The usefulness of a virtues-based programme for supporting children’s transition into school learning

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Executive Summary

Transition to school is identified as a profound experience in a child’s life. A child’s experience in their transition to school is not limited to the child’s first year at school, as it may have much longer lasting effects. As Margetts (1997) notes, ‘Children who adjust adequately in their first year of school are likely to be more successful in their future progress than children who have difficulty adjusting to the new situation.’ As transition plays such a significant role in children’s long-term learning and development it is critical that early childhood educators pay particular attention to this process. Particular focus should be paid to ensuring programmes are conducive to children’s ability to adjust positively to change and to accommodate their changing identity from engaging as part of an early childhood community to a school community, where the contexts, expectations, and environments are starkly different.

The Education Review Office states of transition to school:

“Our view is that the education system should wrap around the child to support best continuity of learning. Ideally this means the ECE services and schools communicate about the children in their communities and how best to support good transitions. This will inevitably involve some ‘preparing’ for the new context of school, but also, ideally, some continuity of practices that are age appropriate and support children’s competence and confidence.”

The research project undertaken by Bay of Plenty Polytechnic Early Childhood Education Centre teachers invited parents of children who had transitioned from the centre into schools, early childhood teachers, and primary school teachers to respond to question-based surveys and to participate in group discussions. The content of questions varied slightly according to the audience, and aimed to gather information regarding respondents’ overall experiences and perspectives concerning transition to school, to form a picture of what knowledge or skills can be of most value.

While this was a locally based project, data was collected from a diverse range of respondents, and it is envisaged that these findings can be applicable to a wide range of education professionals, particularly at the primary and early childhood level. Outcomes validate that the virtues based programme is a developmentally appropriate approach to promoting dispositions for learning, and resembles many of the beliefs and values of all respondents as well as principles of character-based programmes operating within schools. Perhaps most importantly the Virtues Based Programmes develop within children key-qualities critical to engaging effectively within a formal learning environment.

A key finding of our research was that parents place highest emphasis on academic skills, with primary teachers placing even lower emphasis on skills than early childhood teachers and parents. Academic skills drew variable ratings, which demonstrated slightly more diversity in how these are valued. However, the specific virtues respondents were asked to rate in our written survey gathered consistent high ratings, with a number of common
virtues being consistently valued amongst participants. These findings echo a community voice of what is sought and valued in transition to school.

**Introduction**

Since 2006 we have integrated a virtues based curriculum into our *Before 5* programme (now renamed *Kiwi Centre*) with our older children. Our virtues programme develops a culture of character and a caring centre community, by bringing out the positive qualities in our children. The positive outcomes observed in the children influenced our decision to integrate the virtues philosophy across all the centre age groups from 2009 onwards. What began as a search for a behaviour management tool for our teachers became a philosophy which now underpins our wider centre programmes, policies and procedures. The positive focus on what a child is already capable of has had a flow on effect, and has been adopted by a number of families and whanau and taken into a child’s home life as well. Where “values are culture specific, what some families value, others don’t. Virtues are much more elemental than values. While values are culture specific, virtues are universally valued by all cultures.” (Popov, 2000, p.xix). Teachers implement the virtues programme using the strategies of:

1. Speaking the language of virtues, to guide, acknowledge and correct.
2. Recognising teachable moments
3. Setting clear boundaries.

Within the Centres, we promote virtues including respect, responsibility, friendliness, perseverance, determination, courage, honesty, patience, creativity, and confidence. We believe that children learn about these virtues within the context of everyday experiences, and that the development of these virtues provides a strong foundation from which formal learning can continue. While the virtues based programme sits well beside the early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, key competencies within the New Zealand Curriculum, as well as learning dispositions, it is important that it is acknowledged as a stand-alone programme, rather than something embedded in other curriculums. The effectiveness of the Virtues Based Programme relies on constructive teacher attitudes, commitment to teaching strategies, and environmental implementation and therefore requires implementation as a programme in its own right. Some centres who effectively implement the early childhood curriculum and learning dispositions, may find their outcomes for children can be further enhanced by implementing a Virtues Based Programme.

Over the years, we have received ongoing anecdotal feedback from parents and Before School Plunket Nurses, that our children are well prepared for school life, and have generally gone on to transition well into the formal learning of the school system. As we have sought a wide range of national and international literature and research on the transition into school, we have found difficulty in sourcing information specific to the impact of a virtues based curriculum in early childhood education. This has led us to undertake research where we aim to determine what aspects of our current virtues based curriculum are successfully supporting children and their whanau through the transition process, and
also to develop ways that we can enhance the experiences of our children, parents, and whānau as they transition from early childhood settings into school.

**Literature Review**

A virtues based programme gives teachers the tools and strategies to support character development in children by creating a positive and empowering environment in which children can learn and grow. This objective links well with our New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum Te Whāriki which is founded on the aspiration for children

‘...to grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body, and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society.’ (Ministry of Education, 1996, p.9)

The alignment between virtues based education and the early childhood curriculum is endorsed by Singer (2010) whose research found specific connections between character education and Te Whāriki. A virtues based programme at the Bay of Plenty Polytechnic Early Childhood Education Centre resulted from teachers seeking to gain further knowledge on behaviour management techniques, including by attending professional development workshops on the Virtues Project™.

The Virtues Project™, founded in 1991, was introduced to New Zealand in 1994. The purpose of the project is intended ‘to help develop a culture of character where respect, patience, self-discipline, tolerance, and a joy for learning are among the virtues our children master’ (Popov, 2000, p.xv). Popov (2000) believes that the Virtues Project changes the culture of schools through creating an environment of caring and respect.

Many qualities and characteristics fall into the virtues framework. The integral and long-lasting role of another important characteristic is discussed by Goodwin (2011), who discusses the role of self-control (termed self-discipline in the Virtues project, Popov 2000) plays in children’s life through highlighting the findings of a University of Otago developmental study. This found that children with higher levels of self-control led healthier and more successful lives.

Popov (2000) believes that values are specific to a culture whereas virtues are valued by all cultures. A notion reiterated by Lee (2013) who believes that character education is influenced by the culture in which it is being implemented. Lee (2013) conducted research exploring how the Korean early childhood education system endeavours to incorporate positive character development among their children. This was deemed relevant in today’s educational context which is driven by competitive data driven examinations. These methods of teaching and learning can have detrimental effects on building character amongst children and young people. The Korean National Preschool Curriculum Nuri ensures quality across different settings and promotes continuity between early childhood and primary schools, emphasising,
Coherence in education is an aspiration maintained by the Ministry of Education in New Zealand, particularly from birth to eight years as intended in the 10 year strategic plan for early childhood education. The plan’s goal was to improve early childhood and school teacher’s understandings of the links between curricula and pedagogy in each sector and improve the sharing of information in promoting effective transition processes (Ministry of Education, 2002). Research conducted by Mawson (2006) further explores the potential of cohesive, seamless education systems operating between sectors to achieve positive learning outcomes for children moving between educational contexts. Mawson (2006) acknowledges the implications and barriers faced at all levels to accomplish seamless education. These include different motivational philosophies influencing each curriculum, which consequently affects the differences between teaching and learning occurring between respective contexts.

May and Carr (2000 cited in Mawson, 2006) reiterate observations of a ‘mismatch and disruption for children at age five as they move from early childhood programs into the early school years’ (p.3). Mawson suggests a need for strategic problem-solving, including a critical importance of addressing curriculum differences, as well as teachers from each sector developing greater cross-sector knowledge. Mawson recognises while much work has gone into bridging the gap between curriculums, questions must be raised as to whether greater coherence in beliefs and philosophies are needed. Mawson identifies many factors creating and sustaining the gap between early childhood settings and school system settings, beginning with pre-service teacher training right through to day-to-day practice. Peters, Hartley, Rogers, Smith, & Carr, (2009) similarly describe the importance of early childhood teachers and primary teachers to be aware and have better understandings of what is happening in their neighbouring sector.

The issue of disconnections between education sectors is further identified in Margetts (1997) explorations of discontinuities. Margetts (1997) cites problematic discontinuities in curricula, teaching staff, peer groups, and involvement of parents, warning these represent an interruption to learning. Margetts (1997) goes on to identify personal barriers to adjusting to school, including gender, having a familiar playmate, transition activities, and children’s language. Peters (2010) extends personal barriers to include challenges such as poor relationships with teachers, peer rejection and so forth, suggesting strategies must be developed to support children in coping with such challenges. Research endorses knowledge that children who experience a smooth transition into school are more likely to obtain a higher degree of academic success and are more effectively able to socialise with peers and teachers (Dockett & Perry, 2003, cited in Mortlock, Plowman, & Glasgow, 2011).
Internationally Boström (2002, as cited in Peters et al, 2009) illustrated problems such as apprehension, anxiety and a lack of support which may occur for children and their families if there is a lack of knowledge and communication amongst the sectors. This is not always easy as New Zealand researchers Timperley, McNaughton, Howie and Robinson (2003, cited in Peters et al, 2009) found that although there was a commitment from teachers in both sectors to work collaboratively they had quite different expectations from each other and that most were frustrated with the current situation. This has also been noted as a concern in Australia as Henderson (2012) acknowledges that much of the literature surrounding the school-early childhood relationship is mostly dominated by pedagogical differences.

Through the research conducted it is evident there is a sense of disconnectedness between sectors, and that effort needs to be made to build a sense of connection between both sectors. Dent (2014) explores the nature of a push-down effect of education in Australia from formal learning contexts to early childhood contexts. She cites numerous testing and assessment processes and questions the validity of formal testing at early ages and whether this has significant longer term achievement and learning outcomes.

