

## Seamless Transition

**“Tomorrow is next day of learning”**

*Compiled by Graeme Barber, Principal Woodend School, 2012*

**MOE Vision: A world leading Education system that equips all New Zealanders with the knowledge, skills and values to be successful citizens in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

**Ko te Tamaiti te Pūtake o te Kaupapa! The Child - the Heart of the Matter**

*“As students journey from early childhood through secondary school .....each stage of the journey prepares them for and connects well with the next. Schools can design their curriculum so that students find the transitions positive and have a clear sense of continuity and direction”. New Zealand Curriculum, 2007, p 41.*

## Raising Student Achievement and Success

*“If it’s not raising the achievement of our kids ... however we measure it, we should not be doing it”. Minister of Education Hekia Parata, 2012.*

*“Shared understandings of what Student Success is provides a basis for dialogue among all stake holders (MOE, the community, Boards of Trustees, educators, parents and students)”. Riley and McBeath, 2001*

## MOE Goals

- Learners achieve the best possible educational outcomes.
- Young people become confident, connected, actively involved, life long learners.
- Young people acquire skills and qualifications that will enable them to pursue successful and satisfying futures and contribute to New Zealand’s future.
- Maori and Pacifica learners and those with special educational needs are supported to realise their potential.
- Learners find their identities, languages and cultures valued and supported throughout their education.
- Learners can access suitable pathways though education and into work.

## MOE Targets

- 85 % of 18 year-olds achieving in NCEA Level 2 (or equivalents) by 2016.
- 98% participation in early childhood education by 2016.
- Year 8 students transitioning to secondary school able to read and write and do mathematics at a year 9 level.
- Year 9 and 10s participation and engagement keeping them in school and readying them for the NCEA years.

## Seamless Transition Goals

- Providing effective transition from Pre-school to Primary (Intermediate) to Secondary to Tertiary and or Work.
- Supporting Student Success for all students-high levels of and reduced gaps in progress and achievement.
- Providing new and relevant learning opportunities for students, parents and staff.
- Building on strengths, successes and interests for all stakeholders within an asset based development model.
- Fostering increased public confidence in school effectiveness.

## Guiding Principles

(After Kate Tilleczek and Bruce Ferguson et al, 2010. Sharon Cox and Shelley Kennedy, 2008.)

- Student Success, School Effectiveness, Quality Teaching and Seamless Transition by their definition are inextricably linked.
- The use of asset (not deficit) based, inclusive development approaches by the MOE, Boards of Trustees, and Educational Leadership groups in establishing Student Success policy and resourcing its implementation will enhance engagement and ownership by students, families, educators and the community.
- Enhancing life opportunities for all learners is about Student Success and the full range of indicators and components that build coherence and align practice within and between learning institutions (Gallagher. Ontario MOE, 2010).
- All stakeholder groups (MOE, Boards of Trustees, students, families, educators and community) perspectives are important as each attends to different aspects therefore each group needs to be aware of each others concerns and perspectives.
- Students, parents, educators, and the community need to be engaged around any transition not just at the start but right through the process.
- Transition travels from preschool to employment and involves making social, emotional, cognitive and physical changes within families, learning institutions and the wider community.
- ‘At Risk’ is not a characteristic of students but an interaction of young people and the situation they find themselves in at any time.
- Inclusive practices create safe welcoming conditions that enable multiple voices, different values and traditions.
- Teacher knowledge of the learner is crucial in supporting Maori and Pacifica learners, those with ‘at risk’ factors and those with special education needs.
- Assessment used by students and educators **for** improving learning, **as** descriptive feedback and **of** learning to set individual goals, monitor progress, determine next steps and reflect on thinking and learning (Ontario. MOE, 2010).
- Educators need to be aware of research based best transition practice and be able to identify what is and isn’t working and how and when they could better intervene and provide support.
- Annually reviewing and evaluating institution wide student success data and information (progress, achievement, attendance, exclusion & wellbeing surveys) will identify priorities and next steps.
- Educational Leaders and institutions need to celebrate successful practices/programmes (as identified by students, educators and parents) from all aspects of the curriculum and school life.
- Learning Institutions would benefit from ‘occupying’ the media space on all things educational in their area.

## **Factors that negatively impact on transition and create anxiety**

*(After Bruce Ferguson 2010)*

- Unsuccessful starts in social and or learning situations.
- Use of scare tactics with students as they prepare for transition.
- Large changes or discontinuities in pedagogy, discipline, authority, curriculum and workload.
- Being placed in an inappropriate class or exposed to learning pitched at an inappropriate level.
- Losing one's friends and or being exposed to bullying
- Out of school factors such as family stress, poverty, emotional struggles, natural disasters and peer troubles that are not detected and or alleviated.

