

Strengthening Transitions from Preschool to High School in Multisite CLCs



School transitions are critical periods of change that directly impact a student's emotional well-being, academic success, and social adjustment. A positive transition fosters confidence, reduces anxiety, builds resilience, and ensures continuity in learning, while a poorly managed one can lead to disengagement and regression. Bridging activities that connect elementary schools together with the high school provides significant potential for strategies that build a sense of community and a sense of belonging that contribute to harmonious transitions.

Multisite CLCs are particularly well-positioned to support school transitions.

A multisite CLC (MS-CLC) will often group together elementary schools with the regional high school that most students will attend (i.e. "feeder schools"). MS-CLCs also share an action plan that addresses the needs of the students attending these schools, allowing for a concerted effort to support the students throughout their schooling.

Community Schools can support successful transitions in all stages of a child's educational journey by connecting families, schools and community spheres. Because MS-CLCs work across multiple schools, they are uniquely positioned to identify patterns, trends, and recurring transition challenges using shared observations and data from several sites. This broader view provides valuable context for advocacy at community roundtables (i.e. Tables de concertation), helping partners better understand what students and families are experiencing across an entire territory. MS-CLCs can then mobilize community organizations to co-create resources and services that strengthen school-based transition offerings, while also supporting students across multiple spheres of their ecosystem (school, family, community, and peer networks).

"A successful transition for the child and the adults in the child's life, whether at home, at school, or in the community."

Transition is defined as the "time period during which the child gradually adjusts to his or her new physical, social and human environment" (Legendre, 2005, p. 1404), as cited in the Guide for Supporting a Successful School Transition, p. 2.

This tool provides examples of effective School Transition Support strategies used by various schools in the CLC Network, aligned with the Québec Ministry of Education's *Guide for Supporting a Successful School Transition*.

THE 4 STAGES OF TRANSITIONS:

- Preparation
- Meeting
- Adaptation
- Stabilization

– Fabian, H., & Dunlop, A. W. (2002).

Transitions in the Early Years: Debating Continuity and Progression for Young Children in Early Education. Routledge. This model of transitions is often quoted in School Transition Guides.

"Working with connected schools throughout the year provides opportunities to support students at each stage of transition."



Multisite CLCs: Strengthening Transitions from Preschool to High School

Timeline of Transition Strategies

Pre-registration

Timeline: Anytime before registration (typically in January)

Strategy: Offering opportunities to visit the school can help build familiarity with the premises

- 1. Parent-Child activities:** Allow community groups to host activities in schools.
- 2. Virtual visits & activities:** Share videos, photos, or host activities virtually.
- 3. Visits at all grade levels:** Provide engaging experiences for students.

Examples include elementary students attending school plays or movie afternoons at the high school auditorium, Grade 6 visits to Vocational Centres to try different trades (photo).

| **TIP:** *Connected schools are assets that can be great venues for special events!*

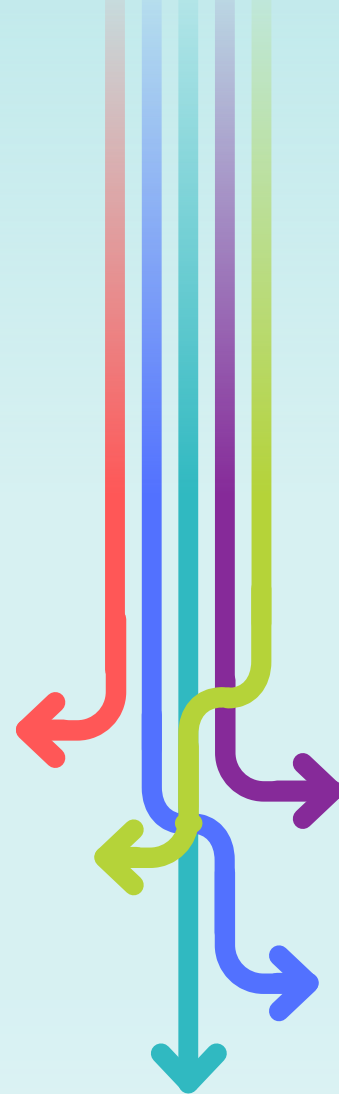
EXAMPLES

Mini-move into the school - Preschool Family activities in Drummondville Elementary

CASE (a community organization) offers their Mini-Move program Saturday mornings at Drummondville Elementary School to help develop preschoolers' gross motor skills and provide families with a sense of belonging to the school community.

