusive teaching practices understand what a student can achieve and design a programme that engages that student. ERO noted that for some students with high needs their learning programme was essentially the same as other students. For other students with high needs an entirely different approach was required. Using strengths and interests to develop a curriculum for students with high needs is also consistent with *The New Zealand Curriculum*. At one school, a boy's interest in film and media was used by teachers to involve him in videoing elements of a physical education class. The boy's use of a wheelchair had precluded him from participating in this class directly.

Responding to the cultural background of students

Part of knowing the student is to explore the cultural capital they have, and use their knowledge to shape the curriculum. This can help students feel a sense of belonging in the school and connectedness to their own cultural roots. Schools should be places where learners' cultural and ethnic identities are acknowledged, celebrated and promoted through the curriculum (Education Review Office, 2012b). Bishop et al emphasise the importance of Māori students' culture being at the centre of interactions in the classroom so that learners "are able to make meaning of new information and ideas by building on their own prior cultural experiences and understanding" (Bishop et al, 2003, p. 201). Such acknowledgement is important for all students.

In *Improving Education Outcomes for Pacific Learners* (ERO, 2012b), ERO explains that as schools develop their curriculum they should take into account the cultures, interests and potential of all their students, including those from Pacific cultures. ERO identified that most schools need to do more to drawn on contexts and themes relevant to Pacific learners. When a school's curriculum connects learners with their wider lives it can increase their opportunities to respond to a particular context or to engage with and understand the material they are expected to learn.

In *The New Zealand Curriculum Principles: Foundations for Decision Making* (ERO, 2012d), ERO identified schools and classrooms where cultural diversity was acknowledged and celebrated. In these classrooms the students' cultural contexts were incorporated into teaching and learning programmes and into the classroom environment. Teachers provided practical opportunities for all students to be proud and share their language and culture through cultural groups, special events and school festivals that celebrated cultural difference.

ERO suggests there is a close link between *The New Zealand Curriculum* principles *Cultural Diversity* and *Inclusion.* Both require teachers to value students as individuals and celebrate the diversity that students bring. Schools need to consider whether their inclusive practices encompass valuing the richness and diversity that students of different cultures bring.

Monitoring and review

Two key self-review activities can assist secondary schools to develop or improve transition processes. Firstly, teachers and deans can monitor how well individual students have adjusted and are making good progress. They do this by talking with the student, their parents, whānau and aiga and their other teachers and by checking the individual's assessment and attendance data. Secondly, the school can consider how well they are ensuring each student experiences a successful transition through their strategic self review using Year 9 and school-wide data.

The monitoring of individual students is especially important in the case of vulnerable students, including those who have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and those who have been identified as potentially disengaging from learning.

Teachers and deans are the best placed to monitor the progress of individual students. They do this by closely observing a student's attendance, behaviour patterns and achievement. They also talk with the student, their parents, whānau andaiga and school staff. Close monitoring of vulnerable students and early intervention is likely to avert more significant issues later.

As part of school-wide review, leaders and teachers should consider the effectiveness of the overall set of transition processes they have in place. This is done by aggregating individual student experiences as well as their feedback and achievement information. Self review should focused on how well the school personnel have worked in partnership with parents, previous schools and other agencies in settling students into school.

Monitoring individual students

While teachers might assume that transitions are happening well, it is good practice to check that this is the case. Such checking should include seeking the perspectives, experiences and expectations of individual students and their families to ensure that the needs of students are being met. Analysis of this information will help schools know whether their transition processes serve all gender, ethnic, cultural and ability groups in the school community. When a transition appears to be less than successful it should not be 'treated as inevitable but rather an opportunity to explore strategies to assist in developing a more positive cycle of experience' (Peters, 2010, p23). Analysis of this information will also help schools to know whether the transition processes schools are using serve all gender, ethnic, cultural and ability groups in the school community.

Students bring to the transition process different skills and dispositions. They can take varying lengths of time to reach the point where they feel comfortable and settled and are making good progress in their learning and achievement at school, and joining in the wider life of the school (West et al, 2010, p. 44). How this sort of information is used can be vital in supporting a student to make a good start at secondary school.

