

Transitions as a Tool for Change: Briefing 3



Scottish Pedagogies of Educational Transit
Transitions as a Tool for Change

Theme 2: Leading the Way in Professional Beliefs and Practices

Starting Strong III (OECD, 2012)¹ emphasises the importance of early years transitions as a focus for professional development. The workforce in Scotland is seen as central to achieving policy ambitions: this theme links strongly to a number of recommendations recently outlined in the Independent Review². In policy, research and practice arenas there is recognition of the importance of a positive start to early learning and childcare and on into school. It is with this background that we considered Transitions as a Tool for Change for practitioners as well as the children with whom they work. In mapping the various professional groups that engage in Early Learning and Childcare, this theme drew out the threads of thinking that lead to practitioner principles of practice and focus on the pedagogies used to support children's learning journeys and educational transitions.

Key Messages from Transitions Research: **Professor Aline-Wendy Dunlop** (University of Strathclyde)

The Early Years Collaborative – What are the Opportunities for you? **April Masson** (Early Years Collaborative)

'Evidence of Quality Professional Development: A Case Study in Childhood Practice **Brenda Dunn and Dorothy Johnson**, (Universities of Dundee & West of Scotland).

'From Generalist to Specialist: The Early Years Pedagogue' **Early Years Pedagogue Team** (University of Strathclyde)

'The Contribution of the Teacher in Early Education in Scotland: Professor Aline-Wendy Dunlop & Jillian Adie (Child's Curriculum Group, University of Strathclyde)

'Transition – Leadership Project' **Rebecca Hand**, Director Early Childhood Education and Care, **Melissa Kidd**, Principal Policy Officer, **Rowena Shirtcliff**, Principal Policy Officer. Great Futures Team from the Queensland Department of Education, Australia

'Transitions in Continuing Professional Development: the contribution of Education Scotland: advocacy, agency and change' **Siân Neil** (Education Scotland)

Discussion

In this seminar we brought together a range of workforce perspectives and thought about the capacity of our Scottish ELC and Primary School Workforce to lead the way in professional beliefs and practices around transitions. All

¹ OECD (2012) *Starting Strong III: A Quality Toolbox for Early Childhood Education and Care*. Paris: OECD.

² Siraj, I & Kingston, D (2015) *An Independent Review of the Scottish Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Workforce and Out of School Care (OSC) Workforce*. London: UCL Institute of Education.

participants had the opportunity to contribute and our ‘Talking Wall’ gathered perspectives around the principles of ‘opportunities’, ‘expectations’, ‘aspirations’, ‘entitlements’ and ‘participation’. In the light of the day’s work we may introduce another principle: that of ‘partnership’. The blending of the many contributions the Workforce make rests on developing a strong understanding of what matters in transitions. Aline-Wendy opened the session with Key Messages from Transitions Research and on the basis of evidence called for the reframing of professional relationships, and professional-family relationships across transitions, the enhancement of transitions experiences, key elements of change for those making transitions, giving a child’s transition time to unfold and seeing transitions as opportunities for continuities and change.

April Masson of the Early Years Collaborative Team, introduced a transitions driver diagram focusing on positive transitions to school concentrating on children, parents and carers, professionals and environments.

In this context we heard three presentations about the strengths of different elements of the workforce and their combined contributions to optimal transitions for children and families. Each presentation: Brenda Dunn and Dorothy Johnson’s on Childhood Practice, Jenny Carey on Early Years Pedagogues and Jillian Adie and Aline-Wendy Dunlop on the contribution of GTCS-registered teachers illustrated the combined strengths of the workforce in Scotland – what we began to call a ‘blended workforce’.

Our international visitors in the Queensland Team gave us a huge amount to think about in terms of leadership predicated on successful partnerships. They highlighted collaborative leadership, pedagogical leadership, procedural leadership and inclusive leadership: with purposeful use of data at the heart. In late 2013, Rebecca initiated a project called *Great Start - Great Futures* in recognition of the importance of children experience an optimal transition to school for successful early learning. The approach that underpins *Great Start, Great Futures* is recognised as best practice in Queensland with the success of the model becoming the inspiration for Queensland Government’s, *Supporting Successful Transitions to School - Decision Making Tool, 2015*. This approach successfully builds reciprocal and respectful partnerships between the prior to school and schooling sectors, within communities, by helping educational and community leaders to understand what matters the most for children to experience optimal development, a strong transition to school and successful early learning. Siân Neil rounded off the day by looking at the contribution of continuing professional development and self-evaluation and introduced ‘How Good is the Quality of Early Learning and Care?’ and the transitions indicators.

How Good is the quality of early learning and care we offer? Quality Indicator 2.6 Transitions	
How Good is our Early Learning and Childcare?	How Good is Our School 4?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of support for children and their families • Collaborative planning and delivery • Continuity and progression in learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrangements to support learners and their families. • Collaborative planning and delivery. • Continuity and progression in learning.

Learning and Implications for Practice

- Opportunity to look up through child development rather than looking down through learning
- One regulatory body for teachers and practitioners, to act as a bridge
- Optimal transition to school leadership is about the “why” not the “what”
- A shift of focus from “school readiness” to “ready schools”: a great challenge and aspiration for Early Level
- Critical reflection and responsive analysis are central
- Professional autonomy
- Critical reflection and responsive analysis are central features when considering the transitional process
- Social competence, emotional resilience, self-esteem, sense of self: important aspects when considering the transitional process
- Professional dialogue between practitioners/teachers sharing documentation
- Early level leadership - why do they do what they do?