

Supporting Children's Transition from Preschool to Primary School: A Training Guide



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Introduction

About the Preschool to Primary School Project

The Preschool to Primary School (PSPS) Erasmus+ funded project brings together partners from Ireland, Bulgaria, and across Europe. The 3-year project aims to support the transition from preschool to primary school, by developing training resources for parents, Early Years practitioners, and primary school teachers. These resources are based on research undertaken with parents in different European countries and the UK, to give voice to their expectations, concerns and hopes for their child's transition. While the resources are designed for use to support all young children with their transition, the project paid particular attention to those experiencing disadvantage and/or disabilities.

The PSPS transnational project partners are:

European Parents' Association

EPA is the only EU-level organisation representing parents as a stakeholder group in education. It has over 40 member organisations with representation in most EU member countries as well as some non-EU countries. It aims to support and represent parents as key to their children's education and to support high quality education.

<https://europarents.eu/>

Marie Curie Association (Bulgaria)

The Marie Curie Association is a non-profit NGO active since 1998. Its mission is to help people with disabilities live independently through education, training and employment opportunities and many other activities. The organisation also focuses on early intervention as crucial for child development, especially for children with disabilities.

<https://www.marie-curie-bg.org/>

PEIN (Ireland - project lead)

The Prevention and Early Intervention Network (PEIN) is hosted by Northside Partnership. It is a network of evidence-based practice, advocacy and research organisations across the Republic of Ireland that share a commitment to improving outcomes for children, young people, and their communities.

<https://pein.ie/>

These training resources are also available as an on-line flipbook, along with other research outputs from the project, which you can access here:

<https://pein.ie/erasmus/>





Who is this guide for?

The simple answer is that this guide is for everybody involved in supporting young children to make a planned, happy and meaningful transition from preschool to primary school.

Whether you are a parent, Early Years or preschool practitioner, school teacher, service manager or Principal, this guide is for you. By providing practical advice, tips, and ideas, it expands your toolkit. By presenting an overview of why transitions are so important to child development and long-term outcomes, it also encourages you to take time and space to reflect on YOUR role in supporting those transitions.

Section 1.3 looks at transition stakeholders, which delves a little deeper into describing who may find this guide useful for supporting children's transition from preschool to primary school.


How to Use the Guide


When we say 'guide' we mean just that – something that will help you on your journey towards understanding a little more about why transitions are so important and what you can do to actively plan and support them.

The guide is divided into 10 units: The first 9 are thematic and Unit 10 provides a reading list, links and downloadable resources to further your own research and planning.

It is designed to be used as and when you need it. The units are all inter-connected and can be used together or as stand-alone pieces. Training supports are only effective when they meet needs so if, for example, you have a very culturally diverse service, start with Unit 7 (Migrant Children and Cultural Diversity). If you are thinking about introducing preschool children to their new route to school and their new classroom, Unit 9 (Environments) is a great place to start.

You may find that reading the guide in its entirety is a good way to familiarise yourself with all of the major components of the transition from preschool to primary school. Then, when you encounter a specific issue or want to plan for a particular component, you can go to the relevant unit and do a more in-depth read. If you are a parent and your child has a disability (whether suspected or diagnosed) you might find Unit 3 particularly useful. You might be an Early Years practitioner thinking about the best way to collaborate with local primary schools, so Unit 8 (Communication) is your starting point. Or maybe you are a primary school teacher who has learned that there will be multiple languages in your new infant class cohort. Unit 4 will prompt you to think about the particular needs to factor into your planning.





All of the units follow a similar structure. They begin with a brief overview of the theme and end with the main takeaways. In between you will find; the key learning objectives for that unit; tips for self-reflection; and guidance on identifying and addressing specific needs. Where appropriate, the tips are presented specifically for parents, Early Years practitioners or teachers and sometimes they are presented together for all three groups.

The best way to use this guide is whatever way works best for you! You might read it all in one sitting or you may dip in and out of it regularly, as you think about transitions. Like all good resources, it is here when you need it.

1: About Transitions

1.1 Why Transitions are Important


A transition – the move from one thing to another – represents change. As preschoolers, children have already made a transition from home to an early childhood care and education setting, and may have transitioned between home and formal childcare arrangements before that. During the preschool day, children experience many transitions. They go from home to preschool and back again, they move between activities and they move from playing inside to outside.



Moving from preschool to primary school is a big leap for children. It means new faces, new environments, new routines, and many other changes. Children will make many transitions throughout their lives so supporting them during this milestone will influence how they manage change for many years to come.

While some children are excited and feel ready to start primary school, others can feel nervous or overwhelmed. We know from research that children's first experiences in school can shape their long-term emotional development and academic achievement. Planned activities that prepare young children and their parents for the changes they can expect are key to a smooth and meaningful transition.

As the research for this guide took place across a number of countries, we also understand that there are many different factors that influence transitions. In some countries, children start school at 4 years of age and in others, 6 is when primary school begins. Similarly, in some places, the preschool and primary school are in the same building and in others, there is no connection at all between the two services. While there are lots of differences, there is one common message – regardless of country or culture, **every child benefits from a preschool to primary school transition that is valued, planned and celebrated.**





There are many things that make a transition meaningful and they are contained in this training guide. We say that a transition is 'meaningful' if the child has been an active participant in the change process and benefits from it. That means (s)he knows what to expect and is prepared for the change.

The two most important factors in planning for transitions is that this work is done in a child-centered way and in partnership with parents.




Being child-centered (see Unit 1) simply means making the needs and interests of children a priority. Working this way means always putting the child at the centre of the learning process and meeting the needs of each individual child. It means looking at things from the child's perspective.

It teaches children that their opinions are valued and supports their holistic development. For transitions, this means including children in the planning and delivery of activities that will support their move between services.

Parents are the experts in their own child. They understand their child's likes and dislikes, know their learning style and are in tune with their emotions. When parents, preschool practitioners and teachers work together, great things can happen. For children, it means that some of the most important people in their lives are sharing information about them. True partnership with parents (see Unit 2) is based on mutual respect and clear communication.

It is important to keep in mind that **the transition from preschool to primary school is a journey, not a destination.** It does not, for example, begin when preschool finishes and school begins. It is a journey of many parts, involving lots of activities and people. These include such things as talking about 'big school', including school uniforms in the dress-up box, site visits between the preschool and school etc. Once a child starts primary school, the transition is ongoing. Everything is still new to them so they need time and support to adjust.

 The key message here is that the transition from preschool to primary school is a key milestone for every child. Planning it with their needs and interests at the centre and in partnership with their parents means that we are helping to make it a happy, playful process. By doing this, we are helping to create a strong and safe base for their future development.





1.2 Key Aspects of Transitions

The research conducted through this Erasmus+ project has identified a number of key aspects of transitions for children, and set out the most important as Units in this guide. These are:


- 📖 Unit 1: Keeping the child at the centre of the transition
- 📖 Unit 2: Understanding families (i.e. diversity, family dynamics, respect, mutual understanding etc.)
- 📖 Unit 3: Disabilities – grouped in the 4 major groups
- 📖 Unit 4: Language
- 📖 Unit 5: Supporting social – emotional development
- 📖 Unit 6: Supporting physical development
- 📖 Unit 7: Migrant children & cultural diversity
- 📖 Unit 8: Communication
- 📖 Unit 9: Environments
- 📖 Unit 10: Bibliography, resources & useful links


1.3 Transition Stakeholders

The key stakeholders involved in the child's transition from preschool to primary school are firstly the child themselves, their immediate family and/or carers, the school, and, in most cases, the preschool practitioner. These people play a key role in supporting this child as (s)he moves into this new phase of their childhood. They each have or will have a relationship with the child, they will be aware of the child's level of social and emotional development, where there is a vulnerability such as being disabled in some way, or where disadvantage has led to challenges for that child and family.

Every child needs these adults to understand them, their disposition, their strengths, their abilities, their capacity for change, and any vulnerabilities they may have. Children vary in their social and emotional development and their capacity to manage change, such as this transition to school. Their age can make a difference as well, for example children aged between four and five will be at a different stage of social and emotional development compared to those beginning school at around six years old. The transition process may begin long before the move to school and end only when the child is settled and functioning well, and is responsive to their new routine and environment. Aistear (the Irish curriculum for young children, 2009) says that

'Belonging is about having a secure relationship with or a connection with a particular group of people. When children feel a sense of belonging and sense of pride in their families, their peers, and their communities, they can be emotionally strong, self-assured, and able to deal with challenges and difficulties.'






The parent is the primary educator of their child. They know their child, they know his/her capacity for understanding change and their ability to navigate that change. They can begin the process of supporting the transition gently and well in advance, through things such as familiarising their child with the journey to their new school, supporting their growing independence in self-care, undertaking jobs around the home etc. If there are older siblings the child may be already familiar with the concept of school, and they can also provide support to their younger brother or sister. If their child has a disability, parents understand the supports that are needed and can liaise with the teacher to discuss provision. Similarly where the community in which the parent lives is considered disadvantaged, it is really important that the teacher links with the parent to help overcome any adverse issues that have may have affected their child, such as homelessness, poverty, domestic violence and so forth.



Parents have watched as their child moves through the stages of gradually gaining independence, whereby they move from the early dyadic relationship with their main carer, to forming healthy attachment patterns with their ever-widening circle of family, friends, and school.

The Early Years /preschool practitioner liaises on a regular basis with parents, especially during drop-off and pick-up times. Through ongoing informal conversations with parents, they generally have good insights into how the transition is being discussed and planned at home. Equally, they share information with parents about what activities are taking place in preschool to support the transition. This two-way communication is key to ensuring a consistent approach. Practitioners play a vital role as a bridge between the child, the family, and the school. They know how familiar the preschool world has become, and while the child is now old enough to move on, how the prospect of change will challenge their emotions and mental well-being.

The school, as it prepares to accept a new cohort of children, will know that the new group will include children who each need individual care and support, and that each child is undergoing their own personal challenge which they will progress through at their own pace. It is really important that schools reframe the concept of school readiness into the school being ready for each child. The school will have a transitions plan that begins some time prior to the new school year, and which will build ties with the child through their families and the child's preschool, demonstrating the continuum that exists and which is now expanding the child's world. The teachers and the school will recognise important social issues that may contribute to challenges for some families and individual children, such as addiction, living in situations such as refugee accommodation, and lack of adequate food due to poverty and other reasons. The school will also be prepared should any disabled children enrol, with adequate resources or equipment in place before the child arrives.



1.4 Importance of Self-Reflection in Transition Practice

In order to achieve the best outcomes for children in education generally and especially during the transitions process, self-reflection is an important tool at the disposal of the adult.

Parents, Early Years Practitioners and Teachers need to continually reflect on their practice: To stop and think, to question and be open to adjusting or changing what they are doing in response to the needs of each child. For example, if the child needs to bring a transitional object for support then this need should be recognised and accommodated. After all, a teddy bear in a school bag is a very small price for making a child feeling safe and secure in an entirely new environment.

The responsive teacher will recognise that it is important that the wider needs of the whole group accommodate the individual needs of each child. In the long term this will support independent, emotionally well-developed children, which will ultimately benefit the wider group.

Self-reflection is a core part of this educational practice. Schon (in Craft and Paige-Smith, 2013) described two types: *Reflection in action*: thinking on your feet, and *Reflection on action*: retrospective thinking – or thinking ‘after the event’, the latter can be done alone or with others.

Gibbs (1988) shows the steps involved:

In each Unit there are sample suggestions that you might use to guide your reflective practice in each area of transitions. What the graphic above highlights is the cyclical nature of this type of reflection. It might begin with a feeling.

For example you might be saddened to realise that, three weeks into the new school year, a particular child still cries every day coming to school.



Prompted by that feeling you evaluate the best course of action to support the child, analyse what supports you might need (such as linking with the child’s parents or making a ‘buddy bench’ in your classroom) and put that plan into action. You then observe how that plan does or does not work and adapt accordingly. The point is that, by being attuned to the child’s needs, you are constantly reflecting on how your practice can best meet those needs.

Self-reflection enables you to move from simply experiencing something to really understanding it. It encourages a level of self-awareness and consciousness about your practice and most importantly, it enables you to identify areas for improvement as well as areas where you are really strong.

Supporting children's transitions from
preschool to primary school

Unit 1: Keeping the child at the centre of the transition





Unit 1: The Child at The Centre






Introduction

'I have a big, big dream for school so I know what it is going to be like. Do you? All of my friends will be there with me and the walls will be pink with lots of twinkly fairy lights and there will be a water fountain where you can fill your own water bottle' (Steffi, 5)

This unit is based on the values of recognising children's rights, respecting these, and understanding that in order to address any needs of a child then the core starting point is to place them at the centre of our thinking.

Learning Objectives

The core objectives for this unit are that each adult in the child's life will:


-  Recognise the vital element of checking at all points that their actions are meeting the child's needs.
-  Use their own knowledge of the child and afford space to the child to speak of their needs.
-  Listen to the child's voice and understand the child's point of view.
-  Take action according to what they hear, and they share with the child the changes that they make in response to that voice so that the child knows they are heard and respected.
-  Use their professional training and knowledge to ensure that the child's needs are correctly met.

Identifying needs

The needs of children transitioning from preschool to school (or during any other transitions in their life) can be identified through consultation with the children, through keen observation and through using professional learning and expertise to analyse the obvious and less obvious needs. Above all, identifying needs is about being able to maintain an open and flexible approach and being willing to respond individually to meet a child's need, even if it means straying from the main group plan.






Each child making this transition will have their own concerns, issues, and views on this change in their lives. They will have expectations, some of which may be accurate and perhaps some which are unexpected. For example, they may not have considered the difference in size between the new classroom and their old setting. The child is moving from being part of a small class ratio, such as 2:12, to a much larger one, perhaps 1:30.





They are turning overnight into ‘pupils’, perhaps with lessm autonomy than in their preschool. In addition, they are moving to a situation where all or most of their familiar friends are gone, and they are part of a group of many strangers. Their Early Years practitioner may have been an emotional anchor, which is not yet replaced in the new classroom. It is only by affording each child a safe space where they feel heard that these needs will become apparent.

In addition, there are broader areas which may present challenges for some children. The school needs to consider these and ensure that any possible need is anticipated. These will vary from child to child and family to family and may include:


-  Children experiencing disadvantage
-  Children with special educational needs (SEN)
-  Immigrant children and children with English as a second or other Language
-  Children from the Traveller community
-  Summer-born children


‘Children seem to experience a fundamental change in their identity as learners over the transition from one setting to another: where they were used to being perceived as competent and autonomous by childcare workers or preschool teachers, they often seem to be perceived as incompetent novices by primary teachers in the new setting’

(The Image of the Child and the Child’s Perspective,
ISSA presentation to Project Partners PSPS, 2023)

Self-reflection Suggestions

School/Teachers

- Does our school have a written transitions policy?
 - How do we engage with parents throughout the transition process?
 - Do we have an information board or on-line portal for parents?
 - Are we communicating openly and regularly with parents so that they are comfortable talking to us about any concerns or expectations?
 - How do we as teachers support the child in adapting to the larger group in the class?
 - How do we acknowledge the child’s shift in role as they become pupils?
 - Will it be made clear to each child where the toilets and bathrooms are, and how they can go to them when needed?
- 

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- ⊙ Will we help the children in the early weeks to learn the layout of the school, perhaps through making maps and exploring the corridors?
 - ⊙ How does the classroom reflect the child's identity: do they see books, toys, items which reflect their family unit? Is their language and culture represented?
 - ⊙ Are each child's particular needs being met in an accessible manner?
 - ⊙ Are there children with vulnerabilities, such as age, minority ethnic group beginning in the class?
 - ⊙ Are we open to hearing each child's voice and bring their ideas into our planning?
 - ⊙ How do we ensure we hear each child's voice, what methods do we use?
 - ⊙ What connections do we make with the child's preschool?
 - ⊙ Do we liaise with the preschools that will be sending children to our school, perhaps using video links to show the children their new settings and getting to know them, or inviting questions from the children due to attend our school?
 - ⊙ Would we establish a local forum or network with local preschools to prepare for transitions?
 - ⊙ Where a child has brought a passport or similar, have we made the time to familiarise ourselves with them?
 - ⊙ Have we discussed children's transition to school with other professionals such as special needs assistants, social workers, where appropriate and with parental consent?




Case Study:

A school in Belgium has a transitions programme that consists of:

- Two years with the same teacher
- Once a month a 'workshop day' which is the free choice of the children
- Parents have slots where they can be co-teachers
- Children spend time with the next class up in advance of their move

Preschool/Early Years Educators

- ⊙ Have we prepared individual children for the transition by helping them to understand what to expect?
 - ⊙ How do we prepare for the final goodbyes?
 - ⊙ Are we supporting their parents around the transition process? How?
 - ⊙ Have we shared relevant information between our preschool and primary school, perhaps in a child's 'passport'?
- 

- ⦿ Have we or the parents been able to bring the child to the new classroom and discuss the differences?
- ⦿ Have we discussed children's transition to school with other professionals such as special needs assistants, social workers, where appropriate and with parental consent?

Parents

Self-reflection is also a core part of everyday parenting. As parents, it is sometimes only when our children have gone to bed that we look back at our day and think about what went well and what did not go as planned. These questions can help guide your thinking:



- ★ Do I know enough about my child's new school and if not, how can I find out more?
- ★ Am I ready for their move to primary school myself? If I am slightly anxious (which is perfectly normal), what am I doing to avoid passing that anxiety to my child?
- ★ How is my child feeling about the transition? How am I supporting those emotions?
- ★ Do we talk enough about the new school to help my child understand what is happening?
- ★ Do we try not to talk too much school so that my child does not feel overwhelmed?
- ★ Have we practised our new route to school?
- ★ Does my child understand that they are moving between two different physical places?
- ★ Do I have photos or images of the school building and classroom that I can look at with my child when we are discussing school?
- ★ If the preschool has given me a passport for my child, is there anything I want to add?
- ★ Am I happy to share that passport with the school?
- ★ What other information do I want the school to know about my child?
- ★ Are we practising the school routine enough that my child is comfortable doing it in September, such as putting on their uniform, the journey to school, opening their schoolbag, etcetera?
- ★ Can my child manage going to the toilet on their own?
- ★ Am I waiting for any assessments for my child? If so, have I let the school know?
- ★ How will I keep checking in on how my child is feeling during the transition?

What these reflective outcomes mean for the child

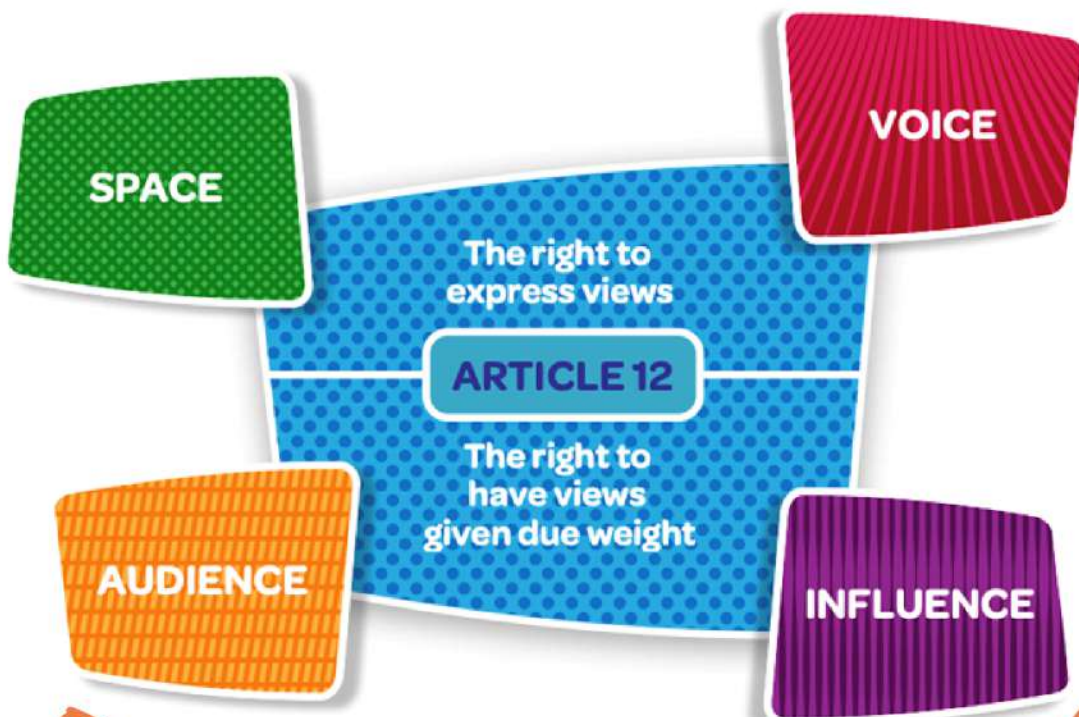
Reflection, really hearing the child and responding to them, will provide children with security, reassurance that they are being seen and heard, offering a continuity of care which will have long-lasting benefits, supporting them through the transition process now and helping them to develop skills, strengths and understanding for future transitions.


