# Transition Between Primary and Secondary School: Why it is Important and How it can be Supported

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*Abstract: This paper identifies and critiques literature on the experience of transition between primary and secondary school; how and why it is seen as critical and in what ways it can be supported. The aim of this literature review is to remind readers of this important period on the lives of young people and the diverse range of issues which they face. There is general consensus in the literature that well-designed and implemented transition approaches can assist in the process of supporting students, their families and school staff. Teachers are crucial in supporting children and young people moving in, between and out of school and making these transitions positive experiences. Therefore, pre-service teacher education needs to include awareness and understanding of the main issues in relation to transition. Teacher educators need to consider how they can incorporate transition programs and strategies in their courses to ensure that graduate teachers have the skills and knowledge to mediate some of the pressures that their students are facing when dealing with transitions.*

## Introduction

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in Victoria defines transition as '... a period of change that can be both challenging and exciting, in which children and families adjust to new roles, identities and expectations, new interactions and new relationships' (DEECD, 2011).

Although it is known that transition can profoundly alter the school experience, less is known about how children, young people, their families and teachers perceive transition and how it alters their educational trajectory. The aims, therefore, of this literature review are to identify empirical research focusing on the experience of transition, particularly from primary to secondary school and to describe how and why transition is seen as critical and to unpack it in what ways.

## Methods

During December 2011, a search was made across several data bases (Academic Search, A+ Education Informit, Education Research Complete, ERIC, Ebsco Host, Humanities and Social Sciences Collection) for research on children and young people and their families and teachers' experience of transition between primary and secondary schools published between December 2005 and December 2011.

The search was made using the key words 'transition', 'school', 'primary' and 'secondary'. Studies were eligible for inclusion in this review if they involved typically developing children or young people in formal, mainstream education aged 10 to 14 years. They also had to be published in the English language, be peer reviewed and have used qualitative and/or quantitative research methods. Studies including children and young people with disabilities, chronic ill health conditions, special needs, gifted children or focusing on a particular social disadvantage such as ethnic or indigenous backgrounds or circumstances (refugee, immigrant, nomad, mobile families, home schooling) or curriculum area (mathematics, ICT, second language learning, literacy) were not reviewed due to their focus on specialised issues. Also excluded were studies that discussed transitions programs, either those run as direction-finding pilots or those that assessed the effectiveness of various transition strategies implemented in particular school settings.

The eligible studies were systematically evaluated using deductive reasoning; aggregated findings were used to identify how and why transition is seen as critical and in what ways.

## Results

The final sample consisted of thirty-seven studies that investigated transition from primary to secondary school. These studies included various perspectives and samples sizes such as from students (n = 40 to 90,118), parents (n= 40 to 191), teachers (n=26 to 39) and principals (n=30 to 765). Most of the studies (22) came from US, with the remainder from the UK (5), Canada (2), Australia (3), China (1), Germany (1), Norway (1), Peru (1) and a comparative study between Ireland and Estonia.

The studies included a range of foci: student belonging and well being; academic development and achievement; friendships and self esteem; transition experiences; beliefs, preferences and practices of students, parents and teachers; transition adjustment; bullying, depression and violent student behaviour; parental involvement and student perception of peer, parent and teacher support.

The predominant data collection method was questionnaires/surveys and interviews. In some of the American studies that dealt with students moving to middle school or from primary school to secondary schools, achievement scores such as the Grade Point Average (GPA) and student absentee data were used in addition to questionnaires and interviews.

An overview of the studies' characteristics is shown in Figure 1 for transition to middle school (mostly in the case of some American research) or from primary school to secondary school.

## Discussion

Examination of the thirty-seven studies dealing with transition from Primary School into Secondary School revealed a fairly constant appearance of themes (Figure 1) including academic attainment, transition experiences and social-emotional adjustment of children and young people; perspectives on transition of teachers, principals and parents. These were the predominant themes addressed in the scholarship on this area to date.
Several overarching subject matters were evident, with student belonging and well-being receiving the greatest attention. Other areas of interest were support from peers, teachers and parents and academic outcomes and family-school connections.

**Why and How Transition is Seen as Critical**

Transition from primary to secondary school is seen as an important crossroad as young people move from a small, self contained classroom to a large, more heterogeneous school with increased expectation of independent academic performance and less teachers' scaffolding. In addition, there are significant changes in the peer group with concerns about social acceptance often causing a loss of self-esteem, falls in academic performance and rising anxiety and depression levels (Akos, 2006; Frey, Ruchkin, Martin & Schwab-Stone, 2009; Marsten, 2008).

