

**TRANSITION PRACTICES:
Findings From a National Survey of Kindergarten Teachers
Diane Early, Robert Pianta, Lorraine Taylor, & Martha Cox, 2001**

Overview

The ready school movement is one that has been getting much attention as a critical component in the transition process. One of the most important aspects of ready schools is having ready teachers and administrators. The national Center for Early Development and Learning created a Transition Practices Survey (a nationwide survey of kindergarten teachers) to describe the specific practices teachers use in facilitating the transition to kindergarten and the barriers they perceive to additional transition practices.

Method

Kindergarten teachers were randomly chosen from elementary schools across the United States. A survey was mailed out and 3,595 teachers participated. All findings presented are weighted to provide national estimates.

Results

- The nation's kindergarten teachers have an average of 11.5 years of experience teaching at the kindergarten level and no relation was found between this teaching experience and their use of transition practices.
- Almost 50% of teachers are certified in early childhood/primary grade education.
- Twenty-two percent of teachers reported having specialized training to enhance children's transition into kindergarten.
- Across America, the average kindergarten classroom contains 22 students. Teachers of larger classes use fewer individualized practices and fewer group practices before the beginning of the school year.
- Teachers reported receiving their class lists an average of 15 days before the first day of school. The timing of class list receipt was significantly related to a teacher's use of transition practices.
- The most common types of transition practices occur after the beginning of the school year and are aimed at the class as a whole

Conclusion

Optimal transitions to kindergarten for children are best supported by practices that are individualized and engage the child, family, and preschool setting prior to the first day of school. Unfortunately, these high-intensity practices are also the most time consuming and least likely to be used by teachers. Teacher training, earlier class list generation, and smaller classes are all avenues for improving transition practices. The findings from this study point to clear areas for intervention for schools attempting to create a more ready environment for children entering kindergarten.

Early, D., Pianta, R., Taylor, L., & Cox, M. (2001). Transition practices: Findings from a national survey of kindergarten teachers. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 28(3), 199-206.