

Prekindergarten to Kindergarten Transition Toolkit

For Administrators and Educators



The transition toolkit is a resource for administrators and educators providing a structured approach to planning, implementing, and evaluating transition activities. It aims to ensure all stakeholders are prepared, engaged, and working collaboratively to support children's successful entry into Kindergarten and promote positive educational outcomes.

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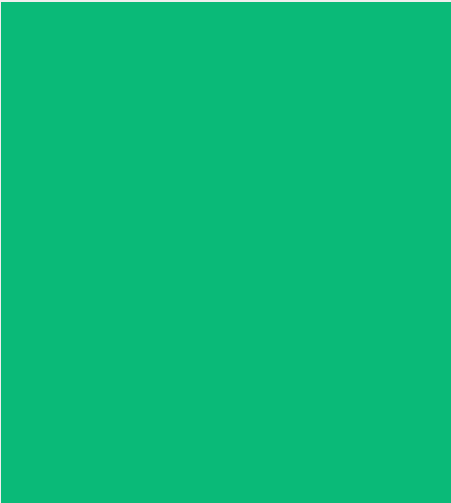
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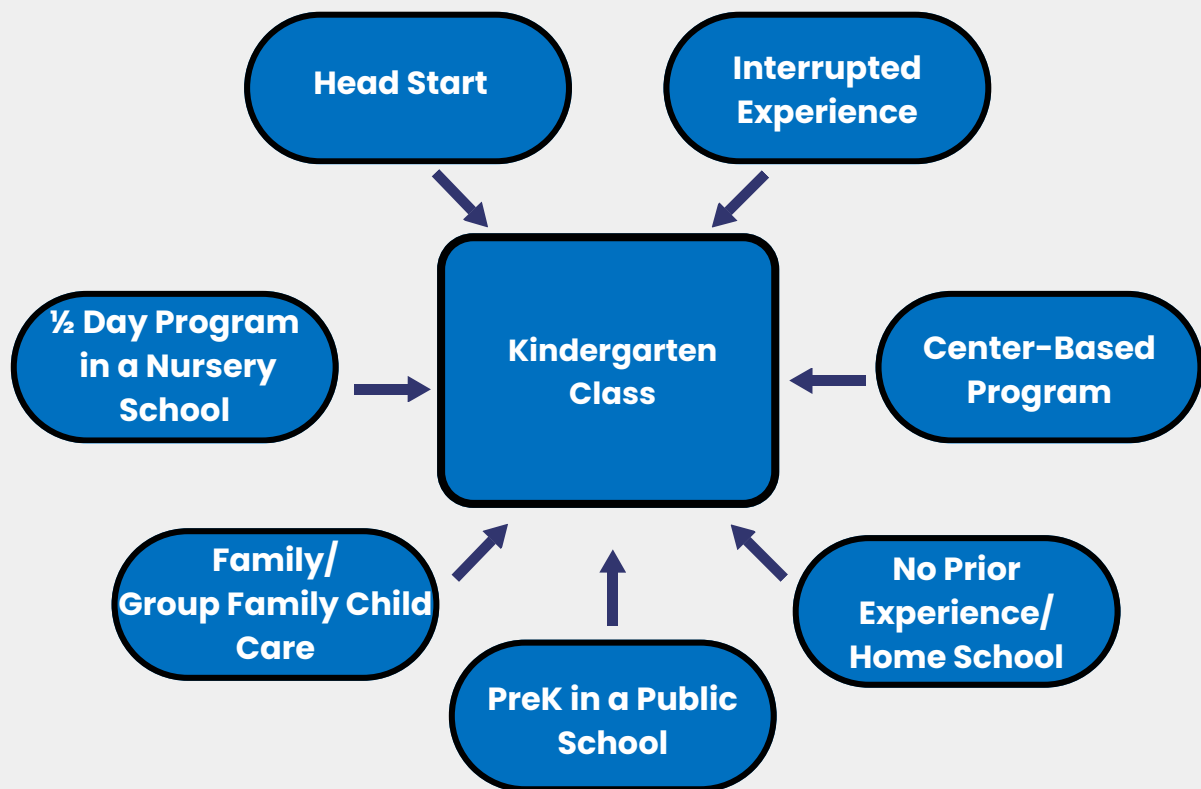
This toolkit is designed to provide guidance for school districts in developing and fostering an effective transition plan from Prekindergarten to Kindergarten. Districts should tailor their decisions regarding this guidance to reflect their specific locations, available resources, programs, and the communities they serve.



