

Transition - Preschool to Kindergarten

Early On...

Guiding parents of preschoolers with special needs through the steps of moving from early intervention programs into public schools in Wyoming



Parent Information Center
500 W. Lott St, Suite A, Buffalo, WY 82834
(307) 684-2277 www.wpic.org



Information & Referral
for Parents of Children
with Disabilities

Parent Information Center

A Project of Parents Helping Parents of Wyoming, Inc.
500 W Lott St Suite A Buffalo, WY 82834 (307) 684-2277

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Transition to kindergarten should be a seamless process. It is the inherent right of EVERY child to enjoy a successful school experience. This experience is designed for all children and takes into consideration the child's continuing social, emotional, cognitive, and physical well-being.



References:

www.ecta.org

www.edu.wyoming.gov

www.mpf.org

www.school.familyeducation.com

A special thank you to all the
Regional Child Developmental Centers
for their positive input.

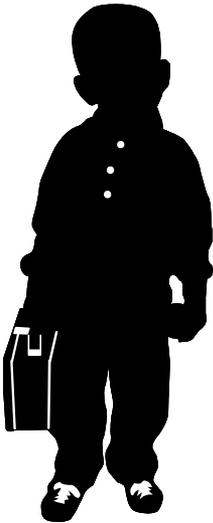
Preparing for a Change

What is Transition?

Transition is the movement from one place to another. It includes the process of moving your child's education from the child developmental center to the public school. When your child leaves preschool to enter elementary school, you have reached a point of transition.

The goal is to help parents and professionals in special education help children understand and complete the transition process from developmental preschool to the public school classroom. Transition planning is a cooperative effort to identify and coordinate services to ensure that children make a successful transition into the school system.

Preparing for the Transition... Why is it Necessary?



As the parent of a child with a disability or special health care need, you may feel uneasy about the move from the developmental center to kindergarten / public school. You may have developed relationships with your child's providers and feel comfortable and relaxed with them. Your providers have probably shared some difficult times with you and have developed a special relationship with you and your child. The thought of someone else taking their place may be emotionally draining.

However, the transition needs to be treated as a great adventure—for you and your child. The best thing you can do to help your child is to get yourself prepared, and then you can concentrate on your child's needs. This can be done by making the most of your child's current program to help him/her learn the specific skills required in the least restrictive environment and by maintaining good communications with the staff. Transition should reduce the stress and anxiety of parents and faculty by providing strategies to encourage a smooth and uninterrupted move.

Transition is a process that should begin *early* in your child's pre-kindergarten year. Informal meetings and observations will take place to educate your child's new teachers and therapists, followed by a formal meeting in which all the parties will meet and discuss the current and future needs of your child. The formal meeting takes place in the spring of your child's pre-kindergarten year.

Not All Children May Be Eligible for Services

Not all children served by the developmental center will continue to be eligible for services in the public school system. This may be because the child has made enough progress within his/her area of need that services are no longer necessary.

Parents of children who do not qualify for services either due to eligibility categories or progress made, may want to participate in a transition meeting anyway, just to let the teacher and school know that there has been a



history of therapeutic intervention. This will give them insight into your child, and can prove to be very useful in adapting teaching styles to learning styles, and helping them be aware of any special health care needs.

What a Parent Should Do



Getting Information...

Contact the special education director in your school district and find out what options, if any, you may have for the placement of your child. In our larger Wyoming cities, you may have several different schools from which to choose for your child to attend, but in our more rural areas you probably will have only one choice. In each of these settings, the services may vary, so it is important to know and understand what each has to offer.

1. Make an appointment to meet with school personnel one at a time. Visit about the supports and services they have to offer. Schools are always busy in the late spring, so do this the fall the year before, or the winter of the year your child will enroll. This will allow you to have more time in making the best choices. Do not wait until time becomes an issue.
2. Make an appointment with the teacher and/or school nurse (if your child has special health care needs). Keep it short. Visit about your child and explain any special needs he/she might have. Make sure you allow

them time to ask questions or voice concerns to you as well.

3. To get a better idea about the program, visit the classroom and see the routine and the activities.

Some things to look for are:

- The physical arrangement of the room.
 - How the program may need to be accommodated or modified to fit your child.
 - How the teacher relates to the children and how he/she teaches them to relate to each other.
 - How disagreements are handled by the teacher.
4. The ultimate goal of this visit is to determine if your child's needs can be met in this learning environment. The fall is a good time to visit so you can observe the new kindergarten students.
 5. Visit with other parents who have already been involved in the transition process. Visit with the pre-school team and discuss the information you have gathered with them.



Sharing Information...



Just as you want information from the school, they would appreciate an equal amount of information from you about your child. Let them know about your child's past experiences, important people in his/her life, his/her strengths and needs, and any health issues that are important.

