

# **Transition traumas, traps, turning points and triumphs: Putting student needs first**

A paper prepared for the PPTA 'The Way Forward for Secondary Education' Conference, Wellington, April 18-20, 2004.

**Prepared by:**

**Kay Hawk** B.A., Cert. EDC., Dip.Ed., M.Ed.Admin (Hons)

**Jan Hill** Higher Dip.Tchg., M.Ed.Admin (Hons)

## **Abstract**

This paper begins with an outline of the unique nature and structure of New Zealand schooling that requires most students to make two transitions in two years. It then explores what the literature tells us about the needs of early adolescents and some approaches to teaching and learning that we believe are pivotal to meeting those needs.

Research evidence, both national and international, shows that when students make a transition from one schooling system to another, their achievement declines and learning can be impeded for at least six months and up to a year or more while they deal with other priorities caused by the shift. New Zealand schools, in recent years, have improved the strategies employed to help students make the logistical and social adjustments to the transition. They have not, however, addressed the problem of the learning and achievement needs.

The paper provides effective strategies, trialled in New Zealand schools, that other schools and teachers can use to assist transition. It then outlines some issues that are cause for concern and presents some challenges to those involved in education at all levels in New Zealand.

The writers advocate that student needs are put ahead of historical habits, the entrenched positions of lobby groups and adult self-interest. They urge that decisions are made nationally about the best structures and timing of transitions. In the meantime, they encourage all teachers and schools to refine and extend their transition programmes to address the learning and achievement decline as well as provide social and emotional support.

## ***Tim***

Tim is a student in Year 8 at a city intermediate school. He is the oldest in his family and his parents often tell him how important it is to them that he does well at school. He is about average in his class and feels that he works as hard as he can and does all his homework.

At the beginning of this year teachers started to tell all the students that this was their last year before secondary school and they had to work harder or they would not do well at secondary school. As the year has gone by, more comments have been made that are making Tim worry about how well he will cope. He is not worried about carrying around all his gear but he knows there will be more homework and that all the work will be much harder. His parents already growl at him for not doing more homework and they look to see if the teacher has marked it. Their teacher sometimes signs the homework but does not give marks. Tim is relieved because he does not think his marks would be good enough for his parents.

Their teacher sometimes says things that make him afraid about his ability. Last week she said she was not going to give him a high mark for his project because if it was handed in like that at secondary school they would not think it had enough depth to it. She was getting them used to this harder marking so it would not be a shock next year.

Yesterday one of the specialist teachers had told them about NCEA and she said they had to get 80 marks in the first year. She said each assignment was worth about 3 or 4 marks. Tim had been thinking all night about how many assignments he would have to do because he knew he would have to do about six subjects and even his maths told him that meant at least 20 assignments for each subject to get the 80 marks for each. She also said they would have a big exam for each subject, as well as the assignments. He wished he could stay at his intermediate school because he was losing confidence in his ability.

## ***Lara***

At the secondary school it is Lara's first term in Year 9. She is having a really hard time because Amy, her best friend from intermediate was put in a different class. They try to meet each other each at interval and lunchtime but Amy has started to bring another friend from her class as well and Lara thinks this new friendship might become more important because they sit together every class and they laugh and joke about things that have happened in class. Lara is feeling more and more lonely because she does not have a friend in her own class and she is feeling left out of the talk at interval and lunch time. In class she is beginning to get growled at for not concentrating and not knowing what to do.

Yesterday she packed up her books early because she did not want to be late to meet up with Amy and the teacher made her stay behind. When she was

finally allowed to go she could not find her friends. Two older boys found her crying behind the tech block. They were smoking and told her they would 'get' her if they got into trouble for smoking so she should shut her mouth. That night she told her Mother who told her that she needs to find a new friend in her own class. She was dreading going to school the next day. All the girls seemed to have their own friends already and she did not think they would want her to butt in. She thought about talking to her form teacher but she was always so busy in form time marking the role and giving out all the notices. The bell always went before she was finished. They had had a talk on the first day about a dean who could help and a school counsellor but she could not remember their names and did not know where their offices were. She did not want to ask her friends or classmates because she was afraid she might cry again. Lara also knew she was going to get into trouble for not doing her maths homework because she had not copied it down correctly and it didn't make sense. She thought about not going to school or at least wagging maths.

## **Introduction**

The New Zealand schooling structure is complex and has a range of schooling options that have arisen over many decades. Over one hundred and twenty years ago, proposals were made to establish schools for 11-14 year olds (Watson, 1964). In September 1922, regulations providing for junior high schools were gazetted. Stewart and Nolan (1992) suggest that, at that time, educational considerations, rather than economic and political ones, appear to have been the key factors in determining this new policy. In the following ten years, however, only ten junior high schools came into existence and only one of them operated as a fully autonomous three-year institution. Stewart and Nolan (*ibid*) go on to describe that, despite the case for three-year middle school education having being made, and won, on educational grounds, factors such as a shortage of funds, professional rivalry between primary and secondary teachers and competition for resources ensured that intermediate schools replaced the junior high school model as the preferred form of education for young adolescents. With the name change came a reduction in the period of instruction from three years to two and less generous staffing and salary scales. It also placed 'middle' schooling, i.e. the intermediate system, firmly in the primary sector.

## **The needs of early adolescents**

To a large extent, and until quite recently, the particular needs of the group of students 'in the middle' and the two transitions that most make during these years, has largely been ignored in New Zealand. In some ways, we still have

a bi-modal system of primary and secondary education, teacher training, for example. Intermediate schools and Years 7 and 8 classes in composite schools (Years 1-13) or in Years 7-13 secondary schools are aligned with the primary system in terms of pedagogy. In other ways intermediate schools now attempt to bridge the two systems. For example, some have a combination of a homeroom and a specialist programme. However, programmes and organisation from Year 9 onwards, regardless of the school type, are generally aligned with the secondary model. In the last decade, seven middle schools have evolved, generally by extending an intermediate structure to Year 10.

The research literature about the special needs of the students 'in the middle' is substantial, regardless of the structure of schools or when students transition from one sector to another (McGee, 2004). At this time, beginning with the onset of puberty, the emotional, social, intellectual and physical developmental changes are profound. It is a period of uneven and complex change and development that is more rapid than at any time other than in infancy (Muschamp, Stoll and Nausheen, 2000). These changes create an imperative to recognise and address the needs that occur during this vitally important period in the lives of young adolescents and to acknowledge that these needs are different from those of older adolescents (Wavering, 1995).

In his paper for IARTV<sup>1</sup>, Pinnell (1998) provides a very recognisable set of characteristics for this group – worrying, watching, striving, needing, and bouncing back and forth – familiar to any parent or teacher of a young adolescent:

- Worrying about small and large things: grades; whether people are angry; war; next year; friends; popularity; being fat or thin; parent's reaction to Maths results; taking a shower after PE; who will sit together at lunch
- Watching body appearance: looking at classmates in a sports team and seeing some as tall as 190 cm and some under 150cm; seeing who receives more phone calls and valentines; about which brand of shoes is right to wear
- Striving in search of a personal identity: while allowing peers to mould that image about me – whatever that is
- Needing to talk; to argue; to be listened to and not indulged; to have privacy; to be in a group; to question discipline; to doubt parents' and school opinions while trying out personal ones; to make family meals difficult; to rest but be unwilling to go to bed; to eat six meals a day or nothing at all
- Bouncing back and forth: between exuberant energy and mournful lassitude, self-confidence and self-consciousness, boldness and withdrawal.

