

# Planning for Terrific Transitions

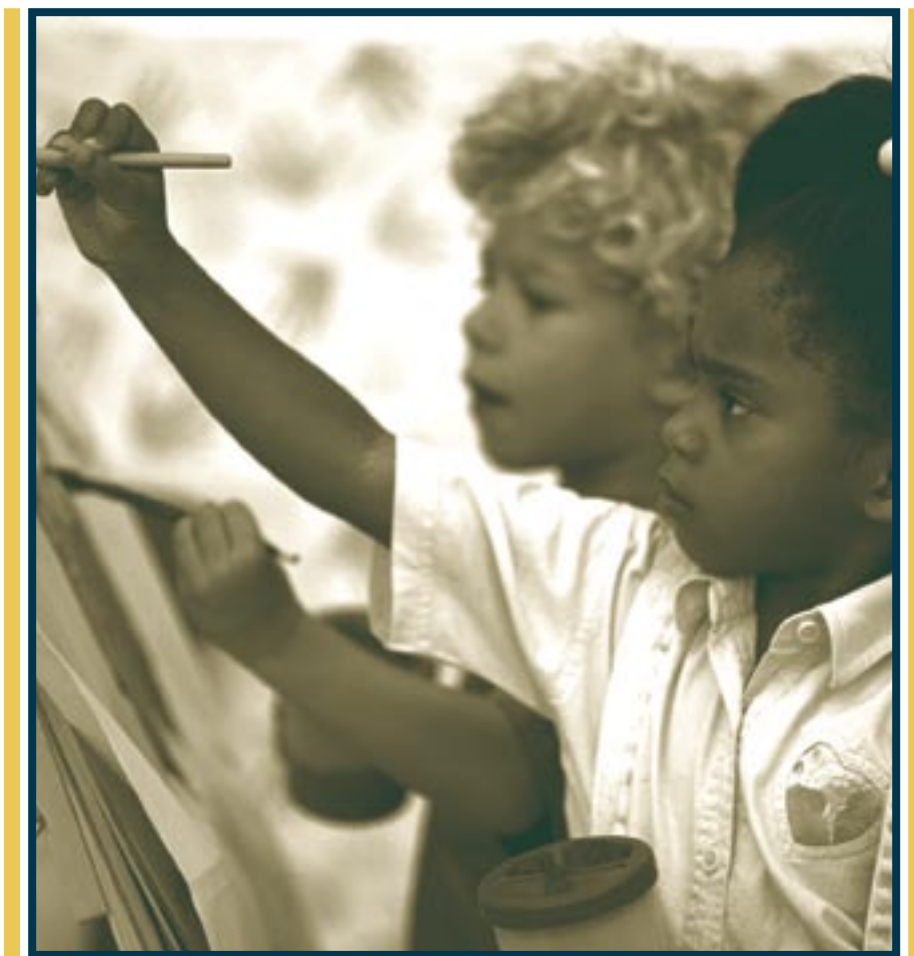
A Guide for Transition-to-School Teams



Participant's  
Guide



# Planning for Terrific Transitions: A Guide for Transitions-to-School Teams



  
Participant's Guide



Associated with the School of Education,  
University of North Carolina at Greensboro

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# Training Materials





# Facts & Findings

**1** A nationwide survey of 3,600 kindergarten teachers was conducted by the National Center for Early Development and Learning.

The results of this survey showed that teachers report that 48% of children have moderate or severe problems with transitions. The fact that nearly half of the nation’s kindergarten teachers are concerned about the needs of the children entering their classrooms indicates the need for better transitions. This critical time in a child’s life is often related to a child’s later success in school. (Pianta & Cox, 1998; Logue & Love, 1992; Kagan, 1992; Ramey & Ramey, 1994)

—National Center for Early Development and Learning. (1999, Summer). *Research and policy brief: Transition to kindergarten*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

**2** The following lists the percentage of teachers who say that half or more of their students enter kindergarten with needs in these areas:

- Following directions ..... 46%
- Improving academic skills ..... 36%
- Transitioning from their home environment ... 35%
- Working independently ..... 34%
- Adapting to formal preschool experience ..... 31%
- Working in groups ..... 30%
- Acting with greater maturity ..... 20%
- Communicating with peers, teachers, etc.. ..... 14%

—Pianta & Cox, 1999

“Children who have academic and social difficulties in the early school years are likely to continue having problems throughout their school careers and in their later lives.”

—Parker & Asher, 1987

**3** The influence of the family upon the child remains fundamental throughout the early years.

—Glickman & Hills, New Jersey Department of Education

**4** Communication between preschool and kindergarten staff can be enhanced when those involved are familiar and comfortable with each other. If opportunities are provided for participants to ask questions and provide information about themselves and their programs in an open atmosphere, the foundation is laid for effective cooperation during the transition.

—S. Bredekamp, National Association for the Education of Young Children

**5** In a study of 1,169 schools midway through the school year, researchers found:

- Although 21% of the districts reported a wide range of transition activities, individual schools rarely provided more than a few.
- Over 50% of respondents said there was no communication between preschool and elementary school staff.
- Only 13% of districts reported having written transition plans.

—U.S. Department of Education

**6** A survey of 3,600 kindergarten teachers revealed that the majority of teachers reported using the following transition practices:

- Sending a letter to parents after the beginning of school
- Holding an open house after school starts
- Sending a brochure home after school starts

The least commonly reported practices included:

- Calling the child before or after school starts.
- Visiting the child's home or preschool program.

—National Center for Early Development and Learning (NCDEL)



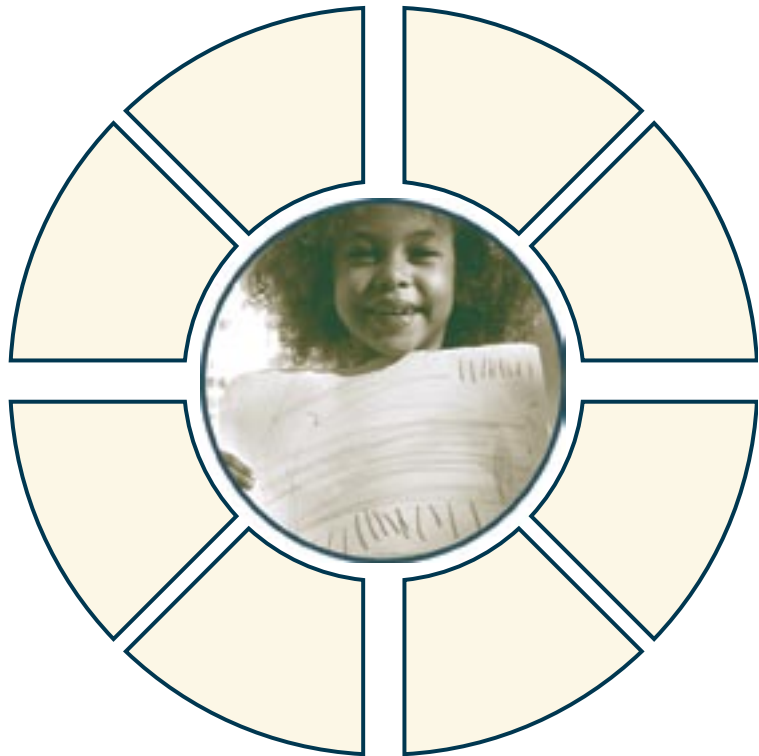
## What Successful Transition Looks Like

- The Schoolboro County Children’s Collaborative formed a Kindergarten Transition Team comprised of preschool personnel (directors and teachers), parents, kindergarten teachers, school administrators, Head Start staff, and home care providers from all three school systems in their district.
- The team started with a survey of all the agencies involved to find out what, if anything, they were doing to address transition issues.
- This team also worked together to develop policies around joint registration, confidentiality, and sharing information.
- The initial product of the Transition Team’s efforts was a written document spelling out the goals of the Transition Team, involved parties, ways to work together, and the responsibilities of all people involved in transition efforts.
- The Transition Team now meets monthly to discuss progress, issues, advocacy, and upcoming events.
- The Transition Team paved the way for staff to get involved. They started by hosting a one-day retreat for early childhood education providers, kindergarten teachers, school administrators, parents, health care providers, and special needs coordinators. Various topics were discussed using a roundtable format. This format enabled participants to share and learn about other programs and to start building connections.
- After the retreat, a School Readiness Rally was held. In preparation for the rally, child care teachers and kindergarten teachers were paired as training teams. During the rally, the teams of teachers answered parents’ questions about curriculum, transitions, what the children are learning as they play, the school’s ability to serve all children, and teacher qualifications and experiences.
- Staff regularly visits different programs. Not only do kindergarten staff visit Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs and vice versa, but ECE staff visit other ECE programs to gain a better awareness of the range of programs and children served. Staff also attend joint training sessions in which they network, learn about ways to ease transitions, and explore developmentally appropriate practices for preschool-age children and kindergartners.
- Parents sign a contract that states that they will regularly read to their children, participate in school activities, and learn about healthy lifestyles. The Transition Team sponsors playgroups for upcoming kindergartners. The public school pre-K is a four-day program, and the fifth day of the week the classroom is used for the playgroups. The public pre-K staff is responsible for planning and supervising the activities. Parents and other ECE providers are encouraged to participate as well.
- A multitude of activities occur at both the sending programs and receiving programs to ease the transition for children. For example, the ECE teachers lead field trips to local kindergartens in April, and from then until the end of the school year, the dramatic play areas of the classrooms are set up by the children as pretend kindergartens. The school bus comes to the ECE programs in May for orientation to public school bus procedures and rules. Also in May, kindergartners visit the classroom to talk about their experiences in moving to kindergarten. All children are encouraged to share their feelings during these talks.

- In the kindergarten classroom, teachers begin to help children with the transition well before school begins. In the late summer they send a personal “letter from the teacher” to all new students, welcoming them to kindergarten. Right before school starts, they call each parent and child to welcome them and answer questions. They have a system in place for older children to “buddy” with an incoming kindergarten child—sending notes, visiting, providing an escort at open house, etc. Kindergarten children prepare a video about what happens in their room and share it with ECE classes that will be moving up in the fall. A bilingual teacher prepares duplicate materials in Spanish and personally contacts all families for whom English is not the language spoken at home.
- Teachers are always coming up with new ideas, which are brought to the Transition Team for dissemination to other programs.
- The whole community is involved in supporting this effort. The Schoolboro Chamber of Commerce sponsors a full-page ad in the Schoolboro Free Press that lists the names of incoming kindergartners and welcomes them to school. A local shopping mall hosts an annual resource fair that highlights community services that are available for young children and could be of assistance to the early childhood program. The public library prepares a list of books that are helpful in preparing children for kindergarten. Summer Read Aloud sessions at the library are organized around these books. The Transition Team also publishes community event calendars.

### Discussion Questions

1. What do you think are the keys to success for Schoolboro County?
2. What positive outcomes do you envision in Schoolboro County for children? Families? Teachers/staff?



## Barrier Busters

Early childhood educators and administrators describe a variety of barriers to providing effective transition practices. Here are some effective strategies for breaking down these barriers:

*There is no forum for joint planning across the multitude of programs involved in serving children before they come to school.*

- Survey all the agencies involved to find out what, if anything, they are doing to address transition issues.
- Investigate who your most likely partners would be to work on transitions with you.
- Form a transition team if there is not one in place already. Transition teams can be formed both at the community level and at the program or school level.

*There is little support for formalized transition planning.*

- Participants must have the chance to learn about why transition planning is important and how they can help. Encourage attendance at transitions training, such as this one (*Planning for Terrific Transitions: A Guide for Transition-to-School Teams*).
- Provide research that supports formalized transition planning to those from whom you are seeking support.

*Children will be attending many different kindergartens in the fall.*

- Invite kindergarten teachers from several schools to visit your classroom throughout the year. If teachers cannot get release time, they may still be willing to come for a breakfast or lunch on their own time on a day when school is out.

*There is no consistent means for sharing information between programs about children and their families, including special needs, native language, and individual preferences.*

- Plan to provide numerous opportunities for the staff of both the pre-K and the kindergarten to interact.
- Develop a packet or portfolio (with parental permission) that will precede the child into his new program. It should include samples of his work, his likes/dislikes, and strengths/needs.
- Attach a photograph of the child and a child-dictated letter to personalize the packet.
- Provide joint training, in which the staff from both early childhood programs and schools learn the same information and have a chance to get to know each other.

*It is difficult to arrange cross-program visits.*

- With careful planning, job swap days can be worked out where the kindergarten teacher and a child care provider exchange positions for the day. This way each early childhood educator gets a real feel for what the other's job includes.
- Plan with parents and the receiving program to provide some common routines. This can be done via phone calls or e-mail.

*Programs are often isolated from each other, thus making communicating and working on common goals more difficult. There is a tradition of separateness that means we don't often think of those in other programs as "colleagues." We often think of our programs, our philosophies, and our approaches as superior to those in other types of programs.*

- Encourage regular communication via telephone or e-mail. Set up listserves for information about early childhood issues and happenings.
- Provide social situations where staff from both programs can meet. Have an early childhood educator party at your center.
- Form a mentoring system. Pair with a kindergarten teacher to help build a stronger personal relationship.

*It is difficult to be aware of all the different programs and supports that are available in the community.*

- Work with other community members interested in early childhood issues to host a community showcase.
- Have a poster contest that each program would prepare about available resources it provides.
- Flyers, pamphlets, and other materials should be made available so that everyone can refresh his or her memories about where to look for resources when needed.

*There is a lack of time to speak individually to parents about the process of transitioning the children into kindergarten.*

- Consider hosting a parent meeting early in the school year and invite a principal and/or a kindergarten teacher to speak to the parents.
- Use a spiral bound notebook to write individual notes home to parents about transition activities going on in your community, reminders about scheduling an appointment for the kindergarten physical, etc.
- Call the schools and ask them if you can help disseminate information about any kindergarten registration or event that your parents might be interested in attending.

*No funding is available to support transition efforts.*

- Share information with the community about the value of good transition practices. Community support for activities can sometimes be initiated by letting others know about a need.
- Some state initiatives, such as North Carolina's Smart Start initiative, have funding for early childhood education. Check with your local partnership to see if there is some money available for projects that you wish to participate in.

*Class lists are generated too late.*

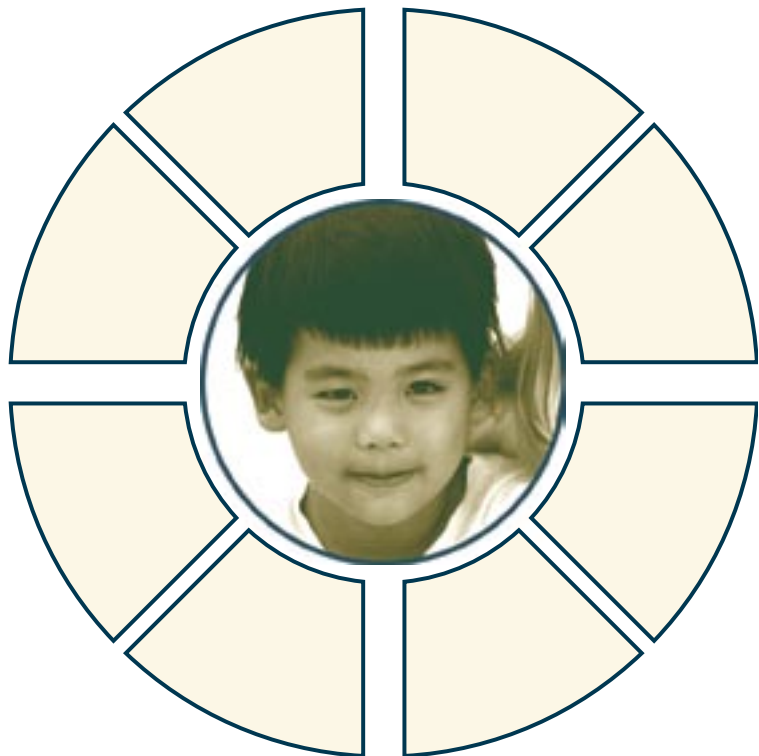
- Form or work with an existing transition planning team to advocate for earlier lists. See if there is a way to receive tentative class lists in the spring. Early lists enable pre-K teachers to help children become familiar with the next teacher and allow time for individualized joint planning between the two programs. Class lists also enable kindergarten staff to make summer contacts with the children and their families.