- Builds familiarity with the physical environment and helps reduce anxiety about the first transition into school.
- Strengthens the school-community partnership by embedding early years services directly in the school space.
- Increases access and awareness
- Partnering organizations can gain increased exposure to their services when connected schools promote the program through newsletters and shared communications.

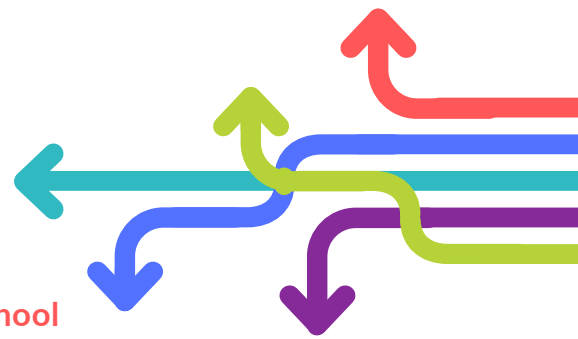
| **TIP:** *Your local Maison de la famille or NPI could be great partners!*



Schools who open their doors to community-based early years programs give their future families a first step into their doors to become familiar with the premises, sometimes even before the child has taken their first steps!



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Gathering virtually - Online Reading Clubs in elementary school clusters for Richmond Regional High School

Online Reading Clubs brings together students from 3 different schools for small group extra-curricular reading practice and activities weekly over Zoom, animated by a trained animator or special education technician.

- Builds familiarity and peer connections across feeder schools before students enter high school.
- Strengthens belonging by helping students start secondary school with recognizable faces and shared experiences.
- Supports literacy and confidence through consistent, low-pressure extracurricular practice.
- Creates an accessible transition strategy that removes transportation barriers and supports participation across communities.

TIP: *Aligning these projects to Educational Project goals opens doors to meaningful collaboration with school staff!*

Connecting with a cause – Sharing a community service activity across schools & grades

Lakeside Academy & Maple Grove Academy's Grade 6 and 8 students collaborate to assemble essential items for local women's shelters, fostering empathy while supporting a vital cause.

- Bringing together Grade 6 and Grade 8 students creates early, positive contact before the transitioning to high school.
- Builds familiarity with future peers, reducing uncertainty about the high school environment.
- Encourages the development of supportive interpersonal relationships prior to entry.
- Helps students enter high school with recognizable faces and shared experiences.
- Strengthens sense of belonging and can reduce anticipatory anxiety.

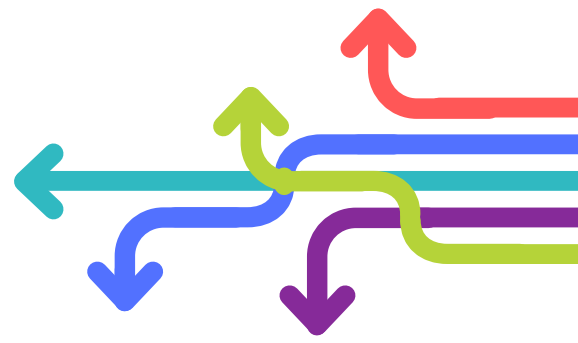
Multisite CLCs make this coordination easier through shared action plans, feeder-school alignment, and cross-site collaboration structures.

TIP: *Connecting over compassion builds community!*





Multisite CLCs: Strengthening Transitions from Preschool to High School



School Registration

Timeline: Usually around January for elementary school and CEGEPs. Some high schools may have an application process that begins earlier.