Addressing the Needs of Children

The voice of the child has become more respected and heard in recent years. It is the child's right under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 12, 1989) to have their voice heard on matters which concern them, such as education. This concept is being implemented in many countries, and there are a number of tools which can ensure that the voice is heard, listened to, and acted upon. Useful examples include the Mosaic Approach, the Lundy Model, and an excellent practical tool by Leuven University which Ferre Laevers called the Siks/Ziko Well-being and Involvement Tool. Teachers and schools can familiarise themselves with these tools and put them into practice appropriately.

The Mosaic approach (Clarke and Moss, 2001) can be used in differing ways, as direct consultation with each child, as an observational tool and a combination approach which is adaptable to each setting. It is "a multi-method approach in which children's own photographs, tours and maps can be joined to talking and observing to gain deeper understanding of children's perspectives on their early childhood settings".

The Lundy Model (Lundy, 2014) addresses the four key elements of Space, Voice, Audience and Influence. It conceptualises the UNCRC Article 12 in a clear manner and has been adopted in Ireland for official use.





This model provides a way of conceptualising Article 12 of the UNCRC which is intended to focus educational decision-makers on the distinct, albeit interrelated, elements of the provision. The four elements have a rational chronological order:

- **SPACE:** Children must be given safe, inclusive opportunities to form and express their view
- **VOICE:** Children must be facilitated to express their view
- **AUDIENCE:** The view must be listened to.
- **INFLUENCE:** The view must be acted upon, as appropriate.

The **Leuven Scale**, known as the Sics/Ziko Observational Scale, has been widely used in schools and preschools to establish how well each child is coping with the transition. It assesses the child on two indicators, Well-Being, and Involvement. If done intermittently it can identify which children are settling in and which may need extra support. It is a simple short observational method whereby a child is observed briefly at the same time each day for a short time with their levels recorded and reviewed. For example schools in the UK and Belgium have used the Leuven Scales early in the new year to operate a 'traffic light' type system, recording the findings in the first few weeks and quickly identifying the children lowest on the scales of well-being and involvement, thereby enabling them to quickly focus on any child that is struggling.

- Using some of these tools and methods will help to ensure that the child is at the centre of planning, preparation and policies/procedures. Listening to families, and giving the opportunity to children themselves to express how they are feeling and coping will ensure that the transition is a successful part of the continuity of care that begins in the home, continues through preschool and into the early parts of their transition to 'big school'.

Documenting the process – how the service is capturing what is happening so it can be revisited multiple times with the child and parents:

- Choosing a tool for pedagogical documentation, having a method for capturing observations and comments on particular issues for each child is important. This can be done through digital methods, written notes, logs, journals, learning stories or any other means. It enables the partnership between the child, the parents and the preschool/school to develop and to be maintained. Open access for such documentation will be valuable, and revisiting previous findings can be a form of great reassurance and support in seeing progress for each child on their transition journey.



Main Takeaways

The main points from this unit, when considering how we really keep the child at the centre of transitions are:

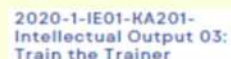
- ✿ The child, the parent(s), the preschool and the school are all key stakeholders in the transition
- ✿ The child needs the adults to be aware of them, their disposition, their strengths, their abilities, their capacity for change, any vulnerabilities and how the adult support can contribute to meeting such needs.
- ✿ The parent knows their child, they know the child's capacity for understanding change, the child's ability to understand the changes that are approaching
- ✿ The preschool practitioner also knows each child, and recognises the momentous nature of this change for each individual child
- ✿ The school will prepare for the new class, they will ideally focus on each new child and address how the teacher, the classroom, the routine and the curriculum will support the new child in making sense and constructing meaning of this new world
- ✿ All adults in the child's world will respect the need to listen, hear and act upon the views of the child
- ✿ Parents, Preschools, and Schools need to reflect upon what they need to consider and enact to improve and ensure that the child's experiences are thoroughly analysed and developed
- ✿ Each child making this transition will have their own concerns, issues, and views on this change in their lives
- ✿ There are broader areas which may present challenges for some children. The school needs to consider these and ensure that any possible is anticipated
- ✿ The voice of the child has become more respected and heard in recent years and there are a variety of tools available to ensure that each child's voice is heard and respected.

'I love Kate [preschool practitioner]. She know everything! She knows my Mammy and Daddy and where I live and my favourite colour and my doll's name. She even knows what colour my granny's car is! Kate is the best and I love her to the moon and back'. (Zaida, 4)



Supporting children's transitions from
preschool to primary school

Unit 2: Understanding Families



Unit 2: Understanding Families

Introduction

'My daughter was lost in her new school. She was the only Nigerian child there so she was an alien landing in a different world. But you know what her preschool teacher did? She made a book all about Mercy and she gave it to me and I posted it to her new teacher. It had photos of our home and the food we eat and the clothes we wear for church. Everything you can think of! And Mercy's new teacher? She did all her research so on the first day of school she told Mercy how she liked her mamma's agbada [traditional Nigerian formal attire] so then boom, Mercy knows that this school knows her family. No aliens here now, only our friends'

(Jumokée, Mom of 4)

As a professional involved in the transition of children from preschool to primary school, understanding the diversity of families is essential. Each family has its unique history, cultural, socio-economic, and emotional background and needs, which greatly affect their perceptions, attitudes, and behaviour around dealing with change in general and educational transitions in particular. Building rapport with family members and understanding their needs can foster a safe and respectful environment that promotes a successful transition for the child and helps families to feel included. This can be achieved when all professional involved in the transition recognise it as a time of significant change, during which families may experience a range of emotions. This might include anxiety, excitement, uncertainty and a whole range of mixed emotions. Many parents consider the start of school as 'bitter sweet' because they are excited by their child's increasing independence but nervous about this big change in their child's life.

In order to involve the family in the process of their child's transition from preschool to primary school, professionals must develop cultural competence and respect the differences that exist in families, in the form of beliefs, values, traditions, or economic means. This is essential in order to create the most important factor for effectively involving families in the transition process, namely building mutual trust and positive relationships.

By gaining a deeper understanding of families, professionals can then support a successful and positive transition for children and ensure family members are valuable partners. This comes during a turning point in the child's life where there are many changes and stressors, in the form of new routine, academic expectations, unfamiliar premises, new social roles and responsibilities, the forming of new relationships, etc.



When professionals really understand families, they are able to recognise different views and priorities as they work to achieve one common goal - to ensure minimal stress to the child settling into their new environment and a fair and equal start to their formal educational journey.



Learning Objectives

✔ The objectives of this unit are to help the professional gain an understanding of the diverse family characteristics, dynamics, structures and backgrounds that exist in order to build respectful relationships with families, and to ultimately support a successful transition for children members of those families. In this regard, self-reflection is an important part of achieving these outcomes, as it can help identify personal biases and beliefs and the way these might influence interactions with particular families.



Understanding family dynamics and the particular contexts they operate within enables Early Years practitioners and teachers to provide tailored and effective support during the transition process. It is, after all, in the professional's power to facilitate an inclusive and supportive transition for children and their families.

Identifying Needs

Families vary greatly from one another, influenced by factors such as ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, and geographic location. Recognising and understanding these differences can help everyone involved in transitions to understand a child's family situation. This then gives practitioners and teachers insights into how a particular family might best approach and navigate their child's transition in an effective, constructive and positive way.


Listed below you will find several factors to take into consideration when supporting children and their families in the process of transition from preschool to primary school.

Diversity of family structures

As we know, families take many various forms. When working with families during the transition process, it is important to acknowledge the various types of family structures that exist. Nuclear families, single-parent families, blended families, mixed marriage families, same-sex parent families, each type of family structure has its own unique circumstances. For instance, in a single-parent family, the parent may have to juggle both work and childcare responsibilities, which can make it difficult for them to attend school meetings or be actively involved in the child's education.

Educators (Early Years practitioners, schools and all relevant professionals) can provide support by offering flexible meeting times or providing resources for childcare.

Similarly, in same-sex parent families, the child may face challenges related to social stigma and discrimination. **Educators can create a safe and inclusive environment by promoting diversity and inclusion and by celebrating the different types of families that exist.**





In blended families, which include step-parents and step-siblings, unique challenges may present in terms of building relationships and managing different parenting styles. Educators may provide support by promoting open communication and providing resources for conflict resolution and family counselling, if necessary.

Family dynamics, culture and values

Understanding diverse family dynamics simply means valuing the different roles and responsibilities that family members may have within a given family structure. In some cultures, extended family members may play a more prominent role in childcare and education (such as grandparents, aunts, uncles or cousins), while in others, the responsibility may fall primarily on the parents themselves. **Such a difference has to be kept in mind when educators are tailoring support to better meet the needs of each family and child.**

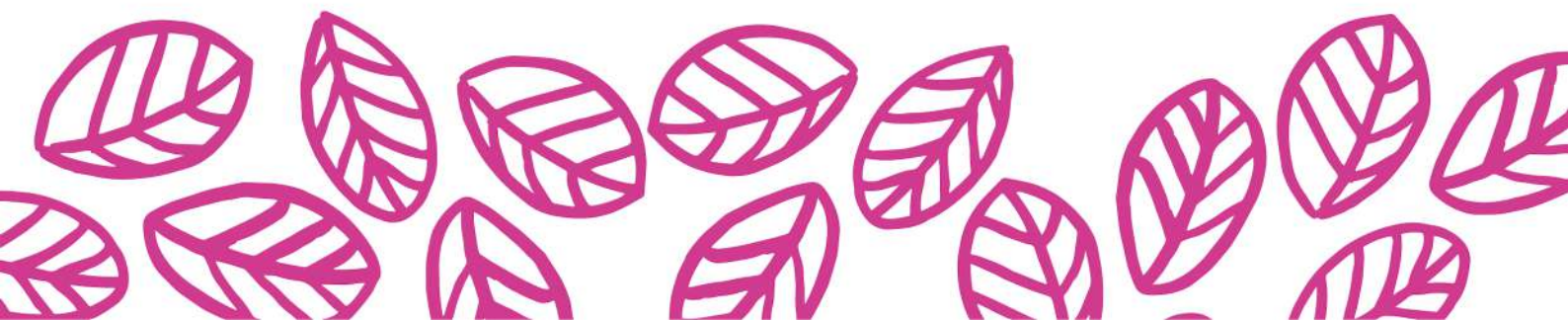
Cultural values and beliefs can also play a significant role in family dynamics and decision-making. In some families, academic success is prioritised above all else, even at the expense of mental well-being. Other families may place more emphasis on social and emotional development. **Thus, educators have to be quick to identify such differences, in order to position themselves in the appropriate mediating role.**

Communication styles

Communication can vary widely among families and cultures, with some being more direct and others being more nuanced. **Whatever the case, educators should insist on effective communication as a crucial aspect for supporting families during the transition process.** Educators should be able to recognise direct communication styles, which tend to be more straightforward and explicit, from indirect communication styles, which rely more on non-verbal cues and implicit messages. This enables them to adapt their communication style to ensure effective and meaningful interactions with families, with as few misunderstandings as possible. For example, some families may prefer face-to-face communication, while others may prefer written or on-line communication. You can use these preferences to build strong partnerships with families. Families from some cultures may prefer the father to communicate with the school, and in some cultures filling out personal information on forms can be something that will only happen when good relations and trust has been established.

Additionally, language barriers can also affect communication styles. Families may speak different languages or have varying levels of proficiency in the national language spoken in the given country. Educators should be prepared to provide information and support in multiple languages, and to use language access tools like translation services or interpreters to ensure effective communication.

It is really important to recognise that communication is a two-way street. If educators are able to listen actively - paying attention to what the family is trying to convey, acknowledging their feelings, and responding in a supportive and respectful manner - the chances are higher that families will feel heard and understood.





Attentive listening helps build trust and strengthen the partnership between families and professionals, leading to more successful transitions for children. On the other hand, if educators are dismissive or fail to listen to families, this can lead to frustration and mistrust, which can ultimately hinder the transition process. **It is vital for each educator to be aware of their own communication style and to work on developing effective communication strategies to build positive relationships with all families.**

Socio-economic background

The socio-economic status of their family can significantly impact a child's start in life, academic achievements, and overall well-being. Families from low-income backgrounds may face challenges such as lack of access to quality early childhood care and education, inadequate housing, and limited healthcare, which can have negative effects on a child's development and is likely to affect the transition. In contrast, families from higher-income backgrounds may have greater access to resources such as private schools, extracurricular activities, and tutoring services. Those two backgrounds can produce very different transition experiences for both the child and the families and professionals themselves. Educators should strive to understand the unique challenges that families from low-income backgrounds may face and work with them to identify resources and strategies to overcome these challenges or at least lessen their impact. This may require connecting families with community resources such as social supports, food banks, and healthcare providers.

It is also important to note that families from different socioeconomic backgrounds may have different expectations for their child's education. **Educators should be respectful of these differences and work with families to identify their priorities and goals for their child's education.**

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a concept that emphasises the connection between various aspects of a person's or group's identity and experiences. Professionals who work with families during the transition process need to recognise that there are multiple social identities, which may intersect in complex ways to influence a family's experiences and attitudes towards transition. For instance, a family that identifies as people of colour, Muslim, and low-income may face unique challenges related to discrimination, Islamophobia, and limited access to resources.

Educators should be aware of the potential intersections that may affect a family's experiences and work to provide targeted support that is culturally responsive. This can include providing language support, connecting families with resources, and working to build strong partnership based on mutual respect and understanding. They can also leverage cultural assets and strengths that families bring to the transition process, such as cultural knowledge, values, and indigenous practices. By doing so, they can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all children and their families.





Another way to effectively support families with intersectional identities is for educators to engage in ongoing self-reflection and learning about cultural humility, cultural identities and responsiveness. **Seeking out opportunities to build relationships with families and community members who have diverse backgrounds and experiences can enhance your understanding of the unique needs of each family and help create a more inclusive and supportive transition process.**

Addressing Needs

Below are some tips, actions, ideas, and practices that can be undertaken to facilitate a successful transition from preschool to primary school for children and their families:

Insist on high-quality communication:

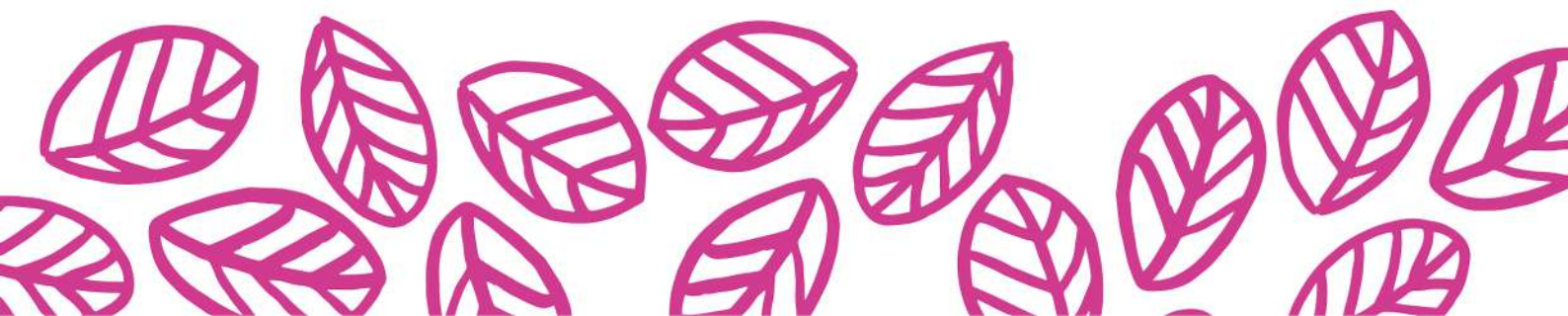
★ For Educators/transition professionals:

When you insist on high-quality communication, you can ensure that everyone involved in the transition process is on the same page. You can set up regular meetings with the child and their family to discuss any concerns they may have and address any issues that arise. You can also facilitate communication between the child and their new teachers, ensuring that everyone is aware of the child's needs. During these communication sessions, you can discuss the child's academic progress and social development. You can provide feedback on how the child is settling into their new school environment, and discuss areas where they may need extra support or encouragement. You can also provide suggestions for how the family can support their child's learning and development at home.

Do not shy away from on-line platforms when trying to facilitate communication, especially in situations where distance or time constraints may make face-to-face meetings difficult. You can use video conferencing or messaging platforms to check in with the child and their family, provide updates on the child's progress, and answer any questions families may have. Establishing effective channels of communication among all parties involved enables a cohesive approach and facilitates a supportive environment. By nurturing open and ongoing communication between yourself and the family, yourself and the child, and facilitating positive interaction among the three key parties, you can create a collaborative framework that encourages seamless transitions and sets the stage for continued growth and the academic achievement of the child.

★ For parents/caregivers

Try to prioritise frequent communication with your child's new school during the transition process. Schedule regular meetings to discuss your child's progress and obtain feedback, and work with teaching staff to address concerns and provide support. Use on-line platforms for communication with school staff and other parents when face-to-face meetings are challenging.



Conduct orientation sessions:

★ *For Educators/transition professionals:*

You can facilitate orientation sessions for children and their families before the start of the school year to provide an opportunity for families to visit the premises, meet the teachers, and learn about the school's policies and procedures and get to know the surroundings. This can help alleviate anxiety the child or family may have about the transition.



These sessions can be conducted either individually or in groups, depending on the school's policy and parents' availability. During the orientation session, you can provide families with a tour of the school's facilities and introduce them to the school's rules and norms.

This can help families become familiar with the school environment and feel more knowledgeable about the process of transition. Additionally, you can introduce families to the teachers and staff members who will be working with their children and use the opportunity to discuss the curriculum with the families. This can help parents understand what their children will be learning and how they can support that learning at home. Moreover, you can provide families with a list of required materials, such as books, uniforms, and supplies, so that they can prepare ahead of time.

Another value of conducting orientation sessions is that they can be used to address any concerns or questions families may have about the transition process. This can be particularly useful for families who are new to the school, are from minority backgrounds and have had restricted access to education themselves, or who have children with special needs.

Attend orientation sessions:

★ *For parents/caregivers*

Attending orientation sessions at your child's school before the start of the year, where made available, is essential. These sessions provide an opportunity for you to visit the school, meet teachers and support staff, and become familiar with policies and procedures. The orientation should include a tour of the facilities, introductions to staff, and discussions about the curriculum.



The information gathered during the orientation will help you understand what your child will be learning and how you can support their education at home. If not provided, do not forget to ask for a list of required materials in advance. Now is a very good time to address any concerns or questions you may have about the transition, particularly if you are new to the school or if your child has special educational needs or disabilities.



Remember that support can take many forms:

★ *For Educators/transition professionals:*

As a professional engaged in transitions, it is important to remember that your support can take many different forms. One effective way to provide support is through social connections. You can help children and families by setting up peer support networks or introducing families to other families with children in the same class or year group. Through the facilitation of these connections, you can help children feel more comfortable in their new surroundings and make new friends, while families have peace of mind knowing that their child is supported in the best way possible. This can be especially important for children who may feel apprehensive about starting school.



Another way you can provide support is by offering guidance and advice on how to navigate the new school environment such as familiarising families with resources such as after-school programmes or extracurricular activities.

This may include discussing the differences between preschool and primary school, and providing families with tips on how to support children in adapting to the new environment through games and activities at home.

★ *For parents/caregivers*

As a parent, it is important to explore different forms of support for your child's transition. Encourage social connections by reaching out to the school and asking about peer support networks or introducing your child to other children in their class. These connections help your child feel more comfortable and make new friends.

Additionally, ask about after-school programmes and extracurricular activities that can facilitate their transition and provide opportunities for socialising and adapting to the new school environment.

