

Pre-Reading

Consider the following questions as you read the Foreword and Preface:

- What has brought you to this study? What is your reason for reading this book?
- How do you feel about approaching the topic of transitions-care?

Personal Reflection

When we open a book we bring our own stories to it. This is no less true when it comes to the story of transitions for all of us. Whether you are a student, a parent, a member of staff, or an administrator, reflecting on your own story will prepare you for the journey of developing a comprehensive school-based transitions program.

Foreword

“We all clapped... and cried. I looked at him, at the panelists, at the audience who all understood what he had said. Here was a ten-year-old who, because of his role as an Ambassador in the Transitions Program, already had language and understanding for his story. He did not have to listen to the scornful judgments of others who didn’t know why he was ‘different.’ Here were panelists who had already begun to think through how they would name themselves, and deal with the inevitable losses that happen in any international school as friends move in and out according to the dictates of their parents’ careers. And here were parents and staff who had come and listened to the stories being told that night - who knew how important these stories were, not only for the students but also for themselves. Yes, they might be older, but they too knew the confusion of defining place and identity - at least to some degree - after their years away from what had always been home to them before.”
(p. XXV)

- What do you imagine needed to be in place in the ASH (American School of The Hague) community to make this moment happen?
- If someone walked into your school today, what would you want them to see?
- What is your dream for your school when someone new walks in?



Preface

We have an innate desire to connect with others. Our stories help us do so. But we have to feel safe in order to share them.” (p. XXVII)

- What things in your life have been/were a challenge because they remained unnamed/not acknowledged or talked about?
- When do you feel that desire to connect with others? What stories have you learned to tell about yourself? When, where and with whom have you felt safe enough to share your stories?

“Imagine my confusion when I arrived in Holland and nobody had heard of Princeton. Imagine how you would feel if you had steadily set aside a considerable portion of your wages, steadily saving for something grand, month by month and year by year, only to be told a decade later that the currency in which you saved had been discontinued.” (p. XXIX)

- What stories/values in your own life have been perceived differently by others you have met during your transitions experiences and/or international life?

“So ‘normal’ was this ritual it never occurred to me to question how my family of origin dealt with goodbyes until I met my wife.” (p. XXXI)

- How does your family say goodbye? How have you grown up saying goodbye?
- Do you think it’s harder to be the one leaving or the one being left behind?
- What are your stories? How do you answer the question: where are you from? How do you feel about goodbyes?



The Six Laws of Transition

I	You have to say a 'clear goodbye' in order to say a clear 'hello' or You have to grieve well to leave well. (In memory of David C. Pollock)
II	For every connection, there is an equal and opposite connection or For a person to connect to somebody else, that other person must be willing and able to make the connection.
III	The Transitions Team is the Transitions Team for the Transitions Team.
IV	A person's role at a school with a high degree of turnover is subject to drift. Arrivers become stayers, and stayers become leavers. People are not consciously aware of this drift. Arrivers need to be helped to consider accepting the roles and responsibilities of the stayers when the time comes.
V	Humans need safe attachments to community. People in transition are looking for a community to attach to.
VI	The international school should conceive of itself as a transitional attachment object for its clientele.

- Look over the Six Laws of Transition. Which ones are you familiar with? Which ones sound new/strange/different? Which most interests you? Why?



Team Discussion

1. What has brought you to this study? What is your reason for reading this book?
2. How do you feel about approaching the topic of positive transitions-care?

Foreword

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3. If someone walked into our school, what would you want them to see? What is your dream for our school when someone new walks in?

Preface

“We have an innate desire to connect with others. Our stories help us do so. But we have to feel safe in order to share them.” (p. XXVII)

4. How does this reality apply to our students, parents and staff?

“Teaching our students the skills for how to say effective goodbyes converts an experience which can be crippling if avoided, into one that can foster immense personal growth if embraced. It takes time and energy to acquire this skill set - but that’s no different from learning to drive. Or to type. Or to sail.” (p. XXXIII)

5. In what ways are learning the skills to say goodbye similar to learning the skills to drive...or type...or sail? In what ways are they different?

