



JOINING THE DOTS.

The Yarra Primary Secondary School Transition Project (2012 – 2017)

**Report 3
May 2018**

**Zita Pinda,
Seven Ways Consultancy**



This project was originally an initiative of the Yarra Youth Commitment, formerly known as the Yarra Education Youth Commitment, and managed by the Joining the Dots Steering Group. The Project was coordinated by the Inner Northern Local Learning and Employment Network (INLLEN), with consultancy work undertaken by Zita Pinda of Seven Ways Consultancy.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the Steering Group member organisations for their strategic input and significant in-kind contributions to this project:

Berry Street Childhood Institute (SFYS)	INLLEN
Catholic Education Melbourne (CEM)	Kildonan Reconnect
City of Yarra	Mission Australia
Collingwood Alternative School	Murdoch Children's Research Institute
Collingwood College	Seven Ways Consultancy
Concern Australia	The Smith Family
Department of Education and Training (DET)	Trinity Catholic School (Richmond)
Eating Disorders Victoria	Victoria Police
Fitzroy High School	Yarra Primary School
Fitzroy Primary School	Youth Connect
Foundation House	YSAS (Youth Support and Advocacy Service)
Hawthorn Secondary College	

We take this opportunity to thank the City of Yarra for its financial support through two consecutive three year *Investing in Community* grants from the (totalling \$129,000) to undertake this project. The Project would not have been possible without these funds. The INLLEN has been the auspice agency to manage these funds on behalf of the Yarra Youth Commitment and the Joining the Dots Steering Group.

The Inner Northern Youth Connections Consortia members NMIC are also to be thanked for their support (\$19,000) of the Project. These funds enabled Fitzroy High School to employ a Project Officer to implement the Demonstration Pilot Project 2013/2014.

We would also like to acknowledge the cooperation of the local DET and Catholic schools, and the DET and CEM personnel for their support in providing the data for this project. Thank you also to all the teachers, agency personnel, students and parents who provided valuable feedback and advice to support this work. A special thank you must go to Hong Nguyen and Rochelle Darby, INLLEN for their work in the role of Project Manager.

For further information on this project please contact Rochelle Darby, Manager Transitions, INLLEN on 03 9940 1454 or email rdarby@inllen.org.au

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Yarra Primary Secondary School Transition Project was initiated in 2012 in response to critical concerns about primary secondary school transition in the City of Yarra. The purpose of the Project was to identify, implement and evaluate a transition model for young people, their families, the community sector and schools that ensure young people remain engaged in education.

Primary to Secondary School transition is a period of time in a young person's life that coincides with rapid physical, emotional, social and cognitive developments impacting on their connection to school and learning as a whole. A successful transition to secondary school is a key factor in determining whether young people remain engaged in education, complete secondary school and transition into positive career pathways.

With funding support from two City of Yarra *Investing in Community Grants*, 2017 was the final year of implementation of the Project and evaluation of the Transition Model. Strategic direction for the Project has been provided by a dedicated cross-sectoral Steering Group. Elements of this project have already been implemented in smaller projects across Darebin and Moreland in the inner north of Melbourne. Now known as Joining the Dots (JTD), this six year action research project (2012-2017) was a key initiative of the Yarra Youth Commitment (YYC), a strategic cross-sector partnership which came to an end in 2016.

The main driving force for the JTD Project has been INLLEN's Project Management. The consistency and depth of support provided by the INLLEN, both strategic and operational, has been instrumental to its success. The JTD Project Manager was employed by the INLLEN to manage and coordinate all aspects of the Project. This has been a major INLLEN initiative involving significant in-kind support of time and resources equalling more than twice the Project funding.

The cross-sectoral Steering Group, working in partnership with the INLLEN, has been the driving force for the planning, development and implementation of the strategies identified at each phase of this action research project. Their considerable contributions over the years have been critical in achieving so much with limited monetary resources. In total there have been 23 different member organisations who have contributed to the Project through:

- Supporting, informing and participating in the development, implementation and evaluation of all phases of the JTD Project in Yarra
- Providing a valuable point of reference regarding Primary to Secondary School Transition and Student Engagement programs and practices

The research and activities of the Yarra Joining the Dots Project are of significant importance due to the limited Australian research and local initiatives focused on effective primary to secondary transition. These JTD initiatives have involved community consultation and direct involvement with over one hundred and thirty different organisations and schools from both within and outside of the City of Yarra. Through their work within the JTD project, local schools and agencies have a clear shared focus on establishing enhanced opportunities for students to experience positive transition and engagement opportunities.

A key strategy of the JTD Project has been the annual collection of data to both measure the transition and engagement experiences of young people in the City of Yarra, as well as serve evaluation purposes. The six years of data collection have provided increasingly informative longitudinal data sets which have been viewed as part of a range of qualitative and quantitative evidence into what effective transition and engagement should look like for young people and their families.

Overall trends for this data show that:

- Student attendance in Yarra is consistently higher than state averages in both the Government and Catholic schools.
- There has been an overall increase in Real Retention in Yarra Government secondary schools while there has been a slight decrease in Yarra Catholic secondary schools.
- There has been a reduction in the number of students transitioning to a government school by themselves or with only one other student from their school.
- There has been a slight decrease in the percentage of students from Yarra in attending Yarra secondary schools.

The development of a series of intensive professional learning opportunities spanning all six years of the Project has not only been a key strategy of the Project but also one of its major successes. The focus was on not only building the capacity of participants but also creating opportunities for information sharing and networking. In total over 500 participants from 130 different organisations have participated in and contributed to three full day forums, five workshops and four bus tours.

Perhaps the most valuable JTD capacity building for schools has been the development of the *Transition Review Process* (TRP). This facilitated process draws upon the research and frameworks developed by the NSW DET and CEM. The three stage self-reflective process enables schools to critically review and improve their transition and engagement program. The Process highlights what schools are already doing well and the gaps and opportunities for improvement, culminating in the development of a Plan for Action. Thirteen schools in Yarra have completed the TRP and now come together as a Shared Learning Community (SLC). The purpose of which is shared professional learning, collaborative partnerships, process consistency, collegial support and ongoing dialogue.

The Online Student Transition Information Form was developed in 2014 by the Shared Learning Community to streamline the process of information sharing between settings. The implementation of this common Google Docs form has resulted in improved relationships between school settings as well as better supported students in secondary settings.

Also developed in 2014, the *Preparing for Secondary School: A Guide for Parents* is a valuable conversation tool for educators and agency workers to assist Yarra parents in supporting their children during the transition process. The Guide has two sections providing tips and advice for families as well as a detailed listing of all City of Yarra secondary schools. Recently re-designed, the Guide is also available in five languages and is referenced in Section 6.

The JTD Transition Model was developed and launched in September 2014 as part of the Joining the Dots Report 2 and represented a distillation of the key work and findings of the Project to date. The intention in establishing this model was to provide a framework for primary to secondary school transition that could be replicated and scaled at both local and systems levels. The Joining the Dots Model has evolved so that it can be easily adopted by schools and agencies and could be scaled up to be used at a systems level.

The development of the updated JTD Model for Transition in 2018 was the culmination of the JTD Project, reflecting current research, data and project learnings. Essential elements for successful transition that were identified by the Project were distilled into five key dimensions:

1. **Student Voice** – Students contributing to decision making about transition and collectively influencing transition outcomes by putting forward their ideas, views and concerns
2. **Student Engagement** – Students fully participating in their education. They feel a sense of belonging and connectedness to school, are intrinsically motivated and self-regulating, are well organised and socially competent

3. **Family and Community Engagement** – Student learning is supported by families and the broader community
4. **Sharing Knowledge and Practice** - Primary and secondary schools working collaboratively and cooperatively to improve the transition experience of students and families
5. **Organisation and Resourcing** – Organisations involved in transition having comprehensive and well communicated transition programs, supported by appropriate structures and resources

Whilst the Five Areas of Action (DET NSW 2017) have provided an important framework that has underpinned the JTD project, the JTD Transition Model 2018 demonstrates broader and deeper understanding and application of essential focus areas for transition and engagement. The JTD Transition Review Process will be adapted in 2018 to incorporate the five areas identified within this model.

The Joining the Dots evaluation was carried out from November 2017 to February 2018 by Johns Education Consulting in consultation with the JTD Project Manager.

The evaluation found that the Joining the Dots Project has had a number of significant impacts in the City of Yarra over the duration of the Project. These have included improved connection between primary and secondary schools, the Department of Education and Training (DET), the Catholic Education Office Melbourne (CEM) and community agencies; improved coordination between secondary and feeder primary schools; greater awareness about the importance of a good transition; improved structures for transition process; better family engagement around transitions; and a better evidence base. These outcomes are due to the following interconnecting Project elements:

- Strong Governance
- The JTD Transition Model
- The Transition Review Process
- Shared Learning Community
- Data sets
- Capacity building events
- Resources

INLLEN has committed through its Strategic Plan (2018-2019) to continue to support the development of the Joining the Dots project across the inner north. This will focus on the development of an Inner North Transition Network and a Transition Guide for schools encapsulating the learnings and resources developed thus far. Additional funding support in 2018 from School Focused Youth Service will enable the deepening of the Moreland and Darebin projects commenced in 2016/2017.

The work of this project demonstrates how collective action around shared vision and policy can produce significant outcomes that not only impact on young people and their families but also on the professional competence and confidence of school and agency staff. This work has also led to enhanced community connectedness.

The JTD Steering Group met in March 2018 to accept the JTD Evaluation Report and to consider its recommendations in order to identify the next steps for carrying the work of the Project forward. The following recommendations were established:

1. Continue JTD in Yarra

- That the Joining the Dots work continue in Yarra with Shared Learning Community as the vehicle for achieving this.
- That the Yarra Steering Group transition to a Reference Group, supporting the INLLEN to build JTD across the Inner North of Melbourne. Any meetings should be on an as needs basis with the purpose of providing input to a specific query/activity.

2. Support Shared Learning Community

- Further investigate possible funding models and sources to ensure the sustainability of the Shared Learning Community. This is to include member school contribution.

3. Joining the Dots Model

- Ensure that the JTD Model 2018 is incorporated into JTD work through revision of the Transition Review Process

4. Support cross school curriculum planning

- Identify and research schools who are working collaboratively to improve understanding of curriculum and pedagogy between settings.

5. Consolidate key knowledge and resources

- Utilise the knowledge and resources developed in Yarra, Moreland and Darebin, to develop an integrated “How To” resource for schools.
- Investigate with the City of Yarra possibilities for further development of the Yarra Preparing for Secondary School Guide as a targeted response to better support Yarra parents.

6. Support collaboration between LGAs

- Explore the development of a Transitions Network with support from the Yarra Reference Group as required.

7. Scale Up JTD

- INLLEN to leverage the Evaluation Report and Project Report to advocate with DET, CEM, ISV and local Councils for greater focus and support for primary-secondary school transition, including implementation of the JTD Resource Package.

8. Seek further funding

- INLLEN to explore funding opportunities to ensure momentum is not lost and to enable the continued project coordination by INLLEN.

CONTENTS

1	Introduction	9
1.1	Overview	9
1.2	Effective Transition.....	11
1.3	Profile of the City of Yarra	13
1.4	Local Context for Transition	14
1.5	The JTD Transition Model 2014.....	14
1.6	The JTD Transition Model 2018	15
2	Activities of the JTD Project	20
2.1	Strategic Approach	20
2.2	Community Partnerships.....	23
2.3	Building Capacity	25
2.4	School Based Programs	30
2.5	Support of Parents and Students	32
3	Transition data 2012-2017	34
3.1	School Destination	34
3.2	Real Retention	35
3.3	Attendance	36
3.4	Year 12 Attainment Rate	38
3.5	Year 7 Cohort.....	39
3.6	Student Attitudes to School	39
4	Joining the Dots Evaluation.....	40
4.1	Aims.....	40
4.2	Methodology	40
4.3	Key Findings.....	40
4.4	Recommendations for Future Action	41
5	Conclusion and Recommendations	43
6	Resources	45
6.1	Yarra Joining the Dots Project	45
6.2	Moreland Joining the Dots Project.....	46
6.3	Reservoir Joining the Dots Project	47
7	References.....	48

ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

Acronym/Abbreviation	Definition
CATS	Childhood to Adolescence Transition Study
CEM	Catholic Education Melbourne
DEECD	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
DET	Department of Education and Training (Victorian)
FISO	Framework for Improving Student Outcomes
INLLEN	Inner Northern Local Learning and Employment Network
JTD	Joining the Dots
LGA	Local Government Area
MCRI	Murdoch Children's Research Institute
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
NSW	New South Wales
OAM	Order of Australia Medal
START	Student Transition And Resilience Training resource
SES	Socio-Economic Status
SLC	Shared Learning Community
TRP	Transition Review Process
YEYC	Yarra Education Youth Commitment
YPSSTP	Yarra Primary Secondary School Transition Project
YSS Network	Yarra Schools Support Network
YYC	Yarra Youth Commitment
VAGO	Victorian Auditor-Generals Office
VIC	Victoria

Source: Johns Educational Consulting

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Primary to Secondary School transition was identified as an issue of concern by the Yarra Youth Commitment (YYC). This period of time in a young person's life coincides with rapid physical, emotional, social and cognitive developments impacting on their connection to school and learning as a whole. The YYC acknowledged that an 'effective' transition to secondary school is a key factor in determining whether young people remain engaged in education, complete secondary school and transition into positive career pathways.

