

## EDUCATION (UPDATE) AMENDMENT BILL

01 SEPTEMBER 2016

### INCREASE FLEXIBILITY IN ENROLMENT AND ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE FIRST YEARS OF LEARNING

- The Bill seeks to enable schools to introduce cohort entry arrangements, after consultation
- The Council believes the needs of each child should be the focus of community discussion on cohort entry, rather than any potential organisational or administrative benefit
- The Council agrees that consultation with families is crucial. It will provide an opportunity for early childhood services and schools to consider new ways to support the transition experience
- Our analysis of the available evidence supports moving to a cohort approach, however we are also mindful there are some issues that need careful deliberation
- The Council suggests that guidance resources are developed to support families, ECE services and schools to create effective transitions.
- The Council thinks it is important that further research is undertaken as the cohort approach is implemented, to inform our understanding of effective transitions.

Key points	Benefits and outcomes for children	Evidence	What are the opportunities	Issues
The needs of the child must be at the heart of the decision on cohort entry	<p>Peters (2010) highlights an effective and successful transition to school is one that focuses on supporting children to develop a sense of belonging, well-being and security throughout their entry into school.</p> <p>The Advisory Group on Early Learning (AGEL) noted school entry in a cohort is reported to be valuable in helping children build relationships, as opposed to having to enter an already established classroom.</p>	<p>Peters (2010)</p> <p>Ministry of Education (2015) Report of the Advisory Group on Early Learning</p>		<p>Children starting school at the same time may not know each other. They could come from different communities and have participated in ECE in different services. Getting to know other children who are starting, as well as those already in the class, could be daunting for some children particularly if the child is not yet five years old</p>

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<p>Meaningful consultation will be crucial as this is a change to a long established tradition in NZ of children beginning school on their birthday or very soon afterwards</p>	<p>Families, alongside ECE services who are listened to and have an opportunity to be involved in genuine discussion and contribute to their local school's decision to embark on cohort entry will approach the change with clear understanding of the benefits and issues involved. They will be able to exercise a choice: for example which cohort a child might be part of.</p> <p>We see this would be a key part of a discussion within a CoL to ensure the community is confident of the decision. It would strengthen the learning opportunities as the CoL across and within schools and ECE services work together to ensure a positive transition experience.</p>	<p>Dockett &amp; Perry (2014)</p> <p>Ministry of Education (2015) Report of the Advisory Group on Early Learning.</p>	<p>This might be an opportunity for schools and services to connect with their community; to consider new ways to provide a positive transition experience, and to hear from their community and not just approach it from a 'convenience' point of view.</p> <p>It would be useful to engage in further research with an emphasis on cohort entry process. This could lead to New Zealand developing a similar resource to support effective transitions which the Australian Government of Education has established.</p> <p>Peters' (2010) literature review makes it clear that there are multiple factors at play that make for good transitions to school which are dependent on the child's culture, learning need, family support, language and background. (p.40).</p> <p>Bronfenbrenner ecological model is used to suggest a way to look at what is happening for the learner.</p>	<p>Parents and caregivers will need to be confident this is the right approach for their child; that they have the opportunity to genuinely discuss the positives and issues, that the school and new entrant class is ready to welcome significant numbers of children in some cases, not all of whom, will know each other. Families should have the opportunity to understand the benefits and implications of cohort entry for their child and then the flexibility to determine which cohort their child is part of.</p> <p>Consultation, discussion and implementation planning will need to allow families to have sufficient time to make arrangements such as for out-of-school care.</p> <p>Schools will need to make sure they have the resource and support for groups of children who may vary in age, be unknown to each other, and have had varying ECE experiences.</p> <p>AGEL noted the impacts school-starting arrangements have on social and educational outcomes for children and families vary. They proposed local schools, ECE services and communities would need to take responsibility for identifying what is needed, reflecting their own transition to school policies and practices as a whole, and considering any consequences for funding and other impacts on the welfare of families and whanau.</p>