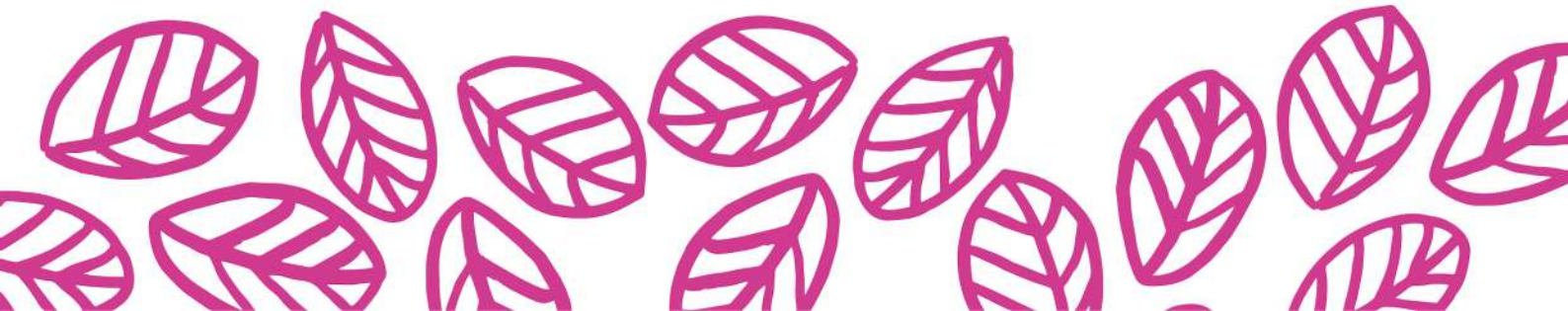



Don't hesitate to ask the school for guidance on navigating the new environment and supporting your child's adjustment and learning at home. Engaging in games and activities together can be a really fun way to ease their transition.

Ensure resources are available:

★ *For Educators/transition professionals:*

Don't overlook the importance of providing resources that can help families prepare their children and themselves for the transition from preschool to primary school. This can include books, leaflets, or on-line resources. You can also recommend bedtime stories or children's books, which can help them understand what to expect during the first few weeks of school, what their new environment will be like, and what their daily routine will look like. Additionally, you can recommend on-line resources for families that provide information on how to communicate with teachers and how to support the child's learning at home.





This can be particularly helpful for families in more difficult circumstances, who may not be familiar with the education system or who may be experiencing the transition for the first time. Professionals engaged in transition are in the ideal position to help families feel more informed and confident about the process and equipped to handle the challenges such changes will present.

Use available resources

☆ For parents/caregivers

Utilise any/all resources provided by the school to help you and your child prepare for the transition. These resources may include books, leaflets, or on-line materials that cover various aspects of the transition process. Take advantage of these materials to gain a better understanding of what to expect during the first weeks of school, the school environment, and the daily routine.



Ask the school for recommendations on bedtime stories or children's books that can familiarise your child with the new school experience. Additionally, seek out on-line resources that provide guidance on how to communicate with teachers and support your child's learning at home, especially if you are unfamiliar with the education system or new to the transition process.

Transition plans for children with SEN (Special Educational Needs):

☆ For Educators/transition professionals:


As a professional facilitating the transition process, you can play a crucial role in ensuring that children with SEN have a smooth and successful transition from preschool to primary school. You can collaborate with the child's parents, teachers, or speech therapist etc. to develop a transition plan that is tailored to their specific needs and addresses accommodations and modifications that will support the child in the new school environment.



For example, if a child has a physical disability, the plan can include accessibility modifications to the school premises and the provision of assistive devices such as wheelchairs or hearing aids.

In addition to working with the child's immediate support system, you can also help families connect with relevant community resources and organisations that can provide additional support, i.e. disability advocacy groups, counselling services, or specialised healthcare providers.





Similarly, for children from disadvantaged economic backgrounds, you can work with their families and school staff to identify and address any barriers that may hinder their success in the new school environment. This can include providing access to resources such as school supplies or transportation, as well as connecting families with community resources such as financial assistance/welfare services.

★ *For parents/caregivers*

Collaborate with your child's teachers, all relevant therapists or assistants, and the school to develop a personalised transition plan that meets their specific needs. This plan should include accommodations and modifications to support their success in the new environment. For instance, if your child has a physical disability, the plan may involve making the school premises accessible or providing assistive devices.



The school can also assist you in connecting with community resources and organisations that provide additional support for children with special needs. Reach out to disability advocacy groups, counselling services, or specialised healthcare providers for guidance and assistance.

Advocate for an open-door policy:

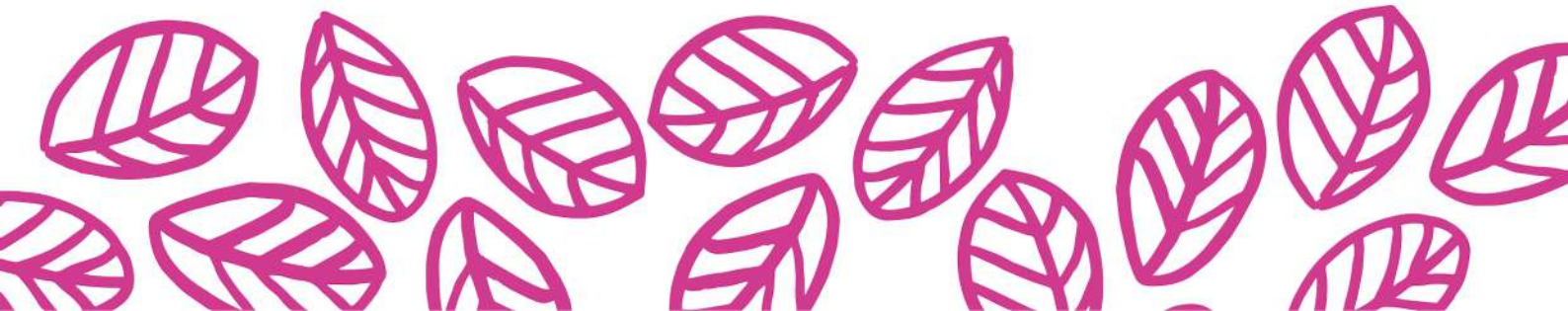
★ *For Educators/transition professionals:*

You can encourage your school to adopt an open-door policy by promoting the benefits of such a policy to the school's management and staff. You can help develop a clear communication plan that includes regular updates on school policies and procedures, events, and pupils' progress and forward those to families. Suggestions for improving communication between families and schools, such as creating a parent-teacher association or hosting regular family engagement events could be ideas you voice aloud in order to seek like-minded supporters at school.

In addition, you can work towards providing information on financial aid options or community resources for families from marginalised groups or economically disadvantaged backgrounds. You can also advocate for policies that support educational equity and access for all children, regardless of their ethnicity, race, gender, orientation and socio-economic background.



Lastly but yet importantly, you can help your school and families understand the unique needs of SEN children during the transition process. This can include providing resources on disability rights, as well as identifying training for teachers and school staff on how to support these pupils. Remember that you are in a unique position to champion a proactive and collaborative approach, to ensure that all children have the support they need to succeed during the process of transition and beyond.



Main Takeaways

When we really understand families, we can really help children to enjoy a meaningful and supported transition.

While families can be diverse and complex structures, understanding their culture, family dynamics, values, socio-economic background, communication styles and the intersectionality of all these factors, means that we can see the child in context.

Understanding families also helps educators to identify children's specific needs and in order to meet those needs, a number of things can be undertaken, including:

- ✿ Modelling and promoting high-quality communication
- ✿ Conducting or taking part in orientation sessions
- ✿ Keeping in mind that support can take many forms
- ✿ Ensuring resources are adequate and available
- ✿ Making transition plans for children with SEN
- ✿ Advocating for an open-door policy that welcomes all children and their families

'This may be the completely wrong thing to say but I used to really shy away from communicating with families outside of parent-teacher meetings. I think I was always worried about saying the wrong thing. But then I did some training on transitions and had a lightbulb moment when I realised I can't know everything, nobody can. So now I ask parents about what I don't know.....I might ask about where at home their son does his homework so I can get a picture of how he learns at home. Or about a recent bereavement and what they want me to say or do when their daughter brings it up in class. It's better for the child and to be honest, it has made my job easier too'

(Frasier, primary school teacher)



Supporting children's transitions from preschool to primary school

Unit 3 Disabilities



2020-1-IE01-KA201-
Intellectual Output 03:
Train the Trainer



Unit 3 Disabilities


A quick note: You might notice that this unit talks about educators and transition professionals. By that, we simply mean all specialists involved in the transition process. For children with disabilities, this might include, in addition to Early Years practitioners and teachers, a variety of allied health professionals (i.e. speech and language therapists, occupational therapists etc.), special needs assistants, play therapists, language support tutors and so forth. We refer to these as ‘transition professional’s because they bring skills and expertise that makes them are a critical part of supporting a meaningful transition.

Introduction

There is no doubt that as a professional focused on transitions you have a deep and holistic understanding of transition as a process that marks a time of significant change, growth, and new experiences for the child. You recognise that children have diverse needs and experiences, and that they are equipped with different levels of mental, physical and emotional abilities which can determine their experiences in social situations, with peers, and in the new school environment. For children from all backgrounds and abilities transitions are pivotal moments that significantly influence their development and shape their future growth.

This unit focuses on understanding disabilities and special educational needs (SEN) within the broader context of transitions. It aims to provide educators/professionals involved in the transition with insights and strategies to support children with disabilities and SEN during this critical period and to support them in becoming a disability-aware professional. Every child, irrespective of their background or specific needs can benefit from a smooth and well-supported transition. Through well-informed and appropriately trained professionals, inclusive, and supportive environments can be created for all.

Unit 3 Disabilities: Objectives

- ✔ This unit aims to help all professionals (educators, therapists, assistants etc.) involved in transitions to get familiar with the various types of disabilities, as well as the specific needs and challenges that children with disabilities may encounter during the transition from preschool to primary school. It presents tips to support the successful transition for those children. It aims to inspire professionals to develop the skills and understanding required to create an inclusive and supportive environment that promotes the well-being and development of children with disabilities during the transition to primary school.
 - ✔ The learning outcomes outlined in this chapter can directly influence the experiences and well-being of children with disabilities during the transition to primary school and enhance their opportunities for social interactions, academic progress, and overall development.
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The unit will explore the major categories of disabilities, including physical, sensory, intellectual, learning difficulties, and developmental disabilities in order to get a deeper understanding of these categories and the specific needs associated with each. By understanding this, professionals are enabled to tailor their support and teaching strategies accordingly.

Unit 3 Disabilities: Identifying and Addressing Needs

As the transition process involves multiple stakeholders, each playing a significant role in supporting children with disabilities (their family members, preschool and primary school practitioners, and other professionals), collaborative partnerships among these stakeholders are essential to ensure a smooth and successful transition for differently abled children. Attention needs to be paid to the particular experiences and needs of children with disabilities during the transition process and upon starting school. It is essential for the educator/professional to keep in mind the specific challenges and requirements that children with disabilities and SEN may face in their strive for academic learning and integration into school life, and pave the way for a more enabled and inclusive educational experience.

For children with disabilities and special educational needs (SEN), the transition to school holds even greater importance. Starting primary school marks a significant shift for these children and their parents and with such a new and exciting chapter there are also unique challenges and considerations.





At the heart of successful transitions lies a meaningful partnership between parents and practitioners. Parents, armed with their intuition, experiences, and deep knowledge of their child's unique needs, serve as invaluable sources of comfort and support during this period of significant change. Professionals, keeping the child at the centre (see Unit 1), collaborate with schools, preschools and parents, fostering open communication and mutual understanding among all parties involved in the child's journey. They also take the necessary measures to provide access, infrastructure, facilities, and special support for the differently abled child making the transition. Taking a holistic approach to planning and facilitating the transition ensures that it is seen not as a destination but as an ongoing process, where the voices of all stakeholders are heard and acknowledged.


- ✔ It is essential to recognise that the transition might take longer and need more dedicated efforts for children with disabilities and SEN. For practitioners, this requires patience and understanding, providing children with the space and support they need to adjust to their new environment.
- ✔ Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that the process of transition is far from simplistic and often encompasses a range of different transitions within itself. When considering the child in the transition process, whether with or without disabilities, we can observe:

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-  **Developmental shifts:** The child progresses from early childhood to a more structured educational environment, requiring adjustments and new skills.
 -  **Social transitions:** The child forms new relationships with peers and teachers, adapting to social dynamics and building connections.
 -  **Cultural transitions:** The child encounters different norms and practices, requiring understanding and adaptation to a new cultural context.
 -  **Emotional transitions:** The child navigates a mixture of emotions, from excitement to anxiety and fear, as they embark on this significant change.
 -  **Routine transitions:** The child adjusts to a new daily schedule and the academic demands of the school setting.
 -  **Physical transitions:** The child moves to a new physical space, transitioning to different school premises.

The following sections delve deeper into strategies, approaches, and resources that can facilitate a meaningful and successful transition for children with disabilities and SEN. These can facilitate a supportive and inclusive environment that enables every child regardless of their abilities to thrive in their new school setting.

In order to help professionals familiarise themselves with the various aspects of support required for children with disabilities and SEN, there is a need to establish a clear understanding of disabilities and their categories.

- 1 Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities:** Different levels of limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour.
 -  **Autism Spectrum Disorder:** Challenges in social interaction, communication, and restricted/repetitive patterns of behaviour.
 - 2 Learning Difficulties:** Difficulties in specific academic skills, such as reading (dyslexia), writing (dysgraphia), or mathematics (dyscalculia).
 - 3 Attention and Behaviour Disorders:** Different limitations in cognitive functioning and engagement in completing of specific tasks. It may also result in challenges with social functioning.
 -  **Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD):** Persistent patterns of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity.
 - 4 Emotional and Behavioural Disorders:** Conditions such as anxiety disorders, mood disorders, conduct disorders, and oppositional defiant disorder.
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- 5 **Speech and Language Disorders:** Difficulties in the development and use of language, which can manifest as problems with articulation, fluency (stuttering), or language comprehension and expression.
 - 6 **Sensory processing impairments:** Challenges in processing and responding to sensory information.
 - 👉 **Visual Impairments:** Partial sight to total blindness, requiring adaptations for accessing information, orientation in the environment and participating in activities.
 - 👉 **Hearing Impairments:** Ranging from mild to profound hearing loss, sometimes necessitating assistive devices for communication and learning.
 - 7 **Physical Disabilities:** Conditions that affect physical functioning or mobility, such as cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, or spina bifida.

We will look at each category of disabilities to identify potential needs, required support from the specialist and ideas how to support those children.


- 1 **Children with intellectual or developmental disabilities** may encounter challenges in various areas, such as communication, social interaction, relatability to the outside world and daily school activities. For example, children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) may benefit from specialised interventions such as social skills training to navigate social interactions and build relationships. In some high functioning children with ASD, psychomotorics or play therapy can also support their overall psychomotor and mental development and engagement. As a professional supporting transition, try to keep in mind the following:

👉 **Communication Challenges:**

Children with limited speech and language skills may struggle to express themselves and understand others effectively. Incorporating visual aids, augmentative and alternative communication systems, and structured language programmes can enhance their ability to communicate with peers and teachers. By working closely with speech-language therapists, specialists can ensure that appropriate interventions are implemented to address the child's specific communication challenges.

👉 **Social Interaction and Relationship Building:**

Children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) often face difficulties in navigating social interactions and building relationships with their peers. Social skills training programmes can provide valuable support in this area. These programmes focus on teaching essential social skills, such as starting conversations, sharing, and understanding non-verbal cues.



Motor and Mental Development:

Some children with intellectual or developmental disabilities may benefit from additional support in their motor and mental development. Psychomotorics or play therapy can be effective approaches to enhance their overall development and engagement. These interventions focus on promoting physical coordination, sensory integration, and cognitive skills through structured play activities. By collaborating with occupational therapists and incorporating these therapies into the transition process, those involved with transition can help children develop essential skills needed for their new school experience.



- 2 Children with learning difficulties** may struggle with mastering specific academic skills such as reading, writing, or mathematics. These children may benefit from specialised instruction and accommodations to help them succeed in school. Families of these children may need support in advocating for their child's educational needs. Some of the strategies educators/transition professionals can employ include:

Identifying specific areas of difficulty:

Educators/transition professionals can work closely with the child, parents, and educators to identify the specific challenges the child faces in their learning. This involves conducting assessments, reviewing educational records, and observing the child's performance in different academic areas.

Example: Through assessments and discussions with the child's parents and teachers, the professional identifies that a child with dyslexia struggles with reading fluency and comprehension but demonstrates strong analytical abilities.

Implementing targeted interventions:

Educators/transition professionals can collaborate with special education teachers, mainstream teachers, and parents to design individualised support plans that address the child's specific learning needs. They implement targeted interventions and accommodations to support the child's academic progress.

Example: For a child with dysgraphia who has difficulty with handwriting, the relevant professional (i.e. occupational therapist) may recommend the use of assistive technologies and software, such as speech-to-text software or specialised writing aids, to facilitate written expression.

Providing assistive technology tools:

Specialists can introduce and implement assistive technology tools that aid in overcoming learning barriers. These tools can enhance the child's learning experience and support their engagement in the classroom.

Example: A specialist recommends the use of a text-to-speech software programme for a child with dyslexia. This tool enables the child to listen to the text being read aloud, enhancing their comprehension and access to written information.



Advocating for allowing extended time for assignments:

Recognising that children with learning difficulties may require additional time to complete assignments, educators/transition professionals can collaborate with teachers to ensure the provision of extended time as an accommodation for successful academic achievements.

Example: A specialist (SEN teacher) works with the child's teachers to establish a system where the child with dyscalculia is given extra time to complete math assignments to alleviate time pressure and support their accuracy.

Advocating for multi-sensory teaching approaches:

Those involved in transition can encourage the use of multi-sensory teaching approaches that engage different senses to enhance learning and memory retention for children with learning difficulties.

Example: For a child with dyslexia, a professional might suggest incorporating multi-sensory activities, such as using sand trays for letter formation or engaging in kinesthetic learning exercises, to reinforce reading skills.

- 3 Children with attention and behaviour disorders** may have difficulties with focus, impulsivity, and self-regulation. These children may benefit from behavioural interventions and support in developing their executive functioning skills. As a professional involved in supporting transitions, your role can provide support in:

Behavioural Interventions:

Implementing behavioural interventions can assist children with attention and behaviour disorders in managing their challenges. This may involve establishing clear expectations, help with setting up structured routines at school, and incorporating visual supports to promote organisation and predictability.



Example: Providing ideas for creating and using visual schedules, checklists, or timers can help children with ADHD stay on track and understand their daily tasks.

Executive Functioning Skills:

Children with attention and behaviour disorders often struggle with executive functioning skills, such as planning, organisation, and time management. Introducing strategies to develop these skills can greatly benefit their transition.

Example: Teaching how to break tasks into smaller, manageable steps or providing organisational tools, such as colour-coded folders or planners, can assist in promoting independence and success in the school setting.



Collaborating with Teachers:

Working closely with primary teachers and educators is essential in supporting children with attention and behaviour disorders. Providing them with information about the child's specific needs and recommended strategies can help create a supportive classroom environment.

Example: Encourage open communication between the child's family and teachers to ensure consistency in approaches and to address any concerns that may arise.

Individualised Transition Plans:

Each child with attention and behaviour disorders may have unique needs, strengths, and challenges. Collaborating with the child, their family, and relevant professionals, such as psychologists or play therapists, can help develop individualised transition plans.

Example: Take your time to outline specific accommodations, interventions, and goals, which have to be implemented on your part and by the school and educators to ensure a smooth and successful transition to school.

* An individualized Transition Plan could be equally applicable to all types of disabilities if they are structured to take into account the levels of functioning and specific needs of each child with disability and SEN.

4 Children with speech and language disorders may have difficulties with speech and language development. These children may benefit from speech and language therapy to help them improve their communication skills. Families of these children may need support in understanding their child's communication needs and accessing appropriate services. Here are some examples of actions that educators/transition professionals might take:

Conduct Assessments:

Educators/transition professionals can assess the specific communication needs of each child with a communication disorder. This assessment can involve evaluating their speech and language abilities, identifying areas of difficulty, and understanding their individual strengths and challenges.

Develop Individualised Plans:

Based on the assessment results, educators/transition professionals can collaborate with speech-language therapists and special educators to develop individualized transition plans. These plans should outline specific goals, strategies, and accommodations to support the child's communication development during the transition process.

☑ **Recommend Speech and Language Therapy:**

This may involve referring the child to a speech-language therapist who can work with them to improve their communication skills. The therapy sessions can focus on areas such as articulation, language comprehension and expression, social communication, and pragmatics.

☑ **Collaborate with Speech-Language Therapists:**

Educators/transition professionals can maintain close communication and collaboration with speech-language therapists. This collaboration ensures that the child's therapy goals and strategies align with their transition needs. Regular meetings and information sharing between the educator and speech-language therapist are vital for consistent support and progress monitoring.

☑ **Educate Families:**

Educators/transition professionals can provide families with information and resources to help them understand their child's communication needs. This includes explaining the nature of the communication disorder, discussing the recommended interventions, and offering guidance on accessing appropriate services and supports. Educators/transition professionals can also connect families with support groups or organisations that provide additional information and assistance.

