



Transition for Students with Diverse Needs

Foreword

This publication is intended to assist schools in planning for and achieving successful transitions for their students. It has a particular focus on transitioning programs and experiences for students with diverse learning needs.

The life and teachings of Jesus Christ are a foundational incentive in developing this publication. In seeking to bring harmony to life, Jesus modelled a transformation of the human spirit through collaboration, encouragement and building strong relationships. Our Catholic schools endeavour to replicate his example with our care for students with diverse needs.

The key transition points that students move through in their schooling years are school commencement, year-to-year progression, the move from Year 6 to Year 7 (in most instances involving a new school), and finally the move to the senior years where important options and choices need to be resolved about post-school pathways. Catholic schools provide continuity during each stage of transition and recognise that positive transitions not only enhance each student's engagement with and connectedness to their learning but offer all students the best opportunity to identify and achieve their personal goals.

The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA 2008) articulates the need for young Australians to be confident and creative individuals, active and informed citizens and to be successful lifelong learners. This publication provides many practical suggestions and strategies to assist some of our most marginalised students to achieve these aspirations and reach their full potential. It recognises that for students with diverse learning needs, each point of transition can present new challenges for them, their families and the school. Detailed planning at these stages will allow all stakeholders to identify possible challenges and to work collaboratively to put in place effective strategies for successful transitions.

Four pillars of school operations are the focus of the materials presented herein:

- School Policies and Practices
- Curriculum: Learning and Teaching
- Organisation, Ethos and Environment
- Partnerships with Student, Family and Wider Community.

This publication recognises the importance of working in genuine partnership with families. As the first educators of their children, parents have a depth of knowledge and can make valuable contributions about additional processes that would support their child. Nurturing this relationship will assist to bring about optimal outcomes for the student.

The inclusive values of Catholic education across the four dioceses of Victoria are reflected in the resource materials herein. I commend this resource to you and am confident it will strengthen your initiatives in achieving full participation for all students in their transition years.



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1. Preamble

For students to flourish in an engaging and respectful environment, Catholic schools must create the conditions for success for all students. Inclusivity is about full participation for all, challenging assumptions about the student population, being proactive in the development of policies and procedures, engaging the community, identifying barriers to learning success and providing a safe and effective learning environment (CEOM 2011).

At all transition points, children should feel that school is a worthwhile place to be, where people care about them and where they are likely to succeed (Dockett & Perry 2007).

For many school-aged children and young people, the most significant transitions occur when they begin school, move from primary to secondary school, and from secondary to post-school options.

While the focus of school-based transition has often been on supporting movements of large groups of students, transitions can occur daily, as students move from class to class, teacher to teacher, from year to year within schools and when transferring to new schools. How these transitions are managed by schools will influence their ongoing learning success. If all young Australians are to meet the goals of the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA 2008) to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens, schools need to work strategically to ensure that every student's experience of transition is positive.

Positive transitions play an important part in shaping lifelong learning and the overall development of children (Astbury 2009). Well-negotiated transition experiences can produce positive effects on a student's wellbeing over an extended period of time (Rice, Frederickson and Seymour 2011). Evidence also suggests that children who do not make successful transitions are at risk of lower rates of academic achievement, decline in attitudes to learning, and reduced social and emotional wellbeing. These factors can contribute to early school drop-out rates and non-completion of Year 12 or its equivalent. For transition to be successful, students must be engaged with and feel connected to school (Butler et al. 2005).

For students with diverse learning needs and their families,¹ transitions can present additional challenges that require support from the school. Uncertainty and the fear of the unknown can be a major source of worry for children and adults alike, and can often give rise to anxiety. Some educational psychologists argue that anxiety about change may not necessarily be a bad thing and that anxiety can have positive aspects if educators learn to understand the student's fear and its impact, contain the loss and embrace the positive (Lucey & Reay 2000, cited in Ashton 2008).

Successful transitions rely on promoting continuity of learning and development, with every effort made to link a student's previous experiences with the challenges presented in the new setting (DEECD 2009). The impact of transition on students at any stage in their education journey is also influenced by the institutional processes, policies and practices that are in place (CEOM 2010). Optimising student learning, engagement and a positive sense of self requires school leaders, teachers and staff to commit to working collaboratively as they inquire into policies and 'best practice' related to transition (CECV 2012).

All of the themes, aspirations and evidence-based practices noted above are developed in this publication, with the expectation that schools will build on and strengthen their initiatives to achieve successful transitions for all students, but especially students with diverse learning needs.

¹ In this publication, students with 'diverse learning needs' can be students with learning, sensory or behavioural needs, highly able students, refugees, new arrivals, students with English as an Additional Language (EAL) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders students.

2. Overview of Transition for Diverse Learners

Transition for Diverse Learners

The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) has developed this publication to support schools in designing effective transition processes and practices for students with diverse learning needs.

The four pillars upon which the transition processes and practices are based are drawn from the Health Promoting Schools (HPS) initiative, which was developed by the World Health Organisation. The four pillars are:

- School Policies and Practices
- Curriculum: Learning and Teaching
- Organisation, Ethos and Environment
- Partnerships with Student, Family and Wider Community.

The interrelated domains of the four pillars are viewed through the lenses of both school improvement and transition and engagement for diverse learners (Figures 1 and 2).

The transition processes and practices outlined in this document embrace inclusion based on the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the principles of social justice and equity.

It is through effective transitions that Catholic schools can continue to build communities of faith and hope, optimise learning, and enhance our Catholic identity.

