



Preschool Network Network News



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Successful transitions depend on several key elements:

- ★ Ongoing communication and collaborative relationships with and among families, community agencies, and school staff;
- ★ Ensuring compatibility between two environments through the alignment of developmentally appropriate curricula, assessment of children, quality of learning experiences, and teacher qualifications and training;
- ★ Preparing children and families for transition;
- ★ Involving parents in the transition process; and
- ★ Developing, monitoring, evaluating, and improving school transition protocol.

Facilitating Successful Transitions

by Kathleen Trumbull

If you've ever moved from one community to another, one school to another, or even one classroom to another, you have no doubt experienced how difficult a transition can be. Going from a comfortable and familiar environment to one that is different and unfamiliar can be a stressful and sometimes confusing, overwhelming, and even frightening experience. This is often how young children may feel when transitioning from their homes or another community setting into the preschool setting or transitioning from the preschool setting into kindergarten. Research indicates that children with disabilities experience all the same problems in transition as typically developing children, but often to a more significant degree.

Teachers, administrators, community agencies and families must work cooperatively to establish collaborative efforts and linkages in order to ease the transition between environments and educational settings for young children. Assuming leadership and dedicating resources to the transition process results in many benefits for all stakeholders and promotes student success in the new environment.

This article provides suggestions for focused transition planning that can support and improve the transition process for children, their families, and the schools. These tips apply to both the preschool program and kindergarten staff as children will be transitioning from home and community to the preschool program, as well as from the preschool program to kindergarten. The need for pre-planning in both situations is necessary to support the child to prepare for and adapt to new experiences.



Tips for Supporting Children's Transitions

Community and School Connections

Participate in joint transition planning with referring programs (See the *90-Day Transition Conference Guidance Document* for specific information on laws and protocol for this important meeting). Planning may include:

- ★ Participate in your community transition team meetings and other interagency meetings and activities;
- ★ Develop a systematic procedure for receiving and reviewing records received from other agencies;
- ★ Develop inter-school collaboration about programs and classroom practices;
- ★ Staff from sending and receiving programs should visit each other's programs and settings to align expectations and curriculum;
- ★ Develop and exchange written materials and outreach presentations with other agencies and programs about the specifics of each program;
- ★ Develop inter-school and interagency protocol for sharing information about individual children;
- ★ Sponsor and participate in joint workshops and training with school staff and other preschool agencies on topics relevant to the care and education of young children;

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- ★ Establish interagency agreements that address roles, responsibilities, and timelines for transition events and activities;
- ★ Invite a family's child care provider to be an active participant in the transition planning process – they have a great deal of contact with families and their children, and a great deal of information to share;
- ★ Establish interagency and inter-school protocol and timelines for generating and receiving class lists; and
- ★ Identify a transition coordinator responsible for establishing relationships with other agencies, inter-school relationships, and coordinating transition activities.

Involving Families and Preparing Children for Transition

- ★ Provide opportunities for children and families to visit the new classroom, to meet the teacher(s) and to tour the new building;
- ★ Hold an open house/orientation for parents and children before school starts;
- ★ Visit the child's home before school starts;
- ★ Send a personal letter to the child and family before school starts welcoming them to their new classroom;
- ★ Arrange for an opportunity to talk with the parents before school starts ensuring that they have an opportunity to communicate their concerns, priorities, family circumstances, and provide information about their child;
- ★ Facilitate contacts among parents of children in your class;
- ★ Survey parents to find out what services or information they need to help their children make a successful transition;
- ★ Survey parents to find out how successful the transition process was and what difficulties they may have experienced;
- ★ Encourage children to talk about any concerns or fears they may have about the new program; and
- ★ Provide families with suggestions about how they can support their child's transition through reading to their children, singing songs, playing games, participating in library activities like story-time, talking with them about rules that will be a part of their new program, etc.



Establish Transition Protocol Within Your School District

- ★ Develop written transition plans for individual children;
- ★ Establish transition planning guidelines and timelines (i.e., generation of class lists, classroom visitations, open-house, community presentations, etc.);
- ★ Develop planning forms (present levels of performance, checklists, family transition questionnaires, special considerations for the child in the new settings, etc.);
- ★ Allowances made for summer work that is supported by salary;

- ★ Provide for designated personnel such as a preschool or kindergarten liaison or transition coordinator; and
- ★ Institute regularly scheduled transition meetings to support inter-school and interagency collaboration.

