



Transition from Early Childhood to Primary School

Waimea Kahui Ako



Introduction



Going to school is an exciting and challenging time for young children and their families. Moving from early childhood education to school can be a positive and rewarding experience that sets children on a successful pathway.

Effective transitions are critical to the development of children's self-worth, confidence and resilience, and ongoing success at school. This is a time to build relationships, maintain excitement for learning and ensure children experience continuity in their learning.

From: ERO: Continuity of learning: transitions from early childhood services to schools




Culturally Responsive Transition

Successful transitions depend on the nature of the relationships between all involved. For children, their friendships, peer relationships and the relationship with their teacher appear central. Respectful, reciprocal relationships between the adults involved are also key factors. This is important for all children but seems to be especially influential for the success of maori children. Relationships support a sense of belonging and wellbeing at school, engagement in learning, learning dispositions and identity as a learner. Children, whose teachers take time to get to know them, affirm their culture, recognise and build on their prior learning, and see promise rather than deficits, reflect many of the features of a successful transition that will support their learning.

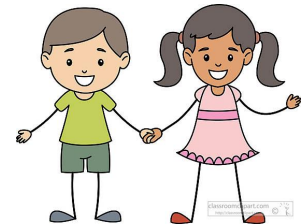
For Maori and Pasifika children, positive, responsive relationships between children, teachers and families, and culturally responsive teaching and assessment are strong themes in ensuring success.





The emphasis should move from “the child being ready for school, to the need for the school to be ready for the child”.

This quote applies equally at the point when a child is entering an early childhood education service, moving through that service, starting school, going to intermediate and on to secondary school and into tertiary or vocational training. When early childhood services and schools live this quote, children and young people’s learning, social, physical and cultural needs are met and the learning they have achieved in one part of the system transfers to and is built on in the next.





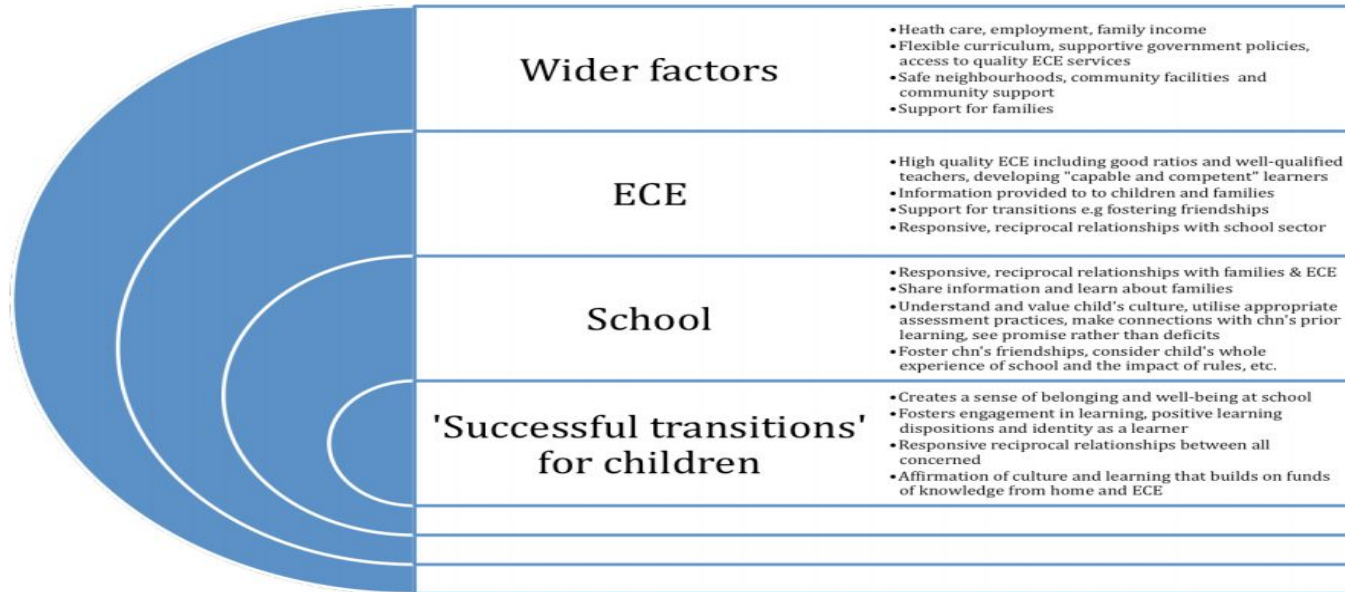
Continuity of Learning



Effective transition into school is critical for a child's development of self-worth, confidence, resilience and ongoing success at school. Schools that are very responsive to ensuring children successfully transition can demonstrate they have a real knowledge about their newly-enrolled children. They take care to translate that knowledge into providing the best possible environment and education for each and every child. Leaders make sure transition is flexible and tailored to the individual child.