---

<sup>1</sup> Incorporated Association of Registered Teachers of Victoria (Australia)

In Nolan et al (2000), educational and child development researchers McKay (1995) and Lipsitz, Mizell, Jackson and Austin (1997) are credited with distinguishing seven categories of core development needs that characterise young adolescence from other developmental stages. They have a need for:

- A sense of competency and achievement
- Self-exploration and definition
- Supportive social interaction with peers and adults
- Challenging and rewarding physical activity
- Meaningful participation in school and community
- Routine, limits and structure
- Diversity of experience

So, what evidence is there of the how best to facilitate the meeting of these needs?

## **Approaches to teaching and learning**

Traditionally, teaching and learning in secondary schools is perceived as fragmented; subject-based and academically-oriented; reliant on text books; with a lack of student collaboration and active involvement in learning; with little reflection on the learning process; working under the assumption that all students will benefit from doing the same thing, in the same way, at the same time (Kruse, 1996). It suggests an environment that is performance rather than learning-based, where learning is compartmentalised and separate from the experiences of the students and where the teacher, rather than the student, is in control of the learning. Research suggests that the following approaches to teaching and learning are some of the most pivotal to meeting the needs of these students:

### ***Integration of the social and academic aspects of their needs***

Researchers argue that each of the needs of these students, as outlined above, reflect both a social and an academic aspect (Beane, 1990; Lipsitz, 1997, Wood and Jones, 1997 and Raebeck, 1998 in Nolan et al (ibid)). The needs, and the social and academic aspects of each of the needs, cannot be seen in isolation or addressed separately from each other. Programmes must promote and integrate these if they are to be educationally effective. For example, if a student learns how to successfully write up a fair test in Science (the academic aspect of developing a sense of competency and achievement), they are likely to experience a feeling of self-efficacy and personal competence (the social aspect of the same need). Both outcomes are more likely if the learning that leads to this involves cooperative learning with peers (the social aspect of the need for supportive social interactions with

peers and adults) and involves a fair test that has practical outcome (the academic aspect of developing a sense of achievement and the social aspect of meaningful participation in the school and community).

### ***Locus of control***

The importance of students having the locus of control in the learning process is well documented and is cited by a number of researchers as being a critical factor for students in this phase of their development (Fern, 1996; Tarter, Sabo and Hoy, 1995 in Nolan et al, 2000; Ward, 2000; Hill and Hawk, 2001). Student locus of control can occur at an individual or a class level and is not a strategy but rather an attitude and an approach that is reflected in everything that a teacher does or that the students do in a classroom. It requires a philosophical commitment to allowing students' learning needs to determine the learning process and where students are actively involved in the learning process (they learn with the teacher rather than leaning being done to them). In these classrooms, there would be:

- Recognition of past learning and capabilities.
- A questioning pedagogy (learning is about asking questions to clarify, explore, explain, undermine assumptions) rather than an answering pedagogy (learning is about being able to give the teacher the right answer).
- Scaffolding learning for students.
- Effective use of formative assessment strategies.
- Cooperative learning.
- A fundamental belief on the part of the teacher that 'the students can succeed; I will help them to that, I can't do it for them, they must all experience success'.

At an individual student level, locus of control would involve:

- A positive relationship with the teacher based on mutual respect and reciprocity.
- Feedback and feedforward to the student.
- Teaching self-assessment skills and providing meaningful opportunities for the students to self assess.
- Giving students choices, e.g. choice of topic, choice of presentation and are involved in making decisions about their academic study.

At a class level, student locus of control would involve:

- Class decision-making such as setting class 'rules' (for learning not just behaviour).

- Displaying the students' work around the classroom.
- Involving students in the classroom organisation.
- Teachers sharing their planning with students (year and term overviews; assessment tasks, criteria and schedules; learning outcomes for units and individual lessons).

It is interesting to note that the three other approaches we go on to describe as being important for these students, all have direct links back to student locus of control in the classroom and of their learning.

### ***Academic challenge***

Research studies in a number of countries show student disillusionment with the lack of academic challenge in their early secondary school experiences (Green, 1997; Kirkpatrick, 1992; Mizelle and Mullins, 1997 in McGee, 2003; Mizelle and Irwin, 2000). Yates (1999 in McGee et al, 2004) argues that in terms of curriculum content, many students end up studying content that they already know. Kirkpatrick (1997) found that students reported an increase in the volume of work, rather than the difficulty, resulting in students focussing on getting work in on time rather than paying attention to the quality. Teachers must recognise and build on past learning. This is not about using nationally-normed test results, or about pre and post testing, but is about asking students what they know about a topic and building on that knowledge, both individually and collectively, as a class. Some students lose confidence in their ability when they discover that there are gaps in their knowledge. Once again, this highlights the long-term transition issue of curriculum continuity and coherence across primary and secondary schools (McGee: 2003: 4) and the need for teachers from both the contributing and secondary schools to talk about learning outcomes, achievement expectations and programme content.

### ***Inquiry learning and learning by doing***

A number of studies emphasise the importance of the use of inquiry methods and learning by doing (Mizelle, 1995; Free, 1996; Tarter, Sabo and Hoy, 1995 in Nolan et al, 2000; Fraser, 2002). Learning by doing involves:

- Hands on, life-related activities where students can see the relevance of what they are learning and which build on their current knowledge and skills.
- Generating products or outcomes for audiences that extended beyond the teacher and the classroom.
- Exposing and challenging students to significant skills, concepts and theories rather than practical activities and events that become ends in themselves.

## ***Strategies and skills to help students learn***

If we are to treat seriously the need for these students to have a sense of autonomy, independence and self-determination, they need to learn strategies to enable them to be able to learn on their own (Galton et al, 1999). This does not mean that students are left to their own devices but rather that they are taught the skills they need to ask good questions; how to access, analyse and use information; how to manage a homework book; how to organise their time to accommodate their in-school and out-of-school commitments; how to study; and how to work effectively in groups. They need to know how the qualification system works and how to sit an exam. The emphasis should be on having consistency across the school both in what skills are taught and how.

Research and experience suggests that teaching students these skills cannot happen in isolation. It is the job of every teacher in the school to be able to teach and reinforce these skills and to provide opportunities for students to practice them. Rudduck (1996: 26) recommends that teachers create time for dialogue about learning so that students understand the longer-term implications of learning these skills and develop a language for thinking about learning and about themselves as learners.

The needs of early adolescents show that teaching and learning at this point must be much more than subject-based, expository teaching. We need to consider programmes and pedagogy in light of these needs and, regardless of when transition occurs, to ensure that what we teach and how enables rather than hinders a successful transition to secondary school.

## **The impact of transition**

Our New Zealand National Curriculum and the Qualifications Framework go a long way towards providing the potential for education to be a 'seamless' experience. The National Curriculum, including Te Whaariki, provides guidelines for the early years through to the end of secondary schooling. The curriculum levels provide opportunities to plan, teach and assess appropriately regardless of the chronological age or school year of the students. The Qualifications Framework has the potential to make the assessment and qualifications process 'seamless' through to the tertiary sector.

