

Transition to School Koori Kids. Pilot Project.

2006

Final Report.



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Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation.

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2006 Report: Transition To School Koori Kids Pilot Program.

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April 2006. Report of TTSKK pilot program.

Overview of program.

The Transition to School For Koori Kids pilot program commenced on the 1st July 2005. It was a result of concerns pre-school staff at Noogaleek Children's Centre encountered annually once children transitioned onto structured schooling. Every year similar problems arose with different children. Problems ranged from unsettled behaviours, low participation to suspensions, which identified a need for a support structure to be put in place for Aboriginal children and families.

The Report of the Review of Aboriginal Education also support these concerns and identifies a large range of issues relating to the difficulties & disadvantages Aboriginal students face at school. The review identifies a need for new approaches to Aboriginal Education and a greater need for early intervention. This is where the need for positive and supportive transition programs was recognised. According to Rothstein "school reform itself must be supplemented by comprehensive support programs starting in the early years of school." (Report of the Review of Aboriginal Edu.2004. pg 12.)

Noogaleek Children's Centre wanted a Transition program that was very individual to each child and families needs. It needed to be a program that supported families through the entire transition process by building new relationships through already established ones. It is a program that scaffolds children from the year prior to school through to term 1 of the new school year.

This report will identify the positive outcomes that can be achieved when pre-school staff, individual families and school professionals combine with child development professionals in a supportive way. The process is a simple one. It is about early intervention and giving Aboriginal children and their parents an introduction to school that they love.

Breakdown of children & intervention services.

36 children in the program.

30 Noogaleek children

4 Winnangay Children

2 Community Children

Each child & family has a very individual program

34 children attending Noogaleek & Winnangay have had regular OM hearing tests (every eight weeks **IAH, AMS**)

1 community child has also had OM tests & developmental assessments through **DADIC**.

23 speech assessments provided by **IAH**,

2 Paediatric assessments provided by **IAH** Dr Alan James & Dr Paul Gray.

All assessments were conducted at Noogaleek Children's Centre.

14 schools throughout the Illawarra were part of the transition process. Each schools level of participation was also very individual.

Breakdown of schools & number of children.

| | |
|--------------------------|----------|
| Kemblawarra: | 1 |
| Koonawarra: | 2 |
| Mt Warrigal: | 6 |
| Albion Park: | 2 |
| Barrack Hts: | 4 |
| Bellambi: | 2 |
| Mt Terry: | 2 |
| Berkeley: | 5 |
| Berkeley West: | 4 |
| Albion Park Rail: | 2 |
| Dapto: | 3 |
| Unanderra: | 1 |
| Parameadows: | 1 |
| St Michaels: | 1 |

NB: Not all children commenced kindergarten in 2006. Some of the children will commence in 2007 but have begun the transition process.

Individual children's transition program.

1. MB Transition 2007

DOB: 10.5.00

Appointment with the child psychologist this year, date to be fixed.

2. KB Transition 2006

DOB: 24.4.01

Appointment with school 30th AUG 05. After discussions, normal transition will focus on KB and call me if feels KB requires extra transition dates.

KB has since moved and is attending another local school, KB has settled in very well.

3. KB Transition 2006

DOB: 20.5.00

Appointment 25th Aug 05 with infant coordinator & AEA. I have concerns with KB age and maturity. Another appointment made with mum and child 21st Sept 05. After long discussions and orientation around the school, mum decided to send KB. Staff were very supportive. KB will commence normal transition Nov 05. Mum would like information on parental involvement.

Follow up meeting 30.3.06 with staff. Infant coordinator informed me that KB settled into kinder well however he is difficult at times. The main problem that arose was KB found it difficult following directions and routines at school. We discussed this personality trait & similarities at pre-school, strategies etc. Kinder teacher did inform coordinator that it may have been more beneficial for KB to have stayed back at pre-school an extra year.

Staff said they have divided the kinder classes by age. KB is in the kinder class with the younger children. Koori kids have also been grouped together. The classes are organised in the same way however content is different. Staff are very excited to also see KB mum's involvement in the school, she is rostered onto tuck shop once a month.

4. JC Transition 2006

DOB:

App: 29th Aug 05 with Principal & AP. Concern with separation anxiety. AP would like to do normal transition and observe JC. Will contact me for extra days if concerned, mum was happy with that.

Contacted A.P 28th Feb 06 JC is doing very well and has settled in. "Has made a good little social group."

5. JC Transition 2006
DOB: 9.6.01

App: 29th Aug 05. I have concerns with JC's age and maturity. Another appointment scheduled for 19th Oct 05 with JC's mum.