This move across schools settings brings with it changes that can have positive or negative effects on students, hence transition to secondary school is a social and academic turning point for adolescents (Langenkamp, 2009; Smith, Akos, Lim & Wiley, 2008).

The developmental stage of adolescence has been defined as a crucial period of cognitive, psychosocial and emotional transformations (Hines, 2007). According to Martinez, Aricak, Graves, Peters-Myszak & Nellis (2011, 526) it is a period of '…significant change and potential turmoil and difficulty'. They summarise it as involving multiple factors (for example developmental changes, school transitions and experiences, social influence) that impact on adolescents' socio-emotional and behavioural functioning and argue that support from peers, teachers and parents is crucial in shaping teenagers' experiences and outcomes (Martinez et al., 2011).

The disruptive nature of the transition process means that previously-learned behaviour patterns need to be adapted to new demands and more challenging environments, which may have a strong negative impact on peer relations and the students' academic achievement (Ding, 2008).

Unsettledness while transitioning between schools causes students to feel especially vulnerable. As a result, they may become disengaged, with the potential of dropping out of school altogether. This is a significant problem, as early school leaving jeopardises future career and employment opportunities and life chances (Darmody, 2008; Frey, 2009).

**Student Belonging and Well-being**

An important aspect in the adjustment to a new school is the students' sense of belonging and their socio-emotional functioning; in other words: their level of well-being. A high sense of belonging,  the feeling of social connection and being socially connected may lead to higher motivation and grades. Students with a low sense of belonging may feel alienated at school, which in turn may cause poor achievement and their eventually dropping out of school (Cueto, Guerrero, Sugimaru & Zevallos, 2010).

Social connection and well-being was investigated by Martinez, Aricak, Graves, Peters-Myszak & Nellis (2011), who  found a correlation between the perceived social support and socio-emotional functioning at the end of elementary school (in this American study, 5th grade). This correlation generally predicted social support and socio-emotional adjustment at junior high school (in this American study, 6th grade). The difference in gender was interesting, as girls perceived that close friend support and school support declined during transition, while boys self-reported an increase in school problems during that period. This suggests that the transition period is a greater challenge for boys than for girls in terms of school functioning whereas girls struggle to form new friendships with a different set of girls. The researchers therefore recommend that parents and educational professionals be more sensitive and responsive to students, so that they feel nurtured and supported during the transition period (Martinez et al., 2011).

The gender differences in the transition experience of young people affect especially those from divorced families. Girls from such families are more adjusted to the academic and social characteristics of transition but are less adjusted to making friends than boys from divorced families (Hines, 2007).

In her study of 340 students in the final year of primary school (in this study, Year 6) and their first year of secondary school (in this study, Year 7), Marston (2008) found that the majority of students moving to secondary school looked forward to more freedom, new challenges, other subjects, different teachers and the opportunity to make new friends. Those students not looking forward to secondary schools were all male. Overall, female students made the transition more easily than males and seemed more settled after transition. 'The age at which students make the transition matters, as does their gender and cultural background' (Marston, 2008, 2)

School climate and school attachment as perceived by students themselves was correlated with misbehaviour and aggressiveness. When there was violent delinquency in students, it was related to negative perceptions of the school climate. This negativity came out of students' exposure to violence at school: observed and experienced violence was seeding and breeding violence in students themselves. On the other hand, students' positive perceptions of school climate and academic motivation were linked to teacher support. The parents' influence and control were connected to lower levels of violence and higher levels of academic motivation for students (Frey, Ruchkin, Martin & Schwab-Stone, 2009).
In addition to destructive behaviour, transition is also a heightened time for bullying as the social hierarchy is reshuffled and students jockey for social positions. Students in schools with formal transition programs are less frequently bullied in the move from 5th to 6th grade as the social dynamics are less supportive of bullying than schools without transition programs. The risk of involvement in bullying is higher in schools that do not have a transition to middle school, which questions the conventional view of K-8 or K-12 rural schools as peaceful and supportive peer communities (Farmer, Hamm, Leung, Lambert & Gravelle, 2011).

