

# Transition Strategies for Early Childhood Programs

## Ideas for Preschool Programs:

1. Have a **"photo" album** of the new school (kindergarten). Pictures might include: the front entrance, the school bus (inside and out), the block area, class pet, and pictures of teachers. These albums go on the preschool book shelf. This gives the preschoolers some concrete pictures to look at, often. Be sure to include all the schools in your school district, where your children might be attended next year.
2. Arrange a **class field trip** to the kindergarten. Make it short and pleasant.
3. Have extra copies of "open house" notices the kindergarten publishes available at the preschool. (Joint effort to publicize) Post them on parent bulletin boards.
4. Encourage the kindergarten teachers to do **home visits** prior to the start of school. One school district starts kindergarten 4 days later than the rest of the grades. This allows the kindergarten teachers to schedule and do home visits with their new children. This is a great way to get to know about the child and his/her family before school entry.
5. **Be sensitive** to the 'systems change' the preschool parents go through as the kindergarten process starts. It's especially difficult for some first time parents. It is a new school and way of school operation to learn. Plus letting go of their little one is just that much more at the kindergarten level. Teacher sensitivity to this is very important to help the parents to usher into the next 'stage.'
6. **Read** a lot of books about going to kindergarten.
7. **Alumni Visits:** Have a few children who are in kindergarten who were in Head Start (PS, day care, etc.) last year come back and tell the children about kindergarten. Have the children prepare their questions ahead of time.
8. Develop a **portfolio** of the child's work to share with the new teacher.
9. Develop a **"Positive Profile"** of the student (A picture of \_\_\_\_\_, A passport for \_\_\_\_\_).
10. **Idea from a program that is a feeder to many elementary schools:** At our College preschool and Kindergarten, the children live in many different school districts, so we can't actually take trips to the many schools they will attend. We decided that it would still be valuable to visit a nearby elementary school, just to show them a big school, with a cafeteria and many rooms. We also "play school" for a week at the end of our Kindergarten year. We bring individual desks into the room, request that children raise their hands to speak or to go to the bathroom, introduce them to worksheets, have them line up to go outside, pledge allegiance, etc., etc. (These are all new experiences to kids in our developmentally appropriate Kindergarten.) The children enjoy this experience (especially having their own private desk!) and we hope it makes first grade a little less strange for them the following fall.

11. **Continuity between programs:** A national Head Start organization has highlighted the importance of continuity between programs as an important element of successful transitions between preschools and elementary school. If many of the kindergartens in your community are developmentally appropriate, it would not be appropriate to bring desks into the room as part of a transition. But in the example above, if the schools to which the children are transitioning are very traditional, such a practice makes sense. Being aware of the composition of the program that children will go to makes it possible to include activities that will be most effective at transitioning them to the next step. Perhaps increasing the communication between the staffs of sending and receiving schools can be a catalyst for change so that more child-centered approaches may grow at all levels!

## **Ideas from School Districts:**

Take the children to **visit the elementary school**. One district has the children go to the auditorium where the principal gives a VERY short welcome. Then the children are divided into groups of about 5-6 and third graders are tour guides to show the children different parts of the school. Children get to: spend about 10 minutes in the kindergarten rooms looking around with the teacher; go to the gym and play for a few minutes; see different classrooms in the school; walk through the library to see ALL THE BOOKS; end up in the cafeteria where the children walk through the line; get milk and cookies; and sit to eat them. This seems exciting to the children as they talk about it for the rest of the school year.

2. **Friends in kindergarten:** Make sure that some of the peers/friends from this child's class are assigned to the kindergarten class...if possible.

3. **Visits** by both receiving and sending teachers to classrooms. Communication about the strengths of individual children is very important.

4. **Teacher Luncheon:** District invites Head Start teachers to a luncheon provided by the school district. Head Start and Kindergarten teachers enjoy lunch together and get to know each other, they spend the afternoon in a shared staff development activity.

5. Another district sponsors "**Kinder Parties**" in which students are invited for a couple of hours of activities in which they get to ride the bus, have lunch in the cafeteria, and meet the teacher. Eight children attend at a time which gives the teacher time to observe them and get to know them. While children are getting introduced to the classroom and teacher, parents spend time with the principal learning about school policies and other information. (Funded through Title I dollars)

6. **Summer School Programs:** A three-week program for preschool, Head Start, early intervention, K-2 children. The program is activity, theme-based. 20 children are assigned to three adults who spend a great deal of their time getting to know children and observing them.

7. School district sponsors a **parent meeting** for families sending children to kindergarten and parents whose children are currently in kindergarten. Kindergarten families share with preschool families things that helped prepare their children for kindergarten. They report that the parent's

perspective is different from the district's perspective and different, important issues are raised at this meeting.

8. **Present a Web Cast!**: District produced video and slide footage which was web cast to the community. It included pictures of the kindergarten, information about screening, etc. This program was produced by high school media classes. This idea has the advantage of reaching families who may not be able to attend an in-school program, but could gather the information from work or home internet connections.

9. **Traveling slide show**: Produce a slide show of your program. Highlight classrooms, areas of the rooms, and individual children. This too could be sent home to families who could not attend in-building events.

10. **Home visits**: kindergarten teachers visit homes of incoming children. They meet parents and children in an informal setting. They may ask children to share some of their favorite toys, ask questions that help them to understand children's interests, and listen to parent information and concerns.

11. **Early Start**: kindergarten children come to school the week before school begins. Six children and their parents come to the classroom at a time where they are introduced to the kindergarten day and meet the teacher. The first day of school in this district, each child is greeted as the bus arrives at school by an adult who escorts the child to his/her classroom. The local women's club volunteers to help with this effort so that there are enough adults to greet each child.

12. **Parent/Teacher Dinner**: In June or August, parents of entering children are invited to school for a dinner. They are escorted by the Head Start (preschool, day care, EI) Program teachers who also attend. Current teachers and kindergarten teachers are with parents as the district describes the school program. After the descriptive part of the meeting, a guest speaker presents information of interest to parents and teachers. (Literacy development was the topic last year).

13. **Staggered Entry**: The first three days of school, only 1/3 of the kindergarten class attends. This gives the kindergarten teacher an opportunity to get to know children in a more relaxed atmosphere. The fourth day of the week, they all come together for the first time.