



## Mentoring Investigation Report

### *Collaboratively initiating a transition program*

<b>Background information</b>	
Mentor teacher(s) name: <i>Sarah Hibberd</i>	
Mentee teacher(s) name: <i>Kerryn Leiper (collaborative co-mentor role)</i>	
Schools: <i>Farrer Primary (Sarah), Melrose High (Kerryn), ACT</i>	
Language: <i>Japanese</i>	
Year level: Focus on inter-school connections and transition from Year 6 (primary) to Year 7 (secondary)	
<b>School or class context</b>	<b>Record of process</b>
<p>Farrer Primary School is a feeder school to Melrose High.</p> <p>Currently there is little connection between the language programs offered at the two schools and therefore little flow-on learning for the students who arrive at the high school with prior knowledge of Japanese.</p> <p>The two schools have a good mainstream transition program so I plan to build on this to improve Japanese language transition.</p>	
<b>Goals of mentoring program</b>	
<p><b>Collaboratively initiate a transition program</b></p> <p>The transition program needs to promote continuation of language learning and increase communication between the language teachers at the schools. I anticipated this would involve some form of visit/activity for the students but also the sharing of programs between the teachers. It is important for the language teachers to have a shared understanding of program content and expected levels of achievement.</p> <p>It is hoped that this transition program and the inter-school collaborations will continue over the long-term to improve continuation of learning across schools and therefore also improve student learning outcomes.</p> <p>The project responds to and is informed by the AFMLTA Program Standard:</p>	

<p><i>Effective languages and cultures programs recognise that students transferring between schools and schooling systems arrive with differing levels of knowledge of and exposure to the languages and cultures taught in the school <b>and have strategies to facilitate transitions and enhance learning.</b></i></p> <p>The transition program is a first step towards helping our schools to create a Languages Pathway Plan in line with the Australian Curriculum.</p> <p><b>We aimed to work in a co-mentoring partnership to achieve this goal, using the professional relationship to support feedback and cooperation between us, and to increase our skills as languages program leaders in the school.</b></p>	
<p><b>Design</b></p>	
<p>To meet early in Term 3 with the language teachers at both schools, and also with the principals if they were willing, to discuss and plan a languages transition plan. This meeting would also be used to share programs and achievement standards to build common understanding of current practices, programs and pedagogies.</p> <p>Organise one aspect of the transition program to occur before the end of Term 3.</p> <p>Keep a journal throughout the process to document our reflections.</p>	
<p><b>Implementation</b></p>	
<p><b>27/7/2012</b></p> <p>Meeting at Melrose High School with Kerryn Leiper. Also present were Susan Daintith and Evelyn Karapanos (teachers) and George Palavestra (Principal) (see meeting minutes, below).</p> <p>We discussed the aim of this project, possibilities for meeting student needs and problems that might make transition difficult. We planned for this year's language program.</p> <p><u>Main findings from meeting</u></p> <p>Melrose has the possibility for streaming Year 7 students. There are two classes so it is possible to have one continuing class and one beginning class.</p> <p>It was established that knowledge of student Japanese levels at the end of Year 6 is required to allow planning for streamed classes and/or differentiation within a class. We will trial a test this year. This test will be given to feeder Primary Schools who teach Japanese. Melrose teachers to design the test so that the information is directly relevant.</p> <p>Administration: George Palavestra (Principal) suggested</p>	<p>Streaming is not always possible due to the impact on other classes and also the number of students choosing to learn Japanese. The other languages at Melrose only have one Year 7 class, thus streaming is not an option for these languages.</p>

