

**EARLY CHILDHOOD RESEARCH & POLICY BRIEFS:
Transition to Kindergarten
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Overview

The transition to formal schooling is a landmark event for millions of children, families, and educators. But research by the National Center for Early Development & Learning (NCELD) and others indicates that the transition practices commonly used in schools may not be well suited to the needs of children and families.

The Problem

- a. A national survey of nearly 3,600 kindergarten teachers in 1996 found that for the majority of teachers, transition practices, if any, included: sending a letter or brochure to parents and holding an open house after school starts. According to the National Education Goals Panels' 1997 publication, *Ready Schools*, these practices prove that schools are doing too little too late to connect with children and families. Families and schools value and need good transition experiences **before** the child enters school.
- b. Teachers identified a number of administrative barriers such as receiving class lists too late to contact families before school, absence of a plan for developing transition policy and practices in their district, and a lack of school system support for effective transition. In addition, they noted the lack of funds to support the time they needed in the summer to conduct good transition practices.

Possible Solutions: What policy changes are needed?

- a. Policies are needed that foster communication and strengthen the bond between preschools and elementary schools.
- b. Such policies would mandate the formation of transition planning teams in localities involving school personnel, preschool staff, families, agency workers and community leaders. This collaboration would focus on better informing the public about preschool and early school opportunities for children.
- c. It is also important to consider policies that strengthen bonds between families and schools. This could involve requiring teacher training in building partnerships with families, especially those from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds.
- d. Policies are needed that encourage high quality kindergarten classroom experiences overall for children.

Conclusion

It is important to consider the issues associated with our current Pre-K to K policies and transition programs. Several transition policy and standards changes could have a great impact on the educational attainment of children across the country.

Pianta, R. & Cox, M. (2002). *Early childhood research & policy briefs: Transition to kindergarten*. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The National Center for Early Development and Learning