



# PLANNING FOR THE TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN

Why it Matters  
and How to  
Promote  
Success



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THE NATIONAL CENTER ON  
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# CHILDREN'S KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION EXPERIENCES ARE ESSENTIAL TO THEIR SCHOOL SUCCESS.

The transition to kindergarten is a time that presents changing demands, expectations, and supports for children and their families. When children experience discontinuities between preschool and kindergarten, they may be at greater risk for academic failure and social adjustment problems. Thus, building and implementing a seamless kindergarten transition can make a significant difference for children's early education experience.

## WHY

### IS A QUALITY TRANSITION IMPORTANT?

Multiple large-scale research studies have found that transition activities for children and families are associated with these gains in kindergarten: <sup>i,ii,iii,iv,v,vi,vii</sup>

- Reduced stress and higher ratings of social emotional competence at the beginning of the school year
- Improved academic growth and increased family involvement over the year
- Stronger benefits for children living in poverty



## WHAT

### DOES A QUALITY TRANSITION INVOLVE?

Evidence from research and the field suggests these key elements:

- Positive relationships between children, parents, and schools
- A transition team of Head Start and kindergarten administrators and teachers, parents, and community members
- Assessments, standards, and curriculum that align between preschool and kindergarten
- Joint professional development between preschool and kindergarten personnel
- Information and communication that is shared with parents and the community at large

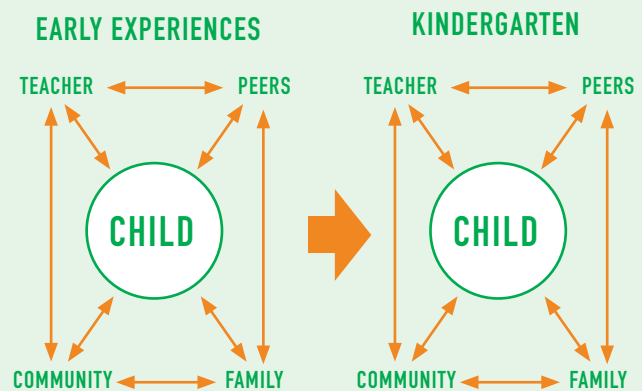
## HOW

### DO WE IMPROVE CHILDREN'S TRANSITION?

Educators can use these key principles: <sup>viii</sup>

- Approach transition collaboratively
- Involve all key stakeholders in the process
- Align children's experiences across systems (i.e., preschool and kindergarten classrooms)

### COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO TRANSITIONS



(Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000)





## USING A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

Successful kindergarten transitions are a result of supportive relationships that are focused on children's development—the relationships between schools, families, and preschool and kindergarten teachers and their classrooms.<sup>ix</sup>

The child, family, school, peer, and community factors are interconnected<sup>x</sup> and they are all influential in helping a child prepare for, and be successful in school. Effective transition practices involve reaching out to families and influential community members, with a strong sense of purpose, prior to the time a child actually moves into a new classroom.<sup>xi</sup>

## INVOLVING ALL KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Children benefit most when all parties involved in the process work together to support the transition. For example, improved kindergarten readiness<sup>xii,xiii</sup> is associated with preschool teachers who communicate with kindergarten teachers about curricula, children's development, and children's educational needs. Also, when families participate in more transition experiences, their school involvement is higher over the kindergarten year, and this is a key indicator of children's long-term social and academic success.<sup>xiv,xv,xvi,xvii</sup>

## HELPFUL RESOURCES

### ARTICLES

Ferguson, C., & Wood, L. (2005). Easing the transition from preK to kindergarten: What schools and families can do to address child readiness. National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools. Austin, TX. Retrieved from <http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/rb/rb6-readiness.pdf>

Patton, C., & Wang, J. (2012). Ready for success: Creating collaborative and thoughtful transitions into kindergarten. Family Involvement Network of Educators (FINE) Newsletter, 4(1). Retrieved January 17, 2014 from <http://www.hfrp.org/content/download/4287/116636/file/ReadyForSuccess.pdf>

### BOOKS

Pianta, R. C., & Kraft-Sayre, M. (2003). Successful kindergarten transition: Your guide to connecting children, families, and schools. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Inc.

Sullivan-Dudzic, L., Gears, D. K., & Leavell, K. (2010). Making a difference: 10 essential steps to building a preK-3 system. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

“ Making time to sit down with everyone at the table has made all the difference for our kids. They are coming to school ready to learn ... ”

WHY

– Kindergarten Teacher

## ALIGNING CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES ACROSS SYSTEMS

Aligned preschool and kindergarten experiences allow children to build on what they have learned and be prepared for what they will be learning next.<sup>xviii</sup> The longer children are involved in a consistent and stable learning environment, including curricula and support services that are aligned, the more they benefit cognitively, academically, and socially.<sup>xix</sup>

### PRACTICAL GUIDES

Bowman, B. T., & Cottone, P. A. (2005). Transition: Change with continuity: A handbook for teachers. Chicago Public Schools Office of Early Childhood Education.

National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement & National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning. (2013). *Family engagement in transitions: Transition to kindergarten*. Retrieved January 17, 2014 from <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/docs/transitions-kindergarten.pdf>

University of Pittsburgh, Office of Child Development. (2012). Ready Freddy: Pathways to Kindergarten Success. Retrieved from <http://www.readyfreddy.org/>

### ONLINE VIDEOS

Capistrano Unified School District. From kindergartener to kindergartener: “What’s important for you to know.” Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DMf1mveot3I>

Head Start: National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning. Transitions from the children's perspective. Retrieved from <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/center/transition>

## RESEARCH REFERENCES

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- <sup>xi</sup> *ibid.*
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