However, for most students making their way through the New Zealand education system, the pathway is an island-hopping exercise rather than a 'seamless' experience. Despite our best efforts to date, the impact of transition from one educational 'island' to another, even when the 'islands' are on the same site, can be traumatic for students (Hawk, Hill, Seabourne, Williams, Tanielu and Foliaki, 1996; Hawk and Hill 2000, 2001; McGee, Ward, Gibbons, Harlow, 2004). The majority of New Zealand students experience

two transitions during their compulsory schooling (at Year 7 and Year 9). There are other countries that also have a three-tier system (Education Review Office, 2003) but, unlike their overseas counterparts, the majority of New Zealand students (52%) experience two transitions within a two-year period, i.e. at Years 7 and 9 (Education Review Office, 2001).

Last year, the Ministry of Education commissioned a comprehensive review of the national and international literature on transition (McGee et al, 2004). What this review exposed is that we have research evidence about how students feel about transition but little evidence on the reasons for the negative impact on their learning or the best time(s) for transition(s) to take place. Most evidence comes from overseas. Most of it is from the United States and most is school-based research and experience on the transition in and out of middle schools, which unlike New Zealand span a four-year period (Nolan, Brown, Stewart and Beane, 2000). A positive outcome of the literature review, is that the Ministry has undertaken a new study that is following a group of Year 8 students from eight intermediate or primary schools transitioning into two secondary schools, one in Wellington and one in Auckland. It is following the students from their last term at their contributing school through to their first and second years of secondary school (Ministry of Education, 2003). A longitudinal study of this nature is long overdue because it has the potential to provide guidance on how to ensure student learning is not adversely affected. It still will not tell us, however, when the transitions should occur.

Despite the lack of New Zealand evidence, the data we do have, so far, suggest that the transition experiences of students in this country are no different from those in other countries around the world.

There is substantial agreement across the research literature on the following points:

- There is often a decline in achievement following transition (Barone, Aguirre-Deandris and Trickett, 1991; Galton, Gray and Ruddick, 1999; Mizelle, 1995; Office of Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools, 2002).
- The age at which transition occurs differs between and within countries. It appears to be the transition that makes the difference, not the age at which the students make the transition (Anderman, Maehr and Midgley, 1999; Mizelle, 1999). Some studies reported on transition at 10 or 11 years old and others at 13 or 14 years old (McGee et al, 2004) with similar findings: a drop in academic achievement. This has serious implications for the majority of New Zealand students who, as described above, make two transitions within two years.
- Because of the stark contrast in organisation and pedagogy, the most difficult transition for students is from primary/intermediate/middle school into secondary school (Kruse, 1996; Kirkpatrick, 1997; Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, 2002).

- Few steps appear to have been taken by schools to address the drop in academic achievement (McGee et al, 2004). In fact, many schools and teachers blame the previous school for not having taught the students well (Sutton, 2000).
- Previous experience and achievement is often disregarded by secondary schools and secondary teachers (Huggins and Knight, 1997; Galton, Gray and Ruddock, 1999; Waslander and Thrupp in McGee, 2004).
- Generally, schools have focussed on the orientation and social aspects of transition rather than the teaching, learning and achievement aspects (Office of Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools, 2002; McGee et al, 2004).
- Extensive transition programmes significantly lower failure rates and lead to better retention of students and fewer dropouts (Roderick and Camburn, 1999; Hertzog and Morgan, 1999, in Mizelle and Irwin, 2000; McGee et al, 2004; McLaren, 2003).

## Effects on Students

The national and international research provides a very consistent picture of how students experience transition. There appear to be degrees of difference, depending on the age at which they move to a new school, but otherwise the messages are the same. The student quotes and examples provided in this paper come from our own recent work in intermediate and secondary schools, from a wide range of deciles, in the North and South Islands.

Students experience a range of feelings before, at and after transition. For many, it is a combination of excitement and anxiety (Shoffner and Williamson, 2000). The things they grapple with include practical, social, emotional and learning issues.

The excitement appears to be greater at transition to intermediate than it is to secondary. It is excitement at the thought of entering a more grown-up world and at the prospect of new and exciting learning experiences.

The anxiety is experienced by most students to some extent and is greater on transition to secondary. Writers and researchers describe students as feeling "uncared for and lost" (Shoffner and Williamson, 2000) and finding their new school "traumatic" (Hawk and Hill, 1996, 2000, 2001; Muschamp et al, 2000; Elias, 2001), "confusing and challenging" (Ward, 2001), "complicated and difficult to understand" (Rudduck, 1996), "destabilising" (Elias, 2001) and "treacherous" and "personally disastrous" (Mizelle and Irwin, 2000). There are many students for whom there is little excitement, and some for whom the anxiety is great and the transition is turbulent and traumatic.

### ***In anticipation***

The expectations are largely generated by things that people have said about the time ahead. Contributions come from siblings, relatives and friends but mostly from parents and teachers. If you want to trigger a long discussion, ask a group of year nine students “What did people tell you about secondary school before you began?” They will recall a long list that will commonly include:

- The work will be harder
- You won't get away with that next year
- There will be more homework
- You will have to carry all your gear with you
- You will have to be more organised
- The teachers won't be there to help you all the time
- You have to shift classrooms
- Teachers will expect more and be harder to please
- Rules will be stricter

In all the years of asking students, and listening to their responses, we have yet to hear a positive comment among them. Ward (2001) quantified student feelings and found 92% of students held neutral or negative perceptions about what their new school would be like.

Most teacher comments seem designed to encourage students to be more self-managing, to work harder or to be more self-reliant. This is often not the way the students interpret them however. They make students anxious about their ability to cope with the new situation and they tend to feel unprepared or fearful of the level of future expectations of them (Rudduck, 1996). They often interpret the comments as a criticism of themselves or sometimes as a criticism of the secondary teachers as well as of the secondary system. Recently we asked groups of students in a high decile city intermediate school what they thought their intermediate teachers meant when they made those comments.

*“They want us to do well when we get there and they are trying to get us ready”.*

*“We will need some extra skills and will have to work harder so they are preparing us for how it will be”.*

The following responses, however, are of concern.

*“They were saying that the high school teachers are going to be harder and tougher on us. I think they mean more grumpy”.*

*"I thought they meant that I was not ready for College and that I was going to have lots of trouble when I got there".*

*"One of the teachers was angry with us and she said it to punish us".*

*"I think some of them didn't like High School and they are warning us about how bad it could be".*

Ward (2001) says that even anticipated change, such as expectations of harder schoolwork, can threaten students' confidence in themselves and self-image as competent learners.

### **On arrival**

Some students report a sense of relief on arrival that things are not as difficult as they had expected. For others, however, it is very stressful and for some, it gets slowly worse.

There is a great variation on the extent to which contributing and receiving schools support the transition and induction of students. First impressions do help or hinder. Prior familiarity with the school, provision of timetables, maps and walking tours of the facilities help alleviate immediate concerns about where the toilets are and where to buy lunch. The absence of information "produces a sense of bewilderment and entrapment" (Cotterell, 1986). An early issue is knowing where to go for classes and to have other needs met. Toilets, tuck shop, sports equipment and transport are mentioned often as examples. Many students feel desperate to be able to move with their new classmates and if they became separated, during the early days, they become very anxious.