While much can still be done to address discrepancies within the education system and relevant policy, some recent movements have been acknowledged as positive, including the reform of the national curriculum which saw the introduction of the key competencies. Hipkins (2005) explains the theoretical background which included research carried out by the OECD. This research raised challenging questions around the relationship of how schools need to change, how the economy works, and how jobs are structured. Key competencies are deemed a holistic approach to learning meaning, ‘students can only demonstrate them by undertaking real actions in meaningful contexts’.

“The MOE pamphlet claims the suggested framework of key competencies promote a lifelong learning model. To achieve this outcome it defines all school leavers as those who have a positive sense of identity, take responsibility for themselves, can interpret and critique the world around them, and can participate and contribute effectively in a range of contexts, and are equipped for lifelong learning”.

These statements represent ambitious aspirations which can be potentially utilised throughout all stages of learning. Carr (2006) examines the five key competencies and considers the potential relationship between these and learning dispositions and how they might support life-long learning. Carr proposes greater continuity may be achieved through implementation of the key competencies and expresses excitement at the potential of the greater alignment between curriculums to foster powerful attributes for lifelong learning.

However, it has been found that inconsistencies within education are not limited to cross-sector but also occur between settings. Barback (2014) describes a new entrant’s teacher experience on school readiness who feels that some ECE centres focus well on school readiness, while others do not. This variety in the quality of teaching and learning in ECE centres has resulted in some children starting school with very little academic knowledge or readiness for school skills. More consistency is required between ECE centres in their approach to school readiness.
Nancy Bell the chief executive of New Zealand Childcare Association believes that the concept of applying a consistent approach across the early childhood sector is not a straightforward one. Early childhood centres and school will have differing views on what children should be able to do when they start school. Ideally ECE services and schools should communicate about children due to transition. Communication can however be difficult due to the fact that schools draw their children from many different ECE services (Barback 2014).

The New Zealand School Curriculum recognises that the transition from early childhood to school is strengthened when the school “builds on the learning experiences that children bring with them” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p.41). However, Peters et al (2009) suggest challenges to transition also occur as it is a process that is diverse and complex for all families who bring with them distinctly different experiences and backgrounds. Fabian (2007), like other researchers, acknowledges the inherent task children face of entering a new culture, changing identity, and fluctuating individual characteristics which influence individual experiences of transition processes. Margetts (1997) notes implications associated with transition, stating:

‘adjustment to the new situation is seen as a critical outcome of successful transition....children who lack, or experience difficulty with, social or cognitive skills, and who exhibit problem behaviours, are at risk of not adjusting to school’ (p.54).

Merry (2007) finds there is a shift in identity as children transition from one context to another as children navigate the new rules and norms inherent in their new environment. Teachers play a role in developing children’s sense of identity. Merry (2007) says literature suggests, ‘children who have been supported to explore and develop a strong sense of themselves are less likely to experience stress in the transition from one environment to another’ (p.50). Peters (2010) believes the new school curriculum supports these aspects of successful transition.

Bernard (2014) furthermore describes the importance of social and emotional learning skills for young children’s wellbeing and academic success. In Australia the National Academy of Sciences has found that 60 per cent of children enter school with the cognitive skills required to be successful but only 40 per cent enter with the social and emotional skills needed to succeed. Dockett and Perry (2003, cited in Mortlock et al, 2011) findings indicated that Australian parents felt the most important thing for their child was to be socially adjusted and to know the school rules with knowledge and skills particularly low on their list of priorities. Mortlock et al (2011) found within their own networks that early childhood teachers felt that parent’s aspirations included formal numeracy and literacy activities in preparation for school. New Zealand has very little research which elicits parent’s views about this.

Peters (2010) explores transition from a holistic standpoint recognising the various factors which influence how a child’s transition proceeds and states.
“A successful transition will include teachers who affirm the child’s identity and culture, connect and build on the children’s funds of knowledge from early childhood education and home, and hold positive expectations for success which includes seeing promise in new entrant learners rather than deficits (p.1)".
Research Question

“The Bay of Plenty Polytechnic Early Childhood Education Centre’s virtues based programme. Is this supporting children’s transition into school learning?”

Aims of Research

The aims of the research are to investigate how children who have attended the Bay of Plenty Polytechnic ECE Centre have transitioned into the school environment. It is also envisaged that we will identify if there are any areas of our curriculum that can be enhanced to support the transition process.

Methodology

This research used both qualitative and quantitative research methods. It has been suggested by some researchers that this mixed methodology approach can increase the accuracy of the data collected and provide a more complete account of the phenomena being studied (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011).

Research Design

An information letter and consent form were emailed to 18 early childhood teachers at the Bay of Plenty Polytechnic ECE Centre, and new entrant teachers from 12 primary schools in the local area. These were also either emailed or paper copies were given to 33 parents of children who had recently transitioned into school. All participants were made aware that they were under no obligation to be part of the research and were able to withdraw at any time. Once consent had been gained surveys were emailed out or paper copies were given to all participants.

After the surveys had been completed and collated participants were invited to group meetings to further discuss matters which had arisen from the surveys.

Survey

Sept 2014 Surveys were emailed to 18 qualified and registered early childhood teachers who work across a variety of age groups at the Bay of Plenty Polytechnic ECE Centre, inviting them to participate in the research. All 18 early childhood teachers responded.

Oct 2014 Surveys were emailed to 12 local schools, 11 of these participated in the research. We received 20 responses as multiple new entrant teachers from some schools and a recently retired new entrant teacher completed the survey.

Sept-Oct 2014 Surveys were distributed to 33 parents with 24 responses returned.

Group Meetings.

After the surveys were completed and collated, group meetings were held where participants were invited to participate in a discussion on areas which we wanted to investigate further.
November 2014. A group meeting was held with 12 early childhood teachers attending. A presentation of the findings from the survey was presented and discussions were held amongst the participants on the main points of the findings.

Dec 2014. A group meeting was held with family members from 10 of the respondents.

Nov-Dec 2014. Researchers went to seven of the participating schools to discuss areas in which we required further clarification.

Analysis of Meetings with New Entrant Teachers. Dec 2014. The discussions held with the new entrant teachers were transcribed and sent back to them to ensure we had accurate data.

Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations. April-June 2015. Three groups of researchers analysed and compiled the data collected from the surveys and group meetings from the three different sources, these being early childhood teachers, new entrant teachers and parents. The resulting findings, discussion and recommendations from these are discussed in the following report.
Early Childhood Teacher Survey and Group Meeting Findings.

This report contains data collected through an online survey and feedback received during a discussion meeting held for ECE teachers after a presentation of data from the online survey results. 18 surveys were given out and we had 18 responses. 10 teachers attended the presentation and discussion. 10 respondents of the written survey worked with the 6 month to 2.5 year age group, 6 worked with 2.5 to 5 years, and 2 respondents were in administration. The larger group of teachers working with children 6 months to 2.5 years can be explained by the centres child/teacher ratios, which are 1 to 3 for under 2 years old, 1 to 5 for 2 to 3 year old and 1 to 8 for over 3 years.

Interestingly, 14 of the 18 teachers (over 80%) have been teaching at BOP Polytechnic ECE Centre for more than 5 years, with 7 (38%) for more than 10 years. Only one teacher had been teaching within the centre for less than two years, with two teachers teaching for between two and five years. Having consistent qualified ECE teachers has allowed the centre to build a culture of quality and implement programmes such as virtues into our curriculum. Virtues are an underlying foundational programme, requiring consistent commitment from staff.

Results indicate that 13 of the 18 ECE teachers (72%), at the centre have attended a Virtues training workshop. Some teachers suggested that having no training in the teaching of virtues was not a barrier, if the philosophy was strong in the Centre they quickly picked it up off other teachers. All teachers suggested it would be good to do a refresher course every few years and the 5 teachers (28%) with no training were very keen to attend training. It was suggested that this training could be done in house.

![Figure 1.](image)

How important do you consider the Virtues to be in the philosophy, curriculum and programmes of the Centre as a whole?

Number of ECE teachers:
- Not Important
- Somewhat important
- Important
- Quite Important
- Extremely Important

Figure 1.
All teachers indicated that virtues were important as part of our curriculum and centre programme, with 11 Teachers (61%) rating virtues as extremely important.

“The virtues are the foundation that everything we do at the centre is based on. From the words that we speak to the children, to the documentation that is written, and the policies that underpin our daily practice. The virtues are the culture of our centre”

Survey responses found variations between teachers’ confidence levels in delivering the virtues programme, with most feeling some level of confidence. This was not necessarily linked to training, as some teachers commented although they have not completed virtues training they felt confident due to the strong in-centre use of virtues. Teachers who work with the older age groups (two and a half years and over) reported feeling highly confident in integrating the use of virtues into daily teaching practice. Teachers working with younger ages experienced varied confidence levels.

The majority of the respondents felt it was at least somewhat important that children attend at least twenty hours of early childhood education prior to starting school, with 10 teachers (55%) seeing it as extremely important. Early childhood teachers noted a range of benefits associated with early childhood education, which is summarised in the following statement:

“Children are given the opportunity to become independent, learn self-care skills, become familiar with daily routines, learn to socialise with a cross section of children encourage to learn with and alongside others, develop communication skills, be introduced to literacy and numeracy.”
Two teachers made suggestions reflecting value for children being at home in the early years noting some scope for diversity, acknowledging that it really comes down to what works for each individual family and individual circumstances.

