

# ARE YOU DROPPING THE BATON?

From effective collaboration to all-through schools – your guide to improving transition



David Harris  
Edited by Ian Gilbert



# ARE YOU DROPPING THE BATON?

From effective collaboration  
to all-through schools –  
your guide to improving transition



David Harris  
Edited by Ian Gilbert



Crown House Publishing Limited  
[www.crownhouse.co.uk](http://www.crownhouse.co.uk)  
[www.chpus.com](http://www.chpus.com)

First published by

Crown House Publishing Ltd  
Crown Buildings, Bancyfelin, Carmarthen, Wales, SA33 5ND, UK  
**www.crownhouse.co.uk**

and

Crown House Publishing Company LLC  
6 Trowbridge Drive, Suite 5, Bethel, CT 06801-2858, USA  
**www.CHPUS.com**

© David Harris 2008

Edited by Ian Gilbert

The right of David Harris to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. Apart from the worksheets contained in the Appendices, and except as permitted under current legislation, no part of this work may be photocopied, stored in a retrieval system, published, performed in public, adapted, broadcast, transmitted, recorded or reproduced in any form or by any means, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

Enquiries should be addressed to  
Crown House Publishing Limited.

**British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data**

A catalogue entry for this book is available  
from the British Library.

**ISBN 978-184590081-6**

**LCCN 2007933488**

Printed and bound in the UK by  
Cromwell Press, Trowbridge, Wiltshire

Every effort has been made to trace copyright holders and to obtain their permission for the use of copyright material. The publisher apologises for any errors or omissions and would be grateful if notified of any corrections that should be incorporated in future reprints or editions of this book.

The graphs on page 23 are from *The Unfinished Revolution* (2001) by John Abbott and Terry Ryan and have been reproduced with the kind permission of Continuum.

# Contents

Foreword by Professor Gervase Phinn .....	v
Foreword by Series Editor, Ian Gilbert .....	vii
Acknowledgements .....	xi
Introduction .....	xiii
<b>Part 1 .....</b>	<b>1</b>
What is the problem?.....	3
How did it happen?.....	16
Why did it happen? .....	20
Do we really need to change things? .....	24
<b>Part 2 .....</b>	<b>29</b>
How can alternative structures of schooling improve the situation? .....	31
Do we want to change our ways? .....	32
Do you want to lead change?.....	54
How can I persuade others that change is needed? .....	56
Is now the time for system redesign? .....	58
How can new ways of leading support change? .....	59
<b>Part 3 .....</b>	<b>63</b>
What can you do about it?.....	65
How can we start improving relationships?.....	68
How do we build strong foundations for transition? .....	73
How do we build new ways of learning?.....	112
Conclusions or beginnings? .....	133
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>135</b>
Appendix A.....	137
Appendix B.....	139
Appendix C.....	143
Useful organisations .....	163
Bibliography .....	165
Index .....	167

# *Introduction*

## *What is this book going to do?*

*Do not follow where the path may lead.  
Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.*

Harold R. McAlindon

From 20 years in secondary education, and more importantly the last four setting up and then running a 3–18 school, I have no doubt that transition is the biggest unsolved issue currently facing education. We are ‘dropping the educational baton’ for generations of young people.

In this book I will challenge you to consider the extent of the problem we face, to understand how we have arrived at such a situation and give clear practical advice on how you can begin to effect substantial system change.

Along the journey I hope you will have the opportunity to re-think the aims of education and are motivated to develop strategies to improve the relationships between institutions.

Our path is divided into three parts:

**Part 1:** What is the problem? How did it happen? Why did it happen? Do we really need to change things?

**Part 2:** How can alternative structures of schooling improve the situation? What are the possible ways of collaborating? Which ways might suit your own situation? Do you really want to change your ways? How can you persuade others that change is needed? How can new ways of leading support change?

**Part 3:** Examples of transition projects from a variety of schools and situations. How can we start improving relationships? How do we build strong foundations? How do we build new ways of learning? These contain everything from examples which can be delivered in 30 minutes to ones that underpin the work of a whole year.

