

# MISSION: Transition



*A practical guide to help parents and children  
transition from head start into elementary school*



**Parents Reaching Out**  
*Your One Stop Resource for a Stronger Family*

Spring 2011

# The Six Keys to Family Involvement

Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement  
Joyce L. Epstein, Ph.D., et. al., Partnership Center for the Social Organization of Schools

## **Parenting**

Build on parenting strengths and help families improve their parenting skills and their understanding of child and adolescent development. Share ideas for setting up home conditions that support children as students at each age and grade level. Facilitate support systems and networks to enable families to effectively nurture their children. Assist schools in understanding families.

## **Communicating**

Communicate with families about school programs and student progress through effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications.

## **Volunteering**

Improve recruitment, training, work, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences at the school or in other locations to support students and school programs.

## **Learning at Home**

Provide information and ideas to families about how to help their children in learning activities at home or in the community, including homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, planning and linking schoolwork to real life.

## **Decision Making**

Equip parents and other community members with the tools they need to function as advocates, advisors, and decision-makers. Include families and community members as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through PTA/PTO, school councils, committees and other parent organizations.

## **Collaborating with the Community**

Identify and coordinate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development. Establish and promote partnerships with individuals and organizations in the community, particularly those that provide support services for children and their families.



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# KINDERGARTEN, HERE WE COME!

## LEARNING BEGINS EARLY

The road to success in school begins early. Good health, loving relationships, and opportunities to learn all help preschool children do well later in life.

Parents and caregivers are busy people. Most of us have many responsibilities; jobs outside the home, laundry to wash, groceries to buy. But however busy we may be, there are lots of things we can do to help our children get ready for school – little things make a big difference.



Mothers and fathers aren't the only people who help children get ready for school. Entire communities share this job. Businesses, schools, government, agencies, and religious and civic organizations help out. But no one is more important than you, the parent; because Day care providers, doctors and other health professionals, relatives, and neighbors also offer support. Life's most basic lessons are learned early and learned at home.

Starting kindergarten often means many changes for children and families: the first day of school, new classrooms, and new teachers. Making a smooth transition between home and school can help children feel good about themselves and teach them to trust other adults and children. Helping children adapt to new situations can ease parents' minds and give them a chance to become involved in their children's education. Transitions are exciting opportunities for children to learn and grow.

## TRANSITIONS: Making Change Easier for Your Child

Change. It is rarely easy. As adults, the idea of change often makes us feel many different things — excitement, fear, or worry. Transition can provide new opportunities for your child and family. It can also be a time of great change and adjustment. Your child and family may need to adjust to new teachers and therapists, new children, different schedules and daily routines, new classroom activities, and new options for parent involvement. You may find that both you and your child experience separation anxiety. Parents, however, are the key to successful transitions.

Transitions don't happen all at once. Usually there is a period of time when children are adapting to change. Although each child experiences change differently, there are three common stages in this process:

- **Letting Go:** When children are most attached to the people and places they are leaving.
- **Uncertainty:** When children feel the new place may be exciting, but they are not confident about it.
- **Taking Hold:** When children learn about the new place and begin to feel confident.

Each stage is characterized by specific thoughts, behaviors, and feelings. There are also specific strategies you can use at each stage to help your child.

## **STAGES OF TRANSITION**

### **Stage 1: Letting Go**

All transitions affect relationships. Feelings of sadness and resistance to the change may occur as your child experiences the *letting go* stage of transition. During this stage your child needs to say good-bye to what he or she is losing and celebrate what he or she has gained.

#### **Help your child say good-bye to old places and faces:**

- Make a **Time Capsule** (page 11).
- Take pictures of classmates and teacher(s).
- Attend program-ending ceremonies and celebrations such as “graduation”, picnics, and play days.
- **Drop a Line** to your child's teacher (page 11).

#### **Common behavior during the Letting Go stage:**

- Clinging to parent or teacher.
- Crying.
- Talking about teacher and classmates left behind.
- Continuing old routines.

## Stage 2: Uncertainty

Transition can cause fears, concerns, and mixed feelings. It can also create confusion for your child. Giving information and support to your child during this stage can be helpful in calming his or her concerns.

