



The North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc.

Ready Schools: Supporting Pre-K Transitions Using a Community Approach

The purpose of this document is to provide the reader with a list of effective pre-k transition strategies that can be implemented to address the needs of the child, family, school, and community. Preliminary studies in selected North Carolina schools suggests that the more transition strategies a child and family have been involved in prior to kindergarten entry, the better prepared the child is for school (Praxis, 2007). Transition plans should be multi-faceted, providing both **on-going** and **intensive support** for all children and families. This document suggests the transition linkages include at least one strategy linking **Child-School, Family-School, Peer, and Communities**. *Critical elements* are strategies, believed to be instrumental to creating a positive transition experience. *Doing* are things that are currently happening in your community, and *Things to consider* are things that you would like to implement. Before developing your community plan, be sure to evaluate the unique needs and resources in your community, paying special attention to any relevant restrictions on available funding.

Child-School Connections These strategies should be designed to familiarize the child with the kindergarten classroom, school environment, and teacher.			
Sample Strategies	Critical Elements	Doing	Things to Consider
Provide opportunities for the preschool child to interact with the kindergarten teacher/elementary school prior to school entry	√		
Kindergarten teachers and/or school support staff visit preschool children in their preschool/child care settings			
Have one transition plan for children attending preschool and one for those who do not			
Coordinate events for preschool aged children to come to public school for events			
Preschool aged children have opportunities to the visit an elementary school individually or as a group			
Make class lists available to families at least one month prior to the start of the school year.			
Provide opportunities for kindergarten teachers to implement home visits			
Implement staggered kindergarten entry policies			
Provide opportunities for staff from preschools and elementary schools to collaborate on placement, screening, registration practices, classroom practices (opportunities to share child portfolios, and information –child likes/dislikes to ease transition)			

Family-School Connections These strategies are designed to build and foster positive two way communication between the parents and the school.			
Sample Strategies	Critical Elements	Doing	Things to Consider
Provide parent orientation before the start of preschool and kindergarten with follow-up opportunities (offer at various or unconventional times to allow for all families to participate i.e. weekends, & various times of day)	√		
Contact the family within the first few days of preschool or kindergarten entry			
Connect families with community resources based on their interests and needs			
Provide training and support for parents on effective home-learning activities (Ideal activities would be low cost and engaging, addressing school readiness skills while fostering positive parent-child interactions, i.e. no dittos)			
Provide opportunities for parental involvement in the classroom and at school events			
Provide opportunities to regularly interact with families before and after the transition (in person and in print)			
Use the Kindergarten Health Assessment as a tool to communicate between families, schools, & physicians			
Seek input from families about prior school experiences, language, interests, concerns, desires, expectations			
Share school-specific resources with families to prepare for transition (personalize information)			

Peer Connections These strategies are designed to encourage positive social interaction between peers. These events can occur inside or outside of the classroom setting.			
Sample Strategies	Critical Elements	Doing	Things to Consider
Make an effort to group children familiar with each other			
Provide opportunities for future classmates to interact with each other prior to school entry			
Promote opportunities for families to interact with each other prior to school entry	√		
Provide opportunities for kindergarten and preschool children to interact			
Create a support group for children who have difficulty making friends			

Community Connections These strategies seek to unify the community and the schools in their transition efforts.			
Sample Strategies	Critical Elements	Doing	Things to Consider
Coordinate professional development for preschool teachers and kindergarten teachers to provide an atmosphere where they can discuss appropriate practices and create a continuum of learning across the ages			
Create an intra-school group that will allow concerned individuals to identify students of concern and work together to provide strategies to assist that child			
Evaluate the list of community programs serving children and families 0-5 to collaborate with (i.e., home-based, public, state/federal and faith based pre-k, Parents as Teachers, libraries, WIC, etc.)			
Create a team of community stakeholders* that will coordinate their services to best meet the needs of all children entering school	√		
*Community stakeholders may include: Child care teachers, directors, business leaders, church leaders, elementary school principals, teachers, district level personnel, community college, parents, health, social services, mental health agencies, etc.			

Resources

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Wesley, P.W. (2001) Smooth moves to kindergarten. Chapel Hill Training Outreach Project, Inc: Chapel Hill: NC.

Wynn, L. (2002). *School readiness: starting your child off right*. Edited by Catherine Woodall. The North Carolina Partnership for Children. English
<http://www.ncsmartstart.org/ntac/subsrcriptionpubs/SchoolReadiness.pdf>
Spanish <http://www.ncsmartstart.org/ntac/subsrcriptionpubs/SchoolReadinessSpanish.pdf>

Resources available for Purchase

Ready Set Go: A journey to kindergarten calendar. It has tips and activities that families can do together the year before kindergarten. It is available in English and Spanish. Contact tschelling@ncsmartstart.org for purchasing information.

Ready Set Go: Transition to Kindergarten Toolkit is a four-part DVD series designed to help children and families successfully transition to kindergarten. These DVDs are available in English and Spanish. To purchase visit <http://www.readysetk.org/>

Sparkle and Shine. The Sparkle and Shine School Readiness program fosters the development of social and emotional skills in the context of early literacy through stories, music and activities to prepare children to successfully transition to kindergarten. <http://www.sparkle-shine.com/index.html>