**Part 1: Supporting transition to school (video transcript)**

00:12 [Anne Stonehouse]

The transition to school is a unique process for each child and family, and it happens over a period of time. The support that services and schools provide needs to build on the child’s strengths and meet their particular needs and expectations. It’s therefore very important that transition programs take account of the unique situation of individual children and their families. This means that transition programs will look different in different locations and for different families. Part 2 of the video series looks at practices in services and schools that support the transition to school for children learning English as an additional language.

00:56 [Vanessa Field – Acting Director, Springvale]

I want the transition to be as smooth and as seamless as possible. I want families and children to have the opportunity to experience the new setting as often as possible until they feel comfortable in that new setting, so it’s not like a complete change. One of the things we do is we create something—an artwork, a piece—and give to the Prep teachers for it to be there when we start the following year. So there’s a piece in the room, whether it be a piece of art or something that sits on the table, the children decide what they make. But something that they can have, left at school, so when they arrive at school it can trigger that memory that, actually we made this at school when we were visiting, we made this to have it belong here at school. One of the things that I really like to do is ask the children about what their expectation is about school and actually present what they feel is important to know about school. So I will ask the Prep children this year what they felt was important to know for the kindergarten children coming to school, because that’s quite different to what the educators think they need to know, and then we’ll facilitate conversations around that. So with our transition program, when we visit the school, I make sure that we have a ratio of one to three, but not only is it one-to-three adults, it’s one-to-three with a cross section of our educators that have different language, so that we can support their integration. We have the transition statements which we send to the school, but we also invite all of the educators from the primary schools to come and meet and most of them take that opportunity to come and meet with the educators working in the room.

03:05 [Anne Stonehouse]

While it is an advantage if chil­dren can speak and understand some English and can communi­cate their needs and wishes, some children do begin school without having been exposed to English and still make a successful transition.

Educators and teachers understand that some children who have little or no English skills are likely to find starting school challenging. By continuing to develop their home language alongside participating in English as an additional language programs, children will be able to acquire English because they have foundational literacy skills on which to base their English language skills.

03:44 [Sadika Iqbal – Multicultural Aide, Dandenong West Primary School]

I will make sure that he knows that there is someone who is going to help him in this school. Most of the parents whom I have been meeting, they are very nervous, some of them will come and tell me that they have been in Australia only for a week or two week. Even the parents are feeling nervous, so what about the child? So I’m like, ‘Don’t worry, I will explain everything about this school, what this school is about, how we are going to help these students. There will be teachers outside on yard duty—if there is a problem, they can tell the teachers and the teachers will help them’. Even the parents, ‘don’t get scared to come to the office, there will be someone to help you’.

04:27 [Filiz Omer – Primary Wellbeing Worker, Dandenong West Primary School]

Part of my role would be to spend time with the student and the family to get to know them, and build a relationship with the student and the families, in order to get to know them and understand their life experiences and what we can do, as a school, to make sure that school is a successful place for that child—so that the family and the child feel welcome. We have a Grade five-kinder friendship buddy program running at the school. Throughout the term, almost every fortnight I will gather a group of Grade Five students and we will walk down to our local kindergarten and we will do some fun activities with the Grade fives and the kindergarten students.

05:17 [Anne Stonehouse]

Educators and teachers support children to make positive transitions to school when they appreciate their knowledge, skills and prior experiences. They share this information through Transition Learning and Development Statements and talking with each other and communicating with families. They may use interpreters with families. The Department of Education and Training provides resources, on its website, to support families in the transition process.

The exchange of information about what children can do is critical at this stage. Information provided by early childhood services to schools will support the Foundation teacher to develop an informed curriculum and learning program for the child.

06:04 [Debbie David – Foundation Teacher, St. Albans Primary School]

And I think the transition program that we include at our school really supports the students to become ready for Prep. So we have eight weeks of three-hour sessions and they come and they do—it’s almost a bit of kindergarten and school rolled into one. And they learn where the places are in the school, they visit the classrooms, the specialist programs. And we also have—they come to our classrooms, so they play in our classrooms, they have the experience of meeting the teachers as well. So there’s no fear when they come here, they know the basic routines; they know where the toilets are, which is really important to them. And they feel safe because they’ve been here before.