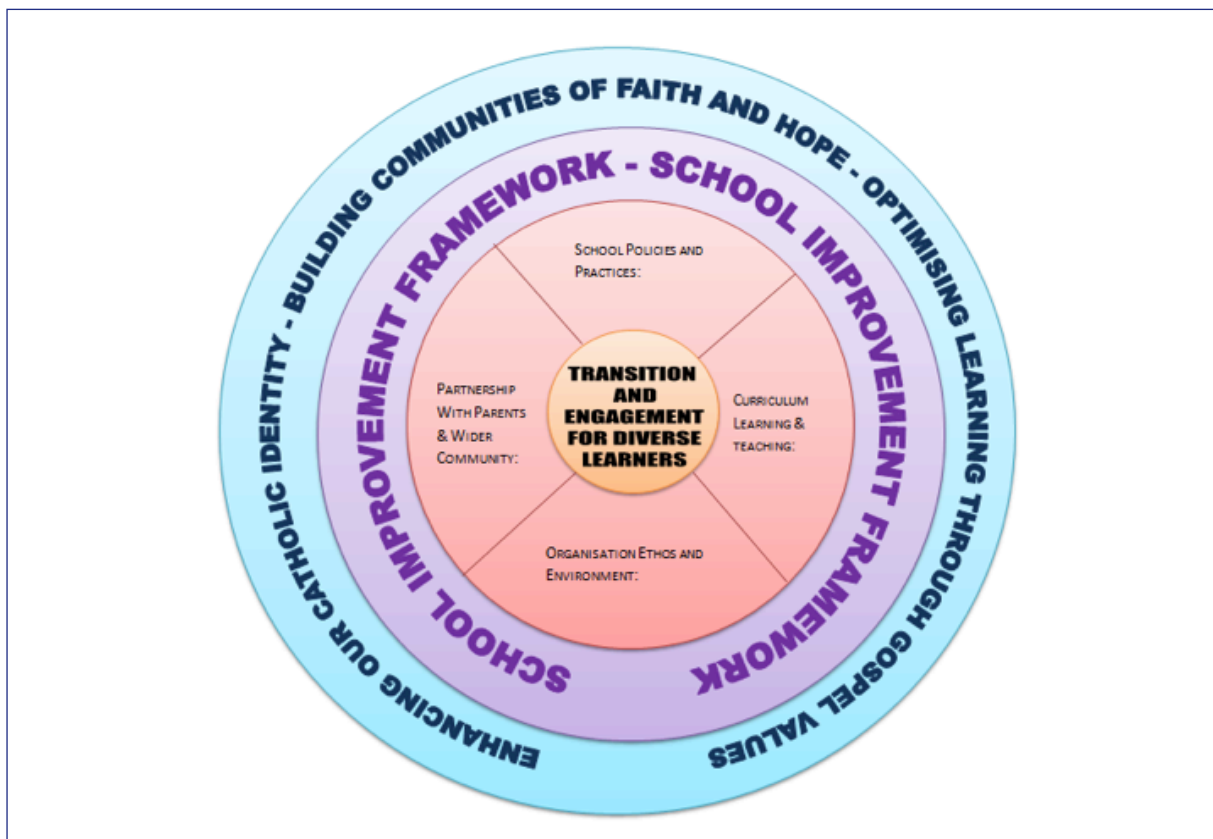


Figure 1: Adapted from Transition and Engagement, Research Document 6 (CEOM 2010).

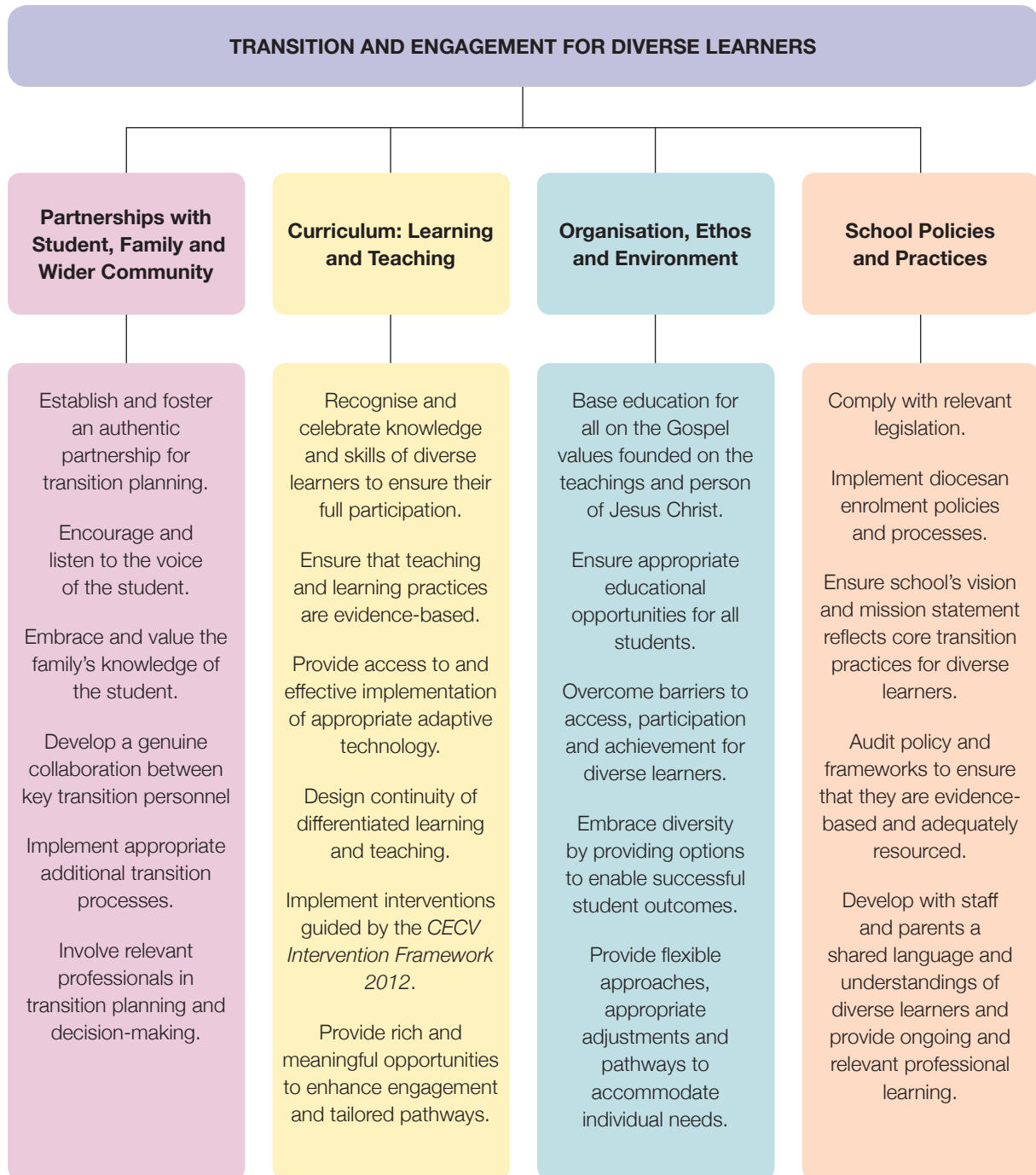


Figure 2: Adapted from Transition and Engagement, Research Document 6 (CEOM 2010).

3. The Transition Process

Principles of Successful Transition

- **All young people have the right to reach their full potential**
Effective transition practices and detailed knowledge of each individual student's strengths and challenges will provide clear evidence when designing the student's program.
- **Every student can participate, learn and achieve**
Schools will provide an inclusive environment that allows students to overcome barriers, and embrace diversity by providing flexible options, appropriate pathway adjustments and high expectations.
- **Genuine partnerships lead to successful transitions**
Discussions are based on equity and respect when planning for the diverse needs of the student. This requires an authentic partnership with students, families and the wider community, ensuring all have an equal voice.
- **Students need a safe, supportive and respectful environment**
Student engagement and connectedness is achieved when school communities value student diversity. Students have a fundamental right to learn in a safe and respectful environment and to be treated with respect.
- **Policies and practices promote successful transitions**
Policies and practices are developed and implemented by all stakeholders in order to assist students during key phases to ensure successful transition.
- **Communication is the key to successful transition**
Establishing protocols for good communication is essential when sharing information and is based on understanding student needs and the development of explicit strategies to support the student's learning.

A successful transition for students is evidenced by the following:

1. New friendships and enhanced self-esteem and confidence.
2. Appropriate adjustments have been implemented.
3. Active engagement in a safe, supportive and contemporary learning environment.
4. Confidence with new routines and school organisation.
5. Curriculum continuity through all stages of transition.

Transition processes are usually planned and implemented to address four successive stages:

1. Preparation.
2. Transfer.
3. Induction.
4. Consolidation.

These stages, as applied to the four pillars, are explained more fully in the following pages.

PREPARATION

This is the time for carefully planned activities to gather information and initiate contact between school and home settings, to ensure transition processes for diverse learners are successful.

