



Investing in School Readiness

Ready!

NEWS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

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The Importance of Transition for Children's Success

Preparing young children to succeed in school starts long before the kindergarten registration and orientation sessions that are held each spring. School readiness is a long-term process that involves families, child care professionals, school administrators, teachers, and community organizations — everyone who supports young children's care and education.

Research shows that transition to kindergarten is enhanced when a strong community network collaborates to share information, resources and opportunities with families and their children. As detailed in *Successful Kindergarten Transitions* by Robert C. Pianta and Marcia Kraft-Sayre, successful transitions involve:

Fostering Relationships as Resources

When a child is involved in and surrounded by supportive relationships, the transition to kindergarten occurs more smoothly. Developing key relationships with those who are critical to children's

long-term school success, such as the principal and kindergarten teachers of the elementary school, is one key resource to be fostered over time.

Creating a Continuum From Preschool to Kindergarten

Child care professionals and school teachers support smooth transitions to kindergarten by sharing information with each other about their programs and practices. In this way, they create a continuum of learning from child care to school that supports children during this very important change in their lives.

Focusing on Family Strengths

Child care professionals and teachers can foster relationships with families that reflect their strengths in order to best support young children's transition to kindergarten.

Tailoring to Individual Needs

Focusing on children's individual needs best serves long-term success. To every extent possible, the framework for transition should be based on the needs and strengths of the child, family and school community.

Developing Collaborative Relationships

There are many participants in the transition process. Working together to form and implement a transition process for children in preschool is critical for their success in kindergarten and beyond.

Communicating, sharing resources and focusing on families provides the foundation to make this important transition. By working together as a community, we can ensure children transition into kindergarten ready to succeed.



Story Books to Support Children's Transition to Kindergarten

Henry's 100 Days of Kindergarten by Nancy L. Carlson

Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten
by Joseph Slate

My Kindergarten by Rosemary Wells

Welcome to Kindergarten by Anne F. Rockwell

Letters and Sounds: Timothy Goes to School by Rosemary Wells

Look Out Kindergarten Here I Come by Nancy Carlson

First Day Jitters by Julie Danneberg

The Kissing Hand by Audrey Penn

Countdown to Kindergarten by Alison McGhee

Is Everybody Ready for Kindergarten?

A Toolkit for Preparing Children and Families

Author: Angele Sancho Passe

ISBN: 978-1-60554-015-3

Editor's Description: Making the transition into kindergarten is a significant and exciting milestone in young children's lives. With proper coordination and planning, it can be a smooth process, benefiting children, families, and schools. *Is Everybody Ready for Kindergarten?* provides early childhood professionals with information and practical advice to help children and their families prepare for the transition and then successfully begin kindergarten. Helpful activities and reproducible checklists and handouts are included.

Fairfax Futures provides assistance and information that serves children and families as they make this important life transition. Two school readiness resources, *Helping Your Child Love to Learn* and *Paving the Way to Kindergarten* continue to be available to the early childhood community free of charge. Both can be downloaded from the web at www.fairfax-futures.org or www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ofc. Hard copies can also be mailed upon written request to Fairfax Futures at info@fairfax-futures.org.



Developmental Milestones for Children

Young children develop at different rates, creating a wide range of milestone achievements for individual children. In partnership with families, child care professionals can support children in reaching typical developmental milestones.



Age 2-3

- Uses an expanded vocabulary.
- Answers yes/no questions.
- Uses two-to-three-word sentences.
- Follows simple directions.
- Walks and runs.

Age 3-5

- Uses sentences of four or more words.
- Asks questions (what, when, where, why, how).
- Relates personal experiences, events.
- Participates in storytelling.
- Climbs, jumps, gallops.

These are just a few examples of milestones to look for in children as they grow and develop. More comprehensive information can be found in the Fairfax County Office for Children's *Early Learning Guidelines*, which are available online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ofc.

Transitions Start With Families

Child care professionals can serve as a resource for families by playing a leading role in connecting them and their children with neighborhood schools.

Timely school registration is one of many critical and important aspects of transitioning children into kindergarten. Early registration directly impacts how schools plan for classrooms and teachers each year.

Some valuable steps a child care professional can take in helping families with this transition are:

- Encourage families to participate in kindergarten orientations offered by the elementary schools their children will attend.
- Schedule visits to a kindergarten classroom at the local elementary school for the children in your care.
- Invite a kindergarten teacher to visit your child care program to talk with the children.
- Offer to help schools by distributing school registration forms and



materials to the parents/guardians of the children in your care.

- Encourage families to make sure children entering kindergarten have a physical and required medical forms filled out by a pediatrician.
- Make families aware that the Health Department offers free clinics where children can receive the physicals and immunizations required by the school system.
- Provide families with information about before- and after-school care options in their communities.
- Provide families with “transition forms” — which detail children’s learning in preschool — and encourage families to give the forms to kindergarten teachers before school starts.

Elementary School Visit Tips

- Ask children what they are most curious about, and highlight that area during your visit.
- Point out areas and experiences that mirror the children’s current preschool/child care environment.
- Help children become familiar with the school they will attend by taking photos of key areas, such as the school’s kindergarten classrooms, playground, school entrance, and cafeteria.
- Visit with children’s friends who will also attend their school.
- Check the school website; some have virtual tours that can be shared with children.

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Neighborhood School Readiness Teams

Promoting and supporting continuity between early childhood settings and elementary school.

Neighborhood School Readiness Teams are a community partnership led by Fairfax Futures, the Office for Children and Fairfax County Public Schools.

The teams include key staff from elementary schools, various agencies within Fairfax County, and early childhood professionals. These teams meet throughout the school year to develop joint planning efforts to assist children and their families in experiencing smooth transitions to kindergarten, so that children have the best opportunities to be successful before and after they start school.

This program encourages nearly 500 preschool children annually to

participate in kindergarten classroom visits during the school registration period.

The Neighborhood School Readiness Teams are currently located in nine elementary schools in Fairfax County (Annandale Terrace, Bonnie Brae, Centre Ridge, Freedom Hill, Hollin Meadows, Hybla Valley, Lake Anne, Lynbrook, and Providence).

If you are interested in starting a Neighborhood School Readiness Team in your community, please contact Fairfax Futures at info@fairfax-futures.org.

Fairfax Futures

12011 Government Center Parkway
Suite 920
Fairfax, VA 22035

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