☑ **Provide Training and Workshops:**

Educators/transition professionals can organise training sessions or workshops for teachers and other school staff. These sessions aim to enhance their understanding of speech and language disorders, effective communication strategies, and the use of assistive technology or alternative communication systems. Equipping educators with knowledge and skills, empowers them to support students with speech and language disorders effectively.

☑ **Facilitate Peer Education:**

Educators/transition professionals can facilitate peer education programmes to foster understanding and acceptance among classmates. These programmes can involve educating peers about communication difficulties, promoting empathy and inclusion, and providing strategies for effective communication and social interactions with their peers who have speech and language disorders.

- 5 Children with sensory impairments** may have challenges sensory processing or accessing information. These children may require assistive devices to help them participate fully in activities. Families of these children may need support in accessing resources and services to help their child thrive.

As a professional involved in transitions, you can:



Collaborate with the school to create sensory-friendly spaces where a child can retreat when feeling overwhelmed or overstimulated.

Develop sensory plans in collaboration with occupational therapists, which outline specific sensory activities and strategies to help the child self-regulate during the school day.

Educate teachers and classmates on sensory processing difficulties and provide guidance on creating an inclusive and supportive classroom environment.

★ For Children with Hearing Loss:

Ensure that the child has access to assistive listening devices, such as hearing aids or cochlear implants, and that these devices are properly maintained and utilised. Provide training to teachers and classmates on effective communication strategies, such as using visual aids, gestures, and clear facial expressions. Advocate for the implementation of captioning or sign language interpretation services in classrooms to enhance accessibility during lessons and activities.

★ For Children with Visual Impairments:

Assess the child's specific visual needs and coordinate with the school to create a visually accessible environment, including appropriate lighting, contrasting colours, and tactile markings. Facilitate the provision of assistive technology, such as screen magnifiers, braille displays, or text-to-speech software, to support the child's access to educational materials. Collaborate with teachers to ensure that instructional materials and assignments are provided in accessible formats, such as large print text or braille, or audio recordings.

6 Children with physical disabilities face unique challenges that require special attention and support. They may have difficulty with their mobility or movement, making it harder for them to engage in various activities. They may need assistive devices like wheelchairs, braces, or crutches to help them navigate their surroundings and participate fully in the everyday life. As a transition specialist you can:

- ✓ Conduct a mobility assessment to determine the child's specific needs for physical accessibility, such as wheelchair ramps, accessible restrooms, or adaptive seating arrangements in the classroom.
- ✓ Facilitating Accessibility Modifications: Educators/transition professionals can work closely with school management and teachers to ensure that the learning environment is accessible and inclusive for children with physical disabilities. This might involve:



- ✓ Conducting a thorough accessibility assessment of the school environment to ensure that it is wheelchair-friendly, including accessible entrances, hallways, and restrooms.
- ✓ Collaborating with the school to make necessary modifications, such as installing ramps or lifts, and widening doorways to accommodate wheelchair access.
- ✓ Training school staff on proper wheelchair handling techniques, including transferring the child safely between their wheelchair and other seating options.



✓ **Providing Training and Resources:**

Educators/transition professionals can offer training and resources to teachers, school staff, and parents to enhance their understanding of specific physical disabilities and the best practices for supporting children with those. This can include workshops on inclusive education, assistive technology and strategies for fostering communication and social interaction.



✓ **Advocating for Individualised Accommodations:**

Educators/transition professionals can advocate for individualised accommodations and support plans for children with physical disabilities. This may involve participating in Individualised Education Plan (IEP) meetings, collaborating with teachers to develop personalised strategies, and ensuring that necessary accommodations, such as modified curriculum or alternative communication methods, are implemented consistently.

✓ **Monitoring Progress and Providing Ongoing Support:**

Educators/transition professionals should maintain regular communication with families and school personnel to monitor the progress of children with physical disabilities. This includes assessing the effectiveness of accommodations, addressing emerging challenges, and modifying support strategies as needed. Ongoing support and collaboration ensure that children receive consistent assistance throughout their transition and beyond.



Tips for parents of children with SEND:

1 **Start early and plan ahead:**

Try to begin preparing for your child's transition well in advance. Connect with their new school's special education team to discuss your child's needs and develop an individualised plan. Early preparation allows time to address any concerns, gather necessary documentation, and ensure that appropriate support services and reasonable adjustments are in place for a smooth transition.





2 Take part in effective communication and collaboration:

Share important information about your child's strengths, challenges, and individualised education plan (IEP) or any relevant documentation. Collaborate with the school team to create a transition plan that includes strategies, accommodations, and goals specific to your child's needs.

3 Visit and familiarise:

Arrange visits to the new school before the transition. Tour the campus, classrooms, and other facilities to help your child become familiar with the new environment. Meet with teachers and support staff to discuss your child's needs and to establish relationships. Encourage your child to spend some time in the new setting, if possible, to ease any anxiety and promote a sense of familiarity.

4 Create a visual schedule:

Work with your child's current teachers or specialists to create a visual schedule that outlines what to expect during the transition to primary school. Include photos, drawings, or written descriptions of key people, places, and activities to help your child understand and adjust to the new environment.



5 Support autonomy and needs sharing:



Teach them strategies for communicating their needs, such as using visual aids, gestures, or simple verbal cues. Help them practice self-help skills, like dressing, using the restroom, and organizing their belongings. By empowering your child to take on age-appropriate responsibilities, you can foster confidence and readiness for the transition to primary school.

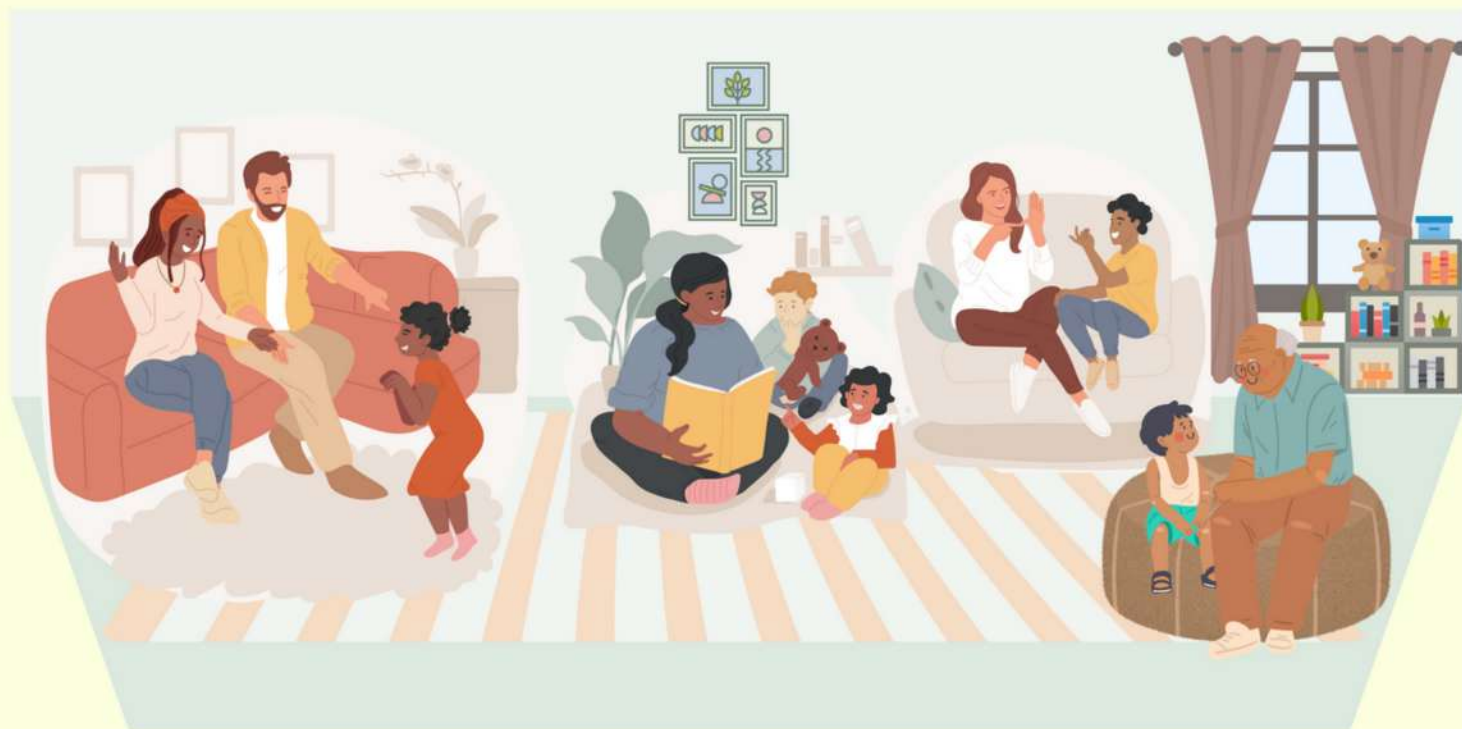
6 Take deep breaths:

It is hard to watch your child navigate a whole new world but you know them better than anybody. Together, with the right supports, you can enjoy their transition journey.



Supporting children's transitions from preschool to primary school

Unit 4 Language





Unit 4: Language

Introduction

‘Children do not doubt that they should learn the language of the school because it allows them to interact with all children. However, some may fear that in the process of learning the school language they will forget their mother tongue’

(Dr Paul Leseman, Utrecht University, the Netherlands)

In today’s world of constant migration, families move from one part of the country to another, sometimes from another country or even continent, and in addition to bringing their cultural life styles with them, they also bring their native dialect, vocabulary, accents and language.






In countries with multiple different minority groups, although the family lives surrounded by people, media channels and institutions where the official language is used, within their own ethnic communities, they speak a different language. Subsequently, a young child does not grasp more than just a few words of the official national language before going to preschool or school. If family members have poor educational attainment, they may have very poor literacy skills and difficulty speaking the official language. Language barriers then become a part of everyday life, creating further disadvantage by limiting knowledge and access to supports and services.

In terms of a child’s transition from preschool to primary school, therefore, language is a fundamental factor in shaping how a child will experience that transition.

Unit 4 Language: Objectives

A quick note: When we say ‘school language’ we are referring to the official language of the county where a child lives. This is the language spoken in their preschool and school.

This unit is designed to help you understand:

-  That school language may be different from the language children use at home even when it is the same language linguistically
-  Different types of language-related problems a child may encounter
-  Why children have problems when school language does not match the language they speak at home
-  The role of various stakeholders in overcoming language barriers that a child or both the child and his/her family may have in communication with and at school
-  Both the child and their family’s right to feel welcome, accepted and respected in school



Unit 4 Language: Identifying Needs

The language a child speaks as their mother tongue can present different types of barriers during their transition to primary school either from the preschool or home, if it differs from the official language of tuition. In some countries where there is no mandatory or accessible preschool programme in place, school is the child's first real immersion into the majority/national language.

In migrant families, the adults may not have any command of the official language, but may have sent their children to kindergarten and preschool, so their children have learnt at least the basics of the official language of the host country. Some of these children are eager to master the official language as soon as possible in order to make friends and communicate with other children, but some are afraid that they will lose and forget their mother tongue if they adapt too well to the official language of the preschool and school.

Recognising the language and a dialect, accent, or any different way of speaking the language, that the child and their family members speak (even when it is linguistically the same language as the official language at school), may help the child transition in a less stressful way. Communication with preschool teachers, children and their families prior to the school year start is of crucial importance in this process. Learning more about the environment from which a child comes, their family and the family's situation can also help in identifying different types of support the child may need. It can also help to create a positive, encouraging and supportive environment for each and every child in the class from the beginning.

In this unit, we will describe a few different scenarios that can provide information on the child's needs in terms of language and communication.

- ① *Both a child and their family members speak the language of tuition but use different dialect, accent, some words or incorrect grammar in their communication.*

Within most countries, dialect, accents and vocabulary differ from one part of the country to another. The way language is used, especially the use of grammar is also different depending on the level of education a person has. All these differences may cause a child to feel insecure in a new environment, and may trigger a fear of being excluded, bullied or laughed at in a new class where the child doesn't know their peers. Although the child can understand and communicate in the official language, (s)he may try to keep quiet and try to mix only with those children who seem to speak the language in a similar way to themselves.



- ② *Child's mother tongue is a different language but both the child and their family members have some understanding of the language of tuition and can hold basic conversation in the language of tuition, although not fluently.*



If a child comes from a minority group that speaks a different language (or Roma families in some countries that communicate in Romani language at home) even though the majority language is all around with media and other children and families in preschool using it all the time, a child and their family members may not be fluent in it. Within their families and communities, their mother tongue is spoken, so the child has acquired most of their learning and understanding in the minority language. If family members are illiterate or have low levels of education, they often believe that they cannot help their child learn anything. The pressure is then put on a child by the family to learn the official language.

In communication with others, a child may try to literally translate words and sentences into the majority language, but then different barriers surface since both grammar and vocabulary include constructions that cannot be literally translated from one language into another. When this happens and others - both grown-ups and children - seem unable to understand or recognise/accept the child's effort, (s)he can develop resistance to both school and classmates/teachers. This may result in a situation where a child refuses to go to school, refrains from communication with peers and teachers and tries to avoid any situation where the official language is needed for communication.




- © *Children and their family's mother tongue is a different language from the language of tuition and the family members can understand and converse in the language of tuition or in an international language, but the child has no command or understanding of the language of tuition.*

In today's world, refugees, migrants, and labour immigrants frequently move from one country to another. When migration is caused by political instability in the country, or wars, usually the first families to leave are the ones better educated, those in a better financial situation and those who feel that they can find work wherever they go. They usually speak at least one international language and/or have immediately begin to learn the official language of the host country when they arrive. However, a child at the age of transitioning from preschool to the primary school, usually cannot speak the host country's language yet. Frequently both the authorities and families think that if they submerge children into the environment where everyone speaks the language of tuition, the children will naturally pick up the language fast.

Research, however, shows that these children attain lower scores even at a later stage in literacy and science tests. Picking up another language does not happen automatically. Most of a child's learning and understanding of concepts and constructs come from the experience and understanding acquired in their mother tongue.





Those that the child already knows are easier to develop in another language, but the new concepts that the child is not yet familiar with in any language become very difficult to grasp for a child in a new language. In such a situation, a child tends to keep quiet, to answer any teacher's question in as few words as possible, hiding the fact that (s)he has not understood what has been talked about.

☉ *Children and their family's mother tongue is a different language from the language of tuition and a child can understand and converse in the language of tuition, but the family members have no command or understanding of it.*

Many immigrant families are acutely aware of the importance of helping their children learn the official language of the host country, i.e., the language of tuition, and send their children to kindergartens, preschools and various other places where children can learn the language as soon as possible, while they try to secure work. A child manages to learn the official language of the host country and can communicate, but the parents have difficulties understanding and speaking/reading the official language. In the interactions with preschool and school, they ask their children to interpret what the practitioners and teachers say.

In such situations children are put in a position to hear and interpret many things they are not appropriate for their age or stage of development. Simultaneously, they sometimes start feeling ashamed of their parents who cannot communicate with teachers directly and fear that teachers may think less of them because their parents cannot speak the official language. This feeling can be strengthened when other children or other children's parents are around and can witness the situation.

☉ *Children and their family's mother tongue is a different language from the language of tuition, but neither a child nor their family members can understand or communicate in the language of tuition*

Newly arrived refugees, migrants, and sometimes asylum seekers who come as families, generally arrive with little to no official host country language skills or understanding. Ideally their children should start education as soon as possible, but if it is the beginning of the primary school year, there is little time for them to prepare the child for a new language, school, and wider environment. Quite often both the authorities and families themselves think that if they immerse children into the environment where everyone speaks the language of tuition (i.e., send them to school immediately) the child will naturally pick up the language fast. This does not happen quickly or easily.



Both children and parents, usually already in various difficult situations, feel lost and completely on their own. If they are also experiencing poverty and substandard living conditions, the child's acquisition of the official host language skills, education and integration drop rather low on the priority list of both parents and child. Frequent absences and early drop out are often consequences of this situation, and the child remains excluded from any potentially integrating activities.





Unit 4 Language Addressing Needs

There are two components to overcoming language barriers that children may encounter in order to support them to make a meaningful, smooth transition from preschool to primary school.



Understanding the particular type of support that is needed for the child and the type of support their parents/family members need. Developing and implementing a support plan that includes various stakeholders, so that a network of support is available for the child and for their parents/family members.

④ *Understanding the particular types of support needed for the child and for the parents/family to enable less stressful and meaningful transition of the child to primary school:*

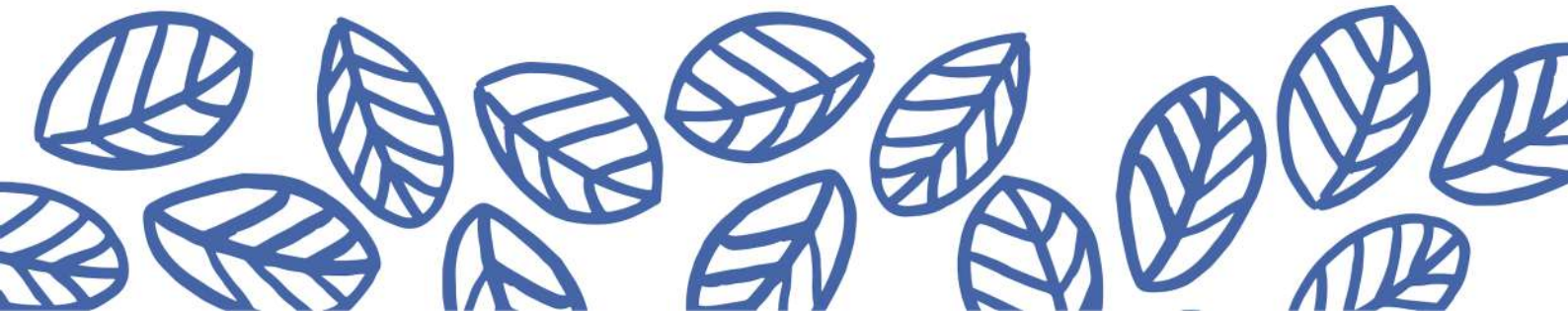
In the situation where both a child and parents speak the language of tuition but in a different way than it is spoken at school, special support is needed to boost the child's and parents' confidence to use the language. This means supporting the child to adopt grammatically correct phrases and learn the official accent and pronunciation, as well as new words.

The child also needs peer support and acceptance, so creating a welcoming environment, with support from other children to understand and celebrate differences is really important. An open discussion with parents, their active involvement and understanding of how their child may feel is also needed in order to support the child's positive attitude towards starting a new, big school.

Communication with the child's preschool practitioners can help the primary school teacher learn and understand the child's background, likes and dislikes, ways of connecting with other children and adults, which helps to tailor the support plan that can start while the child is still in preschool or before the official start of the new school year in the primary school.

④ *Developing and implementing a support plan that includes various stakeholders, so that a network of support is available for the child and for their parents/family members:*

In many countries, there are specialist services for children who come from minority or immigrant families and have difficulties in learning caused by the language barrier. In some countries, there is provision for individualised development/education plan (IEPs) for each child in such a situation at preschool level. Cooperation between preschool practitioners, other professionals who have developed the individualised education plan, and parents, is essential for primary school teachers. It enables them to learn and understand both the type of language barrier and the steps already taken, in order to continue providing support in a way that makes the child feel safe, comfortable and heard.





- ③ In a situation where both a child and parents/family members can communicate at some level in the official tuition language, it is important for primary school teachers and other relevant professionals (special needs assistants, therapists etc.) to see if and what structured support was already in place for the child in preschool. By learning that, they can also learn how much the child has already advanced, what specific needs the child has, how involved the parents/family members have been and what needs the child has at their stage of transition to primary school.



It is also important for the primary school teacher to try to learn what major grammar and sentence structure related differences exist between the child's mother tongue and official tuition language in order to be able to spot the child's efforts to literally translate concepts and thoughts from one language into another. This is really important because it helps the teacher to assess whether a child does not understand the concept, topic and words or just does not know the words needed to express him/herself in the language of tuition adequately.


Talking to a member of the ethnic/minority group involved with the preschool (i.e. practitioner, interpreter etc.) can also help the teacher to understand the manner in which the child reacts best to support. This is especially useful when parents/family members feel insecure and fear communication with the "officials" from the primary school, where they feel inadequate. The child senses the fear and discomfort and becomes equally insecure when communicating with teachers or other professionals involved in the transition process. Teachers should also understand that these children sometimes also fear "losing" their mother tongue if they learn the official language fluently and need to make plans to assist these children to understand that primary school will not make them forget their own language. Both teachers and parents need to support the child's learning and, using both languages, celebrate the fact that the child will be bilingual and therefore even more talented.