<p>adapting the Year 7 enrolment form to include previous language learning (language learned and for how many years).</p> <p>Transition program: We discussed several possibilities to enhance language links between our schools. These would aid in language advocacy as well as in increasing shared understandings of student progress and language levels.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Year 6 students to visit Melrose for a joint project with the Year 7 students. This will allow the Year 7 students to mentor the Year 6s as well as to give an opportunity for the teachers to 'get a feel' for the level of Japanese learned.</li> <li>• Year 6 students could visit Melrose for the 'Japan Day' at the end of Term 4 (which involves only students who plan on going to Melrose). This invitation to go to all feeder Primary Schools.</li> <li>• High School visits to Farrer such as Year 10 students sharing their Japanese stories or providing helpers for the Farrer Japanese Fun Day.</li> <li>• Provision of a diagnostic test to gauge students levels, to allow for differentiation in classes between continuing and beginner learners</li> </ul> <p>Curriculum: We also discussed the need to share curricula across the schools. This would help prevent 'double-ups' and allow the high schools to further develop concepts learnt in Primary Schools.</p> <p><b>10/9/2012</b> – Year 6 visit to Melrose High for joint class with the Year 7 students. All Year 6 students walked to Melrose to join the afternoon Japanese class. Students worked together to create PowerPoint presentations on likes/dislikes in Japanese. This was a subject with which the Year 7 students are proficient and on which the Year 6s are currently working. The visit provided an opportunity for the Year 7s to coach the younger students.</p> <p><b>Ongoing communication</b></p> <p>I have had regular discussions with Kerryn Leiper, principals and the Japanese teachers from other feeder primary schools. I believe this is the greatest need: with increased communication we can collaborate on programs and work to provide the high schools with enough information to start the Year 7 program with targeted differentiation.</p>	<p>I have been in contact with the Japanese teachers from the other feeder Primary Schools (Bonython and Fadden, currently Japanese is not taught at Monash). They wish to be involved. Communication is the key! We will meet later to work out how to involve all schools – e.g. through common diagnostic testing and visits to the 'Japan Day' at Melrose for students intending to move to this school from their primary school.</p> <p>Issue: Schools are not teaching the same things or to the same level. How are high schools to create a program that builds on prior learning when there are such discrepancies? This situation indicates the need for differentiation within programs. Streaming can't answer everything.</p> <p>The lesson was planned to be 1 hour but due to delays in walking to Melrose we only had 30 minutes. In essence it made the lesson too rushed. Kerryn and I discussed the possibility of incorporating this lesson into the mainstream transition day – I could come over for that part of the day. Otherwise we would need a longer length of time to make the afternoon viable.</p>
<p><b>Data gathered</b></p>	
<p><b>Student survey (summary)</b></p> <p><i>Number of students from Farrer going to Melrose High:8</i></p> <p><i>Number of students continuing Japanese at Melrose:6</i></p> <p><i>Total percentage of students continuing Japanese: 59%</i></p> <p><i>Total percentage of students not continuing Japanese: 33%</i></p>	<p>There are currently few students going on to Melrose. I intend to contact the Japanese teachers at the other high schools to see what can be done for students who wish to continue Japanese at these schools.</p>

*Unsure: 7%*

**Other feeder schools teaching Japanese**

Monash Primary – currently without a Japanese teacher

Fadden Primary – Louise Poulakis

Bonython Primary – Kyleigh Howell

**Outcomes**

Increased communication and sharing of information

Procedures are now in place to ensure that the Japanese language teachers in our sector are communicating with each other in regards to ongoing student learning opportunities. Kerry Leiper and I have been in regular communication and anticipate this will continue. I am also in contact with the other feeder school primary Japanese teachers, and have arranged meetings to further develop connections and help them join in the transition program.

Transition program

The following activities have been chosen to build connections between our schools. The transition program must be sustainable to allow it to continue in years to come. Suggestions include:

- visits to the other schools for language specific activities
- participation in Melrose High's Japan Day
- completion of Year 6 Japanese diagnostic test to inform high school teachers of student learning levels BEFORE students arrive at Melrose, to allow for class placement according to student needs
- sharing of programs to avoid 'doubling up' of topics

School changes at Melrose

- Melrose High to add 'Prior Language Learning' section to their Year 7 enrolment form
- Gather data from the diagnostic tests to stream Year 7 languages classes

Where to from here?

