

## Understanding International Mobility

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### I. Mobility and Third Culture Kids

A Third Culture Kid (TCK) is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture. The TCK frequently builds relationships to all cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture may be assimilated into the TCKs life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background. (Dave Pollock)

A CCK is a person who has lived in, or meaningfully interacted with, two or more cultural environments for a significant period of time during developmental years. (Ruth Van Reken)

There are two main overlays for traditional TCKs:

- Cross-cultural experiences
- High mobility

#### **TCK Profile**

TCKs have shared characteristics that present benefits and challenges. They include:

#### **Benefits**

Expanded world view  
Adaptability  
Cross-cultural skills  
Social skills  
Observational skills  
Linguistic skills

#### **Challenges**

Unresolved grief  
Confused loyalties  
Sense of rootlessness  
Restlessness  
Lack of a true identity  
Relationships

Remember these are tendencies, no two individuals are alike!

### II. The Process of Transition

Involvement, Leaving, Transition, Entering, Re-involvement (D. Pollock)

### III. Issues facing internationally mobile children and adults include:

**Stress:** Look for signs in children and adults

#### **Culture Shock**

#### **Grief and Loss**

People, places, pets, possessions, activities, lifestyle  
Allow children to express feelings of sadness  
Plan ways to say goodbye well and to keep in touch  
RAFT strategy (D. Pollock)  
Transition Education

#### Transition Activities:

- Make a memory book
- Compile a photograph album
- Make a video of your neighbourhood, friends, activities
- Have a goodbye party
- Have friends sign a T-shirt
- Plan farewells to favourite places
- Other....

Plan for people who are left behind

**Friendship** - 1-5 model, 'quick release response'

**Language Differences**

**Logistics of the Move**

#### IV. Repatriation

Moving 'home' is different

- We usually don't anticipate the need for adjustment when returning home.
- We are often unaware of how much we have changed until we move back.
- We have particular expectations of 'home' and are disappointed when they are not met.

Factors affecting re-entry include age, length of time away, quality of the experience/s, how the decision was made and who made it

Re-entry adjustment and reverse culture shock

Honeymoon

Reverse culture shock (double U curve)

Readjustment

Common concerns for parents and children:

fitting in, leaving and making friends, school

Common difficulties and concerns include:

- Miss the excitement of living abroad, being unique
- Resist settling back in, fear will lose what was gained
- Don't fit in, feel like a 'hidden immigrant'
- Sense of isolation
- Boredom
- Temporary homelessness
- Change of lifestyle
- Friends and family not very interested in our experiences
- Anger, sadness, depression, loneliness, frustration

Help children know themselves:  
strengths, skills, knowledge, attitudes and values  
How have they changed?  
Cultural vs. national identity

## V. Planning for a Successful Transition

Strategies for supporting children and adults through transition (see list)

Choosing a school (consider each child individually)

- Know your child
- Know the school, attitude is important
- Recognise that there will be gaps in your child's education
- Be a bridge between schools, provide work samples
- Meet with the principal, teacher and school counsellor to discuss placement and ways to engage your child in the life of the school
- Inform the school of any health problems or special needs

### **GENERAL THOUGHTS ON SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND ADULTS THROUGH THE TRANSITION PROCESS**

Provide Transition Education and Transition Activities for children and adults to maximise the benefits and address the challenges of their internationally mobile experience.

The process of transition is different for everyone and each person will each respond in his or her own way.

Recognise moving is stressful and we all need support during this time.

Acknowledge that while moving is difficult, it can be made easier if we plan for it and know what to expect.

Be patient, flexible and have a sense of humour.

Have realistic expectations.

Learn to accept a degree of uncertainty and manage worry.

From: *New Kid in School: Using Literature to Help Children in Transition (2003)*.

## Suggested Literature Resources for Transition Education

There is a wealth of excellent children's literature available that easily lends itself to addressing transition issues and integrating transition education into the curriculum. Picture books have far reaching appeal and can be used across all grade levels. These are a few titles that I think are particularly useful. Consider using them to generate discussion with middle and high school students, and have older students share them with primary school 'buddies'.

### Picture Books

Aliki (1998) *Painted Words and Spoken Memories*, New York: Greenwillow Books.

**(new country, customs and language, saying goodbye, cross-cultural skills, empathy)**

Asch, Frank (1986) *Goodbye House*, New York: Aladdin Paperbacks.

**(saying goodbye to a place, memories)**

Fanelli, Sara (1995) *My Map Book*, Hong Kong: HarperCollins.

**(map of multicultural self)**

Hennessy, B G (2005) *Because of You*, Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.

**(making a difference, learning from and teaching each other)**

Lionni, Leo (1959) *little blue and little yellow*, New York: Mulberry Books.

