

Welcome to Public School: Building High-Quality Transitions

Module 2 Student and Family Engagement

**Maine Department of Education
Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Maine Children's Cabinet**



Objectives

- Understand the importance of collaborating with families prior to the kindergarten entry year.
- Understand how to establish meaningful home-school connections to build strong family engagement in the transition process.
- Identify aspects of transitions related to health, executive functioning and other development in children, and gain an ability to share with parents and caregivers.

Are they 'Ready'?

**Children are not innately “ready” or “not ready” for school. Their skills and development are strongly influenced by their families and through their interactions with other people and environments before coming to school.
(Maxwell & Clifford 2004)**



Resource

The Ready Family

A ready family supports learning at home by providing a positive, literacy-rich environment and opportunities to practice skills that were taught in school. A ready family stays connected to school by volunteering and attending meetings and events at school.

THE READY FAMILY
An Important Component of Preparing a School-Ready Child

What is school readiness?
School readiness involves more than just children. In the broadest sense, school readiness is about children, families, early environments, schools, and communities. Children are not innately "ready" or "not ready" for school. Their skills and development are strongly influenced by their families and through their interactions with other people and environments before coming to school.
A family that is ready for their child to start school **supports their child's learning by preparing for kindergarten, reads daily with their child, and maintains a positive home-to-school connection.**

School readiness occurs when children have the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in primary school, later learning, and life. Physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development are essential ingredients of school readiness. School readiness refers not only to ready children, but to ready communities, families, and schools.

Preparing for Kindergarten
A ready family encourages literacy skills including speaking, listening and thinking. A ready family also teaches routines to prepare their child for a smooth transition to kindergarten.

- How to Prepare Your Family for Kindergarten
- Get Ready for Kindergarten: Activity Calendar for Families
- Transitioning to Kindergarten
- Questions that Lead to Thinking

Reading Together
A ready family reads daily to their child. Reading together improves a child's vocabulary and oral language skills, which are important for learning to read. Reading together also promotes a love of books.

- Dialogic Reading: An Effective Way to Read to Preschoolers
- Notable Books for Younger Readers
- Just Take 20: Make Reading a Regular Routine!

Connecting Home and School
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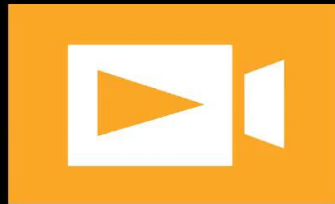
- Infographic: Supporting Your Child's Literacy Development at Home
- Reading Rockets Video: The Home Front
- Literacy Begins at Home (Pre-K-3)
- Kid Zene! A Free Virtual Play Space for Kids and Families to Develop Literacy
- Empowering Parents

Educator Resources

Source: Institution of Education Sciences (IES)

Video

Watch this video from the Head Start ECLKC website related to families and how they engage and feel about kindergarten transitions for their children.



VIDEO: Building Bridges
Families Engaging in the Transition to Kindergarten

While you are watching, write down some parent and/or caregiver emotions that you notice and key take-aways for building relationships with families and caregivers.

Collaborating with Families

When children transition into new programs they are navigating the following for the first time:

- New schools and physical surroundings
- Change in rules and expectations
- Different ways of learning
- Engaging in relationships with new peers and adults
- Many changes in schedules
- Enrollment procedures

Think about how you have felt when making a life transition for either yourself or your child...

Relationship Building

Building **positive relationships** with families and caregivers during the year prior to their children transitioning into kindergarten can help **alleviate** anxiety.

Establishing these **relationships** and understanding the **unique needs** each family has prior to entering kindergarten, enables you to be **intentional** in your transition planning.



Quote From a Maine Parent

“Establishing a strong connection including great foundational relationships with adults and positive interactions with children and teachers is crucial. This means looking into ways of supporting children and establishing routines, communication for the appropriate development of ALL children, and supporting parents in understanding what their role is DAILY in their child's life. Parents need to know the dynamic works between themselves and teachers, and how this fosters a relationship with the child's school and the experience they will have. This positive relationship helps grow a love and respect of learning.”

