

*This is a transcript for the recording of the Be You webinar 'Transitions – preparing for the primary to secondary transitional phase' (26 March 2019). The recording is available at <https://beyou.edu.au/resources/events/primary-to-secondary-school-transitions>*

## **Be You In Focus webinar: Transitions – preparing for the primary to secondary transitional phase**

**Jeannette James:** Good afternoon everyone. We're just waiting on a few more attendees to join the Webinar today. We'll get started in a couple of seconds.

**Jeannette James:** Good afternoon. My name is Jeannette James, and I am the Be You National Advisor for Service Development with the **headspace** delivery team. I'd like to welcome you, and thank you all for joining us in our session here today from your busy lives all across Australia. Today I'm stepping in for Dr Helen Butler who is not able to present today as she's feeling unwell. Helen is sorry to be unable to participate as this is an area of research and practice which she feels really passionate about. However, we are very fortunate to hear from wonderful panellists very soon.

**Jeannette James:** Some of you may have attended the first Be You In Focus event in February, which opened the discussion about various types of transitions across different developmental stages and how these impact mental health and well-being. You can access the recording of this on the Be You events page under the webinar recording section. So, today's session will continue this initial exploration focusing more particularly on the transition from primary to secondary schools.

**Jeannette James:** Another In Focus webinar will be held on April 30, and it will be exploring what we can learn from everyday transitions in the early years to promote good mental health. For those of you who don't know too much about Be You, it's a national mental health initiative led by Beyond Blue in partnership with Early Childhood Australia and **headspace**. It is funded by the Australian government. Be You offers educators and early learning communities a no cost evidence-based online professional learning complimented by a range of tools and resources and events like this one today.

**Jeannette James:** Be You includes a suicide prevention and response service. Be You Consultants are available across the nation to support early learning services and schools embrace the Be You approach. Before we begin, I'd like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land and waters throughout Australia and pay respects to the Elders both past, present and future and emerging, and also particularly the educational Elders that are joining us today. We recognise the importance of continued connection to culture and to land and country and community, to the health and the social well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

**Jeannette James:** Members of our panellists are joining us today from Melbourne, so the land of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, and from Sydney, the land of the Gadigal people of an Eora Nation. We are delighted to have many panellists who are able to share different perspectives on their transitional experiences. Dr Lisa Mundy, who you can see on the screen there, she might give us a little wave, from the CAT Study, the Child to Adolescent

Transition Study, will share current research evidence on young people during the transition years. Welcome Lisa, and thanks for joining us today.

**Jeannette James:** Jodie Scanlon is a primary school educator and now a Be You Educational Consultant with the Victorian team. Welcome Jodie. And Mary Coupland, who is sitting with me in the Sydney office today, is the community liaison officer and school administration officer at Arthur Phillip High School in New South Wales. A warm welcome to you, Mary. We will hear more from Lisa, Jodie and Mary soon. But for now, we're all going to switch off our webcams to ensure that the audio and the visual presentation is optimised during this webinar.

**Jeannette James:** We acknowledge the range of experience in the room today and we understand that there are varying degrees of awareness, knowledge and practice experience of mental health in education. We do welcome observations and questions from all of you via the question and answer box that you'll be able to see on your screen. On this platform, you'll also see a chat box and if you select the dropdown selection menu to send questions to staff, we'll be able to collate your responses and we'll provide answers to you in a follow up pdf.

**Jeannette James:** So your own well-being needs are a priority of Be You. While you are putting your energy into creating a positive mental health environment for children and young people, it's also important to focus on your well-being and that of your colleagues. There is a range of information and resources available on the Be You website to help educators look after themselves while taking care of children and young people. We will provide links to our well-being tools and fact sheets in a post webinar material.

**Jeannette James:** For those unfamiliar with GoToWebinar, this is what the screen will typically look like, with the webinar on the left and the control panel on the right. If you are experiencing difficulties at any time, please note the customer care number of 1-800-136-402 on the screen to call for support directly. You might like to jot this down. You can ask questions about using go to webinar through the question box in the control panel as highlighted in red. You can see here that the control panel is where you're able to manage your computer or your phone audio, and today you are in listen only mode.

