What the Research Says: School Readiness and the Role of Transition and Alignment

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Transition occurs across the lifespan...
Transition = Change = Stressful

Normative stress can be good and growth promoting

Toxic stress can lead to short and long term problems
We know what creates successful adjustment

- Relationships
- Information
- Continuity/Alignment

AND TIME

*Children need our help to do this*
Stability in experiences are crucial

- Relies on continued experience of supportive relationships in a high quality environment

- Change is associated with lower school readiness
Why do we care so much about children’s transition to kindergarten?
First Day of Kindergarten Important to Many

Preparation for the First Day of Kindergarten...

Preparing Your Child for the First Day of Kindergarten...

Starting kindergarten can be very stressful for children, so ease the transition with these tips on how to handle the very first day of school for your kindergartner.

back to school

This is a time of hopes and dreams for a happy and successful school year. Below you will find a first day checklist, activities and book suggestions to help the ...

10 Ways to Celebrate the First Day of Kindergarten | Scholastic.com

Start a lifetime of learning with a kindergarten kickoff to remember.

First Day of School Advice for Parents: Preparing Your Child for ...

Getting ready for Kindergarten or Grade one? Here's some helpful advice for preparing your child for his or hers very first day of school.

First Day of School - Kindergarten - YouTube
Experience in kindergarten matters

- **Kindergarten skills highly predictive of later success**
- **The kindergarten teacher-child relationship** predicts short and long term academic and behavior outcomes
  - Especially important for children at-risk of school difficulties
  - Conflict stable over time
- **Kindergarten family involvement** associated with more cooperative, self-controlled, socially engaged children, lower dropout, higher language and math

The Case for $320,000 Kindergarten Teachers

By David Leonhardt
Published: July 27, 2010
Intervention early matters

- **High quality early childhood education** supports children’s short and long term *development*

- For every $1 spent in early intervention, $7 is returned
What school readiness skills are important to Pre-k and K teachers?

Importance of different skills for kindergarten readiness
Rated by preschool and kindergarten teachers

- Academics: 3.68
- Self regulatory behavior: 4.01
- Interpersonal behavior: 4.09

(Latham et al., 2013)
How successfully are children entering kindergarten?

- Difficult: 16%
- Some Problems: 32%
- Successful: 52%

Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta & Cox, 2000
Teachers who say “half my class or more” exhibit these problems entering kindergarten

- Difficulty following directions: 46%
- Lack of academic skills: 36%
- Difficulty working independently: 35%
- Difficulty working as part of a group: 31%
- Problems with social skills: 21%
- Difficulty communicating/language problems: 14%

Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta & Cox, 2000
What Preschoolers Say About Kindergarten

• “I feel like I’m going to be a little sad because I’m going to miss my friends. But I can’t wait to be on the bus with my new friends.”

• “And, um...it’s a big, big school and there’s more kids - hundreds and hundreds. And there’s kids that don’t know each other’s names. Everyone knows names here.”

• “Tons of rules! No running, No hitting. No pushing. No saying bad words. No throwing sand. And no kissing on the lips. Only kissing on the hands and the cheek. No kicking. No whining. That’s it. And listen to the teacher’s words.”

Child and Parent Perspective on Transition
Activity Setting Experiences

LaParo et al., 2009
“His teacher called several days before school started; it was great and really made Nate feel great.”

“I am pleased… the teacher called after the first two days of school to say how well she was doing.”

“The teacher called me the first week of school and said she should have been evaluated for Ritalin because she can’t teach her.”

“I’m not happy with it… I sent in notes but got no response from the teacher… The first day of school I sent him with a dollar for lunch but he didn’t eat all day… something got mixed up. I tried again with a dollar the next day, but he didn’t eat that day either. He wet his pants. The teacher is young and she’s not very organized. I’m anxious about this year.”
Misalignments and Shifts in the Transition to Kindergarten

• Changes in academic demands / curricula
• Less family connection with school
• Complexity of social environment (peers and adults)
• Less time with teacher(s)
• Too little, too late, too impersonal
What can we do to improve the transition to kindergarten?

Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000
### Child & family connections with school: Transition experiences families found useful

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transition activity</th>
<th>% of families who found the experience helpful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Had child visit a kindergarten classroom</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met with a kindergarten teacher</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met with the principal</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took a tour of the school</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talked with preschool staff about kindergarten</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visited the kindergarten classroom</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talked with parents of child’s new classmates</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in elementary school-wide activities</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended a workshop for parents</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met with child’s anticipated kindergarten teacher</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended an orientation to kindergarten</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pianta et al., 1999
### School-school connections: Transition experiences teachers found useful

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transition activity</th>
<th>Preschool teachers</th>
<th>K teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prek children visiting their kindergarten classroom</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prek teachers visiting a kindergarten classroom</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holding an elementary school-wide activity with prek children</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a spring orientation about kindergarten for parents of preschool children</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having an individual meeting between a teacher and a parent of the preschool child</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing written records</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pianta et al., 1999
That’s good that the practices are useful...

...but are they helping children be more school ready and parents be involved?
Prek to K Transition Practices are Associated with Children’s Kindergarten Adjustment

- NCEDL
  - 1,000 children, 250 schools

**At the beginning of K:**
- Greater frustration tolerance
- Better social skills
- Fewer conduct problems
- Fewer learning problems
- More positive approaches to learning

*Most* helpful for children from low-income families.

LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2008
Kindergarten Transition Practices are Associated with Academic Skills and Family Involvement

- Early Childhood Longitudinal Study
  - 17,212 children, 992 schools

Even more for children from low-income families

Schulting, Malone & Dodge, 2005
Kindergarten Camp Participation is Associated with Improved Readiness

• Child, family, school, and community, connections
  – Improved social adjustment to kindergarten
  – Improved familiarity with routines for kids with same teacher
  – Reading benefits

Berlin, Dunning & Dodge, 2010; Borman, Goetz & Dowling, 2009
Why might transition practices be associated with positive kindergarten outcomes?

• **One pathway: relationships**
  – Closer kindergarten teacher-child relationships associated with short and long-term positive outcomes (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; 2005)
    • Matter more, less likely for at-risk children
  – Targeted transition practices associated with closer relationships which are in turn associated with children’s academic and social gains over K year (LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2013)

• **Another pathway: alignment**
  – Shared information and experiences
  – Growing evidence of positive effects of intentionally aligned systems (Ahtola et al., 2011; LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2009)
School Connection Goals

- **With children**: To foster familiarity with the classroom setting and people within
- **With families**: To foster collaboration and involvement
- **Between schools**: To provide stable high quality classroom experiences across time
- **With community**: To organize resources and get the word out
Key Elements of Successful Efforts

• Teams represent all stakeholders and work together

• Efforts occur across child, family, school and community throughout the year
  – Seen as a developmental and integrated process
  – Providing information, building relationships and developing continuity

• Continuous assessment of what is and is not working
Children, Families and Elementary Schools Benefit from Connections

- Children more socially and emotionally ready
  - Helps them participate more academically

- Families more connected to school
  - Improved long-term student outcomes

- Teachers more prepared to support kids/families
  - Better relationships and more aligned high quality experiences

- Fiscally smart
  - Most important investment is time
THANK YOU!

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