In *Including Students with High Needs* (ERO, 2010a), ERO determined that the use of achievement and other information was fundamental to the overall inclusion of students, including how well they transitioned into school. Inclusive schools, ERO has found, use information about student achievement, interests, strengths, medical

conditions, behaviour and parental expectations to inform the support they gave to each student. This information was typically coordinated through an individual education plan (IEP) process. The IEP would also include specific measureable goals and/or objectives for the student. These could cover a range of fields including academic, social and extra-curricular activities. Where possible, individual education plans included the student's perspective or voice on the learning goals.

Strategic self review

Most schools have a range of data and processes they can use to review how well their students have engaged and progressed since they started secondary school. Analysis of assessment, attendance, retention, stand-down and suspension data can identify students that need additional emotional or learning support, and can also explain the impact of any new transition process.

In *Literacy and Mathematics in Years 9 and 10: Using Achievement Information* (ERO, 2012c) ERO identified that less than 10 percent of schools were highly effective at using information at transition points. Examples of good practice were evident in a further 57 percent of schools. Missing from their practices were opportunities for Year 9 students to discuss and plan learning pathways. There was also a lack of attention to providing students with programmes that aligned to the assessment information gathered.

In *Promoting Success for Māori Students: Schools' Progress* (ERO, 2010c) ERO found secondary schools that successfully engaged students in their learning used self review to improve their responsiveness to Māori students and their whānau. The schools sought feedback from Māori students, staff and parents through surveys and hui. They also used a variety of consultation methods and approaches. Some boards had Māori engagement targets in their planning based on what the school knew about retention, achievement and participation rates of Māori students. Parents and whānau were actively involved in the school and in students' learning. They had a sense of connectedness and a voice in determining the long-term direction of the school.

In *Promoting Pacific Student Achievement: Schools' Progress.* (ERO, 2010d) ERO highlighted issues related to suspensions, exclusions and expulsion indicating that engaging Pacific students was the fundamental challenge in some schools.

One of the secondary schools in this evaluation had developed indicators to guide the evaluation and analysis of data related to Pacific students. Following on from the efforts the school had made, their self review showed increased student attendance and dramatic improvements in the number of students completing the school's homework and taking part in the school's Pacific cultural groups. The school had also increased the level of involvement by Pacific parents. Evidence from the school's self review indicated that the overall effect of these changes had made a positive impact on Pacific student achievement.

Conclusion

Students' successful adjustment to their new schools has a positive impact on their learning. Schools can make a difference through the culture that is created in the school. The following table shows the emphases schools could place on their future transition processes.

Less of this	More of this
• Viewing transitions as end-of-year and beginning-of-year events. • Thinking that all students transition in the same way. • Doing one-off orientation activities for all students. • Leaving the planning for vulnerable students until the last minute. • Doing the planning for vulnerable students without including them and their families. • Expecting that a few people in the school will manage transitions (e.g. deans and form teachers) • Assuming that all students are transitioning well. • Focussing only on the year 8 to 9 student transition. • Giving students a predetermined curriculum. • Viewing all students as if they are of the same culture. • Expecting all students to do the same work (at the same level, and the same time). • Thinking that it is the student's fault for failing to make the adjustments to their new school.	• Thinking about transitions as a process whereby students make gradual adjustments to their teachers, peers, and to the programme. This adjustment will be different for each student. • Taking a long term view to transition approaches by helping students to build the Key Competencies of *The New Zealand Curriculum* • Identifying early the students who are likely to need support as they transition. • Including in the planning process all the people who are connected to a student • Acknowledging that some students will need different approaches and catering for them through specific, and evidence-informed initiatives or actions • Building a school-wide culture of pastoral and learning care for students. • Ensuring that school systems for pastoral and learning care are sustainable by aligning them to existing systems. • Checking on how well transitions are happening for students by talking with students, parents and whānau, and teachers. • Catering for students as they transition within the school. • Getting to know students' interests, strengths and learning needs and using these as the foundation of an engaging programme.