**Jeannette James:** We do hope to respond to as many questions and queries that come in via the chat box, or the Q&A box as possible during today's session, but for those that we don't get to, we'll follow up with supplementary material after the event concludes. All event participants will be able to access a certificate of participation, a recording of the webinar, and any other supplementary material. This will include any reflection questions that we invite you to consider during the webinar and contextualised within your own learning community. We also encourage you to have a go at the polls we'll be launching throughout this session. So, we'll now launch our first poll to start reflecting on our collective experiences and involvement with coordinating primary to secondary school transitions.

**Jeannette James:** So, as you can see here on the screen, the poll is open. What is your experience in the transition space? So, if you wouldn't mind selecting one. And whilst we're waiting on the results of the poll, I'd like to mention here that you may also have access to transitional resources in your own educational sector and we encourage you to explore what these are, if you

haven't done so already. We'll just wait a couple more minutes for people to select one of those options. Early years to primary, primary to secondary or some experience and new to this space. And let's have a look at those results.

**Jeannette James:** Many people are joining us from primary to secondary and some people from some experience and new to the space, so a lovely range there. We'll move on to the next slide now. We have learned much over the years about the transitional space, gone are the days where transitioning students involved attending a solo orientation event. Transition is usually more of an extended process beginning in primary school and continuing into the early days of secondary school. So, let's launch our second poll. What is your experience in the transitional space?

**Jeannette James:** Apologies, I think I may have swapped over the poll, so we might go to the first poll, which is our audiences today. Apologies for this, I'm just stepping in at the last minute, then we'll maybe do our first poll. So, the first poll is what type of learning community are you joining us from? Are you a pre-service educator, an early learning service, a primary school, a secondary school or other? While we're completing that poll, we recognise that across Australia states and territories have developed their own processes and resources to support transition. Until quite recently, the years of transition have differed from state to state.

**Jeannette James:** So, in I think 2015, Western Australia made year seven the first year of secondary school and South Australia is doing the same from 2022 with a pilot in 2020, so that's very exciting. For those of you in these states, there may be particular challenges for staff to consider in planning transition. We may have a look at the results of that poll. We have many people here from primary schools and 11% from secondary schools and 40% others. Thank you very much for participating in that poll.

**Jeannette James:** Our speakers will discuss some of the ways that schools and school staff, students themselves and families can contribute to making the most of transitional opportunities and meeting the challenges of transition. As mentioned in the previous Be You webinar, it is important to try to bolster protective factors and where possible minimise risk factors in periods of transition. You can find this fact sheet and others on the Be You website. Risk and protective factors operate across a number of contexts, the individual, the family, the school community, as well as social relationships.

**Jeannette James:** Transition from primary to secondary school often means multiple changes across multiple contexts. For some students, transitioning simply means moving to another part of their existing school and for others it can mean big changes in family and social relationships, a sense of connectedness and belonging may be lost. While changes can be positive and exciting, this can increase risk for some students. Transitions can therefore create opportunities as well as challenges such as the loss of valued relationships, increased worry and distress, loss of confidence, fall in academic achievement, sometimes identity confusion or disconnection from school.

**Jeannette James:** Let's now hear from Dr Lisa Mundy who will start sharing her experience. She'll have control of the screen in a moment, and she'll be able to share some information about the CAT Study she is involved in. The CAT Study is the Child to Adolescent Transition Study and Lisa will explain how this

relates to some transitional opportunities and challenges. So, over to you, Lisa.

**Lisa Mundy:** Right. Thanks so much for the introduction, Jeannette. As Jeannette said, my name's Lisa Mundy, and I'm a research fellow at the Centre for Adolescent Health at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute. My background is in developmental psychology and for the last eight years I've been working on their childhood adolescent transition study and I'd like to share with you today some of our findings from that study.

