



**Universal PreK (UPK) Café:  
Special Series Issue #4  
Transitions  
April 28, 2021**

Dear Friends,

The Early Education Team is excited to share its fourth issue of the UPK Café Special series. The intent of this series is to focus on recovery, reconnections, and resources that supports school district recovery and implementation plans. This issue's focus is on Transitions.

**A Few Things to Keep in Mind**

According to new research, children ages 3 to 5 have lost important learning opportunities over the last year. Preschool enrollment rates were down nearly a quarter across the country, and in-person education decreased even more. There was also a sharp decline in parent at-home support for book reading and other learning activities, and parents reported higher-than-normal rates of mental health problems for their young children. The findings came out of a [survey](#) undertaken by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at the Rutgers Graduate School of Education. In December 2020 the organization queried 1,001 families of children not yet in kindergarten, asking similar questions as an earlier survey done in [Spring 2020](#).

In Vermont, we know that PreK enrollment experienced a significant (24%) decline due to the pandemic. Kindergarten also showed a sizeable decrease (14%) in enrollment.

It is important to point out that there has been a large increase this school year in students who are home schooled. We can assume that the decrease in enrollment figures is due to increase in the numbers of students being home schooled however this may be true for only a small percentage of students. Many other factors play into the decline in enrollment therefore its critical to explore other possibilities to create transition plans and activities for students enrolling in PreK or Kindergarten for 2021-2022 school year.

**Recommended Practices**

Transition refers to the events, activities, and processes associated with key changes between environments or programs during the early childhood years and the practices that support the adjustment of the child and family to the new setting.

Transition is a process that generally involves many activities on the part of the practitioner in collaboration with the family. As with other life transitions or changes, positive relationships—in this case positive teacher-child and practitioner-family relationships—are associated with greater satisfaction, better adjustment, and better child outcomes. ([DEC Recommended Practices](#)).

The [Division of Early Childhood \(DEC\)](#) recommends the following practices associated with transition:

- Practitioners in sending and receiving programs exchange information before, during, and after transition about practices most likely to support the child’s successful adjustment and positive outcomes.
- Practitioners use a variety of planned and timely strategies with the child and family before, during, and after the transition to support successful adjustment and positive outcomes for both the child and family.

## **Creating Transition Plans**

Transition to a new program has always been an important milestone for young children and their families. And we know that transition requires careful planning and support. The pandemic has created some big challenges and changes to how we have engaged with children and families. It also has provided us with an opportunity to evolve our practices and instruction in a positive way. The downside of the pandemic is that we have lost important learning opportunities and experiences for children and their families. The goal is to help each and every child and their family to feel confident and prepared to handle the big changes they will experience. Recovery teams, along with early education staff play a key role in supporting successful transitions while adjusting to new relationships, routines, and learning environments.

As we transition to a new school year it is important to provide an environment where children and families feel safe, and informed. Consider ways you will engage families in bi-directional communication, responding to their needs to support a smooth transition.

## **Family Transition**

### [Communicating with Families: Helpful Suggestions](#)

Children are not the only ones who will be transitioning back to school, families and caregivers are as well. Think about how you will provide families with an “open house” experience. How will you communicate with families? The frequency of communication may need to increase to support children’s evolving needs through this transition from home to school and provide reassurance to parents and caregivers about the health and safety of their child. Conversations in person will be limited, if at all, but consistent communication is important.

Prioritize strategies for welcoming children and families, ensure that there is a way to greet and check in with families daily. Make the morning transition welcoming and predictable (see Transition Toolbox).

## Transition Toolbox

[Program Wide Implementation with the Pyramid Model](#) comprised of practices for teachers and families. This includes scripted stories for social situations, tools for building relationships, Book Nooks, teaching social and emotional skills and videos to support Pyramid Model practices.

[Rebuilding the Pyramid: Reconnecting After a Break](#) Intentional teaching that connects children to routines, supportive communications, emotional support, expectations/rules and descriptive positive feedback from educators. [Some starters for giving positive feedback and encouragement](#). Support each child with a predictable morning routine and [greeting](#), post daily routines, schedules and classroom expectations. Teach and support emotional literacy through [Feeling Faces](#) and [Helping Children Understand Emotions When Wearing Masks](#).

## Considerations on Transition to Kindergarten

The intent of the document [Considerations on Transition to Kindergarten](#) for Supervisory Unions/School Districts (SU/SDs) on the best practices to help families, early educators and children prepare, understand and plan their transition to kindergarten. SU/SDs should make every effort to identify and locate each resident child who is age eligible for kindergarten within their SU/SD. Whether a child is transitioning to kindergarten from a prequalified public or private prekindergarten education program, a childcare center, or entering public school for the first time, families need to be informed of SU/SD expectations and transition activities. The strategies will help ensure each and every child and their families, will be prepared and welcomed into a safe and secure kindergarten learning environment.

## Transition at Age Three for Children with Disabilities

One major transition required within IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) is when children transition out of Part C/Early Intervention (EI) services into Part B Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) services. Families must be fully informed about the process and afforded their rights, responsibilities, and options as their child transitions from Part C/EI services to Part B ECSE services. IDEA requires states to ensure that 100% of the children enrolled in Part C and eligible for Part B, have Part B services in place by each child's third birthday.

This transition for children and their families as they leave Part C, should be seamless, so they have timely access to appropriate services. Families need to move smoothly from one program or system to another, or among services within a program or system.

[Form 6B IDEA Part C to Part B Transition](#) is a required Vermont Agency of Education form. Its intent is as a guidance tool for Part B eligibility determination and as a parent information and consent form. This important document is to be completed with the family during the transition meeting(s). Depending on the family and child's needs, the transition meeting may be several meetings. Therefore, Form 6B should be seen as a document that is completed over a period leading to the child's third birthday and possible implementation of the child's ECSE IEP. The module, Part [C to Part B Transition](#), can provide more information.