-Quote from Parent & Caregiver Survey from a

Maine Parent.

Why are these Relationships so Important?

- Families will be more likely to **engage** with the school when they feel familiar with the setting
- Families will have **access** to information well before-hand around enrollment, schedule and other items
- Families and children will understand that school and education is **important**, and feel **welcome** into the school community

Connecting with families also happens when educators connect with community providers such as private and family childcare and preschool centers & Head Start programs. We will dig deeper into these connections in Module 3

Fostering the Home-School Connection

Having a strong family relationship with the school can yield positive long-term outcomes for children (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre,2000).

In fostering a strong home school connection, the goal is to increase family collaboration and engagement with the sending program and the receiving program or school.

The following slides give examples of intentional pieces of transition planning. We will look closely at year-long transition planning in Module #4

Fostering Home-School Connections

- Visit the family in their home and learn about the family and child interests, culture, and values
- Invite families into the school to visit classroom and tour the school
- Meet with families and conduct Transition Interviews, or ask them to complete “get to know us” forms
- Workshops and networking for parents of young children

“Building relationships is huge and guides all that I do everyday; family, children, staff – relationships are key!” -Quote from Maine Public Pre-k Teacher



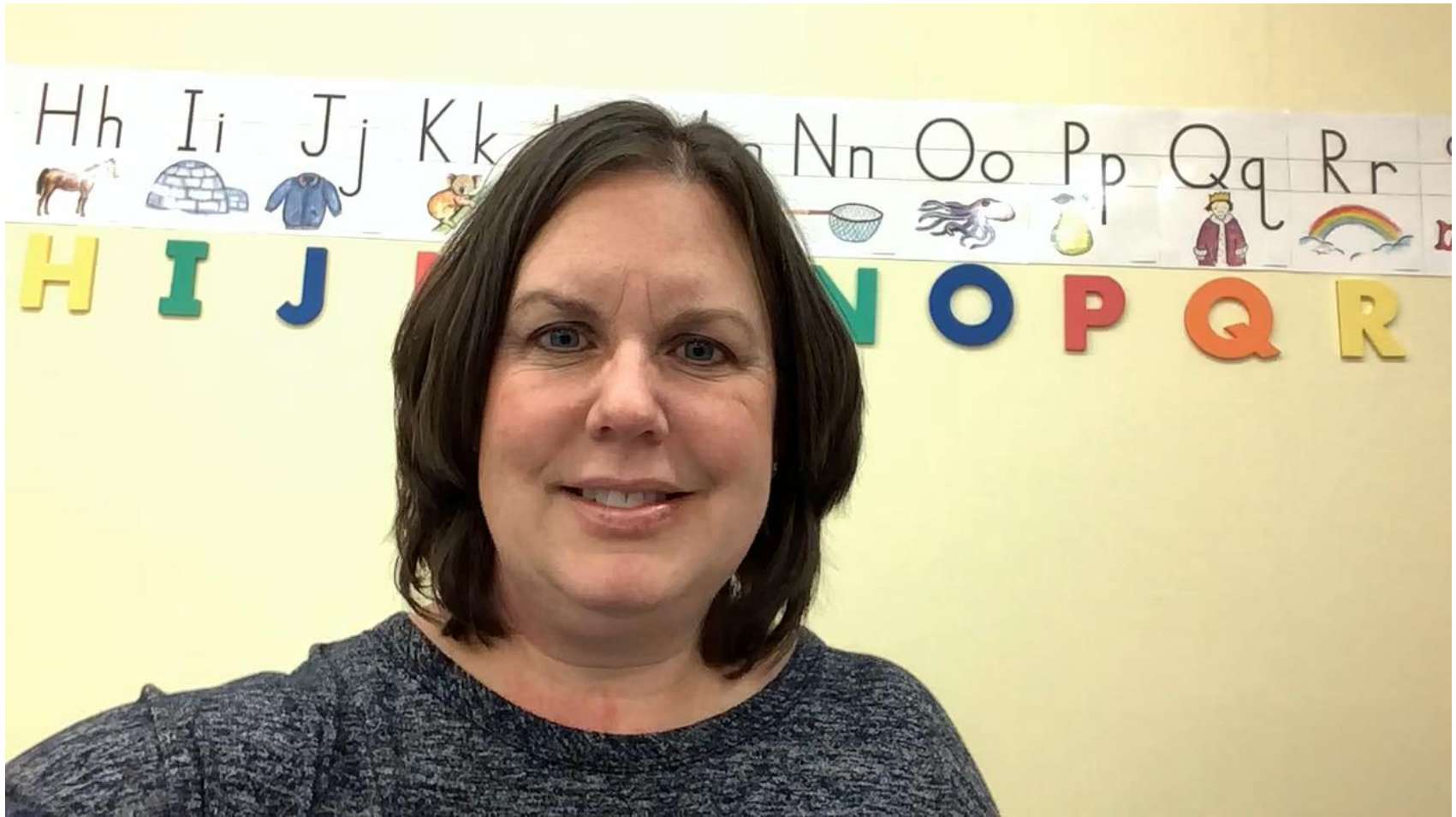
Fostering Home-School Connections

- Support families to participate in transition events
- Provide materials in home languages
- Engage in CDS IEP Transition meetings in the spring
- Tip-Sheets for parents and families around child development and activities for them and their child

“Consistent communication through one method would be helpful. With the crazy academic year, expectations were not clearly communicated, and various forms of communication were used for different things, so it was easy to miss important information.”

- Parent in Maine

Hear From a Maine Educator



3-2-1 Activity

Take 2 minutes to think about and write down the following:

3- Emotions that you would like to help cultivate with families during transition to kindergarten

2 – Examples of current strategies you use to promote positive emotions for families during transition to kindergarten