With the support of funding from two City of Yarra *Investing in Community Grants* (2012-2017), the Yarra Primary Secondary School Transition Project was initiated by the YYC to identify, implement and evaluate a transition model for young people, their families, the community sector and schools, to ensure young people remain engaged in education. The YYC was a strategic cross-sectoral partnership which came to an end in 2016.

Now known as Joining the Dots (JTD), this six year action research project (2012-2017) was a key initiative of the YYC.

Underpinning this work are the following shared understandings:

- Transition from primary to secondary school is a crucial time for a young person
- The transition experience is also about the family of the student
- The impact of transition can be shaped by responses of institutions
- Preparation and management will determine whether the transition is a positive experience
- Transition is not an event but a process spanning a broad period of time beginning from the young person's preparation to transfer from primary school until their successful settlement at secondary school (approximately Year 5 – Year 9)

The Key Objectives of the Project were:

- To determine the number of young people who disengage or are at risk of disengagement during the transition period from primary school to secondary school
- To identify critical success factors needed for effective transition
- To determine current levels of support for young people in Yarra transitioning from primary to secondary school and the effectiveness of services
- For the community sector and schools to work collaboratively on the development of an effective model of transition
- To investigate other practices/models of effective transition
- To trial innovative models and approaches in the local context

Through the YYC, the Project also aimed to strengthen and support the local education and community service providers through a collaborative network and a whole of community approach. It was recognised that this localised approach can respond more flexibly and holistically to the needs of young people and their parents/carers while they are transitioning from primary to secondary school.

The Project spanned six years and was implemented in six phases. The Dates and activities/actions for each phase are outlined in the table below.

Phase	Activity/Action
Phase 1 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yarra Primary Secondary School Transition Project (YPSSTP) initiated • A key initiative of the YEYC, commenced with a 3 year funding from a City of Yarra <i>Investing in Community Grant</i> • Cross-sectoral advisory group formed • Desktop research, data collection (destination of Yarra primary students, attendance and agency support) and community consultation • Compilation of Joining the Dots Report 1 with data collection results in addition to recommendations for action in Phase 2 of the Project • Joining the Dots report 1 launched December 2012
Phase 2 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-sectoral project Steering Group formed • YEYC Focus Area Action Team members contribute feedback and suggestions to Steering Group • Fitzroy High School Demonstration Project implemented • Joining the Dots Forum 1 for Educators and Agencies
Phase 3 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steering Group met regularly • Fitzroy High School Demonstration Project completed • Transition Review Process developed and implemented in six Yarra schools • Shared Learning Community established • Shared Learning Community developed and implemented an Online Student Transition Information Form • Professional Development for Agencies and Schools – Transition 101 Workshop and Transition Review Process Forum • Data Collection • <i>Preparing for Secondary School: A Guide for Parents</i> – resource creation by Zita Pinda, Seven Ways Consultancy • Transition Model developed • JTD Report 2 compiled to include a summary of the first three phases of the Project, the Yarra Transition Model and recommendations for the future • JTD Report 2 launched • A further 3 years of funding received from another City of Yarra <i>Investing in Community Grant</i>
Phase 4 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steering Group met regularly • YPSSTP re-named Joining the Dots • Transition Review Process implemented in a further six Yarra schools • Shared Learning Community (12 member schools) convened by Fitzroy High School • Online Student Transition Information Form updated • Joining the Dots Forum 2 for Educators and Agencies • Bus Tours of eight Yarra Secondary Schools • Data Collection • <i>Preparing for Secondary School: A Guide for Parents</i> – update, translation into four additional languages and available digitally

Phase 5 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steering Group met regularly Evaluation of the Yarra Youth Commitment (previously known as the YEYC) and decision made by the Steering Group to end the partnerships after 5 years Logo development and re-branding as a stand-alone project (previously branded YYC) Shared Learning Community (13 member schools) convened by Fitzroy High School Online Student Transition Information Form updated Support for Refugees in Mainstream Settings Workshop delivered in partnership with Foundation House Middle Years Brain Development Workshop delivered in partnership with the Murdoch Children's Research Institute <i>Preparing for Secondary School: A Guide for Parents</i> – updated and translated and digitally available in five languages Bus Tour of four Yarra primary schools Data Collection
Phase 6 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steering Group met regularly Transition Review Process implemented in one further Yarra school <i>Preparing for Secondary School: A Guide for Parents</i> – Re-branded and graphically designed in line with new logo, updated, translated and available digitally in five languages Shared Learning Community (13 member schools) convened by Fitzroy High School Online Student Transition Information Form updated and implemented by two JTD Project schools in Moreland and Darebin Parent and Family Engagement Workshop delivered in partnership with Catholic Education Melbourne JTD Forum 3 for Educators and Agencies Bus Tour of four Yarra primary schools Data Collection Formal External Evaluation of Project
2018 Post JTD Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joining the Dots Formal Evaluation Report Joining the Dots Report 3 compiled to document the work from all phases of the Project and to launch the revised JTD Transition Model Steering Group meet to review reports, the revised Model and to make recommendations for the future of JTD in Yarra and across the inner north of Melbourne

1.2 Effective Transition

Successful transition from primary to secondary school is significantly linked with understanding and addressing the developmental issues facing young adults. A transitioning young person needs to not only deal with the movement from childhood to adolescence but must also navigate into and through a new set of educational expectations and experiences. This normally involves moving from small and familiar settings into much bigger and complex institutions.

A young person who has a positive transition experience will develop new friends and confidence, settle well into school life, show an interest in school work, will adjust to new routines and school organisation and will experience curriculum continuity.

The JTD Project has identified the Four Phases and Five Areas of Action in Transition as a useful framework for classifying and discussing transition processes and good practice. Citing extensive research originally undertaken in the U.K., this framework has been referenced and adapted by the Department of Education and Training in N.S.W. (2007) and the Department of Education and Training (DET) in Victoria (2016). According to the research, an effective Transition Program should cover all Four Phases and Five Areas of Action in Transition.

Whilst the Five Areas of Action have provided an important framework that has underpinned the JTD project, the JTD Transition Model 2018 demonstrates broader and deeper understanding and application of essential focus areas for transition and engagement. The JTD Transition Review Process will be adapted in 2018 to incorporate the five areas identified within this model.

The framework identifies four distinct phases within the transition period:

1. Preparation

This phase typically involves classroom activities and procedures and the dissemination of general information to parents and students about options and nature of secondary schooling. Generally, schools organise parent information nights to outline selection and enrolment procedures and to give parents general information and support on choosing their child's secondary school. This typically includes transition timelines, secondary open day information and school flyers.

2. Transfer

This phase should involve a high level of direct interaction between the outgoing primary school students and their new secondary school. Typical activities in schools include student/parent meetings and student visits to the new secondary school for orientation activities. Whilst parent meetings and orientation day visits are standard in all schools, some secondary schools offer additional activities and visits for incoming students.

A key element of this phase should be the sharing of academic and other information between primary and secondary schools. This can be a real challenge to schools, made more complex by the number of destination schools.

3. Induction

This phase includes orientation of students to the expectations and operation of the school. Typical activities include starting the Year 7 a day before the rest of the school, home group activities, peer mentoring programs and Year 7 camps held early in the term. Many schools have getting to know you sessions for parents held early in Term 1. Many schools have wellbeing sessions with students which provide support for learning and the social and personal aspects of transition.

4. Consolidation

In this phase towards the end of Year 7 and early Year 8, transition activities eventually merge into the secondary school's overall student wellbeing and welfare support programs. This stage presents both challenge and an opportunity to secondary schools for introduction of further activities, specifically designed to provide students with the means of managing their own learning. This can be a crucial point for young people. Often this is the point where students will begin to absent themselves and disconnect from learning.

The Five Areas of Action in Transition are:

1. Administrative

This area involves the formal liaison and information exchange between destination and feeder schools.

2. Social and Personal

Within this area, students' social and personal needs are addressed to reduce possible concerns and anxiety about the move to a new setting.

3. Curriculum

This area includes information sharing and discussion between destination and feeder schools regarding curriculum covered in the final years of primary and early years of secondary school.

4. Pedagogy

This area includes information sharing and discussion of teaching practices, and how students learn, between destination and feeder schools.

5. Management of Learning

This area covers how students are encouraged to develop independent learning and reflection skills to manage their own learning in a new environment.

1.3 Profile of the City of Yarra

Source Johns Education Consulting

The City of Yarra covers an area of twenty square kilometres and is located in the inner east of Melbourne. It has a mix of residential, industrial and commercial activities. According to the 2016 Census data (.idcommunity, 2017), it has 4203 primary students (4.8% of its population, compared with 8.5% for Greater Melbourne) and 2874 secondary students (3.3% of its population, compared with 6.7% of Greater Melbourne).

The City of Yarra is very diverse, with highly gentrified areas contrasting with areas of low SES, such as the public housing estates in Collingwood, Fitzroy and Richmond. There is a wide variety of education settings in Yarra. These include twenty-two primary schools (four Catholic, four Independent and fourteen Government), eleven secondary schools (two Catholic, two Independent and seven Government including two 'alternative' schools), and an English Language School. This includes the newly opened Richmond High School. Figure 1 shows the location of Yarra in regard to the City of Melbourne.

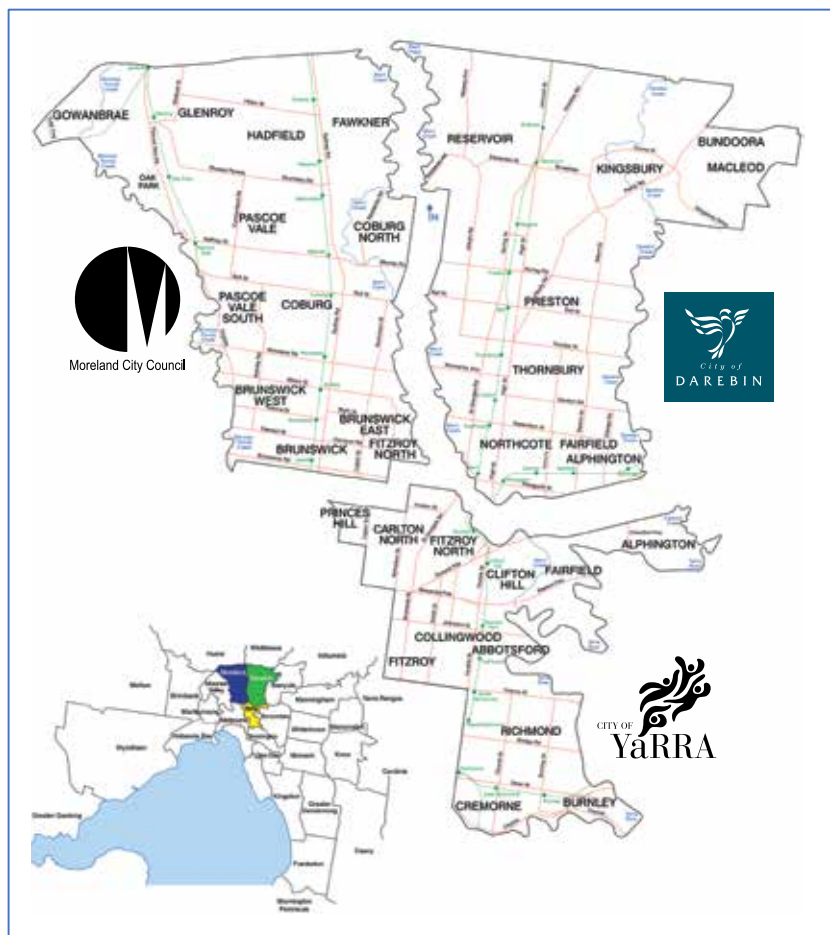


Figure 1 – City of Yarra

Source: Salinger Photography & Communications

1.4 Local Context for Transition

In March 2015, the Victorian Auditor-General (The Victorian Auditor-Generals Report (2015)) released a report on education transitions.

This report found that although programs for students transitioning from kindergarten to primary school are generally effective, this was not the case for the DET programs for the 6,500 students who transition annually from primary to secondary school. The findings include:

- In some measures, children's academic outcomes and engagement with school decline after transitioning to secondary school. Boys' performance declines faster than girls.
- Parents' ratings of school support for children, as they transition, have improved.
- Schools undertake a variety of informed practices to support transitioning children.
- DET has a role to manage inconsistencies across the system and to properly support schools to transition students effectively. It does not do either well.
- DET does not undertake system-level monitoring to track transition outcomes.

Recommendations to DET included:

- The development and monitoring of transition-related outcomes for the middle years, including for children identified as most vulnerable during school transition.
- The development of a more comprehensive suite of guidance and resources to support schools to transition middle-years students.
- Improvement of systems to allow more timely access to child-level data for schools.
- Examination of the appropriateness of the timing of the Year 6 review for children who receive funding under the Program for Students with Disabilities.

The DET accepted all recommendations and has since commenced a number of initiatives. The *DET START: Student Transition and Resilience Training Resource* (Fuller, 2016) was launched in 2016 and the *Toolkit for Transitions Clusters: Primary to Secondary* published on the DET website in 2015. To date there has been no identifiable program initiated for the dissemination of these suggested approaches and resources and consequently they have gone largely unnoticed in schools.

The Joining the Dots project is an example of a local initiative that has been developed and supported due to the lack of a system wide approaches and resources for primary to secondary transition.