After discussions of pro's and con's in starting JC's mum was informed any decision she made would be respected and understood. We also looked at other options. On the 22nd Oct 05 JC's mum contacted me and informed me she would like to hold JC back until 2007.

In 2006 JC will attend Noogaleek 2 days per week and DET pre-school 2 half days.

6. LD Transition 2006
DOB: 28.2.01

Appointment 31st Aug 05 at school. I have concerns with LD's age and maturity. After lengthy discussions LD's mum decided to hold LD back until 2007. LD will attend Noogaleek 3 days per week in 2006. Will begin transition at school mid July/Aug in the kinder classroom and for school events.

Follow up: with principal March 9th 06, LD will begin transition Term 4 beginning with 2hr visits one day a week in the kinder class.

7. SD Transition 2006
DOB: 1.12.00

No major concerns. Normal transition, staff will observe student and contact me if they feel they have any concerns for more transition days. Transition Nov 2005.

Follow up: with principal March 9th 06, SD has settled into school very well, no concerns.

8. BD Transition 2006
DOB: 23.10.00

Appointment 31st Aug 05. No major concerns, discussed child profile. Normal transition Nov 05. Staff will observe and contact if concerned.

2006: Contacted principal in regards to BD, all is going well, BD has settled in well, no concerns.

9. MF Transition 2006
DOB: 15.2.01

Concerns with language dev. MF has severe expressive and receptive delays. Site visit TTS 31.5.05. Orientation is in Nov, they will contact me if they have any concerns. Student counsellor contacted me Nov 27th 05 in regards to MF, we discussed MF's background and reports, will organise a "Language Special " class for MF in 2006.

2006: Spoke with MF's mother and she is very pleased with his progress.

10. RH Transition 2006
DOB: 2.10.00

Appointment 19th Aug 05. Language Ass: 27/6/05. Outcomes: severe receptive Lang delay & moderate expressive difficulties. Paediatric assessment 7th May 05 outcome identified no obvious delay. Transition outcomes, RH will attend DET pre-school two days per week and Noogaleek 2 days per week. Transition as normal, the school will contact me if necessary.

Contacted Principal 28th Feb 06, RH has settled in very well and the school is very happy with his progress.

11. TH Transition 2006
DOB: 30.9.00

Appointment 30th Aug 05. Discussed child profile, would like to organised extra transition times for TH. Extra dates are 19th Oct 05 & 26th Oct 05. 11.45 – 1.00pm. TH will join the kindergarten children with QR a friend from Noogaleek with mum. After this TH will join the normal transition program. TH will also participate in the playgroup at the school with mum until the end of the year.

Visited school 10th March 06, TH has settled into school very well and her kindy teacher and mother are very happy with her progress.

12. SHP Transition 2007
DOB 30.9.00

8th Sep 05 Psychology assessment. Outcome identified tendencies consistent with Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

Application required for ICS funding SNSS.

Appointment with transition to school coordinator DET 27th Oct 05.

Discussion with SH Nan, looking at options for 2006 -07.

Noogaleek 1 full day and 2 half days at the early intervention unit. Transport is required.

Option 2 Paramedows 5 days per week.

Option 3: Autistic school 5 days per week.

SHP con't: 2006 SHP attends Noogaleek 1 day per week and Paramedows 4 days per week. Nan is very happy with his progress.

13. KI Transition 2006
DOB: 25.2.01

App 3rd August 05 with school.

12th Oct 05 Appointment with A.P.

Concerns with behaviour and family history. Discussed child profile. Would like to attempt regular transition and will contact me if they have any concerns. Out of area application required as grandmother prefers this school, she feels it is an easier walk then local school.

2006 DOCS child, we have lost contact with this child.

14. SI Transition 2006.
DOB: 22.12.00

Appointment 3rd August 05 at school.

Appointment 12th Oct 05 with A.P. There are concerns with child's family history. Out of area application will be required for grandmother. We are waiting on application to be accepted.

2006, SI is now in foster care and attends another school and is doing extremely well, is class captain.

15. BK Transition 2006/07
DOB: 23.2.01

App 3rd August 05 at school. Child profile discussed. Concerns age, maturity, social and emotional dev. Discussion of pro's and con's with school & parent. Mum deciding to hold BK back until 2007. Transition will commence 2006. BK attends Noogaleek 2 days per week.

16. RK Transition 2006/07
DOB: 23.2.01

Site visit 8.6.05.

App: at school 20 July 05. Transition team and support workers DADHC.

Discussion on child profile. Main concerns, child's special needs and school's provisions, i.e.; toileting, slope of outdoor area, lunch area, ramps. Access around and indoors at school.

