

## Transitions: A Community Perspective on Transitioning Into Kindergarten

[Music]

Bette Hyde: Something that we're doing in concert with a lot of schools across the state is this kindergarten assessment pilot called WaKIDS. It's a three-way partnership between the kindergarten teacher, the family member, and the third is the early learning provider. So a big emphasis behind WaKIDS is just to make sure that transition is smooth by putting together this team.

Kevin Schwartz: The relationship is absolutely vital to helping their students be prepared for what's going to be expected when they get to kindergarten. And our interactions with them, we can help them understand what the students need to know, and they can help us understand what they need to learn.

Chris Borgen: We really wanted to align as much as we could our community, our providers, the school district, other agencies to get our children school-ready.

Manuel Cruz: We make sure that the children get educated, get prepared for the entry to kindergarten, and we start from six weeks all the way to 5 years old.

Teacher 1: The last two weeks of our program, we do transitioning.

Athisia Juarez: And the kids have portfolios where we put in their work, like writing their name from the beginning, when they first came, and when they ended.

Teacher 1: We do songs. We talked about safety.

Patricia Reyes: We also teach them how to listen to their teacher and don't run with scissors.

Teacher 1: This is the crossing the street: stop, look, and listen.

Athisia: We have a homework calendar, and we go over it with the parent.

Mary Jo Christenson: We're working with families to kind of prepare them in what school-ready looks like, to get their children really focused on those skills that they'll need.

Maggie Castro: We, as educators, can say, "Mom, you know, this is what we're seeing. This is what we need to work on." And parents will sometimes say, "I didn't realize this." You know, "I didn't know. What can I do about it?" Then we start the planning process.

Paola Sanchez: They give you tips on how to help, and they always, like, remember, like, you know, you're your child's first teacher.

Samantha Kealoha: Making sure your kid knows how to spell their name. I think that's really important for kindergarten. And just the sounds. The sounds are so important, because this year they're going to learn how to read, and it's really important that they know their sounds, they know their letters, and they know how to write them.

Patricia: Our mealtimes will change. They will get their food on a tray, like they get it at kindergarten in the regular school system.

Teacher 1: Numbers, because these are stuff they're going to be learning at school.

Maggie Thompson: We're using some of the same language and some of the same methods and approaches, so when students leave the preschool classrooms that we work with and enter into the kindergarten classrooms, it's not a huge transition.

Jennifer Soderberg: Just some more, kind of, parallel alignment, a little bit more conversation about this is what the expectation is for skill — social skills, cognitive skills, behavioral skills — by the end of preschool.

Kevin: Our kindergarten teachers are doing a couple of things. And probably the biggest thing that we started this year was we delayed school by three days. And so those teachers had the opportunity for a three-day period to meet with parents and children individually.

Erika Twohy: They get to meet the teacher, they see where they sit, they see the different areas in the classroom.

Paola: He got to meet some of his peers, and he got to meet some of his p.m. class.

Kevin: That interview process really provided the teachers and the families that nice transition into kindergarten that they have never had before.

Bette: And every kindergarten teacher that I talk to that does that loves it.

Kevin: In addition to that, the teachers do some transition work the follow — or the year before, so they'll do it this spring for kids coming into kindergarten next year.

Paola: I met the kindergarten teacher in May when my child was still going to Head Start, because they have Kindergarten Round-Up. And we got a chance to meet. And she just — I mean, she touched on, like, the variety of things that they were going to be doing throughout the year. Like they have science, math.

Maggie C: That intimidation or uncertainty of walking into a brand-new place is no longer there. They've already got the connection. So the transition is really smooth. Kids are already connecting with faces over there, the parent already knows who the contact is.

Maggie T: Typically, kindergarten children come into school absolutely loving school. They love school, they love their teachers, they want to be with their friends. And they get really excited about things like riding the school bus or being able to go to the lunchroom or out on the playground.

Samantha: My son's first day of kindergarten went really well because my son really wanted to go to kindergarten. He talked about it the whole second half of his last year in preschool.

[Children laughing and talking]

Girl 1: When I see other kindergartners, I think about how I used to be in kindergarten.

Girl 2: Get on the school bus and just drive to school.

Boy 1: When I rode the bus for the first time, I felt nervous.

Bus Driver: Welcome to the bus, to my bus.

Girl 3: [Speaking in Spanish] Hello!

Woman 1: [Speaking in Spanish] How are you?

Boy 2: Actually, for three years of school, I rode with my dad, because I forgot about the bus.

Girl 4: It has yellow everywhere, and it has black windows.

Boy 2: It gets from home to here, then from here to home.

Kevin: The largest memories I had from being in kindergarten was just the overwhelming feeling of so many kids in the room.

Jennifer: Things like, you know, lining up and going to the library, being used to following the directions of lots of different teachers at school.

Erika: And then even in the cafeteria, okay, I have to go in this door, down past these tables by myself. Getting the milk, putting it on the tray, carrying it with two hands over to their table. I mean, it doesn't sound hard to us, but it's hard to them. How do I go to the bathroom, how do I read a book, how do I sit on the carpet, how do I get in line? I mean, just those really school-setting transitions, they do have a difficult time with that.