*There is a lack of knowledge about how cultural and language differences can affect a child's transition.*

- It is important for staff to realize that culture affects all aspects of a child's life. A child's beliefs, values, spiritual practices, rules for behavior, communication, and ways of knowing originate with the child's home culture. Some cultures may expect cooperation and obedience within the group instead of competition and individual achievement. Other cultures may value creativity and artistic expression (Regional Educational Laboratory Network, 1999). Provide staff training around the issues of culture and home language.
- Invite community members and parents from different cultures to share photos, food, and customs they have at parent and staff meetings.
- If you have children whose home language is not English, provide materials in the home language of that family.
- Hire staff members from the community who reflect the cultures and languages of the children enrolled.
- Recognize that each home also has its own culture. How parents communicate, play, discipline, etc. will be different in each home.
- Toys and materials in the classroom should reflect the various cultures of the children.

It's essential that both early care and education providers and schools work together to overcome the barriers to smooth transitions.

**From *Kindergarten Transitions: What Every Pre-K Teacher Should Know*. Amwake, Lynn. North Carolina Partnership for Children. 2002.**



# Step 1 Instructions

## Round Out the Team

### Overview

In *Planning for Terrific Transitions* training, you will begin thinking about how to make a formalized, comprehensive transition team. At some point, the current transition team should plan a meeting to focus on how to “round out the team.” The steps below will help. Then, once newly invited transition team members have been accepted, set a next meeting date to welcome the newcomers and begin assessing your transition needs.

Putting together a comprehensive team is important in order to best represent the needs of children, families, and other transition partners. A solid team will help you work together effectively as you move forward into the planning and implementation stages.

### Instructions

1. Review the following list of recommended and optional team members.

#### Recommended Team Members

- At least 1 kindergarten teacher
- At least 1 local Head Start representative
- At least 1 other representative from an early childhood feeder program
- At least 1 kindergarten school administrator (e.g., principal, vice principal, curriculum specialist, transition coordinator)
- At least 1 district representative (e.g., federal program representative, early childhood coordinator, curriculum specialist, special education coordinator)
- At least 1 parent/other family caregiver (e.g., grandparent, guardian) representing an early childhood education program

#### Optional Team Members

- Private child care professionals (e.g., family child care provider)
- Representatives from other pre-K initiatives
- Elementary school teacher
- Guidance counselor
- Librarian
- Other school personnel (e.g., cafeteria worker, bus driver, janitor, teacher’s aide, office staff, safety patrol, art teacher, PE teacher, after-school personnel, migrant coordinator)
- Older student
- Parent/other family caregiver
- Community representatives (e.g., health care representative, early intervention specialist, mental health professional, social worker, local business representative, local government representative)



2. Review which roles are already represented on the team. One way to do this is to chart everyone's name, role, and contribution to the team. A designated team leader can facilitate this.
3. For those not yet represented, record several names for potential additions. Consider their roles and contributions.
4. Narrow this list by considering "best bets" and best representatives
  - Who could serve on the team as a decision-maker with authority over budget and resources?
  - Who might be an implementer later on?
  - Who has been actively involved with school improvement efforts in the past?
  - Who might be interested but may have barriers to participation?
  - Which parents reflect the diverse characteristics of the children they'd be representing in areas such as ethnicity and economic status?
  - Which feeder programs represent the kindergarten's largest feeder(s)?
5. Narrow your list even further to those candidates who would be *most* effective:
  - Invested in children's issues
  - Effective interpersonal communicators
  - Effective team players
  - Open to change
  - Able to recognize and accept differences amongst team members
  - Clear about the group's purpose
  - Committed to the group
  - Trusting and respectful
  - Able to produce clear assignments and timelines for action
  - Able to monitor their own work and the team's functioning on an ongoing basis
6. Make your final selections, ensuring that the team size is limited to no less than 6, no more than 12 members.
7. Identify one individual with the authority to make decisions with regard to budget and resources.
8. For those candidates on the list who may be reluctant, identify possible ways to overcome their barriers.

## ● End Result

Six to twelve of the most qualified candidates will be selected. You will have a team that is comprehensive and balanced in terms of perspective, work initiative, and commitment to the team's purpose.

## Step 2 Instructions

### Assess the Situation

#### Overview

In *Planning for Terrific Transitions* training, you will begin the needs assessment process with your core transition team. On the job, you should set a meeting with the comprehensive transition team to focus on needs assessment.

The initial part of the assessment consists of the team discussing needs and completing the *Transition Assessment Worksheet*. This worksheet may take several meetings to complete. Then the team seeks the input of others to gain even more perspective and to identify the best plan.

Needs assessment is a critical part of the transition planning process. Without this exercise, transition planning becomes unfocused. Ineffective practices may go unidentified, real causes of problems may not be discovered, and new chosen strategies may be too impractical to implement or may not work at all. Taking time to assess needs and gather information upfront will help you figure out which practices to implement.

#### Instructions for the Team's Initial Discussions

1. Complete each column of Part A: Assessing Current Practices on the *Transition Assessment Worksheet*.
  - List all current transition practices down the first column.
  - List the target connections for each practice.
  - Describe what works well for each practice.
  - Describe what doesn't work well for all the involved target parties.
  - Give suggestions for improving each practice.
  - Record additional information that you still need before you decide on which practices to implement.
2. Complete each column of Part B: Assessing the Disconnections on the *Transition Assessment Worksheet*.
  - Record those connections with no or insufficient transition practices in place.
  - Suggest new practices to help strengthen those connections.
  - Record additional information that you still need before you decide on which practices to implement.
3. Complete each column of Part C: Additional Information.
  - Identify who, outside the team, should provide input. See Part C of the *Transition Assessment Worksheet* for a list of individuals who may participate.

- Discuss the different types of needs assessment methods (questionnaires, non-targeted or targeted focus groups, interviews), information the team can expect to gather with each, and the disadvantages of each.
  - Decide on a set of methods to gather the additional information needed.
4. Implement further information gathering/needs assessment methods (questionnaires, focus groups, and/or interviews) and summarize the results. Instructions for one type of method, focus groups, are given below.

## ● Instructions for Conducting a Focus Group

### Before the Focus Group

5. Identify a list of focus group questions. Questions should be an appropriate mix of specific questions from the *Transition Assessment Worksheet* and general questions, such as:
- How do you think children feel when they move from early childhood education into kindergarten or from home into kindergarten?
  - What kinds of stressors do you observe among children as they enter school? What do you think creates that stress?
  - What do you think would help create a smoother transition for children? What types of activities/strategies would be most helpful?
  - How do you think parents feel as their children move into kindergarten?
  - What types of activities/strategies would be most helpful to parents?
6. Identify a sequence/flow of questions.
7. Arrange for a “recorder” to record information.
8. Consider hiring an outside consultant, who can maintain an impartial perspective, to facilitate the focus group.

### During the Focus Group

9. Convene the meeting by welcoming participants, thanking them for coming, and explaining the importance of their role with children and their input. Tell the participants how long the session will last.
10. Explain the purpose of the meeting: to validate the team’s early needs assessment work and continue focusing on gaps in the transition system.
11. Explain each person’s role: to answer questions surrounding transitions and to share his or her point of view about how he or she is affected by current practices and how those practices affect children, families, and other transition partners.
12. Explain how the meeting will be conducted and introduce rules of participation.

13. Open discussion with a general statement about the need for effective transitions. For example, the leader might say, “Each year, thousands of children in our state enter kindergarten. They come from a variety of settings. Some children come from the local Head Start program, some come from local child care or pre-kindergarten programs. Some children have been at home all of their lives and have never attended any type of program. Regardless of children’s experiences prior to coming to kindergarten, we want to make sure that all of them have a smooth transition to school. To do that effectively, we need to learn from you what would be most helpful.”
14. Define the term “transition” for the group if needed: *Transition* means changes between different types of activities. In education, we think of them in terms of vertical transitions (changes that occur over time, such as moving from early childhood education to kindergarten) and horizontal transitions (changes that occur during the same day, such as moving from school to after-school activities).
15. Facilitate the group to discuss a set of pre-determined questions.
16. The recorder records the group’s input.
17. Before concluding, ask for any additional comments from the whole group.
18. When all comments have been made, summarize the group’s suggestions for improvement.
19. The recorder records the suggestions onto chart paper as the suggestions are summarized.
20. Save the chart page containing suggestions so that the team can later review the suggestions in a meeting and complete the *Transition Plan*.
21. Conclude the focus group by thanking everyone for his or her participation.

## End Result

Your *Transition Assessment Worksheet* will be fully completed.

The most appropriate methods of further needs assessment will be chosen based on the input groups you selected and the types of information you still need. Your input groups will:

- Be able to provide the additional information identified in Parts A and B.
- Be able to provide accurate observations of children and families.
- Be able to provide a full picture of how the community, schools, families, and children are experiencing transition.
- Be involved in the transition process.
- Represent groups where gaps exist in the transition process.

Your further information gathering methods (questionnaire, focus groups, and/or interviews) will be implemented and the results summarized. In your focus groups, a task-oriented, yet enjoyable atmosphere will be created where all participants provide input freely and all input is accurately captured.

# Assessment Worksheet Columns

*The following are guidelines for completing each column of the Needs Assessment Worksheet.*

## **Part A**

### **Current Practices**

Begin the worksheet by listing all of your current practices down this column.

### **Target Connections**

For each practice, think about who is being targeted and record.

### **What Works**

Start with the positive. Discuss what is most effective about each practice. This is important so that you maintain these positive aspects of each practice.

### **What Doesn't Work**

This column looks for a brief description of where the practice breaks down for children, families, schools, or whichever group the practice is aimed toward. It may be tempting here to record the “cause” of what’s not working, but save that for the next column. Here, it is important to clarify the effects on the groups being targeted. This will help identify real causes and make suggestions based on the real causes. Also, after you’ve improved the practices, you will know where to look for positive change.

### **Possible Causes**

Think about what might be causing the breakdowns by asking yourself: “Why isn’t this practice effective? What is the current effect of what I am doing?” Sometimes it is also interesting to think about the reasons behind a cause—the true source of a problem.

### **Suggestions**

What are some suggestions for improving this practice? Here, you are trying to address the causes and eliminate the breakdowns.

### **Additional Information**

This is an important column because it will help you later to decide on further needs assessment activities. Here you ask yourself: What might help you confirm the information you’ve discussed as a team? Who else would you like to talk with? What else would you like to know? You’re trying to figure out what’s wrong and how to improve it.

## **Part B**

### **Disconnections**

This column asks you to list those connections for which there are currently no transition activities or that have too few or ineffective transition strategies in place and should be improved.

### Suggestions

This column focuses on new ideas and strategies for strengthening missing and weak connections. Sometimes it's difficult to come up with ideas for new practices. Consult resources such as the *Menu of Super Transition Strategies and Terrific Tips*, the Internet, professional publications, and the experiences of other programs for ideas.

### Additional Information

This column asks for the same information as it does in Part A: What more do you need to know and from whom do you need to gather this information in order to plan a new program of transitions?

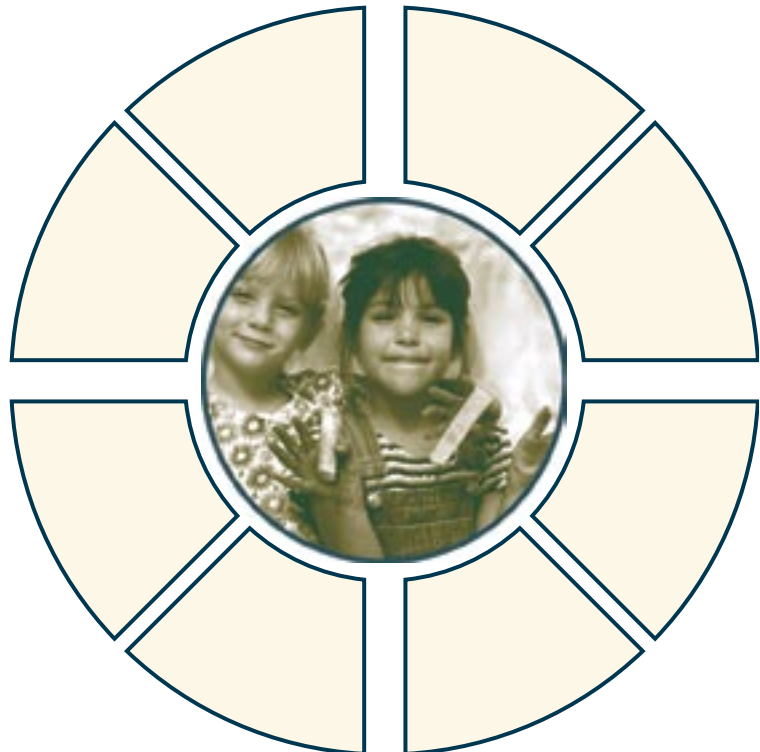
## Part C

### Input Groups

An input group is the group of people from whom you will collect additional information. You may bring them all together and ask them questions, as in a focus group. Or, you may ask them questions in an interview or a mailed questionnaire. Here, you list those you'd like to involve in further needs assessment activities to get the best picture of the transition system and its effectiveness.

### Methods of Information Gathering

How would you like to gather more input? When conducting a needs assessment, teams often rely on four types of information gathering methods: non-targeted focus groups, targeted focus groups, individual interviews, and questionnaires.



# Selecting Information Gathering Methods

*The following will help you choose the best information gathering methods for your needs assessment.*

Method	Common Usage	Advantages	Disadvantages
Non-targeted focus groups (single or multiple sessions)	Best used for mixed groups when personal contact is desired.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Gives you easy, reliable access to ideas, attitudes, and perspectives. Allows you to see ranges of experience and needs across groups. Also enables participants to see what others are thinking and experiencing.</li> <li>● Allows you to probe a topic in more depth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● More depth, but less breadth.</li> <li>● Results are qualitative. May be time-consuming to sift through information.</li> <li>● May be difficult to accommodate schedules and pull group together.</li> </ul>
Targeted focus groups (single or multiple sessions)	Best used for homogenous groups when personal contact is desired.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Gives you easy, reliable access to ideas, attitudes, and perspectives of a single group. Allows you to see the range of attitudes and needs within that group.</li> <li>● Allows you to probe a topic in more depth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● More depth, but less breadth.</li> <li>● Results are qualitative. May be time-consuming to sift through information.</li> <li>● May be difficult to accommodate schedules and pull group together.</li> </ul>
Interviews	Works well for very small groups or individuals when personal contact is desired.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Allows face-to-face contact (or at least telephone contact).</li> <li>● Can clarify questions that may not be clear.</li> <li>● Can probe for further information.</li> <li>● Can observe the person.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Time-consuming.</li> <li>● Often have to accommodate the interviewee's schedule.</li> </ul>
Questionnaires	Often used for very large groups when personal contact is not a priority.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Inexpensive.</li> <li>● Quick.</li> <li>● Respondents can remain anonymous.</li> <li>● Allows you to question a greater number of people.</li> <li>● Can usually cover a lot of topics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Tends to give only superficial or descriptive information.</li> <li>● May miss the respondents' context.</li> <li>● Poor response rate.</li> <li>● May be limited by respondents' reading level or understanding of English.</li> </ul>

## Designing a Questionnaire: Key Points to Remember

- Begin your questionnaire with a few non-threatening questions. (For example, “What age children or grade level do you teach?”)
- Make the items as brief as possible.
- Emphasize the *important* words in each item.
- Group items into clear, logical categories.
- Include clear, concise instructions about how to complete the questionnaire.
- State clearly what to do with the questionnaire when it is complete. (For example, should the questionnaire be returned in a self-addressed stamped envelope? What’s the deadline for returning the questionnaire?)
- Provide incentives for a promptly completed questionnaire.
- Make sure that the questionnaire is neat and easy to read.
- Provide a well-written cover letter that explains the purpose and reasons respondents were selected.
- Test your questionnaire on representatives of the target audience.
- Leave adequate space for respondents to make additional comments.
- Number and include some identifying information on each page.