Please take the whole journey; if the going becomes challenging, stay with it; we are at a point where major change is not only needed, but possible. Collaboration is the key, be it between phases, schools or countries, just give it a go!

Collaborate, collaborate, collaborate!



## *How did it happen?*

*Surely there must be some good reasons why we separate into primary and secondary schooling?*

Interestingly it seems that there are no compelling educational reasons for separation, but many practical reasons that have shaped the current system that we accept as normal. One hundred years ago, it was common to educate pupils from 5 to 15 in the same school, often the same room. This model flourished not just in Britain, but in many parts of the world. While presenting at an iNet conference in Georgia I had the privilege to spend time with the Dean of Education at Southern Georgia University, Cindi Chance. Cindi is one of those enthusiastic people who positively influence thousands of teachers each year. She became even more animated when I discussed the issue of transition. She told me of the current resurrection of interest in the 'one-room classroom'. Her eyes glazed.

"The mention of the one-room school likely conjures up memories of Laura Ingalls Wilder and the Little House on the Prairie television series. Today's educators and youth would express concern for those who attended, when in fact many students who attended one-room schools are now leaders of countries, company executives, successful professionals, inventors, leaders of school reform in the twenty-first century, and other major contributors to life as we know it today. I am sure there are lessons to be learned from the one-room school model!"

With little persuasion, Cindi agreed to research the issue further and write a piece for this book. She agreed to elaborate on the one-room model of schooling to try to help us understand how it came about and why it went away. She wrote this article along with Dr Brent Thorp, Dr Fayth Parks and Dr Meng Deng.

### **The One Room School**

Though thoughts of one room schools are often associated with fascinating stories in literature by such writers as Walt Whitman, W. E. B. Dubois, Washington Irving and Stephen Crane, and are associated with well known tales such as the Legend of Sleepy Hollow, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, The Hoosier Schoolmaster and the Goosepond School, these schools were real. They existed throughout history internationally and many schools remain scattered throughout the world today. The impact of the one room schools on our country is recognized by the US government. In April 2002, the US Secretary of Education, Rod Paige unveiled the new look of the US Department of Education in Washington DC. Both entrances to the building host a façade of a one room school. Dr Paige (CSAA, 2006)<sup>1</sup> explained that the entrances '... are a reminder that we do not serve a faceless bureaucracy or an unchangeable system. We serve an ideal. We serve the ideal of the little red schoolhouse. It [one room school] is one of the greatest symbols of America—a symbol that every child must be taught and every child must learn, that every community was involved and every parent's input valued. Those little schools were built to serve a need: to equip children for the future as citizens and workers.'

---

<sup>1</sup> County School Association of America (CSSA) (2006), [http://csaa.typepad.com/country\\_school\\_associatio/2006/09/index.html](http://csaa.typepad.com/country_school_associatio/2006/09/index.html)

Though the schools have diminished in number their impact remains. Such schools still operate in the United States, Australia, China and many other countries, primarily in isolated rural or mountainous areas, the outback, and on the open plains areas. Worldwide one room schools share some common characteristics—poorly funded, limited teaching resources, and one teacher who serves as the principal, teacher, janitor and community liaison (Cordier, 1998).<sup>2</sup> Examples of this sameness could be included from many countries, however, we chose to provide examples from two very different countries—the United States and China.

In the rural areas of China, there are three types of elementary schools: centre school, village school, and ‘teaching point’ school (Li, 2005).<sup>3</sup> A centre school is often located in the township that consists of 10–15 villages. Centre schools are generally not one room schools. They include all elementary grades—1 to 6. They also have access to additional resources so that village schools and teaching points (in its catchment area) can be supported. For some small villages and especially those in mountainous, remote or extremely poor areas, one alternative for education is the teaching point catering to the younger children and providing for the lower grades—generally Grades 1 to 3. For Grade 4 onwards children will travel further to a larger village with a village school that offers all primary grades. Below are pictures of some of the one room schools in operation today. As with the one room schools in the US and other parts of the world, the teacher is responsible for all the roles necessary to operate a school—the principal, teacher, leader of the social and cultural experiences for the area, and often the janitorial and maintenance staff (Lin, 2003).<sup>4</sup>



The school below in Guizhou province might make students and educators of today wonder about the community’s commitment to education. However, its existence reflects the same advocacy for education exhibited by poor families in the rural south after the Civil War. The Chinese characters on the building say: ‘Basic education is the foundation for the realization of the goal of developing a nation by science and education’ (Deng, 2003).<sup>5</sup>

[This makes an interesting alternative to the UK’s ‘Success for all!’]