Partnerships with student, family and wider community

Establish and foster authentic partnerships with parents, care givers, teachers, allied health professionals and students through:

- opportunities provided to meet and greet staff
- planning for orientation of the new facility
- observing and visiting the current setting
- encouraging and listening to the student voice.

Curriculum: learning and teaching

Support the diverse learner by:

- scheduling the first Program Support Group (PSG) by the end of Term 2
- inviting personnel from all school settings and relevant professionals to the PSG with student and family
- involving allied health professionals, specialist, and CEO student services staff to assist with student planning, where appropriate
- formalising documentation for SWD (LNLSN), if eligible
- beginning to develop the Personalised Learning Plan (PLP).

Organisation, ethos and environment

Identify, provide access to and plan for implementation of the resources required to:

- build the capacity of all staff to meet the specific needs of the individual student
- make physical adjustments to the site, where necessary
- determine best classroom for access
- complete learning space audit.

School policies and practices

Develop whole-school approaches and awareness, to:

- provide professional learning in relevant areas; for example, Autism, gifted education
- develop behaviour plan, if required
- seek written consent from family to gather documentation i.e. diagnostic reports.

TRANSFER

This is the time of student movement and interaction between settings, including orientation activities and active participation to support the routines of the new setting.

Partnerships with student, family and wider community

Conduct PSG meeting:

- Invite personnel from all school settings (primary/secondary/special school).
- Invite Allied Health Professionals.

Share all relevant current documentation, including:

- PLP
- personal profile
- NAPLAN results
- letter of diagnosis
- paediatrician's report
- occupational therapist's report
- physiotherapist's report
- speech pathologist's report
- psychologist's report.

Curriculum: learning and teaching

Support the diverse learner by:

- providing access to the curriculum
- adjusting the curriculum
- modifying assessment when required
- providing reports
- class placement
- providing a buddy
- mentoring
- home teacher
- meeting social and personal needs.

Support the diverse learner through technology, including:

- computers
- iPads
- Braille.

Organisation, ethos and environment

Identify and provide access to and plan for implementation of the resources required to support the student by:

- planning and scheduling additional orientation visits
- confirming dates of additional visits
- notifying parents
- programming for additional meetings
- providing visual timetable
- providing colour-coded books.

Complete SWD (LNSLN) application and, where applicable:

- check that documentation is relevant and current
- complete PLP collaboratively, including transition goals
- complete the Parent Student Transfer Consent Form.

School policies and practices

Implement whole-school approaches and awareness through:

- work shadowing
- whole-school professional learning.

INDUCTION

This is the time of arrival at the next school, with support provided to assist the student to settle into the new setting.

Partnerships with student, family and wider community

- Establish most appropriate and effective communication process between home and school, e.g. communication book, email, telephone calls.
- Schedule first PSG, early in Term 1.
- Provide a consistent place and specific personnel to meet regularly with the student.
- Ensure that the family is fully informed about the school's policies and procedures, e.g. uniform, homework, etc.

Curriculum: learning and teaching

- Revisit goals and strategies on the PLP and ensure that all teachers are thoroughly briefed and responsive to the goals set.
- Provide a Learning Support Officer (LSO) to support the student's needs as assessed by each teacher.
- Provide assistive technology and equipment as required by the student, e.g. magnifiers, iPad, modified furniture.
- Modify learning tasks, assessment and reporting procedures, as required.

Organisation, ethos and environment

- Maximise participation and engagement by considering requirements for access to the school playground and buildings, including toilets, administration, classroom, lockers
- Consider technology and equipment which may support the student in the classroom, e.g. sound loops, appropriate lighting, etc.
- Assess, design and implement strategies to help the student remain organised and involved, e.g. coloured books and folders to match the timetable
- As a Catholic community, highlight inclusive values and actions as exemplified by Jesus Christ through the Gospels.

School policies and practices

- Ensure all staff are thoroughly briefed about the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and its practical implications at school.
- If individual management plans are required (e.g. behaviour, epilepsy, etc.), brief all staff and ensure that plans are easily accessed
- Ensure that the school is compliant with privacy legislation, particularly in relation to students with diverse learning needs.
- Install appropriate and effective documentation protocols, including storage and access to information.
- Schedule PSGs well in advance, ensuring they are a priority on the school's calendar.
- Consider and update policies that will impact on the student, e.g. camp, work experience, etc.

CONSOLIDATION

Transition continues with initiatives in the new setting to ensure there are supports with general learning and wellbeing of the student.

Partnerships with student, family and wider community

- Maintain a genuine and collaborative partnership with the family
- Ensure the student voice is respected
- Survey parents and students to evaluate current practice
- Conduct parent forums to audit school practice
- Identify progress made and provide acknowledgement and recognition to the student and family.

Curriculum: learning and teaching

- Ensure ongoing monitoring and enhance student progress through self-advocacy and independence
- Use current data to identify areas for development and adjust learning plans accordingly
- Evaluate implemented assistive technology.

Organisation, ethos and environment

- Ensure there is evaluation in the post transition period and reflection of ongoing transition processes with students in scheduled classes
- Ensure transition is an agenda item throughout the year.

School policies and practices

- Ensure transition practices are evaluated annually
- Use survey data to inform required changes to practice.

Pathways and Transition Experiences in the Senior Years

For young people with diverse needs, it is critical that transition planning is focused and ongoing throughout their secondary years. There are four key elements that make for successful transition from school to further education, training and/or employment (Figure 3).