**Lisa Mundy:** Okay. Great. First, I'd like to talk about what's happening for students during this time. So, if I ask you to think about when you think puberty begins, many people will say around 12 years of age and that's when the physical changes begin for most children. Although of course, there's a wide age range for onset of puberty. That process we now know is gonadarche. And we used to think that puberty was a unitary event that was pretty much characterised by those physical changes. But we now understand that puberty is actually a cascade of hormonal changes, and those hormonal changes actually start many years before those first physical signs.

**Lisa Mundy:** The first hormonal cascade in puberty is something that we call adrenarche. And this results in hormones called adrenal androgens that start rising around eight years of age and they continue rising right through late childhood, across adolescence and into our early 20s, where they plateau and then they decline in older age. The third process that makes up puberty is the growth spurt. That begins around 12 years of age for girls and about a year later for boys. And obviously, that brings with it big physical changes in terms of growth and body structure and size. And of course, within the middle of all of these, huge biological changes, we have the transition to high school.

**Lisa Mundy:** And now, thinking about what's happening in the brain, we used to think similarly that by the time we reach seven years of age, that was when the brain pretty much stopped developing. That's because that's around the age that the brain reaches full adult size. But with improvements in imaging technology, with the introduction of MRI machines and so on, we can now see inside the brain and we realised that these late childhood years into adolescents are actually a really critical phase of development, and actually they're probably the second biggest change in the postnatal life.

**Lisa Mundy:** If you're looking at this slide, you might be thinking, it looks like we've got lots of colours moving to fewer colours across the ages, from childhood into young adulthood. And so, you might be thinking, well, that looks like less development. But actually, what those slides are showing is the grey matter of the brain. The grey matter contains the cells and connections between the cells, which are called synapses. During this phase we have a process called synaptic pruning. What's happening there is, the connections between the cells that we use a lot are strengthened, and those that we don't use so much are pruned away or removed.

**Lisa Mundy:** And this is a really, really important developmental process and it's importantly dependent on the environment as well, which makes this period of life such a flexible in time of life. We also know that those pubertal changes that I was talking about play a role in organising and activating the changes that happen in the brain across this time. During

this time as well, we know that unfortunately, it's where many mental health problems begin. So, by 14 years of age, one half of all mental health problems have emerged, and for many children, these problems will continue to persist through adolescence and into adulthood.

**Lisa Mundy:** Importantly, the symptoms of these problems are emerging during the late primary school years as well. Despite this being a really important phase of development and lots of changes happening, this has actually been a pretty neglected area of life within policy and research. The things that's been highlighted really in Victoria, back in 2015, the Victorian Auditor-General highlighted that when looking at education transitions, there was a lot of good evidence and good practice happening to support children with the transition into primary school, but the same wasn't true for the transition into secondary school. And as a result, we weren't seeing the same sorts of outcomes for children across that transition.

**Lisa Mundy:** So, we set up the CAT Study in 2012 to really try and characterise what was going on for children and their families and their schools across these years. In 2012, we recruited just over 1200 students to take part. They were in Victoria, primarily in Melbourne, and they were in grade three, and they were eight to nine years of age during that time. We've followed those students for the last seven years across those late primary school years into secondary school, and we're just planning the eighth wave of data collection when the students will be in year 10. But today, I want to talk to you about those primary school years and that transition into secondary school and what the students, teachers, and parents have been telling us about that time.

**Lisa Mundy:** Okay. Firstly, I thought I'd show you some data that we've collected looking at those earliest hormonal changes that were happening around eight years of age. So, on this slide, we were looking at those adrenal androgens that started rising, and we were looking at how that related to children's mental health. What we found is that for children who had high levels of these hormones, particularly for boys, they had higher levels of behaviour and peer problems during this time of life. This really indicates that these years are really important time in terms of intervening for trying to prevent the onset of these mental health problems.

**Lisa Mundy:** We've also been really fortunate in that we've been able to look at inside the brains of 100 children who were taking part in CATS, and this was our nested study, iCATS. Similarly, here, we looked at children who had higher levels of those adrenal hormones compared with their peers. We found that there were differences in the way that the brain responded to emotional stimuli between those children with higher levels of hormones compared with the lower levels. Now, I thought I'd show you the mental health symptoms of the children taking part from grades three into seven, so across the late primary school into high school.