Though one room schools are still scattered nationally and internationally, in order to relive the life span of the one room school model it is necessary to focus the discussion on one very limited area—one room schools in the state of Georgia, USA. The one room schoolhouse was a ubiquitous feature of the rural Georgia countryside from the late nineteenth century to the mid twentieth century. It was the mainstay of the state’s



2 Cordier, M. (1998) *Schoolwomen of the prairies and plains*. Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools Ltd.  
3 Li, L. & Xu, T. (2005) *Yi ren cheng qi yige xuexiao* [One man and one school]. Available online at: [www.southcn.com/news/community/shzt/teacher/work/200511030360.htm](http://www.southcn.com/news/community/shzt/teacher/work/200511030360.htm) (accessed on 18 February 2007).  
4 Lin, R.Z. (2003) *Minban jiao shi* [People-run teachers]. Available online at: [www.edu.cn/20010830/210094.shtml](http://www.edu.cn/20010830/210094.shtml) (accessed on 18 February 2007).  
5 Deng, H. (2003) *Implementation of Policy on Inclusive Education in Rural and Urban China* (Hong Kong PhD thesis preserved in the University of Hong Kong).

*Transition is not just for the summer term—it's for life!*

Hazel Beales from Market Weighton School describes their journey to effective transition, which combines a mixture of the approaches described in the previous case studies:

At last you have made successful contact with your partner schools. You have consulted, collaborated and cooperated, and your transition or bridging project is in place. You are happy with the lessons at either end of the process, your social visits and your taster days are all booked, what else is there possibly left to do? Well, there's so much more to learn and discover. I would strongly suggest that transition does not end after the handover of the precious cargo, our students.

If transition is to be a successful and continuous process, then discussion and dialogue should continue beyond the September transfer. Maintain your contact with the partner schools and try to ensure that there are meetings at least once in the autumn and spring terms, one for review and the other for planning or perhaps developing new projects. Contact is essential and should be maintained once the barriers are broken down.

Here in Market Weighton we have visited all our partner schools to study how they are using guided reading as means to improve reading skills and comprehension. This was very enlightening and we have tried to adapt some of the techniques into our own teaching. However, secondary schools are far more bound by the timetable and finding a weekly, let alone daily spot to work on reading skills has proved nigh on impossible. Most primary schools use the first 15 minutes of the afternoon session, which has the added bonus of calming the students after lunch and getting them back into a mindset for work. Perhaps the suggested changes to secondary school timetables might prove helpful.

If you have formed good relationships with your partner schools, then team teaching is another really beneficial and enjoyable process. We have found it easier to do this in the primary schools as they have far more difficulties regarding cover. Team teaching is enjoyable and collaborative planning means that secondary and primary colleagues have a shared expectation regarding outcomes. We secondary teachers frequently underestimate the capabilities of our Year 7 students and the same may be the case for teachers of Year 3. These sessions also allow us to see each other's strengths and also are occasions for dialogue regarding how to manage the behaviour and learning of individual students who will be joining us the following September.

Some schools, perhaps yours, have a designated teacher in charge of transition who visits their partner schools regularly throughout the year. This is the ideal situation, but is expensive in terms of time and money. I believe that the more teachers who are willing to give up time to visit their partner schools, be it primary or secondary, the better, as the sharing of expertise is that much greater. The latter is often the case with PE where primary schools do not necessarily have the necessary facilities or expertise to extend their students' learning or experience. Here, older students can also become involved and we have found the Junior Sports' Leader programme a very effective tool at KS4 and have now extended the work to the Sixth Form, who are currently studying for their Community Sports' Leader Award. It is hoped that these awards will be extended to literacy, numeracy and the sciences in the near future and will further improve the transitional experience of primary students.

