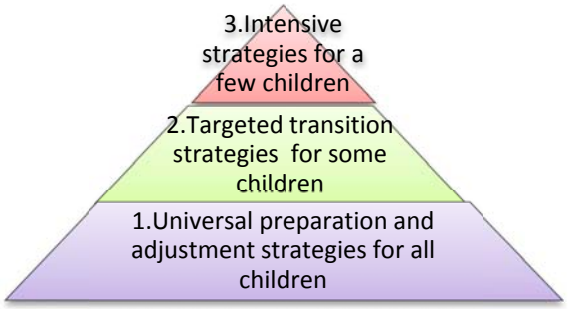

Building Strong Early Childhood Transition Connections

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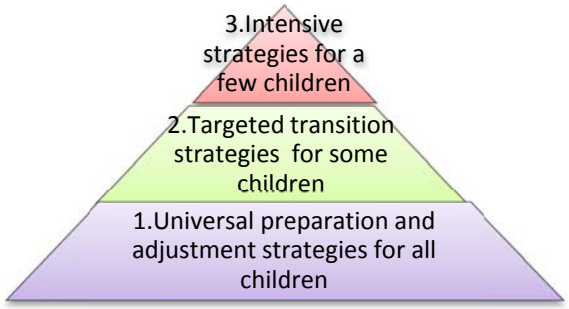
Connecting Children to Children for Successful Transition	**Strategy Level**
Provide a list of "play date" parents for children transitioning to your classroom	1
Provide special consideration for children entering preschool mid-year, particularly a child with an IFSP/IEP. Use the "buddy system" to support mid-year adjustment.	2,3
Teach a class to sign at least 5 words (go, eat, play, book, friend, sit) to communicate with a child who uses sign.	2,3
Match a younger and older child from similar cultures to be "pen pal buddies" as the younger child begins the transition process (share photos, drawings, stories for the family to read in their home language, etc.).	2
Encourage parents to provide activities that enable their child to make friends outside their preschool classroom (e.g. sports activities, musical and dance activities, public library, going to the local parks, etc.)	2

Have kindergarten children prepare a video about what it is like to be a kindergartener.	1
Create a puppet show about kindergarten. Allow the children to use the puppets to talk about their fears. Invite children who are transitioning to watch. Videotape the puppet show for continued use.	1
Have a system in place for older children to “buddy up” with an incoming child (send notes, photos, drawings to get acquainted in the spring, have older child escort younger child during open house or school visitation, and have older child “check in” with younger child 1-2 weeks after school begins).	1
When children who do not have English as a first language visit the school, have an older child that speaks the same language tour the school with the family and spend some time with the younger child.	2,3
Invite a kindergartener who previously attended your preschool program to return and talk about kindergarten (share any rules that are different from the preschool, examples of work, photos, read a short excerpt from a kindergarten book, etc.)	1
Ask kindergarteners to prepare a journal about what happens in their room and to share it with preschool classes that will be moving up in the fall.	1
Take class photos near the end of school to give as goodbye gifts. Mount them on card stock and allow the children to decorate the frames.	1
Make phone books so that children can keep in contact with their friends from preschool over the summer. Copy name and numbers (with parental permission) and have children decorate the phone book covers.	1
Have summer playgroup sessions where incoming children can meet new friends prior to coming to school (playground fun days, cafeteria parties, teas, story times, etc.).	1



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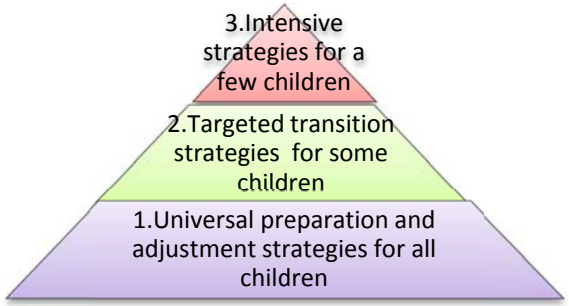
Connecting Children to Schools for Successful Transition	Strategy Level
With parental permission provide class lists early so that teachers, families and children can begin to communicate. This list does not have to be considered final, but at least a core group can be assigned to each other.	1
Check in with the receiving teacher a week or two after school starts to get information about the adjustment of children who transitioned from your program and offer advice about successful strategies with the child if necessary.	2,3
Send a personal note welcoming each child as soon as your class is assigned. Do the same for children entering mid-year.	1
Define personal space for each child (cubby, desk, bin, etc) that is identified with his/her name or photo.	1