1 – New strategy learned from this module that you would like to incorporate into your work.

The Ready Child

School readiness occurs when children have the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in primary school, later learning, and life. Physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development are essential ingredients of school readiness. School readiness refers not only to ready children, but to ready communities, families, and schools. (Head Start, <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness>, retrieved January 12, 2018)

THE READY CHILD
"Children who enter kindergarten ready to meet its academic, social, and emotional demands are more likely to achieve later academic and life success."
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Exhibits Physical Health and Emotional Well-Being

- **News You Can Use: Foundations of School Readiness: Physical Engagement and Health**
- **Ready or Not Kindergarten, Here We Come**
- **Ensuring Healthy Social and Emotional Development in Young Children**
- **Physical and Mental Well-Being**

Displays Skills in General Knowledge, Language, Cognition, and Numeracy

- **Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade**
- **Early Learning and School Readiness: Cognitive Development and General Knowledge Tip Sheet**
- **Teaching Math to Young Children**

Demonstrates Curiosity and Confidence to Learn in School

- **All Children Ready for School: Approaches to Learning in Preschool and Kindergarten—Do Young Children in (NAEYC) Exemplify the Education of Learning**
- **Readiness: Not a State of Knowledge, but a State of Mind**

This document was developed by a collaborative group of representatives of the ten Regional Educational Laboratories throughout the United States.

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Source: Institution of Education Sciences (IES)

The Ready Child



There are many foundational skills that children develop prior to kindergarten entry

- Displays social and emotional skills, including:
 - interacting socially with others
 - Showing positive self-perception
 - beginning to understand the emotions of others
 - Has an ability to interpret and express feeling
- Approaches learning with enthusiasm and curiosity
- Exhibits foundational language and listening skills
- Presents with foundational cognition skills and general knowledge
- Shows an eagerness for learning

We want to look at the whole child, upon their transition into kindergarten, to support every aspect of development and meet each child where they are.

Milestones are More Than Academics...

