



INDIANA  
DEPARTMENT of  
EDUCATION

2023-2024

# RACING INTO KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION TOOLKIT

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Indiana Department of Education  
Office of Kindergarten Readiness



# TOOLKIT INTRODUCTION

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Young children experience a variety of transitions throughout childhood, but often the most critical for children and their families is the shift from early childhood settings to kindergarten. There is increasing evidence that a positive start to kindergarten prepares children for continued successful educational experiences and future life opportunities (Schischka et. al., 2012). Implementing transition practices, particularly for children and families with the highest need, can have a substantial positive impact on academic achievement and parent-initiated school involvement. The impact of these practices is greatest for children with lower socioeconomic status, who are at the greatest risk of falling behind at kindergarten entry and more likely to attend a school that offers fewer transition practices (Schulting et al., 2005).

Kindergarten teacher-child relationships predict academic and behavioral outcomes through grade eight, particularly for children with behavioral problems in kindergarten (Hamre and Pianta, 2001 and Jerome, et al., 2009). Understanding the importance of early childhood transitions is just the first step in easing these transitions and implementing policies and practices that support children and families during what is possibly one of the biggest transitions of their young lives. In 2018, the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE), in collaboration with the Family and Social Services Administration's (FSSA) Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning and Indiana First Steps, established **Indiana's Transition Values**. This toolkit is built on these established values and includes recommendations for practice and resources for various early learning providers and schools. This resource was developed in collaboration with FSSA's Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning and the Indiana Head Start Association.

## INDIANA'S TRANSITION VALUES

1

**Communication:** Communication is the top value because without it, successful transitions cannot consistently occur. Communication between multiple points of connection must be implemented before opportunities for remaining values are feasible.

2

**Respect:** Professionals respect all children and families and are responsive to diverse values and cultural backgrounds. Professionals individualize their approach to transitions in or out of programs based on the needs of each child and family.

3

**Collaboration:** Professionals in all early learning settings and services coordinate with professionals in other roles, disciplines, and sectors to facilitate mutual understanding and collective contributions to improving outcomes for children.

4

**Leadership:** Leadership across systems and services is committed to supporting collaborative transition practices.

5

**Data Sharing:** With consent, professionals share relevant information about children and families across early learning settings and services.

# VALUES: **COMMUNICATION**

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Within the Indiana Transition Value of communication, there are at least four possible points of connection, and possibly more if the child has an Individualized Education Program (IEP). These important communication connections include:

- **CHILD TO SCHOOL**
- **FAMILY TO SCHOOL**
- **COMMUNITY TO SCHOOL**
- **EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM TO SCHOOL**
- **EARLY INTERVENTION TO DEVELOPMENTAL PRESCHOOL AFFILIATED WITH SCHOOL** *FOR STUDENTS WITH IEPs, IF APPLICABLE.*

Schools are the constant in each communication connection. For successful and effective transitions, early learning programs must communicate with schools, and schools must also communicate with each point of connection in the days, weeks, months, and year before the transition. The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Administration for Children and Families' Office of Head Start offers tools and a timeline to support this ongoing communication, which are applicable to all types of early learning providers.

[TRANSITION CALENDAR FOR EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM EDUCATORS](#)

[TRANSITION CALENDAR FOR FAMILIES](#)

IDOE offers a kindergarten readiness resource that all early learning programs can share with families as a possible communication tool. Resources can be used for highlighting concepts to work on prior to kindergarten entry.

[KINDERGARTEN READINESS OVERVIEW](#)

# VALUES: RESPECT

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Respect throughout the transition process begins with respect for all children and families. To best serve the diverse families in all early childhood programs and schools, early educators and administrators must take time to learn more about families and their backgrounds to best meet their needs, including those needs related to the transition to kindergarten. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), offers guidance for establishing respectful, reciprocal relationships with families and promoting positive family engagement. While not specific to transition practices, the guidance is still applicable as a useful resource.

## **DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE: ENGAGING IN RECIPROCAL PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAMILIES AND FOSTERING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS**

## **NAEYC: FIVE R'S FOR PROMOTING POSITIVE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

Respectful considerations for specific student groups such as multilingual learners and special education students may require additional transition practices to meet their needs and those of their families. The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), Early Learning Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center (ECLKC), and additional organizations offer resources to support these student groups, which are applicable to all types of early learning providers.



### **ECLKC: SUPPORTING CHILDREN WHO ARE DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN THE TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN**



### **ECLKC: SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH IEPs IN THE TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN**

#### Resources:

- Hamre, Bridget K., and Robert C. Pianta. "Early Teacher-Child Relationships and the Trajectory of Children's School Outcomes through Eighth Grade." *Child Development*, vol. 72, no. 2, 2001, pp. 625–638., <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8624.00301>.
- Jerome, Elisabeth M., et al. "Teacher-Child Relationships from Kindergarten to Sixth Grade: Early Childhood Predictors of Teacher-Perceived Conflict and Closeness." *Social Development*, vol. 18, no. 4, Aug. 2009, pp. 915–945., <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9507.2008.00508.x>.
- Schischka, Janice, et al. "Factors Affecting the Transition to School for Young Children with Disabilities." *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, vol. 37, no. 4, Dec. 2012, pp. 15–23., <https://doi.org/10.1177/183693911203700403>.
- Schulting, Amy B., et al. "The Effect of School-Based Kindergarten Transition Policies and Practices on Child Academic Outcomes." *Developmental Psychology*, vol. 41, no. 6, Nov. 2005, pp. 860–871., <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.41.6.860>.

