Supporting Highly Mobile Students

Developing a whole school response: A guide for school leaders

This resource is based on findings from the Let’s Stay Put projects, the Let’s Stay Put for Literacy and Numeracy Learning project and the work of Andrea Lynch (James Cook University) in consultation with staff from Rasmussen State School.
Using this guide

Let’s Stay Put represented the first systemic response to mobile Indigenous students in Queensland and Australia. The project aimed to respond to student mobility by lifting teacher and school capacity through evidence-based actions. The project has shown that a whole school approach is critical and that a resource – such as the Mobility Support Teacher – can make a difference in developing successful responses.

This guide aims to assist school leaders in supporting highly mobile students through the development of a whole school approach in responding to mobility. The guide provides the opportunity for school leaders to consider range of actions that work to meet the needs of mobile students and position them for learning. The guide can be used to reflect upon what you and your school are doing well and what changes could be made to better meet the needs of mobile students generally, and mobile Indigenous students particularly.

It is important to note that the guide is premised on schools not having access to a Mobility Support Teacher. For schools/clusters who are implementing the Mobility Support Teacher role, relevant information and considerations are presented within the Mobility Support Teacher Guidelines.
1. Understanding mobility in your school

Key questions: Are we aware of the level of student mobility and the profile of newly arriving students in our school?

- Coming to grips with mobility in your school requires a move from an ‘I reckon’ understanding to an understanding based on evidence.
- The starting point in coming to understand student mobility must be clear and comprehensive data to drive change.
- Identify the data sources and consider the effectiveness of their dissemination.

Additional Resources
- Watch the video *Unpacking mobility as an issue in your school*, available on the Let’s Stay Put website.
2. Build an evidence base

**Key questions:** What information can we use to build an evidence base about the mobility at our school and the profile of mobile students?

- Collecting a range of quantitative and qualitative evidence will develop a mobility profile of your school. Resources such as the mobility index calculator can assist in identifying key data.
- Use the Mobility Index to determine the levels of mobility in your school.
- Develop a profile of your mobile students – joiners and leavers
  - Examine where students are coming from and going to – previous/next school
  - Explore the reasons that people are moving
  - Examine the ‘length of stay’ of students
  - Compare Indigenous and non-Indigenous mobility patterns
  - Investigate departure dates
  - Explore early years (Prep–Year 3) data
- Identify critical data points for your school/cluster
- Identify how data can be used to inform actions

**Additional Resources**
- Use the Index Calculator on the Let’s Stay Put website
- Watch the video *Unpacking mobility as an issue in your school*, available on the Let’s Stay Put website
- Visit the Resources page on the Let’s Stay Put website and read *The characteristics of, and motivations for, Indigenous student mobility: Examples from urban and regional Queensland, Australia*
3. Engage with local history

**Key questions:** Are we aware of the local history and do we understand how histories of relocation and dispossession may influence or underpin reasons for movement?

- Engage school staff in coming to understand the complex socio-cultural and structural ‘push and pull’ factors that motivate Indigenous mobility

- Connect with local Indigenous community/ies to engage school staff in the local Indigenous histories e.g. Crossing Cultures offered through the Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment

- All staff (new and existing) participate in ongoing professional development in cross-cultural awareness relevant to this context

**Additional Resources**

- Watch the video *Coming to understand reasons for movement* – located on the *Let’s Stay Put* website

- Listen to stories of movement – located on the *Let’s Stay Put* website

- Read *Understanding Indigenous Temporary Mobilities* found on the *Let’s Stay Put* website

- Visit the *Resources* page on the *Let’s Stay Put* website and read *The characteristics of, and motivations for, Indigenous student mobility: Examples from urban and regional Queensland, Australia*
4. Lead a positive response

**Key questions:** What strategies are our leadership team using to promote the Mobility Support Teacher role (if applicable), develop a shared language around mobility, build the capacity of teachers, and engage parents and community members?