**Lisa Mundy:** Now, it's important here for me just to highlight that this is mental health symptoms, so we're not looking at a diagnosed disorder here. This is just elevated symptoms that the students themselves are reporting. There's two main things I think are important to note here. One, we start to see an increase in mental health symptoms as we move into those final years of primary school and into secondary school. The other important thing I think that we're also seeing here is that we start to see these gender differences emerging. So, you can see that girls start to have higher levels of mental health problems compared with their peers across this age.

**Lisa Mundy:** This is most likely linked with the changes that we're seeing in those pubertal hormones that are happening across this age. I guess just to highlight really that by year seven, one in five girls are reporting high levels of mental health problems. So, it's a fairly large chunk of the class that teachers are seeing will be dealing with these issues.

**Lisa Mundy:** Okay. So, we then looked at how those mental health problems during primary school were linked with academic performance in year seven. We were looking at children who have persistent mental health problems during primary school. They were reporting having higher levels of problems at two or more years during primary school. What we found was that children who had higher levels of these problems across these years, by the time they got to year seven, they were almost a year behind their peers. It's probably important to note that we were also controlling for their prior academic performance at this age as well. So, this is a fairly substantial lag at this point in education. Interestingly, for reading it was a bit less, but still around a half of the year lag by the time they reached year seven.

**Lisa Mundy:** Now, I thought I'd show you some data looking at peer problems. So, we looked at different types of bullying that students experienced across these years. You can see that in primary school there's quite high levels of frequent bullying, this is being bullied at least once a week. You can see around one in four students were reporting experiencing frequent bullying during this time. Overall, there was a decline in bullying across these years. That's a really positive take-home message. But if we look at those top two slides, the decline is probably most pronounced in those two slides, being frequently teased and being physically hurt, and the types of behaviours that boys tend to be involved in more.

**Lisa Mundy:** Whereas, if we look at the bottom two slides, being talked about behind their backs or excluding others, these are the types of behaviours that girls typically engage in more. You can see here that there's not such a decline across the transition. So, thinking about the different types of bullying that occurring across this age range and also the gender differences that we're seeing. We also looked at this in relation to their academic performance in year seven as well and found similarly that those children experiencing high levels of bullying during primary school were again around a year behind their peers in secondary school.

**Lisa Mundy:** We also asked students about their concerns about the transition, and we ask this across lots of different areas in year six and again in year seven. You can see that generally across the board there were quite high concerns across a whole range of things. The top three concerns in year six were around homework, losing old friends and getting lost. I guess, I just wanted to draw attention to these as they are things that we could be doing, start building the capabilities of students during those mid to late primary school years to help them deal with their concerns that they might be having, particularly around how to deal with the changes in homework as they transition, and in terms of getting lost in the new school. And we'll hear more about that later on.

**Lisa Mundy:** As I mentioned, we also asked these questions in year seven as well. I think one of the things to look at here is that generally there wasn't actually that much of a decline. Students still had a pretty high levels of concern of these things even when they were in year seven. Interestingly, when we looked at discipline and detentions, there was actually a small increase as

well, new things to be worried about that perhaps hadn't been evident before. We also asked teachers to rate their students on a really simple four item questionnaire.

**Lisa Mundy:** This asked about how they thought the students would go across four different areas, and we asked this in year six for all the students and the parents to complete. You can see on this next slide that generally, on the whole, teachers felt that boys possibly were going to struggle more particularly with academic life in high school. Interestingly, what we found is that the answers to these four items that we asked teachers in year six predicted how well those students performed on their Naplan in year seven, even controlling for their performance in year five, so previously, while they were in primary school.

**Lisa Mundy:** Interestingly, teachers were actually much better at this than parents. So, parents weren't as good at predicting academic performance across the transition. So, teachers are obviously playing a really important role in understanding what's going on. I just want to finish up now by just talking about some interviews that we conducted with primary schools around the strategies that they were using to support students in the transition. We conducted these interviews with 50 schools who are all taking part in CATS, and we looked at the strategies they were using across three areas. So, administrative and information, social and personal and teaching and learning.