*"One day a teacher asked me to stay behind and I was really afraid I would not get the right room and I would be late".*

*"I had to buy my lunch but my friends were going to start a game on the fields somewhere. I was scared I wouldn't find the tuck shop and then wouldn't find them, or it would be too late to play the game".*

*"I kept asking people all day if they knew where to go to catch my bus home but no one knew".*

If testing is part of the first few days, that adds significantly to their concerns. Knowing the result will impact on their feelings of self-worth and might determine who is in their class and how others perceive them. One of the most important issues for most students at the beginning is whether they have friends from their contributing school to be with, and whether or not they are separated from them.

The numbers, and physical size, of older students is often of concern. Many students worry about being teased, put-down, belittled or bullied by older

students. In some schools this is a feature of the student culture that the adults do not always know about. Some schools start new students on their own for a day or two before the rest of the students begin. This takes some pressure off new students at the beginning.

Without exception, we have had positive feedback about 'peer support' programmes in the early stages. The older student supporters have been selected and trained so the interactions are usually very positive. We have discussed the problems with vertical forms and induction in other papers (Hill and Hawk, 2003). In brief, there is often an informal and negative induction programme from the older students about where to smoke, how to wag and get away with it, which teachers are in relationships and how to give relievers a hard time. Not all older students want to associate with younger ones and not all are positive role models in spite of teachers wanting to think they are. Overall students find horizontal form experiences more welcoming and constructive than they do vertical form experiences.

The anxieties associated with transition change and evolve as time passes. Initially it is concerns about being with or without friends that seems to take priority (Mizelle and Irwin, 2000).

*"I dreaded each interval and lunch time because I did not know if I would find someone I knew to sit with. I thought about it all morning and couldn't concentrate on my work".*

*"My best friend had made a new friend in her class and they started to do things without me. I wanted to cry but I was scared someone would see".*

*"I didn't know if it was OK to ask to join in a game or whether to just do it. It took me a long time before I just did it".*

As well as having at least one friend to spend regular time with, many students are anxious about 'fitting in', being seen as being cool, not doing anything to embarrass themselves and having feelings of belonging and acceptance (Elias, 2001).

Early concerns about relative status and opportunities are a concern for some (Muschamp et al, 2000). They have been the oldest, the most senior, the power holders and the students with mana in their previous school. Now they are the smallest, newest and least important. They also feel "less connected and less valued" (Shoffner and Williamson, 2000).

*"We used to be the ones that made the decisions and had the power. Now we feel the lowest of the low".*

*"We used to feel confident to organise things and speak in assembly and things. At this school we are not allowed to do anything until we are seniors. That's not for years. I really miss all those interesting things we did".*

### ***After the initial shock***

Once the most immediate concerns of where to go and finding at least one friend have been largely overcome, the reality of the differences in classroom experiences becomes more of an issue. There is very little consistency of systems, language and expectations in some schools. Students have to adjust to different rooms, different desks and differing teacher attitudes, practices and expectations. These differences have a major impact on the ability of students to engage in learning. The willingness and ability of teachers to get to know individual students, to form a learning relationship with them and to engage them in learning at an appropriate level become either barriers or encouragements to learning.

The things teachers say and do make important impressions on students and, to some extent, determine their self-efficacy and motivation. Ruth Sutton provides us with some delightful cartoons that encapsulate the way teachers' comments impact on students' feelings of worth. One shows an adult indicating that a student should 'post' their record of learning into a slot in the desk. Another has a student telling the teacher that she has done this work before. The teacher says "But this time you'll do it properly" (Sutton, 2000: 8).

*"She would ask us what we knew about it and then she would always correct us or make us feel stink about saying it so I stopped saying anything. Then we all had to do exactly the same things all the time".*

Students need to know their past learning is valued and they need to experience challenging success as early as possible. This means each teacher needs to learn as soon as possible what each student brings with them as prior knowledge and needs to assure them that they have the ability to succeed (Ward, 2001).

New forms of curriculum delivery that are subject centered become the norm and require an adjustment on the part of students (Ward, 2001). The styles of teaching vary greatly from classroom to classroom in most secondary schools. Some teachers still teach in controlling ways from the front and expect students to be quiet and do the learning on their own. At the other end of the continuum, some secondary teachers have very interactive classrooms where the locus of control is very much with the students. It is often this change from hour to hour that is difficult to adjust to. Students also have difficulties adjusting many times a day to contrasting and even conflicting expectations from teachers about learning activities and behaviour. Some find adjusting to many different voices is difficult.

Within a school there are differing expectations about presentation of work, differing criteria for the same activities (how to write a paragraph, set out a graph, reference work, etc.), different use of words for the same thing and the same words used differently in various learning areas. All these inconsistencies make it hard for students to do what is expected of them and to transfer learning from one situation to another and these are on top of the differences between the contributing and the receiving school.

*“We were shown how to set out a graph in maths and I was really careful to do it properly but I had things written all over it. He said that we don’t do it like that in Geography but we hadn’t been told the differences.”*

It is common for teachers to begin the year with some revision. This serves several purposes. It overcomes the holiday break time and refreshes student memories. At the same time it gives the teacher an opportunity to understand the needs of individuals and the class. For some students this is a very boring time. They are repeating work they have already done. The early excitement wears off and young people become “bored and turned off” (Muschamp et al, 2000; Sutton, 2000).

For others it creates anxiety as they realise there is knowledge and/or skills they don’t have and Ward reports some teachers as regarding it as the “pupils’ responsibility to catch up” (Ward, 2001: 172). For some students, who were previously the top academic achievers, it is a reality check as they discover they might no longer be the top achievers. Self-efficacy and motivation can be damaged very early in the year and some students will have difficulty regaining their previous confidence and enjoyment of learning (Hill and Hawk, 2000b). Sutton discusses the stage at which some students decide whether to “give up or catch up” (Sutton, 2000: 60).

The critical importance of the teacher/student relationship for vulnerable students is acknowledged (Hill and Hawk, 2000; Schoffer and Williamson, 2000; Ward, 2001). They need to be understood and valued as a person with individual strengths and needs (Ministry of Education, 2003). The sooner a teacher can build such a relationship the sooner a student will feel safe and motivated to learn with and from them.

### ***Students arriving on their own***

When a student transfers from another school during the year or at a more senior level, their transition experiences can be more difficult and they can feel lonely and isolated, even when ‘buddied’ with peers to support them. They generally miss out on the planned induction activities such as being taken on a tour of the school, being given induction booklets, peer supporters and opportunities to meet their teachers. Friendships are often well established and, for girls in particular, it can be hard to be accepted into a group. They will be joining learning programmes part way through and can find themselves repeating some things and missing out on others. It is probably these students who have the most difficult transition.

The further through the secondary system that the student arrives, the more likely it is that there will be some restrictions on what they are able to do because of previous subject options and choices. Arriving at Year 11, for instance, can mean students might have missed some prerequisite teaching to begin a level one NCEA programme. Effective school liaison on subject

preparation, content and continuity (Ward, 2001: 179) works only if most of the students come from the same contributing school.