## **Transition into a Healthy and Happy Learning Environment**

As early childhood educators you understand the importance of prioritizing relationship building, play and social emotional well-being as we transition back from Covid-19. Through this transition, it is critical that early childhood educators realize the early childhood profession's vision of [Vermont's Guiding Principles](#) that each and every young child have equitable access to high quality learning and care environments.

Educators who engage in developmentally appropriate practice foster young children's learning and increase opportunities for all children to achieve their full potential. (NAEYC position statement for Developmentally Appropriate Practice-DAP)

## **Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Action**

- **Creating a caring, equitable community of learners**-All children have not had the opportunity to have interactions with peers this past year. Over the past year and a half, children have not received equitable learning experiences in the areas of emotional, physical, language, literacy and cognitive development. It is important as we transition into public and private programs that we meet children where they are developmentally and individualize instruction for each and every child. Create an environment that is calming, welcoming and predictable.
- **Engaging in reciprocal partnerships with families**-Engaging families by building trusting relationships and ongoing communication is important to understanding shared goals and supporting the family and their child during this transition period.

## **Using Knowledge of Child Development and Learning in Context**

- **Observing, documenting, and assessing children's development and learning**-It is important to embed ongoing observations into daily activities. Using formal and informal assessments that are culturally and linguistically sensitive are necessary for planning and implementing curriculum. It is important to understand developmental milestones, scaffold and monitor desired goals and progress.
- The [Vermont Early Learning Standards \(VELS\)](#) central to a shared vision of what we want for young children in our state in the years from birth to third grade, while providing a road map for intentional teaching.
- **Teaching to enhance each child's development and learning**-Play is critical to the child's learning environment. Planning that provides self-directed play, guided play and direct instruction is essential to children learning through play. Understand where each child is developmentally, by using suggested handouts, checklists, charts, and other resources. A tool you might want to learn more about is the Ages and Stages [ASQ-3 Developing Screening Toolkit](#), that involves families in the screening process, and tracks child development.
- **Planning and implementing an engaging curriculum to achieve meaningful goals**-Curriculum is age appropriate, it includes all domains, is comprehensive in addressing goals that are culturally and linguistically relevant.

## References & Resources

Agency of Education: [Considerations on Transition to Kindergarten During the Covid-19 Response](#) kindergarten transition guidance on the best practices to help families, early educators and children prepare, understand and plan their transition to kindergarten.

[Ages and Stages](#) Support

Anna Winneker, Lise Fox, Meghan von der Embse, Erin Sizemore, and Dana Peña (2020, July) [The Leaderships Team's Guide for Re-Opening Programs](#). National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations.

Barnett, W.S., & Jung, K. (2021). [Seven Impacts of the Pandemic on Young Children and their Parents: Initial Findings from NIEER's December 2020 Preschool Learning Activities Survey](#). New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

Division for Early Childhood of the Council for exceptional Children Foundations of Transition for Young Children (video). [CONNECT instructional resources for transitions, partnerships and practices](#)

[Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center \(ECLKC\): Transitions](#) provides tips, calendars, and videos to support early childhood transitions for infants, toddlers, pre-K, and kindergarten.

**Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA). (2020).** [Transition from Preschool Services to Kindergarten](#). ECTA offers a collection of transition services and resources from national centers, states, studies, including a parent transition handbook.

**Galuski, T.** [Ready or Not Kindergarten, Here We Come](#). NAEYC. This article looks at the whole child and all the skills and strengths each child has developed.

**Head Start/Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC). (2020).** [Transition to Kindergarten: Collaborations, Connections and Six Steps to Success](#). This document outlines a step-by-step approach to build, implement, and evaluate a kindergarten transition plan.

National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning. (2021, April) [Supporting Successful Transitions to Kindergarten for Children with Disabilities](#). Disabilities Services Newsletter. Issue No. 43

Vanderbilt University. (2021, April). [Hemmeter lab research to practice. \[Facebook page\]](#). Dr. Hemmeter and her team offer evidence- based resources and best practices to support children through transitions. Dr. Hemmeter is one of the founding researchers of the Pyramid Model.

## Websites/Webinars/Video Series

**Head Start/ECLKC. (2020).** [Sharing Information for the Transition to Kindergarten](#). In this video, hear from educators as they discuss ways to effectively share information so that programs, families, and children feel prepared for a successful transition to kindergarten.

**Head Start/ECLKC. (2020).** [Transition to Kindergarten](#). There are four points of connection that, when strengthened, facilitate effective transitions: family-school, child-school, program-school, and community-school.

**National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).** [Guidelines for Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Action: Using Knowledge of Child Development and Learning in Context. \(DAP\)](#). Guidelines that address decisions that early childhood professionals make in six key and interrelated areas of practice.

**National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI). (2018).** [How to Use Social Stories to Teach Your Child New Skills and Expectations](#). Backpack Connection Series. Children love to listen to stories. Not only are stories used to entertain children, but they can also be used as tools to teach new skills and expectations.

## **Upcoming Events**

Find out more information about these webinars and other [upcoming events](#) on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC). There are two upcoming webinars in the Inclusion Webinar Series:

- **May 25, 2021, 3–4 p.m. ET:** Increased Access, Increased Learning
- **July 27, 2021, 3–4 p.m. ET:** Increased Opportunity, Increased Learning

If you have received this issue from a coworker and would like to be placed on the UPK Café listserv, please email Leslie at [leslie.freedman@vermont.gov](mailto:leslie.freedman@vermont.gov).

Be well and stay healthy,

The Early Education Team