	• Acknowledging and responding to the cultural identities of all students. • Finding out what students know and can do. Pitching work at an appropriately challenging level so that students experience success. • Involving students and their parents in planning their learning pathways.

Appendix 1

Processes schools can use to access a student's e-asTTle data when a student has moved to a new school.

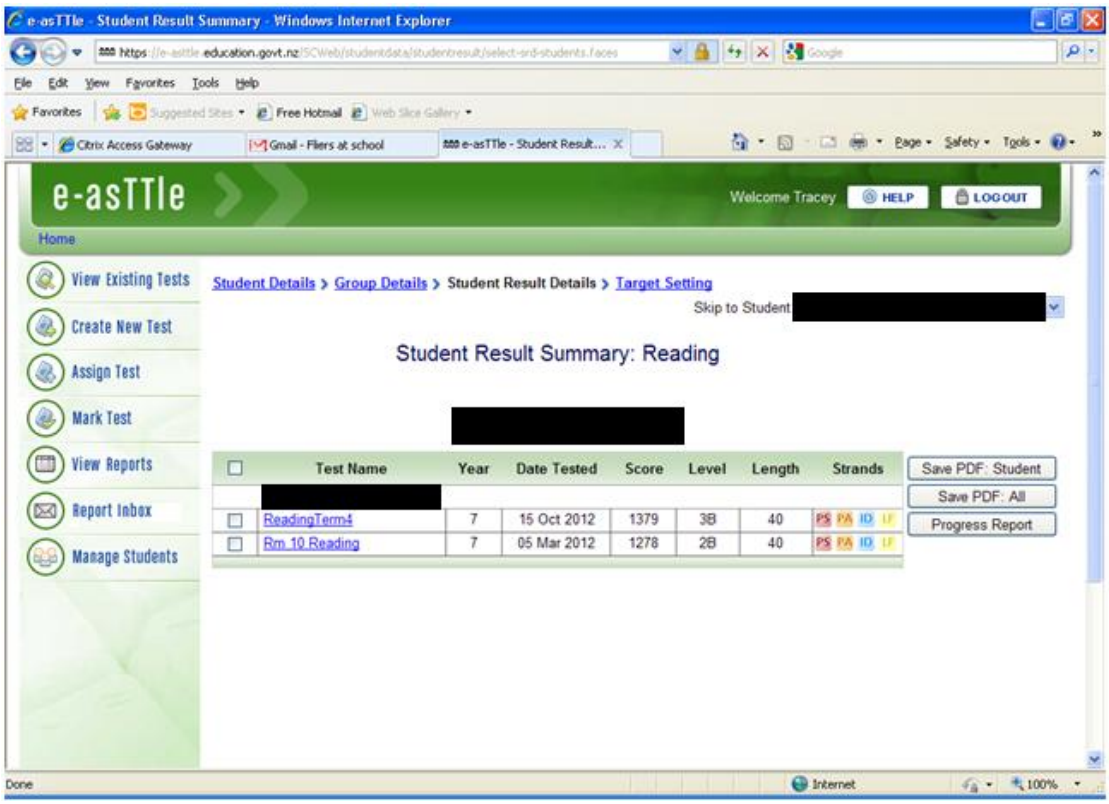
There are two possible solutions for this issue.

One The Ministry of Education has recently introduced a facility in e-asTTle where schools can see all the tests your students have previously completed at your school or another school.

This shows the test name, subject, the year the student was in when they sat the test, the overall score, the overall level, the duration of the test, the strands covered in the test.

Teachers and leaders can view this and also print as a pdf or create an individual progress report. This is accessed in this manner:

- Go to manage students
- go to view student results summary
- choose the group you are interested in
- choose the students
- click on continue



Example above

Two Some Student Management Systems have the facility to Transfer the Student Records from one school to another and this includes e-asTTle results. The SMS vendors that have implemented this facility are:

- Kamar
- e-Tap
- PC schools

Assembly and Musac Edge hope to complete this change before June 2013.

Teachers may be able to get some data even if the originating SMS has not implemented this functionality.

Appendix 2

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