**Lisa Mundy:** I'm just going to highlight a couple of the key findings that we found to conclude. So, looking at organisation and administration here, I guess one of the key take home messages is less than 50% of primary schools had a written policy around the transition. Also, most schools had meetings with their secondary schools, but only about 20% of primary schools were able to meet with all of their destination secondary schools. So, there's obviously quite a few students who wouldn't necessarily be getting the advantage of having their teachers being able to connect with their destination high schools.

**Lisa Mundy:** Social and personal factors is generally where schools are doing really well and there's lots happening here. I guess just to draw attention to the buddy system where there's some evidence here that this is actually really helpful at supporting students across the transition, but only around 10% of the schools were implementing this.

**Lisa Mundy:** Finally, curriculum and pedagogy, so this is an area where there's less research and that translates into there being less resources for schools to be able to draw on. But you can see here that generally schools weren't implementing these to such a high level. Only around one in four schools were implementing timetable changes and about 60% were implementing homework changes. The other thing is these were typically happening towards the end of the transition periods, so sort of later on in year six.

**Lisa Mundy:** I guess I just want to finish off by just saying that this is a rapid phase of development. It's been described as a sensitive phase of development and a developmental switch point. And it is a period of vulnerability for those reasons that I outlined before. So, there are increased risk of mental health problems, disengagement from school and so on. But the fact that this is also such a rapid period of development. It means that it's also a time for opportunity, a great opportunity for us to really be able to support students

and help to move them onto better tracks or to keep them on travelling along on the great tracks that they're already on.

**Lisa Mundy:** I just want to finish off by just thanking all the fantastic schools and students and parents that have been taking part with us and also all the brilliant research team and our investigators and funders as well, and NCRI as well. Thanks so much.

**Jeannette James:** Lisa, that is amazing. 50 schools participating in your team's research, what fantastic dedication. There's certainly a hunger for this information, isn't there? You've given us a lot to think about and we can use your team's research to inform our practices educators, and we really thrilled that you are able to share your team's research with us today. It's so pertinent to this webinar, so thank you very much.

**Jeannette James:** Before we move to our next panellist, you might like to jot down some wonderings from Lisa's presentation. How can you use the information that Lisa presented in the primary to secondary school transitional space back in your own school settings? We will share with you a pdf of the questions raised by Lisa so that you don't need to write these down. And in addition, we have also included other reflective questions that you may like to revisit with your action team or your leadership teams back in your learning community settings. In your panel or your dashboard, you will be able to see, next to the questions and the polls, a little tab that says, handouts.

**Jeannette James:** If you click on that handout, you'll be able to right click and download the PDF. Alternatively, we can share this with you in the post webinar material. So, you see some questions there on the screen, and you may like to pause for a second and jot down some wonderings. Our next speaker is Jodie Scanlon, and she will take us on a journey through her transitional experiences in the primary setting. Thanks very much, Jodie. Over to you.

**Jodie Scanlon:** Thanks Jeannette, and thank you Lisa for such excellent presentation that was very thought provoking. It was wonderful to see so much crossover with what schools should be doing and what I know many schools are doing. My name's Jodie Scanlan and I'm an education consultant on the Be You Victorian team. My background is teaching as I completed a double degree in arts and education prep to 12. I briefly taught in secondary schools at the beginning of my career and then went on to teach in primary settings for years. In my primary role, I was transition coordinator for five years and well-being leader for three years.

**Jodie Scanlon:** I'm just going to share today some of the things that we did while I was leading transition and what things were helpful. During my time facilitating transitions, we firstly developed a 12-month plan. This should be shared with your local secondary settings as well as with students and families. We found it helpful to incorporate student voice when drafting these. Asking students what they found or they would find helpful and supportive was really surprising and a really powerful and valuable tool.