1.5 The JTD Transition Model 2014

The JTD Transition Model was developed and launched in September 2014 as part of the Joining the Dots Report 2 and represented a distillation of the key work and findings of the Project to date. The intention in establishing this model was to provide a framework for primary to secondary school transition that could be replicated and scaled at both local and systems levels. The Model has as its focus effective transition for young people and their families and comprises five key dimensions:

1. **Strategic Approach** – this area includes governance, clear strategic direction and evidence-based work
2. **School/ Family/ Community Partnerships** - this area focuses on school, family and community partnerships, including cross-sectoral networking and school-school partnerships
3. **Building Capacity** - this area focuses on leadership development, Professional Learning forums, training and report writing
4. **School Based Programs** - this area focuses on activities at the school level under the categories of Preparation (such as parent information sessions and open days), Transfer (such as effective

enrolment processes and visits to new secondary school), Induction (such as Year 7 induction and camps) and Consolidation (such as management of learning and engagement/wellbeing activities)

5. **Support for Individual Students and Parents** - this area focuses on early identification of students at risk, mentoring programs and homework clubs.



Figure 2 - Original JTD Transition Model diagram (2014)

Source: Seven Ways Consultancy

1.6 The JTD Transition Model 2018

In supporting a successful transition to secondary school (Year 5 – Year 9), educators need to work collaboratively with the local community to ensure that a student and family centred approach is embedded in school policy and practice.

In March 2018, the Steering Group established a revised Transition Model in response to recommendations from the JTD Evaluation Final Report and also recognition of the following:

- The existing model provided a framework for the development and implementation of a transition project rather than a framework that could be used by schools and agencies to establish effective transition practice.
- The Model did not include a focus on student views on effective transition therefore excluded the young people at the very centre of the Model.
- There was insufficient focus on all elements of Student Engagement and in particular the importance of regular attendance at school.
- There was a need to emphasise and expand upon the Strategic Approach element of the Model so that it had more practical application.
- Further focus needed to be placed on the Support for Individual Students and Parents and School Based Programs elements of the Model.
- There was also insufficient emphasis on School-Family-Community Partnerships with Family and Community Engagement (FACE) having emerged in the findings of the Project as an essential focus for effective transition.

The development of JTD Model for Transition in 2018 was the culmination of the JTD Project. Essential elements for successful transition that were identified by the Project were distilled into **five key dimensions**:

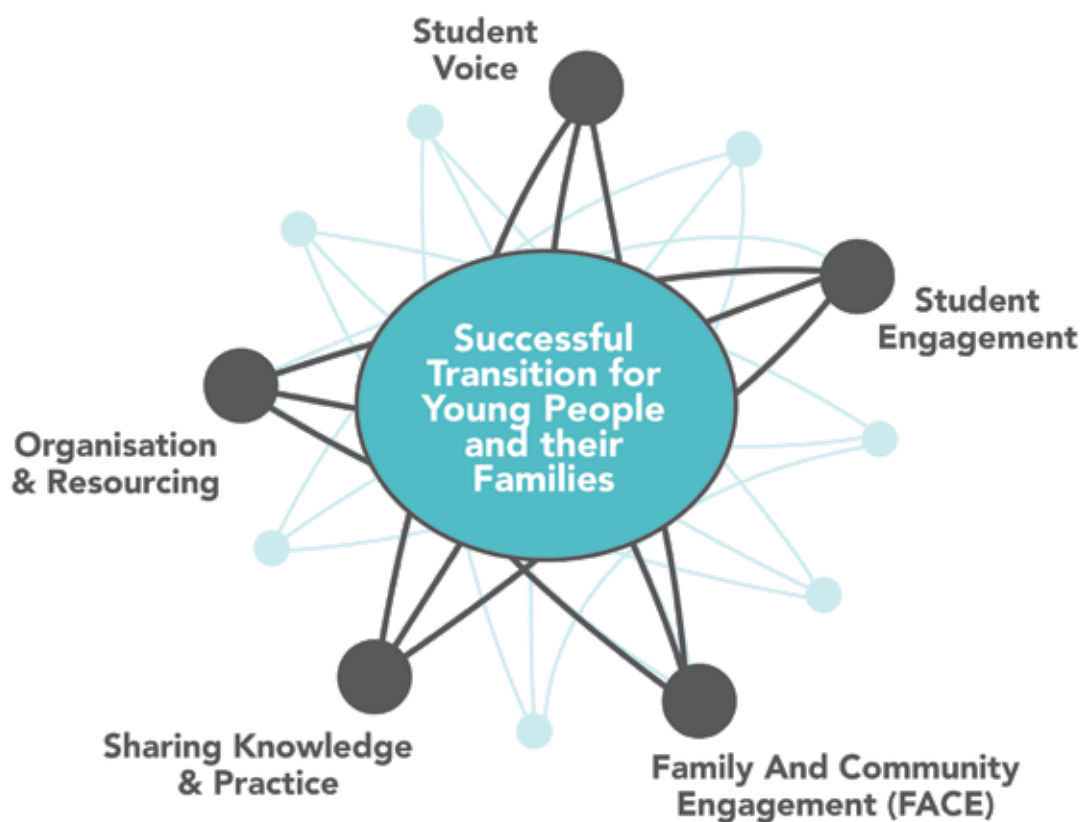


Figure 3 - JTD Transition Model (2018)

Source: Salinger Photography and Communications

1. **Student Voice** – Students contributing to decision making about transition and collectively influencing transition outcomes by putting forward their ideas, views and concerns
2. **Student Engagement** –Students fully participating in their education. They feel a sense of belonging and connectedness to school, are intrinsically motivated and self-regulating, are well organised and socially competent
3. **Family and Community Engagement** – Student learning is supported by families and the broader community
4. **Sharing Knowledge and Practice** - Primary and secondary schools working collaboratively and cooperatively to improve the transition experience of students and families
5. **Organisation and Resourcing** – Organisations involved in transition having comprehensive and well communicated transition programs, supported by appropriate structures and resources

The following table provides an overview of recommended strategies and actions for each Key Dimension that should be included within a comprehensive transition program.

STUDENT VOICE	STUDENT ENGAGEMENT			FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (FACE)	SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE	ORGANISATION AND RESOURCING
	Behavioral Engagement	Emotional Engagement	Cognitive Engagement			
Student actively involved with parents/carers in choice of a good fit secondary school	High expectations for attendance and punctuality	Every student has a strong, positive and secure relationship with at least one member of the school staff	Authentic student and teacher partnership in learning. A focus on project, organisation and time management skills	Learning partnerships with parents are developed and maintained	Active participation in transition cluster / network, strengthening relationships, sharing good practice and working collaboratively on strategic actions	Transition Review Process implemented including a comprehensive transition and engagement plan and transition improvement strategies embedded
Student feedback guides transition programs	Early identification of non-attending students through clear and evident monitoring and follow up of absence	Learning environments promote positive learning & behaviour	Students are enabled to be independent, cooperative and self-regulating learners	Partnerships with appropriate community agencies to support staff, student and families during transition	Identifying, trialling, evaluating and embedding examples of good practice in own setting	Recognition by all staff of the importance of a successful transition into, through and out of the school for improved student life outcomes
Student led forums focused on transition topics and discussions	Student participation in all school activities actively monitored	Social skills development is integrated into the curriculum	Students know and can articulate themselves as learners and take responsibility for their own learning	Opportunities for parents to actively contribute to school improvement	Shared professional learning sessions and reciprocal building of knowledge between primary and secondary settings	A whole school approach supported by a dedicated working group and coordinator who have access to adequate additional resources

STUDENT VOICE	STUDENT ENGAGEMENT			FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (FACE)	SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE	ORGANISATION AND RESOURCING
	Behavioral Engagement	Emotional Engagement	Cognitive Engagement			
Students reflect on and share transition experience between settings	Transfer of attendance information between schools	Student learning and student wellbeing teams actively work together	Students set aspirational learning goals and they self-monitor and evaluate progress	Parent engagement in curriculum activities	Reciprocal learning visits between settings	Comprehensive transition program that encompasses the four phases and five areas of transition
Student Action Teams focus on projects which enhance the transition experience for students	Attendance meetings and improvement plans utilised	Monitoring of the wellbeing of all transitioning students	Early identification of individual student learning needs and appropriate learning support provided	Support for parent engagement in home learning	Shared understandings of classroom operation and practice between staff in local primary and secondary schools	Comprehensive transition program developed in partnership with families for support of students with a disability or vulnerable to disengagement
Student leadership opportunities	Multi-disciplinary support from within and outside of the school for individual non-attending students and their families	Students receive school and community based support if specialised intervention required	Building primary student understanding of secondary curriculum, pedagogy and expectations	Effective home school communication on transition	Continuity between Year 6 and 7 in curriculum and/or assessment discussed between settings	Dedicated transition program for students and families transitioning part way through the year
SRC is active in the organisation of and feedback about transition activities	Students receive school and/or community based support if specialised intervention required	Targeted interventions utilised to prevent anticipated problems, and to respond to identified needs	Flexible learning options provided	Inclusive transition information and materials	Agreements about enrolment and placement protocols	A focus on early intervention for transitioning students and their families

STUDENT VOICE	STUDENT ENGAGEMENT			FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (FACE)	SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE	ORGANISATION AND RESOURCING
	Behavioral Engagement	Emotional Engagement	Cognitive Engagement			
Student led media production of transition materials	Reengagement programs utilised	Transfer of individual student wellbeing information between schools	Careers and Pathways Programs that extend beyond Year 10 subject selection	Community conversations about transition are conducted regularly	Agreements on student information transfer protocols established	Build capacity of staff to better support all students and families during transition, with particular focus on those students vulnerable to disengagement
Peer support programs implemented	Students know who to approach within the school for support and are confident to do so			Opportunities for parents to reflect on and share their transition experience with the school		Documented and communicated transition policies and procedures
		Primary student visits to experience secondary school in action	Transfer of individual student learning needs information between schools	Opportunities for parent education and upskilling		Ongoing evaluation and improvement of transition programs
		Secondary student and staff visits to primary schools to share information about transition and answer any questions		Opportunities are provided for orientation visits with students and their families for students with diverse needs		

2 ACTIVITIES OF THE JTD PROJECT

2.1 Strategic Approach

Governance

The cross-sectoral Steering Group, working in partnership with the INLLEN, has been the driving force for the planning, development and implementation of the strategies identified at each phase of this action research project. Their considerable contributions over the years have been critical in achieving so much with limited monetary resources. In total there have been 23 different member organisations whose role it has been to:

- Support, inform and participate in the development, implementation and evaluation of all phases of the JTD Project in Yarra
- Provide a valuable point of reference regarding Primary to Secondary School Transition and Student Engagement programs and practices

As such, members were asked to:

- Provide input and advice
- Identify and recommend sources of information and contacts that may be of value
- Participate in the planning, implementation and evaluation of Project activities
- Provide feedback to assist with the evaluation of the Project and post Project planning
- Recommend and contribute appropriate resources
- Attend scheduled meetings

The annual membership was capped at a maximum of twelve members and the group has been almost fully subscribed for the duration of the Project. The Group was cross-sectoral with a total of 23 different organisations participating over the course of the Project. These included State and Catholic primary and secondary schools, the Department of Education and Training, Catholic Education Melbourne, local government and community agencies. All of these groups have provided extensive in-kind support including time, resources and providing venues and catering for events. The Group met six times each year.

Coordination and Management

The main driving force for the JTD Project has been INLLEN's Project Management. The consistency and depth of support provided by the INLLEN, both strategic and operational, has been instrumental to its success. The JTD Project Manager was employed by the INLLEN to manage and coordinate all aspects of the Project. This has been a major INLLEN initiative involving significant in-kind support of time and resources equalling more than twice the Project funding.

Data Collection

A key strategy of the JTD Project has been the annual collection of data to both measure the transition and engagement experiences of young people in the City of Yarra, as well as serve evaluation purposes. The data sets established were:

1. Secondary School Destinations

Anecdotally, often the conversations about primary to secondary transition in the City of Yarra focus on the number of young people from the City of Yarra who move from local primary schools to a large number of secondary schools outside of Yarra.

In Phase 1 of the Project, it was decided to try to establish a full database of student placement information using the DEECD database supplemented by analysis of individual school placement summary sheets which the school submitted to DEECD when placements were finalised. However, this

process was made difficult in Phase 3 due to the DEECD no longer collating this information at either regional or central level. For 2015 this process was made considerably easier by new processes put in place at both Department of Education and Training (DET) and Catholic Education Melbourne (CEM) enabling the accurate collection of data from both Government and Catholic sectors.

Data collection issues remain, however, with both the DET and CEM databases limited to data on students that remain within each of their systems. This is because not all primary schools submit their data to DET/CEM and many schools only list the number of students going to non-government or non CEM schools, not the names of the schools.

2. Student Attendance Data

Data to measure individual student emotional engagement and learning outcomes is not easily obtained and so it was decided that for the purposes of this study, school attendance data could help to identify the number of students who could possibly be at risk of disengagement during the transition period.

For the purpose of this Project, absence data until 2013 was collected by collating Student Absence reports from individual school data for all DET schools in the City of Yarra. This methodology was necessary due to the DET no longer producing aggregate data at network or regional level. Interestingly, attendance data is collected and collated differently in the State, Catholic and Independent school systems with only attendance percentage data available in Catholic and Independent schools. For the purposes of this study, it was initially necessary to gain attendance data from the individual Annual Reports of all Yarra schools.

