Buildings transitions between ECE and Primary schools

Huirangi School (TLIF 1-124)

For the Ministry of Education
Author/s: Nicky Tapp, Amy Woodward, Alyson Fitzsimons, Amanda Hogan and Leigh McGrath
Contents

Summary.......................................................................................................................... 3
  Inquiry Team.................................................................................................................. 3
Background...................................................................................................................... 3
  The inquiry...................................................................................................................... 3
Key findings.................................................................................................................... 4
Key implications............................................................................................................ 5
Plans for sharing the findings........................................................................................ 5
Reference List................................................................................................................ 5
For further information................................................................................................. 5

Project title:
Buildings transitions between ECE and Primary schools

Project reference:
Huirangi School (TLIF 1-124)

© Ministry of Education, New Zealand — 2018

Research reports are available on the Ministry of Education’s website
Education Counts:
www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications
Summary

The goal of this inquiry was to strengthen the understandings of Year 0-1 teachers of the learning contexts experienced by their entering five year-olds, as well as the understanding of kindergarten teachers about the programmes and expectations their tamariki would encounter on school entry. This recently completed, small-scale project is innovative because it represents a new way for teachers from Early Childhood Education (ECE) and schools to work together to support transitions from ECE to school.

Inquiry Team

The inquiry team comprised teachers from Huirangi School and Waitara Central Kindergarten. The lead teacher was Nicky Tapp from Huirangi School. The other teachers were: Amy Woodward, Alyson Fitzsimons, Amanda Hogan and Leigh McGrath.

Background

The problem identified was that schools frequently see the role of ECE as to “get children ready for school”; so typical approaches have been one-way; informing ECE teachers and families about school expectations.

It was hypothesised that teachers would have much to learn from each other and that this would support with transition and continuity of learning programmes between kindergarten and school. The teachers from both contexts wanted to build mutual understandings of early literacy and numeracy learning progressions and to use assessment practices that provided accurate information about children’s interests, understandings and needs.

The inquiry

Teachers from kindergartens and schools conducted observations over time in both settings. These focused on the day-to-day activities of teachers and tamariki and interaction between teachers and children. Teachers met regularly to share and discuss their observations and the implications for each context. They also explored Te Whāriki and the New Zealand Curriculum documents to uncover the links and implications for learning, and developed a common vision for the learning of their children.
They developed an inclusive local curriculum based upon their agreed goals, learning principles and intended learning outcomes.

School teachers became more knowledgeable about play-based curriculum and pedagogy, and teachers from both contexts undertook shared professional learning and development on building early literacy and numeracy skills. They shared understandings of approaches to assessment so that school teachers could build on children’s learning dispositions and interests.

The school classroom was reconfigured to be more similar to the kindergarten environment, to allow children to continue building on their earlier learning. Relationships between families and school teachers were more welcoming and informative and school visits began six to nine months before school entry. School teachers took the time to learn about the children who would be enrolling at their school, so that children and families established positive relationships that would support continuity of learning. Tuakana-teina relationships between entering children and older students were established prior to entry, another innovative practice.

**Key findings**

- The new transition experiences were viewed favourably by transitioning families.
- Although the sample is small, school entry assessment data in numeracy and literacy demonstrated improvement e.g. 75% of children who had participated in transition activities were at Level 1 in Number strategy in 2016, compared with 30% before the innovation.
- School entry literacy assessments indicated children’s greater literacy knowledge than before the project.
- School teachers became aware of the principles of Te Whāriki, and were more conscious of the need to continue to build on children’s learning dispositions.
- Teachers developed a curriculum document for He Puāwai, the new entrant room, which combined key principles of Te Whāriki and the New Zealand Curriculum.
Key implications

- Transition to primary school is likely to be enhanced when there is synchronicity between early childhood centres and school.
- Common professional learning experiences for teachers in early childhood and new entrant classes can foster common understandings of curriculum expectations and effective practice.
- Ensuring that parents can be meaningfully involved in the transition from early childhood to school fosters parent engagement.

Plans for sharing the findings

The innovation is attracting interest from other schools and ECE centres, with the team sharing findings with five other contributing ECE centres. ECE and New Entrant teachers from New Plymouth have visited the primary school to learn more about changes that have been made to support transition.

Reference List


For further information

If you would like to know more about this project, please contact Nicky Tapp nicky@huirangi.school.nz
Lifting aspiration and raising educational achievement for every New Zealander