### ***Vulnerable students***

There are some students who, for a range of reasons, are more vulnerable socially and educationally. Mizelle and Irwin (2000) report that 60% of students who are identified as 'at risk' going into high school will not graduate with their class. These students need more personalised help before and after transition. A cluster of Christchurch schools trialled a transition programme especially designed to meet their needs (Burrell and Overton, 2003). They included students who, in their primary schools:

- Had poor social skills (loners/acting out)
- Lacked learning independence
- Lacked social independence
- Have had RTLB involvement over the last 12 months
- Have poor organisational skills
- Have learning difficulties
- Have moderate behavioural difficulties
- Identify as Maori or Pacific Islander

26% of the secondary school's intake was identified by their contributing schools as needing this type of support. A programme was organised with students and their families/whanau by the RTLB, the Year 9 dean and the Special Education Advisor.

Some interesting information gained from the students included:

- Students had a wide range of concerns similar to those already discussed
- Student knowledge of the secondary school was very limited, even if they had siblings attending
- Many had misconceptions about secondary school life
- There was uncertainty about adolescent culture (what was cool)
- Students at either end of the physical development continuum were most concerned about relating to other students

Behaviourally challenged students were not suitable for the programme but the others benefited greatly and the schools were keen to see it repeated each year. An American study of 56 high schools (Hertzog and Morgan, cited in Mizelle and Irwin, 2000) found that schools with extensive transition programmes have significantly lower failure and dropout rates.

## ***Involving parents***

There is plenty of evidence that involving parents in the transition process is very important:

- When parents are involved in student's transition to high school, they tend to stay involved in their child's school experiences (Maclver, 1990); and when parents are involved in their child's high school experiences, students achieve more (Linver and Silverberg, 1997; Paulson, 1994; Paulson, Marchant & Rothlisberg, 1998), are better adjusted (Hartos and Power, 1997), and are less likely to drop out of school (Horn & West, 1992).

(Mizelle and Irwin, 2000: 3).

However, parents rely mostly on the schools to give them opportunities to be involved and some need guidance in how to best help their child. They also often feel they need permission to voice concerns and need guidance regarding who to contact and how.

## **What schools can do**

There have been many strategies and structures trialled over the years. Often it is the day-to-day pressures of time and the tension between the needs of students and the realities for teachers that prevent good things happening. The following are all strategies that have been used in New Zealand schools in recent years.

### ***Liaison prior to the transition***

Liaison between contributing and receiving schools needs to happen in the year prior to transition. It requires an effort from all the schools involved and should include parents. Successful strategies include:

- Students visiting the new school to see classes working and to participate in school events, activities and productions.
- Schools working together in specific areas such as shared kapa haka group, reading programmes, etc.
- Designated staff such as the Year 9 dean and special education staff visiting the contributing school to identify particularly vulnerable students.
- Senior students visiting and talking with students about the receiving school. It is important that they do not just give a glossy version of life at the school. Students need to hear about normal activities and to have the opportunity to ask questions.

- The Principal visiting the contributing school to welcome in-coming students and to talk about opportunities at the new school as well as to give messages about how the school values its students and what support systems and people are available.
- Making a video of the school facilities and activities and making it available to contributing schools. Ideally this will give a realistic view of normal day-to-day activities in classrooms.
- Holding an open evening or day for students and parents/whanau.
- Mailing school newsletters to parents from the time they enrol their child.
- Holding an orientation evening for students and parents/whanau very soon after term begins. The form teachers, dean(s) and counsellor(s) are available to talk with parents.
- Interviewing each student with their parents/whanau and encourage them to talk about how they are feeling and any concerns or support they need.

### ***Minimise early stress***

Stress on students can be minimised by:

- Cutting placement testing to a minimum and done at the end of the year prior to transition. Nationally benchmarked data should be used, e.g. PATs, AsTTle.
- Organising peer support leaders to be trained and available on day one.
- Establishing a buddy system with seniors and new students.
- Bringing new students a day or two earlier than the rest of the school.
- Having welcoming events such as Powhiri, parent/whanau activities, social or fun sporting events.
- In one intermediate school, the Principal gets each student (N=500) to write to him about his/herself. He writes an individual letter back to each student.
- Providing breakfasts for particular groups who can become a support group such as the school whanau, Pasifika students, students new to the country, etc.
- Arranging a planned induction programme with activities that help students get to know each other, their teachers and the school.
- Providing important supporting documents. Students need their timetable as well as a map locating classrooms and key personnel, information about key people and their roles, questions commonly asked with answers, homework diaries, book lists, annual calendar of activities, etc.

- Teachers in charge of learning areas in the contributing and receiving schools can meet and discuss learning outcomes, achievement expectations, assessment data and programme content.

### ***Ongoing support***

Key staff need to find ways to identify student needs and address them early. Some strategies include:

- Having organised times for students to give feedback about their feelings and adjustment. Form period can be the place if it is long enough.
- Reporting to parents and get them in relatively early in term one to discuss settling.
- Form teachers liaising with home (by phone, email or letter).
- Scheduling at least one visit to each form class during Term 1 by the Principal and the dean and one visit by the counsellor (possibly together with other members of the support staff team).

## **What teachers can do**

Individual teachers in their daily classroom interactions can make an important contribution to helping the transition.

### ***Building effective relationships***

- Building a relationship with individual students and classes as soon as possible.
- Learning their names.
- Pronouncing them correctly.
- Talking about yourself and share some aspects of your life, interests, family, etc.
- Taking an interest in each student's special talents, interests and what they do outside of school.
- Developing a shared learning agreement with the class about how everyone will support each other to learn.
- Getting each student to write you a letter about him or herself. Replying in writing or verbally respond to some aspect of it.

### ***Making opportunities to listen***

- Offering a listening ear.
- Making form time for class discussions.
- Watching for students on their own in class or socially.

### ***Contacting families***

- Giving parents your name and a way of contacting you.
- Phoning as soon as you have a concern.
- Home visiting families in your form class.
- Organising a social activity that includes families/whanau.

What teachers must not do is assume students can manage it themselves. Nor must they fall into what Ruth Sutton calls the “culture of blame” (Sutton, 2000: 26) where teachers make critical comments about the other schooling sector.

## **Issues**

### ***The structure of schooling***

The evidence is that students experience difficulties regardless of the time and stage of the transition. Most New Zealand students experience two transitions because of our two-year intermediate schools (Education Review Office, 2001: 4). Having schools on the same site, such as a campus or the Year 7 to 13 schools, does not necessarily guarantee a smooth transition. It is what the adults, and teachers in particular, do that makes the difference rather than physical proximity of buildings.

In the 1990's, some schools requested and won the right to change their status to a middle school. This brought a range of issues to the fore. School funding and staffing are linked to student numbers and it often appeared that the changes were motivated by the wishes of adults to increase the school roll or to stop it declining, rather than a consideration of the needs of the students. Their actions often affected the other schools in the area and the result was that one school benefited at the expense of others. If it was the needs of early adolescents that were the real issue, there should have been some discussion about the merit of the students moving from primary at the end of Year 5 for their Year 6 at intermediate/middle school. It appeared the issue was in the ‘too hard’ basket and it was simply easier to try to retain students already at the school for another year or two.