Girl 1: You had to line up from alphabetical order of your first or last name. And I lined up for, like, recess and lunch, and going to the library and PE and music.

Woman 2: Why do you line up?

Girl 5: So you don't get in a glob.

Teacher 2: I'm waiting until everyone is in a nice straight line in the middle of the hallway.

Boy 2: Yeah, for leaving play court or leaving school or arriving, you have to walk in a straight line.

Jennifer: The routines are really so much more in place than students who do not participate in those programs. They know how to come into the classroom, they know how to put their things away, how to work in a group.

Girl 6: This is my class. But this is the lights. If you have a big problem or a small problem, Kelso will help you.

Boy 2: You have to bring a backpack and a coat. If you get a sack, pack some of your things in it for Show and Share.

Jennifer: They're here, they're excited to start school. They're excited to meet new friends and their new teacher. Sometimes they're a little bit nervous because it's a new place, but in general they tend to be really ready to go.

Boy 3: I was wearing first-day-of-school clothes.

Girl 1: On my first day, I thought, like, I wouldn't, like, make any friends, and then I did.

Boy 4: I was nervous that the other kids would be mean to me.

Girl 7: I was scared to have a new teacher.

Girl 6: But I was — I was scared.

Girl 8: I didn't know where everything was and stuff.

Boy 5: My mom helped me find my seat.

Boy 6: My teacher said, "All the parents have to leave."

Jennifer: Ninety percent of the time, the parents are having a harder time than the kid actually is.

Paola: I was, like, really apprehensive. I was like sad to see him like go, but I know it's like a really important step for him.

Bette: Even though I've spent my life in education and, you know, early learning, you're never ready for them to go.

Girl 6: And I was sad, too, because my mom was going to leave, but until I saw my mom in the hallway, right here in the hallway, and then she gave me a hug.

Boy 1: I, like, gave my mom a hug.

Lilian Mai: He said, "Mommy, can you stay with me?" He did not cry, but he's going to. He wanted to cry. He wanted me to stay. The second day, he's doing better. The third day, "Mommy, I like it. I like to go to school."

Paola: He was like, "We did this and we did that, and we read books, and we went to the library, and we played basketball, we played outside with the ropes."

Girl 7: We sing our morning song.

Woman 3: And then what?

Girl 7: And then we go to our journals and then put them in our folders.

Girl 9: We listen to the teachers. We read with our friends.

Girl 10: We learn math.

Girl 11: Sometimes we wrote stories together.

Girl 6: We learn the schedule.

Girl 4: And we go to gym.

Boy 2: And do music.

Girl 6: [Clicks tongue] But you have to — I don't know how to snap.

Girl 4: Shaking the maracas.

Boy 2: We do journal.

Girl 10: What did you write about in your journal today?

Girl 7: Uhhh...

Boy 2: And we write how we're feeling, like if we're scared, sad, mad, happy. And I forgot what we were talking about. No, when we're feeling safe.

Boy 1: You check out books on the day where you have library.

Girl 1: I learned how to do better at art. I learned how to draw regular people instead of stick people.

Girl 6: We draw pictures, and in the hallway, we hang it up. And the parents come and look at them.

Girl 1: I learned how to, like, write my name and last name — how to, like, write "apple" and "flower."

Boy 1: My favorite thing in kindergarten is lunch.

Boy 7: Lunchroom.

Boy 8: You need to eat, and that's all.

Boy 7: I'm eating.

Girl 1: In preschool, you didn't get to pick where you got to sit, and in regular school, I got to buy my lunch and pick where I sit. So it could be next to a friend.

Boy 8: Free choice!

Girl 10: Mine is, too.

Girl 1: At preschool, like, you got to, like, really play and you didn't, like, have to do anything. And at kindergarten, you kind of have to, like, learn the alphabet and like, learn how to write and stuff.

Boy 9: I wish we could play more in kindergarten.

Bette: People, when I was a superintendent, would ask me, "What's the most important thing you can do to get kids ready for school?" And they would guess I would say, "Read to them," which I think is a dynamite thing, and you surely do want to read and tell stories to kids. But I think at the end of the day, to have children ready, is they need to walk out of their childcare or preschool setting into kindergarten with the belief that, "I am one who can." You know, that confidence that, "I'm ready to tackle the world."

Jennifer: There's a huge area of growth that is necessary for them to be at benchmark by the end of kindergarten.

Chris: And it just makes too much sense to us and to our community, but more importantly to our children, to have that collaborative approach with our community, our providers, all the agencies working with our children and trying to align that as a seamless system within a community that is saying, "Here's where we want our kids as they leave us, particularly at third grade, but definitely coming into kindergarten and first, and what can we do instructionally, curricular, support systems, parents systems as a community to make sure our kids are ready to go and be successful?"

Bette: You know, our state's early learning plan talks about our vision is that we all partner together — and this is a paraphrase — so that every child enters kindergarten healthy, capable, and confident.

Boy 8: Kindergarten's fun.

Boys: Kindergarten rocks.

Girl 4: ♪ Goodbye, goodbye / Whoa, we gotta go / Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah / Goodbye, goodbye / Whoa, we gotta go / Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah ♪

[Music]