**Are these messages visible and consistent?**

- Present a consistent message across the school/cluster
- Ensure strategic alignment with other programs within the school and to departmental /federal initiatives
- Develop a whole school community awareness around issues of mobility – understanding the ‘push and pull’ factors
- Lead a culture of ‘high expectations’ for mobile Indigenous students
- Build a culture of belonging

**Additional Resources**
- Watch the video *Responding to mobility through a whole school approach*, available on the Let’s Stay Put website
- Review the *Example Action Plan for Implementing Let’s Stay Put* included in the Mobility Support Teacher Guide located on the Let’s Stay Put website
5. Audit polices and procedures

**Key questions:** Do we have clear and effective enrolment, induction and exit arrangements?
Do these reflect an inclusive school ethos? Do they contribute to building belonging?

- Provide a structured induction program for all staff members (including teachers, Indigenous support workers, visiting specialist teachers [e.g. ESL, special needs], teacher aides and volunteers) new to your school context:
  - Induction includes locally relevant cultural awareness training, demographic information – including mobility data, information about the role of the Mobility Support Teacher (if applicable), support services available (both internal and external to the school) for students, families and staff

- Review enrolment and exit procedures to ensure that all new families are welcomed and supported in their transition into their new school e.g. on enrolment parents/carers and students are fully informed about:
  - exit procedures, including exit interview,
  - the Behaviour Management Plan and the tools and rewards used in this school,
  - the curriculum and specific programs used in this school,
  - support agencies available in the school/community,
  - assessment for, and of, learning (both initial and ongoing), and
  - attendance requirements.

- Create an appropriate space to welcome families and conduct enrolment/exit interviews

- Instigate a standardised system for
  - timely transfer of information to class teacher/s and specialists
  - ensuring that appropriate furniture etc is supplied to classrooms prior to new students joining the class
  - (if applicable) ensure that teachers of enrolling students meet with new families within two weeks of enrolments, facilitated through teacher release by the Mobility Support Teacher

- Provide a range of assistance packages to ensure students and their families are made feel welcome and supported e.g.:
  - A basic stationery pack is available to new students free of charge, should they require one
  - A uniform loan scheme ensures students are immediately able to wear the appropriate uniform

**Additional Resources**

- Review the examples of enrolment and exit procedure enacted in various schools provided in the *Revised Procedures Package* located on the *Let’s Stay Put* website

- Review the key tasks of the Mobility Support Teacher in the *Mobility Support Teacher Guidelines* and consider how these actions could be adapted and implemented in your school
6. Professional learning for teachers

**Key questions:** Do we have an explicit program to ensure all school staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities in ensuring “reactive” mobility is reduced, new students experience a smooth transition and all students make the best possible educational and social progress?

- Ensure ‘high expectations’ for mobile Indigenous students
- Actively challenge and interrupt deficit views
- Engage with ‘explicit pedagogies’ for planning
- Teachers can engage/empathise when they can ‘explain’ the actions of mobile families in non-deficit ways. Raise awareness of mobility, engaging with family ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors
- Staff can draw on strategies to address gaps in learning resulting from interrupted schooling
- Encourage sense of belonging: build relationships

**Additional Resources**
- Encourage staff to watch the video *Coming to understand reasons for movement* and listen to stories of movement, located on the *Let’s Stay Put* website
- Read *Understanding Indigenous Temporary Mobilities* found on the *Let’s Stay Put* website
- Visit the Resources page on the *Let’s Stay Put* website and read *Positive educational responses to Indigenous student mobility*
- Review the *Staff Professional Development Package* located on the *Let’s Stay Put* website
7. Build community partnerships

**Key questions:** Do we have effective links with the local community?

Do we have effective links with parents of new arrivals, including those who may be hard to reach?

- Develop a clearly framed strategy for building and sustaining relationship with parents/carers new to the school community and for those leaving the school community
  - e.g. each month a morning tea is held to introduce new parents/carers into the school community
  - Families leaving the school are appropriately acknowledged e.g. farewell cards, mementos, class ceremonies

- Develop a range of strategies for communication and consultation

- Provide information about the school, with translations or culturally appropriate versions

- Develop home-school liaison initiatives (e.g. home visits)

- Offer family learning opportunities that assist parents to support their children

- Liaise and develop partnerships with community groups

**Additional Resources**

- Review the examples of engagement with parents/carers and the community in the *Building Partnerships Resource Package*, located on the *Let’s Stay Put* website

- Watch the video *Responding to mobility – The role of the MST*, located on the *Let’s Stay Put* website
8. Build interagency partnerships