**Jodie Scanlon:** Also, arranging visits with local secondary settings, even if it was not the school that students would be attending. It was great to walk through the grounds and visit lockers and science rooms and theatres. Preparing students visually for a new environment is crucial as they may feel scared to ask what these unfamiliar settings are such as what is the science lab and what is it used for? So, it was really beneficial to have open

discussions while wandering around a new setting. This sheer difference in size of the school can be overwhelming if it's unexpected. So, the more exposure for students, the better.

**Jodie Scanlon:** We used to invite past students to return to give a presentation on a day in the life of a year seven student. This was always a really lovely experience as it was exciting for the past student to return and the talks are always so positive and encouraging for our year six students. The past student would excite year sixes with musings around camps and excursions, new friends, larger libraries, sport activities, your own locker, etc. We would link in with local primary schools and run transition days.

**Jodie Scanlon:** We aimed for ideally transitions days once a term and these would be centred around sport activities, leadership days, discos, etc. We also regularly practiced practical tools such as reading maps and reading bus times tables. We walked to the local bus stop and train station just to expose the students to these different modes of transport. We focused explicit teaching around time management and organisational skills, specifically knowing which equipment would be appropriate for which lesson and estimating time. We tried to facilitate discussions and activities promoting positive esteem and a sense of belonging in a new environment, which is really important.

**Jodie Scanlon:** And then just regular communication with parents and with our secondary settings regarding transition activities and the importance of these. Keeping those lines of communication open at all times. For primary schools and secondary schools working together, sharing your plan over an extended period is important. Knowing what's happening in each setting will support a smoother transition and developing relationships with the goal of the year six students attending events. When I was transitioning leader, we were invited to, and I would request to attend events at local secondary schools. For example, matinee theatre performances, art shows, sport days, and the secondary schools would sometimes use it as leadership opportunity for their older students to plan and run activities for our younger students, which was always really wonderful.

**Jodie Scanlon:** We would share correspondence with parents regarding transition information always making sure that they knew what to expect and we would discuss ways to ensure that the students understood and had full access to mental health support in their new school, keeping in mind that some students and families will require more support than others. We would ensure that there was a thorough handover process, and this would include exchanging information relating to behaviour, strengths, areas for improvement, significant friendships, family history, and then any additional needs or areas for support and ensure that there is a shared planning for multiple orientation days for students. In addition to the orientation days, we would always ensure or encourage a day for special needs students, which was really beneficial.

**Jodie Scanlon:** We always find it really important to try and support families as well. Supporting a family is an important element of transition. Encouraging carers to maintain an open communication with the young person regarding the importance of embracing change and the challenging feelings that they may be experiencing. And then, maintain open communication with primary and secondary settings and highlighting to parents the importance of attending any transition meetings and keeping up with correspondence. We did find that sometimes parents would feel

much more comfortable communicating with the primary school as that's what it's been familiar to them for a long time.

**Jodie Scanlon:** So, it is important that the primary schools are aware of what's happening in the secondary schools around transition so they can field any questions. And then, encouraging families to regularly practice new routines with the young person such as catching the bus, selecting appropriate equipment for a lesson, independently navigating a library and new walking routines, etc. We would remind families to be mindful of technology and sleep habits for the young person. And then lastly, encouraging parents and carers to openly discuss their own experiences and successes around change. Validating any feelings of fear or discomfort for the young person as transition can be a really challenging time in a young person's life, it's really important to keep those lines of communication open and ensure that there's lots of support.

**Jodie Scanlon:** Well, that's it from me. Thank you very much for listening and I'll hand you back to Jeannette.

**Jeannette James:** Thanks so much, Jodie. It was fabulous to hear how your school incorporated student voice. I love that. I also love the fact that you noticed there is a significant visual change for many students. Actually, experiencing the different modes of transport is a really great idea as well. So, thanks for sharing with us today, Jodie. I'm now going to welcome Mary Coupland, who is the community liaison officer for Arthur Phillip High School in Parramatta, New South Wales.

**Mary Coupland:** Thanks, Jeannette. Lisa, I loved that great research and data. I'm certainly going to use some of that for my presentations in the future. Jodie, it's great to have a primary school relationship with the high schools. That's the initial part of transition.