- ③ When a child does not understand or speak the official language, and the pressure is on him/her to learn it as quickly as possible, the child needs not only support in acquiring the official language skills, but more urgently, (s)he needs to feel welcome, safe and accepted by the new environment, teachers and peers even without speaking their language.

These children are already frequently at a disadvantage in many ways (they have recently moved to another country, have only part of their family around and are missing the others, have left their friends behind etc.) and they need multiple types of support. If possible, speaking with the child through someone who speaks both languages is of great importance. Parents or other family members can also provide necessary information about the child's likes, dislikes, what the child is missing etc.

- all the details that can help both primary school teachers and relevant professionals to understand the particular and holistic needs of each child in this situation.





Parents, teachers, and family members need to try to find older peers who have succeeded in mastering the language of tuition, have gained new friends, so that the child has role models to look up to. NGOs working in the community may also be helpful in supporting the child's learning process in a fun way even before school starts.

- ③ When a young child is put in a position as a bridge between adults (a teacher and parents, shop assistants and parents or any other official and parents), the child may develop different and negative feelings about parents and him/herself. Teachers and other transition professionals in the primary school need to look beyond a clever child who is capable of switching between languages and understand the feelings and needs of that child.

By communicating with preschool practitioners, or other professionals from any service that have helped the child learn the official language, primary school teachers can gain insights and better understand the child. This type of information can and should shape the place, time, and manner of communication with the child's parents and can help in preparing a support plan for the child. In addition, this information provides insights into parents' attitudes and the level of pressure they put on their child to master the official language. Subsequently, this informs a plan to help parents understand the potential harm of such pressure.

Parents can also find friends and other community members who can speak the official language and ask them for assistance in communication with teachers and administration, so that the child can be part of the conversation when needed, not a facilitator of it.


- ③ In a situation where neither a child or his/her parents speak the official language (i.e., the language of tuition), a child may feel very insecure, unsafe, and overwhelmed by the attention of the people (s)he cannot understand. As a result, their transition from home (or temporary home) to primary school can be very traumatic.



A child in such a situation always needs to feel some connection to the place, people and group, and some reassurance that (s)he can make it in a new environment. Primary school teachers, support services, and other professionals involved in the transition process need to find a way (i.e., someone who can speak the child's mother tongue, signs, pictures, or any other tool) to establish a rapport with the parents and the child, to find out about the circumstances that have led to this situation, more about the child and his/her interests and needs. These details will inform their support plan for that child.

In all situations where a child cannot communicate in the language of tuition in a standard way, the needs of the child go far beyond just the language barrier. In order to overcome the language barrier and develop a meaningful, successful support plan, professionals need to address as many of the child's needs as possible, include parents and family, as well as adopt a multi-disciplinary approach to the development of the support plan.





When addressing a language barrier of any type, at the time of the child's transition from preschool or home to primary school, professionals need to:

- 1 Start with self-assessment of personal prejudice, bias and stereotypes related to those who come from different ethnic/religious/socio economic/geographical backgrounds.**

We all have personal prejudice or bias towards something. It is reflected in our way of talking, body language, readiness to accept/keep distance from people coming from different places, backgrounds and cultures. Once we become conscious of our own stereotypes, prejudice and bias, we can pay attention and change our communication style. Primary school teachers, education specialists, school management and other staff need to self-assess and self-reflect on their own attitudes and opinions in order to create and sustain a welcoming environment for all children. Their example is then followed by children who very quickly pick up on any unequal treatment of anybody.


In a similar way, parents of children with language, or any other barrier, may or may not be willing to get involved and partner with teachers if they sense that there is bias or prejudice from the teachers towards them or their children. Equally, parents may also have prejudice or stereotypes towards the new school, location, country which their children pick up. It is therefore, recommended that their awareness is also raised about these issues in order to overcome them.



- 2 Learn as much as possible about each child's geographical, ethnic, cultural and socio-economic background, family situation and factors that influenced their different or lack of language skills prior to the beginning of the school year.**

This information about each child is necessary to develop a successful plan for supporting them to make a meaningful transition to primary school. It can be obtained from the child's preschool, social services, parents, NGOs working with that refugee/migrant/ immigrant family, social services, or other members of the family. If the child attended a preschool setting, joint activities with that preschool can be developed to help the child see the transition as an exciting new adventure. If the child was not enrolled in preschool, but has attended any alternative activities (workshops and psycho-social support services at the refugee camp for instance), communication and joint activities between school teachers, parents, and relevant services (social services or NGOs working in a refugee camp) in the child's environment can encourage a positive attitude and eagerness in the child about starting school





3 Establish communication and partnership with parents or family members of the child that has a language barrier.

Even when parents or family members cannot communicate in the official language, it is essential for primary school teachers to establish communication with them and involve them as partners in the development and implementation of the structured plan for their child.

Parents are the first and most important educators of their children, they know their children best, and can provide valuable information on their needs and interests, likes and dislikes. Parents also need to understand that a structured plan for their child's transition is necessary and that the messages the child gets from both the teachers and themselves needs to be the same. This message should model acceptance, respect, and the same expectations, as well as providing a safe environment for the child.

In order to make a child welcome in their new "big" school, it is equally important that parents feel welcome. When parents feel welcome, appreciated and respected, a child feels much safer at school and more motivated to learn. So, establishing a partnership with parents of all children, but especially of those who face a language barrier, is really important.

It is also important to note that even when parents cannot speak the official language and their child can, the child should never be put in a position to translate and enable the conversation between the teachers and parents.

4 Establish a network of different stakeholders to jointly develop an individualised transition plan for each child that has a language barrier.


A well-structured plan for enabling a successful, meaningful transition of a child from preschool or home to primary school is not a one-person task. In addition to preschool practitioners who know the child and parents, often an education specialist, child psychologist or play therapist needs to be involved.

Sometimes there may also be representatives from social services that could help and NGO staff who know and work with these children and parents in the community.

Teachers' assistants from preschool, or community members of the child's family, especially those who also have or have had children starting primary school, and representatives of NGOs working with the refugee/migrant/immigrant families in the area, can all be of huge help in the provision of information, communication with the child and parents and in the development of the welcoming, safe and warm environment for the child and his/her parents.

Successful transition includes the development of a child's sense of belonging—belonging to the class and school. Therefore, it really does take a village to make it happen.



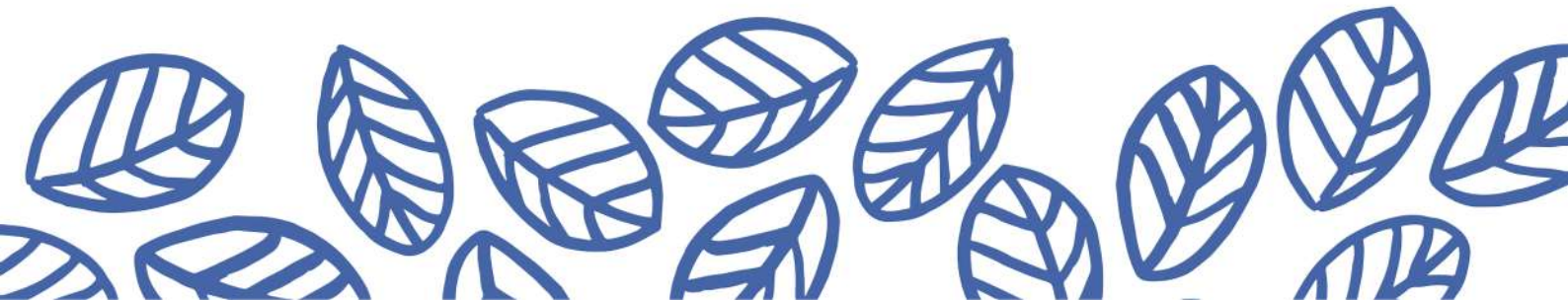
- 
- 5 Think of different ways in which you can make various signs at entry points to school and classroom understandable for both children and parents facing language barriers.

If signs at the entry points for the school, offices, and classrooms are labelled only in the official language of tuition, the parent or child from a different background may be confronted with an intimidating situation. You can have children and parents help you translate welcoming messages into all languages spoken by families in the school community, make drawings and arrows and post all of the languages so everyone feels welcome.

Classroom norms and rules can be illustrated through pictures and drawings as well as in all written languages of the children enrolled in the class. When done in advance, this presents a welcoming environment and a place where the child feels they belong.



Unit 4 Language: Main Takeaways

- ✿ The school language may be different from the language children use at home even when it is the same language linguistically, and children may fear exclusion, being laughed at or not welcomed because of it, even though they can understand and communicate in the official language.
 - ✿ Children who face a language barrier encounter other difficulties as well, and their needs go beyond acquisition of the language in terms of grammar and vocabulary. It is important to make plans to support children to have those needs met too.
 - ✿ Parents and family members may put too much pressure on the child to learn the official language as quickly as possible, or to translate the parents' communication with school and other stakeholders. The teacher's approach needs to take this into account and assist both the child and their parents to adjust their expectations of that child.
 - ✿ When facing a language barrier with a child and/or parents, the role of various stakeholders is essential. Including role models from the same community is a huge boost for both children and their parents.
 - ✿ Both the child and their family need to feel welcome, accepted and respected in school in order to make the transition meaningful and successful. Creating a sense of belonging among children and also among parents is a win-win situation for everyone.
 - ✿ Self-assessing one's own bias, prejudice or stereotypes, becoming conscious of them and acting upon them is important for both teachers and parents in order to establish trusting communication and effective partnership. The child is the ultimate beneficiary of this partnership.
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Supporting children's transitions from
preschool to primary school

Unit 5

Social and Emotional Development



2020-1-IE01-KA201-
Intellectual Output 03:
Train the Trainer



Unit 5 Social and Emotional Development

Introduction

According to Aistear (2009) 'Children's relationships and interactions with their families and communities contribute significantly to their sense of well-being. Children need to feel valued, respected, empowered, cared for, and included. They also need to respect themselves, others, and their environment. They become positive about themselves and their learning when adults value them for who they are and when they promote warm and supportive relationships with them'.

In this unit, with the child at the centre, understanding and providing environments and practices that support these aspects of children's development are identified and addressed.


Unit 5 Social and Emotional Development: Objectives

The core objectives for this unit are that each adult in the child's life will:

- Understand and respond to all aspects of the child's social and emotional issues relating to the transition
- Understand the role and impact that attachment and separation may have upon the child's ability to process the transition
- Have awareness of particular vulnerabilities that may affect a child
- Allow sufficient time and support to each individual child to process their transition at their own pace
- Enable children to be strong psychologically and socially.

Unit 5 Social and Emotional Development: Self-Reflection Suggestions

★ School/Teachers

- Does our school have a written transitions policy?
 - How do we engage with parents throughout the transition process?
 - Do we have an information board or on-line portal for parents?
 - Are we communicating openly and regularly with parents so that they are comfortable talking to us about any concerns or expectations?
 - How do we as teachers support the child in adapting to the larger group in the class?
 - How do we acknowledge the child's shift in role as they become pupils?
 - Are children in school able to take a break if feeling overwhelmed?
- 

- Will it be made clear to each child where the toilets and bathrooms are, and how they can go to them when needed?
- Will we help the children in the early weeks to learn the layout of the school, perhaps through making maps and exploring the corridors?
- How does the classroom reflect the child's identity: do they see books, toys, items which reflect their family unit? Is their language and culture represented?
- Are each child's particular needs being met in an accessible manner?
- Are there adequate preparations in place to meet any disabled child's needs in an accessible manner?
- Are there children with vulnerabilities, such as age, minority ethnic group beginning in the class?
- Do we liaise with the preschools that will be sending children to our school, perhaps using video links to show the children their new settings and getting to know them, or inviting questions from the children due to attend our school?
- Would we establish a local forum or network with local preschools to prepare for transitions?
- Where a child has brought a passport or similar, have we made the time to familiarise ourselves with them?
- Have we discussed children's transition to school with other professionals such as special needs assistants, social workers, where appropriate and with parental consent?
- How will we recognise that a child is struggling to settle?
- Will we notice children that are exhibiting signs of a lack of well-being, such as those indicated on the Leuven Scale, where "the posture, facial expression and actions indicate that the child does not feel at ease... the sense of discomfort is not expressed the whole time"?
- Will we monitor the child's emotional well-being? What criteria will we use?



★ **Preschool/Early Years Educators**


- Have we prepared individual children for the transition by helping them to understand what to expect?
- How do we prepare for the final goodbyes?

- Are we supporting their parents around the transition process? How?
- Are there any children that may require additional emotional support?
- Have we shared relevant information between our preschool and primary school, perhaps in a child's 'passport'?
- Have we or the parents been able to bring the child to the new classroom and discuss the differences?
- Have we discussed children's transition to school with other professionals such as teachers, special needs assistants, social workers, where appropriate and with parental consent?

Self-reflection is also a core part of everyday parenting. As parents, it is sometimes only when our children have gone to bed that we look back at our day and think about what went well and what did not go as planned. These questions can help guide your thinking:

- Do I know enough about my child's new school and if not, how can I find out more?
- Am I ready for their move to primary school myself? If I am slightly anxious (which is perfectly normal), what am I doing to avoid passing that anxiety to my child?
- How is my child at separating from me?
- How is my child feeling about the transition?
How am I supporting those emotions?
- Is my child able to put their feelings into words?
- Are they able to talk about issues that worry them, or things that they enjoy?
- Do we talk enough about the new school to help my child understand what is happening?
- Do we try not to talk too much school so that my child does not feel overwhelmed?
- Has my child any special needs, if so, what information does the school need in order to meet my child's needs?
- Am I waiting for any assessments for my child? If so, have I let the school know?



- 
- ☒ Am I living in circumstances that might be adversely affecting my child, such as being in homeless accommodation, if so, what information will I share with the school?
 - ☒ If the preschool has given me a passport for my child, is there anything I want to add?
 - ☒ Am I happy to share that passport with the school?



How will I keep checking in on how my child is feeling during the transition? Tip: We know that asking a young child how their day at school was can result in a simple 'ok' answer. Every evening over dinner or before bed, play the rose and thorn game. Ask your child for one good thing (rose) about their day and one not so good thing (thorn), and share yours with them. This is a simple but great way to learn about any hopes or worries they might have.

What these outcomes mean for the child

Reflection will ensure that the individual child will be understood, that their apparent shyness or boisterousness may be masking anxiety, that they need some extra reassurance, a listening ear or some practical supports such as being with the most suitable group for that child. It may mean that should they have a vulnerability that is not obvious, that accommodation will be made for this. All this will support them through the emotional challenges that they are facing, and help them to learn the coping skills that will be of benefit through this and future transitions.

Unit 5 Social and Emotional Development: Knowing/Identifying the Needs

Connection is at the heart of every decision we make. We consciously foster an emotional connection with each child. This provides the foundations for a safe learning space. When we feel emotionally safe in our environment, our capacity for learning and growth flourishes. It gives us space to laugh, play and learn, all the joys of childhood. In order to be able to learn, a child needs to feel psychologically and physically safe. Environments and teaching practices, along with behaviour policies must therefore be relational, as opposed to authoritative/punitive - because without the safety these provide, a child's emotionally reactive brain is constantly activated, with their 'thinking' brain compromised and thus, unable to learn.

The Irish curriculum framework, for young children, (which covers children from 0-6 including the first years of primary school) Aistear (aistearsiolta.ie), in its first aim for its theme of well-being states that **Children will be strong psychologically and socially.**





This means that children will:

- 1 Make strong attachments and develop warm and supportive relationships with family, peers and adults in out-of-home settings and in their community
- 2 Be aware of and name their own feelings, and understand that others may have different feelings
- 3 Handle transitions and changes well
- 4 Be confident and self-reliant
- 5 Respect themselves, others and the environment
- 6 Make decisions and choices about their own learning and development.



Each child making this transition will be at their own level of emotional maturity and ability to manage in a new social environment. Children may or may not have unresolved attachment issues which will influence this transition: Some may be confident and excited about the change while some, who may have seemed ready, might display some uncertainty and perhaps anxiety as the time approaches to start school. Any special needs or challenging circumstances need to be accommodated (see Units 3 and 4). These varied reactions and vulnerabilities need to be acknowledged and supports provided.


The school needs to consider these factors and ensure that any possible issue is anticipated. These will vary from child to child and family to family and may include children with special educational needs (SEN) that have not yet been adequately identified or supported; immigrant children and children with English as a second or other language who are already going through a transition process, in addition to moving to school; children from the Traveller community or a minority group who may have had a narrower social circle with different cultural practices and norms; school entrants such as summer-born children, or from countries which start school earlier than others, may be a lot younger than the other children in the class and therefore at a different emotional and social stage of development.

Unit 5 Social and Emotional Development: Addressing those Needs

It is crucial in supporting transitions to pay especial attention to the social and emotional aspects of each child's journey through the transition. To achieve successful transitions for all children will require a certain amount of individual attention and support, as each child will respond in their own way to the changes being asked of them.

In order to support a successful transition, the monitoring and observation of all children needs to be conducted. Many children will manage well, and the forming of the new group in the primary classroom, with good preparation, will proceed as planned.





However, managing the needs of those who, for whatever reason, take a longer time with their transition is a vital part of the overall process for each classroom. Getting it 'right' in the early stages will lead to better outcomes for all in the longer term.

According to *Tús Maith*, a programme which was developed and implemented in Ireland specifically to support social and emotional well-being in preparing to enter school (Barnardos, 2012a), 'A poor transition to primary school has long-term consequences for children. The evidence suggests that children who experience difficulties early on in school are less likely to do well in their later academic learning, and that these children have an increased risk of early school leaving.'

 The following factors therefore need to be considered:

Emotional: Children can manage their emotions and regulate their behaviour. This will be evidenced by children being able to:

- ★ Identify and name emotions
- ★ Be aware of their own/others' emotions
- ★ Understand and express emotions
- ★ Manage conflict and demonstrate empathy for others.



Social: Children will experience positive relationships with their peers and early years staff. This will be evidenced by children being able to:

- ★ Manage their emotions
- ★ Play cooperatively, participate and take turns
- ★ Solve problems
- ★ Share, make positive choices.



These factors are useful in considering each child's levels of social and emotional development and contribute to the level of support that teachers and parents may decide to provide for the child.

Another helpful method of monitoring and identifying any children that need extra support for their social and emotional development is the Leuven Scale (known as the Sics/Ziko observational scale) which was developed particularly for this situation. It has been widely used in schools and preschools to establish how well each child is coping with their transition. It assesses the child on two indicators, Well-Being and Involvement.





Using some of these tools and methods will help to ensure that the child is at the centre of planning, preparation and policies/procedures. Listening to families, and giving the opportunity to children themselves to express how they are feeling and coping will ensure that the transition is a successful part of the continuity of care that begins in the home, and continues as the child's world expands to encompass the wider community, including school.

Documenting the process – how the service is capturing what is happening so it can be revisited multiple times with the child and parents:

Choosing a tool for pedagogical documentation, having a method for capturing observations and comments on particular issues for each child is important, whether it is through digital methods, written notes, logs, journals, learning stories, or a tool such as the Leuven Scale. It enables the teacher to monitor the child's progress over time, and for the partnership between the child, the parents and the preschool/school to develop. Open access for such documentation will be valuable, and revisiting previous findings can be a form of great reassurance and support in seeing progress for each child on their transition journey.

Unit 5 Social and Emotional Development: Main Takeaways

The main points from this unit, which has examined the need for parents and teachers to carefully consider each child's social and emotional issues, are:

- ✿ To recognise that each child will respond emotionally in their own way in handling the move to school
- ✿ That each child will manage social situations according to their stage of development and any previous attachment issues
- ✿ The child needs the adults to be aware of their capacity for change, any vulnerabilities and how astute, knowledgeable adult support will guide the child towards good coping skills
- ✿ The parent knows their child, they know the child's capacity for understanding change, the child's ability to act individually as they progress in their maturing as an independent person.
- ✿ The preschool practitioner also knows each child, and recognises the momentous nature of this change for each individual child
- ✿ The adults each need to consider vulnerabilities and special needs which may impact upon an effective transition for the child
- ✿ All adults in the child's world will respect the need to listen, hear and act upon the views of the child



- * Parents, Preschools, and Schools need to reflect upon what they need to consider and do to improve and ensure that the child's experiences are thoroughly analysed and developed
- * Each child making this transition will have their own concerns, issues, and views on this change in their lives
- * There are broader areas which may present challenges for some children. The school needs to consider these and ensure that any possible is anticipated
- * Observation and monitoring each child's ongoing emotional well-being and social involvement will provide the teacher and school with the information needed to intercede and provide support that will address any emergent issue

'Leyla's preschool have been great at helping me with managing her tantrums. They showed me how to come down to her level and to talk calmly with her and not at her. This has made bedtime way easier so I'll keep doing it over the summer.....and hopefully it will work when she starts school too'

(Carrie, mom of 3)



Supporting children's transitions from
preschool to primary school

Unit 6

Supporting Physical Development





Unit 6 Supporting Physical Development

Introduction

'Physical well-being is important for learning and development as this enables children to explore, to investigate, and to challenge themselves in the environment. A growing awareness of their bodies and abilities is also part of this. The adult supports children's psychological and physical well-being by helping them to make healthy choices about nutrition, hygiene and exercise' (Aistearsiolta, 2020)

Sometimes we are so alert to young children's socio-emotional or specific learning needs, unless there is a physical disability, we tend to pay less attention their physical development. However, perhaps one of the key learnings that we can take from the recent pandemic, is that restricted movement and limited opportunities to exercise gross motor skills can significantly impact a child's development.