**Key questions: Given our local context, what agencies are appropriate for our school to develop relationships with to support highly mobile families and students?**

- Actively develop strong communication links between school and local community through representative agencies such as Indigenous housing groups and health services

- Use inter-agency collaboration – e.g. housing/family/child safety – to promote stability message

- Develop partnerships/ dialogue with key feeder schools – as informed by the previous schooling histories of your joiners

**Additional Resources**

- Review the examples of engagement with parents/carers and the community in the *Building Partnerships Resource Package*, located on the *Let’s Stay Put* website

- Read case studies of schools involved in the *Let’s Stay Put for Literacy and Numeracy Learning* project to learn how these schools worked with a range of agencies and key feeder schools.
9. Reframe teaching practice

**Key questions:** How can we ensure that our teachers are able to call upon a repertoire of skills, knowledge and expertise to ensure that all students are engaged in meaningful learning experiences?

- As professionals, teachers must respond to their particular context and, through an active commitment to reflective practice and professional renewal, develop and share effective practices.

- Promote deprivatisation of teacher practice – team teaching and co-teaching is encouraged and supported e.g. teachers are able to create more finely tuned groups to better respond to students’ learning needs.

- Consider the school ‘readiness’ of/for mobile students.

- Engage with ‘explicit pedagogies’ for planning.

- Reject deficit assumptions about mobility and mobile students and take responsibility for ensuring students learn in your classrooms – regardless of the duration of their stay.

**Additional Resources**

- Encourage your staff to use *A guide for teachers*, located on the *Let’s Stay Put* website.

- Listen to the changes some teachers have made to their practice by watching the video *Teachers responding to mobility in the classroom*, located on the *Let’s Stay Put* website.
10. Develop effective curriculum

**Key questions:** Do we have effective strategies for teaching and learning that enable newly arrived students to fully participate in the educational opportunities provided and make the best possible academic and social progress?

- Develop curriculum planning that is responsive to a mobile context e.g.
  - Shorter units
  - Strategies to meet the dual tensions of providing an engaging, sequenced curriculum and ensuring new students have the prior knowledge needed to successfully progress their academic understandings
  - Considers potential new arrivals/gaps in learning

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives are genuinely embedded in school programs and staff capacity is supported through ongoing professional development. The knowledge of Indigenous education workers is visibly valued and shared within the school and wider community.

**Additional Resources**
- Review example effective practices and units provided in the *Teacher Resource Pack* located on the *Let’s Stay Put* website
- Encourage your staff to use *A guide for teachers*, located on the *Let’s Stay Put* website
11. Promote individualised planning

**Key questions:** Do we monitor and track how our new students settle into school and provide appropriate support for their needs?

- Instigate immediate assessment of learning needs
- Building upon the immediate assessment of learning and support needs, develop personalised learning plans
- Ensure students have immediate access to specialist programs
- Implement a case management approach, involving all relevant student/family support staff
- Review class and group placements
- Implement peer support and buddying
- Offer and follow-up student and/or family consultation

**Additional Resources**
- Read examples of student support included as part of the case studies of each cluster, located on the *Let’s Stay Put* website
- Review the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations *Guide to developing Personalised Learning Plans for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students – A professional learning resource*
12. Celebrate and support

**Key questions:** How do we celebrate and support the social and academic progress of students? How do we celebrate and support the practice of our school staff?

- “Different mobile groups will place different demands on the school, but the impact is not entirely negative as new arrivals may increase the diversity of the community, enhance the commitment to learning, and possibly raise levels of achievement.” (DfES, 2003)

- Celebrate and support the diversity of your school community through newsletters, morning teas, or at community expos etc.

- Value the experiences and knowledges that new students and families can bring to the school

- Create time and space for staff to share their understandings with colleagues and to benefit from each other’s experiences e.g. regular opportunities for teachers to share their practice are built into our whole school plan – teachers are released from class to observe their colleagues’ good practice in teaching mobile students; staff meetings include teachers showcasing innovative practices and sharing ‘tips’

- Create a school resource detailing best practice

**Additional Resources**

- Review examples of how schools celebrated with and engaged the school community in the *Building Partnerships Resource Pack*, located on the *Let’s Stay Put* website.

- Use the example certificates provided in the *Teacher Resource Pack*, found on the *Let’s Stay Put* website