Although we also have a great deal to learn from our primary colleagues, they are under pressure to teach a wide range of subjects which might not necessarily be their particular strength or





# Longcroft School & Performing Arts College

## 4-19 Assessment Levels

### Dance, Drama and Music



*How do we build strong foundations for transition?*

	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Making</b>	<p>You are unsure of your ideas and often hesitant and wary of others.</p> <p><b>Advice:</b> Don't be frightened of making mistakes. Be confident.</p>	<p>You offer many ideas, are thoughtful and can follow others</p> <p><b>Advice:</b> Make a difference and give even more ideas. You don't always have to follow others.</p>	<p>You share ideas and support others and your work is becoming more detailed.</p> <p><b>Advice:</b> Try to discuss your ideas in more depth and experiment more.</p>	<p>You are becoming more inventive and your ideas are more original. You watch and learn from others, evaluating your work as you go along.</p> <p><b>Advice:</b> Keep focused and try to become completely fluent.</p>	<p>You are a leader, creative, experimental and compromise with others.</p> <p><b>Advice:</b> Continue to develop your team skills and the quality of your creative ideas.</p>
<b>Performing</b>	<p>You are making your first steps.</p> <p><b>Advice:</b> Don't be afraid to take even bigger steps.</p>	<p>You are developing your performance skills and are aware of an audience.</p> <p><b>Advice:</b> Remember that practice makes perfect.</p>	<p>You feel secure and give a more confident performance.</p> <p><b>Advice:</b> You've got it. Now listen to your feedback and try to make the changes.</p>	<p>You are expressive in your performance and more aware of your audience.</p> <p><b>Advice:</b> You are doing well. What performance techniques could you improve to move to the higher level?</p>	<p>You are fluent and very confident. An audience enjoys your performance.</p> <p><b>Advice:</b> What else do you think an audience would like to see or hear?</p>
<b>Evaluating</b>	<p>You can <i>describe</i> the lesson.</p> <p><b>Advice:</b> Explain your ideas more.</p>	<p>You can explain some of your ideas and progress.</p> <p><b>Advice:</b> Explain all of the problems and how you solved them.</p>	<p>You can accurately explain how you improved your work.</p> <p><b>Advice:</b> Start comparing your work to other pupils'.</p>	<p>You make informative detailed and reflective comments.</p> <p><b>Advice:</b> Try to use specialist terms in your evaluation.</p>	<p>You use specialist language when evaluating and often relate your work to others.</p> <p><b>Advice:</b> Can you use ideas from other people to solve any problems you may have had?</p>

## *Are You Dropping the Baton?*

talent—subjects such as art, music, dance and drama. Here collaborative work can be a great help and local specialist secondary schools can provide the answer. Transition in these areas may prove a headache if you are not really sure about levels of assessment. Even in secondary schools this can be a problem if, for example, you are an English specialist who is required to teach and assess drama without previous training. Never fear, there are schools working collaboratively to produce user-friendly assessment documents for students and teachers at all the key stages. Longcroft School and Performing Arts College in Beverley, East Riding of Yorkshire, for example, is in the final stages of producing an assessment level document for students from the ages of 4–19, which was piloted as of September 2007. If you are interested in receiving such a useful transition document please contact [sara.mcintyre@longcroft.eriding.net](mailto:sara.mcintyre@longcroft.eriding.net) and she will be happy to help you. The document has been several years in the making and has involved close cooperation with Longcroft's partner primary, junior and infant schools, and we are eventually hoping to extend aspects of the assessment into the Market Weighton area.

Another excellent tool for aiding effective transition is to allow staff to visit schools and observe lessons at the different key stages. It is a means to observe and assess the different layers of learning that take place. Once you have a good relationship with your partner schools they are far less threatened by such visits. Alternatively, why not become a governor and you will be positively welcomed into all aspects of the school's life. I recently visited a Year 2 classroom with a Graduate Teacher Programme secondary English student and by strange coincidence the children were studying anthropomorphic stories (stories where animals adopt human characteristics), a topic we were working on with Year 7 students at the time. It was fascinating to observe how the teacher tackled this subject and how skilful questioning elicited really excellent responses from these 6 and 7 year olds. As we were studying the same topic with our students, it became clear that we are building up layers of understanding and encouraging children to build up a range of skills which they can apply at all stages of education.

