



# Highly Mobile Students: Helping Them Succeed

Dawn Williams  
Rosedale Elementary/ University of Oregon



## Introduction

### High Mobility at Rosedale Elementary

Rosedale Elementary School is located in Bend, Oregon in an older neighborhood, quite close to the town's first high school. In addition to the older homes that are part of Rosedale's boundaries, there are also many apartment complexes, some residence motels, and subsidized transitional housing for previously homeless families.

In the past few years student mobility at Rosedale Elementary has become an increasing concern for office and classroom staff. For the 2008-2009 school year Rosedale began the year with a student population of 580 students. During the year 147 students exited Rosedale and 192 new students enrolled (T. Radcliff, personal communication, June 18, 2009). In the past five years Rosedale Elementary School has experienced a rise in its student population that qualifies for free or reduced lunch. This percentage increase has resulted in Rosedale being designated as a Title 1 school. As the number of children who leave Rosedale during the school year and the number of children who register after the school year has started has increased, the number of children who qualify for free or reduced meals has also increased. Research points toward mobility as one of the factors that contributes to lower academic achievement. Fisher and Matthews (1999) define student mobility as characterized by "an inconsistency and/or interruption in the educational experience of the student" (p.4). One-quarter of the students at Rosedale experienced an interruption in their education last year.

## The Improvement Goal

**Implement a registration process which provides new families with a quick and welcoming orientation while assessing each new student for their reading, writing and math levels.**

## Options for Achieving Goal

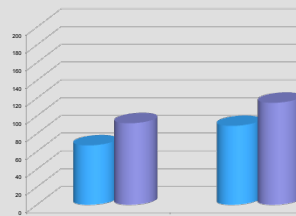
- 1) Short-term transition classroom**-A K-5 classroom where incoming students will transition into the school and the environment before being placed in their permanent placement.
- 2) Mobility Specialist**-Support teacher for the mobile students and their classroom teacher. Can also serve as a liaison with new families.
- 3) Family Welcome Events**-Ongoing opportunities for families to experience some of the events typically held at the beginning of the school year.
- 4) Teacher Training**-Staff development and in-service for teachers.
- ✓5) Pre-enrollment Orientation and Assessment**-A welcome for family members and an assessment of each student's reading, writing and math level before permanent placement is made.

## Supporting Research

The United States has one of the highest mobility rates of all developed countries; annually, about one-fifth of all Americans move. Elementary school children who move frequently face disruption to their schooling (United States General Accounting Office, 1994). The same report indicated that by the end of third grade, one of six children in the United States had attended three or more schools. Mobility is often a reflection of many underlying family issues such as affordable housing shortages, marital status changes, unemployment or type of employment. Historically high mobility rates do not seem to effect families from all socio-economic backgrounds.

A study conducted by Mehana and Reynolds (1995) found that mobility in the United States has an impact on student academic and behavioral achievement. The same study referenced Cornille, Boyer, and Smith (1983) who indicate an estimated six million elementary school-aged children change schools each year, with America having one of the highest mobility rates. Lash and Kirkpatrick (1990) citing the U.S. Department of Commerce, found in 1987 that nationwide 19% of school-age children moved in a single year. Younger children were even more likely to move, with 23% of primary-age children moving each year.

Lash and Kirkpatrick (1990) state, "geographic mobility is an aversive influence on student achievement" (p.148). Rosedale Elementary appears to be experiencing an increased number of student mobility as their families search for work. The schools in and around Bend, Oregon are experiencing the similar issues. Because of this, it is important educators understand the issues around mobility and how they may help students as they move between schools.



## References

Fisher, T. A., & Matthews, L. (April, 1999) *Examining interventions for highly mobile students and their families*. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, Canada.

Lash, A. A., & Kirkpatrick, S. L. (1990). A classroom perspective on student mobility. *The Elementary School Journal*, 91(2), 177-191.

Mehana, M., & Reynolds, A. J. (April, 1995). *The effects of mobility on scholastic achievement*. Paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Indianapolis, IN.

United States General Accounting Office. (1994). *Elementary School Children-many change schools frequently harming their education* (GAO/HEHS Publication No. 94-95). Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

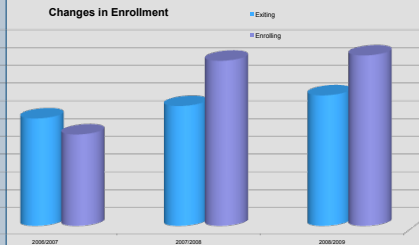
## Rationale

In the past five years the number of students exiting Rosedale Elementary after the start of the school year has steadily increased. The number of students enrolling in Rosedale has also steadily increased each year. This large turn over has had academic and social implications for both the students and the staff of Rosedale Elementary School.

Rosedale Elementary believes in creating an inclusive and welcoming community for the students and their families. The staff is always striving to increase the academic success of each student. In that the highly mobile students are such a large part of the school population, their inclusion and success must be addressed. With the implementation of an assessment and orientation program prior to enrollment there is high confidence Rosedale will significantly impact each student's educational experience.

Each time a new student arrives to enroll at Rosedale Elementary the same procedure will be followed. The new family will be welcomed to the school and an orientation video will be shown. Each new student will be assessed for their reading, writing and math level. The information will be used to inform their classroom placement. Each teacher receiving a new student will have this information before the student arrives in their classroom.

Teachers will have the opportunity to prepare not just the materials and desk a new student requires, but also will have a clear idea where to begin with them academically.



## Contact Information

For additional information please contact Dawn Williams at dawn.williams@bend.k12.or.us

## Timeline and Budget

Materials Preparation: August 2009  
Training of Volunteers: August 2009  
Production of Welcome Video: Ongoing through the 2009/2010 school year. School photo albums to be used until video is completed.

Material preparation by Title 1 Educational Assistants  
Volunteer Training provided by Title 1 Teachers

Assessment time: Approximately 125 hours per year.  
15 Volunteers are currently in place through an existing partnership with the Grace Lutheran Church. Each volunteer contributes 3 hours per week to the school. (15 X 3 = 45 hours per week X 30 weeks = 1,350 hours per school year) 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher currently serves as volunteer coordinator and has agreed to continue in the position.

Cost  
Materials/Training: No Cost. The week before school begins Educational Assistants produce needed materials for all programs and teachers. The office copier will be used to copy the assessment recording sheets. Each student in the school has a record sheet. Title 1 teachers can flex their schedule that same week for the training.

Video Production: No Cost. Rosedale Elementary owns several video cameras. The fifth grade class has graciously agreed to produce the school video as their class technology project. They will be supported by the Technology teacher.

## Expected Outcomes

It is believed that an immediate and warm welcome to Rosedale Elementary will help transition families into the school environment. The photo albums and video will provide the family with important information about Rosedale Elementary while also showing them the events and activities that are a unique part of the school's identity.

Based on this prompt and positive welcome families will feel more comfortable being part of their children's school experience. An increase in parent participation from the high mobility families is anticipated.

Academically, it is believed there will be a minimum of 20 hours of academic time saved per student with the implementation of this program. When a new student arrives after the start of the school year it usually takes the classroom teacher at least 3 days to assess their new student. Students may be placed in the wrong reading group or experience confusion with math lessons while the classroom teacher struggles to fit in the time to assess the child's academic levels. With this model, all new students will be placed in the most appropriate classroom with their initial assessments already completed.

Socially the school expects to see a higher level of comfort for incoming students. Because they will experience academic comfort they will also feel more comfortable with their peers as they begin to make friends.

Finally, as mobile students often move more than once in a year it is Rosedale's intent to provide copies of the assessments so that parents may take them to the next school they attend.