2nd, concern RK's social and emotional maturity. Mum thinking about holding RK back until 07. Funding still in place for 07.

Appointment: 3rd August 05. Further discussions regarding positive start to schooling & best interests of RK. Mum decided to hold RK back until 07. RK will attend pre-school at Noogaleek 2 days per week and an application has been put in for early intervention 2 ½ days. App: 7th Sep 05 & 15th Sep 05 with school counsellor.

Appointment: 10th Oct 05 at school for completion of funding application for RK 07.

2006, RK is attending early Intervention 2 days per week, and Noogaleek 2 days per week. RK is crying a little when left, however settles very quickly once his mother has gone. Term 3, 2006, we will begin transition for RK and visit the school playground weekly in order for RK to feel more confident moving his wheel chair around the playground.

17. MK Transition 2006
DOB: 8.3.01

Appointment: at school with principal & A.P discussion of child profile & transition program.

Extra transition times will be organised for MK. Parental participation encouraged.

Transition dates 18th, 25th Oct, 1st Nov, 8th Nov, (extra dates) 3rd Nov, 10th Nov, 17th Nov.(standard transition)

MK and mum were escorted to transition on the 18th Oct, all went very well. MK's mum was asked if she felt comfortable to take MK to transition on the 25th Oct, she said yes, however did not attend. I called mum for a follow up and reminded her to take MK to transition on the 1st Nov the same day as reading recovery with her 1st grade child. MK did well on this date, however his 1st grade sibling became disruptive to have mum at the school. MK and mum have not followed through with any further transition dates. I contacted the school and kinder teacher to discuss this issue and concerns. Kinder teacher felt further dates were necessary. I contacted MK's mum and dates have been organised for Thursday afternoon so that I will transport MK to school and drop him off at home. Mum felt this method was easier and she

would meet me at school where possible. New transition dates: 24th Nov, 1st Dec, 8th Dec, & 15th Dec 2005.

Roz and I picked and dropped off MK to and from orientation, all appointments were very positive. The school would like more involvement from mum, however were very happy MK was attending.

2006, MK has since moved and we have lost contact with this child.

18. ZK Transition 2006
DOB: 22.1.01

Appointment: 31st Aug 05. at school with principal. Discussion: child profile & program. Speech Assessment, outreach program Noogaleek 29.06.05. Concerns moderate expressive Lang & severe speech delay. Normal transition at this point principal will ask staff to make observations on orientation, will contact me if more transition times are needed. Transition dates: 17th Nov, 24 Nov, 1st Dec.

2006, contacted principal, ZK has settled O.K, however are working on language and speech programs at this point. Will contact me in the future to update me.

19. JM Transition 2006/07
DOB: 20.6.01

Speech Ass; outreach Noogaleek 29.06.05 Concerns, articulation disorder. Appointment at school, 31st Aug 05. Discussion: child profile. Family undecided about sending JM to school. Will contact Winnanggay to let Mandy know if they decide to hold JM back.

JM went to school and kinder teacher was organising speech programs for JM through the school, is settling in "fairly well".

20. BNH Transition 2006/07
DOB 31.1.01.

Appointment at school with parent and staff 20th July 05. Discussion of child profile & program. Concerns with BNH maturity, social/emotional dev and size. Discussed pros and con's in sending BNH to school in 2006.

Mum decided to hold BNH back for another year. Will attend Winnanggay pre-school five days per week in 2006.

21. FO Transition 2006
DOB 23.10.00

Appointment with A.P at school 12th Oct 05. Discussion of child profile. Normal transition will contact us if school feels extra dates are required.

FO has settled in very well and his mother is very happy with his progress and the school. Mum has volunteered her time at the school and is on "tuck shop".

22. CO Transition 2006**DOB: 25.12.00**

Appointment 23rd August 2005 at school. Discussion of program and child profile.

Normal transition at his point, observations will be made and school will contact me if they feel CO requires extra transition times.

2006. I spoke with the kinder teacher and this student took a little longer to settle, however is doing well.

23. BP Transition 2006**DOB: 31.10.99**

Appointment with assistant principal 12th Oct 2005 and we discussed child profile. School knows the family and children's backgrounds well and feels normal transition would be O.K. I have concerns with BP's social / emotional dev, he still has very big separation anxiety issues and does not leave younger siblings side at pre-school. School staff will observe BP and contact me if they feel it is necessary. Mum would like Noogaleek to be kept updated.

Principal contacted me 2.11.05 and was able to get BP in for extra transition times 8.11.05 & 10.11.05, 9am – 12pm.