![Bar Chart](image)

**Figure 3.**

Early childhood teachers rated all 11 virtues highly. Respect (94.33%), justice (92.44%), confidence (90.55), integrity (90%), and patience (88.72%), were considered extremely important in supporting a child’s transition into school, with creativity (79.22%) and courage (77.5%) rating lowest. In discussion with the teachers at the data presentation teacher’s explored why courage may have been a lower rated virtue. Many thought this could be associated to different interpretations. Further discussion revealed many teachers felt courage was an important virtue for children in an ECE setting, as courage enables children to cope with changes and challenges.

ECE teachers considered further qualities important for children transitioning into a new entrant classroom included co-operation, purposefulness and self-discipline, which are concepts closely linked to virtues.
ECE teachers considered, following a set of instructions (88.66%), recognising their own name (86.83%), understanding directional concepts (85%), being able to ask and answer questions (84.94%) and recognising colours (83%) as being the most important skills for a child to have on entering a new entrant classroom. Knowing words beginning with letters (38.55%), and counting backwards from ten (34.88%), were considered to be the least advantageous.

Further skills teachers considered important for children transitioning into a new entrant classroom included, basic self-help skills such as having good self-care skills, able to dress themselves, open their own lunch, boxes, able to toilet themselves. Positive feelings about themselves, coping mechanisms in times of change, social skills, able to follow instructions and communicate their needs were further qualities of importance. These skills can be linked to the characteristics of the virtues of responsibility, confidence, friendliness, and determination.
Most respondents believed children who attended BOP Polytechnic ECE Centres were well prepared for school. One teacher stated from her experience of having her son recently transition from the centre into school:

“*My son was really prepared for school, he knew his name, he could write it and was socially and emotionally ready for the next step. I had his teacher comment she could see he had been around a rich literacy environment and asked if he had been in an ECE service.*”

Early childhood teachers explained the reasoning behind their perceptions of how well children are prepared for school, sharing a range of factors that contributed to their views. These included receiving positive feedback from past parents who have moved on to school, excellent teacher child ratios with trained teachers, passionate teachers who want children to learn and succeed and centre programmes that reciprocate these aspirations.

Further comments included, children are seen as individuals and therefore grow and develop when engaged in a collaborative process where teachers work closely alongside families. These are all qualities embedded within the Early Childhood Curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996). Another point made by teachers validating their belief that children of the centre were well prepared for school, was the understanding that virtues and learning dispositions are developed over the child’s time at the centre.

ECE teachers perceived children might face a range of expectations in their first term of school such as adjusting to the new environment, being ready to learn within a structured environment and focus on formal learning. ECE teachers also considered it important that children be confident, including with making new friends. One teacher suggested it would be beneficial if the new entrant teacher could visit the child at the preschool before they started school, to build that first relationship link and also so the ECE teachers could share with them their knowledge of the child.
The virtues based programme was highly recognised by ECE teachers as being a useful tool for preparing children for school. ECE teachers shared what they believed occurred in their centre to support children’s readiness for school. There was a wide range of replies, but common themes included:

- The use and promotion of virtues in the programme was seen as an invaluable lifelong tool for children to take with them.
- The virtues language was incorporated into the centre programme on a daily basis.
- Acknowledging children’s identity and culture and ensuring that these are valued and respected.
- Providing a positive learning environment that supports children’s learning journey.
- Providing and creating a safe environment with trusting relationships between children and teachers. Teachers who actively engage with children.
- Developing learning goals around children’s strengths, virtues, needs, passion and developing self-help skills.

One teacher identified, the process of preparing children for coping with future transitions and building the foundation for further learning begins in infancy, sharing:

“As I said before I work with infants and toddlers so preparation for school is quite a long way off for the children I teach. With this young age group we are mostly supporting their emotional development and how they cope with separation, attachment, stress etc. This is really important for children to develop before they start school as they may experience emotional stress. Separation anxiety as they enter a new environment with lots of new people. Social development and how to interact with others is also really important at this age as children have their first experiences of sharing, turn taking and cooperating with others. We also build the foundations for future learning as our babies engage in activities that prepare them for one day reading and writing such as gripping different objects of different sizes and eye tracking as they watch and follow different objects as they move. Books are important in our environment and we use books a lot with children, sometimes to settle them if they are upset but also to encourage lots of language, they learn about page turning and reading books from front to back, following the words and pointing out the pictures on the pages.”

Teachers reiterated virtues used to be a very prominent and visible feature of the centres when first introduced. Parents in survey feedback were found to be very well-versed in virtues, including in virtues-specific language, however teachers acknowledged that current parents may not be as knowledgeable. Over time the prominence of virtues within the centre environments has relaxed and current parents may not be as aware of virtues. This can possibly be attributed to longevity in staff who have internalised the virtues based programme and are very comfortable in its delivery, no-longer relying as heavily on visual
prompts and reminders which used to embellish the centre environments. Teachers still comfortably deliver the virtues programme, yet it may not be as visible and prominent to parents as it once was.

Teachers felt confident that children leaving the centre were ready to transition to school, although this was based on assumptions made in reflection of how confident children seemed when leaving the Centre. However, teachers felt confident that as the ‘values of society’ needed to function actively and positively, that the virtues based programme provides an effective tool and resource for preparing children for school. One teacher commented virtues was almost like the ‘ten commandments’ another recalled a phrase her mother used as a child, “patience is a virtue”. Comments like these reflect the traditional nature of virtues.

**Summary of Early Childhood Teacher Findings:**
All teachers were familiar with virtues and felt they were important in the Centre’s philosophy, curriculum and programme as a whole. The majority of teachers had taught at the Centre for more than 5 to 10 years, and saw virtues as an important part of the Centre philosophy and curriculum and programme. Seventy-two percent of these teachers had received training in the teaching of virtues, but it was suggested that having no training was not a barrier if the philosophy was strong in the Centre. Teachers quickly picked it up from other teachers. Teachers working in the older age group two and half years and over, reported strong confidence in using virtues, while teachers working with the younger ages reported varied confidence.

![Figure 6.](image)

Overall analysis found early childhood teachers rated virtues at 86.04% and skills at 63.75%. The top five rated virtues were respect (94.33%), justice (92.44%), confidence (90.55%), integrity (90%), and patience (88.72%). The top rated skills were can follow a set of instructions (88.66%), recognise their own name (86.83%), understands directions (85%), is
able to ask and answer questions (84.95%), and can recognise colours (83%). While teachers were confident that virtues contributed to school readiness, skills were considered to be of slightly less significance. Early childhood teachers also identified skills related to self-management and confidence to be of importance in addition to those provided in the survey.

The majority of teachers agreed it was important for children to regularly attend ECE at least 20 hours per week before starting school, as it offered the opportunity to learn to be away from their parents / caregivers, to work with teachers and other children, and to gain further knowledge and skills which would support their transition into school. Self-help type skills were also identified by teachers as important skills as well as children developing coping mechanisms in times of change, and children having positive feelings about themselves. It could be suggested that many of these skills can be linked to the characteristics of virtues e.g. responsibility, confidence, and courage.

The survey results also yielded some interesting suggestions from teachers on how the Centre could improve the visibility of virtues. It was felt that virtues used to be a very prominent and visible aspect of the Centre when it was first introduced; parents were also very well versed in the specific language of virtues during these years. Early childhood teachers were positive about maintaining the virtues based programme as a prominent aspect of the Centre programme and curriculum, and to enhance the visibility and communication of the virtues programme to parents and families.
New Entrant Teacher Survey and Focus Interview Findings

This report contains data collected from new entrant teachers teaching in Tauranga primary schools. Twelve local schools were invited to participate in this research project by completing an online ‘transition to school’ survey. Eleven schools agreed to take part. One recently retired new entrant teacher also participated. Multiple new entrant teachers from some schools completed surveys, resulting in 20 questionnaire responses being received. The survey was followed up by focus interviews between early childhood research teachers and new entrant teachers in 7 of the schools surveyed. This feedback is also contained in this report.

![Bar chart showing the number of different early childhood centres that children attend before joining their classroom.](image)

**Figure 7.**

The new entrant teachers surveyed vary in the number of different centres that children attend before joining their classroom. More than half of those surveyed, teach in a new entrant classroom consisting of children coming from more than five different early childhood providers. In a follow up meeting with new entrant teachers, one commented that “there is so much variation in what children are exposed to [in early childhood education]...It solely depends on the philosophy, values taught.”
Ninety percent of new entrant teachers surveyed responded that they thought it was important for children to have consistently had at least 20 hours per week in an early childhood education service before starting school. It was strongly felt by new entrant teachers that the biggest advantage to attending an early childhood education service was that the children learn social skills and therefore are better able to work and learn alongside others, and build relationships with their peers and teachers.

“I believe the foundations are set at preschool which help the transition into school. Social interaction, some structured learning time, experiences inside and outside the centres, some work with basics of literacy and maths.”

It was also strongly felt that having knowledge about numeracy and literacy, communication skills (both oral language and listening) and having developed good fine and gross motor skills were important school readiness skills for children to have.

“If they know that the squiggly thing on the board is a letter. They can distinguish a letter and a number and that’s fantastic.”

