



Transition to Kindergarten

Activity Calendar for Educators



NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning

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Get Ready For Kindergarten! Activity Calendar For Educators

The first day of kindergarten! It's one of the most exciting events in a child's life. The transition from Head Start to kindergarten can be a wonderful time, but it's also a time of uncertainty, new demands, and big expectations for children and their families. How can we make this time less confusing and overwhelming?

As an educator, you can make a significant difference in the early education experience of the children from your program when you build a process for a smooth transition to kindergarten. A transition that builds on familiar experiences and relationships will give the children in your class the best springboard to social adjustment and academic success. Consider sharing copies of this calendar with the kindergarten teachers that you partner with to further align the transition process.



Why Is a Quality Transition Important?

Multiple large-scale research studies have found that transition activities for children and families are associated with these gains in kindergarten:

- Reduced stress and higher ratings of social emotional competence at the beginning of school year
- Improved academic growth and increased family involvement over the year

What Does a Quality Transition Involve?

Evidence from research and the field suggests these key elements:

- Positive relationships for children and families with receiving elementary schools
- A transition team of Head Start and kindergarten administrators and educators, families, and community members
- Assessments, learning standards, and curriculum that align between early childhood and kindergarten settings
- Joint professional development between early childhood and kindergarten educators
- Information and communication that is shared with families and the community at large

How Do We Improve Children's Transition?

Educators can use these key principles:

- Approach transition collaboratively
- Involve all key stakeholders in the process
- Align children's experiences between Head Start and kindergarten settings



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How to Use This Calendar:

Start small: Don't feel like you need to take on all the activities suggested in this calendar each month. It's important to realize that you can begin to provide some support for children's transitions, and that is much better than providing none at all.

Set reasonable goals: Check the box next to each activity you plan to do that month; you can choose two or three to start. Reasonable goals will help you to support the children in your setting.

Expand your range of activities as you can: Supplementary activities are listed in the back of this calendar. As you become more comfortable using transition activities, you can add new ones.

Consider transitions in as well as out: Although the focus of this calendar is to help you provide support for children transitioning to kindergarten, it's also important to consider the needs of children who are transitioning into your classroom.



This *Get Ready for Kindergarten!* calendar provides suggestions of activities for each month to help you foster connections—between the children and families in your Head Start program, and the schools and community beyond. The transition to kindergarten is supported by:

Connections with Children and Families

- The children and families in your setting want to know—what will kindergarten be like? Introduce children to the kindergarten classroom, the school environment, the new routines, and their new teacher.
- Involve families throughout the transition.

Connections with Schools

- Collaborate with kindergarten and early education staff to identify goals for children. Share information about children’s progress and additional support services they may receive.
- Help kindergarten educators become familiar with individual children.
- Encourage alignment between the early learning setting and kindergarten—the environments, curricula, assessments, and interactions.
- Be informed about school policies and procedures to help families understand decisions that may be made about placements and services for their child.

Connections with the Community

- Use resources within the community to support continuity in the transition process.



Six Steps to Successful Kindergarten Transition Planning

1. Establish partnerships, identify transition team members, and designate leaders.
2. Identify goals.
3. Assess current transition practices used in your community.
4. Identify the data or evidence you have for practices that are or are not working.
5. Plan and prioritize: reevaluate goals or create new ones, and plan steps to take.
6. Implement and evaluate.



Connecting with ...

Children And Families

- ❑ Notify families, in their home language(s), about upcoming kindergarten orientations and open houses.
- ❑ Engage families to help generate ways they can participate in their children's transition to kindergarten: for example, by talking with their children about what kindergarten is like, practicing new skills at home, and contacting their children's new educators with questions or concerns.

Schools

- ❑ Plan to meet and work with educators in the partner setting. Establish relationships for the current year's transitions and for future years.
- ❑ Visit previous students at their new elementary schools.

August



Connecting with ...

Children and Families

- ❑ Meet with families through program orientation, home visits, and open house gatherings prior to the first day of the school year.
- ❑ Discuss school readiness goals with families and describe how you will work with their children towards those goals throughout the year.
- ❑ Partner with families to generate ways they can support school readiness goals at home.
- ❑ Discuss the importance of on-time school attendance with families, and support them in building effective transportation and attendance routines for the year ahead.

Schools

- ❑ Exchange information about early education and kindergarten policies, practices, and school readiness goals.
- ❑ Share the documents and resources you use to track children's progress with kindergarten educators.
- ❑ Become familiar with policies and services available to children who are dual language learners in the new school setting.
- ❑ Identify policies and supports available for children with disabilities during the transition to kindergarten and in the new elementary school.

September





Connecting with ...