If a child using adaptive equipment (wheelchair, walker, stander, communication device,) will be transitioning to your room, work with sending school staff and/or your special education staff to make sure all centers and activities (including playground) are accessible.	3
Write an individual note (with your photo) welcoming each child and leave in their cubbies.	1
Allow for staggered entrance into school (1/3 of the children come on the 1st day, 1/3 on the 2nd day, and the final 1/3 on 3rd day) to ensure individual attention for each child the first week. Keep in mind, however, that services for children who are transitioning from Part C to preschool must have their IEP implemented on or before their third birthday.	1
Take a photo of everyone on the first day of school and post it along with names, bus numbers, and favorite things to do.	1
Hold a Back to School pep rally.	1
Prepare a *Welcome to School* book with photos of all staff as well as photos of children (with parental permission) playing and participating. Send it to early intervention agencies or feeder preschools. Have it available at the beginning of the school year.	1
Set up an area in your classroom with family photos. Allow children to “visit” their families throughout the day.	1
Turn the dramatic play area into a kindergarten classroom. If possible, borrow materials from a local kindergarten. Post pictures of children getting on a bus, eating in the cafeteria, visiting the school library, playing on the playground, in the gym, art room etc.	1
Develop portfolios for children, particularly children with special needs. This serves as a way to introduce the child to the new teachers. Include art work, photos, and information from families.	1,2,3
Practice songs, activities, stories and rules for the new environment before transition.	1
Start the transition process earlier for children with IFSPs/IEPs. Interview families to determine their needs and provide resources. Sending and receiving staff begin sharing information early on strategies that will help the child and family feel comfortable, build relationships and utilize expertise.	3

Use both formal and informal times to talk to children about the new classroom. Ask questions such as “What do you think (preschool/kindergarten) will be like? How will it be different? How will it be the same?	1
Use circle time to talk about growing up. Bring in materials that the children have outgrown (stacking rings, baby blocks, toddler toys). Ask them to remember things they couldn’t do when they were younger that they can do now.	1
Have a “kindergarten day” at preschool. Plan for scheduled activities similar to those in a kindergarten classroom.	1
Have children dictate a letter to their new teacher and tell her/him what they want to learn and what they look forward to about the new environment.	1
Encourage families to write a letter with their child to take on a visit to a receiving program.	1
Keep a portfolio of each child’s progress throughout the year. At the end of the year share portfolios with each child and show them how much they’ve grown.	1
Pay attention to entry level skills for success in the next environment (preschoolers benefit from experience with peers, following simple directions, practicing separation; kindergarteners benefit from following rules, attending for longer periods of time, working independently). Keep in mind adaptations for children with special needs.	1
Start the transition process earlier for children with IFSPs/IEPs. Interview families to determine their needs and provide resources. Sending and receiving staff begin sharing strategies early that will help the child and family feel comfortable, build relationships and utilize expertise.	3
Help children create “Time Capsules” of their preschool experiences by decorating a box, selecting favorite things to put in the box (videos, photos, drawings, souvenirs), and taking it home to look at when they want to think about preschool.	1
Help children feel comfortable and confident by listening to their fears and concerns and discussing them openly. Share your feelings about change, letting them know that new things are hard for adults too.	1



Building Strong Early Childhood Transition Connections

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Connecting Families to Schools for Successful Transition	Strategy Level
Make a calendar of special dates to share with families.	1
Go on home visits to children coming into your program.	2,3
Conduct a family needs assessment. Make initial contact with the family and begin developing a plan for family support.	2,3
Have a family picnic before school starts or just after school starts.	1