## **Transition stresses can be addressed with time, support and resources invested in**

- Fresh starts and changing attitudes towards and or from learning institutions.
- Supports for positive social development and making friends.
- Getting acquainted with new learning institution staff and or peers.
- Support for cross learning institution conversations, data/information sharing, curriculum programming and transition teams.
- Student success teams at each learning institution with each student allocated a Caring Adult (e.g. Class/form teacher, counsellor or school leader).
- Positive, safe welcoming school and classroom cultures and climates.
- High quality programmes/practices that best fit each student.
- Ongoing engagement with families.
- Professional Learning Development for staff within effective School Improvement and Student Success frameworks.

## **Learning Institution Development**

*(Wayne Francis Charitable Trust-Youth Advisory Group 2011)*

- The learner is more important than the activity.
- Learners grow in responsibility as they are helped to accept responsibility.
- Learning becomes most relevant when it is contextual or built in to a life experience.
- There are under utilised skills and resources in each institution/community waiting to be harnessed and used.
- Growth comes from within each learner.
- The institution will determine the pace of change, with any change becoming permanent only when the learning community is ready.
- Integrated development methods rather than departments that work in isolation best serve institutions.
- To much help leads to dependency, learners should only be helped to enable them to become more self-reliant.

## **Inter-related Bridges to Seamless Transition and Student Success Practices**

(After Michael Barber, 1999)	
<b>Pedagogic</b>	<b><i>Research and best practice based teaching and learning approaches/strategies that enable student success</i></b>
<p><i>“All children are instinctively wired to learn and innately inquisitive, they seem to thrive on trying new things again and again until they satisfy their curiosity, questioning how, what and why...” (Claxton, 2008 cited in Francis, 2012)</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the high school leaving age to 18 and or with a minimum qualification.</li> <li>• Offer a full range of authentic academic and non-academic learning pathways within the minimum qualification framework.</li> <li>• Establish a practice/competency-based qualification as a prerequisite for applying to become a principal that is contracted to the Secondary and Primary Principal Federations to administer.</li> <li>• Work on student’s frontal lobe because brains are ‘plastic’ but only if ‘forced’ hence students can be taught to learn within and to lengthen their attention span.</li> <li>• Adopt pedagogy first practices as defined in the front end of the NZC then link and express them through subject contexts.</li> <li>• Align all practice to Teaching as Inquiry (NZC p35. 2009).</li> </ul>	
<b>Bureaucratic &amp; Administrative</b>	<b><i>Including stakeholders (MOE, Boards of trustees, Teacher Training Providers, educators, parents, students and the community) in effective change management pre conditions and involving them in consultation, collaboration and cooperation process</i></b>
<p><i>“Educators and parents need to be recognised for the ways they successfully prepare and facilitate transition practices for students and students need to be recognised for their strengths, hard efforts, insights and hopes”. (Tilleczek, Ferguson et al, 2010)</i></p> <p><i>“Parents and families are essential to seamless transition so need to be aware of what is going on and invited and engaged in transition teams/programmes”. (Tilleczek, Ferguson et al, 2010)</i></p> <p><i>“Teachers/educators need to work along side each and other between institutions to get to know about each others learning and teaching practices and to establish how they can work together to progress a student along their learning pathway”. (Tilleczek, Ferguson et al, 2010)</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MOE establishes a non-political cross sector reference group to review and establish research driven student success framework that could include             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Curriculum, Teaching and Learning,</li> <li>2. Assessment for, as and of Learning,</li> <li>3. School and Classroom Leadership,</li> <li>4. Programmes and Career Pathways,</li> <li>5. Student Voice,</li> <li>6. Home, School and Community Partnerships (Ontario MOE, 2010)</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Select educators for training and employment who ‘like kids’, are learners themselves and can see things through the eyes of others especially children.</li> </ul>	

- Annually review and evaluate student success data/information to identify priorities and next steps.