Adapted from Zemke R., & Kramlinger, T. (1985). *Figuring things out: A trainer’s guide to needs and task analysis*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc.



# Step 3 Instructions

## Plan the Work

### Overview

In *Planning for Terrific Transitions Training*, you will begin the transitions planning process with your core transition team. Back on the job, though, you will have to return to the drawing board and complete a full needs assessment. Once that is complete, you can meet with your transition team to review and make sense of the needs assessment results. It may take several meetings and additional research to then complete the *Transition Plan*.

Thorough upfront thinking on the *Plan* will help identify strategies that are feasible, practical, and effective. This then sets the stage for a smooth year of implementation.

### Instructions

1. Review all needs assessment results (*Transition Assessment Worksheet*, data from focus groups, interviews, questionnaires).
2. Analyze your results by identifying patterns and themes that point to goals.
  - Where are the greatest areas of concern?
  - Are there priorities that need to be addressed?
  - Where would improvements make the greatest impact?
  - Are there target connections that require attention?
  - Are there themes within the results that point to goals we should set?
  - Do transition activities occur year-round or are they concentrated at certain times of the year?
3. Set goals.
  - Base on needs.
  - Identify the direction or quality of change desired (e.g., increased, consistent, effective).
  - State the outcome, not the process.
  - Include a time frame.
  - Make it attainable and realistic.
4. Identify indicators.
  - Describe as an outcome what the goal will look like once achieved.
  - Identify the direction or quality of change desired (e.g., increased, consistent, effective).
  - Include the quantity of change, where applicable (e.g., 25%).

5. Complete each column on the *Transition Plan*:
  - Indicator number
  - Transition Strategy
  - Action plan
  - Resources needed
  - Person responsible
  - Evaluation method
6. Research additional strategy options, costs, resources, or materials, as needed. Research through the following:
  - Other schools and programs
  - Internet
  - Professional journals
  - *Menu of Super Strategies and Terrific Tips*
  - Professional services
  - Sources of materials
7. Finalize all strategies and columns on the *Transition Plan*.
8. Publish the final *Transition Plan*.
9. Distribute the final *Transition Plan*, along with blank *Implementation Progress Reports* (to report progress during implementation) to the transition team.

## ● End Result

All columns of the *Transition Plan* will contain the correct information. The *Plan's* goals and indicators will be attainable, based on assessed needs, and expressed as outcomes that indicate the desired direction of change and target date of change. The slate of strategies planned will

- Occur year-round.
- Include a plan for involving families.
- Include a plan for individualizing transitions for children, and accommodate a broad range of families.
- Address implementation and other issues uncovered through the needs assessment.

# Transition Plan Columns

*The following are guidelines for completing each column of the Transition Plan.*

## Indicator Number

- This is the first column.
- Each indicator should correspond to strategies that will help the indicator to occur.
- There may be more than one strategy per indicator.

## Transition Strategy

- Consider all ideas from the needs assessment—or other ideas you research.
- Do not limit yourself until after you’ve done your research.
- Choose a slate of strategies that
  - Will occur year-round.
  - Include a way to involve families.
  - Include a plan for individualizing transitions for children.
  - Make the plan diverse enough to accommodate a broad range of families.
  - Include a plan for individualizing transitions for children.
  - Address implementation and other issues uncovered through the needs assessment.

## Action Plan

You may want to use a separate piece of paper to draft your action plan and then transfer your final plan to this worksheet.

1. List all the preparation tasks it’s going to take to implement the strategy. The second to last task should always be to implement the strategy; the last should be to evaluate it. You can always go back and add tasks that you forgot along the way.
2. Make sure that each task begins with a verb, so that it directly conveys what you need to “do” to complete it.
3. Record end dates for each task. This requires several steps:
  - (a) Note the number of full working days required to fully complete each task. The hard part here is to remember to include the time it will take to contact and coordinate with others. It may only take 15 minutes to sit down and write an agenda, but to share it with others, get feedback, revise it, and distribute it may take a whole work week.
  - (b) Record the fixed end dates that you know ahead of time. This includes the end date for the last task (i.e., implement the strategy).
  - (c) Record due dates for all remaining tasks, taking into consideration the number of working school days on the calendar and any conflicting activities.
  - (d) Double-check the timeline from the top down using a calendar.

## Resources Needed

Research through the following:

- Other schools and programs
- Internet
- Professional journals, other industry materials
- *Menu of Super Strategies and Terrific Tips*
- Professional services

## Person Responsible

List one of the following:

- The person who will implement the transition strategy
- The person who will manage implementation of the strategy, by delegating to others, managing the project, and monitoring progress

## Evaluation Methods

These evaluate the strategies and indicators. Tools might include:

- Focus groups
- Interviews
- Surveys
- Questionnaires
- Observations
- Checklists
- Children's records
- Contact logs
- Training sign-in sheets
- Curriculum materials
- Meeting documentation
- Written policy

# Step 4 Instructions

## Work the Plan

### Overview

Implementation means putting your *Transition Plan* to work by carrying out all the steps you've planned by the dates and within the costs specified. The *Transition Plan* is put together before school starts; implementation is then ongoing throughout the year, with different transition activities happening each month. The team gets together at least every two months to report progress, discuss any related issues, and support each other's efforts.

Some team members may be assigned to carry out specific transition strategies from beginning to end; other team members may manage the implementation of assigned strategies, delegating implementation tasks to others and monitoring their work.

Whether you are actually implementing or managing implementation, you will improve your chances of success by possessing strong organizational, communication, and problem-solving skills. Organizational skills will help to keep implementation on target and efficient. Effective communication will help build relationships between all transition partners. Problem-solving skills will help you to overcome any challenges and barriers you may encounter along the way.

### Instructions

#### Implementing

1. Document all action steps on a calendar on their planned dates.
2. Plan weekly tasks to complete each step.
3. Complete implementation tasks weekly, even small tasks such as making contracts, to keep in touch with the project.
4. Overcome barriers proactively by seeking advice from the team as needed.
5. Immediately report to the team leader all problems that require a change on the *Transition Plan*.
6. Submit *Implementation Progress Reports* to transition team leader.
7. Meet all deadlines, unless a change in date is approved.
8. Prepare for evaluation.

#### Managing Implementation

9. Communicate to all implementers their assigned strategies, how they should work together, and how to communicate with each other.
10. Record all steps, dates, and implementers' names on a calendar.
11. Review the calendar frequently to check daily, weekly, and monthly events.

12. Communicate frequently with implementers, related partners, and families to ensure the action plan is followed according to the *Plan*, to make necessary adjustments to the *Plan*, and to ensure communication between all partners and families is being maintained.
13. Collect evaluation data or oversee collection.
14. Require implementers to submit periodic *Implementation Progress Reports* to you (the manager). Submit these, in turn, to the transition team leader.
15. Attend transition team meetings at least every two months to discuss progress and challenges.
16. Seek approval, as needed, to make adjustments to the *Transition Plan*.
17. Prepare for evaluation.

## End Result

Strategies will be carried out. Communication with related partners will occur as often as needed. Effective relationships will be maintained. Adjustments to the *Transition Plan* will be made as problems arise.



# Implementation Progress Report Columns

***The following are guidelines for completing each column of the Implementation Progress Report. Much of the information on the Implementation Progress Report is taken directly from the Transition Plan.***

## **Goal**

A separate report should be completed for each goal. The goal and indicators are taken directly from the *Transition Plan* and are located at the top of the page.

## **Assigned Strategy**

This is taken directly from the “Transition Strategy” column on the *Transition Plan*. Include the end dates for each strategy.

## **Steps for Completing Strategy**

This is taken directly from the “Steps to Implement” column on the *Transition Plan*. Include the deadlines for each of these steps as well.

## **Dates Completed**

Here you are indicating the date you finished the step. It may be earlier than the deadline, after the deadline, or still a work in progress (in which case indicate).

## **Progress Since Last Report**

Give brief narrative on the major tasks you’ve completed to work toward or complete each step. Include any outcomes.

## **Challenges/Barriers/Changes to Implementation Plan**

Include a narrative on anything that has made implementation difficult or that may require a change in the *Transition Plan*. Challenges that have not been resolved may be shared with the team for input. The team leader must approve any changes to the *Transition Plan*.

## **Budgeted Cost**

This comes directly from the “Resources Needed” column on the *Transition Plan*.

## **Actual Cost to Date**

This is a tally of how much money you have spent as of the date of the report.

# Step 5 Instructions

## Measure Up

### Overview

The subject of evaluation is introduced to the team while putting together the *Transition Plan*, when evaluation methods are selected. The team prepares for evaluation during implementation but generally conducts the evaluation once strategies have been implemented. Evaluation is used to identify which indicators have occurred, whether or not goals have been met, the effectiveness of each strategy, and revisions to the *Transition Plan*.

There is no way of objectively judging the effectiveness of the *Transition Plan* without evaluation. It is a critical part of the process that can have profound effects on children and their families.

### Instructions

#### Prepare

1. Consider hiring an outside evaluation consultant with the time and special expertise needed to work with evaluation data.
2. Plan for evaluation logistics (e.g., correspondence, access to documentation, dates, times, places, facilitators).
3. Develop information gathering tools as needed (sets of questions, surveys, sign-in sheets).
4. When it's time to begin an evaluation, review the *Transition Plan* and the preparation that has been completed.

#### Evaluate

5. Gather data on the subjects outlined and use the evaluation methods given on the *Transition Plan*.
6. Ensure all data is documented (e.g., verbal data should be recorded; written data, such as copies of children's records or sign in sheets, should be secured).
7. Summarize results.
8. Meet as a team following each evaluation to share evaluation data and analyze results.
9. If outcomes were not reached, identify possible causes and additional information to be gathered to verify causes.
10. Make recommendations for adjusting the *Transition Plan*.

### End Result

Adjustments to the *Transition Plan* will be made based on documented evaluation data.



# Reflections

*Answer the following questions to reflect on this training.*



What squares with my current thinking? What do I understand and agree with?

What's still rolling around in my mind? What am I still unsure about?

What do I need to change?





# Case Study



## Team Composition (Case Study's Step 1)

This is a case study team that we will be following through each step of the transition improvement process. Here's what happened when team members met to round out their team. The group used the *Step 1 Instructions* as a guide.

- 1 The team took a few moments to review the following list of recommended and optional team members.

### Recommended Team Members

- At least 1 kindergarten teacher
- At least 1 local Head Start representative
- At least 1 other representative from an early childhood feeder program
- At least 1 kindergarten school administrator (e.g., principal, vice principal, curriculum specialist, transition coordinator)
- At least 1 district representative (e.g., federal program representative, early childhood coordinator, curriculum specialist, special education coordinator)
- At least 1 parent/other family caregiver (e.g., grandparent, guardian) representing an early childhood education program

### Optional Team Members

- Private child care professionals (e.g., family child care provider)
- Representatives from other pre-K initiatives
- Elementary school teacher
- Guidance counselor
- Librarian
- Other school personnel (e.g., cafeteria worker, bus driver, janitor, teacher's aide, office staff, safety patrol, art teacher, PE teacher, after-school personnel, migrant coordinator)
- Older student
- Parent/other family caregiver
- Community representative (e.g., health care representative, early intervention specialist, mental health professional, social worker, local business representative, local government representative)

- 2 They reviewed which roles were already on their team and charted their roles and contributions. The Transition Coordinator facilitated this process. Here's the original core team:

- Kindergarten Teacher—Nick Henry. Has been teaching for 15 years; knows skills needed to enter kindergarten.
- Head Start Director—Phoebe Marshall. Represents a large feeder; has close relationships with many incoming families.
- Early Childhood Program Director—Ellen Bishop. Member of Early Childhood Association.
- Vice Principal—Kathy Bond. An administrator who can provide the needed “reality checks” along the way.
- Transition Coordinator—Rachel Brooks. Knowledgeable on good transition practices; well-networked.

- Early Childhood Coordinator—Rolanda Howe. District level representation; has helped coordinate many districtwide policy changes.
- Kindergarten Parent—Dan Brown. Brings perspective of his family who has recently gone through the ECE-to-kindergarten transition.

**3** The team then recorded several other possible candidates. The Transition Coordinator helped them chart the roles and potential contributions of these candidates.

- Gwen Diaz (Early Childhood Education Parent)—Ms. Diaz was considered because the team wanted to represent the large Hispanic population of the families they serve. Ms. Diaz was recommended by the migrant coordinator who indicated that Ms. Diaz was very interested in participating and committed to her child’s education. Ms. Diaz might have difficulty with transportation to meetings, so the team will make every effort to accommodate her and make her participation possible.
- Pat Henley (ECE Director)—Ms. Henley would represent one of our larger feeders. She is heavily involved on at least 10 various child-focused committees. She may be already spread too thin.
- Ethan Conn (Early Intervention Specialist, Community Representative)—Mr. Conn was considered because the team wanted to represent the interests of the special needs population. Mr. Conn not only has training with special needs children but also has worked with Head Start and many other early childhood organizations. He is also an especially effective communicator, having spoken publicly to at least a dozen well-attended events on various topics this year alone.
- Doris Roberts (Media Specialist)—Before becoming a media specialist, Ms. Roberts was a committed third-grade teacher for 13 years and was known for running a tight ship and “bucking the system” for the sake of the children. Known as a “go-getter,” she is relied upon frequently to access resources in a timely fashion. She usually works independently.
- Gerald Bradley (Chamber of Commerce Representative, Community Representative)—Mr. Bradley was selected as a candidate because early discussions on the topic of transitions have pointed to the need for more collaboration with the community to smooth transitions.
- Nancy Sullivan (ECE and Kindergarten Parent)—Ms. Sullivan would provide a well-rounded parental perspective in that she has two older children in elementary school as well as one preschooler and an infant.
- Oggie Datillo (Bus driver, ECE Parent)—Mr. Datillo has been known on his bus route as “Oggie Doggie” for over 10 years by the children he serves. He is a kind man, and loved by the children. He understands the children and the characteristics of the neighborhoods from which they come. The team could rely on him for his insights and observations of children. He has expressed an interest in the team’s purpose now that his son is ready to transition into kindergarten.

**4** They narrowed the list by considering “best bets” and best representatives by discussing the following questions. Rachel Brooks placed a star on the additions list next to each person’s name who fit the description in each of the following questions:

- Who could serve on the team as a decision-maker with authority over budget and resources?
- Who might be an implementer later on?
- Who has been actively involved with school improvement efforts in the past?
- Who might be interested but may have barriers to participation?

- Which parents reflect the diverse characteristics of the children they'd be representing in areas such as ethnicity and economic status?
- Which feeder programs represent the kindergarten's largest feeder(s)?

**5** They narrowed their list even further to those candidates who would be most effective by considering who might be the *most*

- Invested in children's issues.
- Effective interpersonal communicators.
- Effective team players.
- Open to change.
- Able to recognize and accept differences amongst team members.
- Clear about the group's purpose.
- Committed to the group.
- Trusting and respectful.
- Able to produce clear assignments and timelines for action.
- Able to monitor their own work and the team's functioning on an ongoing basis.

**6** The team made its final selections, ensuring that the team size was limited to no less than six and no more than twelve members. Their final count was 10 members.

**7** One individual with the authority to make decisions with regard to budget and resources was identified: Kathy Bond, the Vice Principal.

**8** For those candidates on the list who had barriers, the group members discussed different ways to overcome the barriers. For example, they discussed how they could meet near the bus route Gwen Diaz uses or pick her up to attend meetings.

**9** The team's next step after the meeting was to approach the selected individuals and invite them to join the team. At the next meeting, these new members would be welcomed and the team would begin discussing transition needs assessment.

