



**THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS
WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE
MAUNGAKIEKIE KĀHUI AKO**

Principal's Sabbatical Report

Term 3, 2019

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the Ministry of Education for granting me this sabbatical. The role of a Principal continues to expand and the demands placed on Principals across various facets of educational and community leadership continues to grow, hence I believe it is essential for all Principals to have the opportunity to regularly reflect and refresh.

The ability of a Principal to effect positive change within a school is influenced by strong governance. One Tree Hill College is very fortunate to have a highly effective Board of Trustees and I thank them for their hard work and for their support of my sabbatical.

I wish to thank the support of Maungakiekie Kāhui Ako Principals, teachers and students who allowed me into their schools and classes.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the One Tree Hill College Senior Leadership Team who led the school so well in my absence.

PURPOSE

This sabbatical allowed me to visit all the Maungakiekie Kāhui Ako schools and meet with Principals, teachers, and students. As the only secondary school in the Maungakiekie Kāhui Ako it is critical that we successfully manage the transition for every student from their primary/intermediate school into One Tree Hill College. I specifically listened to student voice about what they need and how we can support this. I also met with groups of current One Tree Hill College students to evaluate the transition programmes we currently have in place - find out what works, what needs improvement, and what needs to be introduced.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

I have been Principal of One Tree Hill College for just over ten years, having previously been Deputy Principal, Dean and an HOD at the school since 2000. Over the course of these years, the college has undergone significant positive change.

In 2013, One Tree Hill College was the secondary school in a newly established Learning Change Network (LCN) with Ellerslie School, Bailey Road School, Panmure District School, Stanhope Road School and Sylvia Park School. This was a MOE initiative to develop closer networks of schools. The One Tree Hill College LCN was facilitated by Bruce Aiden. The LCN allowed the schools to develop and establish close working relationships which

were a fundamental strength when Communities of Schools were introduced in 2014 as a part of the Investing in Education (IES) framework.

The establishment of this Community of Schools coincided with One Tree Hill College implementing an enrolment scheme in 2014 in response to the likelihood of overcrowding. The college's roll had increased by approximately 8-10% per year from 2009 to 2019, to grow from 700 students to 1,150.

In 2015, the Maungakiekie Community of Learning was established, comprising One Tree Hill College, Ellerslie School, Bailey Road School, Panmure District School, Stanhope Road School and Sylvia Park School. These were the same schools that were in the original LCN.

The term Community of Schools was replaced by Community of Learning, then renamed Kāhui Ako. This Kāhui Ako has been fundamental in the successful transition of students from contributing schools to One Tree Hill College.

As part of my research, I wish to examine the elements of a successful transition programme and suggest areas to develop moving forward for the Kāhui Ako.

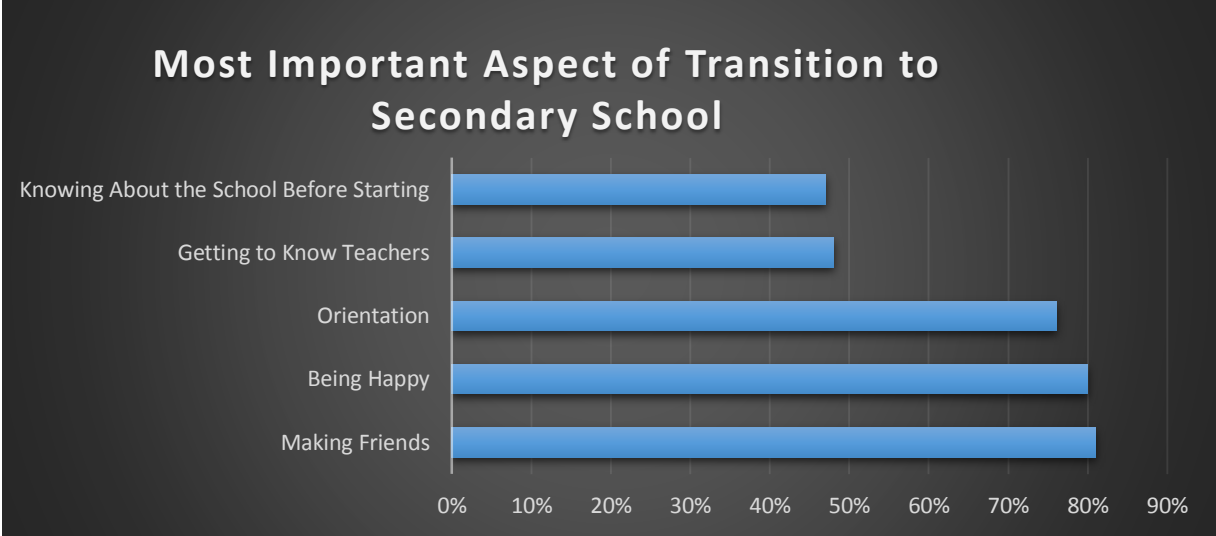
METHODOLOGY

Visit and spend time in all Maungakiekie Kāhui Ako schools, including One Tree Hill College:

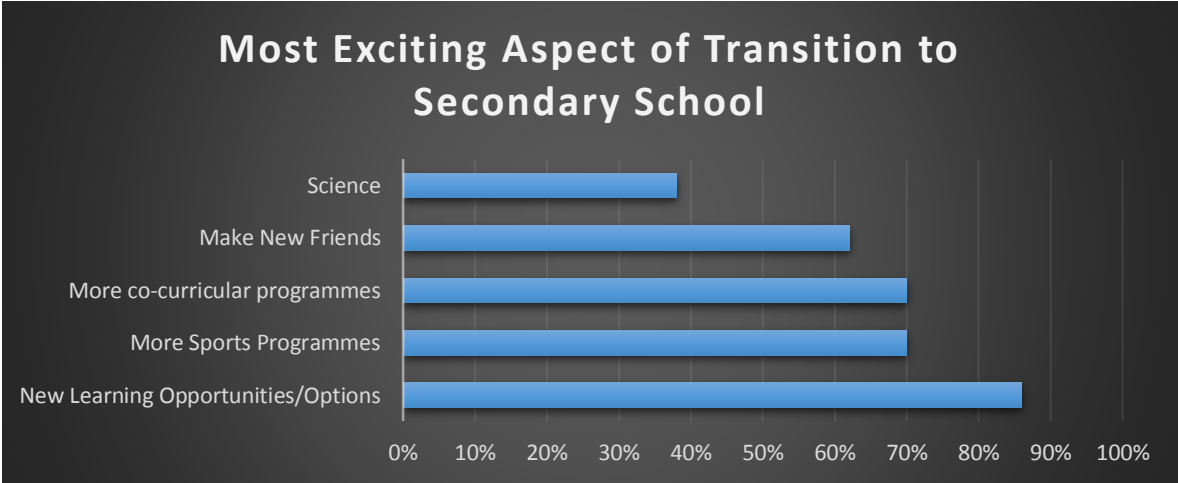
- Observe lessons
- Meet with student groups
- Meet with teachers
- Meet with Principals
- Present to Year 7 & 8 students and teachers about One Tree Hill College
- Question and Answer sessions

FINDINGS

Following a range of discussions with students across the Kāhui Ako, the graphs that follow summarise the most common responses from students:

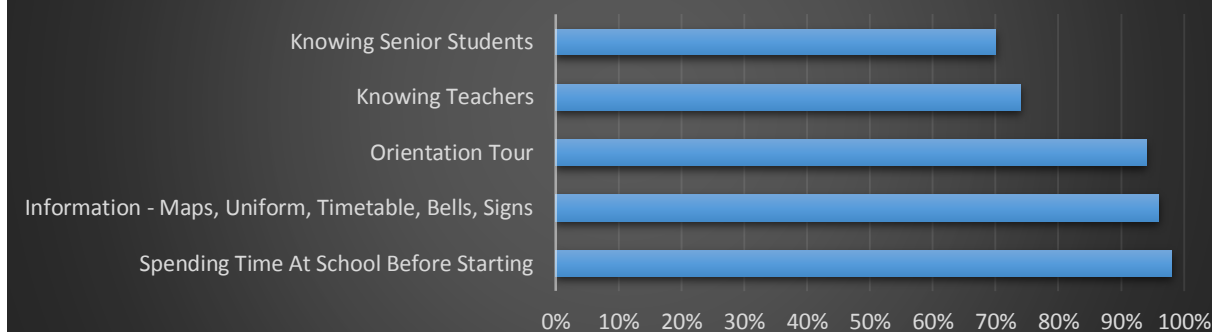


Students discussed that the most important aspects of starting at secondary school were centred around their happiness. They focussed around friendships, which came from various discussions about examples where students were going to different schools to their friends. Knowing that they would get a thorough orientation of their new school was also very important.



