THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
Quality Teaching and Learning

PRESENTER NOTES
CLASSROOM TRANSITIONS

This guide walks you through presenting the ***Managing the Classroom: Classroom Transitions*** in-service suite. This in-service suite includes PowerPoint slides and supporting materials. Please remember to use and adapt these materials as needed for specific audiences.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Presenter PowerPoint slides (17)
- Projector and audio equipment
- Learning Activities:
  - » *Discussion Questions about Transitions in the Classroom* (Parts 1 and 2)
  - » *Planning for Transitions*
  - » *Problem-Solving Vignettes*
- Tips for Teachers
- Tools for Supervisors
- Helpful Resources
- Flip chart or similar large paper and markers for writing participant ideas

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

- This presentation focuses on strategies that promote smooth transitions between classroom activities and routines.
- This presentation is one in a series of in-service suites on how to create well-organized classrooms.
- Video clips and photographs are included to provide concrete examples of strategies and individualized supports.
- Learning activities offer opportunities for participants to discuss how they could apply the strategies to their own classrooms.

SLIDE 1:
MANAGING THE CLASSROOM: CLASSROOM TRANSITIONS

Introductions:

- Begin the training by giving participants background information on yourself.
- Provide an opportunity for participants to introduce themselves (e.g., where they are working, their current role, etc.).

Use an icebreaker that emphasizes the topic of transitions:

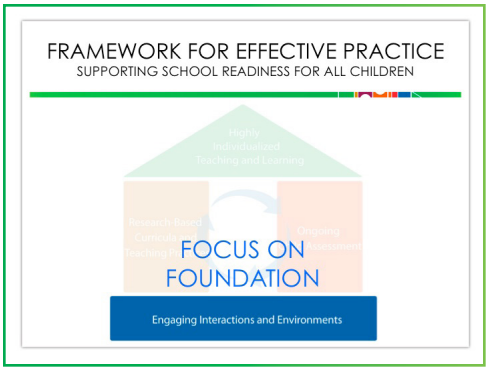
- In small groups have participants share a favorite transition activity they use in their classroom.
- Have participants count all of the transitions they experience in one day. Using their identified number, have participants go to various areas of the room (0–3 transitions, 4–5 transitions, 6 or more transitions). Once participants are in their groups, have them discuss the types of transitions they experience in one day and the advantages and disadvantages to their daily transitions.

Introduce the topic.

Classroom Transitions focuses specifically on creating and managing smooth transitions between activities in the classroom.

Emphasize two main points:

- Children spend a lot of time transitioning between activities during their school day.
- Transitions can be stressful times for children and provoke challenging behaviors. Whole group transitions, that often include periods of waiting with nothing to do, can increase the likelihood of challenging behaviors.



SLIDE 2:
FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

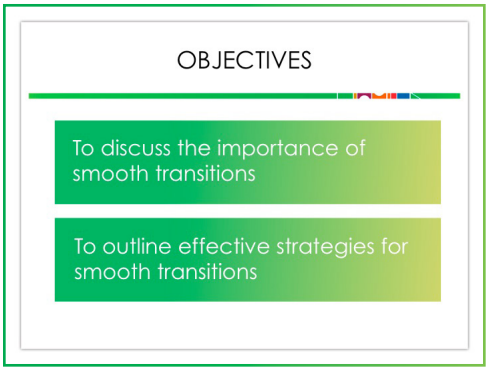
Introduce NCQTL.

Review NCQTL framework for effective practice:

- The House structure supports school readiness for all children.
- The foundation represents effective and engaging interactions and environments.
- The pillars represent research-based curricula and teaching practices and ongoing child assessment.
- The roof represents highly individualized teaching and learning.
- All components interact with each other and are essential for effective everyday practice for all children.

