Summarising learning on a transition statement

A transition statement is essentially a set of short learning summaries. Effective learning summaries include specific descriptions of the child’s progress in each learning and development area. They include information about the level of support the child requires in familiar and/or new situations. They do not include references to a child’s phase of learning as the Continua of learning and development is not a ‘reporting’ framework.

The Queensland kindergarten learning guideline (QKLG) provides advice about creating transition statements on page 37 and examples of transition statement templates that services can adapt on pages 70–78. Different transition statement formats can be developed to suit different services, children and their families. For example, a:

- single transition statement can be developed that incorporates information from the child, parent and teacher
- transition statement may include sections completed by different partners
- format can be created to share information about a child who attends both a special needs and a kindergarten program
- page can be added to enable a parent to provide additional information.

Figure 1 shows the process teachers use to create learning summaries for a transition statement. This process involves:

- reviewing the evidence of learning in a child’s folio collected throughout the year
- reflecting on the child’s learning progress in each learning and development area
- writing a learning summary for each learning and development area.

Note: The transition statement includes partners’ perspectives.
When developing transition statements, it is helpful to keep in mind:

- the purpose — to promote continuity of learning and support the child's transition into a Prep setting
- the audience — parents, who will choose how and with whom to share the information.

It is also important to take time to develop skills and strategies that will enable you to create learning summaries that are specific, clear and concise, and include information contributed by all relevant partners.

**Well-focused learning summaries**

Staying focused while writing learning summaries will save time and energy. This involves being selective about what is recorded and incorporating important information that will support that child's transition into a new setting. This information may include:

- ways to help the child to feel secure and settle into a new setting
- the child’s motivations, strengths, higher-order skills, understandings and learning dispositions that will help a parent and teacher plan for continuity in learning
- situations when the child may need support and successful strategies for providing assistance to this child.

**Tips:**

- Review the significant learnings for each learning and development area on pages 32–33 of the QKLG. This will help you to decide where to record particular information (i.e. in which area of the transition statement) to avoid repetition or overlap.
• After drafting the transition statement, review the learning summaries. Check that they include the most important and relevant information about that child’s learning that will promote continuity.

• When describing a child’s learning, identify whether the learning occurred in a familiar or new situation and/or identify the level of support needed, e.g. explicit or occasional support.

Clear and concise learning summaries

The language used should be easily understood by a parent, who will choose how and with whom to share the information on the transition statement. Use:

• plain English, and avoid educational jargon, acronyms or abbreviations

• positive language to describe a child’s learning, e.g. record what the child can do independently or with support, rather than what they cannot do

• succinct and well-organised wording, e.g. break ideas into shorter sentences or use dot points, group similar information together, avoid repetition

• correct grammar, spelling and punctuation

• legible writing in a format that is easy to follow.

Tips:

• Avoid terms such as ‘not’, ‘cannot’, ‘does not’, ‘but’ or ‘however’, which tend to present a deficit perspective. Reword statements and consider alternative wording to reflect what the child can do without support. For example, ‘Lianni seeks to play with others, but often finds it hard to join in their play’ can be changed to ‘Lianni seeks to play with others and, when supported, joins in a familiar play situation for short periods of time’.

• Work with a colleague who can proofread the learning summaries and check that the meaning is clear.

It is important to carefully choose the words and phrases used so that a person who is not familiar with the child or the kindergarten program understands the intended meaning.

• Be accurate and precise e.g. ‘considers others’ ideas and feelings’ gives the reader more precise information than ‘she’s lovely’.

• Use specific words with clear meanings e.g. ‘writes the first letter of his name’ is more specific than ‘is trying to write his name.

• Avoid unnecessary detail e.g. ‘follows familiar routines without help’ rather than ‘remembers to put his shoes in his bag, wash his hands before meals and wipe the table after eating …’

Tip: Brainstorm with colleagues precise words and phrases to clearly describe different aspects of learning. Discuss how much detail a parent/educator may need about a child’s learning so you avoid spending more time than needed to write learning summaries.

Involving partners in creating learning summaries

Working with partners is an important part of a teacher’s professional role. Teachers need support from service leaders, and time to ensure they can engage effectively with children, parents and team members to develop learning summaries. They also need to consider the types of information each partner is best placed to contribute. It is important that teachers have opportunities to network with other early years teachers (e.g. kindergarten and Prep teachers) in the local area so the most relevant information and processes can be organised to support smooth transitions.
It is helpful to plan ahead and start the process of engaging partners early to avoid running out of time at the end of the year.

**Before writing transition statements**

- Organise a meeting or share general information via a newsletter regarding the:
  - purpose of collaboratively developing the transition statement
  - strengths-based focus
  - value of parents sharing information, e.g. during an interview with the Prep teacher on entry into school.
- Arrange for information related to transition statements to be translated and made available to parents who speak a language other than English, e.g. using a translation service.
- Work with colleagues to build skills for writing learning summaries and seeking feedback.

**When writing the transition statements**

- Make brief notes about each child’s learning, and identify aspects of learning to focus on when working with partners to develop a particular child’s transition statement.
- Invite parents to contribute to developing a transition statement during a face-to-face, telephone or online discussion.
- Support parents to focus on important information to share in a transition statement, e.g. provide a simple survey.
- Support parents with low literacy skills, e.g. by documenting information provided verbally, including some images, if appropriate, and reading the final transition statements to them.
- Organise time and staff so you can work with children, individually or in small groups, to help them to contribute to the transition statement, e.g. by drawing or recording their comments.
- Review all the information gathered and:
  - identify the most relevant information to support the child’s ongoing learning
  - consider combining similar information/perspectives
  - explore respectful ways to present different partners’ perspectives or priorities
  - assist partners to identify information that is most relevant to promoting continuity and supporting the child’s transition to school.
  - support partners to clarify and document information so it is meaningful and helpful to the intended audience.
- Review the final transition statement to check it reflects the most up-to-date and accurate information.

**After writing the transition statements**

- Share and provide a copy of the final transition statement to the parent.
- Acknowledge and openly value the time and effort partners contributed.
- Reflect on the processes used to engage partners, e.g. by seeking feedback from various partners.
- Identify strengths and ways to improve the process, e.g. ways to be more responsive to diverse families or to reduce time needed for rewriting or clarifying meanings.