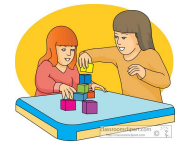
Features of Successful Transition

Figure 1: Features of a successful transition for children and some of the strategies that wider society, ECE services and schools can undertake to ensure children transition as successfully as possible.



Supporting Children's Transition to School

- Connect with funds of knowledge that children bring to school from home
- Culturally responsive teaching
- Appropriate assessment practices that recognise the situated nature of learning and the cultural construction of assessment practices
- Making links between children's learning in ECE and school
- Foster children's relationships and friendships and create contexts with reduce the negative consequences of not having friends
- Consider the child's whole experience of school, including lunchtimes and using toilets
- Provide opportunities for play that enables children to explore experiences, develop language and foster understanding and meaning
- Understand the impact of rules and the way these can support belonging but also constrain behaviour and create anxiety
- Provide information and familiarisation activities for children and families
- Learn about children and their families
- Develop home-school partnerships

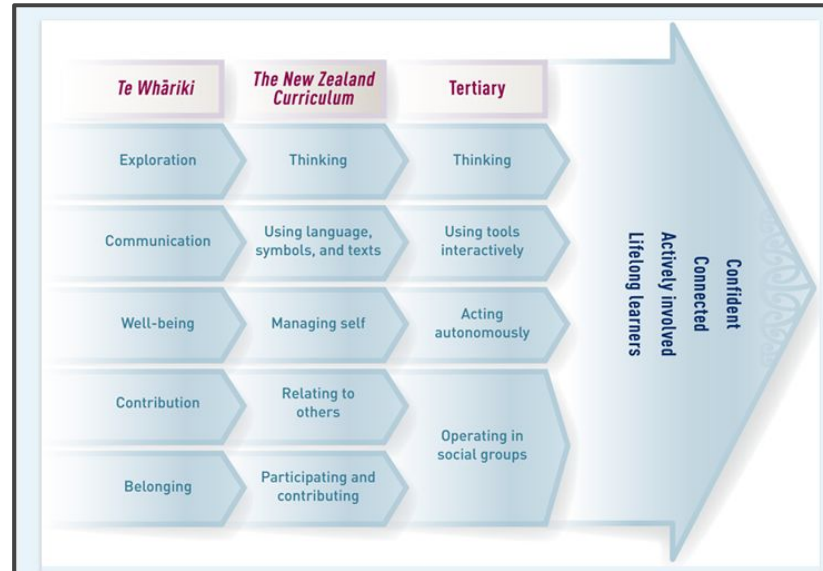


From: Literature Review: Transition from Early Childhood Education at School - www.educationcounts.govt.nz



Te Whariki - NZ Curriculum

Both documents contain statements that have goals advocating building on previous learning in each setting. The deliberate direct link between learning dispositions, key competencies and the working theories of the two curricula creates opportunities for continuity of learning experience. It is important that transition practices are consistently and coherently built on this notion of children developing competence, accessing resources and building relationships. *From: Crossing the Border - Hartley, Rogers, Smith, Peters, Carr - NZCER 2012*





Pathway of our Tamariki - MOE Data 2017

Community of Learning Waimea Community of Learning

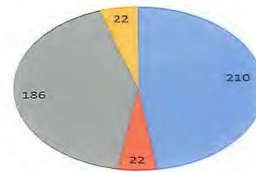
<u>Row Labels</u>	<u>Sum of Count</u>
Education & Care	210
Home-based	22
Kindergarten	186
Not in ELI	22

Community of Learning

Waimea Kahui Ako. Children attending the Primary Schools by ECE Sector

Sum of Count

Total 337



ECE service type

- Education & Care
- Home-based
- Kindergarten
- Not in ELI

ECE - Primary School 2017 New Entrant Summary

[Waimea Kahui Ako Full Data](#)

Brightwater School (50 children from 18 ECE centres)