Children and Families

- Share screening results with families and link those results to resources they can use to support their children's needs.
- Provide families with kindergarten registration information in their home language(s). Let them know what information they will need to bring to registration in the winter or spring.

Schools

- Find out which elementary schools the children may attend after they leave your program.
- Contact schools to exchange information and ideas about specific curriculum areas, such as math, literacy, language development, etc. These could be monthly program-school leadership meetings, shared electronic workspaces, or ongoing communication between educators.
- Invite kindergarten teachers to attend program events, and share about how the children are preparing for the transition to kindergarten.

October





Connecting with ...

Children and Families

- Share accessible, accurate information with families about how the children are doing, based on developmental assessment results.
- Collaborate with families to develop a set of age-appropriate, in-home learning activities they can use to support kindergarten readiness.

Schools

- Visit the other learning setting to learn about similarities in the physical environment and daily routines.
- Consider the differences between early learning settings and kindergarten learning spaces and daily schedules. Look for ways to make them more consistent across settings.
- Meet with educators in the partner setting to align educator practices, routines, and assessments.

November



Connecting with ...

Children and Families

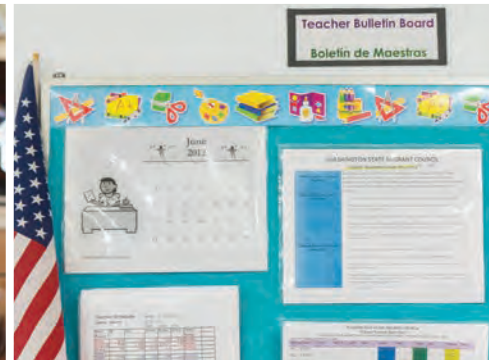
- ❑ Provide activities that families can do with their children over the winter break to support school readiness.

Schools

- ❑ Collaborate with schools on a kindergarten information event for families to be held in the coming year.
- ❑ Coordinate and share transition activities and approaches with elementary schools.



December





Connecting with ...

Children and Families

- ❑ Host a joint kindergarten information event with kindergarten educators for children and families. Plan fun activities, provide resources in families' home language(s), and invite related community service providers.
- ❑ Attend story time at a local library. Invite kindergarten teachers to come meet families and children, and answer questions about kindergarten.

Schools

- ❑ Send an invitation to local schools to participate in a kindergarten information event.
- ❑ Connect with a kindergarten teacher who can come observe your early learning setting. Share insights with each other about ways that the early learning and kindergarten settings are similar and different.
- ❑ Talk about the early learning curriculum and developmentally appropriate practices with kindergarten teachers.

January





Connecting with ...

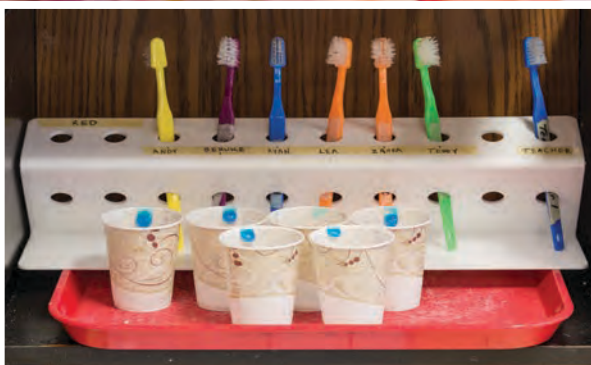
Children and Families

- Provide information to families in their home language(s) about upcoming kindergarten registration events.
- Share children's progress toward kindergarten readiness with their families.
- Collaborate with families to generate ways they can support their children's kindergarten readiness.
- Encourage children's independence during transitions, routines, and activities.

Schools

- Work with schools to plan events and opportunities for children to learn about their new school (classroom visits, family events, etc.).

February



Connecting with ...

Children and Families

- Share information about kindergarten entry expectations and requirements with families.
- Share information with families about elementary school attendance policies, and the importance of on-time attendance to school success.
- Provide families with kindergarten registration information; when and where, what documentation to bring, etc.
- Encourage families to connect with the new kindergarten teacher and school principal by contacting them or arranging a visit to discuss any questions or important information.
- Support students' independence in self-care skills (going to the bathroom, washing hands, taking off and putting on coats, etc.).

Schools

- Invite kindergarten teachers and/or principals to share letter about themselves, their classroom, or school with families and children in your program.

March





Connecting with ...

Children and Families

- Help children and families to prepare portfolios to share with kindergarten teachers.
- Share books and have conversations about kindergarten with children in their home language(s).
- Teach kindergarten recess games to children enrolled in the program.

Schools

- Contact schools to request forms and information in families' home language(s).
- Invite current kindergarten families to talk with incoming families about what to expect and how they can continue to be engaged in their children's learning and development.