If visits to schools are difficult in your case, then continue to invite staff from your partner schools to regular transition meetings as I suggested earlier. These meetings should have a definite purpose; many will be about the logistics of the transition that year but equally they can be a forum to discuss topical subjects or problems. We have recently been discussing the fall in performance over the summer holiday between the key stages, for example.

Finally, if your partner schools use assessment books for written assignments, then why not consider transferring these to their next school. Students and teachers will therefore have a record of previous progress at the different key stages, so any 'slippage' or areas of weakness are more evident and can be addressed earlier. Primary schools often rightly complain that too little notice is taken of the records and details they send to the secondary school—too often the boxes being consigned to dusty store cupboards and we secondary school teachers not even being aware of their existence. To continue an assessment book or record scheme seems an eminently sensible way forward and we gradually intend to have an agreed scheme of assessment in English. It is also ecologically more sound; another area where infant, junior and primary schools lead the way for many secondary schools to follow.

Transition is never ending and should not be consigned to simply the summer term. Once links are in place, the opportunities are enormous and we must constantly seek to explore every avenue where collaboration and cooperation will lead to us becoming better teachers than we already are, but, much more importantly, will ultimately lead to improving the transitional experience for all of our students.

*Are You Dropping The Baton?* tackles issues of transition head on and provides countless examples of how primary and secondary schools can work together more effectively to ensure students enjoy a smooth and effective move from primary to secondary school. It advocates several different approaches to facilitating this, from soft federations between schools to the all-through 3-18 solution.

This practical, pragmatic text places young people at the centre of their learning and provides complete guidance on all that is needed to arrange activities between schools. The wide range of activities catered for includes:

- Short term 'one off' activities for primary and secondary pupils to carry out together
- Longer projects that allow primary and secondary pupils to develop working relationships
- Projects which are ideal for collaboration between teachers with very different experiences and skills
- Activities which place the pupil in the role of educator for others
- Development tasks for leaders of schools who are keen to develop closer relationships with each other
- Guidance on the different routes to collaboration

*"Are You Dropping The Baton?"* is a must-have book for schools, federations and Local Authorities. Immensely practical."

Deryn Harvey, Director The Innovation Unit

"This is a book that helps extend our understanding of the future direction of education and it is to be warmly welcomed."

John West-Burnham, Visiting Professor of Education leadership, University of Bristol

"Transition is one of the weak points in educational continuity. To anyone considering cross-phase federation as a way of overcoming this problem this book offers a rationale and plenty of practical ideas to help them on the way. It is rooted firmly in the experience of Dave Harris and his team at Serlby Park."

John Dunford, General Secretary, Association of School and College Leaders

"Dave Harris has provided a practical guide for all those wishing to make the journey for our children not only productive with clear outcomes but also inspiring, innovative and enjoyable at whatever age. His bravery and creativity as a leader and educator is matched, nay exceeded, by his own personal example of courage and transformation."


Roy Leighton - Writer, lecturer and adviser/facilitator to organisations and institutions on learning, maturity and creative thinking

"I sincerely hope that this exciting review of our transition systems will help to ignite a long overdue discussion across the education profession and beyond which will benefit the generations of the future."

Jo Edwards, Headteacher, Moorside Community Primary School, Halifax



**Dave Harris** has taught for over 20 years, with much of that time spent in inner city schools. He has been a deputy headteacher and a headteacher and is currently Principal of Serlby Park, a 3-18 Business and Enterprise Learning Community, which amalgamated three schools - infant, junior and secondary - to form a single school with a focus on a common approach to learning at its core.

 The Independent Thinking Series brings together some of the most innovative practitioners working in education today under the guidance of Ian Gilbert, founder of Independent Thinking Ltd. [www.independentthinking.co.uk](http://www.independentthinking.co.uk)

Education/Organisation & Management of Education



Crown House Publishing Limited  
[www.crownhouse.co.uk](http://www.crownhouse.co.uk) – [www.chpus.com](http://www.chpus.com)

ISBN 978-184590081-6



9 781845 900816