2006, BP has settled in extremely well, the school and his family are very surprised and pleased with the outcome. BP is taken to school after assembly directly to his classroom, this has alleviated a lot of anxiety.

24. AP Transition 2006**DOB: 16.7.00**

Appointment at school 31st Aug 05. Discussion of child profile, the school knows the family and history very well. Mum is very concerned about AP starting school in 2006, would like to hold him back. Speech assessment: Outreach program 27th June 05, suggests age appropriate language dev. School counsellor report suggests average function in most areas.

2nd meeting 17th Oct 05 with transition team, principal, counsellor, Koori support worker, parents, Sharryn Liddle & myself. Mum was very upset AP had to start school, feels reports are incorrect. Transition program set up. AP will get the bus run to Noogaleek in order to encourage full day pre-school. AP will have extra transition visits to school as well as regular orientation. When AP starts start kindergarten in 2006 he will attend 2 hr sessions only,. A review of AP will be evaluated in week 3 term 1. If the school feels kindergarten is inappropriate for AP an application may be made to the DET for an exemption. Noogaleek will hold AP's days at no charge until we know where AP is going in 2006. AP's doctor will look at assessments.

2006, AP was supposed to begin school with 2 hr sessions only, however his transition has been so good that he began full days the second day of Term 1. AP has settled extremely well and mum and school staff are very happy with his progress.

25. JR Transition 2007
DOB: 28.6.01

Speech assessment, outreach program Noogaleek 27th June 2005. Outcomes severely delayed expressive & receptive language skills. Speech therapy, with speech therapist at playgroup.

JR attends Noogaleek two days per week.

26. QR Transition 2006
DOB: 17.8.00

Speech assessment, outreach program Noogaleek 27th June 2005. Appointment 30th August 2005. Discussion of program and child profile. Extra transition days will be set-up for QR with TH a friend from pre-school. Transition dates are: Extra trans in kindy room 19..10.05 & 26.10.05. Regular transition 10.11.05 & 22.11.05. Speech therapy at playgroup with speech pathologist.

I visited principal 10th March 06. QR has found her transition very difficult. Separation from mum has been hard and so has socialising with other children. The teachers have been encouraging QR to socialise with children who also attended Noogaleek and are still working very hard with QR to settle in. QR attendance rate has also been low with 7 full days and 4 partial days absent in Term 1 thus far.

I spoke with QR's mum on the 24.3.06, she feels QR's problem was her speech, QR found it difficult speaking to other children and her teacher because they weren't able to understand her. QR's mum said QR has since settled in and is feeling more comfortable speaking at school. Mum is happy with her child's progress, and QR is now attending school regularly.

27. ES Transition 2007
DOB: 17.7.01

Speech assessment with our outreach program on the 20.7.05. Speech therapy at Kiama Hospital.

ES attends speech once a month at Kiama Hospital and Noogaleek three days per week.

28. NS Transition 2006
DOB: 29.12.00.

Speech assessment, outreach program 27th June 2005. Moderate expressive/Receptive delay. Appointment at school 30.8.05, discussion of program and child profile.

2nd appointment 16.9.05, transition needs. Regular transition 2.10.05, 1.11.05, 8.11.05. Extra dates will be made if necessary.

Court day for parents 2.10.05, Myimbarr brought NS out to the centre so I could take him out to school for orientation. We arrived and I was asked to laeve NS at the kindy classroom. When I returned the teacher said NS was trying to leave the room and was trying to pinch and hit her. We discussed these issues and on the 8th Nov I will sit in on the group with NS and debrief with kindy teacher Miss Young, main focus will be strategies I use will NS at Noogaleek.

10th Nov I contacted school when I was notified that NS did not attend his 2nd transition appointment. I spoke with Miss Young about organising more visits. Next visit 22nd Nov 9:30

– 11.00am. 29th Nov 2;00- 3.00, 7th Dec 2;00 – 3;00, 13th Dec 2;00-3;00pm. I will pick up NS and drop off.

Orientation was great, half an hour into the first visit Roz and I left NS in the kinder class and then came back. NS was very happy when we returned and cuddled his new teacher good bye as we left. The next visit's were also positive, we left NS for an hour each time returning to a very happy child and teacher.

29. KVH Transition 2006

DOB: 1.9.00

Speech IAH. Appointment at school 23.8.05. No support class necessary for 2006, will attend regular class. School would like KVH to participate in regular orientation and will contact me if necessary. Noogaleek to remind mum of dates and to organise transport. Mum will contact me if she feels she needs company on orientation. KVH will continue with speech therapy at Porter Street Child Development Unit.

