Much of the literature dwells on barriers to a successful transition from primary to secondary school on the correct premise that this is important as an outcome. But there are also opportunities. For many students, including those most vulnerable, the focus should be to explore what they are successful at and looking forward to, not their fears or misgivings.
School Focused Youth Services is a State Funded project designed to improve the health, well-being and educational outcomes of 10-18 year olds. SFYS Inner South covers schools within the Cities of Stonnington, Port Phillip and Glen Eira. The project is governed by a cross-sector and cross council committee and seeks to establish and sustain partnerships between schools and community services.

The DET (2014, p.5) report defines transition as “a movement from one set of circumstances to another, with changes to environments, relationships, behaviours, routines, roles and expectations”.

The SFYS commissioned a report on school transitions for vulnerable young people, with a focus on how to re-engage students through local initiatives. That report, published separately, undertook a literature review, and explored local case studies and relevant policy and strategy documents from the Victorian Department of Education and Training and other government departments and non-government organisations. That information has been condensed into this foldout summary for schools and community services to use as an audit and action guide. The intent is that school and other relevant personnel can use this guide to review what they are doing as part of the process of planning for the next transition program, with additional insights gained from recent publications and exemplary work by colleagues.
Effective programs focus on transition, not change. The difference between these is important. Change happens to people, often quite quickly, even if they don’t want it to. Whereas transitions are mostly internal, often occurring over a substantial period of time and, when managed well, can be liberating and energising. Successful school transitions allow young people - at this crucial time in their lives - to unshackle themselves from their childhood.
Background to the study

The Cities of Stonnington, Port Phillip and Glen Eira are actively committed to working through their own youth services and with other local education and community services to alleviate difficulties faced by young people in our regions.

Whilst the brief for this audit and action guide was to focus on vulnerable young people, many of the findings are applicable to all young people transitioning between primary and secondary education, whatever the level of their preparedness.

Reasons for disengagement, as identified through the SFYS Transition Screening pro forma, include: weak literacy / numeracy skills, low attendance, high anxiety around transitions, missing out on first preference for secondary school, seeking alternative education, poor mental health, disrupted housing, family breakdown, guardian legal issues, pregnancy, and other financial, health and carer based issues.

The transition from primary school to high school is an important life event and corresponds with a number of other physical, psychological and social developmental changes.

Positive transitions improve student academic and personal outcomes (levels of confidence and a sense of their own future) so that young people stay on in schooling and improve their options for careers and employment in productive adult lives.
Key findings

The research literature and case studies explored in this project suggest transitions must be student-centred. The case studies are presented in the full report.

Transitions need to cover the practical matters of organisational differences between primary and secondary school, and the real concerns students have about getting to and from school, getting around their new school, getting to know and trust new authority figures, as well as being ready for what is seen to be a big jump in expectations about student abilities and content knowledge. Transition activities must also be positive and fun.

The Report found:

1. Disengagement is starting much younger than the middle years, in some cases in the first years of schooling. Local schools and agencies are aware of, and responding to, this phenomenon.

2. Two recent major reports from the Victorian Government, through the Department of Education and Training (2014) and the Office of the Auditor-General (2015) have explored, addressed and presented ways forward for the dilemmas outlined above, some of which are already underway locally.

3. Schools and community services in the Cities of Stonnington, Port Phillip and Glen Eira are working together constructively across a dynamic and innovative suite of transition programs.

4. The student is the centre of focus in local transition programs. The aims are for each child to be assisted to reach a sense of belonging at each curriculum stage / year of schooling, and each child be assisted to find within themselves the motivation to move on / step up, feel safe with change and cope with 'departure' and 'arrival' events in their lives.

5. Transition ‘day’ events are becoming common beyond the Grade 6 to Year 7 divide (starting earlier and continuing later) so that moving on throughout their school life becomes second nature to students. The skills learnt regarding handling change are an important part of coping with alterations to school organisation, family structure and physical development, as well as to changing community expectations, and changes arising from technological advances.

6. Most local transition programs aim to be holistic, incorporating widely-based, co-ordinated processes. Individual programs are excellent on their own, but knowledge about what is being done elsewhere could be stronger. This is a point participants accept and this audit and action guide is part of the response to improve local and systemic collaboration.
The Report recommends:

7. A framework for any review and audit of transitions programs based on 5 areas: child-centredness, curriculum, connectedness, continuity and collaboration. This “5C” Framework is not prescriptive but a guide to reflection and future action that will take a different shape for each specific context.

