

Theme: Transition

West Belfast Partnership Board's 'Sharing the Learning' Programme:

The 'Transition to Nursery, through Nursery and to Year 1' Project.

The key elements of innovative practice within this case study (taken from the [Inspection and Self-evaluation Frameworks](#) for pre-school settings and for primary schools) include:

- **Outcomes for learners**
 - the children's progress takes account of and builds effectively upon their **prior experiences and learning**; and
 - the children are **ready to progress** to their next stage of learning;
- **Quality of provision**
 - teachers build upon the children's interests, needs and prior learning; and
 - **assessment information** is gathered and presented in an appropriate manner to inform all relevant stakeholders.
- **Leadership and management**
 - a culture of **self-evaluation** is well-established and the effective use of evidence underpins the focus on continuous improvement;
 - there are **effective partnerships** with parents and carers, external agencies and communities to reduce barriers to learning; and
 - relationships with other schools, and the wider community, support the holistic development of the children.

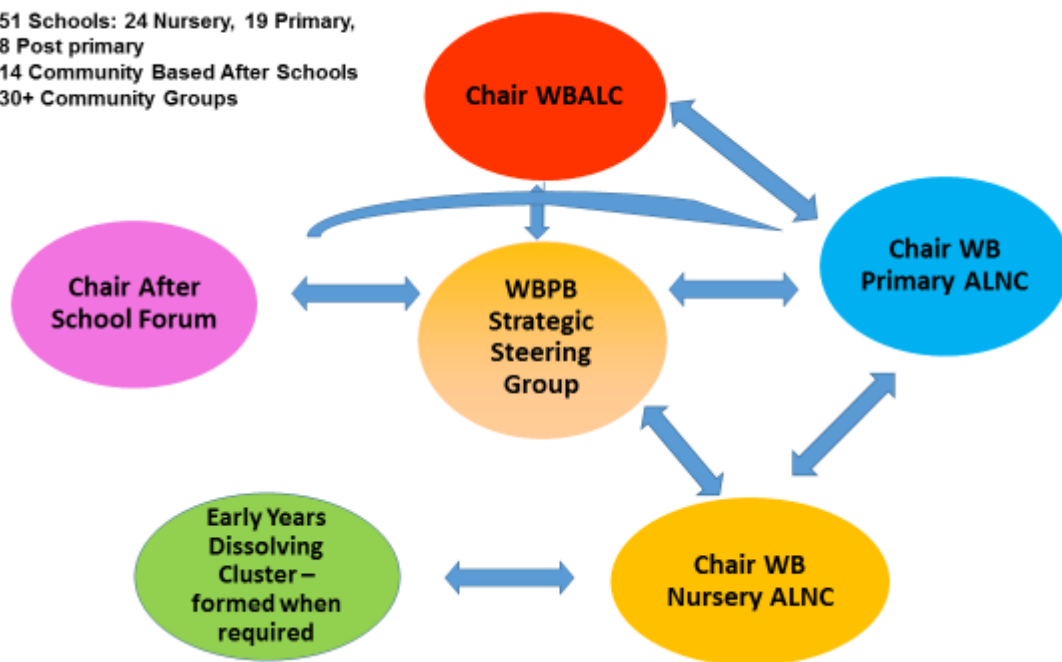
West Belfast Partnership Board's 'Sharing the Learning' Programme:

The 'Transition to Nursery, through Nursery and to Year 1' Project.

Background to the 'Sharing the Learning' Programme

In 2014 West Belfast Partnership Board (WBPB) established a series of structures and processes in partnership with local schools and community organisations to help improve further the life chances of children and young people in the area. In total 51 Nursery, Primary and Post Primary schools and over 30 community organisations are members of the WBPB's network.

- 51 Schools: 24 Nursery, 19 Primary, 8 Post primary
- 14 Community Based After Schools
- 30+ Community Groups



The core aim of the WBPB's 'Sharing the Learning' Programme, funded by the Department of Education, is:

'to raise attainment levels across the education spectrum for children and young people experiencing disadvantage through poverty, exclusion and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.'

Background to the Transition Project

In order to improve transition, it was recognised, through comprehensive consultation and evidence-based self-evaluation by the schools and the WBPB, that more collaborative working methods were needed if the core aim of the 'Sharing the Learning' Programme was to be addressed to best effect. A focus was placed on improving the development of children in the early years of schooling. To this end, a Nursery Area Learning Networking Community (ALNC) and Primary ALNC were established, chaired by local principals and managed by the WBPB¹. The 'wraparound support' approach to the work of this Project includes Early Years, Nursery Schools, Primary Schools, and crucially parents and children.