2006; kinder teacher from school contacted me 23rd February 06. Kinder teacher had concerns with KVH. KVH was not settling well with playground times, socialising and general demands of kindergarten. After discussions with mum and kinder teacher it was decided that staff required more support with KVH in class and on playground. I contacted the Disability Programs Co-ordinator for advice and she has assured me that support can be organised for this student and staff. The co-ordinator will contact staff at school and will update me with the progress.

School staff contacted me and informed me that the Disability Programs Coordinator called, KVH has started to settle in well.

30. DW Transition 2006

DOB:

Attends Noogaleek 2 days per week and DET preschool 2 days per week. Speech assessment concluded a severe receptive and expressive delay. Nan is to take him to speech therapy at Kids Cottage. Has had a very slow transition for the past year. Will attend regular orientation. Follow up Term 1 2006.

Met with principal March 9th 06. DW has had no problems settling into kindergarten, and his Nan is very pleased with his progress.

31. DAW Transition 2006/2007

DOB: 11.3.01

Speech assessment 29.06.05 at Noogaleek through our outreach program with IAH.

Outcomes severely delayed receptive & expressive language skills.

Paediatric assessment with Dr Paul Gray .

Appointment with principal & transition team at school 31.8.05.

Discussion of program and child profile. Thinks it may be better for DAW to remain at pre-school another year.

2nd appointment at school 11.10.05. Discussion for alternatives for DAW. 3 days

Winnanggay 2 days DET pre-school. Mum would like to hold him back.

2006, DAW has began pre-school and is settling into routine satisfactorily. He is finding the structure a little daunting however, his mother is very happy with the pre-school and his progress.

32. LC Transition 2006.
DOB: Not listed
(Community child)

On the 25th August 05 I had a Transition to School meeting at a local school. Infants coordinator identified problems meeting with a koori child and parent enrolled for 2006. The child has identified hearing problems that will affect his learning and a transition program was necessary. I went to the playgroup at the local neighbourhood centre to see if LC's mum was there, I only found his aunty, and asked her to get mum to contact me. The school already had a signed consent form for transition to school. After three days I hadn't heard from her I contacted the Aboriginal Early Childhood Nurse to try contact as the Counsellor at the school needed to assess LC ASAP. The early childhood nurse went to LC's home and left a message for her and a photocopy of the transition forms. On the 15th Nov DET Transition to school co-ordinator called and notified Noogaleek's co-ordinator that LC was booked into a local Early Intervention unit.

Follow up: 30.3.06 discussions with schools AEA and infant co-ordinator, they informed me LC was now at another school and still in an early intervention class.

33. AR Transition 2006.
DOB: Not listed
(Community Child)

I was approached by AR's mother at a gathering and she asked if I would arrange more transition dates for her son at his local school. I contacted the kinder teacher and she agreed it would be a good idea. AR will attend extra orientation sessions with MK in attempt to have the two boys become familiar with one another. The extra sessions will be, 24th Nov, 1st Dec, 8th Dec, 1;30 – 2;30pm.

AR's mum contacted me on the 23rd Nov 05 to notify that she would not be able to attend the extra orientation sessions as she needed to find more permanent housing for her and her family. She felt the program was very positive and that in different circumstances she would definitely have attended the extra sessions.

34. CS Transition 2007.
DOB: 3.5.01

Paediatric assessment Dr H on the 6.7.05. Outcomes, moderate global delay, severe expressive/receptive language delay, difficult behaviour associated with his language.

Paediatric assessment Dr A. J on the 24th Nov 06 Shellharbour Hospital.

Paediatric assessment Dr P.G on the 9th Dec 06 at Noogaleek.

Negotiations are underway to see what the best course of action will be for CS at this point.

Spoke to CS mum and she told me that CS was having another assessment at Porter Street on the 31.3.06; she has asked them to send a copy of the assessment to me.

CS commenced a local Early Intervention Unit 11.3.06 and is still settling in. He also attends Noogaleek two days per week.

35. NT Transition 2006
DOB: 7.7.01

On the 6th March 06 NT's mum notified us that NT was starting school and was on trial for a period of two weeks. I visited the school on the 9th March 06 and saw NT in her classroom. NT's teacher said that NT was settling very well. I will be updating.

I spoke with NT's mum on the 24.3.06 and she said that NT was crying a little throughout the day however she was still comfortable leaving her at school.

NT has had no orientation process so it will be very interesting to see how she proceeds throughout the year.

36. B.D Transition 2006
DOB: 18.6.01
School: Dapto PS

On February 3rd 06 BD's mum notified the centre that BD was going to start school because she had changed her mind and felt that BD was ready.