# Transition Assessment Worksheet (Case Study's Step 2)

*This three-part worksheet will help the transition team begin thinking about the gaps in the current transition system and focus the needs assessment.*

## Part A: Assessing Current Practices

Current Practice and Month It Occurs	Target Connection(s) <i>i.e., child to child, school to child, school to family, school to school, or school to community</i>	What Works <i>What is most effective about this practice?</i>	What Doesn't Work <i>Where does this practice breakdown for children, parent(s), teachers, others?</i>	Possible Cause(s) <i>If breakdowns exist, what are some possible reasons for them?</i>	Suggestion(s) <i>What are some suggestions for improving this practice?</i>	Additional Information <i>What might help to confirm the information you've now gathered about this practice? Who else should you talk with? What else would you like to find out?</i>
Open House (Oct)	School to child School to family	Friendly, easy atmosphere Parents can come and go as they wish	Parents feel left out of the loop for the first few weeks of school Mediocre Attendance Doesn't seem to stimulate future parent involvement	May be held too late Usually scheduled about 8 weeks after the start of school Only one open house at beginning of year	Consider scheduling open house a little earlier—maybe 4 weeks after school starts Hold more than one open house	Kindergarten families: What would help them benefit from open house? What times are most convenient?
Kindergarten Round-up Registration (Apr)	School to child School to family School to community	Nets about 75% of incoming kindergarteners	About 25% of incoming kindergarteners not participating	Advertising not sufficient	May need to look for a variety of ways to advertise	Kindergarten families: How did they learn about Kindergarten Round-up? Suggestions for other ways to publicize?
Letter to student and student's family (Aug)	School to child School to family	Lets family know who kindergarten teacher will be for the fall	Teacher has no time to make personal contact Parents feel uninformed until last minute	Don't receive class list until just before school starts because students are still registering	Send letter out at least 2 weeks before the beginning of school, even a partial list Include list for school supplies with the letter	Kindergarten administration: Can class list (even partial class list) be sent earlier?
Kindergarten Orientation (Aug)	School to child School to family	Lets family meet new teacher Orients family to kindergarten policies/practices	Policies/procedures too much to absorb so quickly for families Emotionally overwhelming for families Families often don't have time to get supplies together	Held 1–2 nights before first day of school Teachers are too busy preparing classrooms	Supply families with teachers' contact information and encourage them to initiate contact Hold orientation at least 3–4 days before school starts	Kindergarten families: What do they want from the orientation experience? If orientation must be held 1–2 days before school, what might help it feel less overwhelming? Kindergarten teachers: How can they be better supported so orientation might happen sooner? How can orientation be simplified?



## Transition Assessment Worksheet (Case Study's Step 2) Continued

### Part B: Assessing the Disconnections

<b>Disconnections</b> <i>List the target connections with no or insufficient transition practices in place.</i>	<b>Suggestions</b> <i>What practices might help to strengthen this connection?</i>	<b>Additional Information</b> <i>What might help to confirm your suggestions for improvement? Who else should you talk with? What else would you like to find out?</i>
School to community	Approach community collaborative and ask to present information on transitions and how members of the community/stakeholders can help to facilitate transitions. Establish outreach program through local pediatricians and county health department to notify families of Kindergarten Round-up registration.	Obtain contact information for community collaborative. Identify other community groups that could be approached and contact them.
School to school	Conduct joint training sessions with ECE and kindergarten staff. Coordinate ECE and kindergarten staff exchange. Arrange periodic meetings that allow staff from sending/receiving programs to share philosophy, practices, and services. Arrange for ECE classes to visit kindergarten classrooms. Older children can share songs or activities that younger children will do at the beginning of the kindergarten year. For all special needs students, arrange for new teachers to visit children in their early childhood placement in order to observe children in settings familiar to them and begin establishing relationships.	Pre-K: Ask sending programs if suggestions like those (to the left) would be helpful. Ask them for topics they'd like to share/learn more about.
Child to child	Buddy program (pair ECE children with older children). Ask kindergarten children to prepare a journal or scrapbook about what happens in their room, and share this with ECE classes moving up in the fall. Allow kindergarten children to prepare a video about what it's like to be a kindergartener.	ECE and kindergarten: Ask sending and receiving teachers how to implement and maintain a buddy program. Ask for students they'd recommend.

## Transition Assessment Worksheet Continued

### Part C: Gathering Additional Information

## Input Groups

Who can give you the “additional information” you listed in Parts A and B of this worksheet? The input group should include individuals who are best able to provide input on what children, families, and other transition partners experience during transition; to help you to understand why current practices might be breaking down; and to offer suggestions for improvement. The input group also should be able to help strengthen currently weak connections.

- Input groups may include:
- Kindergarten teachers
  - Head Start representatives
  - Kindergarten school administrators (e.g., principal, vice principal, curriculum specialist, transition coordinator)
  - District representatives (e.g., federal program representative, early childhood coordinator, curriculum specialist)
  - Parents or other family caregivers (e.g., grandparents, guardians)
  - Private child care professionals (e.g., family child care provider)
  - Representatives from pre-K initiatives
  - Elementary school teachers
  - Guidance counselors
  - Librarians
  - Other school personnel (e.g., cafeteria worker, bus driver, janitor, teacher’s aide, office staff, safety patrol, art teacher, PE teacher, after-school personnel, migrant coordinator)
  - Older student
  - Community representatives (e.g., health care representative, early intervention specialist, mental health professional, social worker, local business representative, local government representative)

List names and titles here (or attach a separate sheet):

#### Head Start (feeder program)

Anna Amos, teacher  
Regina Price, teacher

#### Wee Ones Preschool (feeder)

Betty Guest, pre-K teacher  
Sally Jones, pre-K teacher

#### Happyland Preschool (feeder)

Donna Cannon, Director  
Lee Harrison, pre-K teacher  
Jo Henderson, pre-K teacher

#### Kindergarten teachers:

Roland Jackson  
Phyllis Espey

#### Kindergarten administration:

Reggie Diamond, Principal  
Alice Warren, Vice Principal  
Lillian Stark, Curriculum Specialist

#### Early childhood education parents:

Dottie and Michael Jenkins  
Steve and Francis Dixon  
Glenda Jackson  
Krista Washington

#### Kindergarten parents:

Liz and John Hernandez  
Michele and Jim Carson  
Barbara Oden  
Harry Cook  
Kim Lee Fook

#### Community collaborative representatives:

Nancy Berry, County Health Department  
Joe Green, Housing Authority  
Dr. Roy Brown, Community Mental Health Agency  
Dr. Al Murray, Pediatrician  
Lucretia Johnson, Department of Children & Families

## Transition Assessment Worksheet Continued

### Part C: (Continued)

## Methods of Information Gathering

Consider the different types of information still needed (see Parts A and B of this worksheet under “Additional Information?”). Then consider the input group selections (Part C, above). Given what you still need and from whom, determine the best method of information gathering.

#### Different methods include:

- **Non-targeted focus groups (single or multiple sessions)**  
Best used when you need to tap into a range of attitudes and needs across groups and to probe a topic in more depth. Can be time-consuming to sift through information. Also may be difficult to pull group together.
- **Targeted focus groups (single or multiple sessions)**  
Gives you easy, reliable access to ideas, needs, and attitudes of a single group and enables you to probe a topic in more depth. Can be time-consuming to sift through information. Also may be difficult to pull group together.
- **Questionnaires**  
Allows you to cover many topics quickly and anonymously, but does not provide context or elaboration of responses. Often gets a poor response rate.
- **Interviews**  
Allows personal contact, but generally should interview one person at a time (and no more than three people). Can be time-consuming.

**List method(s) to be used here (or attach). Briefly describe what information will be gathered with each method and how it will be gathered:**

*Based on the team’s assessment of current practices and “disconnections,” additional information needs to be gathered from the following groups:*

- Staff from early childhood feeder programs
- Kindergarten staff
- Kindergarten families

*To gather information from early childhood staff, an interview will be conducted with Pre-K directors. Interview questions will focus on current efforts to facilitate children’s transition to school, as well as ideas for future work. Ask about current efforts to help transition special needs populations.*

*In addition, a non-targeted focus group will be conducted with approximately 8–10 representatives from the three sending programs and kindergarten representatives. Questions will focus on current transition practices, ideas for future exchange programs and child prep activities (including a buddy system), the relationship between sending and receiving programs, and possible challenges/barriers. Possible follow-up questionnaire will be sent to all sending and receiving programs, if needed.*

*A targeted focus group also will be conducted with parents of current kindergarten children. Approximately 15–20 parents will be invited to participate. Questions will focus on their children’s recent transition experiences. Specifically, parents will be asked to talk about what was helpful and what was not helpful and to offer ideas to ensure a smoother transition. Arrange transportation and child care as needed.*

*Finally, interviews will be conducted with kindergarten school administrators, including the principal and vice principals. Questions will focus on ideas for connecting with other programs and agencies involved in the transition process, as well as possible challenges/barriers.*

## Further Needs Assessment Findings (Case Study's Step 2)

### ECE Directors From Sending Programs

Interviews were conducted with each of the directors from local ECE sending programs (i.e., four sending programs). Interviews lasted approximately 30–45 minutes and were conducted at the director's office. Directors were asked to respond to the following five questions:

- What current strategies exist for helping children and families transition to school?
- To what extent have these strategies involved collaboration with the public school?
- How would you characterize your relationship with the public school?
- What ideas do you have for improving the relationship and at the same time facilitating transitions for children and families?
- What do your current efforts include to help transition special needs children?

Results from the interviews indicated that ECE sending programs are making a strong effort to keep families informed of upcoming events and activities at the school. For example, ECE programs alert families to kindergarten registration and orientation. They also provide families with information about the types of documentation or information needed for enrollment. In addition to keeping families informed, all of the ECE programs reported that they schedule a visit in the spring to the local school. At that time, children and families are invited to tour the school and visit one of the kindergarten classrooms.

Each of the ECE sending programs characterized its relationship with the school as amicable, but less than collaborative. Suggestions for improving the relationship included joint meetings between ECE and kindergarten staff and joint staff development.

Regarding special needs children, three of the four directors indicated that they participate in team meetings for all children with Individual Education Plans. Two of the four directors also indicated that they translate materials into families' native languages. One director reported that she had a staff member who assisted with translation. One director reported that she had no provisions in place to help transition special needs children. All agreed that additional strategies for helping special needs students to transition should be incorporated.

### ECE and Kindergarten Staff

A focus group was conducted that included ECE and kindergarten staff. Of the 13 staff members invited to attend the focus group, 8 were present. There were 6 representatives from the various ECE programs and 2 teachers from the kindergarten program. The focus group was scheduled to last approximately one hour and was held in the conference room at the district office. Questions included the following:

- What current strategies exist for helping children and families transition to school?
- To what extent have these strategies involved collaboration between sending and receiving programs?
- What are the current barriers or challenges to collaborating?
- What ideas do you have for improving collaboration and facilitating children's and families' transitions to school?

With regard to the first question, ECE staff members reported that they spend some time talking with the children and parents about the upcoming move. Each class has several children's books pertaining to the move to kindergarten, and they enjoy reading and talking about what children can expect. In addition, ECE teachers reported that a visit for the children to the kindergarten program is scheduled each spring. Finally, pre-K programs provide parents with information about registration and orientation schedules.

According to kindergarten teachers, their primary means for connecting with children and parents prior to the beginning of school is the districtwide round-up and the kindergarten orientation that is scheduled right before the beginning of school.

In terms of current collaboration, representatives from both programs agreed that there is little formal collaboration. Although teachers from the sending and receiving programs talk informally, nothing more formal has been planned.

Looking at current barriers and challenges, two of the ECE teachers reported that they often feel that the school does not value their role in the preparation and transition of young children. While kindergarten teachers disagreed with this statement, they reported that there is often little need to connect with ECE staff about individual children because kindergarten teachers tend to administer their own assessment of children's skills at kindergarten entry.

Another barrier to collaboration is time and convenience. Some of the participants reported that collaborative meetings are often "one more thing to do" in their busy schedules.

Finally, most of the participants reported they would be willing to participate in joint planning meetings; however, they want some reassurance that the meetings will be productive and will lead to real improvements.

### **Kindergarten Parents**

A focus group was conducted with a group of current kindergarten parents of children who attended pre-kindergarten. Transportation and child care were arranged, if needed. Of the 20 parents invited to attend the focus group, 12 were present. The focus group was scheduled to last approximately one hour and was held in the conference room at the elementary school. Questions focused on the following topics:

- To what extent do you feel that your ECE program and the school helped make it a smooth transition to kindergarten?
- What was helpful? What could have been improved?

Most parents reported that the schools and programs did a fair job of transitioning children and families; however, they felt that more could have been done. Several of the parents reported that they had little idea about kindergarten teacher expectations prior to their child entering school. Many felt that they could have been working with their children during the summer months; however, they were not sure what skills to work on.

In addition, many reported that the two to three weeks around kindergarten entry were somewhat overwhelming. Their children needed supplies, and there were numerous forms to complete. They would have appreciated more contact from the school about what was needed and when it was needed.

Most parents felt that the school visit arranged by the ECE program was helpful; however, they felt that one more visit toward the end of the school year would give incoming kindergarteners an extra opportunity to process the change.

## School Administrators

An interview was conducted with the elementary school principal. The interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes and was conducted at the school office. The principal was asked to respond to two major questions:

1. In what ways can you, as an administrator, support transition efforts?
2. In what ways would you like to see your school interface with parents and other community agencies and programs to make sure that children are ready to enter school?

The principal reported that he sees his role primarily as someone who oversees the process. “I trust my teachers to know what children and families need to transition.” In addition, he sees himself as the person who initiates connections with other administrators. For example, if the school needs to work with another program, the principal would initiate the contact.

With regard to the second question, the principal reported that he would like to see the school work more closely with other community agencies. He reports that he currently sits on a community task force and could easily suggest that an upcoming program focus on transitions and children’s readiness.

## *Additional Information Gathered*

### Parents of Upcoming Kindergarteners

A questionnaire was administered to parents of upcoming kindergarten children. Provisions were made for reading and language issues. Questionnaires were distributed through the early childhood sending programs. *(Although this method limits results to children and families who are already enrolled in a program, trying to distribute questionnaires to families whose children were not enrolled in a program proved to be difficult and costly.)* Approximately 120 questionnaires were distributed to parents. Of those 120, 72 were returned (Response rate = 60%).

Parents were asked to answer questions regarding the scheduling of the open house and orientation. In addition, parents were asked what information would be most useful to them as their children move from early childhood education to kindergarten. Results indicated that scheduling the open house and orientation during the evening was most convenient for families. However, some families complained that they received little notice regarding these events and had difficulty arranging child care for younger siblings. Other families reported that because the open house and orientation started at 5:30, they often had to leave work early and take time off.

Early childhood education parents were also surveyed (via questionnaire) regarding their interest in being involved in future school activities. Almost everyone indicated they were interested. Those interested indicated the types of activities they were interested in and special resources or talents they could contribute. They also supplied contact information.

# Transition Plan (Case Study's Step 3)

**The Transition Plan is used both as a planning tool to plan year-round transition activities and as a management tool to help guide implementation.**

**Goal:** Effective coordination between ECE programs and public school (i.e., school-to-school connections) by Fall 2003.

**Indicator 1:** Directors and other staff members from sending ECE programs report improved relationships with public school.

**Indicator 2:** There is consistency between program policies and practices that help create connections and smooth transitions for children entering school.