New entrant teachers also noted that it was advantageous for children to have developed independence skills around toileting, dressing and undressing themselves before starting school. Having an understanding of routines was also helpful:

“Attending a childcare centre prepares children for the regular attendance of school and the expectations of a learning environment.”
Concepts that correlate with virtues were also identified as important aspects children develop through attendance in ECE settings. These included; independence (in virtues terms this is known as responsibility), resilience, cooperation, confidence and perseverance. School readiness skills such as; foundation skills, being able to sit and listen, pencil grip, gross and fine motor skills and being able to listen to and follow instructions, also contributed to a child being well prepared to start school, as does the ability to be able to follow routines and being curious about their world. Self-management skills and the ability to be independent were considered to be highly important, teachers effectively obtain more time to ‘teach’ when children possess greater self-management skills. New entrant teachers commented that it is often the parents that need to be educated in allowing their children to develop independence.

“I think every school’s different in terms of how well prepared the kids are. When they come here, things like packing their bags, and looking after themselves and doing things for themselves, we put a lot of work into that. We encourage children to be responsible.”

“…we encourage the parents, you need to give your child independence, to be responsible for the things that they can be responsible for, their book bag, you know those sorts of things, so as much as the kids, we’re trying to educate the parents as well”.

New entrant teachers considered the development of social skills a vital part of children’s preparation for school with the oral language skills developed throughout these relationships contributing positively to a child’s subsequent literacy journey. Having ‘lots of 1-1 conversations with their caregivers during the pre-school years and lots of experiences to talk’, with nursery rhymes and the ability to hear a rhyme also being considered important.

“Even playing, developmentally, they have to be able to know what they’re doing, partaking in an activity with a friend and being social with them and not snatching, they need to know all those skills.”

New entrant teachers referred to many virtues in their understandings of what helps children to be prepared for school.

“There are certain things you want children to know, like virtues, key competencies, whatever you like to call them, there are certain things that teachers recognise as being really important”.
New entrant teachers responded that only 45% of children entering their classrooms were quite or extremely well prepared. In the subsequent focus interviews, we asked teachers to clarify in what ways children could be better prepared for school. New entrant teachers told us they were seeing declining oral language levels in their school entrants, and the subsequent impact this was having on children learning to read and write. This is a finding reiterated in Powell’s (2005) research where it was stated:

“The sad truth is that many children in decile 1 – 3 schools particularly, arrive at school still operating at the 3 – 4 year-old level of oral language development, and teachers are often frustrated by their apparent inability to learn.”

Primary teachers we spoke with commented that this seemed to be coinciding with the increase in the use of technology, with parents communicating less with their child, Teachers commented that children need to be talked to in order to learn language. A number also responded that children don’t know nursery rhymes in the same way that they used to, which may also contribute to the decline in oral language. Nursery rhymes contain rhyme, repetition, and play with words, which are all important early literacy concepts.

“[somewhere use of] quite babyish pronunciations like ‘puta’ instead of computer, and that’s significant for learning how to write, hearing sounds and writing letters down.”

“We’ve talked about the changes in oral skills over the years. I think its lifestyle, I think its busy families, working very hard to financially sustain themselves, and just not having, the lack of time, it’s easier for the parents to do things, and it’s sometimes quicker.”
New entrant teachers have also noted a decrease in the levels of independence a child displays. It was thought that often the parents needed to be reminded how important it is to encourage independence in their children. Dressing and undressing children for swimming and physical education can pose a problem for teachers, as there are few adults to assist children, needing to support children with these basic activities essentially takes time away from teaching.

“We encourage the parents, you need to give your child independence, to be responsible for the things that they can responsible for...”

“They’re not required to think for themselves, somebody will just come and do it for them, until they come to school, and I think for some children that is probably the biggest issue in transition, is that suddenly they come into an environment where the person who is teaching them has expectations on them...”

New entrant teachers responded that a child that does not attend ‘transition to school’ visits, may not be as prepared as those children who do. Schools responded it was not uncommon for children to just turn up on their first day of school. Each school varied in the number and frequency of the transition visits offered. Some schools offered one or two visits into the existing new entrant classroom, believing that it is generally enough for children, but adding that families are welcome to visit outside of the set transition times. Two of the schools we interviewed, offered a specific transition programme that children and their parents attend for one afternoon a week, for between 7 and 10 weeks before starting at the school. Children and parents have an opportunity to get to know others who will be starting about the same time as they are. Due to the specifically designed nature of these programmes, they also learn about the school, its structure and expectations. In one of the schools interviewed, a new entrant teacher will visit a child in their early childhood centre as part of the transition process. Other schools were also considering this approach.

“It’s just so valuable to see where a child’s come from, because the centre...they’re so different like you know, poles apart and if you can go to a centre and get your head around where that child’s come from, it gives you a foot in the door with that child as well, I see what you stand for and what your children are doing.”

New entrant teachers noted that some early childhood teachers bring children on transition visits, and that this can be interesting at times, as children are quite different than when they are with their parent. Teachers responded though, that it was very important for parents to attend transition visits with their child so they are also familiar with the school and able to develop relationships with the teachers. One school has developed a network group, meeting once a month; that fosters closer relationships between the school and its local early childhood services.

“We could see the benefits for the children when they started school because of that relationship, so I guess that’s where it came from... it was just a long held belief that we could be doing more, and that it would be..."
in the children’s interest to make a smooth transition from whatever preschool they had into school.”

As we see in figure 10, new entrant teachers highly value virtues as an important factor in a child’s transition into the school environment. The virtues of respect (96.6%), responsibility (91.51%), integrity (91.5), friendliness (89.8%), and confidence (89.8) were the highest rated virtues. With the lowest rated virtues being patience (84.7%) and creativity (78.6%). While one teacher offered the addition of the virtue of cooperation to our list of important virtues, most felt that the above list covered desired virtues well.

“if these are all in place, they will make an excellent start at school.”

“I mean at the end of the day, its great the children who come in who can write their name, who can count to ten, do all those academic things, that’s fantastic, but if they don’t know that stuff, but they come in and they can be responsible for themselves, they respect other people, they will progress anyway.”
The highest rated skills according to new entrant teachers were recognise their own name (84.75%), can follow a set of instructions (83%), write their own name (68%), is able to ask and answer questions (67.9%), and correct pencil grip (66.35%), with the lowest rated skills being count beyond ten (33.05%) and knows words beginning with letters (29.75%). Some teachers emphasised that it is not necessarily the skills themselves that are important, but the fact that they give children confidence when entering the school environment.

“...because if they can write their name and are able to sit and cut and paste a little bit, it makes them feel better about themselves. Cause, often if they don’t do that then they immediately think that no I can’t do this, it’s too hard. So it just gives them a bit of confidence coming in.”

“So, I know that there are some teachers, even in our school, that say ‘oh, they’ve got to know the alphabet by the time they come to school. I’m like, no they don’t, that’s our job.”

When asked if there were any other skills important for a child transitioning into their classroom, new entrant teachers reiterated that self-management, self-help skills and good oral language were important in a child’s transition to school. A readiness and curiosity to learn were also important.

New entrant teachers varied on the expectations that they have of children in their first term of school. While some focused on settling children into routines, developing confidence, independence and understanding what was expected from them socially and behaviourally, others were more focused on academic development.
“I spent six weeks just getting my routines and expectations, that’s my focus... I wanted them managing themselves.”

“It is imperative that you set up your expectations, the way that you manage things, because when you do things like reading there’s one person who can take the groups so the children are expected to be independent working on independent activities... expectations of behaviour, the expectations of being able to work independently on tasks.”

In the subsequent focus interviews, we asked new entrant teachers what influenced their expectations. New entrant teachers told us that individual school philosophy and the trend towards more modern learning environments was influencing their teaching, with team teaching, open plan classrooms, and discovery times linked to early childhood ways of learning, becoming more prevalent in new entrant settings.

“I team teach with two other teachers in the next room, for reading particularly... but run a full on developmental programme with a [carpentry] shed and a teacher aide. So in the morning block, I would do reading, the other children go to developmental.”

“On Friday’s we have discovery time. It’s not just free play, it’s building on the competencies which link to Te Whariki... so they sit down at the beginning, they talk about what they’re going to do, and what competency or what skill we’re going to be practicing. It might be sharing today, we’re going to see if we can share with somebody else, and these activities are sort of designed around what they are doing... then at the end of it, they sit down and talk about what they did... so it’s just not free play, it works really well”

Another school commented that they also have a Friday development day, where the school provides dress ups, sandpit, blocks, water play etc. Children can choose where they play. All the year one’s come together and have the day to play with whatever they choose. They believe it is a great time for socialising and the interactions are amazing.

“So our philosophy in our new modern learning environment is around transition to school, so we want a hugely successful transition to school, we thought the philosophy behind it is that we are a community of care, and as the children leave their preschool setting and go into a traditional single cell classroom it’s quite a huge leap and change for them.”

Overall, new entrant teachers responded that it is their own experience that plays a large part in the expectations they have of a child in the first few months of school. New entrant teachers interviewed responded that the introduction of the national standards in schools also strongly influenced the schools expectations for children’s progress, and in turn influenced the focus of the new entrant classroom. New entrant teachers however were mindful that they always need to work from where children are at and are always needing to adapt to meet children’s needs. More than one school responded that they have recently
been rethinking the concept of ‘ready for school’, and have turned their thinking from, “Is this child ready for school?” to “are we ready for them?” Some teachers expressed how the national standards contrasts their personal teaching philosophies, with one teacher explaining that national standards seems to be a framework upheld more stringently by new teachers, she shared:

“I guess they’ve (other teachers) been trained in a time where national standards is the kind of buzz word, and it’s hard not to see that as the most important thing, but because I wasn’t, I don’t’.