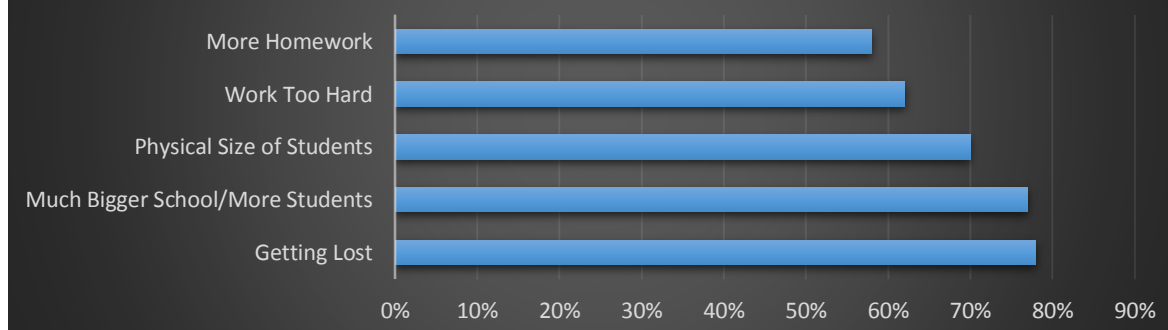
The greatest area of excitement expressed from students about coming to secondary school centred around the increased number of opportunities. This ranged from subject choice, to performing arts, school trips, and sports. Most students could reference their feelings to activities or events that they had heard about, either from siblings, friends, or through social media. School camps and trips were a major factor. It wasn't the range of sporting codes, but the greater level of depth in certain codes (eg. premier teams and social teams). Just over 40% of students also talked about how much they were looking forward to Science at secondary school and doing practical experiments.

What Aspect of a Transition Programme is Most Important



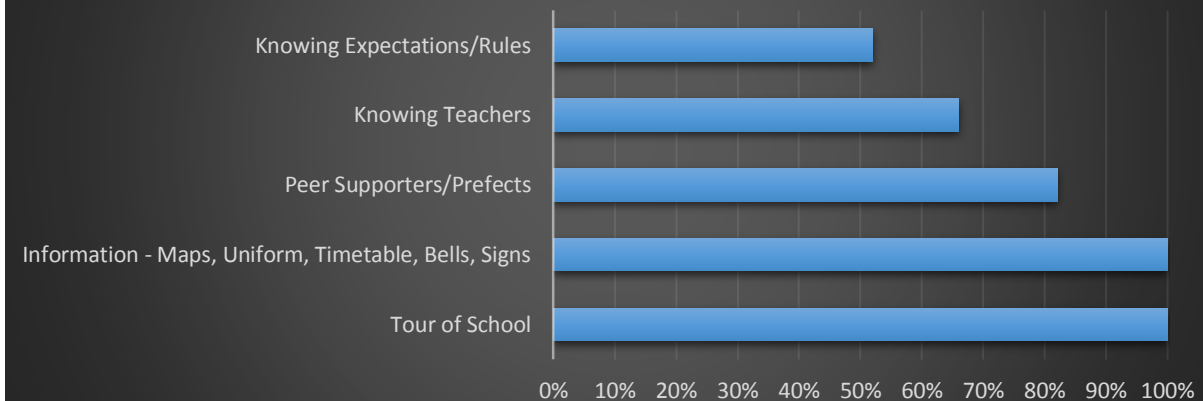
Students were unanimous, that spending time in the secondary school, combined with getting written information and a full orientation tour, is essential in a good transition programme. They wanted to know as much as they could about their new school as possible. They also discussed how they wanted to do this as early as possible. This correlates strongly with one of their biggest fears – getting lost.