Introduction

Transitioning from Prekindergarten (PreK) to Kindergarten is a critical step in a child's education. The early childhood years are full of new experiences, opportunities and expectations for children and families alike. Early childhood educators and program leaders play a significant role in facilitating the transition of students from PreK to Kindergarten. Well-planned and thoughtful early childhood transitions improve academic performance, social-emotional adjustment, and school engagement (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000; Schulting, Malone, & Dodge, 2005; NIEER, n.d.). Kindergarten students arrive with diverse PreK experiences, ranging from formal settings to none at all, as illustrated in the graphic below. Due to this, there can be disparities in readiness which highlights the need for a comprehensive transition plan. According to the National Institute for Early Education Research, children who have positive transition experiences are more likely to feel confident and secure in their new school environment, reducing the risk of anxiety and behavioral issues (NIEER, n.d.).

Where Kindergarteners Can Come From



How To Use This Toolkit

Throughout this toolkit, there are strategies, tools, and supporting documents to assist effective transitions from PreK to K. This toolkit focuses on four key areas that emphasize the importance of fostering connections that support children and families (see pages 3-4):



Establishing Child-School Relationships



Strengthening Family- School Relationships



Nurturing Program-School Relationships



Cultivating Community-School Relationships

This toolkit offers comprehensive guidance on the development of your transition plan. The accompanying Appendix provides essential resources to facilitate both the development and evaluation of this plan. These resources include a structured tool to navigate the transition process, a robust tool for evaluating plan effectiveness following a program year, and a twelve-month meeting planner designed to enhance organizational efficiency.

The collage shows several key documents from the toolkit. At the top left is 'Books to Share', a list of digital and physical resources. Below it is the 'Prekindergarten Learner Profile', a form for tracking a child's skills and interests. To the right is the 'Family Survey', a questionnaire for parents. At the bottom right is 'Appendix C', which includes a '12 Month Meeting Planner' and a 'Prekindergarten Reflection and Planning Tool'.

To further support teachers in the Kindergarten transition, this toolkit includes valuable resources such as a student learner profile template, an end of year family survey, and a comprehensive list of recommended Kindergarten resources and books. Practical guidance on effectively implementing these tools is provided throughout the document

Fostering Connections

Fostering connections is essential for the transition to Kindergarten, for both students and families. As children shift from early learning environments or home settings to Kindergarten, nurturing supportive and positive relationships become possible (Collaborations, Connections, and Six Steps to Success | ECLKC, 2020).

Establishing Child-School Relationships



Prior to the Kindergarten year, it is important for school personnel to build relationships with the incoming students. Here are some suggestions:

- **School Tour & Classroom Visits:** Class trip to the school playground or new classroom.
- **Story Time:** Visit the new school library for a story time session with the librarian or Kindergarten teacher.
- **Welcome Art:** Have children create art projects such as self-portraits or family pictures to display in the new Kindergarten classroom to help create a sense of ownership and belonging.

Strengthening Family-School Relationships



It is important to welcome families to the school community to begin building positive family-school relationships. Research has shown that families who have a positive experience at the beginning of their child's education are more involved throughout the child's academic career. For instance:

- **Open House Events:** Host an open house event where children and their families can tour the school, visit classrooms, and meet teachers and staff.
- **Kindergarten Orientation:** Conduct orientation sessions for families to learn about the Kindergarten curriculum, daily schedules, and how they can support their child's learning at home.
- **Interactive Workshops:** Organize fun workshops that include hands-on activities for children and their families such as story time or arts and crafts, and provide families with materials such as books, school supplies, and information on routines and expectations.

