



GET READY FOR KINDERGARTEN!

Activity Calendar for Teachers



THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
Quality Teaching
and Learning



WINTER 2014





GET READY FOR KINDERGARTEN! ACTIVITY CALENDAR FOR TEACHERS

The first day of kindergarten! It's one of the most exciting events in a child's life. The transition from Head Start to kindergarten can be a wonderful time, but it's also a time of uncertainty, new demands, and big expectations for children and their families. How can we make this time less confusing and overwhelming?

As a teacher, you can make a significant difference in the early education experience of the children from your class when you build a process for a smooth transition to kindergarten. A transition that builds on familiar experiences and relationships will give the children in your class the best springboard to social adjustment and academic success.



WHY IS A QUALITY TRANSITION IMPORTANT?

Multiple large-scale research studies have found that transition activities for children and families are associated with these gains in kindergarten:

- Reduced stress and higher ratings of social emotional competence at the beginning of school year
- Improved academic growth and increased family involvement over the year
- Stronger benefits for children living in poverty

WHAT DOES A QUALITY TRANSITION INVOLVE?

Evidence from research and the field suggests these key elements:

- Positive relationships between children, parents, and schools
- A transition team of Head Start and kindergarten administrators and teachers, parents, and community members
- Assessments, standards, and curriculum that align between preschool and kindergarten
- Joint professional development between preschool and kindergarten personnel
- Information and communication that is shared with parents and the community at large

HOW DO WE IMPROVE CHILDREN'S TRANSITION?

Educators can use these key principles:

- Approach transition collaboratively.
- Involve all key stakeholders in the process.
- Align children's experiences across systems (i.e., preschool and kindergarten classrooms).



HOW TO USE THIS CALENDAR:

Start small: Don't feel like you need to take on all the activities suggested in this calendar each month. It's important to realize that you can begin to provide some support for children's transitions, and that is much better than providing none at all.

Set reasonable goals: Check the box next to each activity you plan to do that month; you can choose two or three to start. Reasonable goals will help you to support your children.

Expand your range of activities as you can: Supplementary activities are listed in the back of this calendar. As you become more proficient with transition activities, you can add new ones.

Consider transitions in as well as out: Although the focus of this calendar is to help you provide support for children transitioning to kindergarten, it's also important to consider the needs of children who are transitioning into your classroom.



This *Get Ready for Kindergarten!* calendar provides suggestions of activities for each month to help you foster connections—between the children and families in your Head Start program, and the schools and community beyond preschool. The transition to kindergarten is supported by:

CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- The children and families in your classroom want to know—what will kindergarten be like? Introduce children to the kindergarten classroom, the school environment, the new routines, and their new teacher.
- Involve families during the transition process to the new school.

CONNECTIONS WITH SCHOOLS

- Help kindergarten teachers become familiar with individual children.
- Collaborate with kindergarten and preschool staff to identify goals for children. Share information over time about children's progress.
- Encourage alignment between preschool and kindergarten—the environments, curricula, assessments, and interactions.

CONNECTIONS WITH THE COMMUNITY

- Use resources within the community to support continuity in the transition process.



SIX STEPS TO SUCCESSFUL KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION PLANNING

1. Establish your partnerships, identify transition team members, and designate leaders.
2. Identify goals.
3. Assess current transition practices used in your community.
4. Identify the data or evidence you have for practices that are or are not working.
5. Plan and prioritize: reevaluate goals or create new ones, and plan steps to take.
6. Implement and evaluate.



CONNECTING WITH ...

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- ❑ Notify families, in their native language(s), about upcoming kindergarten orientations and open houses.
- ❑ Engage families to help generate ways they can participate in their children's transition to kindergarten: for example, by talking with their children about what kindergarten is like, practicing new skills at home, and contacting their children's new teachers with questions or concerns.

SCHOOLS

- ❑ Plan to meet and work with kindergarten teachers. Establish relationships for the current year's transitions and for future years.
- ❑ Visit previous students at their new elementary schools to "check in."

AUGUST



CONNECTING WITH ...