It is really important that children's physical development is an integral part of the preschool to primary school transition process. The change between those two environments can be quite sudden for a child. For example, preschool generally involves more fluid and regular access to the outdoors and less of a focus on tabletop activities. Primary school recreation breaks and access to outdoor space are more scheduled, and sitting at desks/tables for longer periods of time is more common practice. In order to support children around both changes in their physical environment and to their own level of movement, it is important to understand their physical development.

Supporting Physical Development: Objectives

The core objectives for this unit are that each adult in the child's life will:

- Understand and respond to all aspects of the child's physical development at this stage
- Understand the role and impact that the new routine and surroundings will have upon their physical development
- Have awareness of any vulnerabilities that may affect the child's physical development
- Provide activities that cater for the needs of all children
- Ensure that the child's physical health is nurtured and supported through the transition.



Reflection Suggestions

★ Schools and Teachers

- Does our school have a written transitions policy?
- Are we communicating openly and regularly with parents so that they are comfortable talking to us about any concerns or expectations?
- How is each child's level of physical development ascertained?
- Are there children with particular vulnerabilities, such as living in temporary accommodation where living spaces are cramped and/or their nutritional needs are not being met?
- Are there adequate preparations in place to meet any disabled child's needs in an accessible manner?
- Have we discussed children's transition to school with other professionals such as special needs assistants, social workers, where appropriate and with parental consent?
- How will the school meet the nutritional needs of the children? Have they healthy eating policies for example, and how are these supported for all children, including vulnerable ones?
- How does the school meet the children's need for physical activity during the daily routine?
- How often do we provide movement breaks?
- How do we provide for calm and rest?
- What provision do we make for activity when the weather is poor?
- Will we monitor the child's physical development and state of health, what criteria will we use?



★ Preschool/Early Years Educators

- Have we prepared individual children for the transition by helping them to develop their skills in dressing, managing fine motor skills such as doing buttons, zips?
- How do we support healthy eating habits?
- How do we provide for calm and rest?
- Have we shared relevant information between our preschool and primary school, such as individual children's need for extra movement, or support with fine motor work?
- Have we discussed children's transition to school with other professionals such as teachers, special needs assistants, social workers, where appropriate and with parental consent?

☆ Self-reflection is also a core part of everyday parenting. As parents, it is sometimes only when our children have gone to bed that we look back at our day and think about what went well and what did not go as planned. These questions can help guide your thinking:

- ☞ Do I know enough about my child's new school, its routines, and physical spaces, and if not, how can I find out more?
- ☞ Do we talk enough about the new school to help my child understand what is happening?
- ☞ What are my child's expectations about daily routines, going outdoors, mealtimes in school?
- ☞ How can I support my child to manage things like taking on and off their coats, jumpers?
- ☞ Is my child used to a lot of physical activity, how can I provide this outside of school time?
- ☞ Has my child any special needs, if so, what information does the school need in order to meet my child's needs?
- ☞ Am I waiting for any assessments for my child? If so, have I let the school know?
- ☞ Am I living in circumstances that might be adversely affecting my child, such as in homeless accommodation, if so, what information will I share with the school?
- ☞ Does my child have any nutritional needs that the teacher needs to be aware of?
- ☞ If the preschool has given me a passport for my child, is there anything I want to add?
- ☞ Am I happy to share that passport with the school?
- ☞ How will I keep checking in on how my child is feeling during the transition?



☆ *Tip: Make movement an exciting part of the transition process by using the journey to school as family exercise time. If you walk with your child to school, make a game of the journey. You might hop on one leg together every time you have to wait at a pedestrian crossing, or jog the distance between two particular trees. Or walk sideways every time you see a red car! Your child will look forward to their journey to school and have some fresh air and exercise before their school day starts.*



★ *What these reflections mean for the child*

Reflection will ensure that the individual child will be understood, that their apparent shyness or boisterousness may be masking anxiety, that they need some extra reassurance, a listening ear or some practical supports such as being with the most suitable group for that child. It may mean that should they have a vulnerability that is not obvious, and that accommodation will be made for this. All this will support each child through the emotional, and possibly physical, challenges that they are facing, and help them to learn the coping skills that will be of benefit through this and future transitions.

Knowing & Identifying the Needs

Physical development is an ongoing process for all children. As children reach school-going age, they will be moving, running, jumping, enjoying physical challenges that cater to the high levels of energy that children exhibit, and developing their locomotor skills. Their fine motor skills will also be developing, with mark-making gradually becoming more refined, pencil holding getting easier, and increasing comfort with items such as scissors, threading, peg boards etc.

The Irish National Curriculum Framework for 0-6years, Aistear, states in Theme, Well-being, Aim 2 that 'Children will be as healthy and fit as they can be'. In partnership with the adult, children will:

- 1 Gain increasing control and co-ordination of body movements
- 2 Be aware of their bodies, their bodily functions, and their changing abilities
- 3 Discover, explore and refine gross and fine motor skills
- 4 Use self-help skills in caring for their own bodies
- 5 Show good judgement when taking risks
- 6 Make healthy choices and demonstrate positive attitudes to nutrition, hygiene, exercise, and routine.

Each individual child making this transition will be at their own level of physical ability and development, which may differ from their peers in the classroom. Any special needs or impact on their physical development from challenging circumstances or disability need to be accommodated (see Unit 3). The school needs to consider these factors and ensure that any possible issue is anticipated.

Physical activity is now known to form an essential part of supporting broader learning, with frequent movement breaks being shown to support and improve concentration.





Adequate nutrition and physical activity will support the young child’s physical development and their ability to effectively partake in school activities. Physical activity and movement are also a key element of a child’s mental health. It can form an essential element of the transitions process, providing bonding opportunities, fun, and offering a change from the time spent sitting in the classroom.

On average, children spend almost half of their day in the school environment so it is important that all opportunities to encourage and promote physical activity during that time are utilised.

During the transition process there is an opportunity to foster good habits around movement, activity and healthy eating that will endure throughout the child’s lifetime. These habits of movement are general, not specifically linked to sports programmes, and are part of a long-term healthy lifestyle. Sports programmes will play a role for some children; however, the broader patterns of regular movement can be developed through good practice in the early years of school, especially beginning during the transitions phase. After all, we know that active children are far more likely to grow to become active adults.

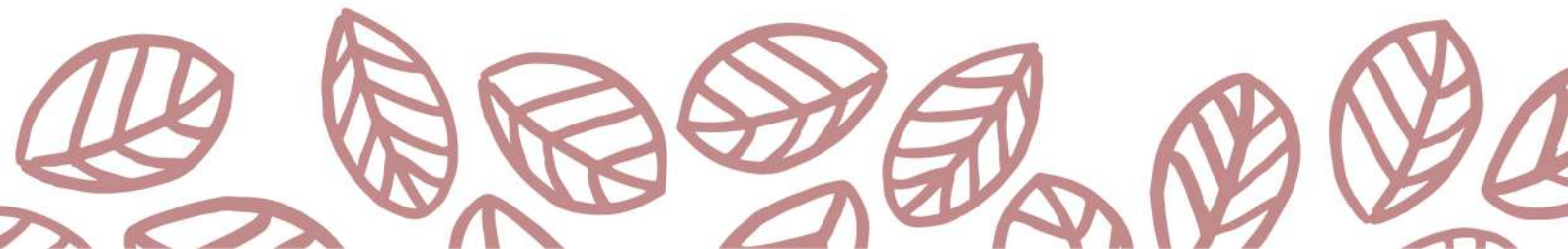
Addressing those Needs

The early classroom years provide a golden opportunity for helping children’s physical development. They are at the optimum age for building good movement skills and physical literacy, which equates with verbal, linguistic and mathematical literacy, supporting all aspects of learning.

The first 8 years is the best time for a child to develop basic movement skills, or FMS, Fundamental Movement Skills. FMS are generally grouped into 3 categories:

① Locomotor (movement) ② Body Control (stability) ③ Object Control (manipulative). Teachers can support each of these in various ways:

<i>Locomotor (Movement) skills</i>	<i>Body control (Stability) skills</i>	<i>Object control (Manipulative) skills</i>
Walking Running Jumping (for distance, for height, one leg to another) Hopping Leaping Skipping Swinging Side stepping Dodging Galloping Climbing Crawling	Balancing on one foot Walking on a line or a beam Climbing Rolling (forward roll, log roll) Twisting Turning Rotating Landing Stopping Bending Stretching	Catching Overhand throw Underhand throw Punt kicking (kicking ball from hands) Striking with an implement Two handed striking Hand dribbling (repeatedly bouncing a ball with one hand) Foot dribbling Kicking Chest passing



These activities will benefit all children, and teachers at this stage of getting to know their new pupils can monitor and provide sufficient variety so that those children who have less well-developed locomotor skills can have their needs met. The activities can be built into the daily routine, indoors or outdoors. In the playground, there will be opportunities to broaden the types of movement and accommodate all the children's needs. Equipment is not needed for many of these games. (See: Resources)

Children with special needs can be catered for in terms of these skills with some simple adaptations. Being physically active is as important for children with special needs as it is for any child. Almost all games or activities can be modified to allow children with special needs to participate.

Active Playgrounds (Health Service Executive, Ireland) suggest these aspects need to be considered for adaptation:

☞ *What method of communication will you use?* Consider how the child communicates (verbal, sign language, pointing to pictures). Verbal cues, demonstrations, physical assistance can be used (if permission is given). Also consider what starting/stopping signals (for example, hand, whistle, coloured cards) you will use.

☞ *Can you vary the level of difficulty?* Change the organisation of the activity, the way the information is presented, duration, length of activities.

☞ *What type of support does the child require?* Moral, technical, physical assistance etc.

☞ *Can you vary the number of players?* For example, vary the class format and size, play games such as two-on-two basketball.

☞ *Can you vary the field of play?* Make the area wider/narrower as needed; shorten distance for children with movement problems.



★ **For individual children consider:**

Children with limited strength: Lower targets. Reduce weight/size of striking implements, balls. Reduce distance/playing field. Allow student to sit or lie down while playing. Use deflated balls or suspended balls. Decrease activity time/increase rest. Reduce speed of game/ increase distance for students without disabilities.

Children with limited balance: Lower centre of gravity. Keep as much of the body in contact with the surface as possible. Widen base of support. Increase width of beams to be walked. Extend arms for balance. Use carpeted rather than slick surfaces. Teach student how to fall. Provide a bar/chair to assist with stability

The other important element in children's physical development is nutrition and the development of healthy eating habits. School can foster these through liaising with parents, establishing guidelines and protocols, for example around the snacks that children can bring to school. Where schools provide meals, such as breakfasts and school dinners, these need to follow healthy eating guidelines.

Documenting the process – how the service is capturing what is happening so it can be revisited multiple times with the child and parents:

Documenting activities can be conducted through the records of classroom routines and lesson plans. Nutritional programmes can be recorded through policies and menus, also through any healthy eating lesson plans that are put in place. In addition, visual documentation of physical activities through photographs would be useful for sharing with parents. Children can be supported to document through learning logs, diaries, or telling stories of their games and activities which can be recorded.

Main Takeaways

✿ The main points from this unit, which has examined the need for parents and teachers to support children's physical development throughout the transition process, are that movement and healthy eating play a key role in supporting the child's physical development, they will help and support the child in all other areas of the learning process, and contribute positively to their mental health and overall well-being.

✿ The window from 0-8 years is vital for a child to develop their fundamental movement skills including locomotor (movement) skills; stability and balance; and object control (manipulative) skills. The school can support this development with opportunities for regular movement. This will support all children, and will enable those who have not had adequate chances to play in this way to catch up and improve their physical development.

✿ Children with disabilities can be catered for with some planned adjustments that will cater for the need that they may have, thus affording them equal opportunities to grow and develop.

✿ Nutrition plays a key role in children's physical development. School policies and healthy eating programmes will support this through the transition phase and will also help to develop long-term habits. These healthy habits, coupled with active movement, will enable the school beginner to build good physical development and health for their whole lives.



'Our youngest [son] is a right home bird. He always just wants to stay at home and inside. So we started taking him to a swimming pool. At first he didn't like it but then he grew more confident. Every week you could see the change in him. We go twice a week now and he loves it. It's amazing how much his confidence has grown and that he's now a proper little swimmer. Now he wants to start football which is music to my ears!'

(Keith, Dad of 4)

Supporting children's transitions from
preschool to primary school

Unit 7

Migrant Children and Cultural Diversity





Unit 7 Migrant Children & Cultural Diversity

*'Look, my skin is brown and you have freckles [comparing arms with researcher], see?
And I have braids and you don't, see? And yes, yes, yes I am beautiful and you are
beautiful too'*

(Amira, 5)

Introduction

Aistear, the Irish Curriculum Framework (2009) explains that *'Children have a fundamental need to be with other people. They learn and develop through loving and nurturing relationships with adults and other children, and the quality of these interactions impacts on their learning and development.* The development of these relationships happens spontaneously when children from similar cultural, ethical, linguistic or geographical background are together for some time – from nursery, kindergarten and preschool all the way to primary school. However, it doesn't come so easily when migrant children find themselves in a completely different environment from the one they have grown in. To foster the development of new relationships alongside facilitating transition from any early years setting to primary school requires a lot of dedication, planning and constructive guidance.

In the process of ensuring a successful, meaningful and fun-based transition to primary school, the main stakeholders include the child and the most important adults around them.

Children are the key stakeholders in the transition process. Every child needs to feel welcome, to be loved and accepted, valued and appreciated. Children have different coping mechanisms when faced with changes, some are curious and see change as an adventure, some become shy and insecure. Some easily connect to other children and adults, some feel comfortable only with those they know well. Some have been brought up to say what they feel and think, some are brought up to listen and obey. Therefore, it is important to include a child, listen to his/her comments, fears and expectations and take them into account when planning their journey from preschool to primary school. Parents, or the closest adult to the child, are another key party to any planning of the transition of the child to primary school. When parent(s) are present (if the whole family has migrated or came to a new country), they are the main source of information about the child's temperament, character, what the child knows and what potential difficulties (s)he may have. Parents are the first and most important educators of their child. They know their child best, how independent and adaptable to change they are and how best to approach them. On the other hand, coming from a different cultural background, parents also bring different ways of communication with teachers and authorities.



We know from research that their expectations for their children's achievements vary from moderate to high academic success, which also influences how they understand and approach the transition of their children to primary school. This, in turn, affects how the child views their transition to 'real school'. Most migrant parents are experiencing some form of disadvantage and the teachers need to know, understand and if possible, provide support or link the parents with other families that can provide encouragement, reassurance and understanding. When a refugee child doesn't have a parent by his/her side, the closest responsible adults become a key stakeholder and the child's support lifeline.

The preschool practitioner/an NGO worker working in a refugee camp with young children or volunteers can liaise with the primary school teachers that will have a migrant/refugee child in their class. If a migrant/refugee child has arrived to the primary school's neighbourhood some months before the beginning of a new school year, and the child has either started going to preschool or attending any workshops for young children in a migrant/refugee camp, the adults who are in contact with the child can assist in preparation for the transition to primary school together with the teachers. Schools usually prepare a transition plan some months before summer break, so in the process of its development and in the implementation phase, preschool teachers, or psycho-social support including personnel from NGOs and international organisations can play an important role in assisting the transition process.

Schools will know that in a new cohort of children, some will be migrant or refugee children, those who are coming from another part of the country or from another country. They are also aware that each child, and especially the ones coming from different cultures, need individual plans and support. They know that each such child has multiple challenges to overcome and that this process is different in pace and characteristics for each child. Therefore, the school needs to develop an individualised plan for the transition of these children, ensure a culturally welcoming atmosphere and environment, and develop a plan for other children to understand, accept and appreciate the cultural diversity of their class.

Learning Objectives

- ✔ This unit is designed to help you understand:
 - ✍ The key differences that need to be taken into account when a migrant child coming from a different culture makes the transition to primary school
 - ✍ Your role in bridging the cultural differences so that a child feels comfortable in the new environment



✓ By using this unit as part of your training to support transitions, you will be able to understand how and why:

- 1 Joining the dots between a child's (temporary) place of living/new home, preschool and new school environments is key to making their transition successful and enjoyable
- 2 The importance of creating accessible and inclusive spaces for all children
- 3 Parents/carers and families need to be visible and welcome in both the preschool and school environments for a child to feel welcome.

Identifying Needs

In migrant and culturally different families, both children and their parents/ significant adults may have additional challenges when the child is starting the primary education.

Children may have inadequate or no skills for communication in the language of tuition and feel completely confused, scared and isolated (see Unit 4). Some may have a better grasp of the official language than their parents and may be forced to play an interpreter role which can make them stressed and ashamed. Some children from this group have never attended any organised educational setting and do not understand what may be expected from them. And some may have different fears and other emotions as a result of the situation they and their families have left behind (i.e., fear of separation, fear of losing a sibling or a parent, not knowing where they are and missing siblings and parent etc.) All these emotions can greatly impact the child's ability to settle in a new school and class easily.

In different cultures, different styles of communication are used between a child and an adult, a parent and a teacher, and a child and a teacher. In some cultures, parents/carers find it important to frequently communicate with teachers and inquire about their child's progress, but in some cultures, teachers are respected and valued in such a way that any inquiry about the child's progress would be unacceptable and perceived as contesting teacher's capacity and competencies to teach children properly.



Teachers and other relevant professionals need to learn, understand and recognise these different styles in order to establish a close relationship with a child and with their parents/ significant adults. In some cultures, caring about a child, including their education, is solely a mother's task, and in some cultures, the expectations for a boy differs significantly from the expectations for a girl in school. Teachers need to understand such differences and prepare themselves for addressing them in a culturally acceptable way for both children and their parents/carers.



Different religious concepts and rules also determine the way children dress, behave, communicate, when they eat or drink, what type of sports activities are acceptable for whom and how, and these differences also need attention.

Many of the elements determining one culture are not explicitly talked about or visible initially, so in order to understand the children's needs, teachers and other professionals need to communicate with not just parents or carers, but also with other members of the same cultural group and other specialists. Reading about and searching for information about the cultural norms of the group from which a child comes can also help in understanding the child's background and subsequent needs.

Addressing those Needs

What can help in preparation for and in the process of meeting migrant children's needs?

★ For teachers:

In order to meet a migrant child's needs, teachers and education specialists need to acquire knowledge about the background of the child (to know), need to feel confident in how best to engage with a particular child (to develop strategy), need to be willing to learn more and try more options (to have drive) and they need to act upon gained knowledge and the strategy they have developed (to act).

- ✔ Before any attempt to address the needs of a migrant child and especially the one from a different cultural background, an honest self-assessment of a teacher is very useful.

A teacher should self-examine his/her attitudes, opinions, (un)conscious bias, prejudice against diverse cultures, religious beliefs and ethnicities. This exercise will raise the awareness of personal readiness to welcome and accept different migrant children and families, and will point to the preparatory work needed.

- ✔ An assessment of the available resources (books, stories, poems, picture etc.) to enable migrant children coming from different countries and regions to see themselves reflected in the school environment and content is also very important.

As part of the preparatory work, an assessment of various multi-cultures represented in books, stories, poems or drawings/pictures is useful. Every child likes to see a reflection of him/herself in the activities in the class. If a story has a character coming from the same country or region of the migrant child and the character is positive, the child will immediately feel part of the story. Simultaneously, it will increase the interest of other children to learn more about a peer who comes from the same country as a positive character in the story or book.



When preparing and implementing a structured plan for the transition to primary school of a migrant child with a different cultural background, it is equally important that the plan includes steps not linked to the child and his/her family. It needs to incorporate the steps for other children to understand the differences they notice, to accept and respect them and to welcome a new peer as part of the 'same team' – their class.

- ✔ Community asset mapping is also a very useful exercise and can be done in the preparation phase for the process of transition of a migrant child to primary school.