Fostering Connections

Nurturing Program–School Relationships



Sharing relevant information about the child and family between the early learning program and the school district should be a collaborative effort. This involves more than just transferring records; true collaboration encompasses:

- **Child Profiles:** Create child profiles that include information about each child’s strengths, interests, and developmental progress to be shared with Kindergarten teachers (see Appendix D for the Prekindergarten Learner Profile).
- **Data Sharing Agreements:** Establish data-sharing agreements between Prekindergarten and Kindergarten programs to ensure relevant information is transferred securely and effectively.
- **Transition Teams:** Establish teams consisting of Prekindergarten and Kindergarten teachers, school administrators, and various support staff to coordinate transition activities through regularly scheduled meetings.



Cultivating Community–School Relationships

Strong community–school partnerships benefit families transitioning to kindergarten. By reducing anxiety, increasing confidence, and providing support networks, these partnerships empower families to prepare their children. A positive school climate, improved child outcomes, and a smoother transition result. Importantly, community organizations, libraries, and other local entities can also contribute to this preparation, expanding the support network beyond the school setting. Examples to further strengthen these relationships and support families are:

- **Community Events–** Organize community events such as fairs and family fun days to bring families, school staff, and community members together.
- **Partnerships with Local Organizations:**
 - Library partnerships to offer story time sessions.
 - Healthcare providers to offer health screenings or informational sessions on health and wellness.
 - Nonprofit organizations that focus on early childhood education, family support, and community services to provide additional resources and programs.
- **Community Bulletin Boards:** Maintain bulletin boards in the school and around the community with information about upcoming events, resources, and volunteer opportunities.

Establishing the Transition Team

Transition teams facilitate a smoother educational shift in grades by emphasizing emotional, social, and academic preparedness. This is achieved through collaboration among teachers, families, administrators, and other professionals. Tailored strategies support children, fostering development and a positive school attitude for academic success and personal growth (Patton & Wang, 2012).

When setting up the transition team, it is essential to identify stakeholders who are invested in helping students during their Kindergarten transition experience. The upcoming pages offer suggestions on possible team members and their roles. The team should choose members who are most suitable to assist this initiative in the school community. Transition teams are not obligated to include all the recommended members or follow a set team size. Remember this list is not exhaustive and the team composition should be customized to meet the specific needs and size of each community and school.

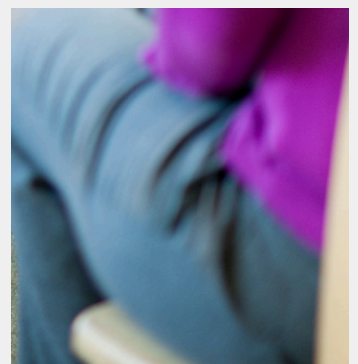
Identify Transition Team Members



Identify Team Member's Roles and Responsibilities



Create and Implement the District's Comprehensive Plan



Identifying Transition Team Members

1

Transition Coordinator

Role: Oversees the entire transition process and coordinates activities among the team.

Possible Responsibilities:

- Develop and implement the transition plan (see Appendix I).
- Schedule and facilitate team meetings.
- Act as a liaison between stakeholders.
- Communicate with families about transition activities and timelines.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the transition plan.

2

Prekindergarten Teacher

Role: Provides insights on each child's developmental progress and needs.

Possible Responsibilities:

- Share developmental records and assessment data with Kindergarten teachers.
- Complete the Prekindergarten Learner Profile to share with the transition team (see Appendix D).
- Prepare children for the transition through classroom activities.
- Communicate with families about what to expect in Kindergarten.

3

Kindergarten Teacher

Role: Provides insights on the children transitioning into Kindergarten and the preparation of the classroom.