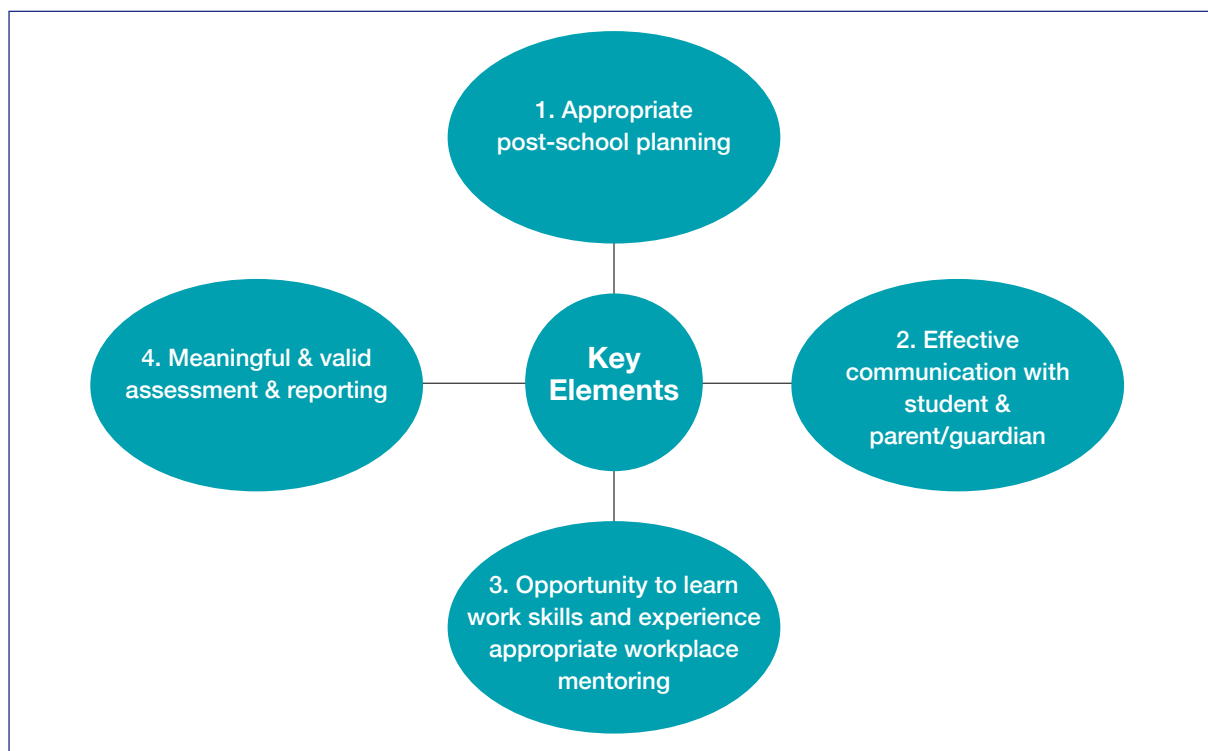


Figure 3: Key Elements of Successful Transition to Post-School Pathways

Transition from a mainstream school to a post-school pathway is successful when:

- the process commences some years before the student leaves the school setting
- there is a team approach and the proposed plan is discussed at the PSG with all stakeholders
- the student and the parent/guardian are given information about the range of post-school options and supports available
- there are some work-related and community experiences included in the student's curriculum which support workforce development and provide opportunities for the student to trial post school options. These experiences will assist the student to explore or expand possible career options, develop employability skills, understand employer expectations and increase self-understanding, maturity, independence and self-confidence (see Appendix 4 for curriculum options)
- there is engagement with external agencies and programs such as disability employment agencies, tertiary institution support units, and apprenticeship/traineeship mentoring programs to support the transition process (see Appendix 4 for more information)
- student learning potential is inclusive of social, vocational, academic and spiritual skills which are matched to educational goals during the student's final years of schooling
- assessment and reporting reflects specific VCAA requirements relating to senior certification and is a true indication of a student's current capabilities. Assessment materials that can be useful in providing supporting evidence for senior students with diverse needs include Compass Literacy & Numeracy (ACER); Vocational Indicator (ACER); Skill Scope Mathematics & Literacy (TAFE SA) and the BRIGANCE Transition Skills Inventory developed by Hawker Brownlow (see Assessment Resources listings in References, Section 9).

4. Disability Standards for Education

The *Disability Standards for Education 2005* (Cth) (DSE) seek to ensure that students with disabilities are able to access and participate in education and training free from discrimination and on the same basis as other students. The standards clarify the obligations of education and training service providers, and the rights of people with disabilities, under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) (DDA). The DSE apply to all students who learn ‘differently from a person without the disorder.’

The DSE cover the following areas:

- enrolment
- participation in education programs
- curriculum development, accreditation and delivery
- student support services
- elimination of harassment and victimisation.

Schools are required to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ for students with disabilities. In this process, consultations with students, parents and carers are essential. This is done through PSG meetings and requires:

1. identifying possible challenges, needs or barriers for the student
2. exploring adjustments that could be made by the school to remove the barriers
3. determining the reasonableness of each adjustment and developing an agreed plan
4. outlining how these adjustments will be implemented and by whom.

A summary of the process for implementing and ensuring compliance with the DSE is outlined in Figure 4.

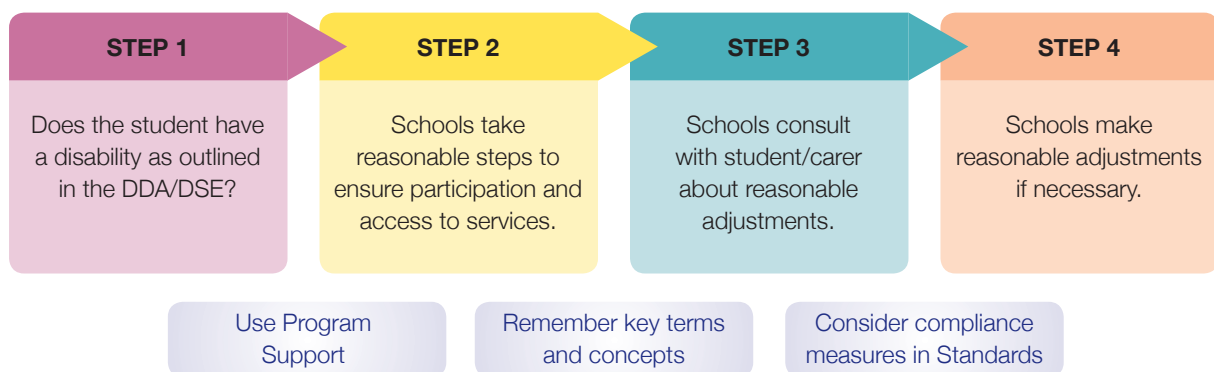


Figure 4. School Process for Implementing the Disability Standards for Education

5. Privacy Policy and Transition

Catholic schools are required to comply with the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) which came into effect in March 2014 as an amendment to the *Privacy Act 1998* (Cth). In relation to health records, Catholic schools are also bound by the *Health Records Act 2001* (Vic.).

The 13 APPs require schools to ensure they handle information responsibly. Catholic schools should develop and implement clear privacy policies that are consistent with the legislation. A school's privacy policy should describe clearly the kinds of personal information that is collected, the purpose of collection, and situations where the information will be disclosed routinely to parents and guardians.

Guiding Principles

- **Collect** only the information that is needed and be clear about the purpose for which it is being collected.
- **Ensure** that written consent is gained prior to providing the information to a third party, i.e. any person or organisation external to the school.
- **Inform** the family why the information is needed and how it will be handled.
- **Disclose** the information only as necessary and ensure disclosure complies with the primary reason for collection.
- **Secure** the information and ensure it is safe from unauthorised access.
- **Provide** information for parents regarding processes for access to and correction of personal information.

Schools can refer to the *Privacy Compliance Manual* of the National Catholic Education Commission and the National Council of Independent Schools (NCEC & NCIS 2013) for further information and guidance.

6. Program Support Group Guidelines for Transition

Guidelines for Conducting Transition Program Support Group Meetings

The Program Support Group (PSG) is a vital and ongoing component of planning that is provided for students with diverse learning needs. For these students, the PSG is particularly important during phases of transition. It is in this forum that effective plans, which address a student's specific needs, can be conceived and brought to life.

At transition times, there is often a 'changing of the guard' as personnel who know and understand the student handover to new stakeholders. This inevitable change can cause anxiety for families and should be handled compassionately. Information must be clearly and respectfully shared with and between appropriate personnel in a timely manner. School staff should involve external personnel at PSG meetings where relevant and try to avoid families being asked to retell their story repeatedly and unnecessarily.

Transitions vary throughout the life of the student and the role of the PSG and its goals may be different according to each phase.

In the transition from **pre-school to school**, the PSG agenda may include, but not be limited to:

- a student's strengths and how he/she learns
- diagnostic information
- previous and current early intervention strategies
- environmental as well as academic and social planning factors
- orientation planning, such as visits to the primary school's playground and Prep classroom
- the practice of school routines, such as wearing a uniform, recess and lunchtime, and break schedules.

