School Readiness: Preparing Families

Lilla Dale McManis, MEd, PhD
August 27, 2015

Copyright 2015 Early Childhood Research Solutions
Why Does it Matter?

A smooth transition to kindergarten helps a child:

- Experience security
- Develop independence
- Cope with new demands
- Be engaged
- Enjoy school

A child’s family, particularly his/her parents, plays a key role in the transition and the degree to which it is successful for the child.
What We’ll Cover

- Transition from Pre-K to K
- Parents’ Perspectives
- Effective Transition Strategies
Transition from Pre-K to K

- Characteristics of Transition
- Challenges to Concept of K Readiness
- Conceptualizing K Readiness
- Working Definition of Transition
- Transition as Major Milestone
- Context of Transition
- Role of Parent & Home
Characteristics of transition from Pre-K to K...

- Major developmental milestone
- Occurs in context of child, family, school, community
- Not a single event but a process
- Encompasses academic, social, & behavioral readiness
- Most do well but some children have difficulty
- Smooth transition predicts later school success
- Role of parent/family fundamental and important
Challenges to the concept of K readiness...

- Inconsistencies in the meaning of K readiness
- Recently greater focus on performance
- Closing the achievement gap
- Can create a more level playing field
- Can undermine an ecological approach
Conceptualizing kindergarten readiness...

- Resides within child, unfolds in stages
- Supported/accomplished through environmental interactions
- Must take both child characteristics and environmental experiences into account
- Represents a set of ideas constructed by communities and schools

(Wesley & Buysse, 2003)
Ramey & Ramey (2010) define transition to school as:

“A process that starts when families, educators, and communities engage in activities to prepare for children’s school entry and ends when the child, family, teachers, and other key individuals perceive that a positive state has been achieved – when they have mutual agreement regarding expectations, roles, and actions to ensure that a given child will make good progress in the school setting” (p. 20)
Major Milestone

- Socially recognized event by entering “formal schooling”
- Qualitatively different relationship with school
- Higher demands and expectations
- Sets tone and direction of school career
Occurs in Context

- Occurs in context of child, family, school, and community
- “Ecological & Dynamic Model of Transition” from Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta
- “Academic Socialization” from Taylor, Clayton, and Rowley
- Partnerships among all promote positive transition
Impact of parent involvement on young children’s school outcomes is based on a long and substantial research literature and includes...

- Interest and motivation in school
- Achievement in emergent literacy & math
- Positive social interactions
- Self-confidence and happiness
Many factors contribute to parents’ perspective about and involvement in their child’s transition to K...

- Personal experiences
- Beliefs
- Expectations
- Concerns
- Resources

Awareness can facilitate Pre-K and K programs supporting a smoother transition.
Personal Experiences

- Memories “reactivated”
- Interpret & direct through their own recollections
- Influence their working model of whether school is a positive or negative place for their child
Beliefs

- Parenting style
- Learning at home
- Understanding/supporting learning through play
- Academic rigor
Concerns

- Adjusting to new routines/settings
- Academic success compared to peers
- Compliance/following teacher’s directions
- Behavior problems
- Getting along with peers
- Making their needs known
What Parents Say...

“There’s no talkin’ back to your teachers, there’s no ‘if you don’t feel like playing, you don’t play, so you go to that area if you want to play.’ There’s no none of that with kindergarten. You can’t talk back to your teacher and be like ‘well I don’t want to do this today, I’d rather do that.’ They don’t have that in kindergarten. Kindergarten is just structure.”

“I think he would get lost, or pushed to the side. Put in a chair, and putting his desk over to the side, and not have the attention he needs, or the help he needs.”

“When Tyler was goin’ to the – at the summer school program, it was just like a regular Head Start. They did the same work that they would do but just more – it was more of a structured setting to get him ready for kindergarten, but see, with Head Start it’s all fun and games. When they get to kindergarten that’s when the goin’ gets tough.”

(Peters, 2014-Interviews with Head Start Mothers)
Teachers tend to emphasize and expect social and emotional readiness while parents academic readiness

Parents don’t fully grasp expectations for K and especially want more information about:
- Academic and behavioral expectations in K
- Their child’s future K teacher
- How to prepare child for K
Compared to higher SES families, lower SES families have children who attend schools where there are fewer and of lower quality K transition activities.

Barriers:
- Work more hours, less flexibility
- Lack of child care for younger children
- Lack of transportation
- Language
- Negative perceptions from school staff

Resources
Effective Transition Strategies

- Impacts of Transition
- Most Common Activities
- Best Practices Approach
- Effective Strategies
- Specific Ideas
Impacts of Transition

Schulting et al. (2005)--ECLS-K....

- School-level transition activities significant predictor of academic achievement at end of K
- Effect of transition practices greater at lower SES
- Most powerful that parents and children visit K classroom prior to the beginning of year
- School-level transition practices significant predictor of parent-initiated school involvement
Most Common Practices

- Pre-K and K: Sending home written information about K
- Pre-K: Meeting individually with parents at end of Pre-K
- K: Inviting families to visit K classroom before school
Best Transition Practices

- View as long-term process
- Promote continuity across settings
- Build across settings
  - Relationships
  - Communication
  - Collaboration
- Involve parents
- Prepare children
Effective Strategies

- Personal versus generic
- Active versus passive
- Partnership versus directive
- Varied versus limited
- Early versus later
- Ongoing versus event
- Coordinated versus silo

*Parents want to be involved!*
Specific Ideas

- Form transition team
- Train staff to work with families through transitions
- Assemble kindergarten transition panel and host panel discussion session with families.
- Help families learn how to advocate for their children and access appropriate resources.
- Develop systems for sharing information
- Develop community partnerships to address children’s needs for transitions

(National Center on Parent, Family, & Community Engagement, 2013)
Take-Aways

- Smooth transition to K vital to child success in school in both short and long run
- Parents play crucial role in transition
- Parents' perspectives determine how effective they are helping child transition
- Effective transition means partnering closely with parents in ways that require planning and resources
- Parents care deeply about their children starting off schooling smoothly
- Parents want to be involved but recognize they need guidance and support
References


References

References


Q & A

ldmcmanis@earlychildhoodresearchsolutions.com
845-414-3890
www.earlychildhoodresearchsolutions.com
Connect Parents and Families to Your Classroom Through iStartSmart!

Because you attended our Webinar:
Enjoy **15% Off + FREE Shipping** on Educational Materials
Promo Code: webinar15
*Offer Expires 12/31/15

Request a Catalog!
hatchearlylearning.com/signup

Powered by fun and engaging Shell Squad Adventures software, the Hatch tablet and computer are a great fit for your classroom. This research-based preschool software includes robust but easy-to-use child progress monitoring that teachers can share with families.