The growing middle-schooling movement brought the philosophy from overseas and tried to make it 'fit' an existing system that was different. In *Bridging Educational Islands* (Hawk and Hill, 2000) we challenged the idea that by adding Year 9 and sometimes Year 10 to the intermediate years in order to create a 'middle' school was displacing the 'middle'.

### ***Entrenched positions***

The metaphor of educational islands, in the so-called seamless sea of curriculum and assessment frameworks, has its beginnings in the earliest days of New Zealand schooling. The students are expected to negotiate the islands while the adults generally spend their career on the one island only. There is evidence of some changes in recent years but we do not have to go back far in history to see the extreme differences that were enshrined in philosophy, pedagogy and bureaucracy (Hawk and Hill, 2000). When schoolhouses were available for principals, there was a code that allowed for secondary principals to have a separate bath and shower. Primary principals were entitled only to a shower over the bath. The stoves were also different. A primary principal was only allowed a stove top with three hot plates. A secondary principal was allowed four. Early childhood educators, of course, hardly existed because in those days we thought children didn't start to learn until they turned 5. These silly, but true, examples illustrate the attitudes of the time.

Although we now have pay parity, we still have a training system that tells us some people need to train for three years but others can do it in a year. We have separate teacher unions because they feel they represent different needs. We have school systems that are entirely different and we have some intermediates and a very small number of secondary schools trying to bridge the pedagogical gap.

Parents are expected to exercise choice for their children but tend to rely heavily on their own schooling experience in judging best practice. Schools often tell us that they know it is not valid to give percentages or place in class or school, BUT its what parents want and so it still happens. We have schools that are afraid to cut back the number of standards they offer because parents are comparing a school that offers 24 credits in a learning area and assuming that is better than one that offers 18.

Whatever system we continue with, or adopt, it is very important that teachers have a real understanding of the contributing and of the receiving schools (Hawk and Hill, 2001). The more a teacher understands what a student has experienced and what they bring with them, the more they are able to build on the strengths and abilities, affirm them, and help the student to move forward to the next learning stages. Teaching times have changed and it is not sufficient to rely on our own childhood experiences as a knowledge base. Nor is it sufficient to rely on our experiences of a system through a parent's eyes. We all need to spend some time on the other islands close to ours.

## ***The transitions***

The key questions are how often should there be transitions? And when?

Ruth Sutton describes the extreme ends of the continuum. At Year 1 students are “at the centre and learning is designed to be as holistic and flexible as the child herself”. At Year 13 the teacher’s goal is “to introduce the world to the student through the vehicle of their specialist knowledge” (Sutton, 2000: 21). Each end requires a different knowledge base but not necessarily a different attitude to teaching and learning.

If we accept that transition is difficult for the majority of students and that it adversely affects learning, it seems logical to have as few as possible. It is not possible, however, to consider appropriate transition points without considering them in the context of our own education system. In particular this means considering the end age of compulsory schooling, 16 years, and the stage at which we offer our major national qualification: NCEA. Currently the fact that our secondary schools go to Year 13 and that NCEA begins for most students at Year 11 makes a difference. It is not sensible to transplant overseas transition points when they come from a system that has a different end age and different high stakes qualifications.

We interviewed students and teachers in two secondary schools that receive students at Year 9, Year 10 and Year 11, sometimes from the same small number of schools. The samples were small but the conclusions were the same: that the closer the student is to beginning external qualifications when they arrive at secondary school, the more difficulty many have adjusting socially and academically. It will always be difficult to separate out the many variables that could contribute to this situation and we do not have many schools in New Zealand that would provide a research context in which to study the reasons in depth.

In the most recent review of literature (McGee et al, 2004) the writers say:

Perhaps too much has been made of student anxiety in reports on transition. It seems that most children adjust to the new school environment within six months and many regain losses in performance by their second year (McGee et al, 2004: Chapter 5).

Students have a right to be well prepared to achieve well in the country’s national qualification system. To regain losses in performance by their second year after arrival at secondary school is not very reassuring, especially if they don’t arrive until Year 10 or Year 11.

We currently see departments in secondary schools analysing their NCEA data in order to understand the implications for their teaching programmes at Years 9 and 10. It is a strength of this qualification that such analysis can be done and student learning can be strengthened as a result. In theory there is no reason why intermediate/middle schools could not be briefed on the same data and decide the implications for their programmes. The reality is that we

very rarely see this happening. The efforts to help students prepare and adjust to transition tend mostly to be behavioural, social and emotional rather than learning related.

## **The current challenges**

### ***Learning from the research***

There is plenty of international research and it is in general agreement on the key findings that transition is damaging to student motivation and learning whenever it happens. However, each research study is set in its own context in relation to receiving age, leaving age and the years at which national qualifications are sought. International research does not always transfer well to New Zealand (Education Review Office, 2001: 11). It is very important not to decontextualise the research findings and generalise claims beyond what is valid. We have to accept the limitations of the data we have to work with.

We have New Zealand research that aligns with the findings on the general effects of transition on students. We have good information on the strategies that will help ease a transition. What we don't have are any substantial studies that tell us when the best time for a transition(s) is. Just doing more of the same type of research will not provide us with the answers to the difficult questions of when? And how often? The type of research we need would be very complex and, in order to gain large enough samples would need to involve every school that has students leaving at differing years and every school that receives these students. Because there are only seven middle schools, the sample would still be limited. Ultimately, the effectiveness of each level of entry would need to be judged by comparing student achievement data, such as NCEA, and schools are unlikely to want to expose themselves to such comparisons. We would need to control for the influences of cognitive ability, academic achievement, social maturity, socio-economic status, and family support and backgrounds would need to be investigated if we are to make comparisons and judgements about what is most effective.

### ***The nature of the transition***

There seems little doubt that students in the middle years have particular and changing needs that should be reflected in their learning programme. As already mentioned, it would seem logical since each transition is problematic for there to be as few as possible. If there is to be a middle school type of programme, then we need to decide where the 'middle' logically is within our system. There is also the issue of how long the 'middle' programme lasts. It seems clear that two years makes little sense but does it need to be three? Or would four be better? If it is to be a four-year period, it should probably begin at Year 6 rather than Year 7 (Hawk and Hill, 2000). If it is to be a middle stage between two very different stages, then we need to be assured

that it will be a learning bridge between the other two 'islands' and not just another separate and different island that creates even greater gaps for students to cope with.

### ***Our complex system of schooling***

Our current range of school structure options is an inherited reality. Decisions are being made currently about the structure of some new schools, closure and changes to some and changes to the status of some existing schools. These are not decisions to be made by individual principals or boards of trustees. In our competitive schooling environment, the so-called 'consultation' process associated with communities making these decisions tends to tear communities apart and leave them damaged, rather than unified. Nor is it always as honestly consultative as it pretends to be (Lee and Lee, 1999: 214).

It would be good to know that there was a national plan, based on sound educational knowledge, that guides these decisions and that student transition was a key factor in the decisions. The editor of the New Zealand Herald called for "a national debate on school structures" in 1996 ('Accidental Schools', quoted in Lee and Lee, 1999: 216). In the recent discussion document on "a schooling strategy" the government says it wants a smooth transition for children to school, and a smooth transition to further education, training or employment (Ministry of Education, 2004: 5) but it does not mention smooth transitions along the way.

