

TRANSITIONS TO KINDERGARTEN:

Timeline and Checklist

Every year, children and families make the transition to kindergarten from a variety of early learning experiences (including child care, PreK, Head Start, developmental/Special Education preschool, or informal care with family, friends, or neighbors). The transition to kindergarten is often a time of uncertainty for children and families, and it can set the stage for long-term school success. The key to successful transitions is that both “sides” of the transition are engaged and working together—early care and education (ECE) programs (the “sending” side) and elementary schools (the “receiving” side).

This tool suggests key strategies for the sending and receiving sides to implement throughout the year to support successful transitions to kindergarten. Some of the activities are ongoing, others have optimal timeframes for completion during the year prior to kindergarten and, importantly, some should happen after kindergarten begins. This tool may be used to inform planning, help with monitoring, and guide improvements to transition to kindergarten efforts.

ONGOING ACTIVITIES



SENDING

- Communicate early and often with families of children who will transition into kindergarten. Learn what questions and hopes they have.
- Create a process to learn which elementary school children will attend for kindergarten.
- Develop and nurture working relationships with the elementary schools where children will attend kindergarten.
- Organize portfolios of children's work and strengths that will help introduce them to their new teachers (e.g., assessment data, work samples, descriptions of the child's strengths and interests, family priorities).
- Involve families in transition planning by providing them with opportunities to advocate for their child and discuss strategies for their success in kindergarten.
- Participate in IEP/IFSP team meetings and, as applicable, begin planning for the transition to kindergarten.



RECEIVING

- Create a process to learn which ECE programs children are transitioning from.
- Develop and nurture working relationships with the ECE programs children attend prior to kindergarten.
- Send newsletters or other forms of communication to local ECE programs about the elementary school and kindergarten program.
- Coordinate a buddy program so children in ECE programs can connect with a kindergarten buddy throughout the year.
- Identify which current students have younger siblings who will be transitioning into kindergarten; establish relationships with those families to learn what questions and hopes they have.
- Involve families in transition planning by providing them with opportunities to advocate for their child and discuss strategies for their success in kindergarten.
- Participate in IEP/IFSP team meetings and, as applicable, begin planning for the transition to kindergarten.

APRIL THROUGH JULY



SENDING

- Identify and connect with elementary schools and community early childhood partners (e.g., Early Childhood Councils, Community Transition Teams, Family Resource Centers) to learn about summer learning and support options for children and families.
- Notify families, in their home language(s), about summer events or programs hosted by community partners, school districts, and elementary schools.



RECEIVING

- Provide information about summer transition events and programs (hosted by the school or by community partners) to local ECE programs.
- Provide guidance written to families, in their home language(s), with ways to support kindergarten readiness during the summer months. Include information on how the school will be ready for children.

AUGUST THROUGH OCTOBER



SENDING

- Provide transition-related professional learning to prepare ECE teachers and staff to support children and families in the transition process.
- Arrange for ECE teachers to collaborate with kindergarten teachers on effective processes and strategies to help children and families transition successfully.
- Coordinate opportunities for ECE teachers to visit kindergarten classrooms.
- Plan joint family events with the elementary school.



RECEIVING

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- Arrange for kindergarten teachers to collaborate with ECE teachers on effective processes and strategies to help children and families transition successfully.
- Coordinate opportunities for kindergarten teachers to visit ECE classrooms.
- Plan joint family events with ECE programs.

NOVEMBER THROUGH JANUARY



SENDING

- Foster collaboration between ECE teachers and kindergarten teachers about classroom practices, curriculum, and appropriate expectations for children transitioning to kindergarten. Plan joint professional development opportunities when possible.
- Support the alignment of ECE curriculum to the state early learning standards.
- Discuss and determine what data should be collected to represent each child's strengths to share with kindergarten teachers. Obtain family permission as necessary and partner with them to understand any assessments of their child.



RECEIVING

- Foster collaboration between ECE providers and kindergarten teachers about classroom practices, curriculum, and appropriate expectations for children transitioning to kindergarten. Plan joint professional development opportunities when possible.
- Support the alignment of kindergarten curriculum to the state early learning standards.
- Review and understand the types of data collected by ECE providers and plan for how it will be used in kindergarten.

● FEBRUARY THROUGH APRIL



SENDING

- Compile written records or documents of each child's progress and pertinent information to send to kindergarten.
- Coordinate with families and elementary school staff to transfer relevant records and data.
- Plan activities to prepare children for what kindergarten looks and sounds like, introduce the expectations, and allow children to role play kindergarten-type activities.
- Become familiar with policies and services available to children in their new school setting and share this information with families.



RECEIVING

- Reach out to incoming families to welcome them to the school and provide opportunities for them to engage in planning activities and provide feedback.
- Invite incoming families to school functions and events.
- Provide families with information about the transition process and kindergarten screening assessments (e.g., dates and locations; what to expect).
- Conduct individual meetings with families to learn about the strengths and needs of their child. Use data shared by ECE program (if available) to guide planning.
- Establish an initial connection with incoming kindergarten students by visiting ECE classrooms or during scheduled school events.

● MAY



SENDING

- Ensure families have all the pertinent information needed for registering their child in kindergarten (e.g., birth certificate, immunizations, physicals, etc.).
- Collaborate with families to identify and develop activities they can use to support their child's kindergarten readiness over the summer.



RECEIVING

- Ask families to confirm where their child will be attending kindergarten.
- Ensure families have all the pertinent information needed for registering their child in kindergarten (e.g., birth certificate, immunizations, physicals).
- Conduct kindergarten orientation for incoming families.

AFTER THE TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN



SENDING

- Contact families during the first few weeks of kindergarten to check-in on the transition process.
- Conduct an annual meeting with elementary school staff to discuss improvements to the transition process and ongoing ECE-Kindergarten alignment. Reflect together on kindergarten transitions in the past year and plan for the coming year.



RECEIVING

- Reach out to families during the first few weeks of kindergarten to check-in on the transition process.
- Conduct an annual meeting with ECE providers to discuss improvements to the transition process and ongoing ECE-Kindergarten alignment. Reflect together on kindergarten transitions in the past year and plan for the coming year.

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