

Preschool to Kindergarten Transition

Moving Up to Kindergarten

When your preschooler moves on to kindergarten they will be joining an elementary program and may begin attending the neighborhood school. As a parent you enter the world of PTA, school bulletins, back to school night, etc. kindergarten is a lot more advanced than it was when most parents were enrolled in kindergarten. Thus kindergarten readiness is an important component to consider as children finish preschool and get ready for the next step.

Getting Ready

By mid-November of the school year prior to kindergarten, an informal conference should be held to discuss the transition process and time lines. This is an opportunity to:

- Discuss your educational priorities for your child.
- Allow staff to discuss their view of your child and their priorities in getting them ready for kindergarten.
- Review program options and plan visits to potential programs.

Program options may include*:

- A general education setting (with or without related services such as occupational or physical therapy)
- Resource Specialist Program (along with a general education classroom)
- A Special Day Class (SDC) with planned inclusion opportunities
- A non-public school

*Education in the least restrictive environment appropriate to meet your child's needs must be considered.

Your child's progress during that last year of preschool will be included in the decision making process involved in determining the appropriate services and school setting for your child. During that year, staff working with your child will identify your child's skills and areas of needed skill development important to a successful transition.

Assessment Activities

Services and placement decisions are made by your child's IEP (Individualized Education Program) team which includes you, the parent. Decisions are to be based on your child's needs identified through comprehensive assessments which include:

- Formal evaluations
- Teacher observations and assessments
- Your observations and concerns
- Reports by related services staff (i.e. speech, occupational and/or physical therapists)
- Evaluation of potential classroom placements and how they match your child's needs

The education staff will make determinations about what new or additional testing or evaluations are needed. Evaluation should cover not only academic readiness but also social/emotional development, motor development, social skills, behavior, etc. You will need to give written consent before any of the assessments can be done.

The Transition IEP Meeting

Prior to the IEP meeting you should ask that assessment results be provided to you ahead of time so that you can review this information. You should have had an opportunity to visit programs that are being considered or, at a minimum, have program descriptions provided to you. Make sure that you provide the school with any information you would like considered and also let them know if you will be bringing anyone with you to the meeting (for example: care providers, case workers, therapists, etc.).

At the meeting the assessment results will be reviewed and you can ask any questions you might have. Progress your child has made on their preschool goals and objectives will also be reviewed. A need for continuing special education services must be determined and then new goals (and objectives, if required) developed. The need for related services is reviewed as well as goals and objectives for those services. It is only at that point that program options (classroom placement) should be discussed. Remember that services and placement should flow from, and be aligned with, your child's assessed needs and identified goals.

Decisions regarding your child's services and placement are team decisions and should be made through consensus after a thorough review of your child's particular needs. Often critical services decisions are made after more than one meeting. Do not feel rushed to make a decision if you are not ready. You may take time to consider the proposed IEP and sign it after reviewing it at home. The IEP should include plans to assist your child in making this transition with visits to the new program if appropriate. The IEP should be given to staff working with your child in kindergarten.

Ready for Kindergarten

Help your child with this step by reading stories about kindergarten, discussing the coming changes and making the transition a "special" event. Kindergarten is an important step in your child's educational journey. Becoming part of a larger school community can be an enriching experience for your child and for you.

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PATH Project: 1-800-866-4726



PEN Project: 1-877-762-1435



TEAM Project: 1-877-832-8945

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