



Kindergarten Transition Resources

For Families, Community Members, Teachers, Caregivers
and Policymakers

Children are eligible for kindergarten in Minnesota if they are at least five years of age by September first in the admission year (M.S. 120A.20) and a developmental screening must also be completed prior to kindergarten entry. There are no other qualifications to enter kindergarten in Minnesota. Exceptions to the screening exist for parents with deeply held beliefs. (M.S. 121A.17 subd.2)

There are a number of strategies families, community members, teachers and caregivers and policymakers may voluntarily explore to support children's transitions from their homes and early education environments into the kindergarten setting. This can be an exciting time for children and families who come with many expectations, hopes and sometimes fears, about the new environment. Attending engaging activities in a number of different formats can ensure it is an opportunity to build the foundation for a successful kindergarten experience for the child.

The department reviewed research literature and surveyed local early childhood education staff to prepare this brief pursuant to direction by the legislature (Laws of Minnesota 2005 First Special Session, Chapter 5, Article 7, Section 8).

Local early educators and school districts employ a variety of transition activities, of which only a portion are represented here. Federal and state funded Head Start, Early Childhood Special Education, School Readiness and Early Childhood Family Education programs partner with parents and school districts to support successful transitions. Each community uses a combination of transition strategies to best serve the families in that area. Additional supports are available in some communities including locally funded preschools and child care services.

For information on local school districts, including contact information for staff, go to http://education.state.mn.us/mde/Learning_Support/Early_Learning_Services/index.html (go to Early Learning Services Program Directory Search under Current Topics, enter search criteria)

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Strategies for Families

As a child's first and most important teachers, parents can do many things to prepare their child for kindergarten.

Opportunities

- Talk with your child when interruptions can be minimized to understand their hopes and fears (if any) about going to kindergarten. Remind them that they can come to you at any time with any question.
- Talk with kindergarten and early education teachers and child care staff to better understand their expectations for the transition and discuss ways to work together.
- See if your preschool or the school your child will be attending has parent resources or children's books you can check out and read at home with your child.
- Take advantage of teachable moments in everyday life to explore language and mathematical concepts while also supporting children's social/emotional development. Recent reports have identified Mathematical Thinking and Language and Literacy as areas for further improvement for children entering kindergarten. MDE created tip cards in Math and Language for 4 & 5 Year Olds available in English, Hmong, Russian, Somali, Spanish and Vietnamese. Go to: http://education.state.mn.us/mde/Learning_Support/Early_Learning_Services/Parent_Resources/index.html to download a set.
- Ensure your child has met screening requirements and talk with other parents to make sure they know the requirements as well. Note that the 2005 Minnesota legislature amended statute to encourage screening starting at age 3 instead of 3 ½ years old.
- Parent brochures that briefly describe Minnesota's Early Childhood Screening program are available in 11 languages: English, Arabic, Cambodian, Croatian, Hmong, Laotian, Oromo, Russian, Somali, Spanish and Vietnamese. These brochures can be downloaded from: http://education.state.mn.us/mde/Learning_Support/Early_Learning_Services/Early_Childhood_Programs/Early_Childhood_Screening/ECS_-_Brochures/index.html
- If you need additional resources to meet the everyday needs of your family, go to www.coveringallfamilies.org, a service maintained by the Children's Defense Fund of Minnesota to connect you with programs in your area. The Roseville school district recommends this site to all of their families.
- Support local efforts to improve school readiness by joining with others interested in this work. See "Using School Readiness Study Information in Your Own Community" for more information at:

http://education.state.mn.us/mde/Learning_Support/Early_Learning_Services/Publications/index.html (Under Studies & Reports)

Recommended Children's Books

Carlson, N. *Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come*. NY: Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers.

Danneberg, J. (2000). *First Day Jitters*. MA: Charlesbridge Publishing, Inc.

Henkes, K. (2000). *Wemberly Worried*. South China Printing Company Ltd.

Penn, Audrey. (1993). *The Kissing Hand*. Washington, D.C.: Child Welfare League of America.