With thanks to DET, attendance data from 2014 onwards has now been provided, however, this change in methodology should be noted when drawing any conclusions from the data.

With thanks to CEM, attendance data was made available to this project in 2015. It should be noted that Catholic and Independent schools only report attendance data from Year 1 to Year 10.

3. Real Retention Data

From 2015, Real Retention was added to the JTD data set in order to understand how well secondary schools retain their students from Year 7 through to Year 12.

This measure is used in DET schools to identify the number of students who remain in their secondary school from Year 7 to Year 12. High retention rates could be identified as an indicator of effective transition and engagement experiences.

4. Year 12 Attainment Data

Year 12 Attainment Rate data is provided by DET for each individual secondary school and shows the percentage of Year 9 students from a given calendar year that have attained year 12 or equivalent four years later (i.e. the year after Yr12).

This data was added to the JTD annual collection of data in 2017 as another useful measure for transition and engagement. Limitations for the use of this data include that it has not been available for the Yarra Catholic schools and that it is not possible to publish or distribute the Attainment Rate data for each individual school.

5. Year 7 Cohort Data

In 2016, this simple survey was established as part of the annual collection of data in order to identify the number and characteristics of Year 7 students in key feeder schools within and outside Yarra. The following items were included:

- The total Year 7 student population for a particular year
- The number of males and females in the Year 7 cohort
- The number of students who live in the City of Yarra

- The overall percentage of Year 7 students who live in the City of Yarra and longitudinal trends for this
- The number of primary feeder schools for the school

6. Student Attitudes to School Data

This survey is conducted annually in all DET schools to provide data to support student wellbeing, engagement, school improvement and planning in schools. The survey captures students' attitudes and experiences at school with the measures utilised based on the best available evidence about what influences student outcomes.

From 2017 a newly developed survey has been administered to all students in Years 4 to 12 and from 2018 the survey will be conducted online. This survey includes specific transition related questions and will therefore provide highly valuable baseline and ongoing data for individual schools to use in their Transition Review Process. Limitations for broader use of this data are that this survey is not administered in Catholic schools and the full data set for the DET schools in Yarra is not available for publication or distribution.

With support from DET, the JTD Steering Group has been able to look at broad overview of the data for Yarra schools in comparison to state means but this data is not available for publication or distribution

Joining the Dots Reports

A key strategy of the JTD Project has been the production of three Project reports to document the research, activities and recommendations of each phase of the Project.

1. Joining the Dots Report 1 (2012)

[Joining the Dots Report 1 \(2012\)](#) PDF

This report documented Phase 1 of the Project including research, data collection, and community consultations and recommendations for the next phase of the Project.



2. Joining the Dots Report 2 (2015)

[Joining the Dots Report 2 \(2015\)](#) PDF

This report provided an overview of the first three phases of the Project and outlined the JTD Transition model. Recommendations for future phases of the Project were also included



3. Joining the Dots Report 3 (2018)

This current report was developed to provide an overview of all six phases of the Project as well as make recommendations for the JTD Project 2018 and beyond. An important element of this report

is the release of the newly developed Joining the Dots Transition Model 2018 which was the culmination of the JTD Project as it incorporates essential elements for successful transition that were identified by the Project.

Evaluation

The JTD Project has adopted evidence based and data driven approaches involving regular research of good practice and evaluation of all Project activities. All forums, workshops and activities have included in their organisation a rigorous feedback and evaluation process. These evaluations have included recommendations for future activities which have been utilised by the Steering Group in planning and development. These evaluations can be viewed in the documentation for activities on the INLLEN website.

The Joining the Dots project evaluation was carried out from November 2017 to February 2018 by Johns Education Consulting in consultation with the JTD Project Manager. Data collection occurred in November and December 2017, with data analysis and report writing occurring in January to February 2018. This evaluation is documented in Section 5 of this report.

2.2 Community Partnerships

Shared Learning Community

The Shared Learning Community was established in April 2014 and was initially comprised of representatives from the five schools who undertook the Transition Review Process. By 2017 the group had grown to have a membership of thirteen schools:

- Academy of Mary Immaculate
- Collingwood College
- Collingwood English Language School
- Fitzroy High School
- Fitzroy Primary School
- Princes Hill Secondary College
- Sacred Heart School
- Richmond West Primary School
- Abbotsford Primary School
- Simonds Catholic College
- Yarra Primary School
- Trinity Catholic School
- Spensley Street Primary School

The objective for the formation and operation of this group was to create opportunities for ongoing dialogue, process consistency, shared professional learning and collaborative partnerships for all schools that had undertaken the TRP.

The group identified the following purpose and role:

- To enable participants of the Transition Review Process to meet and share their learning gained through the TRP.
- To establish consistency of practice and shared responsibility between schools.
- Share the TRP learning with other schools through local networks
- To build relationships and trust across the region so that the complimentary capacities of schools are recognized and utilized to improve the transition experience of students and their families.

The Shared Learning Community has focused on the following:

- Sharing of their experiences in the Transition Review Process, their school's action plans and their progress in implementation of strategies
- Increasing cooperation between neighbouring schools to ensure that students and families access the best fit option for their schooling
- The development of an online student information transfer process
- Consistency between schools in support of parents and students including scripts for information sessions and enrolment processes
- Increasing cooperation between neighbouring schools to ensure that students and families access the best fit option for their schooling
- Inclusive and supportive practices when working with parents/carers

The Online Student Transition Information Form was initially developed by three of the participating secondary schools for use with their feeder schools in 2014. It has undergone several revisions since and is currently in a Google Docs format. A link to the online tool is sent to feeder primary schools each year and involves primary teachers providing detailed information about individual students who have a confirmed enrolment in the secondary school. The information has been utilised to not only provide appropriate support for individual students but also to inform appropriate transition programs. Protocols were being developed to protect the privacy of students and parents. This form has now been implemented with the JTD Moreland and Reservoir projects at Pascoe Vale Girls College and William Ruthven Secondary College.

The group has met up to four times each year 2014 -2017 and was initially supported by the JTD Project Manager. The SLC moved to a self-governing model in 2015. As management of this group involves substantial time for coordination and communication, there is an identified need to source resourcing for the future in order to ensure sustainability of the group.

Local Partnerships

Darebin Joining the Dots Project

The Joining the Dots Darebin Project is currently consolidating the work which began in 2015-2016 from a partnership between INLLEN and Darebin City Council. The focus has been on strengthening school transition relationships and processes in Darebin, with emphasis on neighbourhoods and schools with high equity needs. This project has drawn on the knowledge and resources of the Yarra JTD project, in particular the use of the Transition Review Process and the formation of a Transition Cluster.

In 2015/2016 the Transition Review Process was conducted at Reservoir High School and three feeder primary schools (Reservoir East, Preston North East, Kingsbury)

In 2016, a Transition Cluster was developed between Reservoir High School and these three feeder primary schools, and has been a valuable conduit for ongoing dialogue, process consistency, shared professional learning and collaborative partnerships. In 2017, the DET Senior Education Improvement Leader (SEIL) for Darebin joined the Cluster and has greatly valued the opportunity to not only contribute to its development but also to share its practice with other schools and DET.

Moreland Joining the Dots Project

The JTD Moreland Project 2016-2017 leveraged the knowledge, resources and Transition Model developed through JTD Yarra, was funded by School Focused Youth Service (Merri Health) and implemented with Pascoe Vale Girls College (PVGC) and a number of key feeder primary schools.

This capacity building project focused on improving the transition journey from Year 5 to Year 9 of students at risk of disengagement, with a particular focus on (though not exclusively to) Arabic speaking students and their parents/families.

The components of the Project were:

- Transition Review Process at Pascoe Vale Girls College
- Consultations – Students, Parents, Staff/Teachers
- Digital Case Studies – Three short videos created to share the Student, Parent and School perspectives on Transition and to be utilised as part of a comprehensive transition program Transition Review Process at Primary Schools and Development of a Transition Cluster.
- Development of a Transition Resource by young people, for young people in collaboration with Kids' Own Publishing (included in the Resources section of this report)
- Project Steering Group – cross-sectoral partnership
- Data collection
- Evaluation and reporting

In 2018, additional funding support from SFYS/Merri Health will enable this work to be deepened and expanded to include an additional secondary and two primary schools in the Transition Cluster. One of the Moreland DET SEIL's has also joined the Transition Cluster in a similar role to his colleague in the Darebin JTD Project.

Reservoir Joining the Dots Project

Also building on the knowledge, resources and the Transition Model of the Yarra JTD Project, JTD in Reservoir currently involves William Ruthven Secondary College and two feeder primary schools – William Ruthven and St Clare's. For 2019 it is anticipated that further schools will be added to the Cluster.

The JTD Reservoir Project included the following components in 2017 and this will be built upon in 2018 with further funding support from SFYS/Berry Street Childhood Institute:

- Transition Review Process – WRSC and two feeder primary schools culminating in the development of a strategic Plan for Action on Transition and Engagement
- Consultations – Students, Parents and Staff/Teachers
- Digital Case Studies – As above but in a co-ed setting
- Project Steering Group – cross-sectoral partnership
- Transition Cluster – WRSC and two feeder primary schools
- Evaluation and Data collection.

2.3 Building Capacity

Building the capacity of schools and community agencies in the City of Yarra to identify and support students at risk of disengagement in the primary to secondary school transition period was a major recommendation established in Phase 1 of the Project and emphasised in recommendations of each of the subsequent phases.

The development of a series of intensive professional learning opportunities spanning all six years of the Project has not only been a key strategy of the Project but also one of its major successes. The focus was on not only building the capacity of participants but also on creating opportunities for information sharing and networking. In total over 500 participants from 130 different organisations have participated in and contributed to three full day forums, five workshops and four bus tours.

Joining the Dots Forum 2013

The overarching aim of the Joining the Dots Forum held in September 2013 was to assist in building the capability of schools and community agencies in the City of Yarra to learn more about ways to improve the transition and engagement of young people and to identify and support students at risk of disengagement in the primary to secondary school transition period. In addition to Yarra, the Forum was promoted to schools and agencies in the Cities of Moreland and Darebin. A further objective was to provide important opportunities for people to network, share learnings and build partnerships within and between the different sectors and regions.

The development of the Forum was informed by a Reference Group and was held at the Treacy Conference Centre in Parkville. The Forum was promoted widely through Inner Northern LLEN and the region's three Youth Commitments (Yarra, Darebin and Moreland) and was offered as a 'free' event.

The Forum attracted a total of fifty five registered delegates, representing twenty nine school members, sixteen community members, nine members from other sectors and one from an unidentified sector. Out of this total, nineteen individual schools were represented, with seventeen schools coming from the inner northern region of Melbourne.

Evaluation feedback included requests further opportunities for delegates to discuss actions that they would like to work on in their school/organisation/community. Their responses showed a genuine desire to take action and further their work in this area. Amongst the schools, there were some commonalities between the responses which included:

- Improve connections and relationships between schools and community agencies
- Implement specific strategies as a response to learning more about them at the Forum
- Improve links between schools
- Improve engagement and information provided to parents
- Review/update/improve their school's transition program/policies.

It was recognised that the next steps following the Joining the Dots Forum, were to continue to build the capacity of schools and community agencies in the City of Yarra to identify and support students at risk of disengagement in the primary to secondary school transition period (Year 5 – Year 9) and provide follow up professional learning opportunities for schools and community agencies.

Joining the Dots Forum 2015

The second Joining the Dots Forum aimed to build on the first in demonstrating the importance of a comprehensive primary to secondary transition and engagement program (Year 5 – Year 9) to support all young people to remain connected to learning and school.

Held on the 9th September at the Treacy Centre, Parkville, some 94 educators and community agency workers from across Melbourne came together to gain inspiration and insight from keynote speaker, Tom Brunzell of the Berry Street Childhood Institute, and participate in some of the 15 interactive workshops on offer showcasing good practice in transition and engagement.

Delegate and presenter feedback was overwhelmingly positive, from both a logistical and content perspective, with a large shift in knowledge as a direct result of attendance. It is also important to note that this feedback came from delegates starting from a higher knowledge base than for the last forum held in 2013.

Joining the Dots Forum 2017

The third and final Joining the Dots Forum was held on 2 August at the Treacy Centre, Parkville. The full day Forum sought to provide greater clarity and knowledge about *School-Family-Community Partnerships for improved transition and engagement* and expanded upon the workshop delivered in May. It also sought to be a catalyst for educators and community agency workers to reflect on their current practice, meet and learn from others, and to identify some next steps to take back to their settings for further discussion.

It is critical that we are able to support young people through this period of rapid physical, emotional, social and academic development so that they are motivated, engaged, connected and thriving through and beyond their middle years at school. Often forgotten in this process are the families of these young people for whom it is just as big a transition. They too must maintain engagement in their child's learning.

Nearly 90 educators, community agency workers and interested others from across Melbourne's inner north and beyond came together to hear from keynote, Dr George Otero, participate in good practice workshops and share their own knowledge and experience.

Evaluation feedback received from participants and presenters alike was once again overwhelmingly positive. Pre and post forum knowledge also saw a large positive shift in all areas surveyed. Recommendations for improvement were limited but included such things as a better space and more time to explore the lunchtime information tables, greater interactivity in the workshops and takeaway handouts, an additional round of workshops and an opportunity for a CALD person/someone with lived experience to present.