**Mary Coupland:** Thanks Jeannette. I'm pleased to be sharing with you and representing Arthur Phillip High School today. I'm the community liaison officer at Arthur Phillip High School and I'm responsible for year six and year seven transition and the enrolment process. I've been in an admin role for eight years at Arthur Phillip High School. Arthur Phillip High School is a wonderful school and I adore the learning community. I especially love watching children grow from primary school students into young people. The school was established in 1875, and is considered a city school located right in the heart Parramatta business CBD and educational precinct.

**Mary Coupland:** The school population is diverse with students from diverse nationalities and students from 30 primary schools. We currently have 1,000 students, but in 2020, we're moving to our new building to accommodate 2,000. You can see the picture of our 17-storey high rise on the slide. Before I joined Arthur Phillip High School as enrolment officer, there was no year six-seven transition program in place. I was pleased to accept the role as community liaison officer and build a plan for effective transition from primary to secondary school. As a team, we are still refining this and learning from others. At the moment, the team consists of stage four deputy, current year advisor, next year's year advisor, headteacher and myself.

**Mary Coupland:** I'd love to share some of the strategies we use, and I'll finish the presentation with a timeline showing an overview of our transition processes. Survivor Day. What a great day. Heaps of fun. This is an

example of one of our events. The kids love it. This is a good day for our student and staff as it's designed to be a casual day, even though it's structured. Kids appreciate the style of learning. It's hands on. The days are open to everyone. Last year we had about 300 students participate.

**Mary Coupland:** This event occurs in term two and includes stage four teachers. We invite the year five and six teachers from the primary schools to attend and observe the day. From this, we gain lots of data and we find our potential student leaders. We use project-based learning and the STEM programs on this day. I just want to point out what STRIVE stands for in Arthur Phillip High School. STRIVE are our core values. Respect, success and responsibility. We use these rules every day. Home, away, school or play.

**Mary Coupland:** We hold our orientation day in term two. On this day we run a pentathlon, and I'll share that with you in the next slide. We used to run our testing on the same day as our orientation day, but the kids didn't enjoy it. They were too focused on the testing aspect. We found combining the testing and orientation day was not successful. We made a decision to separate the two and it's been beneficial. Students now come to the day excited to be part of a fun filled action day. The feedback has been great and they feel less anxious about orientation, and they've already established relationships with teachers, peers and others and are familiar with the school's environment.

**Mary Coupland:** Next one is the pentathlon. This is one of our fabulous events that we run on orientation day. Every child competes. The main purpose of this day is to continue building community and a solid sense of belonging. We know a sense of belonging is important for a successful transition and eases the student's concern about changing schools and community. Collaborating by working in groups is an important skill for life and in school. The pentathlon also highlights the importance of time management and critical thinking.

**Mary Coupland:** All important skills for a secondary school young person. The last slide is my timeline. I've divided this into four groups of each term. It's highlighted a few of them for you today, the pentathlon, the orientation day and survivor day. Year six taster day is also popular. That's when we go out to the primary schools. We ensure families are a significant component of our transition program. We find kids don't ask as many questions as the parents do.

**Mary Coupland:** This is important so families can continue their supportive conversations around the strength-based approach to transition conversations at home. We provide them with tips on information evenings, provide them parent packages, with the calendar, important school information regarding subject choices, gifted and talented program, how to get to school, what to wear, we can fill out the expression of interest forms for them, their enrolment forms and any other forms we can assist them with, as long as we keep that communication open.

**Mary Coupland:** Our transition program is still very young. It only started two years ago, and we will continue to evolve it for the benefits of the students and the staff and their families, to ensure a seamless and smooth transition period. Transitions can be successful and thoughtful with thoughtful planning, and ensuring you respond to the challenges that arise. There are many opportunities to build this transition program. Finally, I'd just like to say

thank you to have this opportunity to put what Arthur Phillip High School is doing transition in primary school in the spotlight.

**Mary Coupland:** But can I just say that all New South Wales government schools are doing great things. And if there is no program in place for you and your school, start creating one. Maybe something you've heard today may I help you. Remember what works at one school might not work in another. Find out what your students need and what their resources are available to you. Listen to your community, research your data, do some ground work. Just remember, high school can be a very, very challenging, but not so much hard or scary. Just look at my children's happy faces. Thank you again for this wonderful opportunity.