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- ❑ Meet with families through preschool orientation, home visits, and open house gatherings prior to the first day of school.
- ❑ Discuss school readiness goals with families and describe how you will work with their children towards those goals throughout the year.
- ❑ Partner with families to generate ways they can support school readiness goals at home.

SCHOOLS

- ❑ Exchange information with kindergarten teachers on kindergarten entrance expectations and readiness goals.
- ❑ Share the documents and resources you use to track children's progress with kindergarten teachers.



SEPTEMBER





CONNECTING WITH ...

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- ❑ Share screening results with families and link those results to resources they can use to support their children's needs.
- ❑ Provide families with kindergarten registration information in their native language(s). Let them know what documentation they will need to bring to registration in the winter or spring.

SCHOOLS

- ❑ Find out which elementary schools the children may attend after they leave your program.
- ❑ Contact schools to exchange information and ideas about specific curriculum areas, such as math, literacy, language development, etc. These could be monthly cross-classroom meetings, shared electronic workspaces, or ongoing classroom exchanges.
- ❑ Invite kindergarten teachers to a preschool show-and-tell. Share how preschool children are preparing for kindergarten.

OCTOBER





CONNECTING WITH ...

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- Share honest and accurate information with families about how the children are doing, based on classroom assessment results.
- Collaborate with families to develop a set of age-appropriate, in-home learning activities they can use to support kindergarten readiness.

SCHOOLS

- Visit kindergarten classrooms and school buildings to learn about similarities in the physical environment and daily routines.
- Discuss the differences between preschool and kindergarten learning spaces and daily schedules. Look for ways to make them more consistent across settings.
- Meet with kindergarten teachers to learn about steps you can take to align classroom practices, routines, and assessments.

NOVEMBER



CONNECTING WITH ...

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- ❑ Provide activities that families can do with their children over the winter break to support school readiness.
- ❑ Offer families the support needed over the winter break.

SCHOOLS

- ❑ Collaborate with schools on a joint-curriculum night for families to be held in the coming year.
- ❑ Coordinate and share transition activities and approaches with schools.



DECEMBER





CONNECTING WITH ...

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- ❑ Host a joint-curriculum night with kindergarten teachers for children and families. Plan fun activities and games that feature the preschool curriculum and the kindergarten curriculum.
- ❑ Invite a community librarian to read a book at curriculum night; also invite a kindergarten teacher to meet the families and children, and answer questions about kindergarten.

SCHOOLS

- ❑ Send an invitation to local schools to participate in your curriculum night.
- ❑ Connect with a kindergarten teacher who can come observe your preschool classroom. Ask the teacher to share thoughts on how the preschool environment aligns with the kindergarten classroom.

JANUARY





CONNECTING WITH ...

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- ❑ Provide information to families in their native language(s) about upcoming kindergarten registration events.
- ❑ Share children's progress toward kindergarten readiness with their families.
- ❑ Collaborate with families to generate ways they can support their children's kindergarten readiness.
- ❑ Encourage children to work toward finishing classroom projects independently. Continue this practice for the rest of the school year.

SCHOOLS

- ❑ Discuss how to improve children's progress toward school readiness with kindergarten teachers.
- ❑ Work with schools to plan events and opportunities for children to learn about their new school (classroom visits, family events, etc.).

FEBRUARY



CONNECTING WITH ...

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- ❑ Share information about kindergarten expectations with families.
- ❑ Provide families with kindergarten registration information; when and where, what documentation to bring, etc.
- ❑ Encourage families to connect with their children's new school by asking the new teacher or principal any questions they may have.
- ❑ Support students' independence in self-care skills (going to the bathroom, washing hands, taking off and putting on coats, etc.). Continue for the rest of the school year.

SCHOOLS

- ❑ Ask kindergarten teachers to discuss their expectations for children who enter kindergarten.

MARCH





CONNECTING WITH ...

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- Work with children to prepare portfolios for their kindergarten teachers.
- Share books about kindergarten with children. (See resource list at the end of the calendar.)
- Teach kindergarten recess games to your preschool children.

SCHOOLS

- Contact schools to request forms and information in families' native language(s) if needed.
- Invite current kindergarten families to talk with incoming families about what to expect and how they can continue to be engaged in their children's learning and development.

APRIL



CONNECTING WITH ...