Strategy: For some parents, this is the first meeting with the school. For schools, it's the opportunity to make a great first impression!

- Provide a welcoming environment, for a positive first meeting
- Reduce barriers to registrations with actions such as videos or webinars to explain the process; or providing accessible registration times if done in person. Is there a community partner who can support low-literate parents through this process?
- Share with stakeholders in multiple spheres to celebrate and promote this period

| **TIP:** Leverage the networks of community school partners to share and promote school registration information!

Post-Registration

Timeline: Between the registration period and the first day of school

Strategy: Transition activities offered during this time period help familiarize and create attachments to the new milieu.

- Transition activities such as orientations, summer camps, “student-for-a-day” experiences, and special events can be organized during this period, often in collaboration with community organizations or PPOs.
- Maintain communications between old and new milieu; collaborate to share information between settings (including health and community sector) for students requiring extra support.

EXAMPLES

Making connections over shared activities - Cook & connect over a collective supper at Richmond Regional High School

Animated by the community’s Collective Kitchens animators, Grade 6 students and their parents, Kitchen Brigades high school student volunteers and staff are invited to an evening at the high school to cook and then share a meal together.

- Provides a welcoming, informal first experience in the high school setting before the official transition.
- Builds early relationships between future students, current high school peers, staff, and families.
- Reduces anxiety by allowing Grade 6 students to experience the space in a positive, low-pressure context.
- Strengthens the home–school connection by engaging parents alongside their children.
- Encourages a sense of belonging by creating shared experiences and memories tied to the high school community.
- Reinforces that transition is not just academic, but social and relational.



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CIT (Cougars in Training) Camp: A soft launch to help students prepare for their entry into St. Lambert International High School

CIT Camp is a short, pre-entry transition experience designed to help all new students feel more prepared and confident before starting secondary school. It recognizes that transition is a process, not a single day, and provides intentional support during this critical period. Former CIT campers often return as camp counselors, reinforcing leadership development and peer mentorship. The camp concludes with a family BBQ to strengthen the home- school connection.

- Offers students gradual exposure to the high school environment before the first day, reducing uncertainty and anticipatory anxiety.
- Builds early relationships with peers and trusted adults, strengthening belonging and confidence.
- Develops school literacy and key life skills (routines, schedules, expectations) to support readiness.
- Including a parent and family engagement component strengthens the home-school connection and reinforces a smoother transition.

Around the start of school

Timeline: August - September

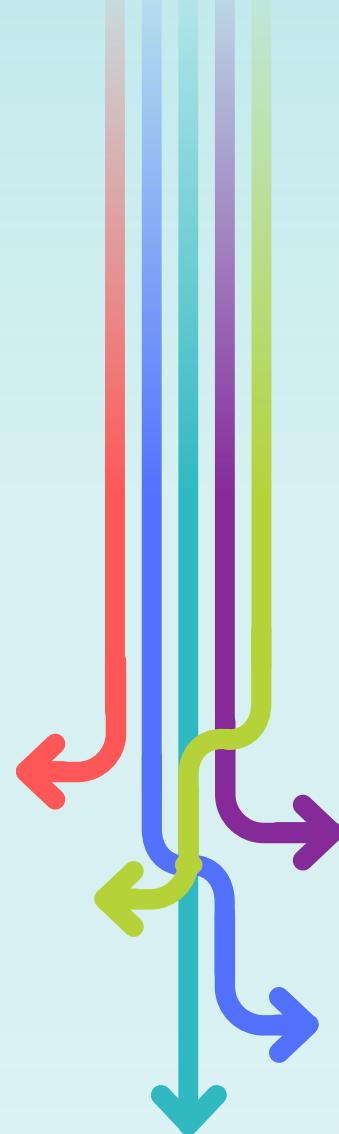
Strategy: The start of school is a key moment to reinforce a sense of safety, belonging, and connection for students and families, especially during major transitions. This is the time to focus on relationship-building and reducing anticipatory anxiety through welcoming, low-pressure opportunities for students to connect with peers and trusted adults, and for families to build relationships with school staff and other parents/caregivers.