### Help your child understand feelings and gain confidence:

- Visit a kindergarten classroom with your child.
- Take part in activities with peers in the new setting.
- Read stories about school.
- Learn a routine or song from kindergarten and practice at home.
- Draw pictures of the new school.
- Take a picture of your child with new classmates and teachers and display it at home.
- Answer your child's questions.

### Common behavior during the Uncertainty stage:

- Crying.
- Clinging to parent.
- Toileting accidents – acts like he or she did when younger.
- Having temper tantrums, angry outbursts.
- Complaining about the new setting/teacher.
- Sleeping poorly.

## Stage 3: Taking Hold

During the final stage your child *takes hold* of new feelings, thoughts, and actions. He or she learns new rules, routines, and responsibilities. Your child also starts to express confidence in the new things he or she has learned.

### Help your child adjust to the new program:

- Create a ritual for “good-bye.”
- Establish new routines.
- **Pack Your Bag** activity (page 12).
- Invite new classmates over to play.
- **Celebration Dinner** (page 12).



### **Common behavior during the Taking Hold stage:**

- Eagerly joining friends upon arrival.
- Talking about new friends.
- Sharing new routines, songs, and activities at home.

Parents and teachers share a role in making children feel safe and secure as they move to a new educational setting. Of course, such milestones in children's lives can cause anxiety, too. Strengthening the ties between schools and families will help create smooth transitions for adults and children too.

## **How Parents Can Help**

- 1** Be enthusiastic about the upcoming change. If you are excited and confident, your child will be too.
- 2** Prepare yourself. Take note of how your child reacts to separation. If possible, visit the new school with your child. Introduce your child to the new teacher in advance.
- 3** Arrange a play-date with another child from the same class, preferably one-on-one so that your child will see a familiar face when he or she walks in.
- 4** Start daily routines that will add to continuity. Let your child become involved with packing lunch or laying out clothes. Also, begin an earlier bedtime several weeks before.
- 5** Put aside extra time, particularly on the first day, for chatting and commuting together. But remember not to prolong the good-bye. If your child whines or clings, staying will only make it harder.
- 6** Always say good-bye to your child. Be firm, but friendly about separating. Never ridicule a child for crying. Instead, make supportive statements like, "It's hard to say good-bye."
- 7** At the end of the work day, put aside your concerns and focus on being a parent.

# WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE READY FOR SCHOOL?

There is no one quality or skill that children need to do well in school, but a combination of things contributes to success. These include good health and physical well being, social and emotional maturity, language skills, an ability to solve problems and think creatively, and general knowledge about the world.

Some parents and educators mistakenly believe that there is a predetermined set of skills that all children need before entering school. However, this is **not** the case. It is also a common misconception that young children's learning occurs in a rigid order — that a child must master a basic skill before learning more complex skills. Again, this is simply not true. All young children go through spurts of rapid learning, followed by times when learning is slower. Likewise, there can be dramatic differences between typically developing children, with each child having strengths in different areas of development.

## REMEMBER

Children develop at different rates  
Most children are stronger in some  
areas than in others.

Therefore, the only universally fair criterion used for determining whether or not a child should enter school is legal age. In the state of New Mexico, all children entering Kindergarten in public schools must be five (5) years old by 12:01 a.m. on September 1<sup>st</sup> of the year they are to attend Kindergarten.



### **WHAT WILL MY CHILD'S KINDERGARTEN TEACHER EXPECT?**

Expectations may vary among teachers and schools, but the following behaviors and skills seem to be common:

- Children will be expected to follow simple rules and instructions.
- Children will be expected to be able to concentrate on a task for 10 to 20 minutes.
- Social skills and self-control skills such as sharing and taking turns will be emphasized. These skills help children get along well with teachers and other children.
- Children will be expected to do as much for themselves as possible, such as taking care of their personal belongings, hanging up their own clothes, and putting away their own crayons and papers.

School success also depends upon the “match” between children’s skills and knowledge and the school’s expectations. **Parents can** promote a good match by take advantage of learning opportunities in everyday activities. Trips to grocery stores, fast food restaurants, the post office, and parks are all experiences that help children learn about their world. These will make a big difference in preparing young children for the classroom.

**Promote good health and physical well-being.** Children need nutritious food, enough sleep, safe places to play, and regular medical care. In addition to medical and dental checkups and immunizations, young children need opportunities to exercise and develop physical coordination. Throwing balls, running, jumping, climbing, dancing to music – all of these activities will enhance coordination and help children learn important concepts such as up, down, inside, outside, over, and under.



