

Transitioning to Kindergarten

SUWALL

A Guide for Parents
of Children with
Disabilities



Maine Parent Federation
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Exploring the impacts of transitioning to a new school.

The transition to kindergarten is a big deal! Kindergarten is a sign that your child is growing and increasing his or her independence. While it's an exciting time, it can also be a time filled with many unknowns. This booklet maps out the process of the transition to kindergarten and provides tools and tips to help parents become active members of the IEP team.

New sounds, new faces, new smells in new places. A new school can be scary for any child. Instead of using the words on the left, try using the words on the right to foster a more positive mindset!

What do you think of when you hear the word "transition"?

- Stress
- Uncertainty
- Nerves
- Anticipation
- Change
- New Routines

- Fresh Start
- Opportunities
- Excitement
- Energized
- Growth
- New Goals





What are your concerns as you think about your child transitioning to kindergarten?

When transitioning to kindergarten, your child may experience changes in a variety of areas.

For example, they may attend a new school, have new teachers and therapists, or ride a bus for the first time. Special education services may also be accessed and delivered differently. As parents it is important to continue to learn about the special education laws and regulations, as well as review the school policy manual. Some of the changes in service delivery are described in the chart below:

Preschool

- Qualify based on Disability or Developmental Delay Diagnosis
- Access services in community, home, or preschool setting
- Provided individually or in groups

Public School

- Qualify due to an identified disability: 13 categories
- Services provided in class or out of class
- Provided individually, in groups, or in classroom (push-in)



How to prepare and what to expect.



child development services

Before your child begins kindergarten, a Transition IEP Meeting will be scheduled. This meeting will include **Child Developmental Services (CDS)**, the team members at the new school, and the parents.

CDS is responsible for contacting the new school and establishing a meeting date with both the school and parents. CDS will also provide the current IEP and any assessments or evaluations necessary for the transition to kindergarten.

In the spring, usually between April 1st, and June 15th, CDS will contact the local school and schedule a transition meeting.

The staff at the **new school** will facilitate the Transition IEP Meeting. Prior to meeting, they will do an observation in your child's preschool setting. After observation a meeting will be held to discuss your child's current special education needs and services, and if additional assessments need to be done prior to the start of kindergarten. At the conclusion of the meeting, the school is responsible to send the written notice and IEP with the determinations of the meeting to the IEP team members.

As a **parent**, you are an equal member of the IEP team and should be prepared to contribute as an expert on your child. You help to set the tone of the meeting, and being prepared helps to ensure the meeting will move forward swiftly and productively.

You are a Contributor

- You are an expert on your child.

You are a Learner

- The school may have ideas you have not thought about.



Preparing for the Meeting

It's important to know who will be at the transition IEP meeting in advance. Your CDS case manager, preschool teacher, therapists, school case manager, and school special education administrator should all be present. The following are tips to prepare for the meeting:

- Think through any questions you may have about the school day.
 - What is the teacher to student ratio?
 - What is a typical school day schedule?
- Come with data to support your request for services.
- Bring a prioritized list of your concerns.
- Share updates from any outside therapists.
- Ask to take a tour of the school.
- Ask to meet the staff, including any ed techs.
- Reflect on your own parental considerations such as your child's experience in preschool and their strengths and challenges.

All formal CDS/school assessments need to be provided to the parents by CDS/school 3 days in advance of the meeting, to ensure proper time to review.

You should gather the following information.

From CDS

- IEP's and Progress Reports
- Recent Evaluations
 - i.e. Neuro-Psych, Academic, Therapeutic

From The Receiving School

- Classroom Observations

Parents

- Recommendations made by doctors, counselors, or therapists.



What to Expect at the Meeting

At the meeting, the team will determine the appropriate services for your child.