- It is important to remember that through each school transition, the child is also experiencing a transition into a new life stage with evolving emotional and social needs: Preschool, Adolescent, Young adult.

TIP: *Many strategies designed for students with special needs are beneficial for all students (Universal Design for Learning). Since anxiety is often invisible, integrating proactive and preventative supports at the beginning of the year can have a major impact.*

Parents support parents - Tears & Cheers or Boohoo Yahoo Breakfasts

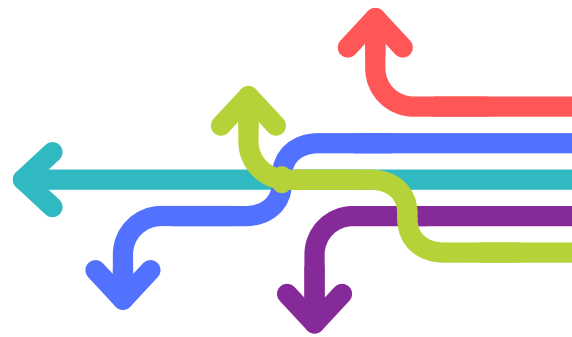
- The first day of kindergarten can be a big emotional moment for parents too! By providing coffee and a space to connect, parent volunteers help new families find their footing and create a supportive community.



The Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Management provides great resources to support the social- emotional developmental needs during the first transition period, and LEARN offers webinars for parents to support teens and young adults in their transitions.



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After school starts

Timeline: October - November

Strategy: This is the adaptation period where students and families move towards establishing new connections, routines and a sense of belonging.

- **Meet the Teacher evenings** can be an opportunity for students to show their parents how they have adapted to their new environment.
- Invite community organizations to share what relevant services they can offer to families.
- Continue communication with all stakeholders.

***TIP:** This is a great time to show the variety of support that surrounds students and their families at a Community School!*

EXAMPLES

Keeping it accessible - St. John's Elementary School's Meet the Teacher Night Video & Supper

The school created and shared a short “walk-through” video on social media to introduce staff and give families a preview of what their visit would look like. For the event itself, they partnered with the local Lions Club to host a BBQ, offering families an affordable supper and creating a welcoming, community-centered atmosphere.

- Reduces uncertainty and anticipatory anxiety by helping families visualize the school environment before arriving.
- Builds school literacy by introducing staff, spaces, and routines in an accessible format.
- Removes participation barriers (cost, time, stress) by offering an affordable meal and creating a welcoming atmosphere.
- Strengthens school-community partnerships while reinforcing that transitions are supported not only by the school, but by the broader community.

***TIP:** Multisite CLCs can share and scale accessible transition strategies across feeder schools to create consistent, inclusive experiences for families.*





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Family Forum - St Paul's Meet the Teacher night turned into Meet the Family night

St. Paul's reimagined its traditional Meet the Teacher night as a Meet the Family night, shifting the focus from families receiving information to families being welcomed, known, and connected. This approach reinforces that transitions are relational, and that a sense of belonging begins when families feel seen as partners in the school community.

- Creates space for families to voice aspirations and worries, strengthening trust and partnership from the outset.
- Prioritizes relationship-building over academic content, helping students and families feel known before expectations are emphasized.
- Helps staff better understand student strengths, needs, and family context from the start.
- Strengthens belonging and engagement by reinforcing that families are valued members of the school community.