Encourage parents to come and share operation of any adaptive equipment their child might use. Ideally schedule this before the first day of school to allow time to fully educate teachers and allow practice time with the equipment.	3.
Come up with a list of parent volunteer opportunities and encourage parents to sign up. Include opportunities outside of classroom time (calling other parents in the evening to remind them of an event, after school club, reading tutors, field trips, classroom help, making materials).	1
Give special consideration to children who may be at risk because of being a part of a migrant or immigrant family, experiencing homelessness, and may be experiencing more transitions than other children or have parents who have had negative or limited school experience.	3
Host a "Back to School" night for incoming children and their families. Children can take part in sample activities, tour the school and a school bus, and meet other children. Parents can meet other parents. Provide forms for carpooling, volunteer opportunities, etc.	1
Encourage parents to visit preschools and share with them the *How Do We Like This Preschool? Preschool Visitation Checklist* available in the Tools section of this module.	1
Consider short hours for the first day(s) of school in order to be proactive about separation issues. Consider having parent(s) stay with the child the first hour in some cases.	2,3
Invite future families to attend events and informational meetings at your school (Fall Festival, Field Day, Family Picnic Day, PTA/PTO).	1
Encourage families from diverse cultures to share with staff their practices that might affect their child at school (don't celebrate birthdays, don't drink milk, don't promote child independence, don't encourage eye contact, etc)	3
Create learning materials for families to use at home with their child before they transition to the new environment.	2,3

Send transitioning families a letter/email early in the year to set the stage for the transition process. See *Sample Letter/Email* in the Tools section of this module.	2,3
To begin the transition conversation, have families complete the *Family Transition Questionnaire: A New School*! found in the Tools section of this module.	2,3
Survey parents to find out their opinions on the transition process. Encourage them to provide input on where improvements might be made.	1
Sending staff should check in with the family a week or two after school starts to make sure any children who transitioned from your program are adjusting to the new environment.	2,3
Invite parents of children with special needs to present to the local interagency coordinating council (do we want to maybe add early childhood councils here? They ICCs are specific to Part C) about what means of support would most benefit families and what special transition concerns they are facing.	3
Provide a wide range of ways to gather information from families about their child (questionnaires, surveys, audiotapes, videotapes, stories, examples of work, “A Day with My Child”). For children with special needs be specific about the types of information that will be helpful and the best way to address the child’s needs.	1,2,3
Hold end-of-year parent-teacher conferences. Share transition information with parents, including the transfer of records and Release of Information forms to be signed if necessary.	1
If you are concerned that a particular child is very fearful about the impending change, invite the parents in to work on a specialized transition plan for that child. This should automatically be part of a good transition plan from C to B!	2,3
Provide information to parents about the program their child will be attending. Include address, phone number, name of principal, date of registration and school hours.	1

Make sure that foster parents are included in the planning process and that their knowledge of the child is part of the information used in developing the transition plan. Coordination among the birth family and the foster family in developing the transition plan for the child is best practice whenever possible.	3
Send families a list of children's books related to transitions. http://facts.crc.uiuc.edu/facts2/facts2.html#Books_Prepare or see Tools section of this module.	1
Write a classroom story about the new school for families to read to their children.	1
Discuss with families any changes of services that will be occurring.	2,3
Discuss after-school child care options with working parents. Provide information and referral to appropriate after-school programs.	2
Have families complete the *Information About My Child* form for the receiving school (with parent permission). Gather the forms and deliver them to the school children will be attending, have families take a copy with them on a school visit, or include in the child's portfolio. Electronic and hard copy versions of this form are available in the Tools section of this module.	2,3
Have parents help their child create an *All About Me* book. Each child will share this with his or her new teacher and classmates.	1
Invite parents to bring a friend or other family member on visits to the new school. Many family members who are not comfortable with the English language find it easier if they aren't attending by themselves.	2,3
Encourage families to come for assistance if their child's fears about attending a new school seem out of proportion. Discussing these concerns with the school guidance counselor, the teacher, or the principal can be very helpful. After talking with the family, make any necessary referrals to other agencies (e.g. Child Mental Health) as quickly as possible to help facilitate the transition.	2,3

Building Strong Early Childhood Transition Connections

(Because these "Terrific Transition Tips" and strategies are school to school and are not directly supporting children, multi-tiered levels of support are not indicated in this section.)

Connecting Schools to Schools for Successful Transition
Use the *Early Transition Preparation and Adjustment Checklist* available in the Tools section of this module to work collaboratively with your early childhood partners to develop seamless, coordinated transitions.
Host an open house for staff from all sending/receiving agencies (child care centers, preschool classrooms, kindergarten classrooms and early intervention agencies). Have everyone share information about their programs. Share curricula and materials used during the next school year.
Make scrapbooks about your school or center and share them with other schools and centers.
Have one program (either preschool or kindergarten) host a "coffee & pastries" morning for program administrators to discuss ways of meeting the needs of diverse families. Talk about the transition process and identify ways to improve it.
Conduct joint workshops and trainings throughout the year with various topics (preparing families, sharing information between sending and receiving programs, classroom activities to prepare children for transition, teacher expectations for newly arriving children, mandated vs. recommended practices, etc).
Plan for joint kindergarten registration days. These can be held at childcare centers, Head Start centers, local family resource centers, etc. Preschool staff can assist kindergarten staff with registration.