Finding community groups of the same cultural background to the migrant child's one can bring many positive things, from information about cultural characteristics of the child, to potential volunteering to help with language barriers.

- ✔ Working together with the child's preschool teachers, parents/carers and any volunteer/representative of an NGO or international organisation involved in organising and conducting workshops and other activities with migrant children is necessary to develop and implement a coherent set of steps in each environment to facilitate the child's smooth and successful transition to school.

Every child looks up to the most important adults in their life and picks up messages on relationships. When parents/carers and/or preschool teachers work well together with a school teacher, the child will feel safer and more confident to move from preschool to primary school, or from a migrant/refugee centre to school. Simultaneously, a well-structured transition plan for a migrant child to primary school needs to have preparatory elements performed at preschool and/or at the refugee centre. Parents/caregivers will be more likely to engage with teachers from primary school if a person they are used to interacting with (preschool teachers or NGO/international organisation's workers and volunteers) are working together.



★**For Parents/carers, preschool teachers and NGO workers:**

As our research in the participating countries has shown, two main concerns parents/carers of migrant/refugee children have are: **1** Will my child understand what's going on in the school, and **2** will my child make friends and not be on his/her own isolated?

In order to assist a migrant child in transitioning to primary school, there are strategies for helping:



★ *Teaching a child to ask for help.*

It is important that a child knows and wants to ask for help. Phrases like *'Could you repeat that?'*, or *'I need help'*, or even acknowledging that something is not understood will signal to the teacher that a child has a problem which needs to be resolved.

★ *Teaching a child some basic school-related words.*

Even if a child has mastered the language of tuition to some extent, there are words that (s)he may not know or understand what they indicate in a school environment. Words like bell, break, playground and cafeteria may not be familiar to a child and what they mean in a school environment may be confusing. So, a list of such words can be compiled and explained through play.

★ *Approaching another child*

Finding and making new friends is an essential part of every child's smooth start at primary school. Even more so for children who may only know other children from a refugee camp before their first day at school. Through play, approaching new children can be practised, using some useful opening sentences a child can learn. When children become confident enough to start a conversation with other children using some practised opening phrases like *'What's your name?'* or *'Do you play games? Which ones do you like?'* they will find it much easier to start making new friendships.



All of these things can be learned through play, pretending to be at school, using dolls or favourite toys and role playing.

★ *Teaching a child some popular children's songs and rhymes in the host country*

A very effective way of learning a new language is through songs and rhymes. Showing and pointing to various parts of the body, or using actions for the words in a rhyme whilst singing or reciting help children connect actions and names for different things with the actions and nouns. This tool can also be used for learning what school related words mean and indicate.



Main Takeaways

The main points from this unit, which has explored the specific needs of migrant children, especially those coming from different cultures are:

- ✿ Migrant children have additional challenges to those that local children face when starting primary school, such as insecurities about their new environment, missing dear and close people from their previous place of living, or language barriers.
- ✿ Parents of migrant children (if they are present) are also facing challenges that come from having different language and cultural backgrounds.
- ✿ Newly arrived migrant children may not have any previous experience of attending nursery, kindergarten or preschool and may therefore lack the related routine, social and communication skills.
- ✿ All adults in the child's world need to reflect upon the child's needs and plan strategies to consider cater for them.
- ✿ Teachers need to (self) assess their own (un)conscious bias or prejudice towards different cultures, religions and ethnic groups.
- ✿ It is essential to include not only parents and preschool teachers if the child has been to any preschool setting, but also community workers, NGOs' and/or international organisations' volunteers and workers in the child's life in order to understand the background context.
- ✿ Playing games about school, using different tools to teach migrant children basic school-related words, phrases, songs and rhymes helps the child prepare for starting school.
- ✿ Preparatory work with other children who will be in the same class is necessary so that they can understand, accept and respect the cultural differences that a migrant child brings to the class.
- ✿ Preparing pictures, information signs and welcoming messages, as well as multi-cultural books, stories, and didactic material will help both migrant children and their significant adults feel welcome and promote the child's sense of belonging to a new class.

Everywhere you see pictures of houses but you don't see any pictures of trailers so when Nancy started at the preschool below they asked me for a photo of a Traveller wagon and to be honest....I was thrilled.'

(Nan, mom of 6)



Supporting children's transitions from
preschool to primary school

Unit 8

Communication





Unit 8 Communication

Introduction

'I think the worst thing in the world is being talked at. You know, when someone just wants you to sit there and listen as if you are a child as well. I want to say 'listen, we are all adults here' but I never do'

(Catherine, mom of 2)

This training unit is intended to help parents and educators/other relevant transition professionals in their roles supporting children as they move from preschool to primary school. It offers practical advice to help improve their ability to support children effectively during this important educational milestone.

In order to ensure a child's successful transition, preschools and primary schools closely collaborate with educators/transition professionals who have significant knowledge and experience in supporting children during this process. By engaging with this unit, they can improve their understanding of the families' point of view and acquire useful advice on efficient communication techniques. They can establish a nurturing environment that gives the child's wellbeing and successful adjustment top priority by having effective communication with everyone involved in that process.


Parents understand their child's wishes, worries, and strengths because they are their primary carers and educators. In this unit, parents can also find practical advice on how to successfully and comfortably engage in meaningful dialogues with their child, teachers, other relevant professionals and primary schools. Parents, with the help of the appropriate communication tools can create a supportive and nurturing atmosphere for their child, which is fundamental for a smooth transition.

This training unit recognises the significance of a collaborative approach to supporting children during the transition from preschool to primary school through effective communication in order to enhance the abilities of all stakeholders, ultimately benefiting the child.

Learning Objectives

✔ The objectives of this Communications training unit are to give parents and educators/transition professionals the knowledge and skills they need to communicate successfully during the transition process and beyond.

These include:

- ✍ Assisting parents and educators/transition specialists in the development of effective communication skills to support the child as they transition from preschool to primary school
 - ✍ Strengthening the capacity of parents and educators to engage in meaningful and open communication with the child as well as the institutions involved
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- ✓ Fostering collaborative partnerships between parents, educators/other relevant professionals, and school staff to ensure effective communication throughout the transition process

Educators/transition professionals will benefit by gaining:

- ✓ An understanding of the importance of effective communication during the transition process
- ✓ Strategies for building strong partnerships with parents
- ✓ Insights into the needs and issues that may arise during the transition
- ✓ Practical ideas for addressing those needs and facilitating a smooth transition
- ✓ Guidance on documenting the transition process for future reference and improvement

Parents engaging with this unit will gain:

- ✓ An understanding of the significance of their role in their child's transition
- ✓ Strategies for effective communication with both preschool and primary school stakeholders
- ✓ Insight into the needs and issues their child may face during the transition
- ✓ Practical ideas and activities to support their child's adjustment to primary school
- ✓ Access to additional resources and materials to further aid their child's transition



Unit 8 Communication: Identifying Needs

Effective communication is essential for addressing the many needs and concerns that may emerge throughout the transition from preschool to primary school, not only for parents and educators/other professionals but also for the children themselves. Understanding these requirements enables professionals and parents to use communication techniques that promote a successful transition for their children.

The following are typical communication issues:

✓ Uncertainty or worry about the new environment:

Clear and accurate information about the new school setting can assist in reducing uncertainty and anxiety. Parents and educators/transition professionals can speak openly with the child on their level, address their worries and answer their questions. The child will feel more at ease and prepared for the transition if there is regular communication about what to expect, such as talking about daily routines, classroom activities, and teacher-pupil relationships.



Separation from familiar routines and friends:

Communication can support the child's transition by facilitating ongoing connections with preschool friends and introducing them to potential new friends in the primary school. Educators and parents can encourage communication channels such as shared playdates, video calls, or pen pal exchanges to maintain and foster friendships. Additionally, discussing strategies for making new friends and encouraging positive social interactions can help the child feel more comfortable and at ease during this transition.

Getting used to new communication and expectation patterns:

Transitioning to a new school often involves adapting to different communication styles and expectations. Educators and parents can play a pivotal role in helping the child understand and navigate these differences. They can facilitate communication between the child and their new teachers, encourage open dialogue and provide guidance on how to express their needs and concerns effectively. Helping the child identify and adjust to new communication norms might help them feel more 'at home' and confident in their new school setting.

Understanding academic and social demands:

All parties involved need to communicate effectively if the child is to understand and manage the academic and social demands of primary school. Open lines of communication provides ongoing and assistance for the child's academic development. Similarly, encouraging open dialogue about social interactions and problem-solving skills can help the child navigate social situations successfully.

Self-Reflection Suggestions

It is important to note that, for both parents and educators/transition professionals, self-reflection plays a crucial role in improving communication practices. By engaging in it, they can assess their current communication styles, strengths, and areas for growth, which can allow them to make adjustments and enhance their communication skills. Self-reflection also promotes empathy, understanding, and self-improvement, which are essential elements of effective communication.



Things as simple as asking *'could that conversation have been handled better?'* go a long way in supporting that reflective journey.



Unit 8 Communication: Addressing Needs

✔ A child's transition experience is greatly influenced by efficient communication between parents, educators and school staff. Strong communication skills enable parents and transition professionals to more effectively comprehend and address the needs, worries, and emotions of the child during this time of rapid change. Clear and open communication ensures that the child's voice is heard, helping them feel supported, valued, and involved in the transition process. Collaborative partnerships create a cohesive support network, promoting consistency, understanding, and a smooth transition for the child.

★ For Parents:

The benefits of familiarising children with the new school environment and meeting teachers in advance is always a good step towards easing anxiety related to transition. Prioritise scheduling visits to the primary school, ensuring that your child has the opportunity to explore the physical space, interact with teachers, and ask questions. By experiencing the new environment first-hand, children can develop a sense of familiarity and reduce anxiety about the transition.



✔ Furthermore, you can collaborate with educators/transition professionals and school staff to develop a comprehensive transition plan that includes pre-visits to the primary school. You can actively engage in the planning process by addressing any questions or concerns you may have.

✔ Regularly review and adapt the transition plan based on your child's progress and evolving needs, while openly communicating with educators and school staff to ensure the plan is personalized and effective for your child's needs.

✔ For parents, it is important to actively participate in structured visits and joint activities between the preschool and primary school and encourage your child to engage with future classmates through playdates, group activities, or attending orientation sessions together. This promotes connections between families, specialists, and the school staff, creating a supportive network, and helping to ease the transition for both you and your child. Take advantage of any/all available resources, such as transition guides or online materials, to further support your child's adjustment at home.

✔ You can keep a record of your child's transition journey, including observations, their reactions, and your feedback. This documentation allows for a comprehensive understanding of your child's progress and highlights any areas that may require additional support. Share these records with educators/other relevant professionals. If you regularly review and reflect on your own records to track your child's growth throughout the transition, you are supporting a smooth transition.

Tips for Parents


- ✔ Maintain open lines of communication with both preschool and primary school staff. Regularly communicate with teachers, expressing any concerns or questions you may have about the transition. Building positive relationships with school staff can provide valuable support for your child's adjustment.
- ✔ Listen attentively to your child's thoughts, feelings, and concerns about the transition. Create a safe space for them to express their emotions and validate their experiences. Offer reassurance, emphasising that it is normal to feel anxious or uncertain during such times of change.



- ✔ Engage in positive conversations about the new school environment, daily routines, and expectations. Encourage your child to ask questions and express their curiosity. This helps them gain a better understanding of what to expect and can alleviate their anxieties.
- ✔ Foster connections between your child and their future classmates. Arrange playdates or joint activities with children who will be attending the same primary school. This provides an opportunity for your child to establish friendships and develop a support system even before starting school.
- ✔ Celebrate milestones and achievements throughout the transition process. Recognise and acknowledge your child's progress, whether it is attending a school visit or making new friends. Positive reinforcement can boost their confidence and motivation during this period of change.
- ✔ Maintain regular communication with other parents whose children are also transitioning to the same primary school. Exchange information, share experiences, and support each other during this time. Creating a network of parents going through a similar transition can be beneficial for everyone involved.
- ✔ Encourage your child to express their feelings about the transition through various forms of communication. This could include drawing pictures, writing stories or even role-playing scenarios related to starting primary school.
- ✔ Introduce your child to age-appropriate books or videos that depict characters transitioning from preschool to primary school. These resources can help your child relate to the experiences of others and provide a starting point for conversations about their own.
- ✔ Stay informed about any upcoming events, deadlines, or requirements related to the transition. Regularly check the school's website, newsletters, or social media platforms for updates. Being well-informed will enable you to support your child effectively and ensure a smooth transition.



Tips for Parents

- ✔ Involve your child in decision-making processes related to their new school. For example, let them choose their backpack, lunchbox, or school supplies. This involvement fosters a sense of ownership and control, making them more invested in the transition.
- ✔ Establish a consistent and open communication channel with your child's teacher once they start primary school. Share any relevant information about your child's interests, strengths, or challenges that can help the teacher better understand and support your child's needs.
- ✔ Encourage your child to maintain connections with their preschool friends, even after transitioning to primary school. Schedule playdates or outings to ensure they still have opportunities to socialise with familiar faces. These interactions can provide a sense of continuity and stability during the transition.
- ✔ Be patient and understanding during the adjustment period. Transitioning to a new school can be overwhelming for some children, and it may take time for them to fully adapt. Maintain open lines of communication with your child, providing emotional support and reassurance as needed.

For Educators/Other relevant transition professionals :

- ★ Emphasise the importance of familiarising children with the new school environment and meeting teachers in advance. Share research findings that support this approach, highlighting how it can reduce children's anxiety and create a sense of comfort. Advocate for prioritising opportunities for children to visit and engage with their future primary school to promote a smooth transition.
- ★ Work closely with parents to develop a comprehensive transition plan that includes pre-visits to the primary school. Actively involve parents in the planning process by addressing their questions and concerns. Regularly review and adapt the transition plan based on the child's progress and evolving needs. Maintain open communication with parents, providing updates and seeking their input throughout the planning and implementation stages.
- ★ Facilitate structured visits and joint activities between preschool and primary school. Coordinate opportunities for children to interact with their future classmates, engage in group activities, or attend orientation sessions together. Encourage parents to actively participate in these activities, fostering connections and building a supportive network within the school community. Provide parents with resources, such as transition guides or online materials, to support their child's adjustment at home and ensure continuous engagement.
- ★ Establish a system to document the child's transition process, including observations, their reactions, and feedback from parents. Create a comprehensive

record that captures the child's progress and any challenges encountered. Regularly review and share these records with parents and school staff, fostering open communication and collaboration. Use the documentation to inform decision-making, track the effectiveness of strategies, and provide targeted support based on individual needs.

✔ Create a supportive and inclusive environment for children and families throughout the transition process. Foster open communication and encourage parents to actively participate in their child's transition. Establish a partnership that prioritizes the well-being and successful adjustment of the child.

✔ Provide resources and guidance for parents to support their child's communication and adjustment. Share information about effective communication strategies, recommended books or articles, and tips for maintaining a positive dialogue at home.



✔ Regularly check in with parents to address any concerns or questions they may have about the transition. Maintain open lines of communication and be responsive to their needs. Ensure parents feel supported and heard throughout the process.


✔ Collaborate with preschool and primary school staff to develop joint activities or events that facilitate communication and interaction between children and teachers. These opportunities can help build familiarity and connections, creating a smoother transition for the child.



✔ Encourage documentation and sharing of observations, feedback, and progress with parents and relevant stakeholders. These records can inform future decision-making, support individualized approaches, and ensure continuity of support for the child throughout their transition journey.

✔ Establish a consistent and structured routine during the transition period. Communicate this routine to both the children and their parents, outlining specific activities and milestones. Consistency and predictability can help children feel more secure and confident during the transition.

✔ Develop social-emotional learning activities and strategies to support children's emotional well-being during the transition. Teach children skills such as self-regulation, problem-solving, and empathy, which can help them navigate new social environments and build positive relationships with their peers and teachers.

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- ✔ Collaborate with preschool and primary school teachers to ensure continuity in learning experiences. Share information about the preschool curriculum and the child's progress to help primary school teachers understand the child's strengths, areas of interest, and individual needs.
 - ✔ Maintain regular communication with parents using alternative communication channels. It is important to provide parents with alternative means to reach you and ask different questions and raise concerns, this may include closed **Facebook** groups, dedicated **WhatsApp** or **Viber** groups, etc. This on one hand will reduce your time responding to parents' emails and phone calls, while simultaneously parents will have the option to communicate with you in a less formal environment.
 - ✔ Organise parent workshops or information sessions to provide them with practical tips and strategies for supporting their child's transition. Topics could include preparing for the first day of school, managing separation anxiety, and promoting a smooth adjustment at home.



- ✔ Foster a positive and inclusive school culture by promoting diversity, acceptance, and respect. Support children in celebrating their unique backgrounds, interests, and abilities. This can help create a welcoming environment where all children feel valued and included.

- ✔ Monitor and assess the effectiveness of transition strategies and interventions. Regularly collect feedback from children, parents, and teachers to evaluate the impact of the transition process. Use this feedback to make any necessary adjustments and improvements for future transitions.
- ✔ Stay informed about current research, best practices, and resources related to transition support. Attend professional development conferences, join online communities or forums, and engage in continuous learning to enhance your knowledge and skills as a transition specialist.

- ✔ Collaborate with community organisations, such as local libraries, community centres, or support services, to provide additional resources and opportunities for children and their families during the transition. These partnerships can help create a network of support beyond the school environment.



Main Takeaways

- ✿ Effective communication is essential for a successful transition from preschool to primary school. Both parents and educators/transition professionals play a vital role in supporting children through clear and open communication.
- ✿ Self-reflection is key to improving communication practices. Parents and educators/transition specialists should assess their current communication styles, strengths, and areas for growth, allowing for adjustments and enhanced communication skills.
- ✿ Collaboration and partnership between parents, educators and school staff are crucial. By working together, they can create a supportive network that promotes consistency, understanding, and a smooth transition for the child.
- ✿ Familiarising children with the new school environment and meeting teachers in advance helps reduce anxiety. Pre-visits, joint activities, and open communication channels foster familiarity, comfort, and a sense of belonging.
- ✿ Documentation of the transition process is valuable. Keeping records of observations, reactions, and feedback allows for continuous support and the identification of areas that may require additional assistance.



Supporting children's transitions from
preschool to primary school

Unit 9: Environments



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Train the Trainer



Unit 9 Environments

Introduction

‘Moving from preschool to primary school is not as easy as ABC. For children, it needs to be carefully planned and explained.....They need to know what their new building looks like, how their classroom will be laid out and where they will hang their little coats. This takes time and it takes thought’

(Mary, Early Years Practitioner)

Learning environments, both indoor and outdoor, should be motivating and appealing to all children. Children have different interests, needs and background experiences, and the materials, equipment and activities that their educational setting provides for them should be reflective of this diversity. Providing an environment where a child is encouraged and supported to have a positive sense of identity and belonging is critical to her/his success as a learner. Similarly, there is an evident link between the environment and the interactions that take place within it. The environment, therefore, requires careful consideration during the transition process, in order to support relationships, play and curriculum.

Learning Objectives

This unit is designed to help you understand:

- ✔ The key role that the indoor and outdoor environments play in supporting every young child’s transition from preschool to primary school
- ✔ Your role in bridging the distance between a child’s familiar environment and their new one.


By using this unit as part of your training to support transitions, you will be able to understand how and why:

- ✍ Joining the dots between a child’s home, preschool and new school environments is key to making their transition successful and enjoyable
- ✍ The importance of creating accessible and inclusive spaces for all children
- ✍ The materials, equipment and activities used in and between the Early Years/ preschool and primary school environments can support the child’s transition process
- ✍ Parents and families need to be visible and welcome in both the preschool and school environments

What do we mean when we say ‘environments’?

Environments simply mean the spaces that we occupy, whether indoor or outdoor. This includes the physical space (i.e. a building) as well as the activities and interactions that take place within them.

As adults, our most common environments are our homes, our place of work and the places we like to socialise. For young children, their main environments are the places





where they play, where their care is provided and where their learning is supported. For children aged between 3 and 6 years old, their main environments are:

1 The preschool

The preschool environment is play focused, and supports learning through that play. Children generally move fluidly between inside and outside spaces, and table top activities are limited.

2 Home

Home is a child's familiar and safe space during periods of change, like the transition to school. It is the critical connection between preschool and primary school, and is where parents and children talk about and prepare for the move to school.

3 The primary school

The school environment is education focused, with elements of play built into the infant curriculum.

All three of these environments are critical to a child's development because supportive and inclusive environments help children to:



- ☞ Make choices
- ☞ Develop the confidence to express themselves
- ☞ Develop, practise and master skills
- ☞ Make discoveries about themselves and the world around them
- ☞ Work through challenges and solve problems

It is important that children's environments are a combination of flexible indoor and outdoor spaces, support different ages and stages of development and are adapted to meet children's changing needs throughout the year.