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- ❑ Provide school readiness activities that parents can do with their children over the summer.
- ❑ Invite kindergarten children to come visit your class and talk about what kindergarten is like.
- ❑ Read storybooks to children about kindergarten. (See resource list at the end of the calendar.)
- ❑ Help students learn self-management skills: Putting away backpacks, putting papers in backpacks, getting their coats, etc.

SCHOOLS

- ❑ Arrange visits to kindergarten classrooms for the children in your class.
- ❑ Share information with kindergarten teachers about the environments children are coming from and going to. Discuss school-specific vocabulary, behavior management, mealtime routines, etc.



MAY





CONNECTING WITH ...

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- ❑ Refer families, as needed, to community resources, such as libraries, museums, and social services for further information about kindergarten and kindergarten readiness.
- ❑ Help children write letters and/or draw pictures that describe themselves and their families for their future teachers.

SCHOOLS

- ❑ Collaborate with kindergarten teachers around placement and screening.

JUNE





CONNECTING WITH ...

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

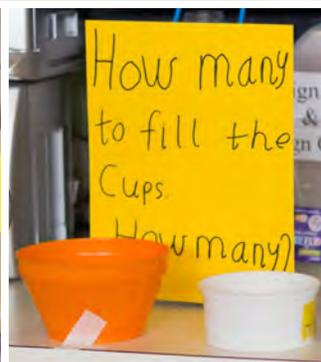
- ❑ Help families find out what school supplies are required for kindergarten and how to purchase them.

SCHOOLS

- ❑ Contact schools to request forms and information in families' native language(s) if needed.
- ❑ Organize a kindergarten camp with schools and community partners where children can meet kindergarten teachers and learn kindergarten rules and routines before the start of school.

JULY





SUPPLEMENTAL TRANSITION ACTIVITIES

- Meet with kindergarten teachers to learn about the results of kindergarten entrance assessments.
- Inform kindergarten teachers and staff about the needs of special populations of children who will be transitioning.
- Collaborate with community sponsors (consider local volunteer organizations) for events like Back-to-School Night.
- Share school readiness goals with professionals at libraries, children's museums, community centers, etc., and gather information about how their programming can support school readiness for the children in your classroom.
- Ask schools about their approaches to collecting student information through observation, observation checklists, anecdotal records, and portfolios. Can you use similar approaches?
- Share information with other programs and schools, examine each other's assessment tools, and discuss what you are learning. What works, what is difficult, and what gives you the information you need?
- Partner with schools to distribute fliers about school readiness and post them in public places.
- Provide kindergarten registration information to social service workers for the families they serve.
- Use social networking, including text messaging and community websites, to send out kindergarten registration information; work with schools, businesses, and community groups.
- Partner with businesses and community organizations to create a Public Service Announcement (PSA) for radio or television to advertise what it means to be "school ready," and highlight the skills that are needed in kindergarten, as well as health check-ups and other requirements.
- Collaborate with schools to create a PSA for radio or television to advertise kindergarten registration dates and locations.
- Plan and conduct joint home visits with kindergarten teachers for children transitioning to kindergarten.
- Work with community organizations to organize kindergarten readiness events, such as an outing to a museum.
- Ask community organizations for funds to create resources, such as booklets for parents. Funding may be in exchange for advertisements in the booklet.

For more information and assistance on how to implement a plan, visit <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/center/transition> or contact your Early Childhood Education Specialist.



SELECTED CHILDREN'S BOOKS ABOUT KINDERGARTEN

- *A Place Called Kindergarten* by Jessica Harper
- *Countdown to Kindergarten* by Alison McGhee
- *First Day Jitters* by Julie Danneberg
- *I am Too Absolutely Small for School* by Lauren Child
- *Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come!* by Nancy Carlson
- *Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come/Preparate, kindergarten! Alla voy!* by Nancy Carlson
- *Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten* by Joseph Slate and Ashley Wolff
- *Off to Kindergarten* by Tony Johnston
- *Que Nervios! El Primer Dia de Escuela* by Julie Danneberg
- *The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn
- *Un Beso en Mi Mano* by Audrey Penn
- *Welcome to Kindergarten* by Anne Rockwell



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