Nursery Area Learning Networking Community
<p>Foci:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthen communication and relationships• Develop and evaluate the Pre-provider to Nursery information pro forma to support planning for the needs of each individual child• Develop west wide resources based on need identified• Deliver programmes in response to parental need• Provide a support platform for principals and staff

Primary Area Learning Networking Community
<p>Foci:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dissemination of good practice <i>Quality learning experiences; Cluster formation; Effective classroom strategies and approaches; Effective interventions with a focus on underachievement; All schools and community gain and learn from expertise of each other.</i>• Self-evaluation <i>Ensuring what we do is effective, measurable and evidence based; Consistency in approach to self-evaluation; Overall evaluation reports from WBPB evaluating all including training etc.</i>• Networking <i>Building trusting relationships with all cross phase; Creating effective links with all to ensure unnecessary repetition and effective workable curriculum which meets the needs of every individual child; All school staff buying in to process.</i>

¹ See membership of the partnerships in the acknowledgements section at the end of this case study.

There is also an Early Years Cluster (when need arises) which draws on different members from community-based Day Care, Sure Start, Nursery, Foundation and Key Stage 1 teachers which is set up at different junctures, for example, when a specific piece of work is identified, such as, transition resources. The nature of this cluster ensures that as many providers as possible have input at various stages over a period of time, and ensures ownership of completed work and buy-in for the use of the resources produced. The views of the parents and children inform all aspects of the work.

The WBPB and the ‘Sharing the Learning’ partners recognised that **early interventions at every phase of a child’s education journey play an essential role in reducing the education inequality gap.**

A wide body of local and international evidence² highlights the factors that contribute to a child’s attainment. These factors were key considerations in the strategic planning for this Transition Project and include: home/family based factors; socio-economic background (which has a stronger impact here than in other OECD countries); levels of educational attainment of the child’s parents/carer; parental attitudes and engagement, especially reading regularly to the child/ teaching early literacy and numeracy skills; talking about the school day; taking the child to the library; regular bedtimes; and, home learning environment (e.g. number of books in the home). There is a long-established pattern which acknowledges poverty as presenting barriers to children’s education, which means pupils from areas of social deprivation enter post-primary schooling with lower than average attainment while simultaneously trying to cope with social and economic problems that inhibit their learning.

² Research sources include the Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development’s (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), and the Millennium Cohort Study and Effective Pre-School Provision NI (EPPNI). The importance of parental and community engagement in education was also highlighted in the Assembly Education *Committee’s Inquiry into Successful Post-Primary Schools Serving Disadvantaged Communities 2010.*

Targets

Project Objectives	Measurable Targets (SMART)
<p>1. Pre-Nursery to Nursery</p> <p>To work with Early Years and Nursery providers to support parents to ensure that they and their children are ready for children starting Nursery.</p>	<p>Quantifiable Annual Target: 1000 children and 600 parents Involvement of 11 WB Early Years providers and 24 Nursery Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 90% of parents and staff report a smooth and seamless transition from pre-Nursery to Nursery - 85% of parents become involved in learning programmes to support their children as they enter education. - 85% of parents access WB parental transition resources to ensure that children and parents are better prepared for Nursery. - 100% Pre-Nursery Providers and Nursery Schools will use the developed Transition Pro forma annually. - Partnerships with 11 Early Years providers (such as Sure Start) and 24 Nursery schools will continue to be developed and strengthened.
<p>2. Nursery to Primary</p> <p>To support families and children in preparation for learning and making transition from Nursery to starting Primary School.</p>	<p>Quantifiable Annual Target: Involvement of 24 Nursery Schools and 19 Primary Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 90% of parents and staff report a smooth transition from Nursery - Primary - 85% of parents who participate show increased positive attitudes in terms of children's education - 100% of families and children engage in activities in preparation for learning and starting primary school - 100% parents /carers involved in programmes designed to encourage reading in line with DE Give Your Child a Helping Hand and Getting Ready to Learn, Big Bedtime Read at home, and understanding of the curriculum and development of school and study routines in the home. - 85% of parents show an increased understanding of the KS1 school curriculum

Actions taken to effect improvement

- 1. Production of a bespoke Transition to Nursery and from Nursery to Year 1 Pro forma.**
- 2. With the EA's SEN Early Years Team, providing valuable input to the 'Transition - Supporting the Child with Special Educational Needs in the Early Years' Resource.**

The ALNCs worked together to develop, evaluate and review a proforma for agreed use in transition to nursery, and in nursery to primary school that would allow them to plan strategically and proactively to support the learning needs of each individual child. They also worked with the Education Authority's SEN Early Years Inclusion Team to produce a resource, *'Transition – Supporting the Child with Special Educational Needs in the Early Years'*.

- 3. Production of 'A Journey to Nursery, through Nursery to Year 1' Resource.**

The WBPB, local Sure Start providers, community-based day care providers and Nursery and Primary Schools all worked together to produce a resource, *'A Journey to Nursery, through Nursery to Year 1'*, which focuses on transition, curriculum areas and has a specific section for parents.