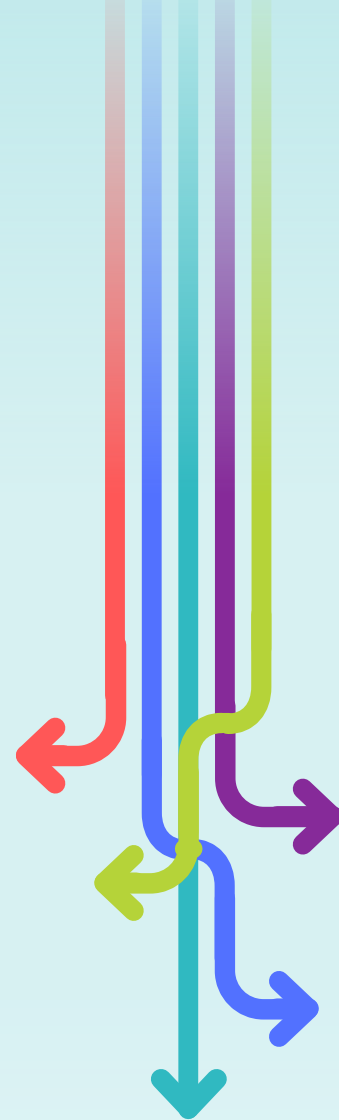
TIP: *Incorporating games and interactive activities is a simple way to build community and reduce anxiety in a welcoming, low-pressure setting.*

Shared Leadership and Commitment - NSFB's Youth Adult Collaboration Committee (YACC)

By bringing together administrators and key stakeholders from schools and the board four times a year, this committee fosters collaboration to bridge the gap between the youth and adult education sectors. Together, they review and synchronize youth and adult sector data, evaluate trends, and apply data-informed insights to the development and implementation of programs that foster smoother transitions.

- Strengthens continuity between youth and adult education by aligning practices, expectations, and supports.
- Uses shared data to proactively identify transition gaps and respond before students disengage.
- Promotes a coordinated, system-wide approach rather than isolated school-level efforts.
- Reinforces that transitions are a shared responsibility across sectors, not a single-point handoff.

TIP: *Multisite and board-level collaboration can mobilize resources and expertise to support student transitions across key educational stages.*

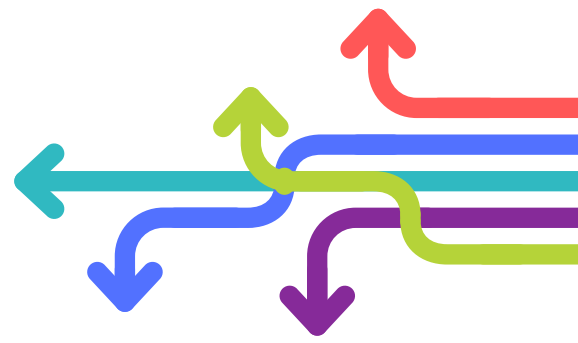


***"Attend your
community's Transition
Tables! Collaborate
within your board to
breakdown
any internal silos"***

***- Chuck Halliday, School
Board Rep, NFSB***



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Community School Tips to Take-away

Partner & Collaborate with internal and external stakeholders for activities and local initiatives helps build the community school spirit.

Communicate with actors in all settings involved in each transition, including those in other spheres: local daycare centres, CLSCs, community groups - local community partnership roundtables that focus on families can sometimes facilitate these actions; Communicate using approachable language adapted to the target audience.

Valorize parents and families in the crucial role they play in their child's transition and in their education. Recognize their abilities and their strengths; support their needs.

“ Students don’t transition alone, they transition within an ecosystem. Because we work across multiple schools, ¹CDAs can see the bigger picture. That shared understanding helps us mobilize community partners to build resources that complement what schools are already doing. We help align schools, families, and community partners so that the supports around students are consistent and connected.” (Siu-Min Jim, CDA, ETSB)

REFERENCES

Fabian, H., & Dunlop, A. W. (2002). *Transitions in the early years: Debating continuity and progression for young children in early education*. Routledge.

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¹ In this document, “Community Development Agent” (CDA) refers to any person or team carrying responsibility for implementing the CLC Action Plan, regardless of official title.