8. Adaption of the hospital process of “Rounding” (patient monitoring and follow-through) for school transition purposes. This strategy should enhance identification of the input and activities of each of the agencies, their location and key contact for the transition strategies and processes, and the extent and type of practical support each offers.

9. The adoption of a “clearing-house” role for the School Focused Youth Services, or similar cross-sector local agency, to improve practices that centre on the exchange and dissemination of documentation and ideas as a broadly-based and consistent process. This is especially important for achieving successful school transitions for vulnerable young people.

10. The identification of sources for long-term resourcing and funding of the exemplary work currently being done in the Cities of Stonnington, Port Phillip and Glen Eira, so that the intellectual capital earned so far is re-invested in new and even more productive work around school transitions.

Working with secondary schools in this space, there is the potential to prevent long-term social and economic costs to Australian society if students transition successfully, stay in school, gain a qualification that will help get them employment, and more generally improve their life chances, health and well-being.
A Transition Framework – 5CTF

The 5C Transition Framework presented below has been developed through consideration of the research literature, government and system reports, and the lived experiences of students, teachers, families and community services briefly outlined in the case studies and consultation undertaken for this audit and action guide and the full report.

The Framework is an amalgam of theory and practice, though does not claim to be exhaustive. The intent is that the 5CTF acts as a guide to undertake an audit of current practice and then as a guide to future planning, coordinated with fellow agencies, as well as identifying the resourcing required or to be requested.

The Framework is based on 5 key factors: -

1. CURRICULUM
2. CONNECTEDNESS
3. CHILD-CENTREDNESS
4. COLLABORATION
5. CONTINUITY

Each of these factors has a suite of sub-headings indicative of action areas to consider during the audit when planning the next round or stage of transition interventions. No one school or agency will emerge from this process with the same plan as another, but there will be overlap and commonalities.

The umbrella ‘C’ headings are designed to allow flexibility so that local contexts, teacher skills, community resources and the needs of the students are the driving force behind the collaborative decisions made, not a model schools try to squeeze their programs into regardless of context.

The 5C Transition Framework is represented in Figures 1 and 2. Each transition program audit would emphasise different areas relevant to program and local strategies, and focus on different areas under each heading as the planning and coordination process gets underway.
Figure 1: 5C Transition Framework - overview. This model was extensively re-developed by Stephen Crump based on Brown, N., & Adam, A. (2010, June), University of Tasmania. Use is permitted for non-commercial purposes with attribution to the authors.

WHAT ACTIVITIES OCCUR UNDER EACH OF THESE HEADINGS IN YOUR TRANSITION PROGRAM?
Areas to explore in the audit and co-ordination stage for each of the 5Cs include:

- **CURRICULUM**
  Preparedness, Relevance, Purpose, Achievable

- **CONNECTEDNESS**
  Locations, Transition events, Peers and Staff, Self (confidence and trust).

- **CHILD-CENTREDNESS**

- **COLLABORATION**
  Systems and Consistency, School Sites and Communications, Knowledge Transfer and Co-ordination, Community and Family.

- **CONTINUITY**
  School and Local Services, Partnerships and Resourcing, Local Environment, State and National Oversight.

**NEXT STEPS?**
There are multiple ways that the 5CTF audit and planning can occur.

Technology provides a swathe of options for entering, processing, presenting and disseminating each 5CTF, but a good starting point for open discussion is always something less permanent at this stage.

*Good luck!*
This Audit and Action Guide was commissioned by the School Focused Youth Services program covering the Cities of Stonnington, Port Phillip and Glen Eira. The request was to review issues around, and examples of, primary to secondary school transition programs occurring within the three LGAs. All three Cities are actively committed to working through their own youth services and with other local community agencies to alleviate difficulties faced by young people in this day and age.

The ‘School Transitions for Vulnerable Young People’ report is a School Focused Youth Service initiative funded by the Victorian Government through the Department of Education and Training (DET). The City of Stonnington in partnership with the Cities of Glen Eira and Port Phillip, and auspiced by DET, is providing funding in order to facilitate the re-engagement of very early school leavers back into education.


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