Collectively, the 20 new entrant teachers surveyed identified 18 children as transitioning from BOP Polytechnic ECE Centre into their classrooms. New entrant teachers were asked how they had observed the virtues of our early childhood programme exhibited in their new entrant classroom, in relation to these children. Overall they responded, that these children had demonstrated many virtues within the new entrant classroom, specifically observing those of respect, determination, patience, confidence, kindness, caring, courage, friendliness, resilience, responsibility and integrity.

“They (virtues) are important. O (name withheld) is a shining example of the virtues in action. She lives and breathes them. She is kind, confident in who she is, but not domineering. Contributing but not taking over. She is respectful and this is allowing her to fly at school.”

“At the time of starting school they strongly exhibited the values/virtues of your programme. They both adjusted quickly to their new environment, were quietly confident in their new situation and showed courage and determination when learning new things. As a result of these values being in place their academic progress was quick.”

As seen in figure 9, new entrant teachers responded that eighty-one point eight percent of these children were quite or extremely well prepared on transitioning into their classrooms. Saying they are well prepared, being confident about taking risks, as well has having virtues and skills in place. New entrant teachers commented that because our children had the advantage of coming to school demonstrating good basic skills which could be quickly built on, they adjusted quickly to the new environment allowing their academic progress to be rapid.

“….Had the values/virtues well established and some basic skills. Teacher did not have to spend a lot of time establishing these things and so they moved quickly both socially and academically.”

New entrant teachers have remarked on the huge leap for children leaving an early childhood setting and starting school, and have commented that they would appreciate greater communication between early childhood centres and schools, with pertinent information about the child transitioning being shared. This perspective fits with Peters, Hartley, Rogers, Smith. & Carr, (2009) research that teachers from both sectors need to
develop greater communication and understandings of what occurs in the neighbouring sector.

“There is quite a disconnect which is unhealthy, between what an early childhood centre does and wants, and what a school believes in. That’s bad, and we need to get together a bit more don’t we.”

“...would love to have more communication between ECE teachers and primary school teachers, even it is a phone call where they share information about the child that is transitioning.”

New entrant teachers in general expressed that they saw value in children’s early childhood education portfolios saying they sometimes kept them in class libraries. Most mentioned that the portfolios were a great way to get children talking and interacting with others. The portfolios showed pictures, stories of events and activities that they could revisit as they sat and talked about them with their new friends. New entrant teachers considered the portfolios to be precious though, and were concerned about them being wrecked or lost. Some early childhood centres provided another booklet for children to leave at school containing pictures and some of the last learning stories that gave a broad overview of the child, while the larger portfolio stayed at home. These smaller portfolios were also more concise for new entrant teachers to read, and see a snapshot of the child, as some noted they didn’t have time to read a child’s larger portfolio.

“Kids who wouldn’t necessarily have talked or interacted before [say] ‘oh, we had one of those at our preschool’. They make links, they share their portfolios”

“We always invited the child to bring their portfolio to school and I understand for parents, that’s quite a biggie, because it’s a treasure... You just learn so much about children from that portfolio and it’s a wonderful tool for the child too, as an oral language base, they’ll go through their portfolio surrounded by 3 or 4 children.”

New entrant teachers were asked what formal testing they conducted during a child’s first term at school. Individual schools appear to have their own tests but they are all based around literacy and numeracy. Common tests used are JAM and Numpa, which are maths tests, and the School Entry Assessment test (SEA) which covers alphabet, oral language skills, word knowledge and concepts of print. These tests are commonly carried out orally on a 1-1 basis. Testing is conducted to assess where children were currently at, to allow teachers to plan and group children according to their level of ability.

“I do school entry tests to see how much they know, but that’s to inform me as to where and what I need to focus on with these children.”

“I don’t tell their parents. I don’t record any tests in their first year. I think there is that philosophy out there that you test a child and you call the parents and you tell them, but I don’t believe in it because we are all
so different. I mean, basically to a parent, is that your child is not up to standard. How dare we.”

When discussing teacher expectations for children as they begin school, many new entrant teachers emphasised that they felt challenged by national standards and pressured to push children academically, often against philosophical beliefs that children should not be academically forced to fit a generalised expectation.

“We have a bit of a problem with national standards as all of us know in the sector, that children will develop at different rates, and to then say to a five year old child that they are not at standard, somebodies standard, and it happens to be a national standard, it’s even bigger than us. It’s cruel, it’s absolutely cruel. So we really focus on the progress as well. So I know Mum and Dad are really worried about the national standards cos that’s what’s being advertised to them, but we also point out, this is where they were, this is where they’ve come. We can’t ask more than that. Yes, it might not be at a government’s national standard, but look what they’ve done, and this is a big step.”

This is of some concern to early childhood teachers also, as early childhood education is often subject to pressure of push-down effects (a trend found in Australia by Dent 2014). Character-type education was introduced in Korean early childhood programmes to contrast academic pressure. Lee (2013) conducted research exploring an interesting shift which saw the Korean early childhood education system endeavour to incorporate positive character development among their children. The Korean National Preschool Curriculum Nuri ensures quality across different settings and promotes continuity between early childhood and primary schools, emphasising,

‘With successful character development, children will have a solid foundation upon which to become moral, ethical, and critical thinkers who create new opportunities and are able to cooperate with others in a rapidly changing global community’ (Lee, 2013, p.5).

New entrant teachers felt that the most important things that early childhood teachers can do to support children’s preparation for school are to provide an environment where they can develop virtues, such as confidence, responsibility, creativity, friendliness, as it is imperative that children possess qualities which will enable them to function positively within the school environment. Social skills are also incredibly important. This is a notion supported by literature where it is identified social and emotional learning is a contributing factor to academic success (Bernard 2014). Foundational skills such as fine and gross motor skills, early literacy and numeracy skills and experience with tools of literacy such as pens, paint, scissors, are also of importance for palpable reasons in that they will enable children to complete some of the instruction prescribed to them by teachers.

New entrant teachers were asked whether they believe that a virtues based early childhood programme supports a child’s transition into school. Overwhelmingly, they responded positively, saying:
“Often times those kids that come in and you’re like they can do this and that academically, they plateau out and the risk takers and the kids with a bit of courage and you know a thirst for learning they just, they steam ahead.”

“I would say it undoubtedly has to, because it’s all about socialisation and learning those competencies that link with our curriculum document and our school curriculum. About preparedness for school and socialisation and I see it as very valuable.”

“When we reflected on what we wanted [in children starting school] it was around virtues”

Summary of New Entrant Teacher Findings

![New Entrant Teachers - Importance placed on Virtues and Skills on transition into school.](image)

Analysis of the new entrant teachers results show virtues rate at 87.87% and skills rate at 53.61%. The top five rated virtues were respect (96.6%), responsibility (91.51%), integrity (91.5%) friendliness (89.8%), and confidence (89.8%). The top five rated skills were recognise their own name (84.75%), can follow a set of instructions (83%), write their own name (68%), is able to ask and answer questions (67.9%), and correct pencil grip (66.35%). As seen in figure 12, there is a considerable difference between the percentile ratings of virtues in comparison to skills.

Closer analysis has further revealed new entrant teachers rated children from BOP Polytechnic ECE centre at 81.8% in terms of being well prepared for school, and children in general at 45%. On discussing expectations as children start school, many teachers noted that it is not the skills themselves that are important, but the confidence they can give children when entering the school environment. It was discovered that some new entrant teachers’ programmes focused on settling children into routines, developing confidence,
independence and understanding what was expected of them socially and behaviourally before delving into further instruction, as this was considered a necessary step to take before children were in any position to focus on school learning.

Team teaching and modern learning environments were influencing the teaching practices of new entrant teachers. Discovery times providing greater continuity and links to early childhood curriculum were common observations. There appeared to be a greater emphasis on being mindful of meeting children where they are at and adapting to meet children’s needs, rather than expecting them to be at a certain level on starting school. Some are rethinking the concept of ‘ready for school’ in turn asking, ‘Are we ready for them?’

When we went out to schools to interview new entrant teachers, most replied that they had not heard of the Virtues Project before. By the end of our discussions where our teachers shared examples of the virtues based programme, many new entrant teachers were able to relate to the programme. It was discovered that each new entrant classroom caters for children coming from a diverse range of early childhood settings, with varying philosophies. New entrant teachers overall believed that 20 hours per week in an early childhood service before starting school was beneficial for children as it supported the development of a range of social and foundational skills. Early childhood settings also provide children with the opportunity to develop resilience, cooperation, confidence, perseverance and responsibility.

New entrant teachers consider the development of oral language vital in early childhood, as it impacts on a child’s subsequent literacy journey. Teachers however, have noticed a decline in the oral language levels of their school entrants, commenting that this seemed to coincide with an increase in the use of technology, and the demands of modern living. New entrant teachers have also noted a decrease in the levels of independence that a child displays, commenting that it is often the parents that must be educated in allowing their children to develop independence and responsibility.

School visits were considered important in a child’s smooth transition into school, with schools varying greatly on the number of visits offered. Some schools offered specific transition to school programmes, reporting the benefits of this. Other schools expected children to visit pre-existing classrooms. In one school, new entrant teachers would also visit children in their early childhood setting. While some early childhood teachers brought groups of children to school visits, new entrant teachers stressed how important it was for parents to bring children on pre visits, so they are familiar with the school and teachers.