# VALUES: COLLABORATION

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The third Transition Value focuses on collaboration. Collaboration is critical to successful transitions, as all individuals working with children must be connected and synergetic to improve outcomes. A collaborative approach to the transition to kindergarten acknowledges that children, families, schools, early learning programs, peers, and communities are all part of the transition.

ECLKC offers resources to support best practice for early learning providers to support collaborative relationships.

➤➤ **[ECLKC: COLLABORATIONS, CONNECTIONS, AND SIX STEPS TO SUCCESS AROUND THE TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN](#)**

➤➤ **[ECLKC: EDUCATOR PRACTICES FOR SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS TO KINDERGARTEN](#)**

Additional resources from ECLKC include books about kindergarten that both early learning providers and families can read with their children, or kindergarten teachers can read to visiting children and families.

➤➤ **[ECLKC: SELECTED CHILDREN'S BOOKS ABOUT KINDERGARTEN](#)**

Additional collaboration and considerations should exist for students with disabilities when transitioning from preschool special education to kindergarten. Resources to improve collaboration for preschool special education students and families from the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA) and Early Childhood Education Journal (ECEJ) can be found below.

➤➤ **[ECEJ: A SUCCESSFUL KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES: COLLABORATION THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS](#)**

➤➤ **[ECTA: TRANSITION FROM PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION TO KINDERGARTEN CHECKLIST](#)**

Finally, collaborating with families during the transition is a crucial aspect of a successful process. Research and practical ideas for family engagement and collaboration can be found in the following resource from the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (NCPFCE).

➤➤ **[NCPFCE: FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN TRANSITIONS](#)**





# VALUES: LEADERSHIP

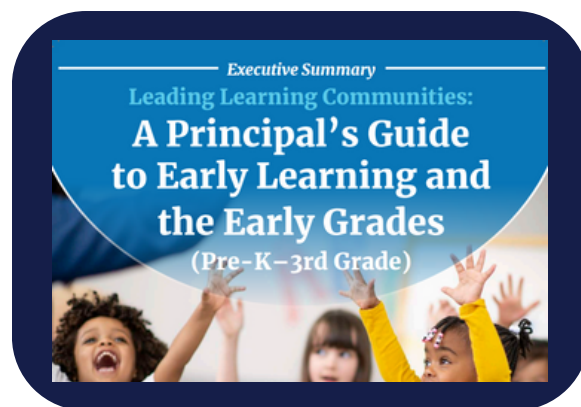
Strong leadership is vital to the success of all initiatives and practices, and transitions are no different. It is critical that leaders of all types of early childhood programs and schools are committed to implementing effective and collaborative transition practices in order for these practices to be sustainable and consistent.

Head Start again offers some key practical tools for both early childhood programs and schools. Explore this resource to find several research-based practices that all types of early learning providers and elementary school leaders can implement to support the transition to kindergarten.



## ECLKC: LEADERSHIP PRACTICES FOR SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS TO KINDERGARTEN

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) also offers general resources on leading early learning programs, which includes the transition to kindergarten. The executive summary for their publication is available below.



## NAESP: PRINCIPAL'S GUIDE TO LEADING EARLY LEARNING AND THE EARLY GRADES

**Invested Leaders**

**Engaged Staff, Families, and Students**

**Improved Student Outcomes and Experiences**

# VALUES: DATA SHARING

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As mentioned throughout this resource, Head Start has many resources in place regarding transitions to kindergarten. This is due in part to the Head Start requirement that children's records be transferred. While required for Head Start, data sharing between any type of early learning program and a child's future school is important. Keep in mind, sharing child-level data can only be done with written family permission and in a manner that conforms to a program's policies regarding privacy protections of children's records.

Sharing data is used to support individual students during the transition process. It allows kindergarten educators to see the data collected by preschool educators in the form of early learning assessments, daily observations, sample work, and more, providing insight into working with the child. One benefit of sharing data is that the school can collect and aggregate future data for students from particular early learning programs to analyze the success of the initiative. For example, if 80% of former students attending one facility perform well on a formative assessment given in kindergarten compared to lower scores reported among students who had no formal early learning experiences, this may suggest to the early learning program that their current practices could correlate to a positive impact on student preparedness. Conversely, if they did not consistently perform well, it may suggest the early learning facility should make adjustments based on student needs.

The first step in collecting data is knowing when, what, and how to collect it. One of the most appropriate methods of assessing young children is through authentic assessment. Authentic assessment is a system of ongoing classroom practices to gather information on a child's skills during their typical routines and activities to identify what they know and can do. With written parental permission, this information can be summarized and shared with the student's future school or given to the family to share it with their school.



**[Authentic Child Assessment Practice Guide from the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center](#)**



Learn more about collecting data and assessing early learners by creating a free account on the [Indiana Learning Lab](#).

**For additional support regarding early learning and transitions, visit IDOE's [Early Learning webpage](#) or contact IDOE's [Office of Kindergarten Readiness](#).**



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