From **primary to secondary school**, the PSG may include, but not be limited to the:

- selection of a secondary school
- review and possible renewal of diagnostic documentation and learning profiles
- sharing of information such as SWD (LNSLN) documentation and Personalised Learning Plans to ensure ongoing and seamless support
- discussion and planning of the student's program to incorporate changes, if required
- invitation to key personnel at the secondary school to attend a transition-focused PSG
- planning of additional visits with specific purposes, e.g. to meet staff, to identify locations such as lockers, toilets, canteen, etc.

From **secondary to post-secondary**, the PSG may discuss and plan for:

- work and career options
- life skills, such as independent living
- belonging and contributing to the wider community
- support networks.

Like all PSG meetings, the process of the transition meeting needs to be formalised. Agendas should be set in advance of the meeting, with all parties having the opportunity to contribute. Minutes should be kept and distributed, and actions followed through by designated members of the group.

7. Key Roles of Transition Coordinator

The Transition Coordinator is responsible for the coordination of transition activities within a team, comprising the student, parent/guardian, educators, and service providers. The Transition Coordinator is to ensure that transition activities and services are addressed and implemented for students with diverse needs. Some of the key duties assigned to a Transition Coordinator are described under five key areas, below.

1. Development of a Transition Policy

- Collaborate with the school community to develop, implement and refine a Transition Policy that relates to all students and that is applicable to all phases of educational transition that occur in the school setting, e.g. pre-school to Prep, mid-year transition, year level to year level, Year 6 to Year 7, junior campus to senior campus, senior-school and post-school pathways.
- Ensure that the policy reflects and encompass the principles of successful transition (see Section 3).
- Ensure that the policy clarifies information requirements and communication processes at all transition points, including:
 - what information is to be collected
 - who will collect the information
 - how the information is to be collected
 - where the information will be located
 - who will have access to the information
 - how the information will be communicated.

2. Identification of Students

- Identify students with ongoing SWD (LNSLN) funding.
- Identify students who require a new or review application for the following year.
- Identify students with diverse learning needs, inclusive of students not in receipt of SWD (LNSLN) funding, highly able students, EAL students, etc.
- Store data and ensure distribution to appropriate personnel in a timely manner.

3. Development of Support Processes

- Prepare a document release form (an SWD (LNSLN) Parent/Student Transfer Form) for parents/ carers to pass on relevant documentation to the receiving school and secure the consent of a parent or carers to forward the information.
- Ensure that all documents being transferred are listed on the document release form.
- Invite the relevant personnel from the receiving school to attend a transition support group meeting. Organise this in a timely manner in the pre-transition year.
- Organise and conduct a transition PSG with relevant stakeholders. The agenda may include a discussion of the student's learning needs, medical needs, current diagnoses and assessments, details of new or review applications, and scheduled completion of any required assessments.

4. Implementation of Support Processes

- Formulate and implement a range of additional transition activities aimed at enhancing the student's familiarisation with the receiving school. For example:
 - extra school visits
 - one-on-one family meetings with pastoral care personnel and/or relevant teaching staff members.
- Assign a staff member to case manage the transition process for students with diverse learning needs.
- Establish ongoing intra-school and school-home communication processes.

5. Coordination of Learning Support Officers

Provide opportunities for LSOs to:

- attend the release/receiving school and discuss strategies that work to support the student
- explore possible assistive technologies that will support the students.

8. Case Studies

Five case studies of transition experiences for students with diverse needs are presented below. Each case study focuses on a student at different stages of school transitioning:

1. Ben – Kindergarten to Prep
2. Jacinta – Year 3 Middle School
3. Shane – Primary to Secondary School
4. Petra – Post-School Pathways
5. Charles – Primary to Secondary School – highly able student.

Each of the case studies reflects and enacts the principles of successful transitions outlined in Section 3 of this publication, with the case study structure organised under the key operational stages also outlined in Section 3 – Preparation, Induction, Transfer and Consolidation.

Case Study 1: Ben – Kinder to Prep

Context

Ben attended kindergarten in his local community. He is five years old and has a diagnosis of Spina Bifida. He has significant physical needs. He is well supported by his family and a team of allied health professionals. Ben is the first child in his family to attend school. Initially, the anxiety around the decision of school choice was overwhelming for his parents, Lisa and Michael. They sought advice from Ben's kindergarten teacher.

Preparation

In late March of Ben's kindergarten year, a meeting was convened which included Lisa and Michael, Ben's kindergarten teacher and health professionals who were closely involved with Ben (his paediatrician, physiotherapist, occupational therapist and continence consultant). At this meeting, Ben's needs and strengths were discussed and documented. This team helped Lisa and Michael to formulate a list of questions to ask as they visited the primary schools they were considering. They were encouraged to take note of the factual and the 'intangibles' ... how they felt as they visited each school.

After visiting three local primary schools, Lisa and Michael decided to send Ben to their parish primary school.

Induction

Another meeting was held in June, this time with Ben's kindergarten teacher, the principal of the primary school, the student support officer from the Catholic Education Office and Ben's parents. Lisa and Michael provided diagnostic documentation and spoke about Ben's particular needs. The process to apply for SWD (LNSLN) funding was initiated.

Transfer

A plan was formulated to assist Ben's transition to primary school. This included visits to the school to explore the environment and meet some of the children and teachers.

The principal made plans to modify a private space where Ben's toileting needs could be addressed. He provided training for the learning support officers. This training was also attended by Ben's mum, Lisa, who was able to offer valuable information about Ben.

The principal arranged for the Prep teacher to meet with Ben's therapy team to ensure that she would be able to support his needs. The classroom was set up to allow Ben to move without hindrance and it was located close to the office, with easy access through double doors without any steps. The playground was assessed by the occupational therapist and minor alterations were made based on her recommendations.

By October, the school had submitted an application for SWD (LNSLN) funding. This included a Personalised Learning Plan (PLP), which was written in collaboration with Ben's parents and the multi-disciplinary team of professionals who work with Ben. It had a focus on transition, safety and personal care.

Consolidation

Ben began his first year of school and his transition was positive. He looked forward to school each day, was an active participant in his class and in the playground, and he made many new friends. Each term, PSGs were held and the PLP was reviewed and updated.

When asked about the transition process, Lisa and Michael suggested that a team approach was very supportive for them. Beginning the process early in the kinder year and involving all relevant personnel ensured that a broad and detailed picture of Ben was shared. They felt that the principal and the school community were welcoming and were open to the adjustments required to accommodate Ben. Above all, they felt listened to as genuine partners in Ben's education.

Case Study 2: Jacinta – Year 3 Middle School

Context

Jacinta was referred by her paediatrician for a multi-disciplinary assessment and was diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder, Asperger's, when attending kindergarten. She has impairments in communication, social interaction, responding to sensory triggers, and also has rigid and repetitive behaviours and interests. Jacinta experiences high levels of anxiety, and this anxiety impacts on her ability to function appropriately in some contexts, including her access to, participation in and response to the curriculum.

Jacinta had a successful transition to primary school. She is now eight years old and next year will transition to Year 3, the middle school.