**Social & Personal**

***Establishing relationships, maintaining engagement and easing anxiety and stress before during and after each transition.***

*“Transitions are both growth inducing and or trouble spots with students in constant motion and tension around being (themselves) becoming (growing up) and belonging (a state or sense of being valued)”. (Tilleczek, Ferguson et al, 2010)*

*“At Risk factors exist both within and beyond learning institutions and across individuals, places of learning, family and cultural levels”. (Tilleczek, Ferguson et al, 2010)*

*“Transition conversations and programmes need to consider timing, year level, location, gender, culture, context and age specific child/youth development processes”. (Tilleczek, Ferguson et al, 2010)*

*“Transition is a non-linear process (not just an event) with the needs and perspectives of students changing in complexity through out the process and or whenever any ‘At Risk’ factors are prevalent”. (Tilleczek, Ferguson et al, 2010)*

*“In developing programmes and strategies to support transition the focus must be on actively involving the people (students, friends, family, staff and the community) who have specific and collective roles with young people and their educators”. (Tilleczek, Ferguson et al, 2010)*

*“Transition does not produce easily defined emotional experiences as students can be excited and anxious, hopeful and fearful, confident and confused all at the same time”. (Tilleczek, Ferguson et al, 2010)*

*“Friends are a critical part of transition although the character of these relationships changes over time and must be understood as such”. (Tilleczek, Ferguson et al, 2010)*

*“A caring teacher takes the time to develop reciprocal emotional and social connections with students”. (Sewell, 2006)*

- Establish multi layered transition programmes that include the student, family and educators. Possible ingredients include - parent information evenings (curriculum and school systems), barbeques, e.g. year 9 only day, school visits, summer camps, sports tournaments, girls night in, boys night out.
- Receive new learners well by adopting ‘this is your learning institution – we want you here- and we won’t let you fail’ approach where educators identify what they can do to motivate and empower each learner.
- Develop profiles for learners that identify what turns them on as well as turns them off.
- Develop on line portfolios e.g. My Portfolio, for students to record from an early age their being, becoming and belonging journey
- Co-construct a self-assessment learning skills card that includes Key Competency indicators.
- Engage with previous teachers well before transition to discuss and strategise around student profiles.
- Establish a multifaceted two-way communication system with parent’s that includes phone calls, texting, email, Face Book, Twitter.
- Establish a transitions team (including a caring adult) that welcomes each student and makes him or her feel comfortable through out the next year. This team and or a caring adult looks for success to celebrate and for early warning signs of any issues (personal, social and career support) within a solution focus –what needs to be done and how can we assist or make it difficult for a student to fail.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open regular communication between teachers, counselors and senior leaders regarding student successes and or areas needing support.</li> <li>• Hold regular e.g. minimum monthly, Student Success ‘finger on the pulse’ meetings to monitor student progress, achievement, behavior issues and attendance. Outcomes of these meetings should include who will do what by when to celebrate or support student success.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Curriculum</b></p>	<p><b><i>Developing coherence and continuity of learning, teaching, achievement/progress and success information</i></b></p>
<p><i>“Being aware and attending to emotional needs of students the door opens for genuine learning to occur”. (Rogers &amp; Renard, 1999 cited in Francis, 2012)</i></p> <p><i>“Inclusive, supportive classroom environments and learning conversations between teachers, students, and whanau help to support all students in learning to learn/achieve successfully. (NZ MOE, 2012)</i></p> <p><i>“Brains are ‘plastic’ but only if ‘forced’ hence students can be taught to learn within and lengthen their attention span”. (Marinussen, Chanan et al 2005).</i></p> <p><i>“Students need to be taught and have opportunities to apply the Key Competencies and Learning Literacy skills”. (NZC, 2007 and NZC Update Issue 21, 2012).</i></p> <p><i>“Empowering students to become more self-directed learners and helping educators and parents further develop these skills in their children can significantly increase students’ motivation, achievement and success”.</i></p> <p><i>“Instead of wondering why we can’t get our students to understand what we want, we could attempt to truly understand our students and what they find motivating” (Francis, 2012)</i></p> <p><i>“Instead of thinking how we can persuade unmotivated students to learn we should be thinking about what is stopping them or putting them off learning”. (Francis, 2012)</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish get ready for the next learning institution skills programmes with modules such as, time management, note taking, test preparation, goal setting.</li> <li>• Develop a careers programme to commence prior to year 7 for students to research what the career looks like and the competencies needed.</li> <li>• Establish homework clubs and or curriculum specific lunchtime or after school learning/remediation sessions and make it cool to be there</li> <li>• Establish tutoring programmes for older students to support and encourage younger students.</li> <li>• Hold graduation ceremonies prior to any transition to the next learning institution.</li> <li>• Specifically teach students how to learn and how to lengthen their attention span.</li> <li>• Provide contextual opportunities for students and educators to learn and educate in each other’s institution.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>School &amp; Classroom Culture</b></p>	<p><b><i>When educators create safe and welcoming conditions that enable multiple voices to be heard and different values and traditions recognised.</i></b></p>