**Indicator 3:**

**Indicator 4:**

Indicator Number	Transition Strategy and End Date <i>Include the month the strategy will occur</i>	Action Plan <i>(Steps and End Dates)</i> <i>Include end dates for each step</i>	Resources Needed <i>After researching, list dollar amount, personnel, materials, etc.</i>	Person Responsible	Evaluation Method <i>Describe the source of information or document that will confirm effectiveness of strategies and achievement of indicators</i>
1	Conduct and evaluate joint training sessions with ECE and kindergarten staff (March 2003–June 2003).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Survey via questionnaire ECE and kindergarten staff to determine training needs relative to transitions (Nov. 15, 2002).</li> <li>● Review program calendars to determine possible dates for three trainings (Nov. 21, 2002).</li> <li>● Identify three topics for training, including identifying early delays (Dec. 1, 2002).</li> <li>● Prepare agendas (Dec. 1, 2002).</li> <li>● Arrange for speakers/trainers (Dec. 1, 2002).</li> <li>● Confirm dates (Dec. 19, 2002).</li> <li>● Confirm places (Dec. 19, 2002).</li> <li>● Begin planning of evaluation (Jan. 24, 2003).</li> <li>● Develop flyers (Jan. 27, 2003).</li> <li>● Develop mailing lists (Feb. 4, 2003).</li> <li>● Send out flyers (Feb. 22, 2003).</li> <li>● Conduct sessions (March 2003–June 2003).</li> <li>● Evaluate (August 2003).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Speakers @ \$200</li> <li>● Meeting places @ \$150</li> <li>● Paper for flyers @ \$35</li> <li>● Postage to mail flyers @ \$20</li> </ul>	Transition Coordinator (assisted by Kindergarten Parent)	<p>Focus group with staff members who participated in joint training sessions to determine their perceptions of training.</p> <p>Initial question ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What has changed as a result of participating in the training sessions?</li> <li>● To what degree will training improve consistency between programs' policies?</li> <li>● Do you have a better understanding of the other programs?</li> <li>● What would you change about the program of training to help improve relationships and coordination between programs?</li> </ul>

## Transition Plan (Case Study's Step 3) *Continued*

Indicator Number	Transition Strategy and End Date	Action Plan (Steps and End Dates)	Resources Needed	Person Responsible	Evaluation Method
1	Coordinate and evaluate ECE and kindergarten staff exchange (Feb. 2003).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identify sending programs and staff who are interested in participating (Dec. 1, 2002).</li> <li>● Review program calendars to determine possible dates (Dec. 10, 2002).</li> <li>● Confirm dates (Jan. 12, 2003).</li> <li>● Coordinate activity with participants (Jan. 31, 2003).</li> <li>● Hold staff exchange (Feb. 2003).</li> <li>● Evaluate (Feb. 2003 and May 2003).</li> </ul>	N/A	Vice Principal (assisted by Early Childhood Coordinator)	<p>Focus group with staff members who participated in the exchange to determine their perceptions of the exchange.</p> <p>Initial question ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To what degree will exchange promote consistency between programs' policies?</li> <li>● Do they have a better understanding of the other programs?</li> <li>● What would you change about the exchange to help improve relationships and coordination between programs?</li> </ul> <p>Distribute questionnaire to directors of ECE programs to determine their perceptions of the relationship between sending and receiving programs.</p>
1 and 2	Arrange periodic meetings that allow staff from sending/receiving programs to share philosophy, practices, and services. Evaluate (throughout 2003).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identify possible meetings dates (Nov. 12, 2002).</li> <li>● Confirm meeting dates, place, and time (Nov. 22, 2002).</li> <li>● Confirm list of attendees and addresses (Dec. 9, 2002).</li> <li>● Draft invitation (Dec. 18, 2002).</li> <li>● Develop agenda for each meeting (Dec. 18, 2002).</li> <li>● Arrange for refreshments (Dec. 18, 2002).</li> <li>● Send out invitations and program agenda (Jan. 8, 2003).</li> <li>● Hold first meeting (Feb. 2, 2003).</li> <li>● Hold ongoing periodic meetings quarterly (Upcoming meetings April 12, 2003; June 8, 2003; Sept. 2003).</li> <li>● Evaluate (May 2003, Oct. 2003, and Oct. 2004).</li> </ul>	<p>Meeting place @ \$50</p> <p>Refreshments @ \$50</p> <p>Paper for agenda @ \$35</p> <p>Postage @ \$20</p>	ECE Director (assisted by kindergarten teacher and early childhood parent)	<p>Conduct an audit of both programs' policies and practices to check for the degree of consistency between them. Take a baseline before meetings begin and then re-audit one year after meetings conclude to determine degree of change.</p> <p>In the short term, distribute questionnaires to staff members who attended meetings to determine their perceptions.</p> <p>Questions should focus on whether or not the meetings are beneficial. Do participants have a better understanding of the other staff members and their programs? What things did they learn that were new to them? What things did they already know? What were the similarities/differences? What else would they like to get out of the meetings and how should the meetings be run? Is there consistency between program policies and practices that relate to transition?</p>



# Implementation Progress Report (Case Study's Step 4)

*This report should be completed periodically and submitted to the transition team leader to monitor implementation progress.*

**Name(s):** Rachel Brooks—Transition Coordinator (Assisted by Dan Brown) **Date:** January 26, 2003

**Goal:** Effective coordination between ECE programs and public school (i.e., school-to-school connections) by Fall 2003.

**Indicator 1:** Directors and other staff members from sending ECE programs report improved relationships with public school.

**Indicator 2:** There is consistency between program policies and practices that help create connections and smooth transitions for children entering school.

**Indicator 3:**

**Indicator 4:**

Assigned Strategy <i>List separately and include end date</i>	Steps for Completing Strategy <i>Include end dates</i>	Dates Completed	Progress Since Last Report	Challenges/Barriers/Changes to the Implementation Plan	Budgeted Cost	Actual Cost to Date
Conduct joint training sessions with ECE and kindergarten staff (March 2003).	Survey via questionnaire ECE and kindergarten staff to determine training needs relative to transitions (Nov. 15, 2002).	Nov. 12, 2002	Rachel contacted directors at Wee Ones Preschool, Paper County Head Start, and Kids Discovery Center regarding staff training needs. Directors identified three areas for training: classroom management, serving diverse families, and identifying early delays.	Director from Wee Ones out on sick leave for next month so didn't get any input.		
	Review program calendars to determine possible dates (Nov. 21, 2002).	Nov. 21, 2002	Rachel set dates.			
	Arrange for trainers/speakers (Dec. 1, 2002).	Nov. 18, 2002	Dan secured speakers.	One speaker is an expert on individualizing transitions but not an actual trainer. Fees lower than expected.	\$200	\$150
	Confirm places (Dec. 19, 2002).	Dec. 19, 2002	Dan checked on four different sites for meetings with ECE and kindergarten staff.	Original places we talked about unavailable. All others over double the price. Need to talk with team about budget and options. Also, none available until April.	\$150— meeting sites	
	Begin evaluation planning (Jan. 24, 2003).	Jan. 24, 2003	Rachel developed additional bank of questions for focus group.	Need input from team on list of questions; need to narrow.		

## Evaluation (Case Study's Step 5)

### Data Gathering

In August of 2003, after all joint training sessions were held with ECE and kindergarten staff, an independent evaluator led a focus group with a selected group of staff members who participated in training. Of the 19 staff members who were selected to participate in the focus group, 12 participated:

- 9 feeder program representatives, including 2 directors and 7 other staff
- 3 kindergarten representatives, including 2 teachers and 1 teacher's aide

The **indicator** being evaluated was “Directors and other staff from sending ECE programs report improved relationships with public schools.” The **strategy** being evaluated was “Conduct joint training sessions with ECE and kindergarten staff.”

### Results Summary

Staff members were asked to respond to the following questions. A summary of the data is also given.

- What did you learn from the training sessions that will help you to do your job better in the future? Open responses included
  - How to assess children.
  - How to conduct observations.
  - How to engage non-English speaking families.
  - Things to consider to individualize transitions.
  - Steps to take to individualize transitions.
  - The value of talking with parents regarding individual children's interests and needs.
  - The value of speaking with other teachers.
- Do you have suggestions for improving this program of training?
  - The majority felt that future trainings would be helpful, maybe three times per year.
  - Other topics desired: developmentally appropriate classrooms and leadership.
  - The majority of respondents agreed that they would prefer future trainings to be held on teachers' workdays.
- Have any program changes been made in the months following training? If so, to what degree did training prompt the change?
 

Four of the ECE programs feeding into two of the kindergartens have begun discussing alignment of the assessment and screening process. This was prompted by training. No other changes reported.
- Do you have a better understanding of the other program as a result of these training sessions? If yes, how have the trainings contributed to your understanding? If no, what would have been more helpful?
 

All respondents said yes. The trainings especially helped respondents understand the philosophies and expectations of other programs.
- Do you feel these training sessions have been productive and will lead to real improvements in children's transition experiences? Explain.

All respondents said yes. Several indicated that the sessions on screening assessment procedures and serving diverse families were more applied and, therefore, were especially helpful.

- Do you feel, in general, that relationships between ECE programs and elementary programs improved as a result of these training sessions? Explain.

All respondents said yes. Additional opportunities for communication have personalized each program with the other.

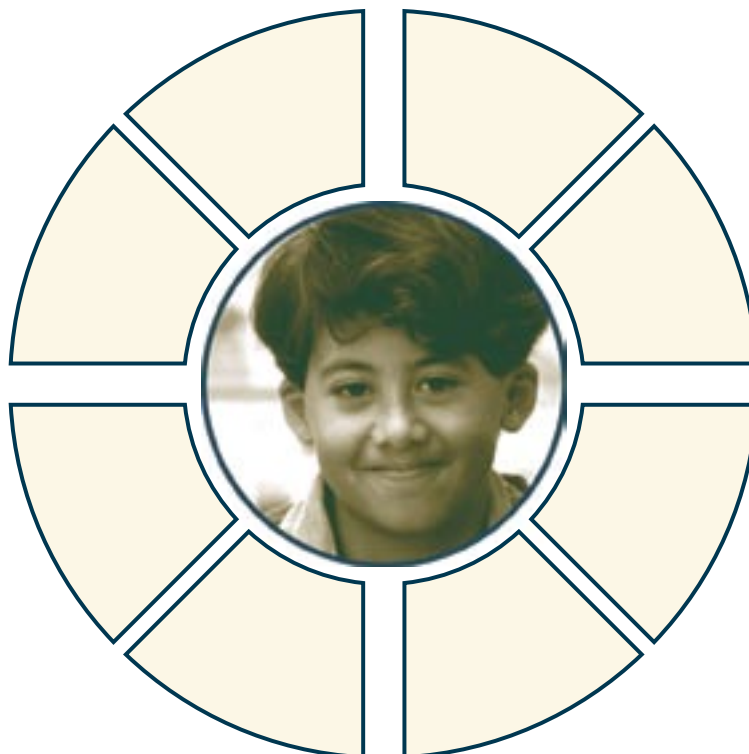
- Do you have any other suggestions for improving relationships between ECE programs and elementary programs?
  - Hold trainings a few times per year.
  - Hold staff exchanges.

### Post-Evaluation Meeting

The independent evaluator provided a summary of the focus group to Rachel Brooks, Transition Coordinator. In turn, the **Transition Coordinator** and **Kindergarten Parent** presented to the team the evaluation data and implications. They summarized that the focus group respondents, for the most part, said that the relationship between early childhood education staff and elementary staff had improved since the first joint training session. Although there is room for improvement in terms of the level of coordination and “dependency” needed between them, the indicator had been met. The team concluded that this training was a first step in the right direction.

### Recommendations

The team decided that workshops should be held three times per year on teachers’ workdays on topics designed to connect the early childhood education staff to elementary staff. Other strategies should be incorporated to increase the level of coordination between early childhood education and elementary staff.







# On-the-Job Tools



# Step 1 Instructions

## Round Out the Team

### Overview

In *Planning for Terrific Transitions* training, you will begin thinking about how to make a formalized, comprehensive transition team. At some point, the current transition team should plan a meeting to focus on how to “round out the team.” The steps below will help. Then, once newly invited transition team members have been accepted, set a next meeting date to welcome the newcomers and begin assessing your transition needs.

Putting together a comprehensive team is important in order to best represent the needs of children, families, and other transition partners. A solid team will help you work together effectively as you move forward into the planning and implementation stages.

### Instructions

1. Review the following list of recommended and optional team members.

#### Recommended Team Members

- At least 1 kindergarten teacher
- At least 1 local Head Start representative
- At least 1 other representative from an early childhood feeder program
- At least 1 kindergarten school administrator (e.g., principal, vice principal, curriculum specialist, transition coordinator)
- At least 1 district representative (e.g., federal program representative, early childhood coordinator, curriculum specialist, special education coordinator)
- At least 1 parent/other family caregiver (e.g., grandparent, guardian) representing an early childhood education program

#### Optional Team Members

- Private child care professionals (e.g., family child care provider)
- Representatives from other pre-K initiatives
- Elementary school teacher
- Guidance counselor
- Librarian
- Other school personnel (e.g., cafeteria worker, bus driver, janitor, teacher’s aide, office staff, safety patrol, art teacher, PE teacher, after-school personnel, migrant coordinator)
- Older student
- Parent or other family caregiver
- Community representatives (e.g., health care representative, early intervention specialist, mental health professional, social worker, local business representative, local government representative)

2. Review which roles are already represented on the team. One way to do this is to chart everyone's name, role, and contribution to the team. A designated team leader can facilitate this.
3. For those not yet represented, record several names for potential additions. Consider their roles and contributions.
4. Narrow this list by considering "best bets" and best representatives.
  - Who could serve on the team as a decision-maker with authority over budget and resources?
  - Who might be an implementer later on?
  - Who has been actively involved with school improvement efforts in the past?
  - Who might be interested but may have barriers to participation?
  - Which parents reflect the diverse characteristics of the children they'd be representing in areas such as ethnicity and economic status?
  - Which feeder programs represent the kindergarten's largest feeder(s)?
5. Narrow your list even further to those candidates who would be *most* effective.
  - Invested in children's issues
  - Effective interpersonal communicators
  - Effective team players
  - Open to change
  - Able to recognize and accept differences amongst team members
  - Clear about the group's purpose
  - Committed to the group
  - Trusting and respectful
  - Able to produce clear assignments and timelines for action
  - Able to monitor their own work and the team's functioning on an ongoing basis
6. Make your final selections, ensuring that the team size is limited to no less than 6, no more than 12 members.
7. Identify one individual with the authority to make decisions with regard to budget and resources.
8. For those candidates on the list who may be reluctant, identify possible ways to overcome their barriers.

## End Result

Six to twelve of the most qualified candidates will be selected. You will have a team that is comprehensive and balanced in terms of perspective, work initiative, and commitment to the team's purpose.



## Step 2 Instructions

### Assess the Situation

#### Overview

In *Planning for Terrific Transitions* training, you will begin the needs assessment process with your core transition team. On the job, you should set a meeting with the comprehensive transition team to focus on needs assessment.

The initial part of the assessment consists of the team discussing needs and completing the *Transition Assessment Worksheet*. This worksheet may take several meetings to complete. Then the team seeks the input of others to gain even more perspective and to identify the best plan.

Needs assessment is a critical part of the transition planning process. Without this exercise, transition planning becomes unfocused. Ineffective practices may go unidentified, real causes of problems may not be discovered, and new strategies chosen may be too impractical to implement or may not work at all. Taking time to assess needs and gather information upfront will help you figure out which practices to implement.

#### Instructions for the Initial Discussions

1. Complete each column of Part A: Assessing Current Practices on the *Transition Assessment Worksheet*.
  - List all current transition practices down the first column.
  - List the target connections for each practice.
  - Describe what works well for each practice.
  - Describe what doesn't work well for all the involved target parties.
  - Give suggestions for improving each practice.
  - Record additional information that you still need before you decide on which practices to implement.
2. Complete each column of Part B: Assessing the Disconnections on the *Transition Assessment Worksheet*.
  - Record those connections with no or insufficient transition practices in place.
  - Suggest new practices to help strengthen those connections.
  - Record additional information that you still need before you decide on which practices to implement.
3. Complete each column of Part C: Additional Information.
  - Identify who, outside the team, should provide input. See Part C of the *Transition Assessment Worksheet* for a list of individuals who may participate.
  - Discuss the different types of needs assessment methods (questionnaires, non-target or targeted focus groups, interviews), information the team can expect to gather with each, and the disadvantages of each.

- Decide on a set of methods to gather the additional information needed.
4. Implement further information gathering/needs assessment methods (questionnaire, focus groups, and/or interviews) and summarize the results. Instructions for one type of method, focus groups, are given below.

## ○ Instructions for Conducting a Focus Group

### Before the Focus Group

5. Identify a list of focus group questions. Questions should be an appropriate mix of specific questions from the *Transition Assessment Worksheet* and general questions, such as:
  - How do you think children feel when they move from early childhood education into kindergarten or from home into kindergarten?
  - What kinds of stressors do you observe among children as they enter school? What do you think creates that stress?
  - What do you think would help create a smoother transition for children? What types of activities/strategies would be most helpful?
  - How you think parents feel as their children move into kindergarten?
  - What types of activities/strategies would be most helpful to parents?
6. Identify a sequence/flow of questions.
7. Arrange for a “recorder” to record information.
8. Consider hiring an outside consultant to facilitate the focus group who can maintain an impartial perspective.