3183 Brightwater School

- Waimea Community of Learning

ECE Service	Children	Community of Learning
65025 Pinegrove Kindergarten	23	
46003 Kiwi Explorers	12	
65074 Futures Early Education Kindergarten	4	
46540 Nurture@Home Ltd.	3	
65161 Paula's Preschool Richmond	3	
65197 Little People Preschool Wakefield	3	
46287 ACE Nayland	2	
65150 Little People Preschool Richmond	2	
5399 Grove Street Kindergarten	1	Nelson City
5400 Henley Kindergarten	1	
5405 Richmond Kindergarten	1	
30081 Home Grown Kids (South)	1	
45605 Jigsaw Preschool 1	1	
46202 Nature Kids Motueka	1	
55505 PORSE Nelson S1	1	
65236 Richmond Early Learning Centre	1	
65239 Futures Positive Beginnings	1	
65421 The Ark Preschool	1	
Not in ELI	3	
Total	50	

ECE - Primary School 2017 New Entrant Summary

65236 Richmond Early Learning

Centre

School	Community of Learning
3194 Henley School (Nelson)	Waimea
3216 Richmond School (Nelson)	Waimea
3182 Birchwood School	Ngā Ākonga ki Whakatū
297 Tapawera Area School	
3180 Appleby School	Waimea
3196 Hope School	Waimea
3208 Nayland Primary School	Ngā Ākonga ki Whakatū
3234 Wakefield School	Waimea
1627 St Paul's School (Richmond)	Waimea
3183 Brightwater School	Waimea
3189 Enner Glynn School	Ngā Ākonga ki Whakatū
3203 Mapua School	Motueka
3209 Nelson Central School	Nelson City
3223 Stoke School	Ngā Ākonga ki Whakatū
3224 Tahunanui School	Ngā Ākonga ki Whakatū
3229 Upper Moutere School	Motueka



Longitudinal Study of Children Growing up in New Zealand

Table 9: Transition activities

Transition activity*	n	%
Visit(s) to the school	4482	79
Visit or visits to their class before they started	4185	74
Met with their teacher before they started	3765	66
Met with their teacher soon after they started to see how they were going at school	2774	49
The school/ teacher/ class received information from ECE or care staff (such as a transition folder or portfolio)	1104	19
Attended school for shorter days	1041	18
Their ECE, or childcare visited the school	1033	18
Other activities to assist them transitioning to school	269	5
None of these	171	3

*Participants were asked to select all items that applied to them. Multiple responses so totals add to more than 100%.



Longitudinal Study of Children Growing up in New Zealand

Table 11: Reasons mothers experienced difficulties with their child's transition to school

Difficulty Experienced*	n	%
Worried child would not make friends at school	659	39
Worried child would not like school	651	39
Being separated from child	614	37
Oldest child and the process was new	479	28
Youngest child and the end of the preschool period	375	22
Worried for child's safety at school	341	20
Child found it difficult to settle in to school	323	19
Worried child was not ready for school	322	19
Child did not want to go to school	143	9
Child had not had a good transition preparation (visits etc.) before they started school	130	8
Other	122	7
Child had/has language difficulties	117	7
Child had/has special needs or disabilities	109	6
Child had/has health difficulties	93	5
Felt they didn't get any support from the school for this process	79	5
Felt they didn't have any family support for this process	74	4

*Participants were asked to select all items that applied to them. Multiple response so totals add to more than 100%.

Longitudinal Study of Children Growing up in New Zealand

Table 12: Reasons mothers gave for overcoming difficulties experienced when their child starting school

What helped to overcome the difficulty?*	n	%
Time and getting used to it	1099	71
Child got used to going to school	866	56
Could see they child was happy at school	829	53
Talking about school with child	638	41
Saw that school was good for child	583	37
Child supported by staff at the school	583	37
Support from or talking with child's teacher	581	37
Getting to know child's teacher	571	37
Establishing a routine at drop off and pick up times	474	30
Getting to know the school	433	28
Child supported by other children at the school	428	28
Support from other parents and friends	386	25
Support from family	345	22
The school responded to concerns with a change in practice or procedure	149	10
Other	64	4

*Participants were asked to select all items that applied to them. Multiple response so totals add to more than 100%.