I have made plans to continue what has been started during this project. Steps include:

- Meet with the Japanese teachers from the other feeder schools to collaboratively work on the transitions through to Melrose High School. Kyleigh Howell also mentioned adopting the transition program to the other high school her students attend.
- Build connections with Alfred Deakin High School, with the hope of initiating a similar transition program with this school.
- Continue the transition program with Melrose, including the visits planned for the end of the year.
- Ask for a copy of the high school curriculum to allow primary schools to choose different topics and avoid doubling-up.
- Share what has been successful with the ACT Japanese Teacher's Network to promote similar outcomes among other clusters of schools.

## Interpreting the information/data

One of the issues that is very clear from the student survey is that there are not many students from Farrer Primary going to Melrose High School. The reasons for this were not sought as they do not relate to this project. However, it does indicate that for this project to be effective, or more importantly, if students are to be encouraged to continue Japanese learning in high school, communication must go beyond our schools. We have brought in the other feeder primary schools, all of which are keen to be involved. For the needs of my students, however, I must also contact Alfred Deakin High which will receive the largest number of our students.

It was encouraging to note that a large portion (59%) of my students wish to continue learning Japanese. Of these, many listed the reason for this decision as being that they have learned a lot and wish to continue. This response reinforces the need to provide continuing and sequential learning opportunities to these students.

Although it appears that next year Melrose High will be able to offer a Year 7 continuing Japanese class, it may not be easy to program for that class. Judging from the e-mails from the other primary Japanese teachers, our schools may have very different Japanese programs and thus the students may be at different levels themselves. When the Australian curriculum for languages is rolled out this may be less of an issue. Kerry Leiper identified one of the main skills needed for a student to be placed in the continuing class as the ability to read hiragana. There may not be sufficient students from the combined feeder schools who can read hiragana to fill a class. If this is the case, a different model for the continuing class will be required. Perhaps all students who have learned Japanese previously could be in one class but the activities could be differentiated to allow for further development. The situation requires further thought and discussion.

Looking at the data gathered, the discussion points and the difficulties related to varied curriculum and teacher changes, I am convinced that for a transition program to be successful it must have two elements:

- communication between teachers and schools about students levels and programming
- differentiation within high school classes (and streaming where possible)

## APPENDIX: PORTFOLIO EXCERPTS

### MINUTES FROM THE INITIAL MEETING AT MELROSE HIGH SCHOOL

Present: Sarah Hibberd, Kerryn Leiper, Evelyn Karapanos, Susan Daintith (teachers)  
George Palavestra (Melrose High Principal)

Agenda Item	Notes	Action required
Susan Daintith – comments from previous experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Curriculum- it is often repeated from Primary to High</li> <li>Streaming- can we have 2 Year 7 classes? She would like to get the students who already come with knowledge to a much higher standard by Year 9. At the moment they all end up at the same level.</li> <li>Testing Year 6s to gauge level- give to the primary schools or have them complete it during their high school visit?</li> <li>Year 10s to visit Farrer Primary to read the stories the students have written</li> </ul>	
Transition program- what will it look like?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Test- further ideas: at the end of the year. Melrose teachers to design the test, pass to primary schools' teachers. Include a comment section from the teacher.</li> <li>Streaming- Could be lines issue (space on the timetable). This would not be perfect but would make it easier to meet the differential needs of the students.</li> </ul>	<p>Identify which schools will be happy to be involved- Sarah</p> <p>Develop test- Kerryn</p> <p>See Kim Tankard (Deputy) to discuss viability. Done- fits with PE which does not have streaming.</p>
What other languages are taught at Melrose? And at other feeder schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Japanese (2 Year 7 classes)</li> <li>Feeder primary schools: Monash, Fadden, Bonython, Farrer</li> <li>Chinese (1 Year 7 class)</li> <li>Feeder school: Mawson</li> <li>Indonesian (1 Year 7 class)</li> <li>German (2 Year 7 classes)</li> </ul>	Who is coming to Melrose? Sarah to survey students.
George Palavestra (Principal at Melrose)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not many students come from Farrer- can you justify streaming? What other lines would it affect?</li> <li>What about other schools?</li> <li>Could we adapt our enrolment form to include prior language learning?</li> <li></li> </ul>	Melrose to include Prior Language Learning on enrolment form. What language? For how many years?
Plan activities and dates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Term 4: Year 10 visit to Farrer to share stories</li> <li>Term 4: High school helpers at the Farrer Fun Day</li> <li>Term 4: Japan Day: Last Monday of</li> </ul>	<p>Year 10 story sharing- Susan</p> <p>Japan Day- Sarah</p> <p>Joint project- Sarah and Kerryn</p>