*“Students who drop out from school don’t see them selves as ‘drop outs’ but disengage due to experiences of and or fear of failure. When asked what would cause them to return to learning they stated - a caring adult” (Ferguson et al, 2005)*

*“Culture is at the centre of the teaching-learning transaction because it empowers our students”. (Grierson & Gibbs, 2007))*

*“A sense of belonging begins and is sustained when a student perceives that their teacher genuinely likes them and is empathetic and responsive to their needs i.e. genuinely cares and is trustworthy”. (Brophy, 2010)*

*“When my teacher treats me with respect, offers meaningful significant choices, creates fun or interesting learning opportunities I am motivated to learn”. (Rogers & Renard, 1999 cited in Francis, 2012)*

*“It is student’s learning that must be understood and acknowledged and captured in order to enthuse, motivate and show the learner a world of learning that can enhance their life and their life chances”. (Bourke, 2007)*

- Identify with stakeholders what local ‘at risk’ factors are.
- Establish a buddy teacher and or school programmes that gives teachers opportunities to observe and discuss what causes’ best learning’.
- Find out from students, parents and educators what they Cheer, Fear and are Unclear about transitions.
- Develop a culture of thinking where:
  - Learning is a consequence of thinking,
  - Learning and thinking is a collective and personal enterprise,
  - Learning involves uncovering complexity and delving deeply.
  - Learning requires active involvement,
- Questions drive learning and are outcomes of learning. (Ritchhart, 2012 cited in Francis, 2012)
- Create intrinsically motivating classroom conditions.
- Involve staff in reviewing student success data and information and in shaping up PLD.
- Establish a not for profit ‘community service’ programme for students.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1**

The ‘Load Aim Fire’ Approach to Seamless Transition Framework through the Reducing Stress and Anxiety Lens. This analogy expresses the importance of having a clear purpose and planning well before taking action. Indiscriminate actions in the pursuit of seamless transition will not address any stress and anxiety nor will they be sustainable.

The target in the center of this framework is ‘Success for all Students’. The next circle contains three essential elements of the ‘Loading’ process:

Research based practice,  
Asset based development and,  
Differentiation and personalisation.

The 'Aiming' circle describes the seven key ingredients that reduce stress and anxiety:

High quality programmes /practices that best fit each student,  
Fresh starts and changing attitudes towards and or from learning institutions,  
Student Success Teams established at each learning institution,  
Getting acquainted with the new learning institution, staff and or peers,  
Professional Learning Development for staff within effective School Improvement and Student Success frameworks,  
Ongoing engagement with families and,  
Positive, safe and welcoming learning institution and classroom cultures and climates.

The 'Firing' circle describes indicative actions/practices within the 5 Bridges to Seamless Transition approach that are practical and sustainable. Each learning institution would need to establish their actions/practices that fits its own context.

## **Appendix 2**

The 'Load Aim Fire' Approach to Seamless Transition Framework through the School Improvement/Effective Teaching Lens. This analogy conveys the importance of having a clear purpose and planning well before taking action. Indiscriminate actions in the pursuit of seamless transition will not connect well with effective change management practices and will not be sustainable.

The target in the center of this framework is 'Success for all Students'. The next circle contains three essential elements of the 'Loading' process:

Research based practice,  
Asset based development and,  
Differentiation and personalisation.

The 'Aiming' circle describes the six key aspects of this process:

Assessment for, as and of learning,  
School and classroom leadership,  
Student voice,  
MOE, BOT, Educators and community partnerships,  
21<sup>st</sup> Century learning and,  
Learning and teaching as inquiry.

The 'Firing' circle describes indicative actions within the 5 Bridges to Seamless Transition approach that are practical and sustainable.

The connections between the separate Load, Aim and Fire circles for both **Appendices** are multi dimensional with several items from one circle connecting with several others from the previous circle.

Educators striving for seamless transition will need to be able to define the connectivity (key people, rituals and processes) between each stage of this approach. Therefore for successful seamless transition consideration must be given to all components of this framework.

### **References:**

Barber, M. (1999). Taking the Tide at the Flood: Transforming Education in the Middle Years. Paper presented at the Middle Years of Schooling Conference. Melbourne. Australia.

Brophy, J. E. (2010). Motivating students to learn, Third Edition. New York, USA.

Claxton, G. (2008). *What's the Point of Schooling: Rediscovering the Heart of Education*. Oxford. England.

Cox, S. & Kennedy, S. (2008). Students' Achievement as they Transition from Primary to Secondary Schooling. Ministry of Education: Research Division. Wellington. New Zealand.