However, Waters, Cross & Shaw (2010) found in their data of 5,159 Year 8 students from 39 randomly-selected schools in Western Australia that their connectedness to secondary school was a significant predictor of academic and health outcomes. Higher connectedness to school was related to fewer classroom and peer problems, fewer emotional problems and greater pro-social skills. These students also had less difficulty in the actual transition itself, all of which was caused by the schools giving priority to pastoral care strategies and focusing on helping students to achieve academically.

Changing school demographics, especially if students move from middle school to a high school that includes fewer students who are ethnically similar to themselves may impact negatively on students' school-related affects (Benner & Graham, 2007). If the students ethnic group declines numerically from middle to high school, even students who were doing well in primary school can experience transition disruptions. This is reflected in their academic performance and their psychological functioning which may continue throughout secondary school (Benner & Graham, 2009).

Socioeconomic status, however, had no direct effect on sense of belonging among students transitioning to high school but had an indirect effect through achievement. In terms of geographic location, rural students demonstrated a higher sense of belonging than their urban peers to their new high schools. It might possibly be due to rural students seeing the larger and better equipped high school as an improvement compared with their small and more isolated primary school (Cueto, Guerrero, Sugimaru & Zevallos, 2010).

Van Ophuysen (2009) also found that measures of achievement (which were obtained through maths and literacy tests) were less predictive for expectations than emotional school-related variables (which were obtained through questionnaires and young adolescents' self-ratings). She also found in her study of 870 German students that their expectations on the adjustment to secondary school were of low importance by comparison with school type effects.

Gillison, Standage & Skevington (2008) investigated quality of life and its association with physical and mental health and the emergence of health risk behaviour in a sample of 63 Year 7 students. They found that support for the needs of autonomy and relatedness during students' transition into senior school provides the most likely way to enhance their quality of life.

**The Role of Support from Teachers and Parents**

'Teachers' ability to support students is a crucial element for quality learning environments. Students who feel supported by teachers are found to have a positive motivational orientation to school work and they experience positive social and emotional wellbeing' (Bru, Stornes, Munthe & Thuen, 2010, 519-520).

Bru et al. (2010) concluded from their study of 7,205 students that their perception of diminishing teacher support is not an obvious, abrupt change during transition from primary to secondary school but a linear downward tendency that is related to student age.

The absence of physical transition and social network changes from elementary to junior high school is a phenomenon of Catholic schools in the United States. The absence of this transition prevents students from developing lower self-concepts, especially in academic and social self-concept (Scott & Barona, 2011).

In the United Kingdom, West et al. (2010) found that the majority of students (aged 13) in their study of over 200 Scottish pupils had adjustment difficulties to both school and peer social systems at the beginning of secondary school. This was more due to personal characteristics of the students than socio-demographics and the role of the primary school. Students with lower ability and lower self-esteem had more negative school transition experiences, which led to lower levels of attainment and higher levels of depression. Anxious students experienced peer victimisation and thus poorer peer transition, which led to lower self esteem, more depression and anti-social behaviour.

**The Role of Peers**

Ganeson & Ehrich (2009) identified the crucial role of peers as one of seven themes in students transitioning from primary to secondary school. The others were the role of school support; the challenges of new procedures; new types of learning activities; feelings of success and confidence; the role of homework; and the role of teachers for student integration into high school.

The role of children's friendships during the challenging period of moving from primary to secondary schools was examined by Weller (2007). Not surprisingly, attendance at local primary schools increased the likelihood of smoother transition into a local high school as peers moved across schools in the same age cohort. In her conclusion she speculated that close friendships and peer relationships that survive the transition have profound effect on how children settle into secondary school and how likely they are to form the most solid and stable friendships in later life.

The importance of peer relationships was corroborated by Ashton (2008) who investigated primary school children's feelings prior to moving into secondary school and found that social aspects (for example, concerns about friendships, bullying, getting lost, teachers' and their choice of school) were most important, while academic outcomes were rarely mentioned.

These peer relationships of adolescents in elementary school (usually Year 1 to Year 4) are a predictor for their adjustment to middle school (usually Year 5 to Year 8). Acceptance, the number of friends, the quality of friendships, loneliness, depression, self-esteem and involvement before transition into high school (usually Year 10 onward) predicted loneliness, self esteem, school involvement and academic achievement after transition (Kingery, Erdley & Marshall, 2011).