Possible Responsibilities:

- Review the Prekindergarten Learner Profile provided by previous teacher (see Appendix D).
- Plan activities that ease the transition for new students.
- Communicate with Prekindergarten teachers to understand individual student needs.
- Communicate with families to establish positive relationships.

Identifying Transition Team Members – Continued

4

School Administrator

Role: Provides leadership and support for the transition team.

Possible Responsibilities:

- Ensure that the transition plan aligns with school policies and goals.
- Allocate resources needed for transition activities.
- Support professional development for staff on transition best practices.
- Foster a welcoming environment for new students and their families.

5

School Counselor or Social Worker

Role: Addresses the social and emotional needs of transitioning children and their families.

Possible Responsibilities:

- Provide counseling services to children experiencing difficulties during transitions in 1-1 or small group settings.
- Support families in understanding and coping with the transition process.
- Work with teachers to identify and support children with special needs.

6

Special Education Staff

Role: Support children with special needs during the transition process.

Possible Responsibilities:

- Ensure that Individualized Education Plans are in place and implemented.
- Collaborate with Prekindergarten teachers to provide appropriate accommodations.
- Communicate with families about special education services and support.
- Monitor and adjust support as needed during the transition.

7

ENL Staff

Role: Offer expertise in supporting children who are dual language learners and their families.

Possible Responsibilities:

- Assess student's/families language using the EML Language Profile (see Appendix A).
- Create and implement individualized language development plans.
- Provide tailored support and resources to ensure a smooth transition and continued language growth in both their native language and English.

Identifying Transition Team Members – Continued

8

Family Members

Role: Provide emotional support, foster routines, and prepare the child for the new school environment.

Possible Responsibilities:

- Communicate with the school to gather information on the transition plan.
- Support student academically and emotionally.
- Ensure participation in transition activities.

9

Community Partners

Examples of community partners include: local libraries, local law enforcement, social service agencies, food banks, food backpack services, mental health services providers, etc.

Role: Build connections within the community and the district.

Possible Responsibilities:

- Ensure that the transition plan aligns with school policies and goals.
- Allocate resources needed for transition activities.
- Support professional development for staff on transition best practices.
- Foster a welcoming environment for new students and their families.



BRAINSTORM:

What team members do you already have in place? What team members will need to be identified?



"The transition from PreK to Kindergarten is a critical period that can influence a child's academic trajectory. Schools that implement comprehensive transition programs that engage families and build connections between PreK and Kindergarten classrooms see more successful outcomes." (A. J., & Pianta, R. C. 2006)

Developing the Transition Plan



Listed below are the recommended steps in the development of a comprehensive transition plan following the establishment of the transition team. These steps are suggestions and should include both short term and long-term goals. To assist in transition planning a month-by-month list of suggested activities are included.

Step 1- Initial:

- Conduct an initial planning meeting.
- Assess current practices and determine what is still needed.
- Create a schedule for meetings to begin work on plan (bi-monthly, monthly, etc.).

Step 2- Planning:

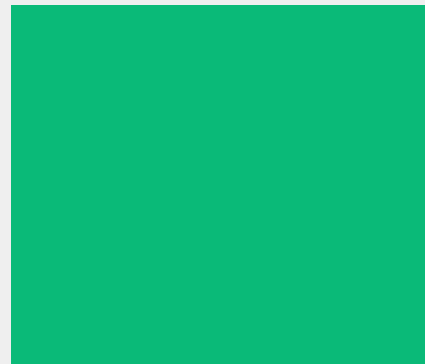
- Assign roles and responsibilities to team members using suggestions from previous pages.
- Discuss and set goals and objectives for transition plan (see Appendix I).
- Develop a timeline for transition activities.
- Initiate a communication plan for the transition team.

Step 3- Development:

- Develop a district specific comprehensive transition plan. Use the tools in the Appendix of this document or step by step and monthly suggestions.

Step 4- Implementation:

- Begin comprehensive transition plan implementation.
- Review and reflect on transition plan to monitor for continuous improvement.
- Adjust and adapt plan as necessary.