New entrant teachers commented that greater links and communication between early childhood centres and schools would be valuable with pertinent information about the child being shared. New entrant teachers in general, expressed that they saw value in children’s early childhood portfolios. However they were considered precious and teachers were concerned for the safety of them. They responded that when used in the new entrant
classroom, they generated much conversation and interaction with others, as well as being used as a literacy tool. New entrant teachers responded, that children who had transitioned from our Centre into their classroom over the last 2 ½ years, had generally transitioned quite or extremely well. Overall they responded that these children consistently demonstrated many virtues within the new entrant’s classroom, specifically observing those of respect, determination, patience, confidence, kindness, caring, courage, friendliness, resilience, responsibility and integrity.
Parent Survey and Group Meeting Findings

This part of the report focuses on the parent’s feedback resulting from our wider research project examining transition to school. Data from the parents’ responses were collected through both written surveys and feedback at a group discussion. A total of 33 surveys were given to parents with 24 responses being returned. Family members from ten of the respondents attended a group meeting to discuss further questions arising from the survey. This discussion revealed the majority of parents were very familiar with the virtues based programme operating within the centre.

This awareness had been promoted through brochures, wall displays, conversations with teachers, children bringing discussion about virtues into the home, and children’s portfolios, including at the infant level. One family shared they had the virtues displayed on the fridge as a reminder. A number of parents would have liked more information so they could better support virtues in the home. Suggestions for how virtues can be supported within the home centred on visual reminders. Ideas include a fridge magnet, and a focus board in the Centre with more information where parents could see specific virtues of current focus. While parents’ demonstrated strong awareness of the Centre based virtues programme, conversely the majority of parents were unaware of a character education programme running in schools. After further discussion within the focus groups, parents were able to articulate ways that character education was integrated into school curriculum, and the different concepts associated with these programmes.

Parents emphasised that they didn’t get the same communication and feedback at school that they had become accustomed to within childcare, which may explain somewhat why parents weren’t as well-versed around the school character programmes as they were with the virtues based programme. One parent revealed that within a school interview, her child was asked if she knew what virtues were, her child was confidently able to give many examples. Other parents recalled their children using virtue-specific language within home-life. This feedback suggests there may be a link between the virtues based programme and character-type programmes operating in primary schools.

All children involved with our research had attended the Bay of Plenty Polytechnic Early Childhood Education Centre for more than six months prior to starting school with 79.2% of children having attended the centre for more than two years before starting school. All children had also attended the centre 20 or more hours per week in the six months prior to starting school with 50% attending between 31 and 40 hours per week, with only one child attended for more than 40 hours.
As Figure 13 depicts, children of the families surveyed fed into eleven different primary schools in the local area, three of these schools were of a special character, and eight were mainstream.

Respondents were asked how many school visits were offered or recommended before their child started school which drew a diverse response. These ranged from zero to as many as thirty-two, with three schools stating that children could visit as many times as they wanted.

The number of visits attended by the children surveyed ranged from one to twelve. Figure 14 indicates that the majority (58.4% or 14 respondents) had attended one to two visits, 20.8% (5 respondents) had attended three-four visits and 20.8% (5 respondents) had five or more visits before starting school.

Our group meeting revealed parents were divided over whether they had sufficient school
visits prior to their child starting school. Parents identified barriers and restrictions, such as only being able to visit at specific times and days and not feeling as though they were able to visit outside these times. For some others they weren’t able to visit before they started as the classroom hadn’t been created at that stage. Others were happy with the number of visits they had attended. One family experienced a whole term of visits at a prescribed time for all the children starting, so children had the opportunity to make friendships beforehand. Some parents also described being able to visit at times which suited them. The New Zealand School Curriculum recognises that the transition from early childhood to school is strengthened when the school “builds on the learning experiences that children bring with them” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p.41). Unfortunately, none of the parents interviewed had taken or been prompted by primary teachers to take their child’s portfolio along to school or within the transition process.

One parent shared a particularly positive account of transition when their special-educational needs child transitioned from the centre into a local school:

“I quite like the way things happened for my child though, because he’s got special needs, he’s been getting a lot more one-on-one time. Which has been really good, and I think that it would be beneficial if they could do that for every child”.

Of the 24 respondents 16 felt the transition process went well. Others felt more visits would have been helpful and some felt the visits could have been closer together. Two respondents noted a gap of 6-8 weeks from their last visit to the child starting school.

Interviewing teachers shared with parents some of the primary teachers’ transition strategies aimed at learning more about the child they would soon be receiving. These were learned of through discussions with primary teachers. Parents responded positively to the idea of new-entrant teachers’ visiting children within their early childhood setting. One parent shared:

“I think it would be pretty amazing for the new entrants to see a child in the environment here, because that’s a place where the child is socialising but comfortable, and also it’s a place to show off to the new teachers, as opposed to just going to an environment where it’s foreign to them”

Another commented

“What a cool idea to make that bond with the teacher and the teacher already has an idea where they’ve come from”.

However when asked for opinions on the idea of early childhood teacher’s accompanying children on school visits one parent stated:

“I think you’re too busy for that. I think it’s quite a big ask, I guess that would take the opportunity from us away, to meet the teacher, and things like that.”
Another suggested:

“What about some sort of report? Not a report but you know I’m thinking all of these lovely portfolios, and it would be a bit overwhelming if I took all these ketes and portfolios into the teacher and said take these home and learn about my child….but there is some value in getting some of your input for their new teacher.

Figure 15.

Figure 15 overwhelmingly identifies the importance all respondents placed on their child having regularly attended an early childhood setting prior to starting school. Parents were able to identify a number of benefits including: learning social skills, the ability to follow instructions and how to be part of a large group. Other skills identified were becoming familiar with routines and the opportunity to learn the basics of literacy and numeracy. Virtues featured in a significant number of responses with respect mentioned frequently along with responsibility and confidence. Interestingly two respondents made mention of the importance qualified teachers made in the centre, commenting:

“Educationally based care is essential. Being supported by qualified staff ensured she was learning effectively from day one. The teachers brought out our child’s strengths and encouraged these.”

Barback (2014) describes a new entrant’s teacher experience on school readiness who feels that some ECE centres focus well on school readiness, while others do not. This variety in the quality of teaching and learning in ECE centres has resulted in some children starting school with very little academic knowledge or readiness for school skills.

91.3% of parents felt that their child was very well prepared for starting school. Parents were asked what aspects of their experience within our centre most supported their child’s transition into school. A number of responses referred to children developing social skills, confidence, independence, listening skills, basic literacy and numeracy skills and that these assist in the transition to school. Having respect for one’s self and others around them also featured prominently.
One parent sums up

“The balance of play and structure was perfect. The teachers were supportive and encouraging and set routines for the kids to take responsibility for themselves...”

Developing the necessary skills associated with transition is deemed integral to overall adjustment to school, with Margetts (1997) stating:

‘adjustment to the new situation is seen as a critical outcome of successful transition....children who lack, or experience difficulty with, social or cognitive skills, and who exhibit problem behaviours, are at risk of not adjusting to school (p.54).

The highest rated virtues from the perspective of parents were Respect (98.52%), integrity (89.65%), responsibility (89.22%), friendliness (88.21%), and confidence (86.73%), with the lowest rated virtues being courage (79.39%) and perseverance (77.91%).

One parent stated

“We love the way that each new child at your centre is referred to as a friend...that says it all! Accept everyone for who they are!...the best thing a child can learn includes loving, caring, respecting others”
One hundred percent of parents concluded that a virtues based programme is either quite or extremely valuable in forming the solid foundation for their child’s transition to school’ as validated in Figure 17. Parent’s comments included:

“I think there is a stark contrast between the loving caring environments here, to an environment which is much more school and big picture....and so I think virtues would really help if they were continued on a little bit longer, and they should really be continued throughout life.”

“They are fundamentals for life...I know that .... had been introduced to some in the character way...she’s got to really think about it and she is a little confused by it, whereas she is very comfortable with the virtues that have come from the centre that are still being supported in the school.”

“I found with my child, she knew the virtues, she knew what was expected of herself, and it’s just unfortunate that other kids in her class didn’t know those same virtues, and it’s not practiced in other centres or in their homes and stuff...so it’s nice that our children have been taught the virtues but then when, it’s like a little safe haven here and we have to take them out into the bigger world, with all these kids from all walks of life.”

Parents added concepts such as ‘compassion and empathy’ , which can both be considered inherent in the virtues of respect and caring, as further useful qualities which support transition.
The skills parents deemed most important were, recognise their own name (94.12%), can follow a set of instructions (88.25%), is able to ask and answer questions (83.82%), recognise colours (79.52%), and count to ten (78%), with the lowest rated skills being, count beyond ten (46%), and count backwards from ten (43.7%).

The skills parents valued as least important were correct use of upper and lower case letters, correct formation of letters, count beyond 10, and count backwards from 10. Six parents felt that having a left or right hand preference and being able to count backwards from 10 were not important.

Parents were invited to suggest further skills considered important for a child transitioning into a new entrant classroom. Focused type skills included ‘being able to glue and colour between the lines’ and ‘learning the days of the week’. Further skills had direct links with the virtue programme. These responses included

- “patience—eg. hand up to ask question and WAITING for acknowledgement before speaking…”
- “social interaction and making new friends”
- “Not getting too distracted by others when trying to complete a task”.
- “I agree with most of the skills mentioned however I think the ability to socialise and relate to other children is important, for me the virtues are key to this”

Dockett and Perry (2003, cited in Mortlock et al, 2011) research findings indicated that Australian parents felt the most important thing for their child was to be socially adjusted
and to know the school rules with knowledge and skills particularly low on their list of priorities. Parent feedback from our research suggests a similar trend, with parents highlighting how useful the virtues have been in supporting their child’s ongoing learning, both within the home and in their school transition.