Ferguson, B., Tilleczek, K., Boydell, K., & Rummens, J. (2005). *Early School Leavers: Understanding the Lived Reality of Student Disengagement from Secondary School*. Toronto. Canada.

Francis, T. (2012). Student-centred thinking and learning in literacy. Keynote workshop at Woodend Primary School. June 2012. Keynote.

Grierson, M., & Gibbs, C. (n.d.) Aesthetic education through the arts: facing questions of purpose, power and learning. In Brown, S., O'Neill, J., & St George, A. (Eds. 2007), *Facing the big questions in education: purpose, power and learning* (pp. 15-24). Palmerston North, New Zealand.

Martinussen, R., Tannock, R., McInness, A., & Chaban, P. (2005). *Teach For Success. Teach ADHD: Teacher's Resource Manual*. TV Ontario. Sick Kids. Ontario. Canada.

New Zealand Ministry of Education. (2007). The New Zealand Curriculum. Wellington: Learning Media Limited.

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2010). *School Effectiveness Framework: A support for school improvement and student success*. Toronto. Canada.

Riley, K., & McBeath, J. (2000). Quality Assurance “effectiveness” indicators and support systems: putting self evaluation in place. Paper presented at Effective Schools and Teachers Thematic Group session, Evaluating school performance: tools and processes, World Bank Listening Week. 2000.

Ritchhart, R. (2012). Visible thinking. Keynote address at College Street Normal School. January 2012.

Robinson, V., Hoepa, M., & Lloyd, C., (2009). School leadership and student outcomes: identifying what works and why. Best evidence synthesis iteration (BES). Wellington. New Zealand Ministry of Education.

Rogers, S. & Renard, L. (1999). *Relationship-driven teaching*. Educational Leadership, September, 34-37.

Sewell, A.M. (2006). Teachers and children learning together: Developing a community of learners in primary classrooms. Unpublished PhD thesis, Massey University, New Zealand.

Tilleczek, K. & Ferguson, B. (2007). *Transitions and Pathways from Elementary to Secondary School: A Review of Selected Literature*. Toronto. Canada.

Tilleczek, K., Ferguson, B., Laflamme, S. (2010). *Fresh Starts and False Starts: Young People in Transition from Elementary to Secondary School*. Executive Synopsis for Educational Policy and Practice. Ontario Ministry of Education. Toronto. Canada.

Tilleczek, K., Laflamme, S., Ferguson, B., Edney, D., Girard, M., Cudney, D., & Cardos, S. (2010). *Fresh Starts and False Starts: Young People in Transition from Elementary to Secondary School*. Ministry of Education. Toronto. Canada.

Wayne Francis Charitable Trust-Youth Advisory Group (2011). Positive Youth Development in Aotearoa-“Weaving Connections-Tuhonohono rangatahi”.

### **Acknowledgements:**

The Canterbury Primary Principals Association (CPPA) for their generosity in sponsoring the 2012 Fellowship Award.

The New Zealand Ministry of Education (MOE) for funding paid study leave.

The Woodend School Board of Trustees for their support and approval of my study leave.

The staff of Woodend School for continuing to develop learning within the safest environment during my absence.

NZ MOE research analyst Sharon Cox and Rachel for their interest in and support of this research project and also for facilitating contact with Ontario Ministry of Education staff.

Trudy Francis of C21 Learning.

The many professionals who willingly assisted me before during and after my visit to Ontario including: Mary Jean Gallagher of the Ontario MOE (Assistant Deputy Minister, Student Achievement Division), Richard Franz (Director Student Success/Learning), Karen Gill (Director-acting- Curriculum and Assessment Policy Branch), Ted Whittaker, Mike Rethnazi and Bob Stones.

The Dufferin-Peel CDSB staff including Joanna Boudrea (Principal of Student Success),

Cardinal Ambrozic Catholic Secondary School Principal Tim Lariviere, Head of Mathematics, staff and students.

The Loyola Catholic Secondary School Principal Jo Giancola, Deputy Principal, staff and students.

Joanne Robinson (Director of Professional Learning) for the Ontario Principals' Council.

Professor Ferguson and Peter Chaban researchers for 'Sick Kids' Ontario.

The Durham District School Board staff members Jane Bate and Elyse Pinder.

Nottingham Public School Principal Dave Fitchett, Deputy Principal, staff and students.

J. Clarke Richardson Secondary School Principal Richard Kennelly, Head of Guidance, staff and students.

Middlefield Collegiate Institute Principal Annette Oliver, staff and students.

*Graeme Barber. Principal Woodend School, 2012*