

Transitioning to Kindergarten

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PRACTITIONER NOTES

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BACKGROUND: The transition from preschool to kindergarten presents several unique challenges. Children may experience heightened anxiety about moving to a new classroom and changes to their daily routine. Transition practices, or strategies employed to ensure a smooth adjustment to kindergarten, are an important component to children's success (Gelfer & McCarthy, 1994; Maxwell & Eller, 1994). To make the transition easier, teachers and parents can work collaboratively to provide children with the skills, knowledge, behaviors, and comfort necessary for success during this time.

Strategies to familiarize children with the transition to kindergarten

- Have preschoolers brainstorm and write questions they have about kindergarten.
- Increase communication about kindergarten so children feel comfortable expressing their questions and concerns.
- Visit a kindergarten classroom.
- Practice making adjustments to the daily schedule for older children (e.g. transitioning to lunch quicker).
- Work on kindergarten readiness skills in small groups.
- Work with children on prosocial skills such as introducing yourself or asking a peer to play.
- Add books about kindergarten to the class library, such as *Mom, It's the First Day of Kindergarten*, *Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten*, and *Is Your Buffalo Ready for Kindergarten?*

APPLICATION:

In the spring, educators of a mixed-age preschool classroom in the A. Sophie Rogers School for Early Learning began to notice that many kindergarten-bound students were in need of more behavioral support than usual. In addition to the testing of limits, educators observed withdrawn behaviors, restlessness, and challenging behaviors from some students who typically navigate the classroom with ease. The suspicion that older students were beginning to feel anxious about upcoming changes was confirmed when one of the 5 year-olds stated, "I don't know when I'm going to Kindergarten school. I won't know who to play with."

This opened a dialogue for students to express their ideas, concerns, and questions about kindergarten. Educators invited the nearby kindergarten to class for a Q&A time with current preschoolers. This was a great opportunity for preschoolers to discuss daily activities with kindergarteners, such as making new friends and shorter lunch time. Afterwards, educators worked in small groups with preschoolers to compare and contrast preschool and kindergarten.

HELP YOUR CHILD TRANSITION

Pre-School → prepare your little one for THE BIG DAY → Kindergarten

Rehearse with dolls or stuffed animals on how to **make new friends.** Pretend that you're the bus driver and your child is riding the bus to school.

Help them **follow spoken directions** from non-family members

PRACTICE MOTOR SKILLS
walk in a straight line coloring

Visit your child's **new school** so they can be familiar with their surroundings.

Children's Hospital Colorado

Retrieved from <https://www.childrenscolorado.org/conditions-and-advice/>

TO LEARN MORE:

[How to prepare your child for kindergarten](#)
[Why school transitions matter](#)