This in-service suite brings us to the **foundation** of the House framework, *Engaging Interactions and Environments*:

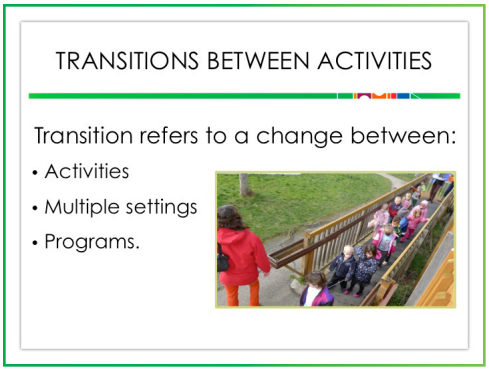
- The foundation of the House represents the fundamental elements of quality preschool practice. These include a well-organized and managed classroom, positive emotional support, and meaningful teacher-child interactions that support children's development and learning.
- Smooth and organized transitions between activities are vital to managing a well-organized classroom.



SLIDE 3:
OBJECTIVES

Outline objectives for the presentation:

- To discuss the importance of smooth transitions.
- To outline effective strategies for smooth transitions.



SLIDE 4:
TRANSITIONS BETWEEN ACTIVITIES

Provide participants with a definition of the practice:

- Transition refers to a change (e.g., who provides services, what activities are available).
- There are three main types of transitions:
  1. Transitions between activities within a given setting (e.g., snack to playground, free play to large group).
  2. Transitions between multiple settings on the same day (e.g., Head Start to after school child care program, Aunt's house to child care).
  3. Transitions between programs (e.g., birth-three programs to preschool, preschool to elementary school).
- The focus of this presentation is transition between activities during the preschool day.

SLIDE 5:
WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

There are several important reasons to address transitions between activities in early childhood classrooms.

- Transitions take up a great deal of time in preschool classrooms.
- During transitions, children often spend a lot of time waiting (e.g., waiting until everyone has finished snack, waiting for everyone to clean up before beginning large group time). All of this time waiting with nothing to do can lead to unrealistic expectations and challenging behaviors.
- Some children (and adults) have stressful and frustrating experiences during transitions between activities (e.g., children arguing over who took out what toys and who should put them away; children not knowing where to put certain toys when they are done with them; children not knowing what to do, children not knowing expectations for the transition).
- Many preschool teachers and other caregivers consider children's ability to independently make transitions between activities one of the essential skills needed in group contexts such as preschool and kindergarten.

LEARNING ACTIVITY: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ABOUT TRANSITIONS IN THE CLASSROOM PART 1

The purpose of this activity is to get team members to start thinking about what transitions might look like in their classrooms. Through this discussion, team members may find that they need to minimize transitions or that they have some challenging behavior during transitions that may be addressed through implementing transition strategies.

Have participants break into small groups or classroom teams.

HANDOUT

Distribute the *Discussion Questions about Transitions in the Classroom* handout to groups.

DISCUSSION

Review directions for Part 1 and make sure each group identifies a note taker and a reporter.

Have reporters from each group share ideas from the small group discussion to the larger group. You may choose to have the groups record answers on a large sheet of paper for everyone to view.

NOTE

After strategies to implement before, during, and after transitions have been discussed, the groups will reconvene after viewing Slide 9 to answer Part 2.

SLIDE 6:
STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT TRANSITIONS: BEFORE THE TRANSITION

There are numerous strategies that can be used to ensure well-organized transitions between activities. These include strategies you use before the transition, during the transition, and following the transition.

Provide examples of strategies to use before the transition:

- Plan your daily schedule to include the minimal number of transitions that occur over the course of the day. Minimize the number of transitions in which all children have to do the same thing at the same time (e.g., Do all children have to go to the restroom at the same time? Can some children come over to the rug and sing a song or read a book, while other children finish an activity?).
- Plan for what adults will do during transition times (e.g., Which adult is responsible for greeting the children? Who will begin looking at books on the carpet with children?).
- Teach children the expectations for the transition routine. Teaching children how to clean up and how to line up will reduce the length of transition times. By reducing transition times, more time is available for children to spend in other learning activities. As children become familiar with the expectations, problem behaviors are less likely to occur.
- Provide verbal and nonverbal cues before transitions (e.g., "Five minutes 'til snack. It's almost time for clean-up," show pictures of the next activity, beat a drum). Once a transition cue has been established, the cue should be used consistently to signal the transition.