Preparation

Jacinta's parents completed a 'My Personal Profile' (Positive Partnerships) when Jacinta commenced school and this was regularly updated. In consultation with the parents, class teacher, occupational therapist and speech pathologist, Jacinta's strengths and challenges were identified and a Personalised Learning Plan developed. All information that had been documented in the 'My Personal Profile' file was passed to the new class teacher.

Transfer

Program Support Group (PSG) meetings were scheduled each term. Careful consideration was given to Jacinta's Year 3 class placement. The classroom teacher attended the Term 4 PSG meeting in preparation for Jacinta's transition. An ongoing SWD (LNSLN) application was submitted for the following year.

During Term 4, Jacinta, along with other students, spent time in the middle school unit to familiarise her with the environment and the routines. This also included time on the 'middle school' playground. A digital booklet was provided for all students and was accessed online. The booklet included a map of the school and photos of teachers and learning support staff working in the middle school unit. A hard copy of the booklet was provided to Jacinta.

Induction

Jacinta and her family visited her classroom the day before students returned for the new school year. Jacinta's classroom teacher showed Jacinta where to put her bag, her seating placement and routines for eating morning snacks and lunch. Jacinta was familiarised with her 'Calming Space' and the calming apps for her iPad. Jacinta was also familiarised with the class visual timetable and was provided with a timetable for home. Jacinta and her family took a 'learning walk' around the middle school playground.

Consolidation

A PSG was scheduled for Term 1, Week 2. Jacinta attended the beginning of the meeting where the class teacher and the parents made positive statements regarding Jacinta's transition. Jacinta was also given the opportunity to express positives and to discuss any concerns.

The parents and teachers reviewed and monitored Jacinta's progress and identified social and academic goals for the term. Strategies to support Jacinta both at school and home were discussed.

Case Study 3: Shane – Primary to Secondary School

Context

Shane has a bilateral, profound hearing loss. He received his first cochlear implant in his left ear in 2002, at 10 months of age. In 2008 he received a second implant in his right ear. The cochlear implants have provided significant benefits for Shane, however, they do not provide normal hearing and he still presents with profound hearing loss when he is not wearing the speech processors. He struggles in noisy situations and displays listening performance similar to that of a severely deaf student using amplification.

Shane has been well supported in his primary school years by his teachers, parents and a visiting teacher. Regular PSGs have been held to assist in programming and supporting his individual needs, particularly through the creation and regular review of his Personalised Learning Plan. The school has worked hard to establish and monitor the acoustic environment of his learning space, the pedagogy of the curriculum delivered, and the technology to assist Shane to access the curriculum and be an independent learner.

Preparation

In Term 1 of Shane's last year at the primary school, a Transition PSG meeting was held with the primary school student support coordinator, classroom teacher, LSO, visiting teacher, parents and Shane to gather information to be shared with secondary school and to address technology needs for the new site. At this meeting, the following actions were organised:

1. The 'CECV Form 5 Parent Student Transferring Consent' form was signed to enable the transfer of data, reports and learning profiles to be sent to the secondary school (these were required to confirm eligibility for SWD (LNSLN) funding).
2. Shane's parents were encouraged to have a review appointment at Australian Hearing to upgrade hearing equipment for the new school.
3. The secondary school conducted student and parent surveys for their incoming Year 7 students to evaluate each school's respective transition practices (see Appendices 2 and 3).

Transfer

In Term 2 of Shane's last year at the primary school, a PSG was held in conjunction with the student support coordinator from the secondary school. At this meeting, the parents, Shane and teachers discussed his learning profile, his successes and challenges of the journey through primary school, and the requirements that they saw as necessary in terms of learning and teaching, as well as organisational and environmental conditions for a successful transition. At this meeting the following actions were organised:

1. Shane and his visiting teacher prepared an electronic learning profile that could be sent to all of Shane's new teachers to develop their understanding of his individual needs and introduce them to his hearing equipment.
2. Additional visits to the secondary school were organised for Shane and his parents.
3. The visiting teacher visited the secondary school to assess the acoustic environment of the learning spaces and make necessary recommendations for the school.

Induction

In Term 3 of Shane's last year at the primary school, a PSG was held at the secondary school. The impact of Shane's disability, his long- and short-term goals learning goals, and the necessary adjustments to Shane's learning program were discussed and planned for in a submission for SWD (LNSLN) funding. Shane received an upgrade of personal hearing equipment and, with the visiting teacher and the student support coordinator from the secondary school, trialled several different sound field systems.

In Term 4, the secondary school purchased and had installed four sound field systems and key staff were inducted into the use of these. Key staff also received professional learning on supporting a hearing impaired student.

Consolidation

Shane, his parents and the visiting teacher met with subject teachers prior to the first day of school to show them how the FM unit and the sound field system worked.

In Term 1 of the new school year:

- Shane's learning profile was sent to all staff
- Shane was given an iPad.
- A PSG was held to review and monitor Shane's progress.
- A time was organised for the LSOs who were involved with Shane to work together and develop their strategies for working with Shane.

This transition had positive results. Although this had been a very successful transition, the transition team conducted an audit to determine if their transition practices required further refinement (see Appendix 1, Audit Tool).

Case Study 4: Petra – Post-School Pathways

Context

Petra was born with mild Cerebral Palsy. This had an impact on her physical and academic development. She attended Catholic schools for both her primary and secondary education, receiving Commonwealth-support funding during the whole of her attendance.

Preparation

Petra received learning support throughout her secondary schooling and there was extensive preparation for her transition from school. The planning commenced in Year 10, with options discussed at the PSG meeting. She was enrolled in a CEOM Senior Pathways and Transition program during Year 10. This program was specifically designed to assist her to plan a suitable pathway to further education and training. During this program, Petra learned about the world of work and some post-school training and education opportunities through a range of interesting activities, including written exercises, group tasks, TAFE & industry visits, and a carefully planned program of Structured Workplace Learning.

Transfer

Petra and her family were given information about disability employment agencies and tertiary support units. There was careful consideration of her strengths and weaknesses through consultation with key staff, including the student support coordinator and the careers teacher. Petra decided to undertake VCE focusing on the Humanities, with a view to applying post school for further education in Social Sciences.

Consolidation

Petra's subject selection was tailored to meet her goals. As Petra had struggled with mathematics during her junior and middle years of schooling, options of an appropriate pathway were explored. Foundation Mathematics was chosen as the most appropriate maths for her. By completing Foundation Mathematics in Year 10, it freed her up to focus solely on her humanities subjects in Years 11 and 12.

Petra's Turkish-Greek heritage enabled her to speak another language, so she maximised this capacity by studying Greek. Support was put in place to ensure she achieved success in her studies. PSGs were conducted each term, with the focus being on discussing issues of concern and deciding on appropriate actions. Petra attended all the PSGs to ensure she was given a voice in planning for her pathways.

Petra achieved an ATAR score of 60.5 at the completion of Year 12. She applied for university studies in Social Sciences under the Special Entry Assistance Scheme (SEAS). She was offered and accepted a placement in Arts & Media studies.

Petra graduated from university in 2012 and has been successful in securing work using her language and writing skills. She was invited to undertake her Honours year and is currently preparing her thesis.

Case Study 5: Charles – A highly able student – primary to secondary school

Context

Charles attends a large primary school in the Western region and is a highly able student who has had his academic needs met through the development of a Personalised Learning Plan that has focused on his strengths, interests and appropriate adjustments. He is anxious that his teachers at his new secondary school will not understand him and be able to cater for his academic needs.