You need to be open with them if you are going to expect them to provide an appropriate education for your child. The team needs to know all about your child to best support his/her education.

1. Think about goals you want your child to reach in the upcoming year. With everyone working together as a team, those goals can be realized. Be sure to include the skills your child will need to develop to become successful.
2. Invite the school personnel to get to know your child. Ask them to observe your child in the preschool classroom or even visit your home. Make sure you are open to them and welcome them to become an active part of your child's team.
3. Allow school personnel to look through your child's file. This will let them see what kind of services and supports your child has been offered through the developmental center.
4. Discuss your child's specific needs with staff and find out who will help him/her now and in the future.

Develop a health plan with the school to address any critical health needs.

Evaluations

In the state of Wyoming, public schools recognize the educational diagnostic label of Developmental Delay (DD) from three (3) years old through age nine (9). This applies to children who do not qualify for Special Education services under any other category and meet the Developmental Delay criteria.

Under WY Chapter 7 Rules Governing Students with Disabilities, the definition of Developmental Delay is as follows:

(v) "Developmental Delay means a child with a disability ages three (3) through nine (9) who is determined through appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedures to be experiencing developmental delays in the following areas: physical development, cognitive development, communication development, social or emotional development, or adaptive development, that adversely affects educational performance and who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services. Developmental Delay is a category available to children ages three (3) through nine (9) who do not qualify in other categories under these rules, but meet the Developmental Delay criteria. School districts or public agencies are 'free to utilize Developmental Delay as a disability category if adopted by the local governing board and annual assurances are provided to Wyoming Department of Education that the criteria is implemented consistent with these rules.

(A) Developmental Delay eligibility criteria: Eligibility is established through a comprehensive evaluation in accordance with these rules. The initial evaluation shall be conducted by qualified professionals as determined appropriate by the school district or public agency. The initial evaluation process shall be comprehensive and address all areas of need resulting from the suspected disability. In accordance with these rules, a child is identified as a child with a Developmental Delay if the following criteria are met:

(I) The child's performance is significantly below the mean of expected performance, measured at 1.75 standard deviations below the expected performance for children of comparable chronological age in one (1) area (physical, cognitive, social/emotional, communication, or adaptive functioning); or

(II) The child's performance is markedly below the mean of expected performance, measured at 1.5 standard deviations below the expected performance for children of comparable chronological age in two (2) or more areas (physical, cognitive, social/emotional, communication, or adaptive functioning); and

(III) Results of hearing and vision screening that provide evidence that the child's performance is not the result of hearing or vision impairments.

(B) Exceeding the age of eligibility: Consistent with 34 C.F.R. §300.305(e)(1), the school district or public agency must evaluate the child before determining the child is no longer a child with a Developmental Delay."

The school district may want to do an evaluation of your child to satisfy their special education requirements. As parents, you must be aware that even though this is a re-evaluation of your child, the school may call it an *initial* evaluation since it is the first (or initial) time the school district is doing an evaluation.

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the process is different for a re-evaluation than an initial evaluation. This evaluation process may have to take place for the child to receive special services. IDEA is the law that requires a free appropriate public education for all children.



Call the Parent Information Center for more information about IDEA and for our parent's rights handbook called: "*Keys to Confident and Effective Parent Participation in the Special Education Process.*" This handbook can also be found on our website at www.wpic.org under publications.

Parents should ask questions, be informed, and become familiar with their rights under the special education law: the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).



Preparing for the Transition IEP Meeting

Now that you have met all of the professionals, established relationships with your child's educational team, and learned about the special education process, it will be much easier to focus on your child's educational goals. By now everyone should be acquainted with your child and his/her specific needs. Here are some tips to help prepare for the IEP meeting.

1. Collect all the information you want to share at the meeting. Prior to the meeting write down everything you would like to say. It is easy to forget some of your thoughts and to become emotional or discouraged during the meeting.
 - Find out who is responsible for what.
 - What are the correct procedures?
 - What is the timeline for the transition procedures?
 - What criteria determines a child's transition?
 - a) Age;
 - b) Degree of educational growth/developmental level of performance;
 - c) Area(s) of need;
 - d) Your involvement as a parent.

2. Let the Case Manager know if you will be bringing a guest to the meeting.

3. Go over everything with the preschool staff for their input.
4. It is everyone's responsibility to adhere to both state and local level agreements.
5. Be happy with yourself for all the hard work you have done! It will be beneficial to your child.

Your Role on the IEP Team

You are an **equal** member of the team. The professionals' roles are different from yours, but they are not any more valuable. They have experience and knowledge of special education programs for your child, but you have the personal experience and knowledge of your child that only a parent can have.