SLIDE 7:
STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT TRANSITIONS: DURING THE TRANSITION

Provide examples of strategies to use during transitions:

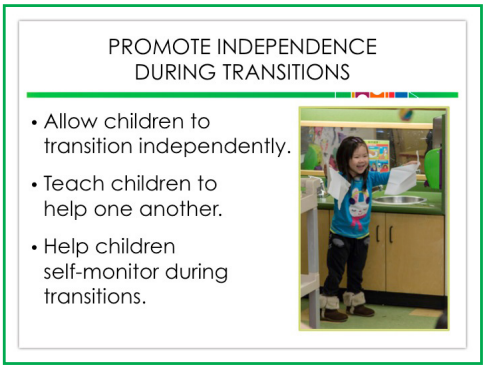
- Engage children in transition activities (sing songs, play word or guessing games, recite rhymes, organize finger plays). Transition activities provide children with an activity to complete while other children are still transitioning. These activities also encourage children to finish their previous task, so that they can play the game or sing the song. During these activities, skills related to the transition can also be taught (e.g., setting the table for snack or lunch, sorting toys during clean-up time).
- Allow children adequate time to finish projects or activities so they do not become frustrated by activities ending too soon. Give them a warning that it is about time to change activities.
- Plan something to engage those children who finish an activity quickly, so they are not waiting without anything to do (e.g., if some children finish cleaning up and getting to large group quickly, they might look at books while waiting for other children to finish cleaning up).
- Individualize support to accommodate individual children's needs.
  - » Photos to help anticipate what activity is next.
  - » Directions given in a child's home language or sign language.
  - » An individual warning to a child that it will soon be time to clean up and begin a new activity.

    Support may need to be individualized (i.e., one child may need an adult to provide a five-minute, three-minute, and one-minute warning before clean up while the rest of the class might need only a three-minute warning).

SLIDE 8:
STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT TRANSITIONS: AFTER THE TRANSITION

Provide positive attention and feedback to children following transitions. For example:

- When children pick up toys without much prompting, share with them how this shows how well they take care of the classroom materials.
- When children are working together to accomplish the task more quickly, let them know how much you appreciate their teamwork (e.g., "Nicholas and Jorge did a great job cleaning together and moving to the carpet").



SLIDE 9:
PROMOTE INDEPENDENCE DURING TRANSITIONS

Provide strategies to promote independence during transitions:

- Allow children to move individually from one area to another area when they complete an activity (e.g., as children finish snack, they are encouraged to go to the carpet and choose a book; as children finish putting away their coats and backpacks, they are encouraged to get a puzzle).
- Teach children to help others (e.g., have children move as partners from one activity to another, or ask one child to help another child gather his/her backpack).
- Help children self-monitor during transitions (e.g., children can be asked to think about how quietly or quickly they moved from one activity to another).

LEARNING ACTIVITY:
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ABOUT TRANSITIONS IN THE CLASSROOM PART 2

The purpose of Part 2 of this activity is to get the team members to start thinking about what strategies they might use to address issues they have in their classrooms.

DISCUSSION

Have participants break into the same small groups or classroom teams as for Discussion Questions Part 1.

Review directions for Part 2.

Walk around the room and check in with groups for questions or concerns. You may need to facilitate strategy solutions by prompting groups to share strategies.

Length of video: Approximately 27 seconds

SLIDE 10:
VIDEO: INDIVIDUAL TRANSITION

Introduce the video.

Inform participants that they will view a video that shows how a teacher supports a child during a transition.

VIDEO

DISCUSSION

Facilitate a discussion by asking participants "How did the teacher support the individual child to transition?"

Length of video: Approximately 36 seconds

SLIDE 11:
VIDEO: WHOLE GROUP TRANSITIONS

Introduce the video.