Further PD opportunities requested followed a general theme of opportunities to network and to share good practice and resources.

Transition 101 Workshop 2014

The aim of the Joining the Dots Transitions 101 Workshop held in July 2014 was to assist in building the capability of community agencies in the City of Yarra to identify and support students at risk of disengagement in the primary to secondary school transition period (Year 5 – Year 9). The aim was also to provide important opportunities for people to network, share learnings and build partnerships within and between the different sectors and regions.

The Workshop provided opportunity for participants to:

- Learn what works in transition and engagement and how to apply it in their community
- Build relationships with key partners and meet other educators and practitioners
- Gain practical resources and access to organisations to support their community

The Workshop was held in the library at Collingwood College and attracted a total of thirty registered participants, representing six school personnel and twenty four community agency personnel.

Transition Review Forum for Schools 2014

The aim of the Transition Review Process Forum for Schools was to provide an opportunity for local schools to gain a better understanding of primary secondary school transition (Years 5-9) and the Transition Review Process implemented in five schools in Yarra earlier in 2014. The secondary aim of this forum was to identify five new schools to complete the Transition Review Workshops in early 2015, with mentoring support from one of the current Shared Learning Community members. The intention is that once successfully completed, these five schools will then join the Shared Learning Community.

The Forum provided opportunity for participants to:

- Learn about what works in transition and engagement and how to apply it in their community
- Meet with personnel from schools who have undertaken the Transition Review Process in order to better understand the strategy and its possible application in their school

The Forum was held in September 2014 at Fitzroy High School. The Forum attracted a total of 15 registered participants, representing 13 school personnel and 2 community agency personnel.

Support for Refugees in Mainstream Settings Workshop 2016

The first in a series of three professional development workshops for the JTD project in 2016/2017 was delivered in partnership with Foundation House. This full day workshop shared components of [Schools In](#)

[for Refugees](#), a whole-school approach to supporting students of refugee background, with a particular focus on primary secondary school transition. The workshop was facilitated by Maureen O’Keefe and Sharrin Murphy from Foundation House.

The aim of this free workshop for educators and community agency workers was to build their capability in supporting young people and their families through the transition process from English Language Schools into mainstream settings.

There were nine participants who provided feedback that the workshop improved their understanding of the refugee experience for young people including their prior educational experiences.

Middle Years Brain Development Workshop 2016

Held at the Fitzroy Town Hall Reading Room, and delivered in partnership with the Murdoch Children’s Research Institute, the second workshop in the series was for educators and community agencies.

The aim was for educators and community agency workers to gain a better understanding of this *sensitive phase* of development; a time during which there is the biological embedding of the social, emotional and learning environment. Also a time of life during which there is a great opportunity for environmental experiences, including education, to shape the developing brain. Additionally, participants were encouraged to share this information with colleagues, young people and their parents to ensure common understanding.

Dr Lisa Mundy, Project Manager for the Childhood to Adolescence Transition Study (CATS), was joined by PhD student, Kate Hardiman, in presenting data from the Childhood to Adolescence Transition Study (CATS), to examine:

1. Why are the middle years a sensitive phase of development?
2. What is happening for children during these years in terms of their relationships with peers, family and school, and at a biological level?
3. What does this mean for learning and school engagement?

Although there were 42 registrations for this free workshop there were 37 participants on the day. Evaluation feedback showed that there was a good mix of practical activities, listening and networking and that the information would be useful in the future. However, it was clear that a follow up workshop would be required to expand upon the practical implementation of this knowledge in class.

Parent and Family Engagement Workshop 2017

Held in late May in the Community Room at Trinity Primary School, Richmond North, this exceptionally well received workshop aimed to provide deeper understanding of parent engagement together with practical tools and strategies that participants could implement in their own settings.

The Workshop was developed to address a worrying lack of understanding by educators of the difference between parental involvement in school versus parental engagement in their child’s learning. Both are valid but have very different outcomes. The greatest long term success comes when educators shift their thinking and practise to working with families as partners in their child’s learning. This results in sustained school improvement.

There were 36 attendees for this half day workshop. The format included a mix of practical presentations and facilitated table work encouraging networking, sharing of practice and valuable tools and resources. The presenters were:

- Gail McHardy, Executive Officer at Parents Victoria, provided an overview of parent and family engagement from the parent perspective.

- Rachel Goldie, Teacher, St Peter Chanel, Deer Park, was joined by Joanne Pampanella, Engagement Project Officer, and Glenn White, previously Executive Principal from Glenroy College in sharing their practical examples of how to engage with more challenging families.
- Narelle Struth, Catholic Education Melbourne, shared Catholic Education Melbourne's fabulous resource and accompanying toolkit entitled, *Parent Engagement in Action*

The feedback from participants and presenters was extremely positive. Recommendations for improvement were limited but included sharing contacts, allowing more time for examples of good practice to be shared together with more ideas and strategies to take away. Participants rated their knowledge prior to and after the workshop and despite the wide range of participants and expertise, all reported a general lift post workshop.

Bus Tours 2015-2017

Schools who have undertaken the Transition Review Process have identified that there is a general lack of knowledge about the curriculum, pedagogy and structure in other educational settings. To address this, a program of annual bus tours have been established. The aim of the Bus Tour was twofold:

1. To provide a relaxed opportunity for school transition coordinators, wellbeing leaders and teachers to join local community agency workers in building their professional networks and gaining a better understanding of the teaching and learning environments in primary and secondary settings
2. To provide primary students and teachers with an opportunity to meet secondary staff and local community agency workers, to ask any burning questions they may have about transitioning to secondary, and for students to potentially meet their new transition coordinator.

Ongoing support from Collingwood College through the provision of both bus and driver enabled the tours to be provided free of charge.

The first two tours held in November 2015 provided an opportunity for Yarra's primary school educators and community agency workers to visit eight of Yarra's Secondary Schools, meet the Principal & key transition and wellbeing team members, and explore the facilities and classrooms in each of these diverse settings.

The participants visited the following schools in 2015:

- Tour 1 – Lynall Hall Community School, Melbourne Girls' College, Academy of Mary Immaculate and Simonds Catholic College
- Tour 2 – Fitzroy High School, Princes Hill Secondary College, Collingwood College and Collingwood Alternative School

Both tours were oversubscribed with a good mix of educators and community agency workers from across Yarra. In all there were 32 participants. Fifteen participants were Yarra educators and the remaining seventeen were from Yarra community agencies/Council.

In response to the overwhelmingly positive feedback from the 2015 bus tours, the 2016 tour provided Yarra secondary school educators and community agency workers with an opportunity to explore a diverse mix of primary school settings to gain a better understanding of their teaching and learning environments.

The four participating primary schools were briefed to:

- Provide a walking-talking tour of their school and an opportunity to meet key staff
- Visit a 5/6 class to gain an understanding of their teaching and learning environment, and

- Interact with students and teachers to provide participants, teachers and students with an opportunity to ask any questions about transition to secondary school

The participants visited the following schools in 2016:

- Tour 3 - Fitzroy Primary School, Collingwood College, Trinity Catholic School and Spensley Street Primary School

The fourth JTD Bus Tour was held in November 2017. Eleven energised participants from schools and agencies came together to explore and gain a better understanding of the teaching and learning environments of another four Yarra primary settings:

- Tour 4 - Fitzroy North Primary School, Sacred Heart Primary School, Collingwood College and Richmond West Primary School

Evaluation feedback from participants and host schools involved in all of the Bus Tours reinforced the value of bringing together educators and agencies in an informal way to improve their knowledge and build local networks. It was also recommended for 2018 that the Bus Tour should return to secondary schools.

For further information about these capacity building activities go to <http://inllen.org.au/joining-the-dots/>

2.4 School Based Programs

Transition Review Process

The Transition Review Process (TRP) was developed in 2014 as a key initiative of the JTD project in order to assist in building the capability of schools to review and update their transition and engagement program. Ultimately it aims to improve the connection young people have towards learning and school during and beyond the transition period (Year 5 – Year 9).

By the end of the three sessions in the Transition Review Process, it was expected that schools would achieve the following:

- Complete an Audit of their Transition and Engagement Program with key stakeholders
- Develop a visual representation of their Transition and Engagement Program using the “Four Phases and Five Areas of Action in Transition” framework
- Complete a draft Plan for Action (Strategic Plan) for their revised Transition and Engagement Program

The first session with the JTD Project Officer provided an overview of the Transition Review Process and revolved around use of an Audit Tool.

This included:

- Discussion around the School’s intended outcomes for the Transition Review Process
→ Why is it important? What does the School hope to gain?
- Assessing the ‘current status’ and ‘priority’ of each item in the Audit Tool
- A facilitated discussion around the items considered by the majority to be of medium to high priority
→ identifying subsequent action required, a timeline for action and who should be involved.

Session Two involved work around the Four Phases and Five Areas of Action in Transition. This included:

- Familiarising participants with the definition of the Four Phases and Five Areas of Action in Transition
- Identifying all of the school’s current transition related activities

- Mapping the School's current transition related activities against the Four Phases/Five Areas of Action in Transition Grid
- Identifying strengths and opportunities within the School's current Grid – Which activities are working well? Which activities need improvement/need to be reviewed?
- Identifying gaps within the School's current Grid – Are any of these gaps priority areas? If not, should they be priority areas?
- Presenting examples of possible activities that fit within the Four Phases/Five Areas of Action in Transition Grid
- Exploring and adding in activities that should be in the School's revised Transition Grid (keeping in mind priority items identified through the Audit)

In terms of the "Four Phases of Transition", the Joining the Dots Report 1 identified that transition activities in Yarra schools tend to be centred around the Preparation, Transfer and Induction Phases, with little emphasis on the Consolidation Phase. In terms of the "Five Areas of Transition", the research found that the main Area of focus in many Yarra schools was Administration, with less emphasis on Social and Personal, Curriculum, Pedagogy and Management of Learning.

Session Three involved participants pulling together everything that has been discussed and achieved from the previous two sessions/steps. This included:

- Reviewing results of the Audit conducted in Session One: Medium to High priority items, Strategies/Action, Who will be involved and Timelines
- Reviewing results of the Transition Grid activity in Session Two
- Inputting results directly into the template for the Plan for Action
- Clarifying the Objectives and Expected Outcomes within the Plan for Action

School staff involved in the TRP in each school included:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Principal, Assistant Principals | • Parents |
| • Transition Coordinator | • Students |
| • Student Wellbeing Coordinator | • Community partners |
| • Relevant staff (Year 5 – Year 9) | • Other relevant stakeholders |

Once a school completed the facilitated TRP process, they joined a local transition cluster known as the Shared Learning Community, to support the ongoing implementation of good transition practice. To date, the following thirteen Yarra schools have completed the TRP:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • Academy of Mary Immaculate | • Richmond West Primary School |
| • Collingwood College | • Abbotsford Primary School |
| • Collingwood English Language School | • Simonds Catholic College |
| • Fitzroy High School | • Yarra Primary School |
| • Fitzroy Primary School | • Trinity Catholic School |
| • Princes Hill Secondary College | • Spensley Street Primary School |
| • Sacred Heart School | |

Fitzroy High School and Community Demonstration Pilot Project 2013-2014

The Fitzroy High School and Community Demonstration Pilot Project was developed as a response to the recommendations of the Joining the Dots Report 1. The Project was undertaken at Fitzroy High School (FHS) from May 2013-June 2014 and was given the working title Fitzroy Engagement And Transition (FEAT) Project.

A School Community Action Team (SCAT) model was used to support and enhance the Project which focused on four key areas:

1. **Primary Secondary Transition (Years 5-9)** – supporting the school to further develop and implement a primary to secondary school transition plan, which incorporates transition from primary as well as from team to team within the school
2. **Research and Capacity Building** - collecting and reporting on data about risk indicators and factors for students who disengage in the early years of secondary schools and make recommendations about strategies to build the school's capacity and take next steps, working within a partnership model.
3. **Advocacy Case Management** - developing a partnership approach to improve educational engagement of up to 20 FHS students focusing on early intervention (Years 7-9) who are presenting signs of disengagement or are absent from school on average 2 days or more per week.
4. **Parent and Family Engagement** - developing a parent and family engagement strategy using a community approach to engage students in their learning including actively engaging parents in all young person's learning and school community and build parental and family capacity to nurture and encourage successful learning practices.

With funding from Youth Connections, a Project Officer was employed for two days per week to undertake the advocacy case management; work with the FEAT on the other project areas; and help to write the final project report. The findings from this Project resulted in significant changes to the FHS organisational structure and priorities. It also informed the strategic direction of the JTD Project and indicated that there was much work to be done in the area of transition, both within the school and across the system.

For further information about the Fitzroy High School and Community Demonstration Pilot Project go to <http://inllen.org.au/joining-the-dots-old/jtd-yarra/>

2.5 Support of Parents and Students

Preparing for Secondary School: A Guide for Parents 2014-2017

This resource was first developed in 2014 to better assist Yarra parents in supporting their children in the transition process. This transition is often a new and challenging experience for the parents and families of the young person and many parents have concerns about the changes that the new school will bring.