### During the Focus Group

9. Convene the meeting by welcoming participants, thanking them for coming, and explaining the importance of their role with children and their input. Tell the participants how long the session will last.
10. Explain the purpose of the meeting: to validate the team’s early needs assessment work and continue focusing on gaps in the transition system.
11. Explain each person’s role: to answer questions surrounding transitions and to share his or her point of view about how current practices affect him or her, children, families, and other transition partners.
12. Explain how the meeting will be conducted, and introduce rules of participation.
13. Open discussion with a general statement about the need for effective transitions. For example, the leader might say, “Each year, thousands of children in our state enter kindergarten. They come from a variety of settings. Some children come from the local Head Start program, some

come to us from local child care or pre-kindergarten programs. Some children have been at home all of their lives and have never attended any type of program. Regardless of children's experiences prior to coming to kindergarten, we want to make sure that all of them have a smooth transition to school. To do that effectively, we need to find out from you what would be most helpful."

14. Define the term "transition" for the group, if needed. *Transition* means changes between different types of activities. In education, we think of these changes in terms of vertical transitions (changes that occur over time, such as moving from early childhood education to kindergarten) and horizontal transitions (changes that occur during the same day, such as moving from school to after-school activities).
15. Facilitate the group to discuss a set of pre-determined questions.
16. The recorder records the group's input.
17. Before concluding, ask for any additional comments from the whole group.
18. When all comments have been made, summarize the group's suggestions for improvement.
19. The recorder records the suggestions onto chart paper as the suggestions are summarized.
20. Save the chart page containing suggestions so that the team can later review the suggestions in a meeting and complete the *Transition Plan*.
21. Conclude the focus group by thanking everyone for his or her participation.

## ● End Result

Your *Transition Assessment Worksheet* will be fully completed.

The most appropriate methods of further needs assessment will be chosen based on the groups you selected and the types of information you still need. Your input groups will

- Be able to provide the additional information identified in Parts A and B.
- Be able to provide accurate observations of children and families.
- Be able to provide a full picture of how the community, schools, families, and children are experiencing transition.
- Be involved in the transition process.
- Represent groups where gaps exist in the transition process.

Your further information gathering methods (questionnaires, focus groups, and/or interviews) will be implemented and the results summarized. In your focus groups, a task-oriented, yet enjoyable atmosphere will be created where all participants provide input freely and all input is accurately captured.

# Step 3 Instructions

## Plan the Work

### Overview

In *Planning for Terrific Transitions Training*, you will begin the transitions planning process with your core transition team. Back on the job, though, you will have to return to the drawing board and complete a full needs assessment. Once that is complete, you can meet with your transition team to review and make sense of the needs assessment results. It may take several meetings and additional research to then complete the *Transition Plan*.

Thorough, upfront thinking on the *Plan* will help to identify strategies that are feasible, practical, and effective. This then sets the stage for a smooth year of implementation.

### Instructions

1. Review all needs assessment results (*Transition Assessment Worksheet* and data from focus groups, interviews, and questionnaires).
2. Analyze your results by identifying patterns and themes that point to goals.
  - Where are the greatest areas of concern?
  - Are there priorities that need to be addressed?
  - Where would improvements make the greatest impact?
  - Are there target connections that require attention?
  - Are there themes within the results that point to goals we should set?
  - Do transition activities occur year-round or are they concentrated at certain times of the year?
3. Set goals.
  - Base on needs.
  - Identify the direction or quality of change desired (e.g., increased, consistent, effective).
  - State the outcome, not the process.
  - Include a time frame.
  - Make it attainable and realistic.
4. Identify indicators.
  - Describe as an outcome what the goal will “look like” once achieved.
  - Identify the direction or quality of change desired (e.g., increased, consistent, effective).
  - Include the quantity of change, where applicable (e.g., 25%).

5. Complete each column on the *Transition Plan*.
  - Indicator number
  - Transition Strategy
  - Action plan
  - Resources needed
  - Person responsible
  - Evaluation method
6. Research additional strategy options, costs, resources, or materials, as needed. Research through the following:
  - Other schools and programs
  - Internet
  - Professional journals
  - *Menu of Super Strategies and Terrific Tips*
  - Professional services
  - Sources of materials
7. Finalize all strategies and columns on the *Transition Plan*.
8. Publish the final *Transition Plan*.
9. Distribute the final *Transition Plan*, along with blank *Implementation Progress Reports* (to report progress during implementation) to the transition team.

## ● End Result

All columns of the *Transition Plan* will contain the correct information. The *Plan's* goals and indicators will be attainable, based on assessed needs, and expressed as outcomes that indicate the desired direction of change and target date of change. The slate of strategies planned will

- Occur year-round.
- Include a plan for involving families.
- Include a plan for individualizing transitions for children, and accommodate a broad range of families.
- Address implementation and other issues uncovered through the needs assessment.

# Step 4 Instructions

## Work the Plan

### Overview

Implementation means putting your *Transition Plan* to work by carrying out all the steps you've planned by the dates and within the costs specified. The *Transition Plan* is put together before school starts; implementation is then ongoing throughout the year, with different transition activities happening each month. The team gets together at least every two months to report progress, discuss any related issues, and support each other's efforts.

Some team members may be assigned to carry out specific transition strategies from beginning to end; other team members may manage the implementation of assigned strategies, delegating implementation tasks to others and monitoring their work.

Whether you are actually implementing or managing implementation, you will improve your chances of success by possessing strong organizational, communication, and problem-solving skills. Organizational skills will help to keep implementation on target and efficient. Effective communication will help build relationships between all transition partners. Problem-solving skills will help you overcome any challenges and barriers you may encounter along the way.

### Instructions

#### Implementing

1. Document all action steps on a calendar on their planned dates.
2. Plan weekly tasks to complete each step.
3. Complete implementation tasks weekly, even small tasks such as making contacts, to keep in touch with the project.
4. Overcome barriers proactively by seeking advice from the team as needed.
5. Immediately report to the team leader all problems that require a change of the *Transition Plan*.
6. Submit *Implementation Progress Reports* to the transition team leader.
7. Meet all deadlines, unless a change in date is approved.
8. Prepare for evaluation.

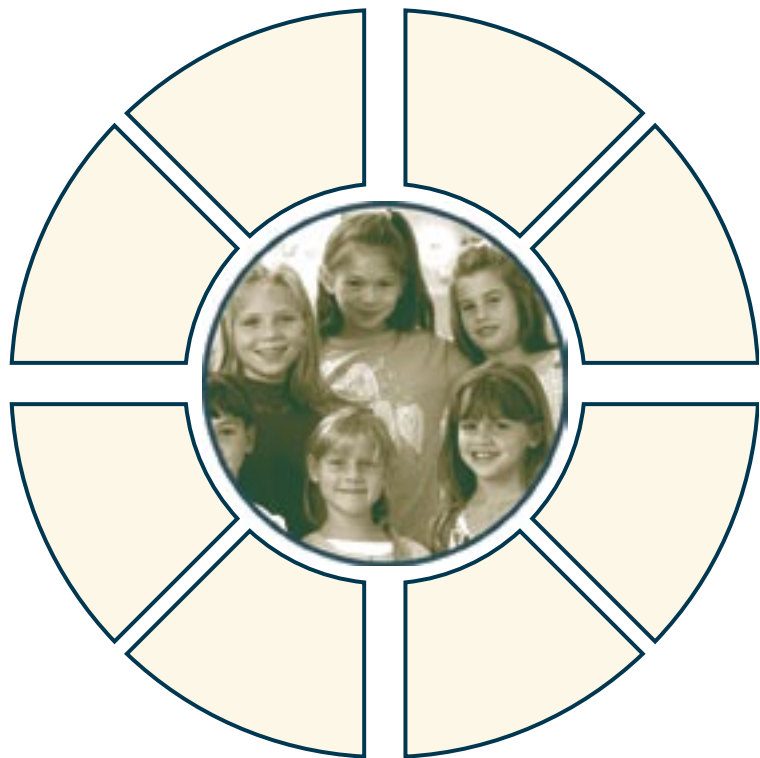
#### Managing Implementation

9. Communicate to all implementers their assigned strategies, how they should work together, and how to communicate with each other.
10. Record all steps, dates, and implementers' names on a calendar.
11. Review the calendar frequently to check daily, weekly, and monthly events.

12. Communicate frequently with implementers, related partners, and families to ensure the action plan is followed according to the *Plan*, to make necessary adjustments to the *Plan*, and to ensure communication between all partners and families is being maintained.
13. Collect evaluation data or oversee collection.
14. Require implementers to submit periodic *Implementation Progress Reports* to you (the manager). Submit these, in turn, to the transition team leader.
15. Attend transition team meetings at least every two months to discuss progress and challenges.
16. Seek approval as needed to make adjustments to the *Transition Plan*.
17. Prepare for evaluation.

**End Result**

Strategies will be carried out. Communication with related partners will occur as often as needed. Effective relationships will be maintained. Adjustments to the *Transition Plan* will be made as problems arise.



# Step 5 Instructions

## Measure Up

### Overview

The subject of evaluation is introduced to the team while putting together the *Transition Plan* and selecting evaluation method. The team prepares for evaluation during implementation, but generally conducts the evaluation once strategies have been implemented. Evaluation is used to identify which indicators have occurred, whether or not goals have been met, the effectiveness of each strategy, and revisions to the *Transition Plan*.

There is no way of objectively judging the effectiveness of the *Transition Plan* without evaluation. It is a critical part of the process that can have profound effects on children and their families.

### Instructions

#### Prepare

1. Consider hiring an outside evaluation consultant with the time and special expertise needed to work with evaluation data.
2. Plan for evaluation logistics (e.g., correspondence, access to documentation, dates, times, places, facilitators).
3. Develop information gathering tools as needed (sets of questions, questionnaires, sign-in sheets).
4. As it becomes time to begin an evaluation, review the *Transition Plan* and the preparation that has been completed.

#### Evaluate

5. Gather data on the subjects outlined and use the evaluation methods given on the *Transition Plan*.
6. Ensure all data is documented (e.g., verbal data should be recorded; written data, such as copies of children's records or sign-in sheets, should be secured).
7. Summarize results.
8. Meet as a team following each evaluation to share evaluation data and analyze results.
9. If outcomes were not reached, identify possible causes and additional information to be gathered to verify causes.
10. Make recommendations for adjusting the *Transition Plan*.

### End Result

Adjustments to the *Transition Plan* will be made based on documented evaluation data.



# Self-Assessment for Sending Program Staff

Directions: You may use this checklist for individual reflection, to prompt group discussion, or as a way to track progress as you improve your transition practices. For each item, place an “X” next to the appropriate word to indicate whether you believe that example of best practice is followed by your program.

## Sample Strategies for Maintaining Ongoing Communication Between Early Childhood Programs (ECP) and Kindergarten Staff

### ECP and Kindergarten Staff

1. Get to know each other and share information about our programs.  Yes  Partially  No
2. Work together to implement a formal plan for effective transitions.  Yes  Partially  No
3. Provide accurate and unbiased information about programs.  Yes  Partially  No
4. Respect each other and have an honest acceptance of each other’s professional roles.  Yes  Partially  No
5. Periodically visit receiving programs to observe.  Yes  Partially  No
6. Plan joint activities for registration, workshops, and other activities.  Yes  Partially  No
7. Participate on each other’s policy advisory committees when possible.  Yes  Partially  No
8. ECP staff assists in screening for kindergarten, as applicable.  Yes  Partially  No
9. Discuss the transfer of specific records to the school while respecting parental rights to privacy.  Yes  Partially  No

## Sample Strategies for Preparing Children for Transition

### We

10. Provide for a wider range of developmental interests and abilities than the chronological age range suggests.  Yes  Partially  No
11. Design experiences to stimulate learning in all areas—physical, social, emotional, and intellectual.  Yes  Partially  No
12. Plan activities that are responsive to individual differences in ability, interests, cultural backgrounds, and linguistic styles.  Yes  Partially  No
13. Provide an environment in which children can learn through active exploration and interaction with concrete materials, adults, and other children.  Yes  Partially  No
14. Organize the environment to allow children to select their own activities from a variety of choices.  Yes  Partially  No
15. Organize the day so that children work individually or in small informal groups most of the time.  Yes  Partially  No
16. Provide many opportunities for children to see how spoken and written language are related.  Yes  Partially  No
17. Schedule visits to the new school for the children.  Yes  Partially  No
18. Discuss new activities, schedules, rules, and bus routes to help the children feel comfortable and confident.  Yes  Partially  No
19. Read books to the children about changes and moves.  Yes  Partially  No
20. Invite children to express their feelings through dramatic play.  Yes  Partially  No

- 21. Invite kindergarteners or older siblings to visit and talk about the change. \_\_Yes \_\_Partially \_\_No
- 22. Make phone books so that children can keep in contact with their friends from ECP over the summer. \_\_Yes \_\_Partially \_\_No
- 23. Encourage parents to provide activities that allow their children to make a greater variety of friends than just those that are in their ECP classroom. \_\_Yes \_\_Partially \_\_No
- 24. Use both formal and informal times to talk to the children about kindergarten and allow them to express their feelings. \_\_Yes \_\_Partially \_\_No
- 25. Have children dictate a letter to their new teacher, telling them what they've learned and what they look forward to learning the next year. \_\_Yes \_\_Partially \_\_No
- 26. Keep a portfolio of each child's progress throughout the year. At the year's end, we share this book with each child and show him or her how much he or she has gained and grown. \_\_Yes \_\_Partially \_\_No

**Sample Strategies for Involving Parents in the Transition**

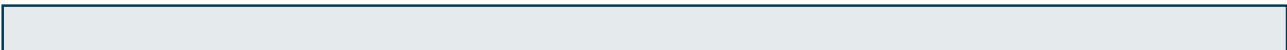
**We**

- 27. Provide parents with information about the school their child may be attending. \_\_Yes \_\_Partially \_\_No
- 28. Encourage parents to attend open house/back-to-school night. \_\_Yes \_\_Partially \_\_No
- 29. Discuss child care options with working parents and provide information and referrals. \_\_Yes \_\_Partially \_\_No
- 30. Invite kindergarten staff to come to a parents meeting at the ECP to provide an overview of the program and answer questions. \_\_Yes \_\_Partially \_\_No
- 31. Discuss the transfer of records with parents and provide "release of information" forms. \_\_Yes \_\_Partially \_\_No
- 32. Create a story about the new school for parents to read to their children. \_\_Yes \_\_Partially \_\_No
- 33. Introduce parents to others with children attending the same school. \_\_Yes \_\_Partially \_\_No
- 34. Discuss any changes in services available to parents. \_\_Yes \_\_Partially \_\_No

**Sample Strategies for Reaching Into the Community**

**We**

- 35. Participate in community forums on kindergarten transitioning. \_\_Yes \_\_Partially \_\_No
- 36. Participate in community-wide workshops for pre-K staff. \_\_Yes \_\_Partially \_\_No
- 37. Organize an annual effort to identify books about being ready for "big school." \_\_Yes \_\_Partially \_\_No



*Self-Assessment for Sending Program Staff (continued)*  
**“Pick 6” to Improve**

Take a minute to reflect on how you answered the previous questions. Are there areas where you see a need for improvement? Are there areas where you currently don't have any activities? You can use the space below to note some strategies you would like to use. A good way to start is to “Pick 6” new strategies (three to begin shortly and three that may take longer to institute).

<i>Choose 3 strategies to begin in the</i> <b>Short Term</b>
<i>Choose 3 strategies to begin in the</i> <b>Long Term</b>

# Self-Assessment for Kindergarten Staff

**Directions:** You may use this checklist for individual reflection, to prompt group discussion, or as a way to track progress as you improve your transition practices. For each item, place an “X” next to the appropriate word to indicate whether you believe that example of best practice is followed by your program.