	<p>Term 4. Send students who are going to Melrose.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possible invitations for Multi-cultural assembly or Harmony Day</li> <li>• Joint project- Year 6 and Year 7, Year 7 as mentors</li> </ul>	(Monday morning odd weeks or 2-3pm Monday afternoon even weeks). Farrer students can walk to Melrose. Use computer labs.
Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistency of teachers</li> <li>• Advocacy- some students don't see the purpose and it gets difficult, particularly in the higher grades!</li> </ul>	
Share programs	(No time for discussion at meeting, but to be discussed later)	

<p><b>Reflections</b></p> <p><b>Teacher Meeting at Melrose</b></p> <p>27/7/2012</p> <p>Communication is the key. <b>Even without streaming, teachers can do so much more towards differentiation of programs if they have prior information about the students.</b> With prior information, they wouldn't have to spend so much time during Term 1 getting to know at what level their students are working.</p> <p>I am thinking about the wider picture- thinking about the cluster and helping my kids continue after primary school. <b>I am going to need to connect with more schools and the wider community.</b></p> <p>Wouldn't it be great if kids could see the connections we are building with Melrose and CHOOSE to go there because of the language program?</p> <p><b>Communication with teachers</b></p> <p>10/8/2012</p> <p>Kerryn is so positive. She is keen to work for the benefit of the students and is willing to try new things. I feel very lucky to have this connection with her. It would be very difficult to build connections with someone if they were not highly motivated or if they did not value students' prior learning. This could be a major issue with the rate that teachers move around schools. A program could be built up only to lose all momentum if a new teacher with less interest came on the scene. <b>We need to set up a solid transition program that will be easy to maintain, even with new teachers.</b> Perhaps this should be written down and kept with school documents (i.e. incorporated into school policy).</p> <p>7/9/2012</p> <p>I have heard back from both Kyleigh Howell at Bonython and Louise Poulakis at Fadden Primary. They are both keen to participate in transition programs and both have made interesting comments:</p> <p><b>'As I have just started teaching Japanese, I have been concerned about whether my Year 6s are ready for high school, so this will help very much. Let me know when you would like to meet.'</b> – Louise</p> <p><i>'(I am) definitely interested in forming closer connections with the high schools. I don't know how many of mine would know their hiragana - I haven't yet found a successful way of including it in my program that provides students with a sound knowledge of the script. However, it is something I am working on and knowing that they wouldn't have to spend the first term learning it again would make teaching it more worthwhile. I could also see the benefit of the Lanyon cluster looking at something similar (although we all teach Japanese, so I guess technically the students shouldn't be starting from the beginning anyway). (I am) happy to meet or just be kept in the loop.'</i> – Kyleigh</p>
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## Year 6 joint lesson with Year 7 students

10/9/2012

It takes longer than half an hour to walk to Melrose! We were left with only 30 minutes to implement the lesson, including introducing the students to each other. It was not long enough. We planned an ice-breaker and then time to talk about the project and our wish to build connections. If we had done this, it would have made the afternoon better.

The students were uncomfortable with each other but still got most of their slide show completed.

One thing it did show- many of my students know more about the topic than the Year 7 students. The topic was 'shumi' (hobbies) which gave my students some new vocabulary, but the sentence structure is the same as we have been learning in the past few weeks. Kerryn and I chose this topic because it was familiar to both of our groups. However, **it brought home the need to share our programs so that we are not doubling up.**

How is Kerryn to manage this? **If only 6 of my students are continuing with her and the other continuing students having learned different topics, what is she to do?! Perhaps I need to get hold of her program and do my best not to do the same things???**

For the future- we should try to arrange this sort of thing either in a longer session (we could leave at lunch time) or as part of the full orientation day that the Year 6s already do.