Longitudinal Study of Children Growing up in New Zealand

Table 13: Reasons child experienced no difficulties when starting school

Reason for no difficulty*	n	%
Ready for school	3071	76
Happy to go to school	2970	73
Excited about going to school	2896	72
Familiar with environment because siblings or other family member attends/has attended the same school	2243	55
Had friends or other children he/she knew at the school	2126	53
Familiar with school surroundings	2013	50
Used to the ECE or care environment	2009	50
The transition process/school visits etc. prepared child well	1737	43
Their teacher	1576	39
Child finds it easy to make friends and meet new people	1559	39
The support child received from teachers at the school	1381	34
ECE or carer prepared them well	1221	30
Parent had the time to be involved in settling them into the school when they started	1189	29
Parent had the time to prepare him/her	1189	29
Family support the child has	1110	27
Familiar with environment because a family member works at the same school	281	7
Other	19	<1

*Participants were asked to select all items that applied to them. Multiple response so totals add to more than 100%.

Data collection from Waimea Kāhui Ako

Surveys were sent out to all primary schools and most Early Childhood Centres within our Kāhui Ako.

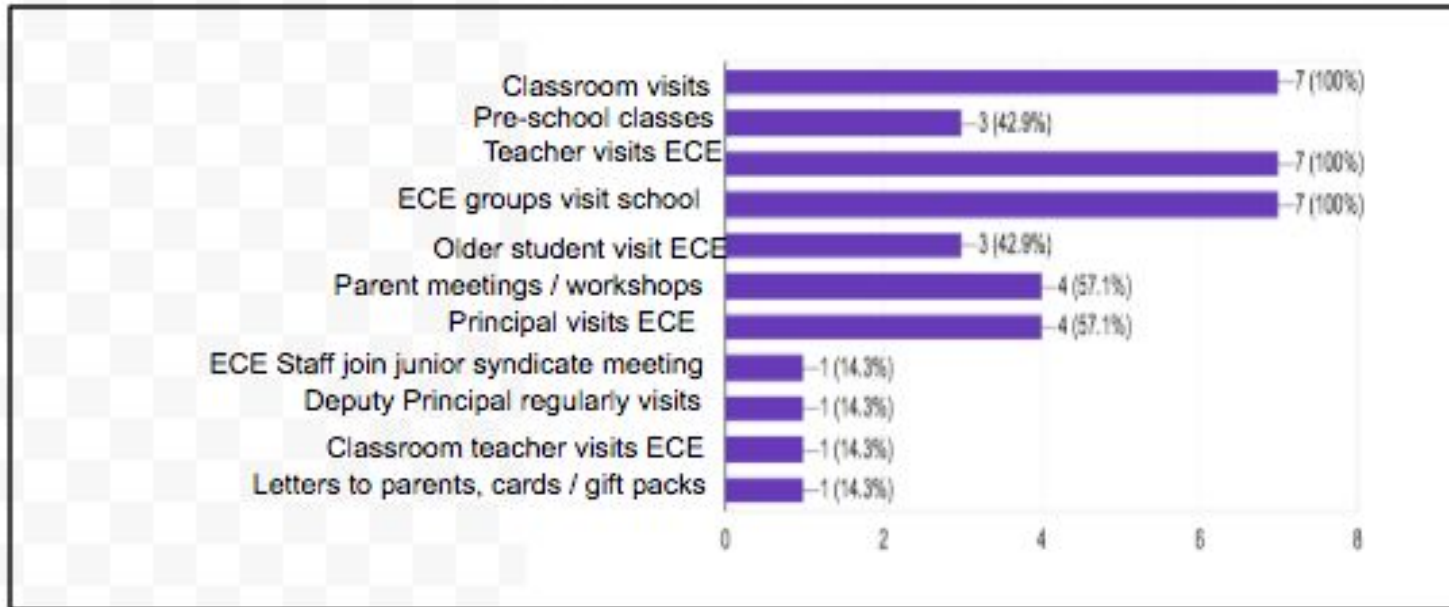


Questions were asked of new entrant teachers (7 schools), early childhood teachers (9 centres) and parents / caregivers (20 responses) who have had their eldest child start school in 2018.

