

Overview

More than 320,000 children from Head Start programs enter kindergarten each year. Research shows that smooth kindergarten transitions have a direct impact on children's social and emotional and academic outcomes in kindergarten and the years to follow.

Transitions to kindergarten are more successful when families, programs, and receiving elementary schools form thoughtful partnerships and develop action plans for the process. Together, they can create continuity across systems, promote smoother transitions, and strengthen child and family well-being.

This video highlights the transition experience from parents' perspectives. Program staff may review this video during training, team discussion, or individual reflection. Families and staff from programs and receiving schools might have a "watch party" to discuss the video with families and receiving schools.

After viewing the video, use this guide to:

- Reflect on the transition experience from parents' perspective
- Explore three strategies to bridge the transition to kindergarten
- Reflect on how programs and schools encourage a successful transition
- Consider future activities to enhance transition success



Perspective-Taking

Reflect on the parents' perspectives in the video.

| Parent Perspectives | Reflection Questions |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What hopes and questions they have for a successful transition• How they feel about the transition to kindergarten• What role families, Head Start programs, and receiving elementary schools can play in the transition to kindergarten• How they participated in the transition to kindergarten• The importance of openness to family cultures and languages | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is most interesting about the experiences parents shared in this video? What is surprising?• How can the insights from parents inform transition activities and partnership-building with receiving schools?• How can programs and schools create welcoming environments that encourage parents to reflect on their experiences with transitions?• How can parents' perspectives be included in future transition planning? |

Key Strategies for Successful Transitions

Reflect on the three strategies highlighted in the video. Consider how these may apply to your program's transition practices.

| Sharing Information | Reflection Questions |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prepare families for what to expect and invite them to share their ideas and concerns.• Share data between early learning and elementary school settings.• Maintain strong relationships and open communication with families.• Communicate with families in their home languages, recognize the importance of home languages, and foster the use of home languages.• Work with families to share their cultures and experiences with receiving school staff. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How is information shared with families about the transition to kindergarten? What other information might be helpful to families?• How do programs and receiving schools promote home-school connections to foster parent engagement in learning and classroom experiences?• How do parents receive information about local parent-to-parent organizations, family peer networks, and parent-initiated school-community efforts that support seamless transitions? How can these connections encourage parents to continue in leadership roles in new settings?• How do families learn about the new setting—for example, the supplies they will need, before- and after-school care, transportation, food, and community resources? |
| Building Relationships | Reflection Questions |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learn about the unique strengths, interests, goals, and concerns of each family and child.• Identify opportunities for parents to build and use leadership skills.• Coordinate events for families that address their common interests and concerns.• Embrace family practices, values, opinions, cultures, and languages. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How are respectful relationships and trust established with the children and families who are transitioning to kindergarten?• How are opportunities created for parents to continue their leadership in the new setting? Can parents offer feedback and have a role in decision-making?• How do families connect with other families in the program or community who have children of similar age transitioning to new learning settings, or who have transitioned recently?• How does the program communicate with parents about transitions that might be challenging for their child? How does the program work with parents to develop strategies that can help their child transition? |

Key Strategies for Successful Transitions, cont.

Reflect on the three strategies highlighted in the video. Consider how these may apply to your program's transition practices.

| Aligning Across Settings | Reflection Questions |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage learning at home by sharing child outcomes and kindergarten readiness activities.• Plan and offer shared professional development for programs and receiving schools about strategies to engage families as partners.• Consider the transition process from the perspectives of children and families. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What shared professional development and planning opportunities are available for kindergarten teachers and program staff? What opportunities would support further collaboration between them?• How do Head Start programs and elementary schools work together to plan transition activities? What activities could be valuable opportunities for developing partnerships?• How do local Head Start programs and elementary schools share their expectations and norms? Are there any areas of misalignment to discuss?• How do you ensure that families and children continue to experience welcoming environments (parent- and family-friendly-friendly schools)?• How can feedback from children and families about their perspectives and experiences of the transition process be used for continuous learning and improvement? |

For more information about this resource, please contact us:
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