Preparation

In mid-June, a Program Support Group meeting was convened and Charles's parents, his Grade 6 teacher and the student support coordinator from his future secondary school attended. The agenda was formulated to discuss his strengths, adjustments required and current practices that had supported his learning. The focus was on continuing the strategies in his PLP to ensure a smooth transition to secondary school. Permission was given by his parents to share the results of his most recent assessment. A signed document was given to the secondary school.

Transfer

The secondary school prepared an electronic student profile that outlined Charles's high abilities and all the relevant information that was required to support his program at his new school. This was sent to his parents to seek approval for this information to be shared with all relevant teaching staff. There was discussion about setting up appropriate mentors, both a teacher and a senior student.

Induction

Charles's teachers were informed about the appropriate adjustments that were required to meet his academic needs. Staff met to discuss the curriculum differentiation that would be put in place to meet these needs. Charles met the teacher who would be his mentor. A timetable for each Wednesday lunchtime was scheduled so that he could meet with William, his student mentor.

Consolidation

Ongoing professional learning was delivered at the school to assist staff to meet his and other highly able students' needs. Domain meetings devoted time to planning for all students' needs when designing their classroom program and assessment tasks.

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Appendix 1 – Audit Tool for School Action on Transition

This audit tool is designed to support schools (P–12) in beginning or reviewing their transition planning. Assess your school’s status on each aspect or transition (e.g. beginning, consolidating, established), and then look at what you do well, what you need to develop and your current capacities and needs. Indicate your priority for action in each area.

School Policies and Practices	Current Status	Priority	Action that we need to take	Who will be involved	Timeline for action
The Vision and Mission reflects core transition practices for diverse learners and is compliant with the DDA.		Low Medium High			
There is ongoing professional development of teachers related to student needs.		Low Medium High			
There is a school policy on transition, which is evidenced-based and adequately funded.		Low Medium High			
A transition coordinator has been appointed.		Low Medium High			
There is a transition committee or working group.		Low Medium High			
There is a transition program or set activities.		Low Medium High			
There is an inter-school transition group and the school is represented.		Low Medium High			

Curriculum: Learning and Teaching	Current Status	Priority	Action we need to take	Who will be involved	Timeline for action
Teachers are given current data so that they have knowledge of the diverse learners they teach: strengths, interests, and challenges.		Low Medium High			
Teaching and Learning practices are evidenced-based.		Low Medium High			
There is access to and effective implementation of appropriate adaptive technology.		Low Medium High			
Teachers know about the curriculum of other settings.		Low Medium High			
Teachers experience the teaching and learning approaches of other settings.		Low Medium High			
Teachers adapt their classroom approaches to assist transition.		Low Medium High			
There is continuity of differentiated learning and teaching approaches between settings.		Low Medium High			

Organisation, Ethos and Environment	Current Status	Priority	Action we need to take	Who will be involved	Timeline for action
There is application of UDL approaches to maximise participation for all.		<i>Low</i> <i>Medium</i> <i>High</i>			
All relevant teachers know about the transition arrangements.		<i>Low</i> <i>Medium</i> <i>High</i>			
All information about present and new setting is available for teachers.		<i>Low</i> <i>Medium</i> <i>High</i>			
There are web-based links between school settings.		<i>Low</i> <i>Medium</i> <i>High</i>			
Teachers meet with colleagues from other settings.		<i>Low</i> <i>Medium</i> <i>High</i>			
There are visits of teachers between settings.		<i>Low</i> <i>Medium</i> <i>High</i>			
Teachers know about the organisational structures of the other setting.		<i>Low</i> <i>Medium</i> <i>High</i>			
There is continuity in organisation and structures between settings.		<i>Low</i> <i>Medium</i> <i>High</i>			

Partnerships with Student, Family and Wider Community	Current Status	Priority	Action we need to take	Who will be involved	Timeline for action
Student Voice: Students articulate, discuss and reflect on their hopes and dreams for the new setting.		<i>Low</i> <i>Medium</i> <i>High</i>			
Students construct and bring learning profiles to their new settings.		<i>Low</i> <i>Medium</i> <i>High</i>			
Information is provided to students and families about their new school setting.		<i>Low</i> <i>Medium</i> <i>High</i>			
Transition is discussed in classes with students within both settings: planning and reflecting.		<i>Low</i> <i>Medium</i> <i>High</i>			
Transition activities are conducted in classes with students prior to transition.		<i>Low</i> <i>Medium</i> <i>High</i>			
There are orientation visits of students and families to the new setting.		<i>Low</i> <i>Medium</i> <i>High</i>			
Additional transition meetings are organised for students with diverse needs (PSGs).		<i>Low</i> <i>Medium</i> <i>High</i>			
There is involvement of relevant professionals in transition planning of diverse learners.		<i>Low</i> <i>Medium</i> <i>High</i>			
Families meet with teachers in both settings to discuss transition arrangements.		<i>Low</i> <i>Medium</i> <i>High</i>			
Families maintain links with teachers in the new setting to discuss transition responses.		<i>Low</i> <i>Medium</i> <i>High</i>			
Families continue to feel welcome in the new setting and have valued roles.		<i>Low</i> <i>Medium</i> <i>High</i>			

Appendix 2 – Student Transition Survey (Year 6 to Year 7)

Teacher Instructions

This survey is designed to gather some information about how students felt about the transition from primary to secondary school. Please work through each of the three sections one at a time:

1. Transition
2. Connectedness
3. Classroom.

When conducting the survey with the students, it is important to clarify a few points, e.g. the scoring system 1–6. Explain that if they strongly disagree about the statement, they should tick one (1), and that if they do not feel strongly either way, they should tick three (3).

Section A: Transition

Questions 4, 5 and 6: Clarify the reference to ‘transition morning’ as being the activities that they engaged in at their secondary school at the end of Grade 6.

Question 8: Clarify the reference to ‘orientation activities’ as applying to the things they did on their first day at their new secondary school.

Section C: Classroom

Question 1: Give examples of how students might respond when answering this question.

Question 5: This means that students are given choices about their learning, such as completing a work requirement in PowerPoint, a poster, a building model, etc.

Additional instructions for students with diverse needs

If a student is likely to have difficulties reading the survey and understanding the questions, provide 1:1 support to assist her/him. Unpack and explain the last two questions for the students and scribe their response if required.

Name In 2014 I was in Grade: I have a brother or sister at this school: Yes No

Section A: Transition	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. I felt well supported at primary school.						
2. I was well prepared for transition by my primary school.						
3. I was involved in extra visits to my secondary school.						
4. The transition that took place late last year was very helpful.						
5. I met new friends during transition.						
6. I felt more relaxed about coming to secondary school after the transition morning.						
7. I was given opportunities to practise being organised for secondary school.						
8. The orientation activities at the beginning of the year helped me to cope with school in the first few weeks.						
9. My new teachers have helped me to get organised.						
10. I find it easy to keep my books and materials organised.						
11. I am doing all my homework.						
12. I can find my way around the school easily.						