The resource is titled *Preparing for Secondary School: A Guide for Parents* and it has two sections:

1. Tips and advice for parents including:
 - Choosing the right School
 - A map of the Victorian education system
 - School visits

- Applying for a secondary school
 - Enrolling your child
 - Preparing for secondary school
 - Starting school
 - The importance of regular attendance
2. A detailed listing of all the secondary schools in the City of Yarra including information on:
- Location of all City of Yarra secondary school\individual school programs and requirements
 - Enrolment contact details

In 2015 the Resource was translated into Arabic, Chinese, Somali and Vietnamese. We gratefully acknowledge the support of Fitzroy Primary School and School Focused Youth Service, without whom this could not have been achieved. Subsequently, the City of Yarra and INLLEN have funded the translation and graphic design of the Resource. All five language versions are available in digital format on the INLLEN website and can be accessed through Section 6 of this report.

Feedback from both educators and agency workers within Yarra, and beyond, has reinforced the value of the Resource. However, it is generally accepted that printed versions would be more widely utilised, particularly the translated versions. INLLEN will explore opportunities to ensure future sustainability and printing.

3 TRANSITION DATA 2012-2017

3.1 School Destination

One of the focus areas of the JTD Data collection 2012 - 2017 has been on tracking secondary school destination data to establish

1. The percentage of students transitioning to schools within the City of Yarra.
2. The percentage of students transitioning to government schools alone or with one other student from their previous school

The following analysis was included in the *Joining the Dots Evaluation Report 2018*, Johns Education Consulting.

The government system has seen a slight dip in retaining students from Yarra since 2011 when the JTD Project started collecting statistics. In 2011, data collected from DET by the Joining the Dots Project showed that 53% of all government primary students from Yarra remained in Yarra government schools after transitioning to secondary school. From 2012 to 2015, this fluctuated from a high of 56% to a low of 47%. In 2016, this figure sat at 50%. In contrast, the Catholic system saw a slight increase in retaining students from Yarra since 2012 (the first year of statistics for this system). In 2012, 43% of Catholic students remained in Yarra Catholic schools. From 2013 to 2015, this fluctuated from a high of 66% to a low of 50%. This figure sat at 46% in 2016, however, only two Catholic schools supplied data, thus skewing results somewhat.

When looking at the whole base cohort of all students in Yarra, we can see from Figure 4 that in 2012, 37% of the students transitioning from a Yarra primary school stayed within Yarra to go a government or Catholic secondary school. From 2013 – 2015, this fluctuated between 34% and 39%. In 2016 this percentage was 35%.

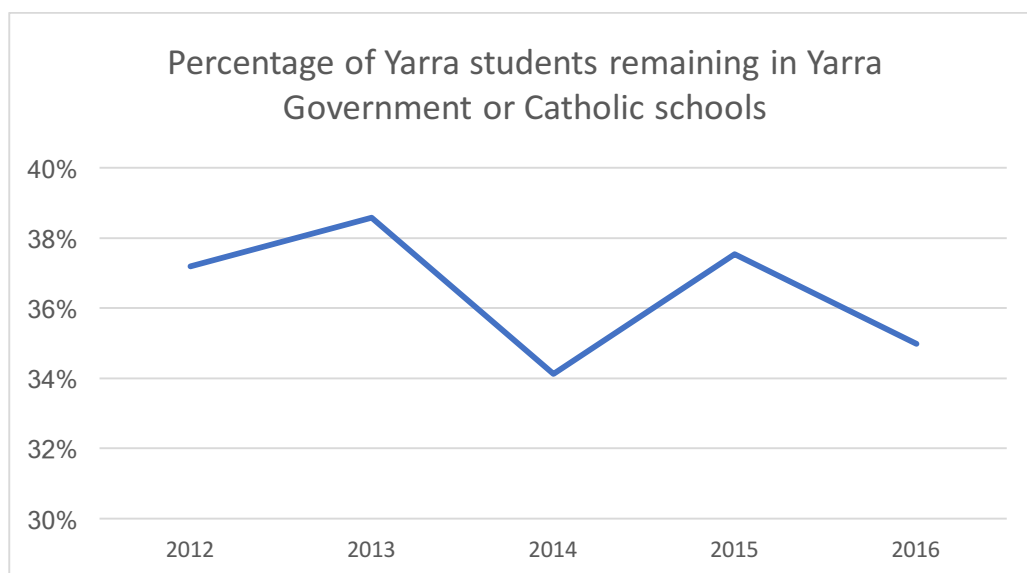


Figure 4 - Percentage of Yarra students staying in Yarra Government or Catholic schools

One area where the trend has been encouraging is a reduction in the number of students transitioning to a government school by themselves or with only one other student from their school. This has been shown to be a risk factor in experiencing a successful transition, as knowing less people typically equates to travelling further and being more disconnected from local supports and familiar settings. Figure 5 shows this trend.

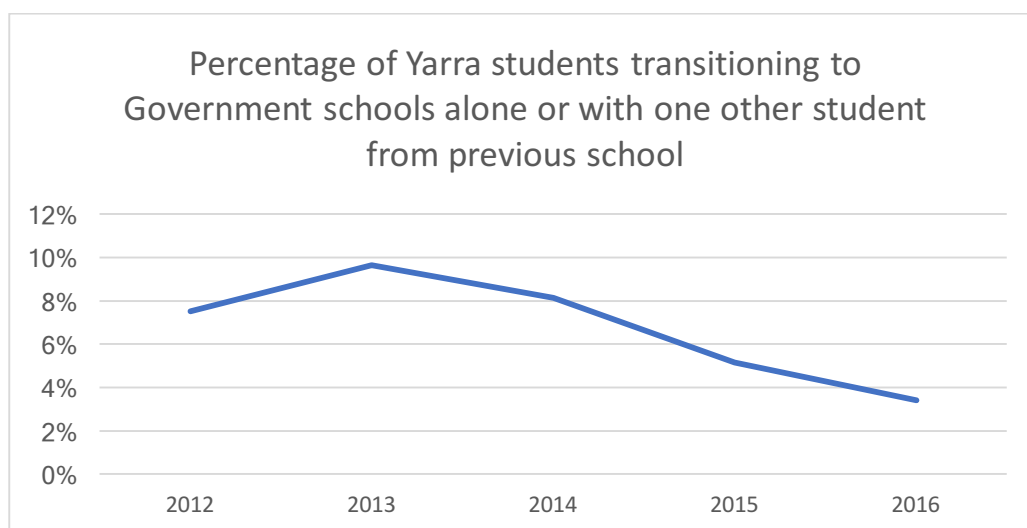


Figure 5 - Percentage of Yarra students transitioning to Government schools alone or with one other student

3.2 Real Retention

Another key data set that has been identified by the Joining the Dots Project has been real Retention. This measure is used in schools to identify the number of students who remain in their secondary school from Year 7 to Year 12. High retention rates could be identified as an indicator of effective transition and engagement experiences.

The following analysis of Real Retention trends for Yarra government schools 2007 – 2016 was also included in the JTD Evaluation Report.

Figure 6 shows while trends are encouraging across the four schools shown, (with all showing a modest increase over this period of an average of 9% increased real retention), it would be difficult to attribute this to the JTD Project.

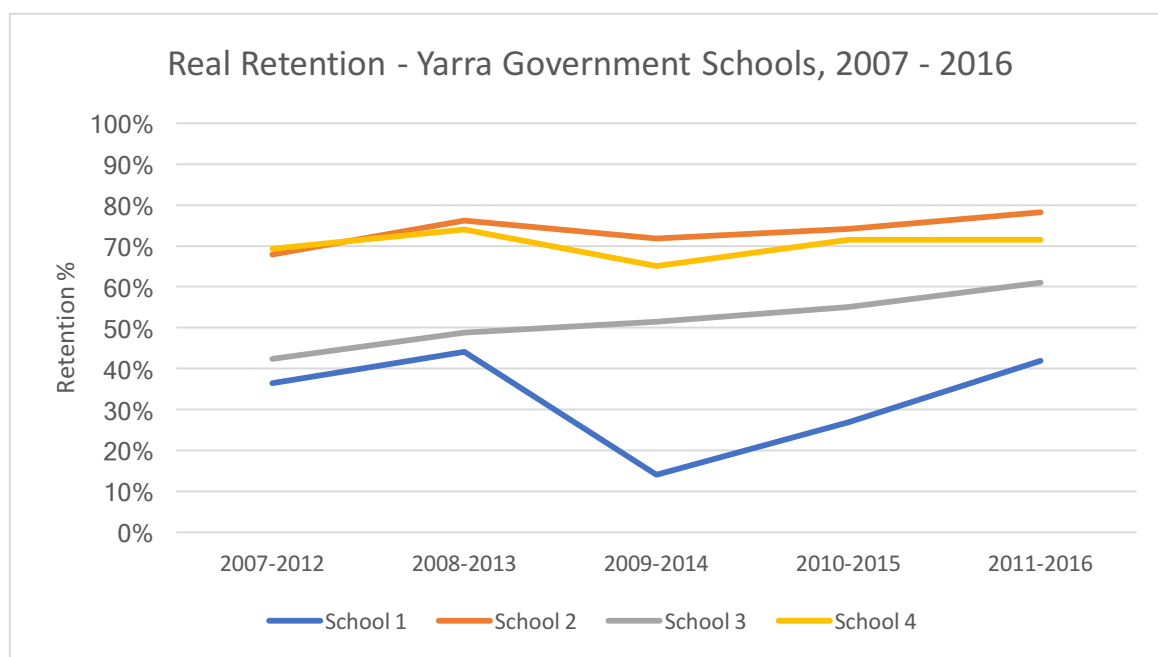


Figure 6 - Real Retention in Yarra Government Schools, 2007 – 2016

In contrast, Figure 7 (Real Retention for Yarra Catholic Schools 2010-2016) shows a slight drop in Real Retention, however, as previously mentioned; with only two schools this data can be unreliable. As a

statistic, this is a slow-moving measure, due to time lag from students who were in Year 7 when the Project started, only finishing Year 12 in 2017. As such, it will take some time to see any potential flow through effect from the Project.

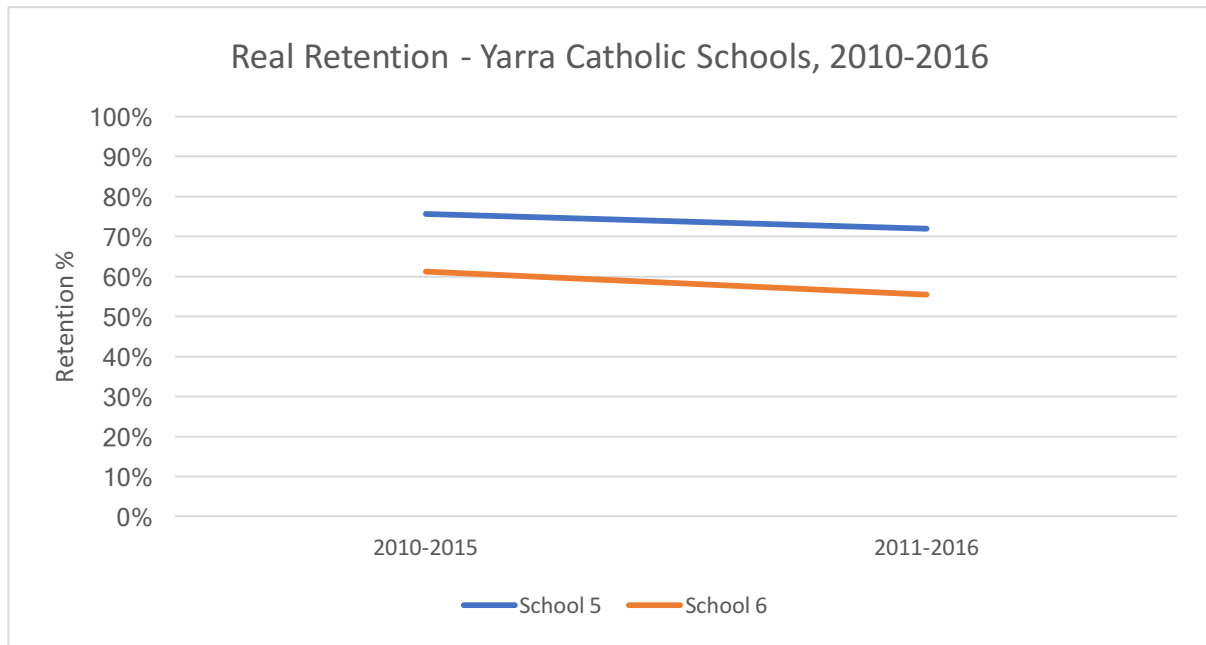


Figure 7 - Real Retention in Yarra Catholic Schools, 2010 – 2016

3.3 Attendance

Attendance data is widely used as an indicator for student engagement and was therefore identified within the Joining the Dots Project as a key data set for measuring effective transition to secondary school.

The following analysis was provided by the JTD Evaluation:

There have been some challenges with collecting data for attendance over the course of the Project. These have included that for the Catholic sector, the data set only spans Years 1-10. Both the Government and the Catholic sectors changed how they collected data during course of the Project. As with other data sets, it is difficult to attribute improvements or declines directly to the JTD Project. Figures 8 and 9 below show the school absence data available since 2010 as collected from DET by the Joining the Dots Project. For the Government school sector this shows Prep to Year 12 data for the City of Yarra, spanning 2010-2016, with comparative Victoria wide data from 2013. For the Catholic school sector this shows Prep to Year 10 data for the City of Yarra, from 2012-2015, with comparative Victoria wide data from 2014.