I contacted the school on the 9th of February to see how BD was settling in and the school felt she was coping well. BD has not had an orientation process.

2006 Transition to school for Koori Kids.

Results from Teacher evaluations.

Eleven schools were given a survey to complete, nine surveys were returned.

Question 1: Have you found the TTSKK process beneficial? How & Why?

- Yes as the children are more settled.
- Good transfer of information & contacts with experienced people.
- Open & effective communication between the pre-school & school.
- Child centred.
- Consideration for schools capacity to provide a service.
- Clear specific transition process enabling maximum support for individual students.
- Yes, it was very supportive for all concerned. It ensured that the transition process was informative & the parents felt at ease.
- Yes, NS did not seem ready for school during orientation visits, but he was much more settled during the transition visits. This put me at ease and NS at ease and I became more hopeful of a smooth start for NS this year. When NS came to kindy this year we knew each other already and he settled in extremely well. He was in familiar territory.
- We are aware of the program & that our most recent enrolment had been through it.
- I found the extra communication initiated by the preschool most beneficial. It enables the primary school to evaluate its human & physical resources that may be needed to meet the transitioning child's needs.
- It was particularly helpful to us in the case of JC, as Noogaleek was instrumental in setting up a meeting between parent & school & was able to provide detailed information on the koori child's readiness for school. On the basis of this meeting & advice, JC was not enrolled in kinder this year.
- Yes, the meeting was informative re: RH progress in pre-school and as to how Noogaleek viewed RH behaviour.

Question 2: Was the process helpful in planning for the child's enrolment?

- Very helpful as the school is able to place the children in appropriate class group.
- Yes, well documented. Meeting was purposeful & well structured. Expectations could be met based on the comprehensive information provided.
- Yes, the teachers & staff were better prepared for these children. They knew more about them.
- It was helpful. I did have plans ready to help NS if he became unsettled, but I didn't need to use any back up plans because NS enjoyed being at school

and followed along with everyone else. It was good to know I had the support and contacts there if I needed them.

- Limited contact, 1 meeting with staff, one meeting to discuss centre with principal, 1 meeting with child, ribbonwood conference.
- Yes, an interview was able to be arranged with prospective parents well in advance of the new year. Requirements for the child were negotiated.
- Noogaleek's intervention on students enrolling would be extremely beneficial to any teacher, providing valuable insights into their abilities strengths & weaknesses.
- Yes, it made us aware of some possible concerns which thankfully we have not encountered as yet.

Question 3: Did you feel there was adequate communication with the child's prior to school service?

- Yes, very good.
- Yes, obvious understanding existed with the child's parents, and meetings were conveniently arranged.
- yes, much better than our school with some preschools.
- Yes, there was adequate communication with the TTSKK co-ordinator, but I have had no communication with NS mum, however, all is well.
- Could be more information/detail.
- Yes, Although it was limited we did not really need a great deal of assistance with planning for him as his sister and mother and father were already part of the school community.
- Yes, but I only just found out about BD.

Question 4: Do you feel this process has made Koori parents feel more comfortable coming to school and being part of the child's schooling?

- Yes, as they can help within the class or in the school canteen and the children feel special when they see their mum in the school.
- Yes, evidenced by interaction in current year. Yes, judging by the positive meetings and subsequent follow up.
- Yes, it meant that the trusted link with the preschool was not broken.
- I have seen very little of mum as NS catches the bus to & from school. I believe the program put both NS and his mum at ease about starting kindergarten.
- Yes. , although still not as willing to engage in school activities as non Koori parents.
- We've only dealt with one student through this process & the parent of JC is well known to us. She seemed comfortable at the meeting & took time to consider the pros & cons before making her decision.
- It was beneficial but RH family were already associated with the school. RH was related to the schools AEA who had a positive relationship with his mother, father & grandmother. As our school has a large, local Aboriginal community and has had for many years, the Aboriginal parents/caregivers already have a well established positive relationship with the school. But every effort in this regard is beneficial.
- Yes.

Question 5: What do you see are the challenges for Koori kids starting school & throughout their schooling life?

- Consistency of residential address & after school plans for children.
- After school care
- Understanding of school expectations & schools understanding of cultural expectations.
- Cultural acceptance and understanding.
- That the institution provides a supportive structured environment that understands the needs of the Aboriginal learner that there is support & encouragement from all & that the students see purpose & meaning in what they do.
- Their attendance & punctuality is often a problem, but NS family are always at school, punctual, well dressed etc. Like all children, it depends on each child's background. I rarely have contact with Koori kids families, so little things like a changed library day or sports day is hard to get the message across.
- Understanding non-indigenous culture. Understanding routines in mainstream classes. Speech differences, language differences. Learning styles. Attendance. Family support for school. Differences in home/school expectations.
- Like any student, students experience difficulty establishing routines early on in the year. Parents are often reluctant to get actively involved in their child's education at school.
- Coping with formalised school structures, even reacting to bells, toileting routines, canteen lines, class lines etc.
- Many have no prior to school experience. The DET has recently released a study which details this. It is a valuable document to access. Much information is available on the DET website – www.det.nsw.edu.au.