## Sample Strategies for Maintaining Ongoing Communication Between ECP and Kindergarten Staff

### ECP and Kindergarten Staff

1. Get to know each other and share information about our programs.  Yes  Partially  No
2. Work together to implement a formal plan for effective transitions.  Yes  Partially  No
3. Provide accurate and unbiased information about programs.  Yes  Partially  No
4. Respect each other and have an honest acceptance of each other’s professional roles.  Yes  Partially  No
5. Periodically visit each sending program to observe.  Yes  Partially  No
6. Plan joint activities for registration, workshops, and other activities.  Yes  Partially  No
7. Participate on each other’s policy advisory committees where possible.  Yes  Partially  No
8. Conduct joint kindergarten screenings, as applicable.  Yes  Partially  No
9. Discuss the transfer of specific records to the school while respecting parental rights to privacy.  Yes  Partially  No

## Sample Strategies for Preparing Children for Transition

### We

10. Invite parents to visit the school with their children during the school year before the child starts kindergarten.  Yes  Partially  No
11. Hold a back-to-school night in August prior to the beginning of school.  Yes  Partially  No
12. Send a personal “letter from the teacher” to all new students in the late summer, welcoming them to kindergarten.  Yes  Partially  No
13. Provide for a wider range of developmental interests and abilities than the chronological age range suggests.  Yes  Partially  No
14. Compare types of activities among ECP programs and begin kindergarten with similar activities so children begin their kindergarten experiences with confidence.  Yes  Partially  No
15. Design experiences to stimulate learning in all areas—physical, social, emotional, and intellectual.  Yes  Partially  No
16. Plan activities that are responsive to individual differences in ability, interests, cultural backgrounds, and linguistic styles.  Yes  Partially  No
17. Provide an environment in which children can learn through active exploration and interaction with concrete materials, adults, and other children.  Yes  Partially  No
18. Organize the environment to allow children to select their own activities from a variety of choices.  Yes  Partially  No

19. Read books to the children about changes and moves.  Yes  Partially  No
20. Invite children to express their feelings through dramatic play.  Yes  Partially  No
21. Invite kindergarteners or older siblings to visit and talk about the change.  Yes  Partially  No
22. Make phone books so that children can keep in contact with their friends from ECP over the summer.  Yes  Partially  No
23. Encourage parents to provide activities that allow their children to make a greater variety of friends than just those that are in their ECP classroom.  Yes  Partially  No
24. Use both formal and informal times to talk to the children about kindergarten and allow them to express their feelings.  Yes  Partially  No
25. Have children dictate a letter to their new teacher, telling them what they've learned and what they look forward to learning the next year.  Yes  Partially  No
26. Keep a portfolio of each child's progress throughout the year. At the year's end, we share this book with each child and show him or her how much he or she has gained and grown.  Yes  Partially  No

### Sample Strategies for Involving Parents in the Transition

We

27. Provide parents with information about the school their child may be attending.  Yes  Partially  No
28. Encourage parents to attend open house/back-to-school night.  Yes  Partially  No
29. Discuss child care options with working parents and provide information and referrals.  Yes  Partially  No
30. Invite kindergarten staff to come to a parents meeting at the ECP to provide an overview of the program and answer questions.  Yes  Partially  No
31. Discuss the transfer of records with parents and provide "release of information" forms.  Yes  Partially  No
32. Create a story about the new school for parents to read to their children.  Yes  Partially  No
33. Introduce parents to others with children attending the same school.  Yes  Partially  No
34. Discuss any changes in services available to parents.  Yes  Partially  No

### Sample Strategies for Reaching Into the Community

We

35. Participate in community forums on kindergarten transitioning.  Yes  Partially  No
36. Participate in community-wide workshops for pre-K staff.  Yes  Partially  No
37. Organize an annual effort to identify books about being ready for "big school."  Yes  Partially  No

*Self-Assessment for Kindergarten Staff (continued)*  
**“Pick 6” To Improve**

Take a minute to reflect on how you answered the previous questions. Are there areas where you see a need for improvement? Are there areas where you currently don't have any activities? You can use the space below to note some strategies you would like to use. A good way to start is to “Pick 6” new strategies (three to begin shortly and three that may take longer to institute).

*Choose 3 strategies to begin in the*

**Short Term**


*Choose 3 strategies to begin in the*

**Long Term**


# Transition Assessment Worksheet

*This three-part worksheet will help the transition team begin thinking about the gaps in the current transition system and focus the needs assessment.*

## Part A: Assessing Current Practices

Current Practice and Month It Occurs	Target Connection(s) <i>i.e., child to child, school to family, school to school, or school to community</i>	What Works <i>What is most effective about this practice?</i>	What Doesn't Work <i>Where does this practice break down for children, parent(s), teachers, others?</i>	Possible Cause(s) <i>If breakdowns exist, what are some possible reasons for them?</i>	Suggestion(s) <i>What are some suggestions for improving this practice?</i>	Additional Information <i>What might help to confirm the information you've now gathered about this practice? Who else should you talk with? What else would you like to find out?</i>

(1 of 4)

## Transition Assessment Worksheet (Continued)

### Part B: Assessing the Disconnections

<b>Disconnections</b> <i>List the target connections with no or insufficient transition practices in place.</i>	<b>Suggestions</b> <i>What practices might help strengthen this connection?</i>	<b>Additional Information</b> <i>What might help to confirm your suggestions for improvement? Who else should you talk with? What else would you like to find out?</i>

(2 of 4)



## Transition Assessment Worksheet (Continued)

### Part C: Gathering Additional Information

#### Input Groups

Who can give you the “additional information” you listed in Parts A and B of this worksheet? The input group should include individuals who are best able to provide input on what children, families, and other transition partners experience during transition; to help you understand why current practices might be breaking down; and to offer suggestions for improvement. The input group also should be able to help strengthen currently weak connections.

Input groups may include the following:

- Kindergarten teachers
- Head Start representatives
- Kindergarten school administrators (e.g., principal, vice principal, curriculum specialist, transition coordinator)
- District representatives (e.g., federal program representative, early childhood coordinator, curriculum specialist)
- Parents or other family caregivers (e.g., grandparents, guardians)
- Private child care professionals (e.g., family child care provider)
- Representatives from pre-K initiatives
- Elementary school teachers
- Guidance counselors
- Librarians
- Other school personnel (e.g., cafeteria worker, bus driver, janitor, teacher’s aide, office staff, safety patrol, art teacher, PE teacher, after-school personnel, migrant coordinator)
- Older student
- Community representatives (e.g., health care representative, early intervention specialist, mental health professional, social worker, local business representative, local government representative)

List names and titles here (or attach a separate sheet):

## Transition Assessment Worksheet (Continued)

### Part C: (Continued)

## Methods of Information Gathering

Consider the different types of information still needed (see Parts A and B of this worksheet under “Additional Information”). Then consider the input group selections (Part C, above). Given what you still need and from whom, determine the best method of information gathering.

List method(s) to be used here (or attach). Briefly describe what information will be gathered with each method and how it will be gathered.

#### Different methods include:

- **Non-targeted focus groups (single or multiple sessions)**  
 Best used when you need to tap into a range of attitudes and needs across groups and to probe a topic in more depth. Can be time-consuming to sift through information. Also may be difficult to pull group together.
- **Targeted focus groups (single or multiple sessions)**  
 Gives you easy, reliable access to ideas, needs, and attitudes of a single group and enables you to probe a topic in more depth. Can be time-consuming to sift through information. Also may be difficult to pull group together.
- **Questionnaires**  
 Allows you to cover many topics quickly and anonymously, but does not provide context or elaboration of responses. Often gets a poor response rate.
- **Interviews**  
 Allows personal contact, but generally should interview one person at a time (and no more than three people). Can be time-consuming.

# Transition Plan

*The Transition Plan is used both as a planning tool to plan year-round transition activities and as a management tool to help guide implementation.*

**Goal:** Effective coordination between ECE programs and public school (i.e., school-to-school connections) by Fall 2003.

**Indicator 1:** Directors and other staff members from sending ECE programs report improved relationships with public school.

**Indicator 2:** There is consistency between program policies and practices that help create connections and smooth transitions for children entering school.

**Indicator 3:**

**Indicator 4:**

Indicator Number	Transition Strategy and End Date <i>Include the month the strategy will occur</i>	Action Plan (Steps and End Dates) <i>Include end dates for each step</i>	Resources Needed <i>After researching, list dollar amount, personnel, materials, etc.</i>	Person Responsible	Evaluation Method <i>Describe the source of information or document that will confirm effectiveness of strategies and achievement of indicators</i>

(1 of 3)

## Transition Plan (Continued)

<b>Indicator Number</b>	<b>Transition Strategy and End Date</b> <i>Include the month the strategy will occur</i>	<b>Action Plan (Steps and End Dates)</b> <i>Include end dates for each step</i>	<b>Resources Needed</b> <i>After researching, list dollar amount, personnel, materials, etc.</i>	<b>Person Responsible</b>	<b>Evaluation Method</b> <i>Describe the source of information or document that will confirm effectiveness of strategies and achievement of indicators</i>

(2 of 3)

## Transition Plan (Continued)

<b>Indicator Number</b>	<b>Transition Strategy and End Date</b> <i>Include the month the strategy will occur</i>	<b>Action Plan (Steps and End Dates)</b> <i>Include end dates for each step</i>	<b>Resources Needed</b> <i>After researching, list dollar amount, personnel, materials, etc.</i>	<b>Person Responsible</b>	<b>Evaluation Method</b> <i>Describe the source of information or document that will confirm effectiveness of strategies and achievement of indicators</i>

(3 of 3)

# Implementation Progress Report

*This report should be completed periodically and submitted to the transition team leader to monitor implementation progress.*

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

Indicator 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Indicator 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Indicator 3: \_\_\_\_\_

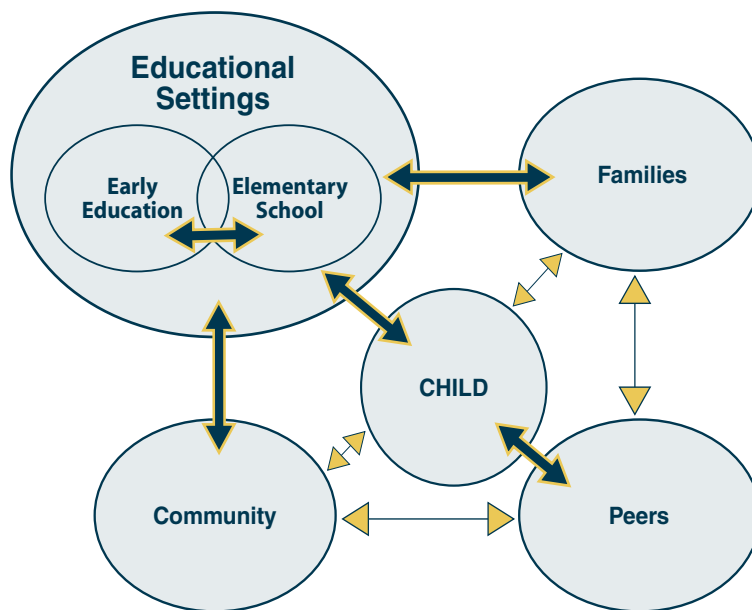
Indicator 4: \_\_\_\_\_

Assigned Strategy <i>List separately and include end date</i>	Steps for Completing Strategy <i>Include end dates</i>	Dates Completed	Progress Since Last Report	Challenges/Barriers/Changes to the Implementation Plan	Budgeted Cost	Actual Cost to Date



# Menu of Super Transition Strategies & Terrific Tips

*This menu is full of ideas for new transition practices. There are transition ideas that will strengthen schools' ties with children, families, the community, and other schools as well as help children connect with other children. Use this Menu as a resource for ideas to complete a Transition Plan, along with other resources such as other schools and programs, the Internet, professional journals, other industry materials, and your own experience. Note: The suggested months noted for conducting each of the activities in this menu are only suggestions. Many of the activities can be conducted at any point during the year.*



# Connecting Children to Children Will Help Smooth Transitions

*By connecting children to their peers, you are providing another means of supporting transitions for children. Children begin to feel more comfortable in their new environment when they see some familiar faces, both of same-age peers and those peers that are a little older.*

Transition Strategy	Month
Ask kindergarten children to prepare a journal about what happens in their room and to share it with preschool classes that will be moving up in the fall.	September
Encourage parents to provide activities that enable their children to make a greater variety of friends than just those that are in their preschool classroom. These can be sports activities, musical and dance activities, taking their child to the library, going to the local parks, etc.	September
Arrange for elementary school children from different cultures to be “pen pal buddies” with a child who will be entering school the next year from the same cultural background. They can share pictures, stories for the family to read in their home language, and other materials.	October
Have kindergarten children prepare a video about what it is like to be a kindergartener.	November
Create a puppet show about kindergarten. Allow the children to use the puppets to talk about their fears.	January
Invite a kindergarten child who previously attended your program to return to the preschool and talk about what it is like to go to elementary school. He or she could also share any rules that are different from the preschool. If possible, have the child share some examples of class work or photos.	March
Have a system in place for older children to “buddy up” with an incoming kindergarten child. Have the older child write or dictate a note in the spring to the preschooler. They can send notes, photos, drawings, etc. about the school prior to the child coming. Arrange for the older child to be an escort during open house or school visitation. Once the preschooler enters school, allow for some play time between the two children at recess or allow them to eat together. Some schools have “reading buddy” programs that continue the process. The reading buddy can read to the kindergarten child before nap time. This allows non-judgmental oral reading for the older child, and some special one-on-one for the younger child.	March
Take class photos near the end of school to give as goodbye gifts. Mount them on card stock and allow the children to decorate the “frames.”	April
When children who do not have English as a first language visit the school, have an older child that speaks the same language show the family around the school and spend some time with the younger child by playing a game or reading him or her a book.	April
Make phone books so that children can keep in contact with their friends from preschool over the summer. Copy name and numbers and have children decorate “phone book” covers. Obtain parental permission to share phone numbers.	May
Have summer playgroup sessions where incoming kindergarteners can meet new friends prior to coming to school. These can be fun days on the school playground or “parties” in the cafeteria.	June



# Connecting Children to Schools Will Help Smooth Transitions

*Children feel more connected when their school and preschool experiences are similar.*

Transition Strategy	Month
<p>Help children create “Time Capsules” of their preschool experiences. You can use a shoebox or other storage type box. Have the children decorate their boxes and have a label printed out that says “_____’s Preschool (or Head Start) Treasures.” Have the children select favorite things they would like to go in their boxes—videos, photos, favorite drawings, souvenirs, etc. Tell the children to take their boxes home and look back at them when they want to think about preschool.</p>	<p>July or whenever children leave your program</p>
<p>Provide class lists early so that teachers, families, and children can begin to communicate. This list does not need to be considered final, but at least a core group can be assigned to each teacher.</p>	<p>As early as possible</p>
<p>Send a personal note or postcard welcoming each child as soon as your class list is assigned.</p>	<p>As early as possible</p>
<p>Define personal space for each child—a cubby, desk, bin, etc.—that is identified with his or her name or photo. Write an individual note to each child welcoming him or her to school. Place the notes in children’s cubbies.</p>	<p>August</p>
<p>Take a Polaroid or digital photo (or take film to a one-hour photo) of everyone on the first day of school and post it along with the children’s names, bus numbers, and favorite things to do.</p>	<p>August or September</p>
<p>Hold a “Back to School” pep rally.</p>	<p>August or September</p>
<p>Prepare a <i>Welcome to School</i> or <i>About Our School</i> book. Have photos of all the staff in the book, as well of photos of children as they participate in kindergarten activities. You can send this book to the feeder schools or you can have it available at the beginning of the school year.</p>	<p>August or earlier</p>
<p>Set up an area in your classroom with photos of parents and family. Allow children to “visit” their families throughout the day.</p>	<p>August</p>
<p>Turn the dramatic play area into a kindergarten classroom. If possible, borrow some materials from a local kindergarten to enhance the play experience. Post pictures of children getting on a bus, eating in the cafeteria, visiting the school library, and playing on the playground, in the gym, in the art room, or in different areas of the school.</p>	<p>December</p>
<p>Write a welcome note for each child to be placed in his or her cubby or on their desk on the first day of school.</p>	<p>August or September</p>
<p>Allow for staggered entrance into school. (1/3 come 1<sup>st</sup> day, next 1/3 the 2<sup>nd</sup> day, and final 1/3 the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of school. Last 2 days of the week have all the children come.)</p>	<p>August or September</p>
<p>Define a personal space for each child’s belongings labeled with the child’s name, photo, or drawing.</p>	<p>August or September</p>
<p>Help children feel comfortable and confident by listening to their fears and concerns and discussing them openly. Share your feelings about change with the children. Let them know that new things are hard for adults, too.</p>	<p>January</p>