For the Government school data (Figure 8), key trends worth noting are:

- *Apart from Year 12, all year levels in Yarra are better off in 2016 compared with the Victorian average.*
- *From 2010-2016 at Year 7, Year 8 and Year 9 there are encouraging drops in absence levels (levels impacted by transition regarding student engagement).*
- *Most year levels have dropped in absences from 2010 to 2016. The only year level with increased absence from 2010 is Year 6, up marginally from a low of 6.3% absence in 2014 to 7% absence in 2016.*
- *Year 5 has also gradually increased for past 3 years from a low of 5.7% absence in 2014 to 6.4% absence in 2016.*
- *An encouraging improvement trend is evident in Years 9 and 10. Both have dropped below 10%. Year 9 had 9.1% absence in 2016, down from high of 12.3% in 2012. Year 10 had 9.5% absence in 2016, down from high of 12.9% in 2012.*

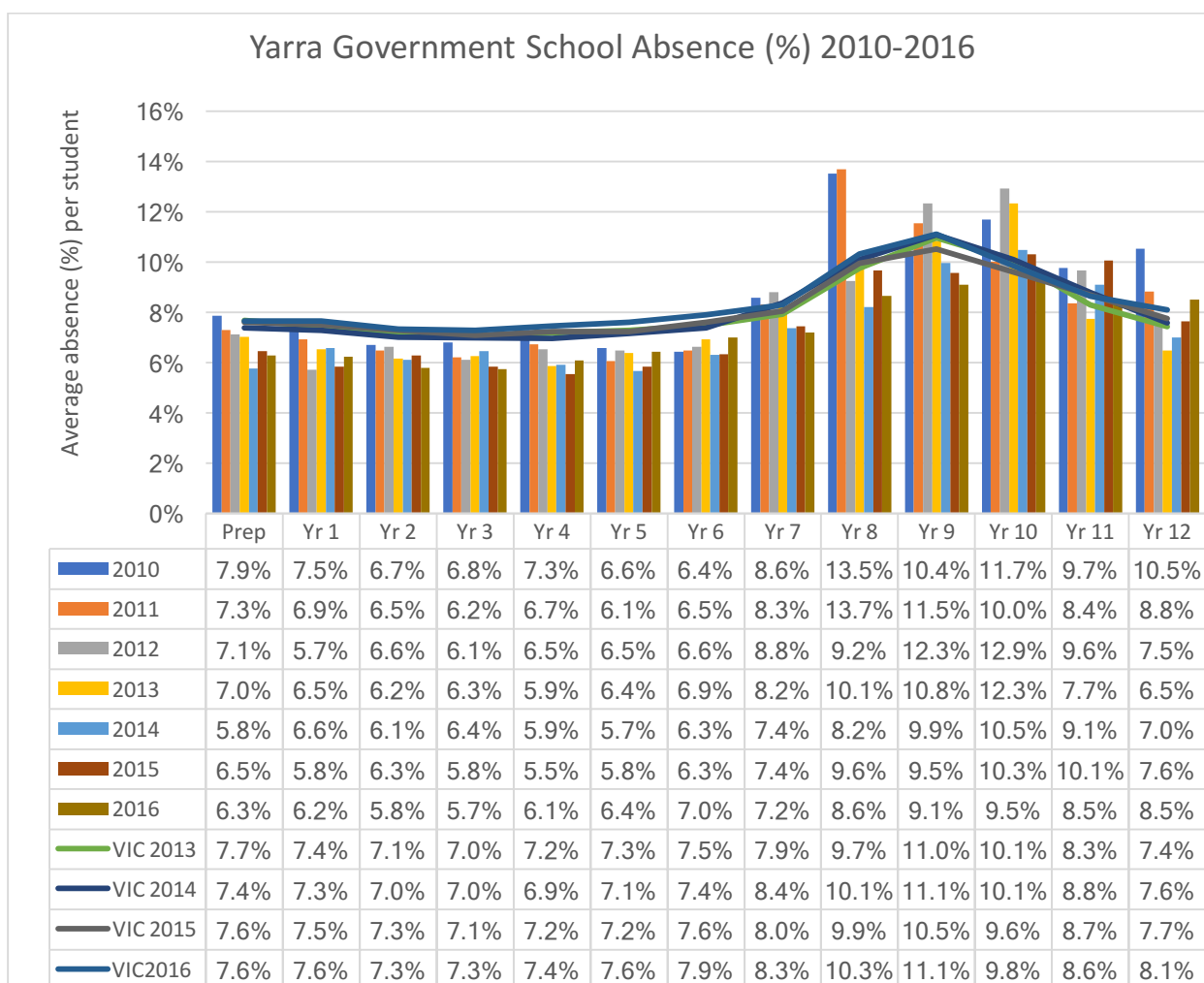


Figure 3 – Average student absence 2010 – 2016: Yarra Government Schools with comparative Vic figures

For the Catholic school data (Figure 9), it is worth noting that the data is skewed with two primary school data sets missing. With only a small number of schools to collect data from this has a large impact. Key trends worth noting are:

- Year levels in Yarra are a mixture of better off and worse off in 2016 compared with the Victorian average.
- At Years 8 and 9 Yarra (both important years to measure engagement levels), the Catholic School data is better off compared with the Victorian average.
- All Year levels seem to have increased in absences from 2012 to 2015.
- Despite increase Yarra Catholic Schools generally have lower absence levels than Yarra Government Schools.
- In addition, Victorian Catholic School data absence levels are lower than Victorian Government School absence levels.

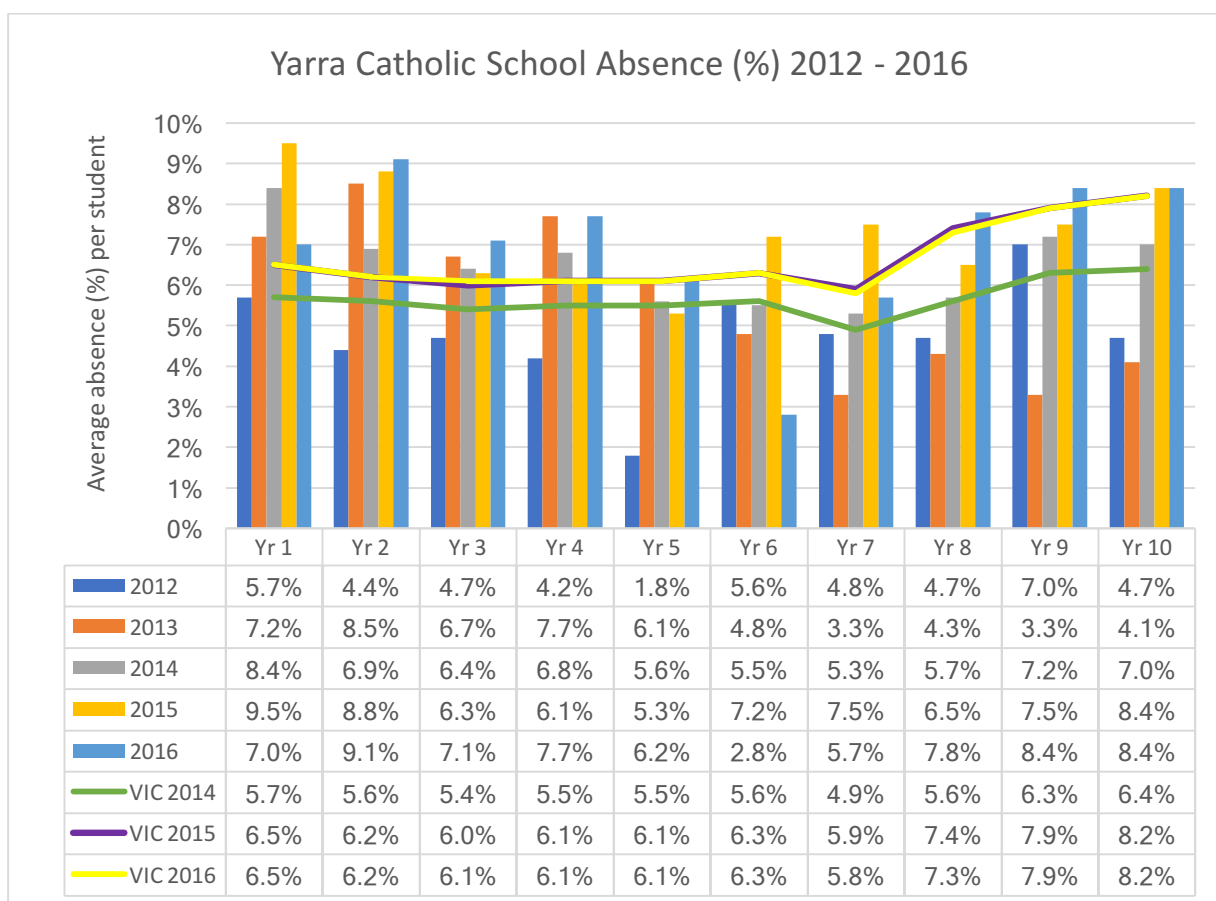


Figure 4 - Average student absence 2012 – 2016: Yarra Catholic Schools with comparative Vic figures

Whilst it may be difficult to point to the data showing clearly an impact from the Project, stakeholders nonetheless felt that it had upskilled them in understanding how to approach this important engagement measure. One stakeholder commented that their involvement with the Steering Group provided “...affirmation that the way we are working with our students to keep their attendance high is working”. It is worth considering that 92% attendance still equates to three weeks per year of absence. Over the thirteen-year course of a child’s education this equates to one whole school year of absence.

3.4 Year 12 Attainment Rate

Year 12 Attainment Rate data is provided by DET for each individual secondary school and shows the percentage of Year 9 students from a given calendar year that have attained year 12 or equivalent four years later (i.e. the year after Yr12).

This data was added to the JTD annual collection of data in 2017 as another useful measure for transition and engagement. Limitations for the use of this data include that it has not been available for the Yarra Catholic schools and that it is not possible to publish or distribute the Attainment Rate data for each individual school.

Through liaison with DET, the Steering Group has however been able to establish a broad snapshot of this data. It shows that there is large variation between the schools with rates ranging from between percentiles in the low nineties to percentiles around the mid-fifties. Individual school data is highly valuable for each school as they review the effectiveness of their transition and engagement programs.

3.5 Year 7 Cohort

This survey was distributed to key feeder schools within and outside Yarra in both 2016 and 2017. The survey was established as part of the JTD annual collection of data in order to identify the number and characteristics of Year 7 students in these schools. The following items were included:

- The total Year 7 student population for a particular year
- The number of males and females in the Year 7 cohort
- The number of students who live in the City of Yarra
- The overall percentage of Year 7 students who live in the City of Yarra and longitudinal trends for this
- The number of primary feeder schools for the school

There was a low return rate for these surveys with only seven responses in 2016 and three responses in 2017. As a result it is not possible to draw any real conclusions from the data. However, it can be noted that for the four Yarra schools that completed the survey in 2016, the percentage of students who lived in Yarra ranged from 30% to 62%. Two Yarra schools completed the survey in 2017, and the percentages were 32% and 47% for these schools.

3.6 Student Attitudes to School

This annual DET survey captures students' attitudes and experiences at school with the measures utilised based on what influences student outcomes.

With support from DET, the JTD Steering Group has been able to look at a broad overview of the data for 2017 for Yarra schools and for the State. It was identified that there is generally a decrease in scores from Year 6 to Year 7, both in Yarra and across the State. The scores for Yarra for Student Behaviour and Student Safety were an exception to this, with the Year 7 students' scores being marginally higher than the scores for Year 6 students. The reasons for this apparent downturn following transition are multiple and varied, including the need for a more engaging and age appropriate survey.

From 2017 a newly developed survey which includes specific transition related questions, has been administered in all DET schools to all students in Years 4 to 12. This survey will provide highly valuable baseline and ongoing data for individual schools to use in their Transition Review Process. Limitations for broader use of this data are that this survey is not administered in Catholic schools and the full data set for the DET schools in Yarra is not available for publication nor distribution.

4 JOINING THE DOTS EVALUATION

The Joining the Dots evaluation was carried out from November 2017 to February 2018 by Johns Education Consulting in consultation with the JTD Project Manager. Data collection occurred in November and December 2017, with data analysis and report writing occurring in January to February 2018. The Joining the Dots Evaluation Final Report was tabled at a Steering Group meeting in March 2018.

4.1 Aims

The evaluation had three core aims.

1. To determine whether the Yarra Transition Model developed in 2014 is scalable; replicable; appropriate for the needs of schools, students and families and reflective of current best practice/research.
2. To identify the key learnings from the JTD Project and determine areas that could be improved upon for similar projects – both current and future. This included analysing the effectiveness of governance arrangements and understanding the impact of the JTD Project on transition practice in Yarra.
3. To provide clarity and insight for recommendations to be made to stakeholders for the next phase(s) of the JTD Project.

4.2 Methodology

The evaluation focused on the following research questions:

- Is the Yarra Transition Model appropriate for need, reflective of current best practice, scalable, and replicable?
- Has the Steering Group partnership provided effective project governance and support?
- What has been the impact of this project on:
 - the awareness by educators and community agencies in Yarra of the need for a well-supported transition to secondary school spanning Year 5 to Year 9
 - the primary to secondary school transition practice/process by educators in Yarra
 - the student and family engagement in learning in Yarra
 - the coordination within and between sectors in Yarra (primary and secondary educators, and community agencies) to support transition and engagement.
- What learnings from the Project can be shared to improve further/similar work in the area?
- What recommendations for the next phase(s) of the Project can be made?