BRAINSTORM:

**What step is your district on?
What do you need to address to have a comprehensive transition plan in place?**

Month by Month Planning

A month-by-month transition team plan facilitates a smooth transition from Prekindergarten to Kindergarten by breaking down tasks into manageable segments. This plan encompasses gathering information about new Kindergarteners, aligning the curriculum, and fostering a welcoming Kindergarten experience through activities such as orientation days and buddy programs. Ongoing communication with families is essential for ensuring a successful transition. Below is a selection of activities that can be implemented each month to develop a transition plan for Prekindergarten students and their families. For a printable planning tool and additional resources mentioned below, please refer to the Appendix.

January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up the transition team, define roles and duties, and kick off the initial planning phase. • Evaluate past transition plans and offer input. • Arrange meetings for the transition team and ensure alignment with school policies and objectives. • Organize student records and assessment data. • Allocate resources for transition tasks. • Assess current IEPs and identify children requiring special assistance. • Identify multilingual learners and plan for support (see Appendix A for recommended use of the EML Language Process). • Initiate communication with families regarding the upcoming transition. • Collaborate with local services and support agencies for potential partnerships.
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share information about the transition process with all stakeholders and begin preliminary activities. • Coordinate information sessions for staff and families. • Share developmental records and assessments with Kindergarten teachers. • Communicate with families about what to expect in Kindergarten. • Review developmental records and assessments from Prekindergarten. • Plan welcoming activities for new Kindergarten students. • Ensure resources are in place for transition activities. • Develop transition plans for children with special needs. • Plan language support activities for multilingual language learners. • Host informal gatherings for families to discuss transition concerns and questions. • Start collaboration on activities to support transitioning families.
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training for staff on transition best practices. • Schedule and support professional development sessions. • Look at vertical alignment of curriculum and standards. • Plan and integrate transition activities into the Prekindergarten classroom routine. • Plan classroom setup—paralleling classrooms routines and mirroring classroom setups, when possible, from Prekindergarten • Finalize IEPs and accommodations/supports for transitioning children. • Provide training on supporting multilingual language learners (see Appendix A for recommended use of the EML Language Process). • Organize family workshops on preparing for Kindergarten and readiness. • Offer resources and services to support family engagement.

Month by Month Planning – Continued

April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarize children with the Kindergarten environment and continue family engagement. • Organize classroom visits for Prekindergarten children and prepare children for visits. • Monitor and reflect on the effectiveness of transition activities. • Facilitate small group sessions focused on easing the transition. • Adjust support plans based on feedback from visits. • Support multilingual language learners during classroom visits. • Host events for families to meet Kindergarten teachers. • Provide additional resources and support for transition activities.
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all preparations are complete and maintain clear communication with families. • Finalize the end of year activities. • Continue preparing children for Kindergarten. • Ensure all resources are in place for the new school year. • Provide final support sessions and resources to families. • Ensure all accommodations are ready for the new school year. • Prepare final language support plans for multilingual language learners. • Distribute final information and resources to families.
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the effectiveness of the transition plan and gather feedback for future improvements using page 15 of this document. • Collect feedback from all team members and families through surveys (see Appendix H). • Provide feedback on the transition activities and outcomes. • Share observations and feedback on the readiness of new students. • Review the transition plan and identify areas for improvement. • Evaluate the social-emotional readiness of transitioning children. • Assess the effectiveness of support plans and make adjustments. • Review language support outcomes and plan improvements. • Collect feedback from families to reflect on. • Provide feedback on transition team members roles and identify potential improvements.