Question 6: How can we make this program better?

- Continue as is – more time to consult.
- I have no suggestions to improve an already effective program.
- Continue the program.
- It's fine.
- If NS was a difficult student I may have requested extra help from his family of the TTSKK co-ordinator, but he has settled in with ease.
- We don't know enough about it to make informed recommendations.
- Ensure that transitioning parents know well in advance which school is their local school for kindergarten and when they are hosting their orientation days in term 4. All schools can provide a map of their local areas.
- Include students in the orientation program of the individual schools. Help school set up & run playgroups which operate in classrooms & where kids experience "big playgrounds", bells and other structures before coming into kinder. Encourage Koori parents to attend such sessions.
- From what I know this is a good program and well worth continuing. Possibly it would be worthwhile finding out if a relationship already existed between the

child's family and the school. This would inform your future directions re level of planning, involvement etc.

- Depending on the individual needs of the child possibly extend the orientation process and allow them to attend for 1-2 hrs a week in the regular classroom. This would give the kindy teacher more time to observe their specific needs, ie: behaviour, academics, social etc.

Question 7: Any other comments?

- This service has provided a safety net to ensure success for this student. A secondary benefit has been introducing the staff of Noogaleek to the whole school staff & developing an awareness & understanding of their service.
- Keep up the good work.
- Do it again in 2007.
- I would participate in the program again and recommend it to colleagues. Thank-you.
- I would welcome any advice you can give us, as I feel it's our responsibility to be as ready for the Koori students as possible. I think advice ie: different learning styles should be incorporated into teaching practices to encourage more engagement in their learning.
- RH has settled in very well. He is participating very well and following instructions. He has made friends with students and staff. No problems have manifested themselves as yet. His parents are very pleased with his efforts and his progress in kinder.
- Provide funding to support the children ie: teachers aide. This particular child needs support in the playground as well as the classroom.

2006 Transition to school Koori Kids.

Results from Parent evaluations.

34 surveys were sent out to parents to evaluate and 0 came back, so I had to look at another alternative in getting some feedback. I called parents directly on phones if I had their numbers or spoke to them directly asking them 9 questions. Six parents/carers gave me feedback. These are the results:

- 1. Did you feel part of your child's Transition to school process?**
 - Yes.
 - Yes.
 - Yes.
 - Yes, you kept in touch with me all the time.
 - Yes. I was made aware of all of the meetings & my child's progress.
 - Yes I did thank-you.

- 2. At any time, did you feel uncomfortable with the transition to school process? If so when?**
 - No.
 - No. Noogaleek informed me of times when I had to go there.
 - Yes. More so at the school cos I didn't feel he was ready. I didn't feel the Dep of Edu listened to me. They did what they wanted anyway. But he is doing well.
 - No.
 - During my first visit I felt uncomfortable speaking with the teachers, but all the other times were good because I got used to them.
 - I felt very comfortable with the whole process.

- 3. What did you like about the Transition process?**
 - Noogaleek was involved and everyone worked together to help K with his transition.
 - I like the fact that the pre-school came with me to the school and explained where A was at.
 - The extra visits organised.
 - That Noogaleek organised everything for us and got D the help he needed.
 - It helped my child start school. His pre-school teacher made me feel comfortable at the school & explained things to me.

- I liked that everything that needed to be organised was done for me and I didn't have to stress about anything.
- 4. What didn't you like about the Transition process?**
- The first day of school Q cried.
 - I was scared he wasn't ready and I felt the Dep wasn't listening to me.
 - Nothing.
 - Nil.
 - It was all good.
 - Nothing. It was all very satisfying.
- 5. What changes can be made to the Transition to school process?**
- Nothing.
 - I had three other children who didn't go through a program like this and it was much harder. Now, I felt I had the support and so did he. I felt it was beneficial for him and everyone was working together. It was a network of people working together.
 - Visit with A more after starting.
 - Visit at the school more.
 - It should be a permanent thing.
 - None that I can think of.
- 6. Do you feel comfortable coming to the school and being part of your child's schooling? How has the transition process assisted in making you feel more comfortable at the school?**
- Yes, because D was at the pre-school there for a year before he started. It made settling into kinder easier for him and me.
 - Yes. I felt more comfortable, especially with K developmental problems cos of the support from pre-school.
 - Yes, but I know the school from before.
 - Yes. The Principal is excellent.
 - I feel more comfortable now that I know the teachers & I know that I can talk to them if I need to.
 - Yes. I feel very comfortable. I am now helping with the children's home reading in the classroom.
- 7. What do you think are the main challenges for Koori Kids starting school and throughout their schooling life?**
- Support programs for Koori kids, there needs more.
 - Reading & writing. Extra help academically. They need more support.
 - The meeting stopped challenges. I was confident there was enough support. I felt at ease. All Koori parents need to feel that.

