RACING into Kindergarten
Transition Toolkit

Indiana DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Office of Early Childhood & Out-of-School Learning

IHSA Indiana Head Start Association

Introduction

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 into kindergarten. There is increasing evidence that a positive start to kindergarten sets the child up for continued positive educational experiences and future life opportunities (Schischka et. al., 2012). Additionally, implementing transition practices, particularly for high-risk children and families, 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. These children are at the greatest risk of falling behind at kindergarten entry and are also more likely to attend a school that offers fewer transition practices (Schulting et al., 2005). Furthermore, 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. This toolkit focuses on Indiana's Five Transition Values and includes recommendations for practice for *all types* of early learning providers and schools as well as the resources that align to these values.

Indiana's Five Transition Values

As you consider your own transition practices and the tools offered in this toolkit, please keep at the forefront, Indiana's five Transition Values.

Communication			
Respect	**Collaboration**	**Leadership**	**Data Sharing**
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 a program based on the needs of each child and family.	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.	Leadership across systems and services is committed to supporting collaborative transition practices.	With consent, professionals share relevant information about children and families across early learning settings and services.

Communication

Communication is the overarching Transition Value, because without communication successful transitions cannot consistently occur. Communication between multiple points of connection must be in place before opportunities for respect, collaboration, leadership, and data sharing are feasible.

Within the communication value 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:

> **Points of Connection**
> - Child to *School*
> - Family to *School*
> - Early Childhood Program to *School*
> - Community to *School*
>
> And if applicable:
> - Early Invention to Developmental Preschool affiliated with *School* (for students with IEPs)

Schools are the constant in each of the connections. 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, and months 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 Activity Calendar for Early Learning Program Educators](#)
- [Transition Activity Calendar for Families](#)

The Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) also offers kindergarten readiness documents that all early learning programs can share with families as one possible communication tool highlighting concepts to work on prior to kindergarten entry.

- [Kindergarten General Readiness](#)
- [Kindergarten Reading Readiness](#)
- [Kindergarten Math Readiness](#)

Remember as an overarching transition value, communication will continue to show up in multiple resources in the remaining four values.

Respect

Respect throughout the transition process starts 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 their 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 while not specific to transition practices, the guidance is still applicable.

- [Developmentally Appropriate Practice: Engaging in Reciprocal Partnerships with Families and Fostering Community Connections](#)

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. Head Start again offers resources to support these student groups which are applicable to all types of early learning providers.

- [Supporting Children who are Dual Language Learners in the Transition to Kindergarten](#)
- [Supporting Children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) in the Transition to Kindergarten](#)

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 a program based on the needs of each child and family.

Collaboration

The third transition value focuses on collaboration. Collaboration is critical to successful transitions as all individuals working with children must be connected and working together 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.

Head Start offers resources reflective of best practice for all types of early learning providers to support collaborative relationships:

- Collaborations, Connections, and Six Steps to Success around the Transition to Kindergarten
- Educator Practices for Successful Transitions to Kindergarten

Additional ideas include books about kindergarten that both early learning providers and families can read with their children or kindergarten teachers could read to visiting children and families. A list of possible books can be found here:

- Selected Children's Books about Kindergarten

Other resources also include:

- A Successful Kindergarten Transition for Children with Disabilities: Collaboration Throughout the Process - This resource includes a sample individualized transition plan.
- Transition from Preschool Special Education to Kindergarten Checklist - This resource from the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center includes checklist indicators that can be used to develop a transition plan, encourage caregiver decision-making, update a child's IEP, and promote practitioner planning, communication, and collaboration skills. The checklist rating scale can be used for a self-evaluation to determine whether practices are in place and being implemented.

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.

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.

- [Leadership Practices for Successful Transitions to Kindergarten](#)

Leadership

Leadership across systems and services is committed to supporting collaborative transition practices.
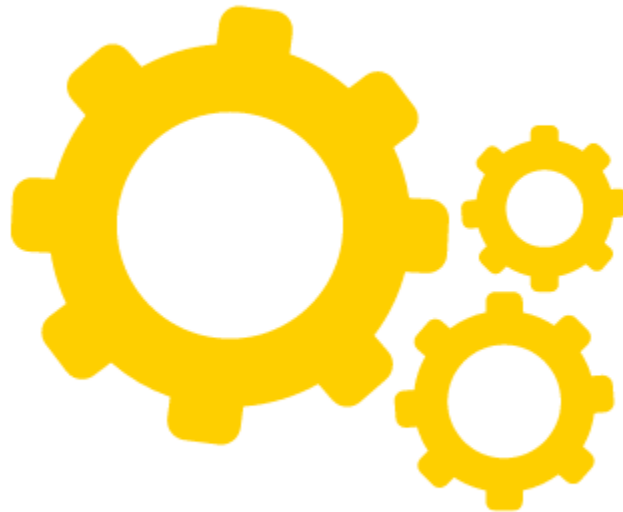
Data Sharing

As mentioned throughout the toolkit, Head Start has many resources in place regarding transitions to kindergarten. This is due in part to the Head Start requirement that childrens' records are transferred. While required at 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 child records.*

Sharing data is important for many reasons. The first and primary reason is of course 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 etc., which provides some insight into working with the child. However, an additional benefit is that the school could collect and aggregate future data on students from particular early learning programs and share the data back with the early learning program. 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 have a positive impact on student preparedness. Conversely, if they did not consistently perform well, it may suggest the early learning facility needs to make some adjustments.

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 for them to share it with the school.

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

Programs may learn more about authentic assessments and collecting data on early learners by creating an account on the Indiana Learning Paths platform through [ILEAD](#).

Data Sharing

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

References

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