Data collected and analysed included documentation on the formation and development of JTD, two online stakeholder surveys, a focus group, phone interviews with stakeholders, in person interviews with key stakeholders, transition related data sets and feedback from school based and professional learning activities. The data analysis comprised analysing statistical trends for quantitative data, and thematic analysis of qualitative data.

4.3 Key Findings

The Evaluation found that the Joining the Dots Project has had a number of significant impacts in the City of Yarra over the duration of the Project. These have included improved connection between primary and secondary schools, DET, CEM and community agencies; improved coordination between secondary and feeder primary schools; greater awareness about the importance of a good transition; improved structures for transition process; better family engagement around transitions; and a better evidence base. These outcomes are due to the following interconnecting Project elements.

- Strong Governance

- The JTD Transition Model
- The Transition Review Process
- Shared Learning Community
- Data sets
- Capacity building events
- Resources

4.4 Recommendations for Future Action

Stakeholder feedback indicated that JTD Project is a very important project for Yarra and has made significant improvements to their organisation's transition and engagement related practices. There was strong evidence that the Project has achieved its aims and should be continued. Its expansion into neighbouring LGAs has demonstrated that it is both replicable and scalable.

The following recommendations were made based on the evaluation findings, recommendations from stakeholders and current best practice research.

1. Continue Joining the Dots Project delivery locally

- Consider ways to ensure that Joining the Dots continues to be delivered locally.
- Consider ways to utilise community momentum around the Project to create next steps.
- Consider reviewing annually to ensure reflective of current good practice and research.

2. Update Joining the Dots Transition Model

- Consider ways to emphasize and expand upon the Strategic Approach element of the Model.
- Consider ways to emphasize the Support for Individual Students and Parents and School Based Programs elements of the Model.

3. Support Shared Learning Community

- Consider developing a Terms of Reference and a Strategic Plan to refocus the SLC, focusing on such tasks as collaborative actioning of individual TRP Action Plans/Policy; documenting and improving transition programs to include reciprocal school visits by staff; and curriculum planning to build in transition related skills and wellbeing.
- Consider seeking funding for coordination of the SLC.

4. Support cross school curriculum planning

- Consider facilitating schools to work collaboratively to design a comprehensive transition program that includes all five areas of transition, with specific emphasis on in-class curriculum, not just students visiting and experiencing secondary schools.

5. Consolidate key knowledge into one resource

- Consider bringing together the knowledge gained so far into a single resource for schools that includes such things as basic information on transition; a suggested annual timetable of when to carry out transition activities; JTD resources such as student and parent books, guides and digital case studies; and the TRP documentation.
- Consider creating a Train the Trainer process to enable delivery of TRP with this documentation. This could be delivered by key organisations that work in the school transition space, such as other LLENs, the Catholic Education Office, regional DET offices and schools.

6. Support collaboration between LGAs

- Consider schools in Yarra, Moreland and Darebin continuing to utilise a local focus for a Transitions Cluster approach focused on locally relevant transition related topics specific to their schools.

- Consider forming an Inner North Transitions Network for professional development, networking and support with implementation of the Project to create economies of scale and to widen the support network for these schools
- Consider ways to set up this network in a coordinated, self-directed and self-funded manner to ensure its sustainability. This could be achieved by member schools contributing towards project management and coordination costs.

7. Scale up Joining the Dots

- Consider ways to scale the Project up, including the earlier mentioned resource package and leveraging off local momentum for the Project.
- Consider building Project advocacy goals with key education administrative and peak bodies into future objectives.

8. Seek further funding

- Consider securing further interim funding as the current funding period has ended. This will ensure that it can be sustainable from a project management perspective in the short-term.
- Consider researching longer term funding options, required to enable the Project to continue its excellent work and to promote the work more widely across Melbourne and Victoria.

This evaluation is documented in Section 5 of this report and a copy can be downloaded from <http://inllen.org.au/joining-the-dots/>

5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research and activities of the Yarra Joining the Dots Project are of significant importance due to the limited Australian research and local initiatives focused on effective primary to secondary transition. The six years of data collection have provided increasingly informative longitudinal data sets which have been viewed as part of a range of qualitative and quantitative evidence into what effective transition and engagement should look like for young people and their families. The Joining the Dots Model has evolved into a framework that can be easily adopted by schools and agencies and could be scaled up to be used at a systems level.

The JTD initiatives involved community consultation and direct involvement with over one hundred and thirty different organisations and schools from both within and outside of the City of Yarra. The work of this project demonstrates how collective action around shared vision and policy can produce significant outcomes that not only impact on young people and their families but also on the professional competence and confidence of school and agency staff. This work has also led to enhanced community connectedness.

Through their work within the JTD project, local schools and agencies have a clear shared focus on establishing enhanced opportunities for students to experience positive transition and engagement opportunities.

As is experienced at the end of any project, the challenge is to establish adequate support, momentum and resourcing to ensure the sustainability and expansion of the already initiated Project work into the future.

INLLEN has committed through its Strategic Plan (2018-2019) to continue to support the development of the Joining the Dots project across the inner north. This will focus on the development of an Inner North Transition Network and a Transition Guide for schools encapsulating the learnings and resources developed thus far. Additional funding support in 2018 from School Focused Youth Service will enable the deepening of the Moreland and Darebin projects commenced 2016/2017.

The JTD Steering Group met in March 2018 to accept the Evaluation JTD Evaluation Report and to consider its recommendations in order to identify the next steps for carrying the work of the Project forward.

The following recommendations were established:

1. Continue JTD in Yarra

- That the Joining the Dots work continue in Yarra with Shared Learning Community as the vehicle for achieving this.
- That Yarra Steering Group transition to a Reference Group, supporting the INLLEN to build JTD across the Inner North of Melbourne. Any meetings should be on an as needs basis with the purpose of providing input to a specific query/activity.

2. Joining the Dots Model

- Ensure that the JTD Model 2018 is incorporated into JTD work through revision of the Transition Review Process

3. Support Shared Learning Community

- Further investigate possible funding models and sources to ensure the sustainability of the Shared Learning Community. This is to include member school contribution.

4. Support cross school curriculum planning

- Identify and research schools who are working collaboratively to improve understanding of curriculum and pedagogy between settings.

5. Consolidate key knowledge and resources

- Utilise the knowledge and resources developed in Yarra, Moreland and Darebin, to develop an integrated “How To” resource for schools.
- Investigate with the City of Yarra possibilities for further development of the Yarra Preparing for Secondary School Guide as a targeted response to better support Yarra parents.

6. Support Collaboration between LGAs

- Explore the development of a Transitions Network with support from the Yarra Reference Group as required.

7. Scale Up JTD

- INLLEN to leverage the Evaluation Report and Project Report to advocate with DET, CEM, ISV and local Councils for greater focus and support for primary-secondary school transition, including implementation of the JTD Resource Package.

8. Seek further funding

- INLLEN to explore funding opportunities to ensure momentum is not lost and to enable the continued project coordination by INLLEN.

6 RESOURCES

6.1 Yarra Joining the Dots Project

Reports

1. **Joining the Dots Report 1 (2012)**
documenting the initial development and activities of the JTD Project
2. **Joining the Dots Report 2 (2015)**
documenting the action Phases 2 and 3 of the JTD Project

[Joining the Dots Report 1 \(2012\)](#) PDF

[Joining the Dots Report 2 \(2015\)](#) PDF



Forums and Workshops

1. **Joining the Dots Forum 2013**
Successful Transitions for Full Engagement
(Year 5-Year 9)
2. **Joining the Dots Forum 2015**
Successful Transitions for Full Engagement in Learning
3. **Joining the Dots Forum 2017**
School-Family-Community Partnerships for Successful Transition and Engagement
4. **Transition 101 Forum 2014**
Understanding the Primary to Secondary School Transition Process (Year 5 – Year 9)

Click [here](#) to view resources from the 2013 Joining the Dots Forum

Click [here](#) to view resources from the 2015 Joining the Dots Forum

Click [here](#) to view eight presentations from the 2017 Joining the Dots Forum

[Transition 101 PDF](#)



5. **Middle Years Brain Development Workshop 2016**

Murdoch Children's Research Institute
Response Ability Factsheet

[Murdoch Children's Research Institute – Middle Years Brain Development – Response Ability Factsheet](#)



6. Parent and Family Engagement Workshop 2017

Vital for Transition and Student Engagement

[Parent and Family Engagement – May 2017 Workshop PDF](#)



Tools

Preparing for Secondary School: A Guide for Parents 2017 (Yarra Region)

Supporting parents with their child's transition from Primary to Secondary school.

This is a valuable conversation tool and companion to secondary school application packs. It has been developed to help guide parents/families through the process of selecting a secondary school, applying, enrolling and supporting learning at home.

While this Resource is suitable for any locale, it also contains specific information about Yarra secondary schools.

Darebin and Moreland versions will be available mid 2018.

[Download](#) a high res file for printing PDF (9.5MB)

[Download](#) a low res file for viewing online (2.2 MB)



Translated versions

Arabic version – [Download the PDF](#)

Chinese version – [Download the PDF](#)

Somalian version – [Download the PDF](#)

Vietnamese version – [Download the PDF](#)

6.2 Moreland Joining the Dots Project

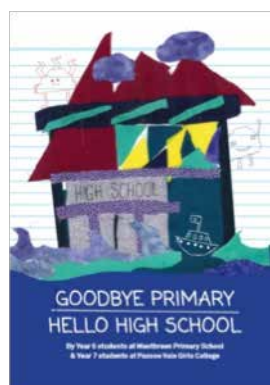
Kids' Own Publishing Book

Goodbye Primary, Hello High School has been produced by Kids' Own Publishing and was designed by Year 6 students from Westbreen Primary School and Year 7 students from Pascoe Vale Girls College as part of the Joining the Dots Moreland project.

This book is intended for use as a conversation starter either in class or at home with families.

Kids' Own Publishing is a social purpose arts organisation that empowers children, families and communities to share their stories through artist-led community publishing.

<http://inllen.org.au/joining-the-dots-old/jtd-resources/>



Digital Case Studies

These three short digital case study videos were prepared as part of the Joining the Dots [Moreland](http://inllen.org.au/joining-the-dots-old/jtd-resources/) project with Pascoe Vale Girls College and Westbreen Primary School students. They encapsulate the Student, Parent and School perspective on the secondary school transition experience into and within a large single sex secondary school.

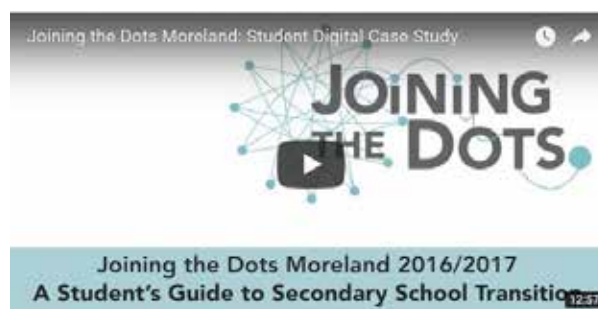
Each video has been created specifically for use in class with students (Student Video), at parent information sessions (Parent Video) and with mixed audiences (Guide to Transition). The Student Video is accompanied by a Teacher Handbook to aid delivery in class.

A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO SECONDARY SCHOOL TRANSITION

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO SECONDARY SCHOOL TRANSITION

A GUIDE TO SECONDARY SCHOOL TRANSITION

<http://inllen.org.au/joining-the-dots-old/jtd-resources/>



6.3 Reservoir Joining the Dots Project

Digital Case Studies

A further three short digital case studies were prepared as part of the Joining the Dots Reservoir project with William Ruthven Secondary College and William Ruthven Primary School.

These versions are set in a small co-ed secondary setting in the north of Darebin.

A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO SECONDARY SCHOOL TRANSITION

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO SECONDARY SCHOOL TRANSITION

A GUIDE TO SECONDARY SCHOOL TRANSITION

<http://inllen.org.au/joining-the-dots-old/jtd-resources/>



7 REFERENCES

- Department of Education and Training (2015). A Toolkit for Transition Clusters: Primary to Secondary. State of Victoria (Department of Education and Training). Melbourne, VIC.
- Fuller, A. (2016). START: Student Transition And Resilience Training. A Year 6 – 7 Resource. Department of Education and Training. Melbourne, VIC.
- .idcommunity, (2017). City of Yarra. Service age groups. 2016 Census. [online]. Retrieved from <http://profile.id.com.au/yarra/service-age-groups>
- Johns Education Consulting (2018). Joining the Dots Evaluation: Final Report. Melbourne, Vic
- McCourt, B. (2017). The role of student engagement in the transition from primary to secondary school. Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluations. NSW Department of Education. Sydney, NSW.
- Victorian Auditor-General (2015). Victorian Auditor-General's Report: Education Transitions. Melbourne, Victorian Auditor-General's Office.
- Yarra City Council (2014). Middle Years Strategy 2014 – 2017. Yarra City Council, Melbourne.



The Yarra Primary Secondary School Transition Project (2012 – 2017)

May 2018



Inner Northern Local Learning and Employment Network
inllen.org.au/joining-the-dots-old/jtd-yarra/