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Cohort entry is likely to be each term rather than once a year intake or twice yearly intake	Practice may see small groups transitioning each term rather than large groups. This can foster friendships between children but also can provide opportunities for parent engagement in school activities which will help their transition too.	Peters (2010) reference to Dockett and Perry's 2005b study re parents trying to find children starting at same time as their own child (p.68)		
Successful transitions – Cultural responsiveness	Literature refers to benefits for different groups of children should they be part of a group transitioning to school e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Māori children</li> <li>• Pacific children</li> <li>• Children with additional needs</li> <li>• Children who linguistically diverse and/or come from linguistically diverse homes and attended immersion/ bilingual ECE services (Peters, p. 67)</li> </ul>	Peters, S. (2010). Literature Review: Transition from Early Childhood Education to School. Report to the Ministry of Education.	The introduction of a birthdate cohort entry membership to school (if implemented appropriately) is likely to have an effect on children and families feeling more comfortable in the school setting. This may impact on children's attendance increasing in the school sector.	

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	<p>While the literature on effective transitions from early learning services to school for Pacific children are limited, the following key features were highlighted in the A'oga Fa'a Samoa Centre of Innovation project as significant for effective transitions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transitioning as part of a small group of peers, which fostered a sense of belonging and contribution to the group</li> <li>• Establishment of a buddy system</li> <li>• Having a caregiver move to school with the children</li> <li>• Relationships</li> <li>• Key caregiver from the ECE service supporting the experience</li> </ul> <p>Based on these findings it would appear that the birthdate cohort entry may be beneficial for Pasifika children. Specifically, if they are attending with small groups from immersion services or with peers from Pasifika culture.</p>	<p>Podmore, V., Samu, T. A'oga Fa'a Samoa (2006, p.67).</p>		

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	<p>Many researchers have identified that a child's experience of transition into primary school is linked to children's emotional wellbeing, social competence and cognitive development, and they discuss the impact of a successful transition on ongoing educational outcomes and later life skills. Giroux (1992) has described the desirability of creating conditions in which people can become border crossers who try to understand a new culture or setting in its own terms rather than applying their own cultural lenses to something new.</p> <p>Gaining insights into the 'other' or new culture can disrupt existing divides and open new possibilities. Seeking this understanding on many levels, rather than making judgments about the other setting based on their own early childhood or school culture, and trialing ways of supporting learners to make these border crossing transitions, were central to the work of the teachers in this setting.</p>	<p>Crossing the Border A Community Negotiates the Transition from Early Childhood to Primary School</p> <p>By Carol Hartley, Pat Rogers, Jemma Smith, Sally Peters</p>		
Indicators of 'successful' transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Belonging, wellbeing and feeling 'suitable' at school</li> <li>• Recognition and acknowledgement of culture</li> <li>• Respectful, reciprocal relationships</li> <li>• Engagement in learning</li> <li>• Learning dispositions and identity as a learner</li> <li>• Positive teacher expectations, and</li> <li>• Building on funds of knowledge from early childhood education and home" (Peters, p.22)</li> </ul>	Peters (2010, p. 22)		

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Key elements for effective transition practices in schools	<p>Transitions: the early childhood perspective</p> <p>“successful transitions from early childhood to school help maintain continuity of learning”</p> <p>Transitions: the new entrant perspective</p> <p>“Laying the foundations for success” (p. 33)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong school leadership placing a high emphasis of the importance of transitions</li> <li>• Respectful, responsive relationships between school/early learning services/parents/whanau</li> <li>• Teachers having a good understanding of Te Whāriki and the NZ Curriculum</li> <li>• Robust systems to review the effectiveness of transition process</li> <li>• Identified and responsive to individual learning needs of priority learning (p. 32)</li> </ul> <p>Smooth transition promotes a positive start “to their whole school learning pathway” enabling them to navigate their way through change.</p>	<p>ERO report (2015)</p> <p>Continuity of learning: transitions from early childhood services to schools</p>	<p>The benefit of birthdate cohort entry to school will allow for early childhood and schools to engage in collegial planning to prepare for cohort entry.</p> <p>E.g. for early childhood services and schools to be ‘ready for children’s’ transitions instead of focusing on children being ‘ready for school’.</p> <p>AGEL noted a cohort system also lets teachers plan a programme focused on a new group which having children starting on any day in the year does not.</p>	

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