It is perhaps not surprising that young people with higher levels of social skills had high quality friendships before and after the transition from primary to secondary school. Subsequently, these positive peer relationships promoted adjustment to the new environment. In supporting these peer relationships teachers can play an important role. Teachers who were more attuned to peer group affiliations promoted more productive contexts and had students with improved views of school social climate and adjustment during the school transition period (Hamm, Farmer, Dadisman, Gravelle & Murray, 2011).

DeWit, Karioja, Rye & Shain (2011) even go as far as asserting that mental health problems in students can be averted or reduced with emotional support from classmates and teachers. Their claim is backed by their findings that indicated that perceptions of declining classmate and teacher support are linked to increases in symptoms of depression and social anxiety in adolescents.

**Academic Outcomes**

Academic performance, students' sense of belonging and their positive perception of the transition from primary to secondary school may be related to participation in extracurricular activities. Participation is linked to students' increased commitment to school, positive engagement and social networks, which might promote better academic attitudes and work habits (Akos, 2006).

Students' social integration into middle school, including teacher bonding, popularity, and extracurricular participation affect academic achievement (Langenkamp, 2009). Liu & Lu (2011) challenge the link between sense of belonging and academic achievement in their study of 567 Chinese students where they found that neither the initial status nor the rate of change of students sense of school belonging predicted academic achievement over the transition period into high school.

Social relationships and changing context during the transition to high school have affects on academic outcomes. Middle school social relationships are protective against low academic outcomes in the first year of high school, but not for low-achieving middle school students (Langenkamp, 2010).

McIntosh, Flannery, Sugai, Braun & Cochrane (2008) tracked academic and school discipline records for students as they transitioned from 8th Grade 8 to 9thGrade. They found significant interactions between academic scores and office discipline referrals, both within and across grades.

Depressive symptoms in the transition to high school were associated with changes in parent support and peer support. As social support declines from 8th to 9th Grade, depressive symptoms increase. Ninth graders experience more depressive symptoms and lower levels of

school belonging compared with eighth graders (Newman Newman, Griffen, O'Connor & Spas, 2007).

Students participating in a primary to secondary school transition program had higher outcomes for academic effort than their peers who did not participate. Teachers involved in the transition program had sustained levels of positive efficacy for meeting the instructional, behavioural and social needs of all students compared with teachers in the control group, who did not participate in the transition program. Students with higher levels of aggression who were participating in the transition program tended to socialise more with academically productive peers than students with higher levels of aggression in the control group, who were not participating in the transition program (Farmer, Hamm, Petrin, Robertson, Murray, Meece & Brooks, 2010).

**Family-School Connections**

Parental involvement was categorised into three dimensions: direct participation, academic encouragement and expectations for attainment (Chen & Gregory, 2010, 54). It correlated with student outcomes, with some forms of parental involvement being more effective than others in supporting low-achieving students' school performance. Students had higher grade point averages if their parents had higher expectations about grades. Those students were also seen as more academically engaged by their teachers. If parents were more academically encouraging, students experienced more care from their teachers (Chen & Gregory, 2010).

When parents, primary and secondary school staff were in contact with each other, multiple forms of family-school communication reduced income and language disparities in academic subjects (Crosnoe, 2009).

Early adolescents' attachment to their mother is a predictor for emotional problems (for example, worries, anxiety or depression) in the transition from primary to secondary school. Adolescents living with both biological parents seem to perceive attachment relationships with both parents as more secure and display fewer worries about the transition into secondary school than their peers from single-parent or blended families. It may be that intact families are less exposed to socio-familial adversity and therefore have high-quality of interactions, thus predisposing adolescents to better tolerate stressful events such as transition into secondary school (Duchesne, Ratelle, Poitras & Drouin, 2009).

Adolescents who were more pubertally advanced and had experienced transition to middle school engaged in more unsupervised activities and had weaker authority beliefs. This was associated with less adolescent disclosure but more maternal control. Less maternal control was associated with more unsupervised activities (Laird & Marrero, 2011).