1. Bring your own copy of the IDEA Regulations so you can make notes on it and refer to it as needed, as well as any health records that the school might need. Ask for any reports early so you can read and be prepared.
2. Listen to the programs and placement the staff suggests. When they are done, give your input and suggestions.
3. Remember it is a give-and-take situation. They may not be able to meet all of your requests. It is better to compromise and maintain a good relationship with the other team members so your child will be able to progress in his/her new environment.

4. Specifics to look at:

- How do you picture your child as a kindergartener?
- What will your child need for kindergarten?
 - a) His/Her needs
 - b) His/Her sense of security and readiness

5. Address your concerns and your readiness for your child to enter kindergarten.

Keep in Touch

Communication between home and school is one of the most important factors in your relationship. It is a long-term relationship and one that takes time and effort.

Visit with the school and the teacher on a regular basis whether it is in person, over the phone, in writing, or by

email. Find out what is the best way to communicate with them, and let them know your preference for communicating.



The main goal is to make sure you continually stay involved in your child's education. If a problem does come up, it will be much easier to solve if a healthy and comfortable relationship has been developed.

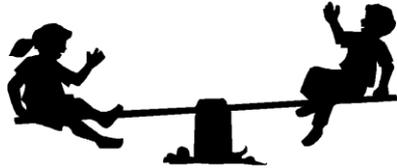
Preparing Your Child for the Transition

Visit often with your child about his or her new school.

Encourage positive talk and allow him/her to express his/her concerns. If the school has a summer program, make sure your child is involved. It is important to remind

your child that this is going to be an exciting new adventure. Keep your comments positive and enthusiastic so your child will feel the same way.

Arrange a visit to the new classroom and, if possible, spend lunch time at the new school. Relax and enjoy this time. This will allow your child to be relaxed and excited about the new school.



Remember your positive attitude will help your child be happy and positive about the upcoming changes.

You Can Choose What is Best For Your Child

In Wyoming, there is no legal requirement for kindergarten attendance, so an option might be to keep your child in the developmental preschool during their 5th year. Whatever you choose, the program must be examined closely to see if it is a good fit educationally and socially for your child. You must decide based on what is best for your child's individual needs. Look at all of the options. Make sure you understand what your rights are. You do have a choice.

Another factor might be to look at the long-range goals for your child and consider the length of time you believe your child should be in school. According to the IDEA, students with disabilities can receive specialized instruction, services and supports under special education (IDEA) until they are 21 years old. Knowing this early might make a difference in your long-term planning for your child.

Kindergarten Screening

You want your children to be as successful as they can be in all situations. You will want to be prepared for kindergarten screening. Take advantage of any early kindergarten screening or school visits your school may offer. Ask the district/school for all the information and tasks that will be required of your child. Ask questions.

- What screening tools are you going to use?
- What are the expectations for my child?

Once you feel like you have good information, go over the information with your Developmental Preschool team. Look at the areas where your child will be most successful and celebrate them.

Next, it will be important to see if there are areas that will be of concern for your child's screening. There are some options. The team may decide that some extra work in areas of concern may help your child. Another option to consider is for the school district to make some accommodations in the kindergarten screening for your child based on his/her needs outlined in the IEP.

In all you do, it is important that you keep in mind the new partnership with your local school district. You are building bridges with a new team and need to value their input in these situations, also.



When School Begins

Remember that positions and people may change during the summer, and the people you met in the spring might be different from those who will be working with your child in the fall. Introduce yourself to those whom you have not yet met who will be working with your child.

Give them a week or two to settle in, and then find a time to get to know them a little better. Ask if they have any questions about your child and let them know you want to be involved with your child's progress and education.

Staying Involved

When school begins, stay involved in your child's daily routine and education. It is important for you to become involved in your child's entire education process, not just his/her IEP.

If possible, volunteer at the school and attend PTO/PTA meetings. Parents with children who have disabilities tend not to get involved in school activities. However, it is important to remember that your child has a voice in the school and you need to make sure it is heard on his/her behalf. It is just as important for your child with a disability to see his/her parent involved as it is for a typical child to see his/her parent involved in the school.



Books about going to school to read to your child

Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten

by Joseph Slate

Seven Little Mice Go to School by Kazuo Iwamura

Pete the Cat: Rocking in My School Shoes by Litwin

Mom, It's My First Day of Kindergarten

by Hyewon Yum

Yoko Learns to Read by Rosemary Wells

The Bernstein Bears Go To School by Bernstein

Where Do You Go To School? by Arnold

Will I have A Friend? by Cohen

First Day at School by Holland

The Little School at Cottonwood Corners by Schick

A Pocketful of Cricket by Caudill

Calico Cat at School by Charles

I Met Polar Bear by Boyd

The Monkey That Went to School by Meshover

Going to Kindergarten by Jones

For more information about special education and disability related topics, or to sign up for our e-newsletter, go to our website at www.wpic.org.