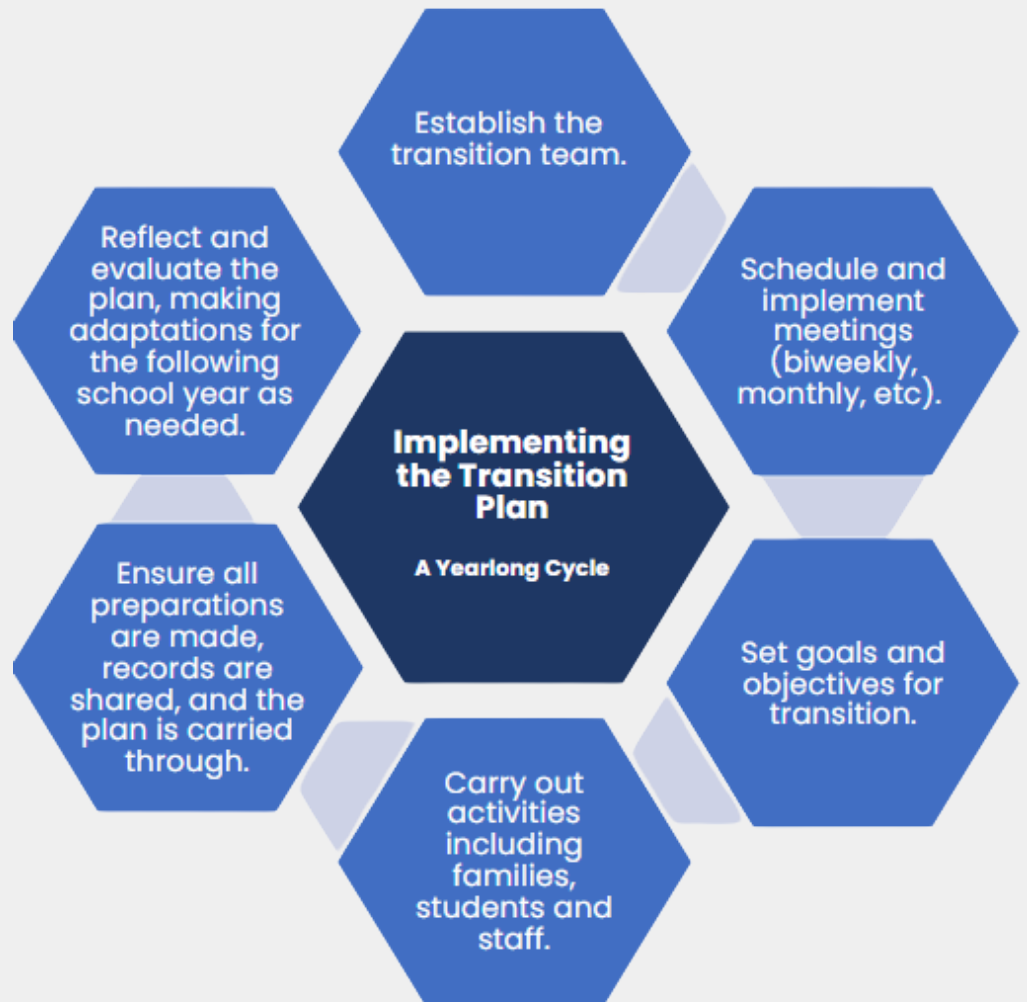


BRAINSTORM:

Highlight the suggestions mentioned above that are already implemented in your program. Circle those that your program can begin to implement to enhance the transition experience.

Implementing the Transition Plan

Continuous reflection and evaluation are crucial for adapting and enhancing each stage of the transition plan to address the changing needs of students, families, and educators. The transition from PreK to Kindergarten is a cyclical plan which aligns to curricula, fosters communication, and addresses children's needs. The goal is to build a strong educational foundation, reduce worries, and instills a love for learning.



"A smooth transition from PreK to Kindergarten helps children build on their early learning experiences, reduces anxiety, and sets the stage for future academic success. A thoughtful transition plan can make a significant difference in a child's long-term educational journey." – National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER)



Setting Goals and Objectives

Transition goals and objectives from PreK to Kindergarten vary based on specific needs of the students and the district. These goals and objectives should be updated on an annual basis. Annual updates ensure that the transition process remains relevant, effective, and responsive. Below are some suggested goals and objectives to use as a baseline to create a plan for your program. Goals can and should include teachers, support staff, students, and their families. **The Developing and Evaluating the Transition Plan Tool** (see Appendix I and J) includes additional goals and objectives. This tool provides the transition team with information to consider in developing and evaluating the plan.