This includes:

- Therapies
- Specially designed instruction
- Placement which best meets your child's Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
- Ed tech support
- Extended school year services (ESY)



The goal will also be determined at the meeting for the areas of academic, social/emotional, functional/developmental, behavioral, and therapeutic (i.e. OT, PT, Speech). Additionally, if any accommodations need to be made to support your child's learning and participation in the school day, they will be determined at this time.

Children born between July 1st and December 15th who have an active IEP as of December 1st, may be considered to continue to receive services through CDS for an additional year or enter kindergarten. This is an IEP Team decision.



Examples of Modifications

- Sensory items to avoid or seek out
- Preferred seating
- Breaks
- Assistive technology
- Additional time to complete work/tests
- Advanced warning of emergency drills



Adjusting to the Transition

Communication in kindergarten often feels different than in preschool. Parents may feel a shift in the frequency of communication with staff, and it is helpful to set up a home-school communication log. This will help to ensure the information coming home is dependable and beneficial.

Parents are also responsible for coordinating any therapies or support services apart from

the school day. Fostering communication between any outside providers is crucial in maximizing the effectiveness of services delivered. For example, the school OT should be communicating with the private OT. This will require the school and outside providers to sign releases.

Try keeping a log which documents:

- the date
- the type of communication (email, phone, meeting)
- who you spoke with and what their position is
- specifics of conversation



The Purpose of IEP Meetings

IEP meetings are scheduled annually at a minimum to review goal progress and make updates to the plan. An IEP meeting may also be scheduled to review recent evaluations or determine services.

*Did you know...
parents may request an IEP meeting to review the plan at any time throughout the year.*

When working with the team, it's helpful to get to know the new team and each of their roles. The chart below describes the roles and duties associated with IEP team members.

Special Education Teacher

- Often fulfills the role of Case Manager.
- Ensures the fidelity of writing and carrying out the IEP.
- Typically acts as first point of contact for the parents.

Special Education Administrator

- Has the authority to make financial decisions.
- Is required to oversee the IEP meeting.
- Role may be filled by a principal, assistant principal, instructional strategist, director of special education, or assistant to director of special education.

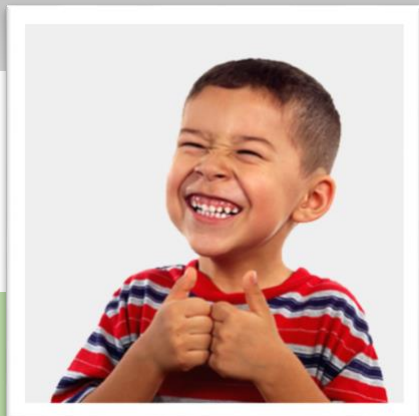
Mainstream Classroom Teacher

- Collaborates with special education teacher to modify lessons.
- Helps to determine Present Level of Performance (PLOP).
- Oversees necessary accommodations for inclusion within the general education setting.
- Helps to create a classroom environment which functions as a community.

Therapists

- May overlap in some goals.
- Work collaboratively to schedule service times (i.e. not overload the student).
- Should look for natural opportunities within the school day to integrate & provide therapy, which may be referred to as "push-in".





How to Prepare Your Children

Transitioning to kindergarten is an exciting milestone! Here are some tips to help prepare your child for upcoming changes:

- Keep steady expectations and rules at home which echo those at school.
- Create a social story about attending the new school.
- Help build your child's confidence with positive feedback & encouragement for GOOD behavior!
- Encourage your child to ask questions about the upcoming change.
- Express excitement about the transition.
- Take your child on a tour of the building & practice his/her routes.
- Participate in town recreation programs
- Meet the staff.
- Be consistent with summer schedule.
- Engage your child in creating an "About Me" sheet for their new teacher.

3 Takeaway Tips for a Successful Transition:

1. Preparation and organization are key ingredients in a smooth transition.
2. Coming to the IEP meeting with a positive attitude and a team player mindset will take you far.
3. Give every transition at least 6 weeks before making an additional change.



Notes



Notes





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