Rusackas, F. *I Love You All Day Long*. NY: HarperCollins Publishers.

Slate, Joseph. (1996). *Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten*. NY: Dutton Children's Books.

Resources

Hale, D., Brown, G. & Amwake, L. *Planning for terrific transitions: a guide for transition-to-school teams*. (2004). Greensboro, NC: SERVE.

Meisels, S., Marsden, D. and Stetson, C. (2000). *Winning ways to learn: 600 great ideas for children*. NY: Goddard Press.

Minnesota Department of Education and Minnesota Department of Human Services. (2005). *Early childhood indicators of progress: Minnesota's early learning standards*. Roseville: Minnesota Department of Education.
<http://education.state.mn.us/mde/static/002628.pdf>

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Strategies for Community Members

Communities can work to ensure that families in their area have the support to raise curious, nurtured and healthy children.

Opportunities

- Seek to support young children's reading throughout the community. One community in Minnesota sends one book a month to each child under five years old through a United Way funded project.
- If a family you know needs additional resources to meet the everyday needs of their family, go to www.coveringallfamilies.org, a service maintained by the Children's Defense Fund of Minnesota to connect families with programs in their area. The Roseville school district recommends this site to all of its families.
- Support local efforts to improve school readiness by joining with others interested in this work. See "Using School Readiness Study Information in Your Own Community" for more information at: http://education.state.mn.us/mde/Learning_Support/Early_Learning_Services/Publications/index.html (Under Studies & Reports)
- Involve the children who will be going to kindergarten in community service projects and in solving community problems.
- Sponsor community events such as book fairs that encourage families to read together.
- Organize book donation drives for child care, Head Start and other early childhood programs.

Resources

Hale, D., Brown, G. & Amwake, L. *Planning for terrific transitions: a guide for transition-to-school teams*. (2004). Greensboro, NC: SERVE.

Minnesota Department of Education and Minnesota Department of Human Services. (2005). *Early childhood indicators of progress: Minnesota's early learning standards*. Roseville: Minnesota Department of Education.
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Strategies for Teachers and Caregivers

Early childhood teachers and caregivers and kindergarten teachers can provide a number of supports that assist children in their preparation for kindergarten.

Opportunities

Preschool and Child Care Teachers:

- Meet with kindergarten teachers to understand the expectations for children who will be entering the district's kindergarten. Support the development of those skills and abilities in the children in their program.
- Invite the kindergarten teachers to visit the early childhood care and education program classrooms.
- Talk to children about the transition to kindergarten. Answer children's questions and allay fears.
- Read and discuss stories with children that deal with starting school and kindergarten.
- Create or identify resources families can check out to review at home on the transitions to kindergarten.
- Take the children who will be entering kindergarten in the fall on a field trip to the kindergarten; eat lunch at the school.

Kindergarten Teachers:

- Visit preschool and child care classrooms to meet children and share information about kindergarten.
- Have a special family event or series of events that invite families into the kindergarten classrooms and to meet the teachers. Involve all the staff that a child will encounter when starting kindergarten: bus drivers, kitchen staff, etc. Schedule multiple opportunities during the spring and summer.
- Create or identify resources families can check out to review at home on the transition to kindergarten.
- Conduct family meetings prior to the start of kindergarten to share information and discuss expectations.
- Conduct home visits before and after children enter kindergarten.
- Moorhead Kindergarten teachers provided child-appropriate scissors to each child attending their Family Fun night which was coordinated with Head Start and other programs.

Schools Administrators

- Organize coordination meetings between early childhood care and education staff and kindergarten teachers to discuss the transition to kindergarten for children.
- Create and disseminate system-wide brochures for families that offer preparation ideas and discuss the kindergarten program. Include a timeline for kindergarten transition that includes family or community support events, the school calendar, etc. For example, see the format used by South Washington County at <http://www.cecool.com/brochures/Kindergarten%20getting%20ready%202005-06.pdf>
- Osseo school district connects with a local church that serves many immigrant families to provide information on early childhood programs, screening and transitions to kindergarten. They also use their district's cable channel to air a panel discussion on getting ready for kindergarten.
- Develop and implement ways to connect private child care providers and kindergarten teachers. Invite child care providers to visit kindergarten classrooms with their children.