**(cultural influences, cultural identity)**

McLaughlin, Patricia (1995) *What You Know First*, USA: HarperCollins.

**(feelings about moving, childhood memories, saying goodbye to a place)**

Rylant, Cynthia (1982) *When I Was Young in the Mountains*, New York: Penguin Books USA Inc.

**(cultural differences, childhood memories)**

Say, Allen (1993) *Grandfather's Journey*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.

**( cultural identity, moving back)**

Sharmat, Marjorie W (1980) *Gila Monsters Meet You at the Airport*, New York: Aladdin Paperbacks.

**(misconceptions children have about moving, process of transition)**

Stimson, Joan (1996) *A New Home for Tiger*, London: Scholastic Children's Books.

**('home', process of transition)**

Viorst, Judith (1995) *Alexander, Who's Not (Do you hear me? I mean it!) Going to Move*, New York: Aladdin Paperbacks.

**(feelings about moving, saying goodbye)**

Waber, Bernard (1988) *Ira Says Good-bye*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, Co.

**(staying behind, saying goodbye, disengagement, grief and loss, friendship, conflict resolution)**

Williams, Karen L (1991) *When Africa Was Home*, New York: Orchard Books.

**(when 'home' is other than your passport country, re-entry)**

## **Other Useful Books for Primary, Middle and High School (PMH)**

Achebe, Chinue (1960) *No Longer at Ease*, Oxford, UK: Heinemann Educational Publishers.  
**(re-entry, cultural identity) H**

Creech, Sharon (1998) *Bloomability*, New York, NY: HarperCollins.  
**(international school experience, TCK experiences) PM**

Eldon, Karen (Ed) (1997) *The Journey is the Destination: The Journals of Dan Eldon*, San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books.  
**(document one's personal history, celebrate unique life and TCK experiences) MH**

Fleischman, Paul (1997) *Seedfolks*, New York: HarperCollins.  
**(multicultural garden) PM**

Nye, Naomi Shihab (1992) *This Same Sky: A Collection of Poems from Around the World*, New York, NY: Aladdin Paperbacks.  
**(multicultural poetry, 'home', memories) MH**

Seaman, Paul (1998) *Paper Airplanes in the Himalayas: The Unfinished Path Home*, Notre Dame, IN, USA: Cross Cultural Publications.  
**(TCK autobiography) H**

Taber, Sara Mansfield (1997) *Of Many Lands: Journal of a Traveling Childhood*, Washington DC: Foreign Service Youth Foundation.  
**(celebrates internationally mobile childhood, all areas of transition education) PMH**

Zemser, Amy B (1998) *Beyond the Mango Tree*, New York: Greenwillow Books.  
**(TCK fiction, author is a TCK who lived in Liberia) PM**

## Recommended Reading Related to Transition

Eidse, Faith and Sichel, Nina edited by (2004) *Uprooted Childhoods: Memoirs of Growing Up Global*, Boston: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, Inc.

McCluskey, Karen C (1994) *Notes From a Traveling Childhood: Readings for Internationally Mobile Parents and Children*, Washington, DC: Foreign Service Youth Foundation.

Rader, Debra and Sittig, Linda Harris (2003) *New Kid in School: Using Literature to Help Children in Transition*, New York: Teachers College Press.

Pollock, David and Van Reken, Ruth (1999, 2001, 2009) *The Third Culture Kid Experience: Growing Up Among Worlds*, Boston: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, Inc.

Smith, Carolyn (1991) *Absentee American: Repatriates' Perspectives on America*, New York: Alethia Publications.

Smith, Carolyn (1996) *Strangers at Home: Essays on the Effects of Living Overseas and Coming "Home" to a Strange Land*, New York: Alethia Publications.

Storti, Craig (1990) *The Art of Crossing Cultures*, Yarmouth, ME, USA: Intercultural Press.

Storti, Craig (1997) *The Art of Coming Home*, Yarmouth, ME, USA: Intercultural Press.

Tavanger, Homa Sabet (2009) *Growing Up Global: Raising Children to Be At Home in the World*, New York: Ballantine Books.

### Useful Websites

[www.transition-dynamics.com](http://www.transition-dynamics.com)

[www.globalnomads-dc.org](http://www.globalnomads-dc.org).

<http://www.interactionintl.org>

<http://tckacademy.com/class/001/handoutanswers001.pdf>

<http://tckid.wordpress.com/>

[www.asiasociety.org](http://www.asiasociety.org)

### Recommended Articles

Third Culture Kids

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/expateducation/6545869/Third-culture-kids.html>

The Struggle of the Global Placeless

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/27/us/27iht-currents.html>