Feedback regarding schools expectations of children in their first term of school were again very varied. 18 out of 23 comments made mention of skills that featured in our parent survey list, with particular emphasis on early literacy concepts such as recognising and writing their own name, recognising letters, and numbers. Self-management skills including being able to hang own bag up, settling in and feeling confident to interact, working as part of a group, understanding what virtues were and are practiced, sense of belonging, and following the morning routine were further expectations featuring in parents comments.

Discussion revealed a range of ways schools aim to inform parents around their expectations. Parents’ experiences included starter pack pamphlets and ‘nuggets’ of information, a dinner for parents, meetings with relevant personal e.g. principal, board of trustees, covering a range of topics including national standards etc. Others mentioned information was really only attainable through ‘self-searching and asking’. One parent comments they ‘do stuff like website and newsletters, but you do have to actively involve yourself.’ Another parent mentioned the advantage of finding reassurance from learning some of the schools expectations such as ‘can they recognise their name…’, stating “it did feel good though, to be able to tick them off and go yep yep yep…”. This comment suggests it can bring parents some confidence knowing their child’s skills correlate with the specific expectations of their school.

Our survey identified that 91.3% of parents believed their child was ‘quite or extremely ready’ to meet these expectations, and only 8.7% rating their child as ‘ready’.

When discussion provoked parents to discuss whether they had ever felt pressured to meet school expectations, parents spoke about different experiences with homework. One stated:

“On his first day of school, he came back with the last three weeks of homework. I was like….and a couple weeks later, they didn’t have homework at all. So you don’t know what was happening, I don’t know if I’m supposed to be doing anything with him or what. I just felt confused when he started.”

Another mentioned her daughter’s homework always contained a helpful sheet glued to the book containing expectations and guidelines, including tips on spelling for example ‘look at the word, stretch out the word, and then try and write the word.’

In regards to national standards, one parent shared her experience of her child’s new-entrant teacher explaining to parents:

“They think it’s quite unreachable at their age, and they’ve explained this to parents, this is where your child should be at, and don’t be discouraged if your child is not meeting that standard….I know that my
child can get quite discouraged if someone else can do something that she can’t quite do yet...I haven’t put any big interest in those standards, even though I know the teachers do.”

Parents answered that a range of difficulties were experienced following their child’s transition to school. These difficulties were largely environmental including adapting to the new environment and new learning format. This was represented in many comments made by parents including:

- “little fish, big pond syndrome,...overwhelmed first weeks by the number of people around”,
- “My son would have liked to be playing outside rather than at a table with worksheets”
- “Settling into a new school”
- “silly stuff, toileting...eating lunch without supervision...how to deal with conflict when supervision absent”
- “Leaving Mum...a personal thing that cannot be controlled as each child is different in personality”
- “Reading is a challenge, she does it well but when I asked she said learning is the hardest thing”

Parents were informed of one approach mentioned within the primary teachers’ interviews of primary teachers speaking directly with early childhood teachers. Parents responded positively to this approach, with one stating

“I think that would be hugely useful...if they have a little heads up that, hey, he’s really confident in this situation, but in this situation will need a little helping hand along.”

This statement implies a certain level of trust esteemed from the parent towards the early childhood teacher. Ideally ECE services and schools should communicate about the children and continuity of practice that are age appropriate which support children’s competence and confidence which support positive transitions. Communication can however be difficult due to the fact that schools draw their children from many different ECE services (Barback 2014).

When invited to add further comments a small number of parents suggested they would like to see formal learning occurring within the early childhood context sharing they would like “more focus on structured days and school skills” and another added “…maybe they could do a before school time where the kids are focused for an extra half an hour on learning”.
Summary of Parents Findings:

This research project has discovered our virtues based programme is highly valued by parents who have had children attend the centre as supporting children’s attitudes and perspectives beyond the home and as contributing to a positive transition to school. Analysis illustrates virtues being rated at 85.68% overall and skills at 67.17%. The top five rated virtues were respect (98.52%), integrity (89.65%), responsibility (89.22%), friendliness (88.21%), and confidence (86.73%). The top five rated skills were recognise their own name (94.13%), can follow a set of instructions (88.25%), is able to ask and answer questions (83.82%), recognise colours (79.72%), and write their own name (79.47%).

While the virtues were consistently rated as important by parents, academic skills received variable ratings, suggesting value for virtues is perhaps more universal than value for academic skills. Communication is a strength of the centre and this has effectively nurtured parents understanding of the virtues based programme, however there are still some discrepancies in regards to parents’ knowledge of character education programmes operating in schools. Peters (2010) describes that children will transition more successfully if teachers affirm a child’s identity and culture and build and connect with the knowledge gained from home and the early childhood centre. This is also reiterated in the MOE (2002) 10 year strategic plan which identifies a goal to improve the sharing of information across the sector to promote effective transition processes. Our research suggests gaps do exist in regards to attaining this aspiration. It was of particular interest that portfolios were not actively encouraged by the primary sector, as these contain significant information concerning individual children, and have been identified in research as enhancing transition for children.

Our research has determined that while our parents consider their children to have been well prepared for school by the Centre, and as upholding high regard for the virtues based programme contribution to their child’s preparation, the overall structure of their transition to school was not without flaw. There are discrepancies amongst the nature of school visits,
with a variable range of provisions arranged by individual schools, and parents shared mixed feelings on this matter. However, parents responded positively to suggestions involving strategies to enhance new-entrant teachers’ knowledge and understanding of the child they would soon be teaching. Parents shared their children were very familiar with the use and language of virtues and this has resulted in them understanding what was expected of them, parents expressed optimism at fostering the virtues based programme at home, given further support from the Centre to do so. One concern arose from a parent’s admission that while her child displayed many of the attributes of the virtues based programme, it was difficult for her child to adjust to an environment where virtues was not prominent. It was suggested that it was a shame not all children were exposed to a virtues based programme before starting school and maybe it should be practised in other centres. Goodwin (2001) and Lee (2013) validate this notion and the positive contribution a virtues based programme plays in relation to a child’s long term learning and development.
Summary of Overall Findings

Our most recent ERO report (2012) highlighted:

“Teachers are caring, positive and responsive in their interactions with children, whānau and aiga. They support children’s sense of belonging in both centres and the wider community, recognising the diversity of families’ cultures. Teachers focus on developing children’s literacy, numeracy and oral language skills. Children confidently share ideas with teachers and each other and seek support as needed. They develop self-help skills, participate in highly developed social play and take on leadership roles.”

Over time teachers at the Bay of Plenty Polytechnic Early Childhood Education Centre have received favourable feedback about children who transition from our Centre into school, and have known that children participate responsively within our early childhood programmes. It is our view that the virtues based programme plays a significant role in allowing this. To review whether our Centre programmes remain relevant beyond a child’s time within the Centre, a group of our teachers set out to determine what our community believes is important for transition to school from the perspective of parents, our own early childhood teachers, and primary teachers.

One of the aims of our research was to distinguish whether our virtues based programme potentially contributes to children’s on going learning. One method to measure this was to encourage respondents to rate a range of virtues, and skills through written surveys, which was later extended on within discussion groups. An overall analysis of our research has found a distinct pattern demonstrating how consistently respondents rate virtues, while respondent’s ratings for skills gathered mixed review. Virtues gathered consistent high appraisal, as seen in figure 20, suggesting that despite a diverse mix of respondents, ranging from parents of past children to early childhood teachers, and primary teachers, all parties deem virtues to be of high importance. This finding validates the statement made within the Virtues Handbook, which states ‘while values are culturally specific, virtues are universally valued.’ (Popov, 2000, p. xix)
Overall analysis found early childhood teachers rated virtues at 86.04% and skills at 63.75%. The top five rated virtues were respect (94.33%), justice (92.44%), confidence (90.55%), integrity (90%), and patience (88.72%). The top rated skills were can follow a set of instructions (88.66%), recognise their own name (86.83%), understands directions (85%), is able to ask and answer questions (84.95%), and can recognise colours (83%).

Overall analysis of the new entrant teachers results show virtues rate at 87.87% and skills rate at 53.61%. The top five rated virtues were respect (96.6%), responsibility (91.51%), integrity (91.5%) friendliness (89.8%), and confidence (89.8%). The top five rated skills (see figure 22) were recognise their own name (84.75%), can follow a set of instructions (83%), write their own name (68%), is able to ask and answer questions (67.9%), and correct pencil grip (66.35%).

Overall analysis of the parents results illustrates virtues being rated at 85.68% overall and skills at 67.17%. The top five rated virtues were respect (98.52%), integrity (89.65%), responsibility (89.22%), friendliness (88.21%), and confidence (86.73%). The top five rated skills were recognise their own name (94.13%), can follow a set of instructions (88.25%), is able to ask and answer questions (83.82%), recognise colours (79.72%), and write their own name (79.47%).
These findings show both primary teachers and parents’ rate the virtues of respect, responsibility, integrity, friendliness, and confidence as the most important virtues in transition to school, with early childhood teachers rating justice and patience in favour of responsibility and friendliness. Recognise their own name, can follow a set of instructions, can ask and answer questions all featured prominently as highest rated skills amongst all respondents’ results. Early childhood teachers also considered understanding of directions and colours as important, primary teachers considered able to write their own name and pencil grip as important, and parents deemed recognise colours, and write their own name as important. These findings provide useful information for early childhood educators to consider when implementing transition to school programmes.