Lee and Lee (1999) clarify the strongly entrenched and polarised views about the middle years and how we should manage them through school structures. It is time we moved past the politics of entrenched positions of existing adult groups and made decisions based on student needs. It will be uncomfortable and disappointing for some because change is nearly always resisted initially. The recent closure of schools is a current example. It is probably not fiscally possible to make all the desired changes in a grand national re-organisation. Rather it will require an 'evolutionary approach' (ibid: 6). The best-practice decisions need to be made however and all new decisions based on these rather than historical habit or the wishes of powerful lobby groups.

### ***Leaving age and NCEA decisions***

We have already pointed out the important and close links between these components of our education system and the desired time of transition. It is possible that changes could be made in these areas. There is already discussion in some schools about the wisdom of having three years of NCEA. If there were only two years, at Years 12 and 13, that would allow more flexibility in the entry time for secondary school. If students entered at the beginning of Year 10 they would still have two years to prepare for the qualification as well as making the other adjustments. We are suggesting

that any changes to the timing of transition(s) must consider the national qualifications system and the leaving age.

### ***Trial and evaluate learning strategies***

There are many excellent examples of strategies contributing and receiving schools have used to help students adjust socially and emotionally on transition. All schools should now be using these strategies. The strategies that are largely untried are those that will help to make the learning seamless. Regardless of the school type, decile and relationship with contributing and receiving schools, schools could be trialling a range of strategies that aim to ensure learning is not disrupted. This will require a willingness on the part of all teachers to accept they have a responsibility to actively support students through a learning transition. It will require them to understand what is happening in their contributing/receiving school(s) and it will require their schools to provide support, through time allocations, for strategies to be trialled. It could be an excellent focus for national development funding. The effective strategies could then be shared with other schools.

### **In summary**

- We have a complex structure of schooling that is inconsistent in how it handles student transition.
- The majority of our students have two transitions in two years. This makes little sense in the light of what we know about the effects of transition on students.
- Since 'Tomorrows Schools', with an increase in school self-interest and competitiveness, the changes that schools might want to make to their structure can be a result of adult self-interest rather than meeting student needs. They are usually at the expense of other schools and their students.
- Entrenched and polarised positions of the various education interest groups means there is little hope for national agreement on an ideal structure, or how to adapt what we have now.
- We are unable to rely on overseas research, or the current New Zealand research project, to answer the most difficult questions of how often? and when?
- Decisions need to be made nationally about the best structure(s) and future decisions made on this basis. These need to consider the issues of school leaving age and the stage of sitting national qualifications.
- Now, and in the future, all contributing and receiving schools and teachers need to refine and extend the transition programmes that support social and emotional adjustment.

- We need research and development initiatives that assist students to make the necessary adjustments in their learning so it is not put on hold or damaged at times of transition.

## ***Emma***

It is the end of Emma's first term in Year 9. She is thoroughly enjoying being at secondary school and didn't have any trouble at all picking up on the Year 9 work. Last year Mr Williams, her teacher, told the class about some of the things they would be studying next year and reassured them that the way they do their setting out in Maths is just the same as it is for the Year 9 students. It was true. This year, her new teachers reminded her class that when they use the words 'learning outcomes' that this means the same as the words 'learning intentions' that their primary and intermediate teachers use. She knows that the teachers at her previous school and the secondary school work together regularly to make sure that the programmes in both schools are complimentary.

Emma was excited about going to secondary school. She had seen a video about the school that showed her what a normal day would be like and towards the end of Term 3 some senior students had come to her class to answer all their questions. Emma was relieved to know that she and three or four others would have a couple of buddies that would look after them for the first few weeks and to hear that the school always puts at least two or three friends or classmates in your form class. She had been worried that she would be the only one from her school in her form class. That would have been so hard.

She enjoyed reading the school newsletter that was posted out to her and her parents once she had enrolled at the school. Reading the items about the after-school activities had already helped Emma to make up her mind to join the kapa haka group and have a go at basketball. The teachers sounded really cool and Emma knows that the kapa haka groups from both schools are planning a trip to Wellington next August. Like all the other students, Emma and her parents met with the Year 9 Dean and then went to the school's Open Night. The teachers seemed really friendly, even the one that her older brother had told her to look out for. At the end of the holidays her form teacher had written a letter to her to welcome her to the school.

Emma had no trouble finding her way around on the first day. They were given a pack with a map, a booklet that had all these 'what if' questions and answers, a homework diary and a page with the programme for the next three days, an outline of the major events for the year, a list of all the extra-curricular activities that are available to the Year 9's and the names of some of the people she might need to see and where to find them. For two afternoons, they did fun activities with the other Year 9's and the teachers and each class had a chance to meet with the counsellor, the nurse and the reading tutors. Emma wished they could have had a counsellor at her last

school. Maybe that would have helped sort out the hassles she and her friends had on the bus with the boys from Room 11.

About a month ago, everyone in Year 9 had to fill out a questionnaire about how the students were settling in to the school. Emma could honestly say that she was enjoying every day. Her only hassle was that the Social Studies teacher was new to the school and she was different from the teachers. She lectured you all the time and didn't make learning fun like the others. She even talked to you as she expected you to take down notes from the board! And when you asked for help she said you should have been listening. She is the only teacher that doesn't seem to know that Emma has a bit of trouble with reading. Social Studies sucks. Emma hopes that if she writes it down, someone will find a way to tell the teacher. The other day, Emma saw Mr Williams in town. He said that the teachers had told him that the Year 9's were a great bunch of students. Emma laughed and told him the teachers were a pretty good bunch too.

*We acknowledge and thank the many schools that we have worked in and have enabled us to listen to students and their transition experiences. Particular thanks go to the AIMHI and the SMAD schools.*

## Reference List

Anderman, E.M., Maehr, M.L. and Midgley, C. (1999) Declining Motivation after the Transition to Middle School: Schools can make a Difference. *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, 32(3), pp. 131-147.

Baldwin, V. (1995) Some Aspects of Schooling for Emerging Adolescents in Russia, USA and Australia. Paper presented to Australian Curriculum Studies Association (Inc) *Curriculum 95; Reconstructing Curriculum – Choosing the Future*. The University of Melbourne, 11-14 July.

Barone, C., Aguire-Deandais, A.I. and Trickett, E.J. (1991) Mean-ends Problem Solving Skills, Life Stress, and Social Support as Mediators of Adjustment in the Normative Transition to High School. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 19(2), pp. 207-225.

Beutel, D. (2003) Pedagogical Concerns in the Middle Years of Schooling. *Australian Journal of Middle Schooling*. 3(1), May 2003, pp. 29-33.

Burrow, D. and Overton, A. (2003) *Increasing Success at School: A report on a Pilot Year 8 to Year 9 Transition Programme*. Mairehau High School.

Carvel, J. (2000, January 4) Summer Schools for all 11-year-olds. *Guardian Unlimited*. Retrieved 17 January 2001, from EBSCO Academic Search Elite.

Collins, J. and Harrison, B.T. (1998) Claiming and Reclaiming Education: the Experiences of Multilingual School Students in Transition from Primary to Secondary School. *Unicorn*, 24(1), pp. 16-29.