Section B: Connectedness – School	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. I like my new school so far this year.						
2. I feel well supported at secondary school.						
3. I feel good about being a student at this school.						
4. I feel I belong at this school.						
5. I feel safe at my new school.						
6. I am doing well at school.						
7. My teachers really know me.						
8. I feel confident to approach the teacher(s) if I have a problem.						
9. I have made new friends at secondary school.						
10. I have found secondary school very enjoyable.						

Section C: Classroom	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. My teachers make learning interesting.						
2. My teachers make school work enjoyable.						
3. I feel confident to put my hand up and ask questions.						
4. My teachers take the time to help me when I have difficulties.						
5. My teachers let me show my learning in different ways.						

What advice would you share with an incoming Year 6 student?

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What activities/advice helped make the start of Year 7 positive for you?

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Appendix 3 – Parent Transition Survey (Year 6 to Year 7)

Parent Name: Student Name:

This is our first child at this secondary school: Yes No

Section A: Leaving Primary and Beginning Secondary School	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree		No Response
	1	2	3	4	5	0
1. Our experience with our primary school was positive.						
2. Our primary school prepared our child well for secondary school.						
3. The process to enrol our child at this school was easy.						
4. We felt confident about sharing vital information about our child's needs during enrolment.						
5. Once our child was accepted, our secondary school prepared our family for their secondary school start.						
6. There were enough parent information meetings at our secondary school.						
7. The times of the meetings suited our family.						
8. We got all the information we needed from these meetings.						
9. Information was shared with us in many ways						
10. There were many ways we could ask questions about our child starting at this school.						
11. We were clear who to contact when we had a question.						
12. We had everything we needed for our child to start on the first day.						
13. Our secondary school prepared our child well for his/her school start.						
14. Our secondary school made our child's start a smooth one.						
15. Our child is saying positive things about his/her secondary school start.						

Section B: Invitation, Welcome, Inclusion	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree		No Response
	1	2	3	4	5	0
1. We felt connected to our primary school.						
2. We already feel welcome at our child's secondary school.						
3. We feel positive about our child's start to secondary school.						
4. There have been opportunities for us to be at our child's school.						
5. We already have lots of important information about our child's secondary school.						
6. We are satisfied with our decision to send our child to this school.						
7. Our child feels safe at secondary school.						

What advice would you share with our school and other new families?

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Additional Comments (Optional)

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Appendix 4 – Senior School Pathways and Post-School Options

Students with Diverse Needs

Work experience: This will provide an opportunity for the student to gain insights into the industry of their choice and develop understanding of the world of work and career opportunities.

Structured Workplace Learning: This involves students undertaking structured on-the-job training where they are required to master a designated set of skills and competencies related to a course accredited by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) for example, Vocational Education and Training (VET), the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL).

School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships: Apprenticeships and Traineeships are available to secondary students from 15 years of age and provide an opportunity to undertake full-time work AND training or combine a school-based apprenticeship with part-time employment, school and training.

SEAS: Special Entry Assistance Schemes exist to assist students with diverse needs to access tertiary education.

A more comprehensive guide prepared by DEECD, titled *Strengthened Pathways Planning* can be found at the DEECD website <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/careers/Pages/disabilitypathways.aspx>.

Appendix 5 – Glossary

Access

Part of a school's role is to ensure that all students are able to access all components of school life – curriculum, specialist areas, and activity and outdoor facilities. Access primarily refers to the school providing the **means** and **opportunity** for all students to engage in all learning opportunities.

Adaptive technologies

They offer many affordances to students with a diverse range of learning needs such as:

- adaption – fitting the material, devices, hardware and software to the characteristics of the student, taking account of age, gender, culture and so on
- affordances – the properties of the system, as perceived by the user, which allow certain actions to be performed and which encourage specific types of behaviour.

Examples of adaptive technologies include mobile and fixed devices such as iPads, laptop computers, interactive white boards, LCD touch screens, iPods, and assistive listening systems such as classroom soundfield systems, Apps and software programs.

Authentic/stakeholders partnerships

Genuine partnership between the school and family/other key stakeholders is the cornerstone of successful support for all students, particularly those requiring additional support. Family-school partnerships can be defined as a multi-faceted approach used to build strong and effective relationships between schools, families and their communities to support learning.

Differentiation

Students work on the same curricular area, but interact in different ways with teachers and resources. They have some or all of the assignments, learning targets, resources, teaching methods and student groupings planned to differentially take account of their aptitudes and the levels of their current strengths, attainments and needs.

Evidence-based practices

Evidence-based practice (EBP) means using the best, research-proven assessments and practices in our day-to-day teaching. This means each educator upholds his/her responsibility to stay in touch with the research literature and to implement best practice as a part of all decision-making. Implementing evidence-based practice means a real commitment to lifelong learning, expressed in the best possible education of all students (Sackett et al. 1996).

Inclusive education

Inclusive education reflects the values, ethos and culture of an education system committed to excellence by enhancing educational opportunities for all students. Inclusive education relies on a school community's ability to embrace diversity and be flexible in its approaches.

Inclusive education occurs where the school system and structures change to fit the needs and strengths of a child, rather than attempting to change the child to fit the system, and where the benefits derived from overcoming barriers to the access, participation and achievement of particular students have a positive impact upon the teaching and learning environment for all.

Participation and access

Schools need to ensure that all students are able to participate and access all components of school life – curriculum, specialist areas, and activity and outdoor facilities. Providing for participation and access primarily refers to the school providing the **means** and **opportunity** for all students to engage. A component of providing participation and access may involve the school making reasonable adjustments and providing a level of support to particular students.

Reasonable adjustments

Based on the Disability Standards for Education (Australian Government 2005), adjustments are required to be made for students with disability in the areas of enrolment, participation and access.

An adjustment is considered reasonable if it balances the interests of all parties affected. To determine reasonableness, schools are asked to consider a number of things, including:

- the nature of the disability
- the views of the student
- the effect of the adjustment.

Students with diverse needs

The term ‘students with diverse needs’ reflects the view that appropriate opportunities and supports are provided to all students based on their needs. Students falling into this category can include:

- students with a disability/ diverse learning needs
- gifted and talented students
- refugees/New Arrivals and EAL/D students
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Providing for students with diverse needs requires adjustment to be provided in curriculum development and assessment. Schools are encouraged to consult with the student and their family/carer to ensure they have a clear understanding of the needs of the student.

Universal design for learning

Universal design for learning (UDL) is a concept that originated in the field of architecture and was applied to education in the early 1990s through work completed at the Centre for Applied Special Technology (Hitchcock et al. 2002). UDL applies this idea to curriculum and instruction.

A universally designed curriculum has built-in flexibility and options for all learners from the beginning – at the planning stage – and this leads to more elegant, integrated, and seamless educational opportunities. The application of UDL that teachers can use daily is differentiation.

Appendix 6 – Acronyms

CECV	Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd
CEO	Catholic Education Office
CEOM	Catholic Education Office Melbourne
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DEECD	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development*
DSE	Disability Standards for Education
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EBP	Evidence-based practice
HPS	Health Promoting Schools
LNSLN	Literacy, Numeracy and Special Learning Needs
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
PLP	Personalised Learning Plan
PSG	Program Support Group
SEAS	Special Entry Assistance Scheme
VCAA	Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority
VCAL	Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VRQA	Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority

*Note: Due to a change in government, DEECD was renamed the Department of Education and Training (DET) in 2015.



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