Some early signs that the process your school and/or district team has established is successful are:

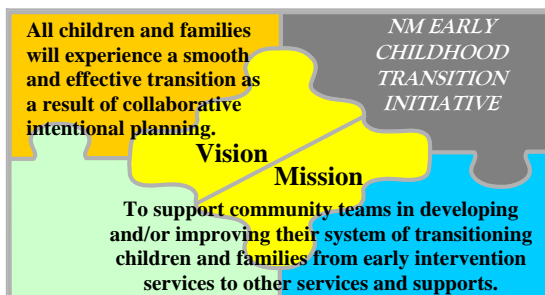
- ★ Children will like school and look forward to coming to school;
- ★ Children will show steady growth in skills;
- ★ Parents will become actively involved in their children's education; and
- ★ Teachers, staff members and families will value and respect each other and work in partnership to support children's success.

Building Bridges of Support

The NM Early Childhood Transition Initiative

by Judy Kimmel

It is a well recognized fact that change can create a host of emotions for the individual who is anticipating the change or moving through the change. For a family who is anticipating their child's transition from the early intervention system to other supports and services, this can be a particularly challenging time. We know that having bridges of support in place can make a difference. Since 1999, our state has been diligent about



building these bridges of support in local communities. The NM Early Childhood Transition Initiative is based on the premise that community-based teams have the capacity to build effective bridges across systems for the benefit of families who are exiting from the early intervention system. Recognizing that smooth and effective transitions are dependent on collaborative practices at the local level, this effort focuses on bringing appropriate representatives from early childhood agencies together, in partnership, to intentionally develop effective strategies which promote barrier-free transitions for families.

Currently, there are 38 locally-based community transition teams in New Mexico. Teams are comprised of representatives from the Family Infant Toddler Program (IDEA-Part C), Local Education Agencies/LEAs (IDEA-Part B), Head Start programs, child care agencies, family members, Parents Reaching Out, New Mexico School for the Deaf, New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Children's Medical Services, CYFD, and other relevant early care and

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education entities. Teams are encouraged to meet regularly to discuss how well the transition process is working for children and families. Each team has access to a coach-mentor who is available for technical assistance, group facilitation, and problem solving.

In the article (this issue) by Kathleen Trumbull entitled “Facilitating Successful Transitions,” she highlights a number of key elements and tips that contribute to a successful transition. Communication, collaboration, involvement, preparation, planning, and participation are all fundamental strategies to ensuring that families have a satisfying experience—and not just families, but all individuals/agencies involved in the process.

Often times, this type of transition is viewed as a watershed time for families—a defining moment. I remember one family stating that “how” the transition was handled resulted in a lasting impression of the receiving agency; in this case an LEA (school district). Fortunately, for this family, the impression was favorable. It was evident to this family that there was a healthy, productive, collaborative partnership among the various agencies, all directed at ensuring that the transition from Part C to Part B was seamless and satisfying. I can recall the mother stating that **THIS** set the course for her relationship with the schools well into the future.

Our desire in New Mexico, and our vision, is that all children and families experience a smooth and effective transition—a result of communities coming together and intentionally planning toward that outcome. We have made tremendous strides in this state through the sheer hard work and determination of individuals, coaches, and locally-based transition teams dedicated to collectively working together on behalf of families. Thank you for these bold efforts.

If you are new (or “old”) to the early childhood field (Part C, Part B, Head Start, Early Care and Education, etc.), and you are not involved in your locally-based transition team, we encourage you to become involved. Contact any member of the Preschool Network staff for more information. Building bridges of support, on behalf of families, is a constructive, positive way to make a difference.



by Anna Marie Garcia

The New Mexico SPARK ignites in Espanola! SPARK is an initiative of the NM Community Foundation through grants from the WK Kellogg Foundation,

McCune Charitable Foundation, and the Daniels’ Fund.