There are multiple milestones in childhood development that can lead to successful transitions. Talking with parents and caregivers about their children's skills in the following areas can enable us to meet children where they are, and guide next steps:

- Demonstrating a curiosity or interest in learning new things
- Being able to explore new things through their senses
- Taking turns and cooperating with peers
- Speaking with and listening to peers and adults
- Following instructions
- Communicating how they're feeling
- Empathizing with other children
- Controlling impulses
- Paying attention
- Limiting disruptive behaviors

Partnering with Families to Foster Healthy Children

Resource: Healthy Children Are Ready to Learn

HEALTHY CHILDREN ARE READY TO LEARN



NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Health and Wellness

Introduction

Health connects to school readiness long before a child enters school.¹ Healthy development continues to support learning throughout childhood and later life. "Health in the earliest years—actually beginning with the future mother's health before she becomes pregnant—lays the groundwork for a lifetime of well-being..."²

School Readiness Begins with Health

Physical Health

Children who access ongoing health care³ have better attendance and are more engaged in learning. Consistent attendance helps children prepare for school.⁴ Routines such as handwashing and wearing helmets help children stay healthy and avoid injuries.⁵

Oral Health: Children with healthy teeth are better able to eat, speak, and focus on learning. Daily oral health hygiene and ongoing care from oral health professionals help make sure that children have healthy teeth.^{6,7}

Nutrition: Good nutrition is essential for children's brain development. Children who have access to nutritious food have energy to learn. Providing healthy snacks and meals helps children's bodies grow, giving them what they need to talk, play, and learn together.^{8,9,10}

Physical Activity and Motor Development: Staying active benefits young children's physical and cognitive development. Activities that get children moving build motor skills that are useful to reading, writing, and math skills.¹¹

Sleep and Rest: When children get enough sleep, they can pay attention, remember what they learn, and manage their feelings.¹² When programs schedule times for a nap, rest or quiet activities, children can focus on learning.¹³

Perceptual Development: When children use their senses to explore, it helps them learn about the world around them.¹⁴ A child's ability to see and hear affects their reading, writing, and speech and language skills. Sensory screening helps identify children who may need vision or hearing support.¹⁵



National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness

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Healthy Children are Ready to Learn

Along with development, child health is a very important piece of a child being ready to learn.

Meeting these basic needs enhances engagement in learning and fosters better attendance at school:

- ✓ Physical Health
- ✓ Oral Health
- ✓ Mental Health
- ✓ Nutritional Health

When families have access to and understanding of these pieces, children have the opportunity for school success.

We will talk more about supporting families with access and understanding around resources in Module #3: The Ready School and Community

How Can We Foster the Ready Child?

In the year prior to kindergarten enrollment, we can help parents and caregivers strengthen their child's abilities by:

- Providing tip-sheets about development and milestones
- Connecting families with community resources, including physician's offices, mental health services
- Including workshops, and other community informational sessions, in your yearly transition plan
- Including a health history piece in your family interview

Tying It All Together

Take some time now, to discuss with your team, or write down your own thoughts regarding the information in today's session:

- ❖ What emotions play a part in transitions for adults and children? How can we work to alleviate negatives and build positives?
- ❖ When thinking about building relationships with families, what are some important things to do/remember?
- ❖ What are some developmental milestones that should be discussed around children entering kindergarten?

Save these thoughts – we will come back to them in Module 4

For More Information

Head to the **Maine Department of Education's** *Transitioning into Kindergarten* webpages

Resources
for
Providers

Resources
for
Educators

Transition
Plan
templates

Information
and tip-sheets
for sharing
with families

Link:

www.maine.gov/doe/learning/earlychildhood/transitions

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Module 2 Student and Family Engagement

- [The Ready Child](#)
- [The Ready Family](#)

Module 3 School and Community Engagement

- [The Ready School](#)
- [The Ready Community](#)

Module 4 Building Transition Teams and Plans

Questions?

Thoughts?

Digging
Deeper...