**Jeannette James:** Thank you so much, Mary. I'd love to come next year or even this year to have a look at the Pentathlon Day and that Survivor Day. That sounds very exciting. I'm sure some of the Be You staff would like to attend with me, so thank you so much for Mary and Jodie and also Lisa for highlighting research and on the importance of primary and secondary schools working together over an extended period and the importance of students and families being connected. Another useful tool that we have seen used nationally and internationally is the idea of a transition passport.

**Jeannette James:** You may have heard of it. Ideally, they are started in primary school and completed in secondary school. The transition passports contain a range of activities that support transition and include family and student voice in this space such as what the student feels school should know about them. We can provide examples of these in a post webinar material. So, we do have a couple of question and answers that have come through the chat box, and I'll ask some of the panellists if the questions are relevant to them to unmute their microphone.

**Jeannette James:** So, we have heard from both research and practice in this setting in the transitional space. Whilst we're answering some questions, you might like to think about your school and what are the current supports available to implement some of these ideas and what your school can do to build upon this work effectively. So, if we move to the next slide and Lisa, a question has come in from the attendees. Someone has asked, "It would be great for schools not here today to be able to learn more about this research. Can we share the research with them and can they join the study?"

**Lisa Mundy:** Hi. Yeah, that's a really, really good question. And yes, we're definitely really, really keen for all schools to hear about our research. So, we have a website which we can include as part of the resources at the end of this webinar. And also we have a social media account as well, so we can also share those as well. We keep regular updates there, and there's also links there to the reports that we've done, which summarise quite a lot of the data I've been talking about today what we've done with the departments of education. Yeah, so I think that hopefully that between those resources that we can certainly make sure that they're accessible to others.

**Jeannette James:** Thank you so much Lisa. If anyone else has any questions, you might like to pop those either in the chat box and reply to the staff or just Q&A box and we will mention, either in the webinar today or collate those responses for you in a pdf that we'll make available on the webinar section of the events page on the Be You website. The next slide shows some key

learnings from our webinar today. We've heard some great up-to-date research that is evidence-based and discussed implications for practice.

**Jeannette James:** We have heard from primary and secondary school staff about strategies that have worked well in their own transition programs. We hope that you've taken some key learnings from today that you can share with your learning community to support children and young people through transitions. We encourage you to check out the Be You website, specifically the professional learning and the fact sheets provided information about transitions.

**Jeannette James:** So, as we draw the webinar to a close, let's consider some next steps. We do know that registering your school early learning services the best way to enhance whole school setting approach to promoting children's and young people's mental health by embracing the Be You approach. There are so many benefits in registering as a Be You Learning Community and assigning an action team leader. This includes gaining access to a dedicated and expert Be You Consultant to support you. It includes surveys and tools and resources that are not available to an individual account holder.

**Jeannette James:** Your Be You consultant can act as a critical friend and take a strength-based approach helping identify what your community is already doing and how you can support your existing work and planning priorities. And please don't forget, this is available all at no cost, and we have Be You Consultants all around the nation. If you're unsure if your school is a participating Be You school, you can contact your local consultant via the Be You website, and we will get in contact with you and make those connections for you.

**Jeannette James:** So, many thanks for joining us this afternoon to discuss the important topic of school transitions, and we're just moving on to the last couple of slides now. When you exit out of this webinar by closing the web browser, you'll be prompted to complete a short five question survey. This helps us know what you have liked, what we can improve on, and how we can best meet your needs in the future. We will be offering a variety of in focus webinars throughout the year. The survey will also be sent to you via email if you don't see it on exiting the webinar.

**Jeannette James:** Also included in the survey are some reflection questions asking you to consider your learnings from today, and an action that you can take straightaway to help support the children and young people in your care manage transitions. We encourage you to explore in focus webinars and national check-in events. We hope to see you again next time, but until then, take care and thank you for working with us to grow immensely healthy generation.

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