Cotterell, J. (1986) The adjustment of early adolescent youngsters to the transition to secondary school: Some Australian findings. In M. Youngman (ed.), *Middle Schooling Transfer: Problems and Proposals*. London: NFER Nelson.

Education Review Office (2001) Students in Years 7 and 8. *National Education Evaluation Report*. Autumn, 2001.

Education Review Office (2003) Students in Years 9 and 10. *National Education Evaluation Report*. June 2003.

Elias, M. (2001) Middle School Transition: It's Harder Than You Think. *Middle Matters*. Winter 2001, pp. 1-2.

Fraser, D. (2002) *Engaging Student in Deep Level Learning through Curriculum Integration*. A paper presented to the Middle Schools' Conference. May, 2002.

Free, R. (1996a) *From Alienation to Engagement: Opportunities for Reform in the Middle Years of Schooling*. Vol. 1, pp. 1-10. Belconnen: Australian Curriculum Studies Association.

Free, R. (1996b) *From Alienation to Engagement: Opportunities for Reform in the Middle Years of Schooling*. Vol. 3, pp. 29-40. Belconnen: Australian Curriculum Studies Association.

Galton, M., Gray, J. and Rudduck, J. (1999) *The Impact of School Transitions and Transfers on Pupil Progress and Attainment*. Annesley, Notts: Department for Education and Employment. Research Report RR131.

George, P., Stevenson, C., Thomson, J. and Beane, J. (1992) *The Middle School – and Beyond*. Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Hawk, K. and Hill, J. (2000) *Bridging Educational Islands: Making the Aotearoa/NZ system a seamless experience for students*. Paper prepared for the NZARE Conference. University of Waikato, November 2000.

Hawk, K. and Hill, J. (2001) Troubled Transition: How to ensure that educational transition points do not interrupt student learning. *Set: Research Information for Teachers*. No. 3, 2000, pp. 29-32.

Hawk, K., Hill, J., Seabourne, T., Williams, T., Tanielu, L. and Filiaki, L. (1996) *Towards Making Achievement Cool: Achievement in Multi-Cultural High Schools*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Hawk, K., Tumama Cowley, E., Hill, J. and Sutherland, S. (2001) *Relationships: The Critical Factor in Teaching Maori and Pasifika Students*. Paper prepared for the NZARE Conference. Christchurch, December 2001.

Hill, J. and Hawk, K. (1998) *Achieving Is Cooler Than It Was: Achievement in Multi-Cultural High Schools*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Hill, J. and Hawk, K. (2000a) *Making a Difference in the Classroom: Effective Teaching Practice in Low Decile, Multi-Cultural Schools*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Hill, J. and Hawk, K. (2000b) *Four Conceptual Clues to Motivating Students: Learning from the Practice of Effective Teachers in Low Decile, Multi-Cultural Schools*. Paper for the NZARE Conference: 2000.

Hill, J. and Hawk, K. (2003) *Achieving is Cool: What we learned from the AIMHI Project to Help Schools More Effectively Meet the Needs of their Students*. Paper for the NZARE Conference: 2003.

Kirkpatrick, D. (1997) What's the Point? Changes in students' beliefs about academic work in transition from primary school to secondary school. *Set: Research Information for Teachers*. 1, (1)

Kruse, D (1996) Transition and Change: Early Adolescence and the Role of Education. *Learning Matters*, 1(2), pp. 59.

Lawton, D. (1999) Middle Schooling: The Battle to Overcome the Obstacles of Structure. *The Practising Administrator*. Vol. 1, 1999, pp. 22 – 26.

Lee, G. and Lee, H. (1999) The Contested Middle Ground: Middle Schools in New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 34(1), pp. 211-221.

McLaren, K. (2003) *Reconnecting Young People: A Review of the Risks, Remedies and Consequences of Youth Inactivity*. A report for the Youth Transitions Report Series for the Strategic Social Policy Group of the NZ Ministry of Social Development.

McGee, C. (1987a) *Crossing the Divide: the Transition from Primary to Secondary School in New Zealand*. Wellington: Department of Education.

McGee, C. (1987b) *Executive Report: the Linkages Project – Transition from Primary to Secondary School in New Zealand*. Wellington: Research and Statistics Division, Department of Education.

McGee, C., Ward, R., Gibbons, J. and Harlow, A. (2004) *Transition to Secondary School: A Literature Review*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Ministry of Education (2004) *Making a Bigger Difference for all Students: A Schooling Strategy Discussion Document*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Ministry of Education (2003) *A Study of Student's Transition from Primary to Secondary Schooling: Some preliminary data from the interviews with students*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Mizelle, N.B. (1995) *Transition from Middle School into High School: the Student Perspective*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco.

Mizelle, N.B. and Irwin, J.L. (2000) *Transition from the Middle School into High School*. Retrieved March 15, 2004 from [http://www.nmsa.org/research/res\\_articles\\_may2000.htm](http://www.nmsa.org/research/res_articles_may2000.htm).

Muschamp, Y., Stoll, L. and Nausheen, M. (2000) *Learning in the Middle Years*. Paper presented to the British Educational Research Association at Cardiff, September 2000.

National Center for Education Statistics (1995) *Digest of Education Statistics*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Nolan, C.J.P. and Stewart, D.J. (1992) *The Middle School: Essential Education for Emerging Adolescents*. Palmerston North: ERDC Press.

Nolan, C.J.P., Brown, M.A., Stewart, D.J. and Beane, J. (2000) Middle Schools for New Zealand: A Direction for the Future. *Median* 6, pp. 4-6.

Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (2002, June) *Changing Schools: Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Transfer Arrangements at Age 11*. (HMI 550: Version 21 June 2002). London: Office for Standards in Education. Retrieved February 2004 from <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/public/yearspub02.htm>.

Pinnell, P. (1998) Middle Schooling: A Practitioner's Perspective. *IARTV Occasional Paper*. No.57. Victoria: Incorporated Association for Registered Teachers of Victoria.

Roderick, M.R and Camburn, E.M. (1999) Risk and Recovery From Course Failure in the Early Years of High School. *American Educational Research Journal*. 36 (2), pp. 303-343.

Rudduck, J. (1996) *Going to 'the Big School': the Turbulence of Transition*. In *School Improvement: What can pupils tell us?* in J. Rudduck, R. Chaplain and G. Wallace (eds.) London: David Fulton Publishers.

Shoffner, M.F and Williamson, R.D. (2000) Facilitating Student Transitions into Middle School. *Middle School Journal*. March, pp. 47-52.

Sutton, R. (2000) *Year 8 to Year 9; Overcoming The Muddle in the Middle*. Salford: Ruth Sutton Publications.

Vars, G.F. (1997) Student Concerns and Standards Too. *Middle School Journal*. March 1997, pp. 44 - 49.

Watson, J.E. (1964) *Intermediate Schooling in New Zealand*. Wellington: NZCER.

Ward, R. (2000) Transfer from middle school to secondary school: A New Zealand study. *Journal of Educational Research*, 33, pp. 365-374.

Ward, R. (2001) *The development of a middle school*. Unpublished PhD thesis. Hamilton: University of Waikato.

Wavering, M.J. (ed.) (1995) *Educating Young Adolescents: Life in the middle*. New York: Garland Publishing.