Suggested Goals

- Ensure Continuity of Learning and Development.
- Foster Positive Relationships.
- Increase Family Engagement.
- Promote Child Readiness.
- Support Teachers and Staff.

Suggested Objectives

- Align Prekindergarten and Kindergarten curricula to ensure a smooth academic transition for children.
- Create opportunities for children to meet teachers and peers before transitioning to Kindergarten to support relationship-building and social integration.
- Provide families with resources, workshops, and communication channels to actively engage them in supporting their child's transition to Kindergarten.
- Assess and support each child's developmental needs through targeted activities that prepare them for the Kindergarten environment.
- Offer professional development and collaborative opportunities to ensure teachers are equipped with strategies to support children's transition to Kindergarten.

District Goals

District Objectives

Reflection and Continuous Improvement of Plan

Setting up a transition plan from PreK to Kindergarten involves a reflective framework for continuous improvement, connecting PreK programs with Kindergarten classrooms. It focuses on monitoring, tracking, and feedback for adaptability and responsiveness. Please see the “Prekindergarten to Kindergarten Transition Reflection and Continuous Improvement Planning Tool” in the Appendix to reflect on the transition programming and plan for continuous improvement.

Monitoring and Tracking of Data



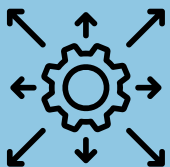
Progress Monitoring: Consistently assess students' academic, social, and emotional development using valid and reliable tools.

Data Collection: Record student progress from Prekindergarten to Kindergarten, encompassing attendance and academic performance.

Tracking: Evaluate the impact of curricula and teaching methods through the systematic tracking of collected data.

System Development: Establish a plan of action to facilitate data sharing agreements between Prekindergarten and Kindergarten programs to review effectiveness.

Feedback



Teacher Feedback: Conduct meetings and conversations with Prekindergarten and Kindergarten teachers to collect insights on curriculum alignment, student readiness, and transition activity effectiveness.

Family and Caregiver Feedback: Involve families through surveys, meetings, and discussions to gain their viewpoints on the transition experience.

Student Feedback: Use techniques such as drawings and conversations to assess children's comfort levels and address any concerns they might have about the transition.

Reflection and Continuous Improvement



Data Analysis: Regularly analyze Prekindergarten student data to identify patterns and areas for improvement in programming.

Reflective Meetings: Hold meetings with transition team members to review and reflect on progress monitoring and assessment data. The team can provide feedback, identifying successes and areas for improvement.

Sharing Best Practices: Share successful practices within and across schools and CBO locations to encourage ongoing learning.

Annual Review: Conduct a comprehensive annual review of the transition plan with the transition team to evaluate effectiveness, make adjustments to goals and objectives, and strive for continuous improvement of the plan.



Please reach out to the Office of Early Learning for additional assistance with transition plans. Our dedicated team is here to support you with any inquiries you might have regarding NYSED resources. Whether you're a family looking for early childhood education options, an educator seeking professional development opportunities, or a community member interested in early child programming, we are committed to providing the information and guidance you need. Feel free to contact us via phone, email, or visit our website for more details. Together, we can ensure a bright and successful future for our youngest learners.



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<https://www.nysed.gov/early-learning>

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Appendix

Appendix A

EMLL Profile Process

Appendix B

NYSED Links and Resources

Appendix C

Books to Share

Appendix D

Prekindergarten Learner Profile

Appendix E

12 Month Meeting Planner

Appendix F

Transition Team Sample Agenda

Appendix G

Prekindergarten to Kindergarten Transition Tipsheet

Appendix H

Family Survey Prekindergarten to Kindergarten Transition

Appendix I

Transition Planning Tool for Districts

Appendix J

Transition Planning Tool for Community-Based Organizations

Appendix K

PreK to K Transition Reflection and Continuous Improvement Tool