If there are program newsletters sent out, send a copy to the other programs from where you receive or send children. This provides current information and builds familiarity with each other's programs.
Develop photo albums of staff from your program or agency and provide copies to sending/receiving programs to help children and adults become familiar with faces they will be seeing in the future.
Arrange for records to be shared between the sending and receiving agencies. This should only be done with written permission from families. Items to be shared can include developmental checklists, behavior checklists, portfolios of children's work, etc.
Host a joint program meeting between the staff of sending and receiving programs. Play a game of "Alphabet Soup" where acronyms and terminology from different programs are matched and any common myths are dispelled with a "True/False" activity.
To monitor a child's adjustment in the new environment, use the *How Am I Doing? Follow Up on Transition from Early Intervention to Preschool*, and *How Am I Doing? Follow Up on Transition from Preschool to Kindergarten* in the Tools section of this module.
Share any transition activities that may be part of your beginning-of-year or end-of-year curriculum with sending/receiving programs to help them understand how children are being prepared for transition (e.g. the *2nd Step Curriculum* has 2 weeks of "getting ready for kindergarten" activities).
Invite special visitors from the school to come to the preschools – librarian, principal, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, custodians, art, music, PE teacher, office workers – and have them conduct an activity with the children that relates to their function at the school.
For children with IFSPs/IEPs, send the paperwork to the new school in plenty of time for the new teacher to be able to review the contents and share with the special education team. Highlight particular items that merit attention for the first day of school. Follow confidentiality guidelines when sharing information.

If children are prescreened for kindergarten, plan the screening to be held in conjunction with the preschool so preschool staff can be present during screening. This can also be done at the preschool site so children will be comfortable in a familiar setting for the screening.
Use videotaping as a way to share information about a child and family who will be transitioning to a new program. If necessary, provide equipment and technical assistance for a family or provider to make a video. This is a great way to introduce a family to the new teacher, to demonstrate how to operate any special equipment, and/or to show the child at play.
Arrange for a school bus driver to visit the sending program. Let children practice getting on and off the bus (coping with steep steps, safety issues), and have the driver explain safety rules.
Share information via TSI GOLD or other electronic media.

Building Strong Early Childhood Transition Connections

(Because these "Terrific Transition Tips" and strategies are community to school and are not directly supporting children, multi-tiered levels of support are not indicated in this section.)

Connecting Community to Schools for Successful Transition
With family's permission, have the local paper do a community piece on how one child with special needs transitions into preschool or kindergarten. Highlight the different community agencies that support this transition and describe their roles.
Sponsor a full-page newspaper ad that lists the names of incoming preschool or kindergarten students and welcomes them to school.
Host community-wide workshops for kindergarten and preschool staff with topics such as universal precautions, home visiting, behavior management, chronic illnesses, recognizing stress in young children, etc.
Host a resource fair that highlights community services that are available for young children and could be of interest to the early childhood programs.
Host community forums to raise awareness around transition issues and to promote collaboration to address gaps (invite families, health department, pediatrics, social services, schools, private programs, recreational programs, child care, early intervention, family home care, Head Start, etc.
Host meetings and meals at local churches and businesses during the weeks before kindergarten registration. Describe the process and provide translations of written materials and interpreters.
If there is large population of migrant, homeless and/or immigrant families in your community, host summer-based outreach programs and community awareness programs about the legal rights of these families and their children related to education (e.g.lack of records cannot prevent enrollment). Provide materials in their native language and at an appropriate reading level.
Arrange for community-wide health screenings as a part of preschool or kindergarten registration.

Make special arrangements for community members to assist families that are non-English speaking. These community members can assist with providing special information and with completing forms.
Publish community event calendars.
Encourage the library to highlight books about early transition in the spring and summer. (Click on link for a list of children's books addressing transition http://facts.crc.uiuc.edu/facts2/facts2.html#Books_Prepare)

(Schell-Frank, D., & Link, S. (2013) adapted from *Planning for Terrific Transitions: A Guide for Transition-To-School Teams*,2000, The National Center for Early Development and Learning, University of Virginia)