Resources

Bohan-Baker, M., Little P. (2004). *The transition to kindergarten: A review of current research and promising practices to involve families*. A Harvard Family Research Project.

<http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/content/projects/fine/resources/research/bohan.pdf>

Education Commission of the States. (2003). *Easing the transition to kindergarten*.

<http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/12/03/1203.htm>

Hale, D., Brown, G. & Amwake, L. *Planning for terrific transitions: a guide for transition-to-school teams*. (2004). Greensboro, NC: SERVE.

Minnesota Department of Education and Minnesota Department of Human Services. (2005). *Early childhood indicators of progress: Minnesota's early learning standards*. Roseville: Minnesota Department of Education.

<http://education.state.mn.us/mde/static/002628.pdf>

Pianta, Robert C., & Kraft-Sayre, Marcia, (Eds.). (2003). *Successful kindergarten transition: your guide to connecting children, families, and schools*. Baltimore: Brookes Publishing.

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services; Administration for Children & Families. [Easing the Transition from Preschool to Kindergarten: A Guide for Early Childhood Teachers and Administrators.](#)

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Strategies for Policymakers

Policymakers can improve the availability and coordination of supports for children's transition to kindergarten.

Opportunities

- Visit preschool and kindergarten environments in your community. Shadow the staff for a period of time. Ask questions about what they experience in supporting children's transitions to kindergarten.
- Understand the complexity of transferring child-related information from the early learning environment to the kindergarten classroom and how that information can help the child's transition to kindergarten.
- Develop and support policies and practices that respond to local needs and research on best practices that support children being ready for schools, schools being ready for children and supportive communities.
- Support school districts, early childhood care and education programs and families to enhance kindergarten transition practices.
- Support local efforts to improve school readiness by contacting others interested in this work. See "Using School Readiness Study Information in Your Own Community" for more information at: http://education.state.mn.us/mde/Learning_Support/Early_Learning_Services/Publications/index.html (Under Studies & Reports)
- Support community-based screening efforts for young children.
- Back efforts to encourage adults in the community to spend more time with children.
- Support family literacy programs.

Resources

Bohan-Baker, M., Little P. (2004). *The transition to kindergarten: A review of current research and promising practices to involve families*. A Harvard Family Research Project.

<http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/content/projects/fine/resources/research/bohan.pdf>

Hale, D., Brown, G. & Amwake, L. *Planning for terrific transitions: a guide for transition-to-school teams*. (2004). Greensboro, NC: SERVE.

Minnesota Department of Education and Minnesota Department of Human Services. (2005). *Early childhood indicators of progress: Minnesota's early learning standards*. Roseville: Minnesota Department of Education.

<http://education.state.mn.us/mde/static/002628.pdf>

National Center for Early Development & Learning, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Early childhood research and policy brief and fact sheet: transition to kindergarten.

<http://www.fpg.unc.edu>

The National Governor's Association report on opportunities to improve school readiness includes a list of policy recommendations, including supporting kindergarten transition activities. <http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/0501TaskForceReadiness03.pdf>

The National Governor's Association Center on Best Practices includes information on Maryland's initiative for Kindergarten Preparedness.

<http://www.nga.org/portal/site/nga/menuitem.9123e83a1f6786440ddcbeeb501010a0/?vgnextoid=e2b9038948b32010VgnVCM1000001a01010aRCRD&vgnextchannel=4b18f074f0d9ff00VgnVCM1000001a01010aRCRD>

Pianta, Robert C. & Cox, Martha J. (Eds.). (1999). *The transition to kindergarten*. Baltimore: Brookes Publishing.

Shonkoff, J., & Phillips, D. (Eds.). (2000). *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development*. Washington, DC: National Academy of Sciences Press.