Smith et al. (2006, 2008) found that American students below 9th Grade looked forward to increased independence in choosing courses and developing an academic plan. As they were unlikely to appreciate the gravity of particular curriculum choices, guidance counsellors and parents played a significant role. Parents and students were generally excited about the range of opportunities available at high school. However, unrealistic expectations in the academic and social realms were associated with academic difficulties. Students were concerned about organisational issues (for example, finding their way around, getting lost, homework), whereas parents were more concerned about safety and social issues such as fitting in. The timing of support given by school counsellors is salient to the students as they work with families to create the 9th Grade schedule. Students had smooth transitions from middle school to high school if their parents remained a constant support, monitored their activities and intervened positively.

Weiss & Baker-Smith (2010) found that attendance at American middle school resulted in worse outcomes (for example, course failure) than attendance at K-8 schools.

| Authors & year | Sample | Country/Age | Themes | Method |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Akos, 2006 | 173 students | US, 6th grade | Student belonging, academic and psychosocial outcomes | Questionnaire |
| Ashton, 2008 | 1,673 students | UK, Year 6 | Children's perspective | Questionnaires, discussions, student drawings and writings |
| Benner & Graham 2007 | 918 students | US, 8th grade | Student belonging | School data Gottfredson's (1984) Effective School Battery, High School Performance Scale, Grade Point Average (GPA) |
| Benner & Graham, 2009 | 1,979 students | US, Year 7 to Year 10 | Student belonging, psychological functioning, academic behaviour | Questionnaires |
| Bru, Stornes, Munthe & Thuen, 2010 | 7,205 students | Norway, Year 5 to 10 (10 to 16 years old) | Student perception of teacher support | Questionnaire |
| Chen & Gregory, 2009 | 59 students | US, 9th grade | Parental involvement as Protective Factor | Surveys by teachers, Interviews of students |
| Crosnoe, 2010 | 17,899 students | US, 8th grade | Family-School Connections and Academic Outcomes | Interviews of parents, teachers, school administrators and adolescents, Achievement tests |
| Cueto, Guerrero, Sugimaru & Zevallos, 2010 | 1,086 students, 30 principals, 39 home room teachers of secondary schools | Peru, Mean age 12 years 4 months | Sense of belonging | Demographic survey, Sense of Belonging Scale, questionnaire, interviews of students |
| Darmody, 2008 | 765 Irish school principals, 127 Estonian school principals, 916 Irish students, 269 Estonian pupils | Ireland, Estonia First year Pupils in Ireland, 10th grade pupils in Estonia | Pupil's ability to cope with transition | Questionnaires to school principals and students, Focus interviews |
| DeWit, Karioja, Rye & Shain, 2011 | 2,616 students | Canada, 14 years of age | Student well being, mental health difficulties | Survey |
| Ding, 2008 | 433 middle school students | US, 7th grade | Academic performance | Grade Point Average (GPA) |
| Duchesne, Ratelle, Poitras & Drouin, 2009 | 626 young adolescents | Canada, Grade 6 | Adolescents emotional problems | Security Scale , Phone interviews, Questionnaires |
| Farmer, Hamm, | 477 students | US, 6th grade | Instructional, | Survey by teachers, |