Example questions included:

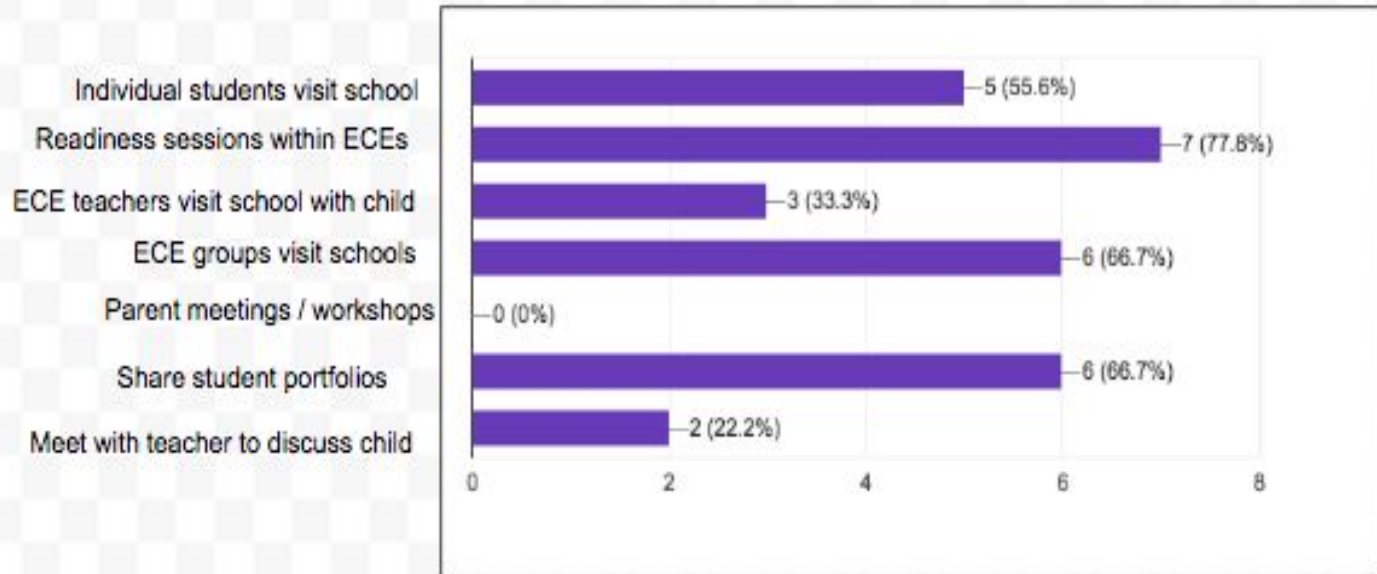
- What initiatives / processes do you have in place for transition and which one/s do you believe are the most effective?
- What information do you provide to the new entrant teacher?
- How do you support families / parents in the transition process?
- Do you have any ideas to enhance / improve transition processes?

Current Practice - What Schools Do Now?





Current Practice - What ECE's Do Now?





What we currently do as part of the transition process

- Individual children visits to school
- Early childhood groups visit schools - classroom, library, assembly, events
- Sessions to 'prepare' children held within early learning centres
- Early childhood teacher visits school with the student starting
- Share portfolios with primary school teacher
- Early childhood teacher meets with primary school teacher
- Parent meetings / workshops
- Primary school teachers visit student in their early childhood setting
- Pre-school classes held at primary school
- Older primary children attend kindergarten sessions regularly
- ECE staff join syndicate meetings
- Letters to parents





Information shared at Transition

- Students share ECE profile book with new entrant teacher
- Teachers visit ECE to gain knowledge of the child
- Teachers share information about individual children - strengths, needs, social etc
- Parents receive a 'Starting School' book / transition to school brochure
- Enrolment forms / information booklets are available about local schools
- ECE teachers join student on a school visit
- Meeting between ECE and new entrant teachers - discuss programmes, expectations, learning philosophy, facilities
- Information about enrolment / starting school on website for parents to access



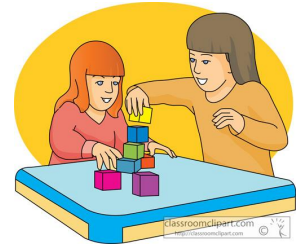
How do we currently support Family / Whanau in the transition process?

- Parents have a tour of the school / facilities
- Up to date information on website to access
- Parent evenings / meetings to discuss junior and share new entrant programmes
- Personal phone call from teacher to parent to organise visits to school
- Letters to children, class newsletters sent home
- Formal and informal discussions with parents
- Use Storypark / Seesaw to share information between home and school, ECE and school
- Parent questionnaires about the child - strengths, needs
- New parents morning tea
- Reading programmes for parents
- Pre-school sessions for child and caregiver
- Parent survey after 6 weeks at school
- Buddy systems



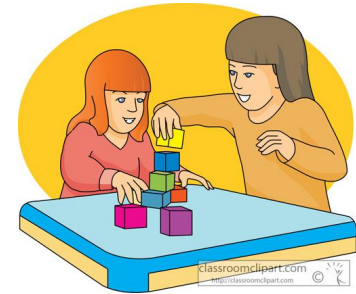
Themes Identified within the Data - From New Entrant Teachers