- 4. Design and Publication of 'Progression of Play from Nursery to Primary 2' Resource.**

John Paul II Primary School, Matt Talbot Primary School and St Bernadette's Nursery School worked together to create the *'Progression of Play from Nursery to Primary 2'* resource. Through partnerships and collaborative working relationships, WBPB were able to help support this work on trialling, design and publication.

- 5. 'Harper, the Wonder Dog' Transition Storybook by local author, Liz Gough.**
- 6. Storytelling sessions with local author, Liz Gough.**
- 7. Training on the use of puppets.**

A key action in this work was the creation of the *'Harper, the Wonder Dog'* Transition Storybook written by local author, Liz Gough, with the story telling animated by the use of puppets. The puppets were purchased for each Nursery setting and were also used in some Primary settings during the first term. Liz Gough kindly provided training on the use of puppets. She also undertook story telling sessions in the Nursery and Primary schools at key transition points in the school calendar.

8. **‘Parent and Child’ Programme delivery tailored to meet need.**
9. **Cross-phase teacher professional learning to develop knowledge and expertise.**

A ‘Sing-a-Long with Harper’ nursery rhyme book with CD was produced and given to every Nursery child in west Belfast to promote early phonics, improve early vocabulary, expand imagination and most importantly to have fun. This resource also focused on parental engagement and promotion of reading at home. All of the above resources were shared with others across Belfast and regionally. Specific parent and child programmes were delivered in 24 Nursery schools based on parental and child need. There was joint cross-phase teacher professional learning opportunities on the effective use of the resources. Some schools in Shared Education partnerships provided training and resources for their partner schools.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic

The Transition Project begins in January/February each year when the settings begin to work with the children and parents on getting prepared to make the transition and continues through to November, a period which includes the child’s transition in September to their new school. Given the COVID-19 lockdown occurred during a key period for the delivery of the Transition Project, the mode of delivery had to change from face-to-face to on-line.

In response, a number of short videos were produced entitled, ‘*The Adventures of Harper the Wonder Dog, with Emer and Lorcan*’. These resources were produced using the puppets in order to disseminate key education and health messages during the COVID-19 pandemic. They have been shared with local community day care providers, Nursery and Primary schools, SureStart, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, Education Authority and Department of Education. They have also been disseminated to schools and education stakeholders with whom the WBPB work on a regional basis.

‘*The Adventures of Harper the Wonder Dog, with Emer and Lorcan*’ can be accessed by clicking on the links below. Note: the words in the story are not read aloud in the video clips so they can be read by the teachers or parents alongside the child.

<u>Having fun indoors</u>	<u>Playing in the garden</u>	<u>Helping at Home</u>
<u>Washing your hands</u>	<u>The World Around Us</u>	<u>Playing and meeting friends</u>

Outcomes from the Project

Robust evaluation of all 'Sharing the Learning' interventions is carried out centrally by the WBPB's Evaluation Officer. Methods include: quantitative data captured and reported on an Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) Scorecard; qualitative feedback captured through evaluation questionnaires; structured interviews; focus groups of children, parents and educationalists; and, impact stories.

The various evaluations are collated and included in a comprehensive End of Year Status Report which is disseminated to all stakeholders. The key outcomes identified include:

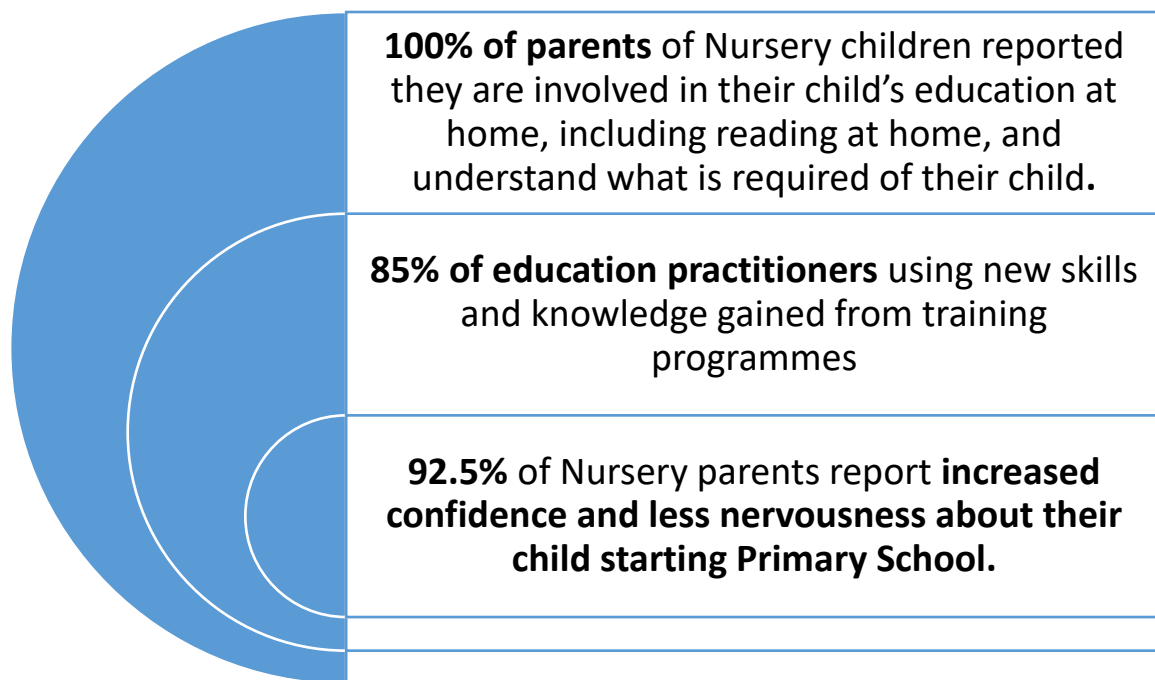
- **Increased parental engagement at Nursery level, including transition to Nursery and from Nursery to Primary School**
- **Increased parental engagement in reading at home, in line with the Department of Education's 'Give Your Child a Helping Hand' Strategy**
- **Seamless transition for children and parents between providers**
- **Increased collaboration between Early Years providers including Sure Start, Nursery, Primary and community-based providers through the WB Early Years Cluster**
- **Increased parental confidence as primary educators of their child**
- **Improved Home to School routines**
- **Improved preparedness of children for Nursery and School**
- **Reduced anxiety for child and parent about Transition stages**
- **Collegiate, supportive networks which share resources and dissemination of best practice**

The membership of the Nursery and Primary ALNCs has also increased as a consequence of the Project. All targets set within in the business case have also been achieved:

- Transition Programmes were completed by 24 Nursery schools, 3 Surestart organisations and 6 community-based day-care organisations;
- Child and Parent Family Learning Programmes were delivered in 24 Nursery schools with 1110 children, 1060 parents, 207 grandparents and 14 others including carers, staff and siblings;
- Collaborative engagement with 19 Primary schools;

- Dissemination of resources; and
- Teacher Professional Learning for 429 Nursery, Primary and Community staff on topics such as resilience, and emotional literacy, attachment and positive mental health.

OBA Outcomes



Main lessons learned

- Schools and community working together has a really positive impact in terms of improving outcomes for children and families, area planning and the effective use of resources including financial resources.
- The Nursery's Parent and Child Programmes provide parents with tools and confidence to support their child's learning, building confidence in their role of supporting their child's education and leading to better levels of engagement and use of the skillsets of the parents.
- Delivery of Parent and Child programmes in Nursery Schools in the Autumn Term engages parents in their child's Nursery environment which facilitates and builds positive parent/staff relationships from the outset.
- Staff have found the time spent on completing and implementing the transition pro-forma pays off significantly in terms of improved understanding of an individual child's development needs and supporting proactively child-centred learning.

- The highly valuable impact of linkages through Nursery and Primary ALNCs, supporting consistency of transition across West Belfast.

Further information

If you require further information regarding the contents of this case study, please contact Angela Mervyn, Education Programme Manager in the West Belfast Partnership Board at angie@wbpb.org.

Acknowledgements

'Harper, the Wonder Dog'

Author, Liz Gough

Michael McGlade of Yellow Design for design and production

Angie Mervyn of West Belfast Partnership Board for publication

'Journey to Nursery through Nursery and to Year 1' Resource

West Belfast Nursery ALNC

West Belfast Primary ALNC

Clare Evans, St Teresa's NS

Clare McAllister, St Michaels NS

Laura Mallon, Holy Child NS

Mairead McLogan, St Paul's NS

Ríoghnach Doherty, St Peter's NS

Caroline Gallagher, Holy Trinity PS

Natasha McGoldrick, St Kevin's PS

Penny Ambrose, Beechmount Sure Start

Christine Collins, Upper Andersonstown Community Forum

Department of Education N.I.

Education Authority's "Transition: Supporting the Child with Special Educational Needs in the Early Years" Task Group, as some of their materials have been included or adapted for use in this resource.

Designed by Yellow Design, Belfast.

Published by The West Belfast Partnership Board.

'Progression of Play from Nursery to Primary 2' Resource

John Paul II Primary School: Ólin Irvine & Roisin Sullivan

Matt Talbot Nursery School: Ríoghnach Doherty & Rosemary Ward

St Bernadette's Nursery School: Roisin Cassidy & Michelle Kearney