

Transition from Preschool Special Education to Kindergarten

Children's transition from preschool to kindergarten is successful for families and children when collaborative relationships exist between the preschool and kindergarten programs. Personnel from early care and education programs, preschool special education, family resource and support programs, and elementary schools need to plan and coordinate transition activities for families before and after a child's entry into kindergarten. Collaborative planning, clear communication, and a variety of transition activities support child and family preparation for an adjustment to the new setting.

[Watch a video of this guide](#)

Video courtesy National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement

Communication and Coordination in Transition Planning

- Form a team that includes preschool and kindergarten staff, school administrators, parents, and other key members to plan, coordinate, and evaluate transition activities that occur before and after the kindergarten year begins. Designate one or more staff to coordinate the development of a transition plan that informs the child's transition from preschool programs, preschool special education programs, or other preschool programs into kindergarten.
- Share key records with parental permission to coordinate parents' and teachers' participation in an IEP transition meeting. Work collaboratively with families to design special education services and supports for the child in the future kindergarten setting.
- Coordinate meetings with the kindergarten teacher once staff assignments are finalized. Continue discussions about child interests and strengths and address parents' and teachers' concerns about the child's transition to the kindergarten program.
- Ensure kindergarten and preschool program staff are knowledgeable about their respective program policies and procedures, so that families receive clear and accurate information about the requirements for kindergarten enrollment.
- Provide opportunities for parents to learn about kindergarten policies, visit the new classroom, and meet kindergarten and administrative staff. Remind families of open houses, informational meetings, and other kindergarten activities.
- Support families to identify their goals for their child's participation in kindergarten. Encourage parents to share their knowledge about their child's abilities, strengths, interests, and challenges, as well as, the different kinds of supports their child will need to succeed in kindergarten.
- Talk with or read books to children about what they will experience in kindergarten, including kindergarten activities, routines, opportunities, and expectations. Provide opportunities for each child to visit the kindergarten classroom he or she will attend, meet teachers and other children, and observe classroom activities.
- Once the school year begins, help parents know how they can be involved in their children's kindergarten classroom. Communicate with family members about how plans for supporting the child are working and how the child is adjusting in the kindergarten setting.

A Quick Peek

Jennifer, the Head Start disabilities coordinator; Maria, the Head Start classroom teacher; and Alberto, the preschool special educator are working with the Ramirez family to prepare for the transition of Lily, who has special needs, and twin Luisa to kindergarten in the fall. The preschool staff and the school's transition coordinator have worked together on a community transition team and are knowledgeable about activities the local school and the school system offer to parents whose children will be entering kindergarten. A transition plan is in place for the Ramirez family that reflects their wishes and concerns for their children's participation in kindergarten. The school staff have provided opportunities for the parents to attend the school's open house/orientation event and visit the school to meet the kindergarten teacher and visit her classroom with their daughters. An IEP meeting is scheduled to determine services and supports for Lily in the kindergarten setting. The preschool team and the kindergarten teacher will work with the Ramirez family to ensure a smooth transition to kindergarten in the fall and have already discussed how ongoing communication among the parents and their team will be coordinated.



You'll know the practice is working if...

- Family members report transition planning activities are useful for increasing their knowledge and supporting their decision-making
- Family members are familiar with kindergarten policies, curricular approaches, and daily routines and activities
- Family members develop positive relationships with kindergarten staff

This practice guide is based upon the following *DEC Recommended Practices*: Transition 1, 2
 The DEC Recommended Practices are available at <http://dec-sped.org/recommendedpractices>

Access this practice guide and other products at <http://ectacenter.org/decrp>
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