One trend that emerged is that parents place somewhat higher emphasis on skills than new entrant teachers at almost 15% higher than what new entrant teachers rate them, with early childhood teachers sitting in the centre. With virtues sitting above the value for skills, we have compelling evidence that virtues in early childhood education makes a valued contribution to children’s on-going learning, while focusing on skill acquisition is not necessarily what is being requested by primary teachers, and of further importance, contrasts developmental needs of children. This finding should persuade all early childhood teachers partaking in encouraging formal instruction within early childhood settings to review rationales for doing so and consider alternative approaches, which align more intrinsically with our holistic early childhood curriculum Te Whariki, in preparing children for school.

Findings demonstrate the many ways in which the virtues based programme contributes to
children’s primary school learning. Our findings demonstrate how closely the virtues based programme correlates with the key competency component of the New Zealand Curriculum, and character-type education programmes operating within schools. Mawson (2006) recognises while much work has gone into bridging the gap between curriculums, questions must be raised as to whether greater coherence in beliefs and philosophies are needed. The virtues based programme provides a coherent framework flowing between early childhood settings and primary schools. Parents were very well aware of virtues and its related terminology, and shared accounts of their children assimilating virtues related concepts easily when these terms were used within their new schools.

Our research shows early childhood education for at least twenty hours per week is valued, with our parents rating attendance within ECE highly, even more-so than ECE and primary teachers, which drew one or two low ratings from respondents respectively. Developing social skills, learning of basic skills and routines, forming trust with other adults, as well as developing virtues such as respect, responsibility, and confidence were all considered to be aspects developed through early childhood education. Primary school teachers put particular emphasis on self-management skills as important for children to develop, with some detailing a decline in the self-management skills many children are currently arriving at school with. Another interesting finding that arose was the decline in oral language skills children are arriving at school with. Teachers considered an increased use of technology may be contributing to this trend.

Recent research conducted by the Education Review Office into continuity of learning: transitions from early childhood services to schools; revealed:

"Just over half of the services were implementing a curriculum that supported children to develop the dispositions and strong sense of identity and belonging needed to support a successful transition." (p. 2).

Parents of our centre expressed they believed their children were prepared for school, with the majority stating they felt their child was extremely well prepared. New entrant teachers answered eighty-one point eight percent of children transitioned well into school from our centre, in contrast to forty-five percent of children in general. Early childhood teachers also stated they believed all children were prepared for school by the Centre. Early childhood teachers pointed to management structures, teaching practice, and centre programmes as indicators that children were being well prepared by our Centre. Parents and primary teachers shared similar views, with parents emphasising the virtues role in this process, with one parent in particular expressing that it was a shame it was not more consistently practiced in other settings, including within homes and centres.

Evidentially, our parents had experienced a wide variety of school-visit structures, with varied numbers of visits being provided for between schools. Those parents who had received more visits reported increased satisfaction with their transition to school process. Interestingly the family of a special educational needs child who transitioned, shared a highly positive account of transition where increased one-on-one attention was provided, emphasising it would be great if this occurred for all children. This is a finding which correlates with the ERO finding within their research regarding transition to school (2015) where they state findings of “several examples of excellent support for children with special
education needs’ (p. 42).

Communication was an area identified as a factor in need of improvement, particularly at the school level, as many parents reported feeling like they needed to self-source information relating to school expectations, structures, board of trustees and so forth. The primary teachers we interviewed reported value for portfolios, sharing the advantage of building children’s confidence, and teachers understanding of children. However, none of our parents had been encouraged to bring their portfolio along to school. Feedback from our research has found a summary of important aspects rather than an entire portfolio may be of greater use in transition. A number of strategies were also explored to potentially enhance communication around children starting a new school, with parents responding positively to the idea of a new entrant teacher visiting children within their early childhood setting, or making a phone call to their early childhood teachers. These were strategies primary teachers had themselves suggested. The consensus seems to be that all parties are willing to enhance communication processes in order to better support children in their transition.

There were variations in the way new entrant classrooms were structured, with some encompassing a two-teacher team within an a two-classroom open format, and some classrooms actively encouraging a balance between structure and free play. An additional finding that arose from our research was the pressure of the national standards framework, with many sharing how the generalised standardisation of national standards contrasted their personal teaching philosophies. Many teachers reported feeling pressure to communicate the national standards effectively to parents in a way that doesn’t undermine the child’s current capabilities. This was consistent with parent feedback that showed teachers conscientiously encouraged parents to focus on how far their child had come as opposed to where they should be at on a national level. New entrant teachers were very forthcoming with this information, with some expressing major concerns and dissatisfaction with the framework.

Primary teachers were overwhelmingly supportive of a virtues based programme in early childhood, emphasising that virtues form the dispositions that will enable them to teach children effectively. They articulated that their job is more achievable when children arrive at school with the virtues, rather than just skills-based attributes. This sentiment was echoed by early childhood teachers, as well as parents who accentuated the contribution of the virtues based programme to their child’s successful transition to school.

Overall, our research demonstrates the validity of implementing a virtues based programme in early childhood education, not only as a means of encouraging a strong culture of care and respect which promotes a rich learning environment, but as supporting future transitions and on-going learning. Transition to school is a process that should be crafted with intentional strategies aimed at actively supporting children, parents, and whānau, as research confirms children’s transition experiences play a role in their developing sense of identity and confidence (ERO, 2015). As our teachers have articulated, supporting a child’s dispositions towards change and transition begins in infancy with developing trusting relationships, further validating the reality that early childhood education structures and programmes play a long-term role in children’s on-going learning and development.
Transition is further supported when communication processes which encourage new entrant teachers gaining knowledge and understandings of children are strong. Cross-sector knowledge and understanding is also of significance, and the virtues based programme with its connection with key competencies inherent in the New Zealand Curriculum, actively provides a sense of continuity between educational settings. Acquisition of academic skills is still of some value for children in transition to school, however it should not be a primary focus of early childhood teachers. This is an outlook shared by primary teachers, who consistently responded that it is their place to teach academic skills, which is more achievable when children arrive at school with the qualities and characteristics which empower them to learn. We would further contend that the acquisition of skills will develop naturally when children are embedded in a holistic environment which endorses a virtues based programme, as it is this programme which forms the foundation for children to thrive in as engaged learners.

**Recommendations**

**Recommendations from Early Childhood Teachers’ Responses:**
- Use various means of communicating virtues with parents including newsletters and posters, (as these were some of the ways virtues were communicated in the early days of delivering virtues).
- Incorporate examples of virtues in context, within children’s individual learning journey assessments.
- Include virtues based programme information for new parents, including through pamphlets and discussion.
- Gain understanding of the diversity in the way virtues is delivered and practiced amongst the different centre age-groups, this can possibly be attained by teachers spending time working in the different age-groups within the Centre.
- Engage in regular training to remain refreshed, all new teachers joining the Centre will also need to engage in training to gain understanding about how the virtues based programme operates within the centre.
- Centre-review identified as a potential means of revitalising/reviewing the virtues based programme

**Recommendations from Primary Teachers’ Responses:**
- Integrate virtues based programming into all early childhood education as it promotes children’s holistic development and attributes which will enable them to thrive within a school learning environment
- Support the development of age appropriate basic foundation skills developed within the everyday context of the early childhood setting.
- ECE Centres to provide high teacher to child ratios to allow for sustained and meaningful 1-1 interactions supporting oral language development that furthers early literacy and numeracy understandings.
- Encourage parents and whānau to allow their children to develop the virtue of responsibility, as independence is highly valued in schools.
- Promote transition to school visits for each child, stressing importance of parents also becoming familiar with the school and teachers.
• Enhance partnerships and communication processes between sectors. Make contact with new entrant teachers as children transition, passing on pertinent information.

• Encourage oral language in young children, including through traditional nursery rhymes and through virtues based strategies such as ‘speaking the language, and recognising teachable moments’. Virtues based strategies encourage rich opportunities for oral discussion and internalisation of some complex concepts, such as respect etc.

• Emphasise the virtues and skills primary teachers have identified as important within holistic and meaningful learning contexts.

• Encourage parents to take a child’s early childhood portfolio to school to support transition. New entrant teachers had suggestions for portfolio content that would be beneficial and of interest to them such as:
  • Things children enjoy and like doing
  • How children interact with others and if they find making friends easy.
  • If new things scare them
  • Are they confident to ask for things?
  • Can they express their needs?
  • Are they independent?
  • Strengths, interests, behaviour issues and social difficulties.
  • “Maybe some virtues that they display quite strongly.”

Handy but not essential:
  • Can they write their name?
  • Can they recognise their name?
  • Can they open lunch packages?

Recommendations from Parent Responses

• Teachers to work in partnership with parents to develop virtues and skills which parents identified as important within meaningful and holistic learning contexts.

• Further support our parents understanding of the virtues based programme and practical tips for fostering virtues within the home. Parents showed favour towards visual reminders, such as magnets to put on the fridge etc.

• A focus board was suggested as a further means of expanding their knowledge of the virtues with tips for parents to be able to identify and encourage the use of virtues at home. An email containing hot tips on this was also suggested.

• A portfolio sheet with an explanation about the virtues and how it is used in the centre.

• Parent feedback shows they would appreciate implementation of a virtues based programme amongst all early childhood settings.

• Encourage parents and whānau relationships with new school and primary teachers. Parents were enthusiastic towards the idea of primary teachers making a phone call to early childhood education teacher, and the idea of the primary teacher visiting their child within the early childhood setting.

• Produce a brief sheet where children’s virtues of strength, virtues to be strengthened, interests, and what a child may need support with, in the transition process can be shared with primary teachers.
References


Margetts, K. (1997). Factors impacting on children’s adjustment to the first year of primary