## Connecting Children to Schools Will Help Smooth Transitions (Continued)

*Children feel more connected when their school and preschool experiences are similar.*

Transition Strategy	Month
Preschools can practice kindergarten activities, rules, songs, or stories.	February
Develop portfolios for children with special needs. This serves as a way to introduce the child to the new teachers. Include the child's artwork, photographs of the child, and questionnaires completed by the families.	Ongoing
Use both formal and informal times to talk to the children about kindergarten. Ask questions such as, "What do you think kindergarten will be like? How will it be different from our class? How will kindergarten be the same as our class?" Write the answers on flip chart paper and review and add to them over time.	February
Use circle time to talk about growing up. Bring in materials from other classrooms that the children have outgrown—stacking rings, baby blocks, toddler pull toys, chubby crayons, etc. Talk about the fact that the children are learning newer skills and that they changed classrooms as they got older and started using more advanced materials. Ask children to remember things they couldn't do when they first came to preschool and can do now. Make predictions about what the children will be learning in kindergarten that they can't do now. Write these predictions on a chart and post them in the room.	April
Have a "kindergarten day" at the preschool. Plan for scheduled activities similar to those in a kindergarten room.	May
Have children dictate a letter to their new teacher and tell them what they've learned and what they look forward to the next year. If the name of the teacher is not known, simply write, "Dear kindergarten teacher."	May
Keep a portfolio of each child's progress throughout the year. At the year's end, share his or her portfolio with each child and show them how much they have gained and grown throughout the year.	May
Share your feelings about change with the children. Let them know that new things are hard for adults, too.	Ongoing

# Connecting Families to Schools Will Help Smooth Transitions

*How involved the family is in the child's education makes a big difference in the child's outcomes. Families and schools benefit from the mutual sharing of information.*

Transition Strategy	Month
Make a calendar of special dates to share with families. This can include school holidays, special events, etc.	June
Go on home visits. This lets you get to know the children and their families.	July or as soon as possible
Conduct a family needs assessment. Make initial contact with the family and begin developing a plan for family support.	First two weeks of school
Host a "Back to School" night for incoming kindergarten children and their families. The children can take part in sample activities, tour the school and a school bus, and meet other children who will be attending school there. Parents can meet other parents as well and possibly make connections for carpooling, etc.	August
Consider having a "Staggered Start" of kindergarten where smaller groups of children attend the first day of school. This can be done by having 1/3 of the children for each of the first three days of school and all children on the other two days of the first week. This allows the teacher to have more individual time with each child. The teacher may want to have children come with their parents for the first hour or so. You can also have shorter days as well for the first week.	August
Have a family picnic before school starts or just after school starts.	August or September
Encourage parents to come and share how to operate any adaptive equipment that their child with special needs might require. This could be done before the first day of school so there is enough time to fully educate the teachers and allow some time to practice with the equipment.	August
Encourage parents to volunteer at the elementary school as well as at the early childhood program.	September
Survey parents of children with special needs to find out their opinions on the transition process. Encourage them to provide input on where improvements might be made.	September
Invite future families to attend Fall Festival at your school. Talk to the PTA about providing postage for the invitations.	October
Invite parents of special needs children to present to the local interagency coordinating council about what means of support would most benefit their families and what special transition concerns they are facing.	November
Schools can create learning materials for children to use at home with the parent.	Throughout the year
Provide a wide range of ways to gather information from families about their child with special needs. You can provide questionnaires, audiotapes, or videotapes that allow the families to provide information specific to their child's needs and the best way to address those needs.	January

## Connecting Families to Schools Will Help Smooth Transitions (Continued)

*How involved the family is in the child's education makes a big difference in the child's outcomes. Families and schools benefit from the mutual sharing of information.*

Transition Strategy	Month
Hold end-of-the-year parent-teacher conferences. Share transition efforts with the parents. If you are concerned that a particular child is very fearful about the impending change, invite the parents in to work on a specialized transition plan for that child.	February or later
Invite parents to PTA or PTO the year before their child attends the school.	March
Provide information to parents about the program their child will be attending. You should include the address, the phone number, the principal's name, dates scheduled for registration, and school hours.	April
Discuss the transferring of records to the kindergarten with the parents. Provide release of information forms to be signed by the parents.	April
Write a classroom story about the new school for parents to read to their children.	April
Discuss with parents any changes of services that will be occurring.	April
Have parents complete a Family Transition Questionnaire. A sample form can be found in the <i>Terrific Transitions: Ensuring Continuity of Services for Children and Their Families</i> publication. Pass the information on to the child's kindergarten teacher or school (with parental permission).	April
Discuss after-school child care options with working parents. Provide information and referral to appropriate after-school programs.	May
Have parents complete the Information About My Child form found in <i>Terrific Transitions: Ensuring Continuity of Services for Children and Their Families</i> publication. Gather the forms and deliver them to the schools that the children will be attending.	May
Have parents help their children create an <i>All About Me</i> book. Each child will share this with his or her new teacher and classmates.	May
Invite parents to bring a friend or other family member on visits to the preschool or elementary school. Many family members who are not comfortable with the English language find it easier if they aren't attending by themselves.	Ongoing
Encourage families to come for assistance if their child's fears about attending a new school seem out of proportion. Discussing these concerns with the school guidance counselor, the teacher, or the principal can be very helpful. After talking with the family, make any necessary referrals to other agencies (e.g., Child Mental Health) as quickly as possible to help facilitate the transition.	Ongoing
Schedule end-of-the-year individual conferences with families to share transition planning with them.	May

# Connecting Schools to Schools Will Help Smooth Transitions

*The connections between schools help children and their families as they transition to elementary school.*

Transition Strategy	Month
<p>Host an open house for staff from all child care centers and kindergarten classrooms. Have presentations about what their programs are like. Allow them to get acquainted with one another and to share materials they will be using during the next school year.</p>	August
<p>Make scrapbooks about your school or center and share them with other schools and centers.</p>	August
<p>Have one program (either preschool or elementary) host a “coffee and donuts” morning for program administrators in order to allow time for the programs to discuss ways of meeting the needs of diverse families. They can talk about the transition process and identify ways to improve it.</p>	August
<p>Conduct joint workshops and trainings throughout the year.</p>	September
<p>Plan for joint kindergarten registration days. These can be held at child care centers, Head Start centers, local family resource centers, etc. Preschool staff can assist the kindergarten staff with the registration process.</p>	Ongoing
<p>If there are school or child care newsletters sent out, send a copy to the other schools where you receive children from or send children to. This provides a constant update of activities and builds familiarity with each other’s programs.</p>	Throughout the year
<p>Develop photo albums of staff from each agency and provide copies to each other to help children and adults become familiar with faces they will be seeing.</p>	Ongoing
<p>Arrange for records to be shared between the early childhood setting and the kindergarten setting. This should only be done with written permission from parents. Items to be shared can include developmental checklists, behavior checklists, portfolios of children’s work, etc.</p>	September
<p>Host a joint program meeting between staff at the elementary school and staff at the local preschools. Play a game of “alphabet soup” where acronyms and terminology from different programs are matched.</p>	October
<p>Invite special visitors from the school to come to the preschools—librarian, principal, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, custodians, art teacher, physical education teacher, office workers—and have them conduct an activity with the children that relates to their function at the school.</p>	March
<p>For children that have special needs send the paperwork to the new school in plenty of time for the new teacher to be able to review the contents. You might highlight items that merit particular attention before the first day of school. Follow confidentiality guidelines when sharing information.</p>	April
<p>Design a program that teams up an early intervention teacher, a preschool teacher, and a kindergarten teacher and provides opportunities for joint training.</p>	April
<p>If children are prescreened for kindergarten, plan the screening to be held in conjunction with the preschool. This way, preschool staff can be present during the screening. This can also be done at the preschool site so that children will have a familiar setting for the screening.</p>	May

## Connecting Schools to Schools Will Help Smooth Transitions (Continued)

*The connections between schools help children and their families as they transition to elementary school.*

Transition Strategy		Month
If necessary, provide equipment and technical assistance in order for parents and caregivers to make a video about a child that will be moving to a new program. This is a great way to introduce the parents to the new teacher, to demonstrate how to operate any special equipment, and show the child at play.	Ongoing	
Have children dictate a letter to the preschool teacher to be sent to the kindergarten teacher. It should tell what they have learned and what they look forward to in kindergarten.	May	
Arrange for a school bus to visit the sending programs. Let children practice getting on and off the school bus (coping with steep steps, safety issues), and have the driver explain safety rules.	June or earlier	

# Connecting Community to Schools Will Help Smooth Transitions

*Ongoing collaboration is essential for building strong connections.*

Transition Strategy	Month
With a family's permission, have the local paper do a community piece on how one child with special needs transitions into the regular school. Highlight the different community agencies that support this transition, and describe their roles in the transition plan.	August
Sponsor a full-page newspaper ad that lists the names of incoming kindergartners and welcomes them to school.	September
Host community-wide workshops for kindergarten and preschool staff. Such topics as universal precautions, home visiting, behavior management, chronic illnesses, recognizing stress in children, etc.	Ongoing
Host a resource fair that highlights community services that are available for young children and could be of assistance to the early childhood programs.	September
Have the public library prepare a list of books that will be helpful in preparing children for kindergarten. If possible, arrange for a community volunteer to come and read the books from this list to the children throughout the children's preschool year.	October
Host community forums—half-day to all-day events that are attended by families and all agencies involved in early childhood (health department, social services, schools, child cares, family care homes, Head Start, etc.) The purpose is to raise community awareness around transition issues and to promote collaboration to address gaps. The forum can be guided by the following questions: What agencies provide early care and education services to young children and their families? How are community programs that serve young children alike and different? What are our expectations of children and how do these expectations differ? What do we do now as a community to prepare children and families for smooth transitions into kindergarten (including children with and without experience attending preschool, children with and without special needs, children with and without English as their first language)? How can we provide increased continuity of experiences and expectations for all young children and their families? (from Patricia Wesley's <i>Smooth Moves to Kindergarten</i> )	January
Host meetings and meals at local churches and businesses during the weeks before kindergarten registration. Describe the process and provide translations of written materials and interpreters when necessary.	March
Arrange for community-wide health screenings as a part of kindergarten round-up or registration.	April
Make special arrangements for community members to assist families that are non-English speaking. These community members can assist with providing special information and with completing forms.	April
Publish community event calendars.	Annually







# References & Resources



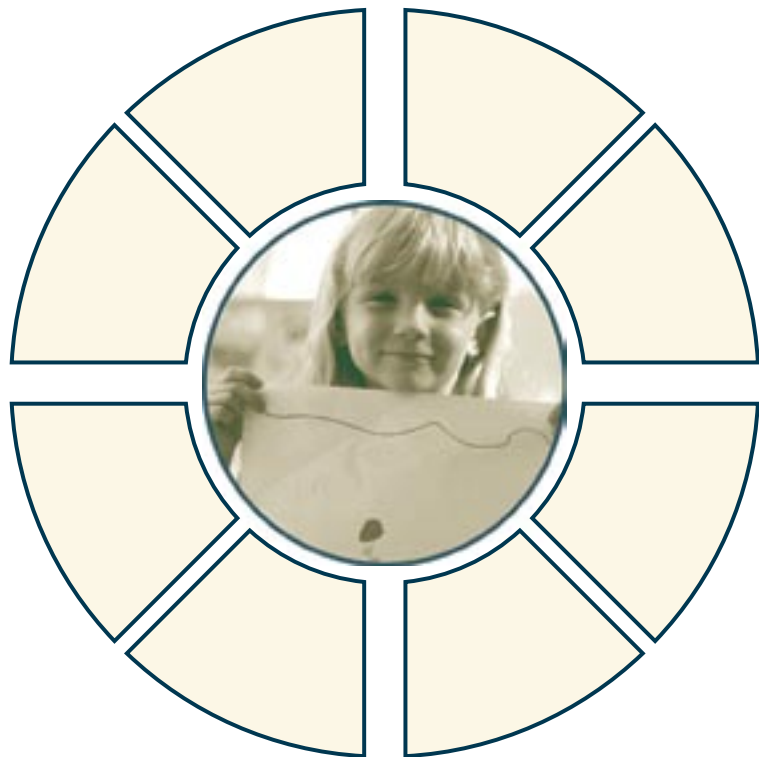
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# Glossary

<b>Collaboration</b>	The process by which organizations or individuals make a commitment to work together on a specified problem and unite to achieve common goals, that cannot be achieved by each organization working alone.
<b>Confidentiality</b>	Child-specific information is shared between agencies only when the family provides written permission to do so. Professionals also refrain from discussing or commenting on any children or their families to others.
<b>Continuity</b>	Refers to the experiences children and families have as they move from one environment to the next. When the two environments are similar or compatible, the result is transitions that have been eased, supported, or smoothed.
<b>Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP)</b>	Developmentally appropriate practice “results from the process of professionals and families making decisions about the well-being and education of children based on at least three important kinds of information or knowledge: (a) what is known about child development and learning; (b) what is known about the strengths, interests, and needs of each individual child in the group in order to adapt for and be responsive to individual needs; (c) knowledge of the social and cultural contexts in which children live to ensure that learning experiences are meaningful, relevant, and respectful for the participating children and their families” (NAEYC, 1997).
<b>Feeder program</b>	An early childhood education program in an elementary school’s catchment area.
<b>Head Start</b>	A comprehensive child development program that has served low-income children and their families since 1965. Their goal is to increase school readiness for low-income children.
<b>Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)</b>	For more than 25 years, federal law has guaranteed a free and appropriate public education to children with disabilities. In 1997, reauthorization by the United States Congress strengthened this law.
<b>Readiness</b>	The condition of children when they enter school, based on five domains of development: health/physical development, social/emotional development, approaches to learning, language development and communication, cognition, and general knowledge.
<b>Receiving program</b>	The school and staff where a child enters kindergarten.
<b>Sending program</b>	The multitude of places that serve children prior to kindergarten. These programs include Head Start, child care centers and homes, preschool and other pre-K programs, early intervention programs, and nursery schools.

<b>Title I</b>	Part of the Improving America's Schools Act (PL 103-382), re-authorized in 1994. It was originally enacted, as Chapter I, in 1965. It provides grants to allow local school districts to develop and operate programs designed to assist low-income students and their families. The legislation stipulates that each district must prepare a plan for the transition of each child from preschool to kindergarten. The primary goal has been to supply funds to schools serving low-income and educationally deprived students.
<b>Transitions</b>	These are changes between different types of activities. In education we think of them in terms of vertical transitions (changes that occur over time, such as moving from preschool to kindergarten) and horizontal transitions (changes that occur during the same day, such as moving from school to after-school activities).
<b>Transition planning</b>	The process of preparing children and families for change.
<b>Transition teams</b>	Groups of people dedicated to transition planning and implementation; usually includes administrators and staff from early childhood education and kindergarten programs, parents, and representatives from community organizations.
<b>Transition implementation</b>	Carrying out the strategies that the transition team has planned in order to ensure continuity.



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## About SERVE

The SERVE Center for Continuous Improvement at UNCG, under the leadership of Dr. Ludwig David van Broekhuizen, is an education organization with the mission to promote and support the continuous improvement of educational opportunities for all learners in the Southeast. The organization's commitment to continuous improvement is manifest in an applied research-to-practice model that drives all of its work. Building on research, professional wisdom, and craft knowledge, SERVE staff members develop tools, processes, and interventions designed to assist practitioners and policymakers with their work. SERVE's ultimate goal is to raise the level of student achievement in the region. Evaluation of the impact of these activities combined with input from stakeholders expands SERVE's knowledge base and informs future research.

This rigorous and practical approach to research and development is supported by an experienced staff strategically located throughout the region. This staff is highly skilled in providing needs assessment services, conducting applied research in schools, and developing processes, products, and programs that support educational improvement and increase student achievement. In the last three years, in addition to its basic research and development work with over 170 southeastern schools, SERVE staff provided technical assistance and training to more than 18,000 teachers and administrators across the region.

The SERVE Center is governed by a board of directors that includes the governors, chief state school officers, educators, legislators, and private sector leaders from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

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