## YEAR 6 STUDENT PREFERENCES RE LANGAUGE AT HIGH SCHOOL (SUMMARY)

High School	Language	Notes
<b>Melrose</b> (8 students)	Japanese (6 students)	Pretty good at it Enjoy it Want to live in Japan later in life
	Other (1)	Want to learn other languages
	No language (1)	Not interested
<b>Deakin</b> (19 students)	Japanese (13)	Fun Already know a lot so it will be easier Japanese is fun but I want to learn French I've learnt so much I don't want to stop Parents want me to continue it I love the culture
	Other (6)	More interested in a different language Learn the basics again Mum is making me learn Indonesian Want to try something new
<b>Boys Grammar</b> (1 student)	Japanese (0)	
	Other (1)	Want to extend my vocabulary



<b>Mackillop</b> (4 students)	Japanese (1)	
	Other (3)	Want to try another language Want to talk to family in French
<b>St Edmunds</b> (1 student)	Japanese (1)	Know it already
<b>Chisolm</b> (1 student)	Not sure	
<b>Telopea</b> (1 student)	Japanese (1)	
<b>St Clare's</b> (1 student)	Japanese (1)	
<b>Trinity</b> (1 student)	Not sure	
<b>Don't know</b> (2 students)		
<b>TOTAL: 39</b>		

<b><i>Analysis of Student Preferences</i></b>
Number continuing Japanese: 23 (59%)
Number not continuing: 13 (33%)
Number unsure: 3 (7%)

<b>Reflective Summary</b>
<p><b><u>Project</u></b></p> <p>I am very glad to have been part of this project. Kerryn and I have started the ball rolling with our transition program. It still needs fine-tuning but we have begun and both of us have a view to looking to the future and the further development of our programs. But more than just this project- I am thrilled that the findings from the project will be disseminated more widely. It would make little difference to students if only the few who were going to Melrose benefitted from this. I'm pleased that I now have the cooperation and interest of the other feeder schools' Japanese teachers and I don't plan on stopping there! I feel passionate about providing a way for students to continue their learning across schools and I will continue promoting this further.</p> <p>Perhaps we can build this program further by developing a language standard to enter the continuing class. This would give the primary school teachers a goal to work towards in terms of student performance, as well as placing value on what we are doing. One of the other primary teachers commented on the continuing class being based largely on <i>hiragana</i> competency saying: '...knowing that they wouldn't have to spend the first term learning [<i>hiragana</i>] again would make teaching it more worthwhile'. This would be a motivating factor for students as well as teachers.</p> <p>The true test about the benefit of the project, however, will be time. How much will this benefit the students</p>

next year? Will it continue? We will need to continue reflecting on our practices and look for other ways we can support our students.

### **Developing Professional Agency and Leadership**

Although this project has been collaborative, as the project leader I feel that I have increased my professional agency and leadership skills. I have long held a view that good leadership requires strong professional relationships and this was my first point of action with those I worked with. That is, I was conscious of developing relationships and listening carefully to others to understand where they stood in regards to the different aspects of this project. I also feel I was quite lucky in this respect as I already knew Kerryn Leiper well prior to the project and we quickly worked out that we are both on the same 'page' with desiring to increase school connections and to develop a transition program.

One aspect of learning for me is increased awareness that I need to engage with the wider context. I have always found that no implementation of ideas is as simple as you first think, and there are always flow-on effects and influences that may not at first be visible. When looking at the possibility of streaming, various people at the initial meeting brought up other items and agendas that needed consideration before a decision was made, such as the effect streaming would have on the timetable. I know that there will be more things to consider as we continue to develop our inter-school connections and work to extend our findings to other teachers, schools and transition hubs.

In closing, I wish to thank AFMLTA for the opportunity to participate in this project. I look forward to working with you more for the future development of languages education.