# IMMUNIZATIONS

The law requires your child be immunized against specific diseases prior to **enrolling** in kindergarten. You must bring the original immunization record with you when registering your child. Immunizations are available from your primary physician, public health offices, and, occasionally, at community health fairs and/or school clinics. Call your local public health office for more information. Remember, you may not be able to obtain an appointment for immunizations on short notice, so plan ahead.

If your child is exempted from the above requirement for religious reasons, you must submit a completed & notarized “**Certificate of Religious/Conscientious Objection to Immunization**” form to the school upon enrollment of your child. This form can be obtained from your local school district, and/or the New Mexico Department of Health. Public Health offices are located in each county. Visit the NM Department of Health – Public Health Division website to find the office closest to you – <http://nmhealth.org/PHD/index/shtml>

Additionally, if your child is exempt from the immunization requirement for medical reasons, you must submit a statement from a licensed medical/osteopathic doctor at the time of enrollment. Both medical and religious exemptions **must be renewed annually**.

## IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS

New Mexico State Law requires the following for kindergarten entrance. Check with your health care provider for the appropriate intervals for each vaccination.

1. DTP – Four doses given at appropriate intervals for Diphtheria-Tetanus-Pertussis.
2. Polio - Three doses of Polio vaccine given at appropriate intervals.
3. MMR - Two doses given at appropriate intervals for Measles, Mumps, and Rubella.
4. Hepatitis B – Three doses given at appropriate intervals.
5. Varicella – Two doses after the child’s first birthday at appropriate intervals.

Kindergarten is a time for your child to expand his love of learning, his general knowledge, his ability to get along with others, and his interest in reaching out to the world. As your child proceeds through school, you will need to continue your encouragement and involvement. But for now, celebrate all that you have accomplished as a parent. Share your child’s enthusiasm. Let your son or daughter know how proud you are as he or she starts kindergarten.

## Considerations for Transitioning a Child from a Head Start Classroom or Home-based Setting Into Public Schools:



### 1. What will be different for your child?

- Building
- Larger classroom
- Child/adult ratio larger
- More structure
- Different equipment
- Less free time
- Longer day
- Bathrooms with larger facilities
- New playground
- New fears
- Greater distance
- Difference in discipline
- New staff

### 2. Ideas and activities for teaching skills needed to deal with some of these changes. Be creative and imaginative!

- Dramatic play
- A pretend day
- Cafeteria role-play
- Discuss differences and the reason for the change
- Praise children for progress and tell them they're ready for kindergarten
- Increase appropriate structural activities
- Visit the new school/library/playground/bathrooms, etc.
- Concentrate on readiness during the last month: dressing, toileting, paper and pencil activities, etc.
- Role-play new situations: principal, new friends, notes home, etc.
- Make a picture of the new school
- Teach bus skills; take a ride on a bus
- Have older siblings or children talk to your child
- Have a party to introduce children before school begins
- Take pictures of the new environment
- Allow your child more independence with structure



## How Can Parent Involvement Be Continued in the Kindergarten Program?



### 1. What will be different for parents?

- Less time in classroom/program
- Less rapport initially
- More formal/more structured
- Less total interaction
- Fewer educational opportunities (parent meetings, conferences)
- More expensive (supplies, special activities, meals, etc.)
- More threatening

### 2. Some ways parents can continue to be involved in their child's education.

- P.T.A.
- Teaching at home
- Classroom volunteer (room parent), parents need to make the first move.
- Adult show and tell
- Share skills
- Call/see/write teacher
- Ask that teacher keep in contact
- Use Head Start as a resource
- Field trips
- Attend parent conferences/open houses
- Assist in writing I.E.P.s
- Know parents' rights
- Playground supervision





# Transition Activities



## Time Capsule

**Who:** Children ages 3 to 6

**What you need:** A shoe box, paper, crayons, tape, favorite things from early intervention or other preschool program.

**How to do it:** Explain to your child that you are going to make a box for all of his or her preschool treasures. This is called a *time capsule*, because it helps you remember a special time in your life. Talk with your child about what he or she would like to include. For example:

- Artwork
- Pictures
- Videos
- Nametags
- Souvenirs
- Special gifts

As you make the Time Capsule, talk with your child about his or her special memories. Tell your child about a time when you left someplace that was special to you. Store the *Time Capsule* in a place where your child can get it.