| Petrin, Robertson, Murray, Meece & Brooks 2010 | | | behavioural and social needs of students | survey by students, |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Farmer, Hamm, Leung, Lambert & Gravelle 2011 | 1800 students | US, 6th grade | Bullying, Students' well-being | Focus group interviews with students, teacher surveys |
| Frey, Ruchkin, Martin & Schwab-Stone, 2009 | 652 adolescents | US, 8th grade | Violent student behaviour, student well-being | Social and Health Assessment survey |
| Ganeson and Ehrich 2009 | 16 students | Australia, Year 7 | Students' experience | Students' journal entries |
| Gillison, Standage & Skevington, 2008 | 63 students | UK, age 11 – 12 years | Quality of life, student well-being | Quality of Life questionnaire |
| Hamm, Farmer, Dadisman, Gravelle & Murray, 2011 | 26 teachers, 225 students | US, 6th grade | Student well-being | Survey by teachers, Social cognitive mapping by teachers and students |
| Hines, 2007 | 196 adolescents | US, 6th grade and 7th grade students (11-12 years old) | Family Structure Divorce, Student well-being | Demographic data, Survey for students, survey of parents |
| Kingery, Erdley & Marshall, 2011 | 365 students | US, 5th and 6th grade | Peer acceptance and friendships as predictors of adjustment | Academic achievement and absentee data from student files |
| Laird & Marrero, 2010 | 191 mothers and adolescents | US, aged between 11 years 4 months and 12 years 5 months | Adolescent adjustment and academic performance | Pubertal development scale, questionnaire, survey to mothers and adolescents |
| Langenkamp, 2009 | 90, 118 students | US, 7th to 12th Grade | Social Integration and academic performance | Survey to students |
| Langenkamp, 2010 | 90, 118 students | US, 7th to 12th Grade | Social Relationships and academic performance | Survey to students |
| Liu & Lu, 2011 | 567 students | China, 16th grade ( mean age 16 years 4 month) | Sense of belonging and academic achievement | Survey to students, standardized scores from exams |
| Marston, 2008 | 154 parents, 340 students | Australia, 6th and 7th Grade | Perceptions of students and parents, gender differences | Survey with scale items, Open-ended questions |
| Martinez, Aricak, Graves, Peters-Myszak & Nellis, 2011 | 140 students | US, Average age of 11 years and 5 months, 5th grade and 6th grade | Socio-emotional adjustment | Self-report surveys to students, |
| McIntosh, Flannery, Sugai, Braun & Cochrane, 2008 | 5,542 students | US, Grade 8 and Grade 9 | Academic Achievement and Problem Behaviour | Office Discipline Referrals, Grade Point Averages (GPA) from school's data bases |
| Newman, Newman, Griffen, O'Connor & Spas, | 205 students | US, 8th and 9th graders (aged 13 to 14 years) | Peer and Family support, School belonging, | Survey, Reynolds Adolescent Depression Scale, |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2007 | | | Depression | life events questionnaire |
| Ophuysen, 2009 | 874 students | Germany, 9-13 years | Emotional, motivational and achievement-related effects | Achievement tests, school grades, questionnaire, demographic information |
| Rice, Frederickson & Seymour, 2011 | 147 students in Year 6, 263 students in Year 7 | UK, average age of 10.84 years in Grade 6 and 11.25 years in Grade 7 | Students emotional and psychological adjustment | Self-reports, peer assessment, Questionnaire |
| Scott & Santos de Barona, 2011 | 331 students | US, 4th, 5th and 6th grade | Self-concept, self-image, academic and social self-confidence | Student Self-Concept Scale, Demographic information |
| Smith, Akos, Lim & Wiley, 2008 | 172 students, 94 parents | US, 6th to 8th grade | Students' perceptions, parents' perceptions | Perception of Transition Survey (2004) , Interviews with teachers, principals, high school counsellors |
| Smith, Feldwisch & Abell, 2006 | 40 students and their parents | US, 8th grade | Students' perceptions, parents' perceptions | Grade Point Average (GPA) |
| Waters, Cross & Shaw, 2010 | 5,159 students | Australia, 8th to 9th Grade (12-14 years) | Ecological characteristics of connectedness | Students self reports |
| Weiss & Baker-Smith, 2010 | 1,483 students | US, 9th grade | Academic and social outcomes | Philadelphia Education Longitudinal Study (PELS), Interviews |
| Weller, 2007 | 558 students, 76 parents | UK, Year 6, (aged 11-12 years) | Student' Friendships, parents social capital | Questionnaires, surveys, group discussions, individual interviews |
| West, Sweeting & Young, 2010 | 2,000 pupils | UK, aged 13 years | Student well-being and attainment | Surveys, self-complete questionnaires, mini-interviews |

**Figure 1: Summary of studies for transition from primary to secondary school**


## Summary and Conclusion

This review of the literature on the experience of young people who are transitioning from primary to secondary school revealed the disruptive nature of the transition process and the impact of multiple factors that can have either positive or negative effects on students.

Thirty-seven studies published between 2005 and 2011 were examined. They involved a range of emphases, including academic development and achievement; transition adjustment, bullying, depression and violent student behaviour; student belonging and well-being, friendships and self-esteem; parental involvement and student perception of peer, parent and teacher support; and transition experiences, beliefs, preferences and practices of students, parents and teachers.

These were grouped and discussed under the key themes of student belonging and well-being, the role of support from teachers and parents, the role of peers, academic outcomes and the importance of family-school connections. The analysis of the literature indicates that well-planned and implemented transition programs can support students, their families and even school staff in the process of moving.

However, teachers are critical in this passage from primary to secondary schools. It is hoped that this paper will contribute to raising their awareness and understanding of the issues involved to assist young people with the demands of that particular phase in their educational journey.

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