Española SPARK (Supporting Partnerships Assuring Ready Kids) joins six New Mexico communities and only eight states in enhancing the way communities work together to support young children and their families in transitioning from

preschools or early childhood settings to kindergarten. Collaboration is the key component of the SPARK Project! The project looks at the transition principles of *communication, joint decision-making, comprehensive and responsive services, families as partners, skill development, respect for culture and home language, developmentally appropriate practice, and assessment of partnership effectiveness.*

The Espanola SPARK Project has a local coordinator, a local council made up of community and business leaders, and a Joining Hands Team consisting of both preschool and elementary education teachers, as well as parents. These teams meet regularly to partner in building strong relationships to meet the goals outlined by the project. The project encourages parents, staff at early childhood settings, preschools, elementary schools, community and business leaders, as well as staff at state agencies to look at the policies that guide our schools and early childhood settings in providing a quality education for all children.

The Espanola SPARK project has been active in supporting the goals outlined by the initiative by offering training to teachers and parents in the areas of early childhood education, health, and culture. Staff are supported who choose to take college classes or attend conferences, by helping them financially using the T.E.A.C.H. Program (Teacher Education And Compensation Helps). The project partners with Las Cumbres Community Services who provides a Community Resource Center with written and audio resources/materials relating to transition. They also provide forums for families and schools to discuss issues and ideas having to do with transition.

Classroom Activity

Information About My Child

Plan an open-house, orientation event or visitation day for children and their families who are transitioning into your setting. During this event, have the materials and time for parents to engage in the following activity:

Ask parents to make a strengths-based portfolio which is a book of information representing a child’s strengths, interests, desires and goals. Provide scrapbooking materials for parents to put the book together such as: various types and designs of paper, scissors, glue, pipe stems, glitter, stamps, markers, stickers, ribbon, die-cuts, beads, etc. Print off copies of the following titles for each book (one copy of each title page for each parent to make a complete 8-page book):

- ★ These things please me most about my child...
- ★ These are the things my child does well...
- ★ My child really likes...
- ★ Right now I am most concerned about...
- ★ I would like my child to learn to do these things...
- ★ My child learns best when...
- ★ Our family could also use help with...
- ★ I would like to be involved in my child’s program in these ways...

Ask parents to bring photos of their child to put into the book. Provide a digital camera for parents to take pictures of their child to put into the book. As you develop this activity, you will probably think of other page titles that can add information to the book that will help you provide support to a child and his/her family.

Professional Development Opportunities

Sharing Difficult Information With Parents — This workshop offers tips and suggestions for caregivers and teachers when sharing concerns about children to their families. May 17, 2007, ENMU T&TA Center, Portales; May 21, Taos Family Resource Center, Taos; May 30, 2007, WNMU La Familia Resource Center, Silver City; June 13, 2007, San Juan T&TA Center, San Juan College, Farmington. To register, call La Vida at (505) 527-1149

Collaboration: Working Together With Support Staff in Inclusive Child Care Settings — This workshop will look at roles, responsibilities, service delivery models, and ways to encourage collaboration with key players. May 19, 2007, 10:00am–12:00pm, Las Cruces. To register, call La Vida at (505) 527-1149

Preschool Inclusion: Modifications & Adaptations to Enhance Learning — An online training opportunity. The training provides a brief overview of inclusion's conceptual framework within developmentally appropriate practice for preschool children. Session II: June 4-17, 2007 – registration deadline, May 28. For more information or to register, contact Dawn Giegerich at dgiegerich@salud.unm.edu

NAEYC National Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development — June 10-13, 2007, Pittsburgh, PA. The theme of this institute is "Intentionality in Early Childhood Education." Online registration is available at: <http://www.naeyc.org/conferences/institute.asp>

The Seventh National Early Childhood Inclusion Institute — July 31-August 2, 2007, Chapel Hill, NC. For inclusion institute and registration information, go to: www.nectac.org/~meetings/InclusionMtg2007/splash.html or contact Judi Shaver at (919) 962-7316 or judi_shaver@unc.edu

Do you or your staff need NM Early Childhood Outcomes training, or training on the use of the Child Outcome Summary Form? If so, please call Leslie Sandoval at (505) 272-9924 to schedule a training date.

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