**Why:** It is hard for children to leave a place where they feel comfortable and safe. Creating a *Time Capsule* helps them know they are growing and learning. When they feel proud and confident it is easier to try new things.

## Drop A Line

**Who:** Ages 3 to 5

**What you need:** Paper and crayons

**How to do it:** Ask your child to help you write a letter to his or her teacher.

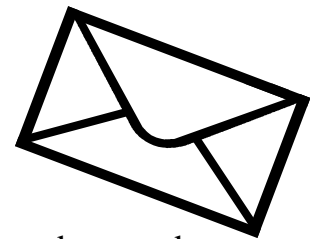
**Why:** This letter lets your child know he or she won't be forgotten. In addition, it provides practice with pre-reading skills.

My teacher's name and address:

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## Pack Your Bag

**Who:** Ages 4 to 6

**What you need:** A backpack labeled with your child's name.

**How to do it:** Explain to your child that you are going to prepare for an adventure to his or her new school. Help your child find his/her name on the backpack. Let your child help pack the backpack for school.



*For example:*

- A family picture
- Markers
- Crayons
- Paper and pencils

**Why:** Young children feel more secure in a new setting when they have familiar objects with them.

**Note:** Check with the teacher at kindergarten about policies for bringing items from home. A small item such as a family photo on a key chain is usually allowed if kept in your child's backpack or pocket.

## Celebration Dinner

This is a great time to begin new rituals and traditions at home. Try these ideas to start the year off with a bang!



- The night before starting kindergarten, turn dinner into a party by setting the table with special dishes.
- Throw a “*Beginning of School*” party with hats, blowers, and a cake or favorite dessert.
- Take a picture of your kids and mark their heights inside a closet door.
- Have your first family meeting.



No matter how your family chooses to celebrate starting kindergarten, make it a new ritual. Memories are one of the most precious things we can give our children. They'll be quick to remind you about your annual back-to-school celebration the first time you forget!

# Parents Reaching Out

*Your One Stop Resource for a Stronger Family*

As a statewide non-profit organization, we connect with parents, caregivers, educators, and other professionals to promote healthy, positive, and caring experiences for New Mexico families and children. We have served New Mexico families for over twenty-five years. Our staff and Family Leadership Action Network volunteers reflect the unique diversity of the communities throughout our state.

Children do not come with instructions on how to deal with the difficult circumstances that many families experience. Parents Reaching Out believes that families' needs go beyond the bounds of formal services. *What we can offer to each other is uniquely ours. We have all been there.*

## **Our Mission**

The mission of Parents Reaching Out is to enhance positive outcomes for families and children in New Mexico through informed decision making, advocacy, education, and resources. Parents Reaching Out provides the networking opportunities for families to connect with and support each other. This mission supports *all families* including those who have children with disabilities, and others who are disenfranchised. Parents Reaching Out achieves this by:

- ♦ Developing family leadership
- ♦ Connecting families to each other
- ♦ Building collaborative partnerships
- ♦ Providing families with the knowledge and tools to enhance their power

## **Our Beliefs**

- ♦ Families need support wherever they are in their journey.
- ♦ All families care deeply about their children.
- ♦ Families may need tools and support to accomplish their dreams.
- ♦ All families are capable of making informed decisions that are right for their family.
- ♦ Families in the state benefit from our organization having the staff and materials that meet their diversity.
- ♦ Systems that listen carefully to the family perspective improve outcomes for our children.

We invite all families and those serving families and children in New Mexico to make *Parents Reaching Out your one stop resource for a stronger family.* Our publications, workshops, and Resource Center offer tools for informed decision making and building partnerships in communities. Our trained staff and network of volunteers are here to serve you.

*Parents Reaching Out is the home of:*

NM Parent Information and Resource Center (NMPIRC)

NM Parent Training and Information Center (NMPTIC)

NM Family to Family Health Information Center (NMF2FHIC)

## **Parents Reaching Out**

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[www.parentsreachingout.org](http://www.parentsreachingout.org)

From I-25—take the Gibson Blvd Exit 222 and go East on Gibson. Turn left at the third stop light (Girard). Turn left on Vail. Go one block to Columbia. Turn left on Columbia. Parents Reaching Out is on the east side of the street. Welcome!