April



Connecting with ...

Children And Families

- Provide school readiness activities that parents can do with their children over the summer.
- Invite kindergarten children to come visit your class and talk about what kindergarten is like.
- Read storybooks to children about kindergarten. (See resource list at the end of the calendar.)
- Help students learn self-management skills: Putting away backpacks, putting papers in backpacks, getting their coats, etc.
- Help families to understand and complete kindergarten registration forms, including special education letters, home language surveys, and placement agreements.

Schools

- Arrange visits to kindergarten classrooms for the children in your program.



May





Connecting with ...

Children and Families

- ❑ Refer families to helpful community resources, such as library story times, social services, support for dual language learners, and free or reduced cost physical exams, meal programs, and haircuts.
- ❑ Help children write letters and/or draw pictures that describe themselves and their families for their future educators.

Schools

- ❑ Collaborate with kindergarten educators around placement and screening, particularly for children with disabilities.

June





Connecting with ...

Children and Families

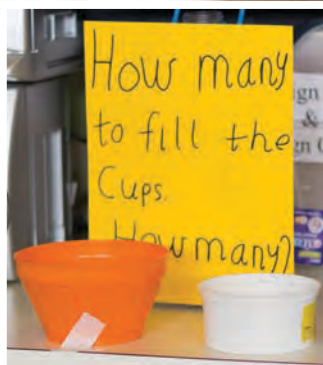
- ❑ Help families find out what school supplies are required for kindergarten and how to obtain them. Identify community programs that provide free or reduced-cost school supplies.

Schools

- ❑ Contact schools to request forms and information in families' home language(s).
- ❑ Organize a kindergarten camp with schools and community partners where children can meet kindergarten educators and learn kindergarten rules and routines over the course of several days, before the school year begins.

July





SUPPLEMENTAL TRANSITION ACTIVITIES

- Meet with kindergarten educators to learn about the results of kindergarten entrance assessments.
- Participate in joint professional development with kindergarten teachers around supporting the transition to kindergarten.
- Meet with kindergarten teachers and families to make a plan for children with disabilities who are transitioning to kindergarten.
- Collaborate with community organizations (consider local volunteer organizations) for events like Back-to-School Night.
- Share school readiness goals with professionals at libraries, children's museums, community centers, etc., and gather information about how their programming can support school readiness for the children in your program.
- Ask schools about their approaches to collecting student information through, observation checklists, anecdotal records, and portfolios. Can you use similar approaches?
- Share information with other programs and schools, examine each other's assessment tools, and discuss what you are learning. What works, what is difficult, and what gives you the information you need?
- Partner with schools to distribute fliers about school readiness and post them in public places.
- Provide kindergarten registration information to social service workers for the families they serve.
- Use social networking, and community announcement boards to send out kindergarten registration information; work with schools, businesses, and community groups.
- Partner with businesses and community organizations to create a Public Service Announcement (PSA) for radio or television to advertise what it means to be "school ready," and highlight the skills that are needed in kindergarten, as well as health check-ups and other requirements.
- Collaborate with schools to create a PSA for radio or television to advertise kindergarten registration dates and locations.
- Plan and conduct joint home visits with kindergarten educators for children and families who are transitioning to kindergarten.
- Work with community organizations to organize kindergarten readiness events, such as an outing to a museum.
- Ask community organizations for funds to create resources, such as booklets for parents. Funding may be in exchange for advertisements in the booklet.

For more information and assistance on how to implement a plan, visit <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/center/transition> or contact your Head Start Regional EC Specialist.



Selected Children's Books About Kindergarten

- *A Place Called Kindergarten* by Jessica Harper
- *Countdown to Kindergarten* by Alison McGhee
- *David Goes to School* by David Shannon
- *First Day Jitters* by Julie Danneberg
- *Froggy Goes to School* by Jonathan London
- *I Am Too Absolutely Small for School* by Lauren Child
- *Kindergarten Rocks!* by Katie Davis
- *Look Out Kindergarten, Here I come!* by Nancy Carlson
- *Look Out Kindergarten, Here I come!/Preparate, kindergarten! Allavoy!* by Nancy Carlson
- *Mae's First Day of School* by Kate Berube
- *Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten* by Joseph Slate and Ashley Wolff
- *Off to Kindergarten* by Tony Johnston
- *Que Nervios! El Primer Dia de Escuela* by Julie Danneberg
- *School's First Day of School* by Adam Rex
- *Splat the Cat* by Rob Scotton
- *The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn
- *Un Beso en Mi Mano* by Audrey Penn
- *Welcome to Kindergarten* by Anne Rockwell
- *Wemberly Worried* by Kevin Henkes



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