This video shows two examples of whole group transitions. The first transition is from a small group activity to free choice. The second transition is from the outside playground back into the classroom.

As they watch the video, encourage participants to think about the following questions:

- What transition strategies are used to support these whole group transitions?
- How familiar do you think the children are with these transitions? What makes you think this?

VIDEO

DISCUSSION

Discuss the participants' answers to these questions after viewing.

SLIDE 12:
SMOOTH TRANSITIONS: ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORT

The next few slides are some additional examples of how teachers have supported smooth transitions in their classroom. For each example, a transition problem is outlined and then an image of a teacher-made solution is displayed.

Problem:

When it's time to line up, children are gathering in a group and pushing to get to the door.

Solution:

The teacher provided environmental support by placing colored squares on the floor to define a space for each child and to help children stay in line while they wait to leave the classroom. This environmental support was put in place before the classroom transition to line up.

NOTE

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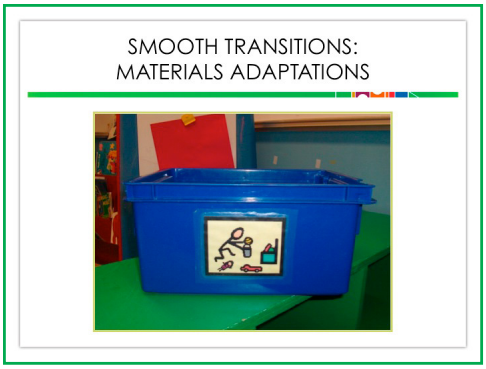

SLIDE 13:
SMOOTH TRANSITIONS: MATERIALS ADAPTATIONS

Problem:

In this classroom, a child was confused during clean up time and was not able to put toys in their proper places. He wandered around the room rather than cleaning up.

Solution:

To support this child, the teacher adapted her materials by putting out a "clean-up" bucket. The child works on putting items in the box during clean up time. The teacher later empties the box by putting items in their proper locations. This material adaptation was put in place before the transition to clean up.

NOTE

Show blank slide first when describing the problem. Click on slide to reveal the picture when presenting the modification.

SLIDE 14:
SMOOTH TRANSITIONS: ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORT

Problem:

In this classroom, a few children are engaging in challenging behaviors during their wait to wash their hands.

Solution:

To support an efficient and effective transition, the teacher posted ideas of things to do while waiting. Children are encouraged to engage in these activities during their wait. This environmental support was put in place before the transition to wash hands.

NOTE

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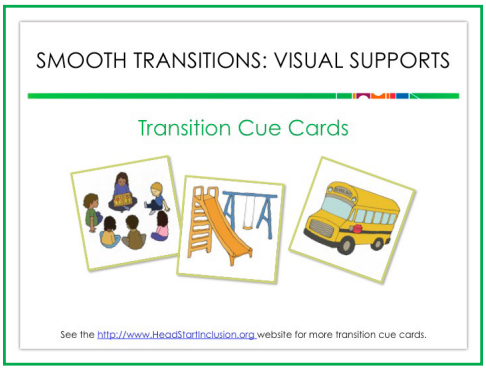


SLIDE 15:
SMOOTH TRANSITIONS: VISUAL SUPPORTS

Problem:

In this classroom, some children want to do another activity that occurs later in the day, such as going out to the playground, and are anxious that they will miss out on the activity. Other children have difficulty moving from an activity because they do not know or are anxious about what activity will come next.

Solution:

To support the transitions and relieve children's anxiety, the teacher provided visual supports which show children the activities they will participate in during the day and what activity will come next in the day. A visual schedule that is accessible for children and reviewed during the day can support transitions throughout the day. This visual support was used during the transition.

NOTE

Show blank slide first when describing the problem. Click on slide to reveal the picture when presenting the modification.

LEARNING ACTIVITY:
PLANNING FOR TRANSITIONS

Have participants break into teaching teams (i.e., co-teachers, lead, and assistant teachers) or teams of classrooms with similar schedules to collaboratively work on planning a schedule that supports smooth transitions.