Understanding children's needs

There are two parts to understanding children's needs in the context of creating environments that support a meaningful transition:

- 1 Making the preparation for transition a part of their current environment
- 2 Preparing them for the move between two different environments

This means incorporating the transition into conversation, play and learning. A preschool practitioner might ask a child *'when you think of school, what do you see?'* and a teacher might prompt a conversation about the best memory from preschool. This enables the child to see the connection between places and how they belong there.



It also means supporting the emotional and physical move between preschool and primary school. Maybe the preschool can do a walking tour to the local primary school and the school might host a teddy bear's picnic for the incoming preschoolers, their parents and preschool practitioners. Whatever activities you choose to do, making children familiar with new environments will help them to feel safe and welcome when they get there.

What do we use to help us identify and meet children's needs?

- ☞ Our understanding of child development means we know that there are certain indicators and milestones for their mental and physical growth. So our environments need to provide children with space, equipment, activities and opportunities that support that development.
- ☞ Working in partnership with families to understand the child's home environment and their wider world
- ☞ Valuing how play stimulates their natural curiosity to learn
- ☞ Verbal and non-verbal communication – speaking their language with both words and body language
- ☞ Observing, observing, observing. When we watch how children play, interact, move and communicate, we gain a better understanding of what they need to support their growth and development.



When it comes to understanding children's needs and their environments, some are more obvious than others. A child with physical disabilities, for example, will need spaces that are fully accessible and inclusive (see Unit 3). A child from a migrant or ethnic minority background needs to see themselves reflected in their surroundings (i.e. culturally diverse books, dolls and toys – see Unit 7). Being able to identify other needs depends on your knowledge of the child, through your partnership with their parents, your observations and interactions. Some children love being outdoors more than others, for example, just as some children are more sensitive to noise than some of their peers.

What matters most is how you create your environments to support those specific needs and how you share that information. If you know that Jack finds loud and sudden noises stressful, you might incorporate school bells into stories and role play. By sharing that information with parents and his new teacher, you have supported them to plan how they will manage that when Jack begins school. If you are Jack's new teacher, you might reduce the volume of the bell in your classroom or alert Jack a few minutes before it rings.

'One of my preschoolers the year before last was non-verbal. We worked with his parents and collected pictures from home for his social stories that we stuck along the wall. Every day at home time he would run over and point at either his Grandad or Mom to remind us who would be picking him up that day. We recorded all of this in his 'All About Me' folder that we shared with the primary schoolso they would understand where Cian was coming from and how he communicates. They [the school] then assigned him a brilliant SNA [special needs assistant].'

(Emily, Preschool Leader)

Meeting those Needs

'There was a sandpit in my Montessori but there is no sandpit in my school and that used to make me a bit sad' (Zoe, 6)

We know that young children are less intimidated by a new environment if they are supported to feel that they belong there. That simply means creating spaces where children feel seen, heard and valued. Environments that build on a child's interests, learning style and needs, help to foster their sense of identity and belonging. And when a child feels that they belong, they feel safe.

When we include the preparation for transitions into a child's everyday environment, we are supporting them to navigate the changes involved in that transition. Below are just some ideas of how that might look in practice. Remember that communication with the parent(s) is the most important factor because that is how information is shared and used to support the child (see Unit 8).

★ Preschool

- ✍️ Include books that talk about starting school in your library
- ✍️ Keep some school uniforms and schoolbags in the dress-up box so during role play, school is talked about and gross motor skills are exercised
- ✍️ Store some small toys in lunch boxes so children can get used to opening and closing them
- ✍️ Have images/drawings that reflect the diversity of wider society
- ✍️ Use social stories and/or puppets to explore children's thoughts on schools
- ✍️ Incorporate transport into discussions about how we get places (i.e. What do you see walking to preschool? What other buildings will you pass in the car on the way to your new school?)
- ✍️ Prepare a passport for each child to share with their parent(s) and encourage them to share with the primary school. Include their likes, dislikes, learning style, (dis)abilities, special interests, specific needs and how they are catered for in preschool etc. - anything that will help the new teacher to understand the child as a person
- ✍️ Talk about bells and how schools use them so children understand how break times are communicated. Making up a little dance or song about bells with the children can make them less daunting
- ✍️ Work with the local primary schools to organise site visits. You might, for example, invite the teachers in for a 'show and tell' session with the children and their parents. This really helps children to connect the three environments and can also encourage parents to interact and communicate with teachers.




★ Home


- ☞ Try to strike a happy balance between talking about school but not too much. You know your child better than anyone so take their lead – if they want to talk about school, that's great. If they don't, revisit the conversation at another time
- ☞ Share positive memories about your own time in school. Children love hearing that their parents were actually children too!
- ☞ Practice opening zippers and buttons on clothes, and opening and closing lunch boxes and water bottles
- ☞ Practice the journey to school a few times over the summer and incorporate games along the way (Let's figure out how many minutes it takes if we walk this way? How many trees can we count from the house to the school gate?)
- ☞ Walk by or pop in to say hello to their preschool after they have finished there. This will help your child to see that it didn't just disappear and that it is someplace other children now go to before they will start school too!
- ☞ Talk about their new teacher in a friendly and positive way, so that your child knows that you know and trust them. This really helps them to establish a relationship with their teacher
- ☞ Remember that you are the most important link between your child's preschool and their new primary school. Talk to the preschool team and your child's Key Worker about what they think is important for the school to know. When you share information with the new school and teacher, you are helping them to understand your child.



★ Primary school

- ☞ Create a photo book of your school, with pictures of the principal and infant teachers, the yard, classrooms, coat racks, toilets etc. This can be shared with local preschools for their libraries so that children can see their new environment long before they are enrolled there
- ☞ Send postcards to children arriving to junior infants a week or two before they start, telling them how excited you are to meet them
- ☞ Try to make sure that the layout of the classroom is play-based (i.e. designated quiet or sensory corner, toybox etc.) and that learning equipment is softened where possible (i.e. a welcome sign on the whiteboard)
- ☞ If the child brings their 'passport' or 'About Me' document to school ensure that the teacher takes time to read it and mention it to the child so they know the teacher is aware of them as an individual
- ☞ Use play as a learning tool. That way you are speaking the child's natural language



 Work with the local preschools to organise a site visit to your school. If you can include something fun (maybe a treasure hunt or story circle), it will help to create excitement about starting school.

★ Self-reflection Suggestions

Self-reflection is a core part of Early Years and teaching practice. Whether you use a self-guided evaluation toolkit or keep a learning journal, below are some sample questions that you might use to guide your reflective practice when are thinking about environments. These apply to both preschool and primary school as there shouldn't be a significant difference between the two environments. They are both, after all, spaces for children who are still in early childhood.

- Does our preschool/school have a written transitions policy?
- Does our preschool/school reflect wider society? Do we have images and toys that represent ethnic diversity, different types of (dis)ability, family structures and roles that are not gendered?
- Does our indoor learning environment incorporate young children's interests? How?
- Are toys, equipment and materials accessible to all children, including children with disabilities?
- Do we have storage space for each child with their name and photo on it?
- Is the children's artwork visible and rotated frequently?
- Do we have an information board or on-line portal for parents?
- Do we offer a range of age-appropriate play props?
- Does our environment provide literacy and numeracy props, such as books, art supplies, story sacks and items to count, stack, pair etc?
- Is our outdoor space fully and easily accessible to all children?
- Does that outdoor space support children to play alone, in pairs and in small groups?
- How am I documenting the child's needs without preschool/school environment?
- Am I communicating openly and regularly with parents so that they are comfortable talking to me about any concerns or expectations?
- Have we prepared children for the transition by helping them to understand what to expect?
- Are we supporting their parents around the transition process? How?



- Have we shared relevant information between our preschool and primary school?
- Will it be made clear to children where the toilets and bathrooms are, and how they can go to them when needed?
- Have we discussed children's transition to school with other professionals such as special needs assistants, social workers, where appropriate and with parental consent?
- Have we collaborated with the local preschools/schools that our children will be coming from/going to?
- Are we open to hearing children's voices and incorporating that learning into how we plan our environments?
- How do we ensure we hear children's voices, what methods do we use?



★ **Self-reflection** is also a core part of everyday parenting. As parents, it is sometimes only when our children have gone to bed that we look back at our day and think about what went well and what did not go as planned. These questions can help guide your thinking:

- Do I know enough about my child's new school and if not, how can I find out more?
- Am I ready for their move to primary school myself? If I am slightly anxious (which is perfectly normal), what am I doing to avoid passing that anxiety to my child?
- How is my child feeling about the transition? How am I supporting those emotions?
- Do we talk enough about the new school to help my child understand what is happening?
- Do we try not to talk too much school so that my child doesn't feel overwhelmed?
- Have we practised our new route to school?
- Does my child understand that they are moving between two different physical places?
- Do I have photos or images of the school building and classroom that I can look at with my child when we are discussing school?
- If the preschool has given me a passport for my child, is there anything I want to add?



- Am I happy to share that passport with the school?
- What other information do I want the school to know about my child?
- Are we practising the school routine enough that my child is comfortable doing it in September (i.e. putting on their uniform, the journey to school, opening their schoolbag etc.)?
- Can my child manage going to the toilet on their own?
- Am I waiting for any assessments for my child? If so, have I let the school know?
- How will I keep checking in on how my child is feeling during the transition?

★ *Tip: We know that asking a young child how their day at school was can result in a simple 'ok' answer. Every evening over dinner or before bed, play the rose and thorn game. Ask your child for one good thing (rose) about their day and one not so good thing (thorn), and share yours with them. This is a simple but great way to learn about any hopes or worries they might have.*

Main takeaways

- ✿ Environments are the places and spaces that children occupy, and the interactions and experiences that they are part of while they are there.
- ✿ Environments play a really important role in supporting every child's transition as they move from what is familiar (preschool) to what is unknown (primary school).
- ✿ For young children, understanding the similarities and differences between these two different environments can really support the transition because it prepares them for the changes they will encounter.
- ✿ Connecting the preschool, home and school environments is really important because it provides a sense of continuity for children. When adults share information, children benefit.
- ✿ Environments that are open and welcoming to children and their parents are environments where children can develop a strong sense of identity and belonging. This is a key part of supporting meaningful transitions.
- ✿ Activities such as site visits between preschools and schools and sharing children's information 'passports' help the child to be more prepared for school AND the school to be more prepared for the child. That is a win-win.
- ✿ Talking positively about the transition itself and the child's new environment can help them to be excited about this new chapter in their life.



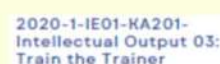
'I don't think I realised the role that the actual physical environment played when Zoe was getting ready to start big school.....We talked a lot about her uniform and her teacher but she got a very big shock when we walked into the classroom. It was huge, which she wasn't used to and there was a really strong smell of bleach that she still remembers when she talks about her first day of school'

(Claire, mom of 3)

Supporting children's transitions from
preschool to primary school

Unit 10

Bibliography Resources Downloadable Links





i Unit 10 Bibliography, Resources & Downloadable Links

If you want to think some more about supporting children's transitions from preschool to primary school, there are many excellent on-line resources available. Along with the information in this learning unit, they will enhance your toolkit for promoting and supporting little people's big transitions. The references included in some of the modules are also listed here. Some links are included in more than one section.

Clarke, A. & Moss, P. Listening to young Children: The Mosaic Approach (2001)

<https://oro.open.ac.uk/17075/#:~:text=Traditional%20methods%20of%20consultation%20with%20user%20groups%20require,to%20young%20children%27s%20perspective%20on%20their%20daily%20lives.> Accessed 24 th May 2023

Craft, A., & Paige-Smith, A. (2013). What does it mean to reflect on our practice. In *Developing reflective practice in the early years*. Maidenhead: McGraw Hill

Gibbs, G. (1988). *Learning by Doing: A Guide to Teaching and Learning Methods*. Oxford: Oxford Further Education Unit.

Laevers, F. 'Leuven Scale: Sics/Ziko Observational Tool',

<https://emotionallyhealthyschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/sics-ziko-manual.pdf> accessed 24th May 2023

Lundy, L. (2014) The Lundy Model of Child Participation,

<https://www.qub.ac.uk/Research/case-studies/childrens-participation-lundy-model.html> accessed 24th May 2023

Teaching Council (Ireland) Droichead Programme (2017) Induction, Reflective Practice.

<https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/fileupload/droichead/key-points-of-information-about-droichead.pdf> accessed 12th August 2023

UNCRC United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child, Article 12, (1989)

<https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text#> accessed 24th May 2023

i Unit 2: Understanding Families (Bulgarian Links, some also in English) :

- ✔ Transition resources for parents and teachers created by the Trains project (2019-1- UK01-KA201-062038) consortium available in EN and BG.

<https://eutrainslearning.eu/bulgarian/>

- ✔ Parents' guide to transition for relocated children available in BG

https://www.noe.gv.at/noe/Kindergaerten-Schulen/Vom_Kiga_in_die_Schule_Bulgarisch.pdf

- ✔ Educational support and orientation created by Eurydice of the European Commission available in BG and EN

<https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/bg/national-education-systems/bulgaria/bulgaria-bgobrazovatelna-podkrepa-i-orientirane>




- ✔ List of good practices gathered by the Ministry of Education, Bulgaria and applied in educational institutions throughout the country in order to pupil's transitions to school, school retention, and educational practices within the classrooms. Available in BG. <https://back2school.mon.bg/good-practice-school.php>
- ✔ How to listen, talk and play with the child. Publication supported by the Ministry of Education, Bulgaria for professionals in kindergarten, preschool and social services. Available in BG <https://rb.gy/phkgw>
- ✔ A free directory with shared good practices from professionals, teachers, parents about starting school, being in school, examples of inclusive games and activities at school, etc.
https://priobshti.se/category/za-uchiteli/priobshtavashti-igri_or
<https://priobshti.se/category/dobri-praktiki> Available in BG.
- ✔ Handbook for parents of first graders – Intended for parents of children starting school. It can also be used by primary teachers and other specialists - social workers, pedagogical advisers, psychologists, educators, and resource teachers. The handbook aims to encourage dialogue between the family and the school, to stimulate good relationships between parents and teachers. Available in BG http://sluchilishte.bg/materials/site_single/30
- ✔ Handbook for families of children with Special Educational Needs. Available in BG. http://rcpleven.com/07knigi/dete_sas_SOP_zaRoditeli.pdf
- ✔ Handbook for professionals for Intercultural education and educational integration with various practices described, which aim to reduce the dropout of students and retain their interest in school. Available in BG. http://sluchilishte.bg/materials/site_single/19
- ✔ Resource pack full of transition activities for teachers and transition professionals. Available in EN <https://www.twinkl.bg/resource/transitioning-from-preschool-to-primary-school-pack-1-roi-tpcs-109>, part 2 of the pack <https://www.twinkl.bg/resource/transitioning-from-preschool-to-primary-school-pack-2-roi-tpcs-110>
- ✔ Suggested activities for preschools to support a positive transition to school. Available in EN <https://ncca.ie/media/3755/suggested-transition-activities-for-preschools.pdf>





i Unit 3 Disabilities: Resources and Links (some in Bulgarian)

- ✔ sopbg.org/materials - website with games, activities, and materials for children with SEN. Available in BG
 - ✔ Handbook for children with SEN for kindergarten teachers. Available in BG
https://karindom.org/pdf/inclusive/narachnik_uchiteli.pdf
 - ✔ Handbook Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in pre- primary Education and care: Available in BG <https://arci-ngo.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Narachnik-za-prepodavатели.pdf>
 - ✔ Recommendations for teachers when having a visually impaired student in class. Available in BG https://ourakovski.com/download/pages/594/nara4nik_2.pdf
 - ✔ Research Report Transition to Primary school. Available in EN
https://ncca.ie/media/1504/transition_to_primary_research_report_19.pdf
 - ✔ Transitioning from preschool to primary school - Information and advice for parents of children with Down syndrome. Available in EN
<https://downsyndrome.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Transition-from-Preschool-to-Primary-School.pdf>
 - ✔ Transition from preschool to Kindergarten for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Available in EN.
https://www.diva_portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1292422/FULLTEXT01.pdf
 - ✔ Speech Pathology Tools-Speech and Language Pathology Interactive Tools for Teachers at Initial Education <http://www.speechpathologytools.eu/>
Accessible peer interaction with disabled youth
<http://www.accessinteract.eu/outputs/>
 - ✔ Ways to Adapt (Physical) Activities for Children with Special Needs
<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/healthwellbeing/our-priority-programmes/heal/healpublications/playground-games-for-primary-schools.pdf>
accessed 2nd June 2023
 - ✔ <https://downsyndrome.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Transition-from-Preschool-to-Primary-School.pdf>
 - ✔ <https://www.sess.ie/resources/transition-early-childcare-and-preschool-primary-school>
 - ✔ Visual impairment: https://www.ncbi.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Preparation-for-Transition-To-Primary-School_NCBI-2021.pdf
- 




Unit 4: Language

- ✔ How to prepare a child with communication difficulties for starting school:
<https://www.theschoolrun.com/how-prepare-child-communication-difficulties-starting-school>
- ✔ Inclusive education and social support to tackle inequalities in society:
<https://www.isotis.org/en/home/>, <https://vle.isotis.org/course/view.php?id=219>
- ✔ Partnering with diverse population, Learning Coalition:
<https://affect.coe.hawaii.edu/modules/partnering-with-diverse-populations/>
- ✔ Steps Towards Learning – A Guide to Overcoming Language Barriers in Children’ Education. Save the Children UK:
<https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/content/dam/global/reports/steps-towards-learning-lr.pdf>

Unit 5: Social and Emotional Development

- ✔ Tús Maith (Barnardos, 2012)
<https://knowledge.barnardos.ie/handle/20.500.13085/901?show=full> (accessed 29th May 2023)
- ✔ Useful Mindfulness tools from the Irish Heart Foundation for younger children and to support parents: <https://irishheart.ie/schools/primary-schools/mindfulness/> accessed 23/06/2023

Unit 6: Supporting Physical Development

- ✔ Be Active After School Activity School Programme is a HSE supported after school physical activity programme aimed at primary school teachers with parental support for the delivery in school.
www.beactiveasap.ie
 - ✔ CARA is a national organisation which provides a collaborative and partnership platform throughout Ireland to impact on enhancing sport and physical activity opportunities for people with disabilities.
www.caraapacentre.ie
 - ✔ Food Dudes: <https://www.fooddudes.ie/about-food-dudes/>
 - ✔ HSE Active Classroom <https://irishheart.ie/schools/primary-schools/active-classroom/> accessed 31st May 2023
 - ✔ HSE Active Playgrounds
<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/healthwellbeing/our-priority-programmes/healthpublications/playground-games-for-primary-schools.pdf> accessed 2nd June 2023
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- ✔ Incredible Edibles: Healthy Eating in Primary Schools.
<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/healthwellbeing/hse-education-programme/training-and-resources-for-primary-school-teachers/healthy-eating-training-and-resources-for-primary-school-teachers.html>
 - ✔ The Irish Primary P.E. Association (IPPEA) is an association dedicated to heightening awareness of PE issues in primary schools and it aims to promote physical activity in an educational context.
www.irishprimarype.com
 - ✔ Ways to Adapt Activities for Children with Special Needs
<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/healthwellbeing/our-priority-programmes/heal/healpublications/playground-games-for-primary-schools.pdf>
accessed 2nd June 2023

i Transitions: General resources

- ✔ *Aistear Siolta Practice Guide*: <https://www.aistearsiolta.ie/en/transitions/>
- ✔ *Ambitions for Transitions*: <https://loveparenting.ie/back-to-school-resources/>
- ✔ *Betterstart*: <https://www.betterstart.ie/2021/09/01/supporting-a-childs-transition-to-primary-school/>
- ✔ *National Council for Curriculum & Assessment*:
<https://ncca.ie/media/3755/suggested-transition-activities-for-preschools.pdf>
- ✔ *National Parent's Council*: https://www.npc.ie/images/uploads/downloads/HINTSTIPS_8PP-am.pdf
- ✔ *Mo Scéal (My Story)* : [Mo Scéal | NCCA](#)
- ✔ *Transitions support from the Irish Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth: Let's Get Ready* :
<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a8d8f-ready-for-school/>

Transitions support from the Irish Department of Education:

- ✔ *For parents* <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a2d7f-insights-transitions/#transitions-a-focus-on-parents>
- ✔ *For Early Years practitioners* <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a2d7f-insights-transitions/#transitions-a-focus-on-early-years-practitioners>
- ✔ *For primary school teachers* <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a2d7f-insights-transitions/#transitions-a-focus-on-primary-school-teachers>





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