Biggest Concerns/Worries about Transition to Secondary School



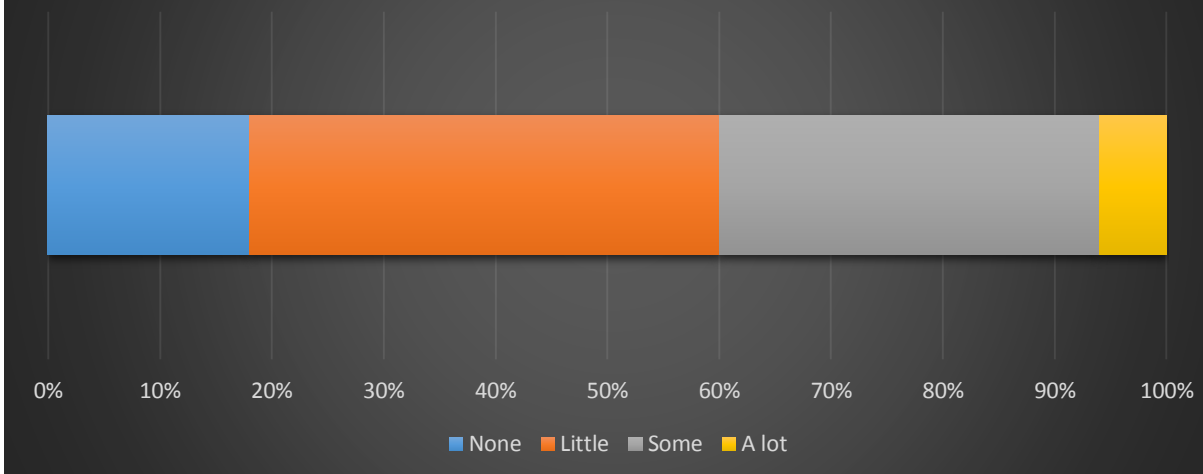
As noted, students were most worried about getting lost or doing the wrong thing – being ‘told off’ was something students were concerned about. Some of the richest discussions focussed on the differences in school size and student size. The physical size of both weigh heavily on student minds. Students talked about wanting to ‘break through’ these mental barriers as quickly as possible. Suggestions included activities with the older/bigger students during their orientation tour. Several students talked about ‘stories’ that their parents had shared with them about their experiences going to secondary school – many of these were not positive. There is no doubt that parents definitely have a significant role to play in the mind set of their children in starting secondary school.

What Are the Key Parts of a Transition Day/Orientation Programme



When discussing the actual components of a transition/orientation programme, students were probably at their most vocal. There were many excellent ideas expressed. It became obvious that many of the themes already discussed were highlighted again, emphasising their importance. Once again, the components of a transition programme which students felt would be most important are around orientation.

Level of Knowledge of Kahui Ako



Another aspect of the discussions with students was focussed on the awareness level of students of the Maungakiekie Kāhui Ako. It became very apparent that, despite knowledge of the posters that were up in the schools, there was limited knowledge of the Kāhui Ako. The majority of students could recall the name, but little else. Approximately 30% of students could recall at least 4 of the 6 schools. The connection that most students were able to make is that One Tree Hill College is the secondary school that is within the Kāhui Ako and that it was aligned with their school. Approximately 75% of students I met with said that they were going to be attending One Tree Hill College.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings outlined previously will act to inform our transition programme for Year 8 students in our Kāhui Ako. We will place greater emphasis on the physical aspects of the orientation programme. As a college, we already host a ‘transition day’ for enrolled Year 8 students in late November, however, there are number of things we can do prior to this event to support students with their transition including other events hosted at the college, distributing a greater amount of information, and having a review of our signage around the school to support students with their movements in the larger school environment. Involving our senior students, who are often physically larger, is also important to put student’s minds at ease. It is important that this process of transition begins much earlier than Year 8. This was one of the strongest pieces of feedback from parents. Parents highlight the selection of a secondary school for their children was one of their most difficult and important decisions. Like the students, they wanted to know as much as possible about the school, but over a greater length of time. A common responses from parents, was that they wished to be involved in their child’s secondary school in some form, even if just through communication and news updates, from Year 5. The implication for the Maungakiekie Kāhui Ako, is that as the secondary school, we are able to host various events to help familiarise parents with the school, such as prizegivings, PTA events, sports events, etc.

BENEFITS & CONCLUSION

The major benefit of using this research to inform transition programmes is that it is specifically addressing aspects of transition that students either want, or worry about the most. There has been a significant amount of research into transition, however this report is specific to the Maungakiekie Kāhui Ako.

Student wellbeing and happiness is critical and the most important element for students and parents. Parents reiterated that although they wanted good academic outcomes for their child when they leave school in year 12 or 13 to pathway them into further tertiary study and/or employment, there initial focus was on their child enjoying their new school.

One Tree Hill College bases its pastoral philosophy upon a ‘Whānau’ model. This is a model which built upon the traditional ‘house’ system which originated in English boarding schools. The Whānau model which has been developed at One Tree Hill College has been a major component of the positive relationships which are established and maintained at the college. The Māori concept of Whānau emphasises the family values which are used to underpin the model and the importance of positive relationships. A key benefit of the Whānau system is the transition of new students into the secondary school environment and developing fast effective relationships. A strong transition programme, in combination with the Whānau structure, increases a student’s positive initial experiences of belonging, and in turns allows them to begin more successfully at a new school and settle more quickly, reducing the levels of anxiety.

N Coughlan

PRINCIPAL