

Transition to Kindergarten | Tips for Children with IEPs

The Transition Summit Guide recommends transition practices for all children. Children with individualized education programs (IEPs) may have special considerations, and their families may have special concerns.

We offer here some tips and resources to help ensure that both IEPs and kindergartens address children's individual needs during transitions.

General approaches for transition planning:

- Include special education and disabilities personnel in your Transition Summit.
- Develop a Disabilities Service Plan that includes a description of procedures and activities that support smooth and successful transitions to kindergarten for children with IEPs.
- Develop interagency agreements with local education agencies (LEAs) that support successful transitions for children with IEPs.
- Refer to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Head Start Performance Standards for requirements and recommendations for transition practices that include interagency collaboration, supports for families and children, and training for teachers and staff.

School and community practices to help children with IEPs make smooth transitions:

- Provide joint trainings and other professional development activities for school district and Head Start teachers and staff on the transition to kindergarten.
- Provide opportunities for school district and Head Start teachers and staff to observe each other's programs and learn about their curricula and teaching practices.
- Provide education and family support activities to help families understand their rights and responsibilities and how to advocate for their children.

- Include information about the transition to kindergarten during IEP meetings held during the preschool years.

Family outreach before transitions:

- Confirm dates and work with the school district to make sure the child has a current IEP in place when the kindergarten year begins.
- Establish a transition team that includes a primary contact person within both the sending and receiving programs.
- Help families learn about kindergarten options as well as the ways special education and related services may be provided.
- Hold a transition meeting with family members, the kindergarten teacher, and the school's special education team to develop a transition plan for the individual child. Make sure the plan includes transfer of the child's records.
- Visit the new school with the family and child to learn about its expectations and routines.
- Partner with the family to identify and prepare for activities the child will encounter in kindergarten. These include participating in larger groups, following group directions, attending meal times, going to the bathroom, and following school bus routines.
- Introduce the family to other families who have already experienced the transition process.

Family outreach during transitions:

- Work with the family and the kindergarten teacher to discuss strategies and modifications that can help the child feel safe and welcomed during the first weeks of school.
- Help families and the kindergarten teacher establish a system to communicate about the child's adjustment to the new school.
- Check to see whether the child's records have been transferred to the new school.

- Partner with the family to make an "Introducing Me" book to share with the new teacher.

- Help family members advocate for their child's specific needs.

Family outreach after transitions:

- Make a follow-up contact with the family and the kindergarten teacher to let them know you are interested in the child's continued progress.
- Help the family know about community resources that are available for families of children with IEPs.

RESOURCES

Effective Transitions for Children with Special Needs from Preschool to Kindergarten

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/Disabilities/docs/transition-to-K-2007.pdf>

This PowerPoint presentation by Beth Rous and the National Early Childhood Transition Center (NECTC) provides an overview of research, policy, and practices that support successful transitions from preschool to kindergarten.

NECTC Transition Tips: Toolkit of Practices and Strategies

<http://www.hdi.uky.edu/nectc/NECTC/practicerearch.aspx>

This extensive checklist of tips from the National Early Childhood Transition Center provides specific strategies and activities to promote a smooth and successful transition for children with disabilities, and their families.

Head Start Performance Standards

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/Head%20Start%20Requirements/1308/1308.4%20%20Purpose%20and%20scope%20of%20disabilities%20service%20plan.htm>

This section of the *Head Start Program Performance Standards and Other Regulations* describes the Disabilities Service Plan, which should include provisions for transition for children with disabilities.

Fenlon, A. (2005). Collaborative steps: Paving the way to kindergarten for young children with disabilities. *Young Children*, 60(2), 32–67.

Rous, B.S., & Hallam, R.A. (2006). *Tools for transition in early childhood: A step-by-step guide for agencies, teachers, & families*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Inc.



THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
Quality Teaching
and Learning



For more information, contact us at: NCQTL@UW.EDU or 877-731-0764

This document was prepared under Grant #90HC0002 for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, by the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning.

WINTER 2014