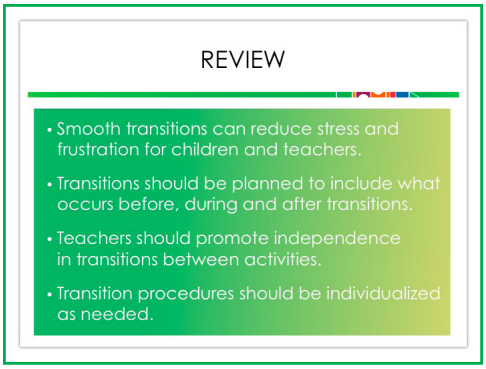
HANDOUT

Distribute the *Planning for Transitions* handout to groups.

Review directions and examples.

- First have participants make a chart with space for all classroom transitions.
- In the first column, participants will list transitions that occur throughout the day and the times at which these occur.
- In the subsequent columns, participants will list possible ideas to use before, during, and after transitions to make these times more efficient and effective.

Walk around the room and check-in for questions or concerns. You may need to facilitate strategy solutions by prompting groups to share strategies.



SLIDE 16:
REVIEW

Review the main points of the discussion:

1. Smooth transitions can reduce stress and frustration for children and teachers.
2. Transitions should be well-planned to include what occurs before, during, and after transitions.
3. Teachers should promote independence during transitions.
4. Transition procedures should be individualized as needed.

HANDOUT

Based on participant roles:

Distribute and review *Tips for Teachers* handout.

Distribute and review *Tools for Supervisors.*

Distribute *Helpful Resources* list and review key resources.

LEARNING ACTIVITY:
PROBLEM-SOLVING VIGNETTES

Have participants break into small groups or classroom teams.

HANDOUT

Distribute the *Problem Solving Vignettes* learning activity to the groups.

Review directions and make sure each group identifies a note taker and a reporter.

DISCUSSION

Have participants read the vignettes and discuss the questions. Alternately, you may approach the first vignette as a whole group discussion and have participants work in small groups to discuss the second vignette.

After adequate time for discussion, have groups share answers to the questions with the larger group.

Possible answers:

Some possible reasons for the challenging behaviors that Michelle and Jim display:

- Anxiety over moving to another activity.
- Difficulty understanding what activities will occur next.
- Prefer the activity he/she is currently participating in to the upcoming activity.
- Did not complete whatever he/she wanted to during the activity.
- Has difficulties with peers during the transition (e.g., he/she is pushed in line, he/she is slower than other students and so is always last).
- He/she has to wait during the transition (e.g., students go in from the playground and wait in the hall while everyone goes to the bathroom; teacher is not prepared at the beginning of circle and often children are waiting while she gathers materials).

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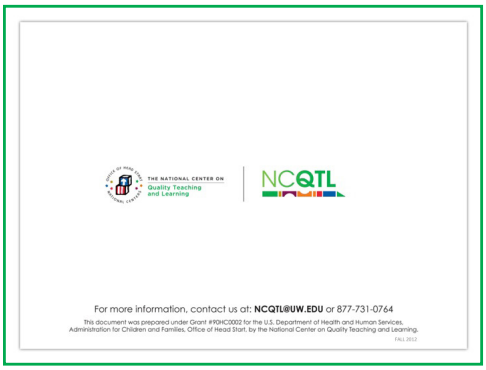
Possible solutions:

- Providing visual cues of the schedule or upcoming events.
- Providing a reminder of upcoming transitions (visual and/or verbal).
- Giving students a job to perform during the transition (e.g., Michelle can pass out materials for circle, Jim can be the door holder).
- Scheduling for transitions so that children are not all doing the same thing or waiting for extended amounts of time.
- Reevaluate the schedule to make certain children are not missing part of the activity (because the child was in a pull-out class, had to complete something from the previous activity, was completing classroom chores, etc.).
- Praise children for following transition routines.



SLIDE 17:
CLOSING

Provide participants with NCQTL contact information and encourage them to visit our website for additional resources on effective teaching practices.