- Teachers understanding them. Reading & writing learning styles.
 - They are shy & don't like to get tormented by the other kids. Low self esteem.
 - Getting over their shyness and building up their self confidence.
- 8. Are there any changes you would like to see at the school?**
- No.
 - I feel it would be nice if the pre-school followed up more and visited K more. You guys know K very well. If there was more funding given for more visits.
 - More programs for Koori kids. Specific ones, we learn differently.
 - More support programs and more money for them.
 - A longer orientation program would be good at all schools.
 - None that I can think of at this stage.
- 9. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?**
- Keep in touch.
 - I would like to hear from you throughout the year.
 - No.
 - Thank-you.
 - I think that this program is really good & help our children start kinder.
 - Just that it's a really good project and you've done a wonderful job. Thank-you for your help and support.

Transition To School Koori Kids Pilot Program. 2006 Final Report.

Evaluation of program.

The Transition to School for Koori Kids pilot program has been a very challenging, yet rewarding program to be involved in. It has proven to be a “safety net” for families and children taking that next step into formal schooling. It is a bridging service that helps build and mould positive relationships. It is a simple program that looks at the “whole child’s” individual needs and abilities, supported through a network of agencies.

The transition program for each child and family was very individual. The program needed to be structured in this way in order to maximise its effectiveness. If the program had been inflexible and families and children were “pigeon holed”, I feel the outcome would have been very different. By relating back to the Individual programs, you can see how each varies from reminders of orientation times and dates, through to supported visits to kinder classes. Whatever the program, each experience was very different and most of the time very positive.

The feedback from most of the Principals and teachers has been very optimistic. Most schools would like to see the program continue and have been extremely supportive throughout the process. This unique program bridges the communication barrier between prior to school services and schools. It introduces new teachers to children and families better preparing each for the new year. Programming for children begins earlier so a smoother transition can occur.

Most parents/carers have appreciated the support they have received through their involvement in this program. Parents have expressed a confident feeling knowing there is a network of people working together for the best interest of their child/ren. As one parent expressed “the meetings stopped challenges, I was confident there was enough support.”

Parents acknowledge good programs, most identify a need for more Koori specific programs within our schools. They recognise the need for more AEA’s and would like to see more academically focused literacy programs put in place for their children.

Only two community children who do not attend a prior to school service were identified within this project. Accessing aboriginal children outside Noogaleek Children’s Centre and Winnangay Pre-school was difficult under the time constraints I had. If this program was to continue, accessing the Men’s and

Women's group could be one way of introducing new families to the program. Extension into the Illawarra Aboriginal Community Centre's programs such as Myrrinnbah and the Elders group could also be another. Flyers and posters at the Aboriginal Medical Centre could also be an alternative in promoting this project. However, sometimes the best way of getting news around an Aboriginal community is through "Koori mail"; that's word of mouth.

This program ran for approximately eight months, two days per week. Imagine what the outcomes could be if more attention and time was devoted to such an important issue. We need to set up Aboriginal children for success, and a positive start to school can help achieve this. This program undoubtedly demonstrates how effective good transition programs can be. As the Report of the Review of Aboriginal Education recommends, "That a transition-to-school scheme be established and supported by print and staffing resources. Each region will develop a transition-to-school plan for Aboriginal students. This plan should include liaison with Health and DOCS staff to ensure minimum health needs of Aboriginal children are met. Aboriginal children should be given priority access to DET preschools." (Report of the review of Aboriginal Education. DET. 2004. Pg 200.)

By following the recommendations of the review and focusing on the positive outcomes of this pilot program, it is obvious how effective good transition programs can be when supported appropriately by funds, human resources, health professionals, schools and families.

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- Albion Park Public School.
- Barrack Hts Public School.
- Bellambi Public School.
- Mt Terry Public School.
- Berkeley Public School.
- Berkeley West Public School.
- Albion Park Rail Public School.
- Dapto Public School.
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