- Flexibility - although size of school has impact on the flexibility to facilitate transitions.
- Individual visits (routines, expectations)
- Parents involved with visits
- Meetings with teachers from both settings to share individual information
- Parent meetings when extra support is needed including all professionals involved with children
- Parent Evenings
- Sharing of information / profile books
- Shared Professional Development opportunities
- Opportunities to share with other teacher in Kahui Ako – success stories



Themes Identified From the Data - From Early Childhood Centres

- Teachers visiting from schools
- Sharing profile book
- “Readiness” for school groups in ECE
- Groups of children for school visits
- Meetings with teachers from both settings
- Communication with parents
- Re-visits by children back to ECE
- Shared Professional Development opportunities





Themes Identified From the Data - From Parents / Caregivers

- School visits including parents important
- Sharing information about individual students - at enrolment, between centres
- Sharing profile books
- Older school students as mentors
- Sharing ideas / expectations at home to help prepare for starting school
- How long should the transition process be?
- New Entrant teacher visiting pre-school
- ECE teacher attending a school visit with child
- Parent evenings great to clarify expectations, processes etc
- Groups of ECE children visiting school (eg library, assembly, playground) on regular basis
- Care, affection, nurturing of individual children as they transition to school



Questions Raised from the Data?

- School “Readiness” What are the settings interpretations of this – what do they think school readiness is?
- “Sharing” profile books – what does this mean/look like? How is a profile book put together?
- What is New Entrant teachers knowledge of Te Whariki? How do we ensure meaningful progression? How much do New Entrant teachers know about Learning stories? (Format etc)
- What info is shared when teachers meet to “share information”?
- How do the two groups communicate regarding technical processes, practical information and philosophical ideas?
- How are parents communicated with about transition?
- What culturally responsive practices are considered?
- How much Parent/Student voice is there for transition?
- How do we clarify shared language – commonality? (Te Whariki / NZ Curriculum – consider capabilities)
- What methods could be used to share info with parents (Story Park / See-Saw)



Where to From Here? - Possible Next Steps

- Share findings and subsequent action plan with ECE Network meeting
- Meet with ECE / NE teachers to share and discuss questions raised - achieve a common language and understanding of these themes
- Identify links / pathways between Te Whariki and NZC
- Establish a working party of ECE / NE teachers to develop a coherent pathway of transition to school - develop a transition vision statement and associated capabilities
- Find and share examples of best practice to support transition across our Kahui Ako





Resources

Education Review Office (ERO) (2015) Continuity of learning: transitions from early childhood services to schools.

<http://www.ero.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/ERO-Continuity-of-Learning-FINAL.pdf>

Kellaway, Karen (2013) Transition from ECE to Primary School.

file:///C:/Users/gilmoreg/Downloads/Karen%20Kellaway%20Sabbatical%20Report%202013%20-%20Transitioning%20from%20ECE%20to%20Primary.pdf

Ministry of Education (2010) Literature Review: Transition from Early Childhood Education to School.

<https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/ECE/98894/References> (this document comes with a very long list of references for more detail)

Ministry of Education (2015) Continuity of Learning (summary report)

https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/163589/Continuity-of-Early-Learning-Learning-Progress-and-Outcomes-Overview-Report.pdf

Ministry of Education (2018) Transitions in Early Learning

<https://www.education.govt.nz/early-childhood/teaching-and-learning/transitions-in-early-learning/>

Te Whāriki (2018) Pathways and Transitions. <https://tewhāriki.tki.org.nz/en/weaving-te-whariki/pathways-and-transitions/>

Transition to School (2018) Growing up in New Zealand project. <http://www.growingup.co.nz/en/news-and-events/news/news-2018.html>

University of Waikato (n.d) Transition research projects. https://www.waikato.ac.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/291282/Transitions-booklet.pdf

ERO - [Keeping Children Engaged and Achieving in Reading](#)

ERO - [Building Genuine learning Partnerships with Parents](#)



Acknowledgement

My thanks go to all the new entrant teachers, early childhood centres and parents who took the time to complete the survey.

Thank you also to Fiona Young (RTLB) and Gwen Gilmore (MOE - ECE) who worked with me to discuss and collate the data and support the on-going development of transition to school for our tamariki.

Nga mihi nui