



64TH CONFERENCE ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

**WORKING TOGETHER
TO ACHIEVE STUDENT SUCCESS**

**Easing the Transition
to Kindergarten**

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PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA
State Office of Education | Department of Public Instruction

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Agenda

- Why Early Childhood Matters
- What is Transition to Kindergarten?
- Durham's Transition To Kindergarten Initiative
- More Ideas for Transition Activities
- Questions and Wrap Up

**Why Early Childhood
Matters**

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Building a Strong Foundation




Higher Education
High School
Middle School
Elementary School
Early elementary
Early childhood

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Higher Education
High School
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Impact of Early Childhood



- The more words a child knows at 3 years old, the higher their literacy skills are in 3rd grade.
- 3-year-olds whose parents went to college know more than twice as many words as other children
- By age 3, a poor child would have heard 30 million fewer words in his home environment than a child from a professional family.

What is Transition to Kindergarten?

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Transition to Kindergarten

Kindergarten transition is a series of events and interactions that foster relationships between rising kindergarteners, families, and school personnel.



<http://youtu.be/L7Nnk8yzGS8>

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Why is Transition to Kindergarten Difficult?

Early Child Care System	Public School System
1) Schools options and need based programs	1) Universal entitlement
2) Support for children and families	2) Student focused support/intervention
3) Families drive enrollment	3) Enrollment is compelled by the government

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Why is Transition to Kindergarten Especially Difficult for Parents?

- Losing control over child's environment
- No longer have daily contact with teacher/school
- Child's uniqueness and individuality seems less of a focus
- Past negative experiences with the public school system.
- Feeling confused by school policies or unwelcomed in the school environment

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Path to School Success

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Elements of a Quality Transition

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Building Relationships

Key Connections

Child	➔	School
Family	➔	School
Child	➔	Child
Community	➔	School
School	➔	School



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Impact of a Quality Transition

Well Transitioned kindergartners

- Increased self-confidence and motivation
- Improved relationships with other children
- Openness to new experiences
- Early school success

Well Transitioned Parents

- Increased confidence that their child will succeed
- A sense that teachers understand their child's needs
- A sense of pride and commitment in on-going involvement
- Confidence about their influence in the education system

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Impact of a Quality Transition

Well Transitioned Teacher & School

- Increased knowledge of the children and ability to meet their individual needs
- Increase parental and community support
- More resources and larger network of support
- Awareness of early childhood and family support services available in the community
- Professionalism and pride in their families efforts to reach out to young children and their families

Well Transitioned Community

- Healthier children and families
- Children and families receiving support services faster
- Increased amount of children ready for school
- Increased number of students completing school

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Durham's Transition To Kindergarten Initiative

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Durham County

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Blast Off to Kindergarten Kits

1,500 rising kindergarteners received Blast Off to Kindergarten Kits.

Transition Teams

- 4 pilot schools held Transition Team events.
- One school had 78% of the incoming kindergarten class attend at least 1 transition event.
- 100% of families surveyed after they attended an event reported that they felt more confident about ways to prepare their child for kindergarten.



Blast Off to Kindergarten



- February/March
- Dinner, tour the school, meet the school staff, Q & A with teachers, Blast Off Kit

Kindergarten Here I Come...



- April/May
- Dinner, Teacher-Led Activity, Parent-Child Activity

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Popsicles On the Playground



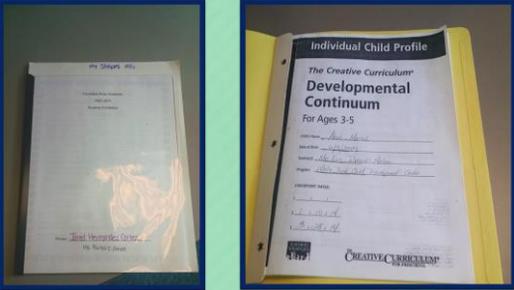
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Kick Off to Kindergarten



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Pre-K Portfolios



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Mini Grants



•500 families participated in transition activities at events funded by mini-grants at 16 child care centers and elementary schools.

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Mascots and Websites



Dottie the Durham Kindergarten Mouse



Durhamgoestokindergarten.com
dpsnc.net/pages/Durham_Public_Schools/Parent_Resources/CIA/Kindergarten

More Ideas for Transition Activities

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Common Transition Activities

- Letter from teacher
- Tour of school
- Meet the teacher and principal
- Tour classroom
- Kindergarten breakfast
- Summer Program
- Letter from child to teacher
- Teacher calls or home visits



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Less Common Transition Activities

- Invite early childcare parents to PTO/PTA
- "All about me" books
- Newspaper listings of new K kids
- Community-wide Health-Screening/ Service Fair
- Student-to-student events
- Pen pals with Kindergarten class
- Transition folders on each child given to Kindergarten staff

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Less Common Transition Activities

- Parent Support/Transition Groups
- Create story/book about new school that parents can read with children
- Transition/Kindergarten book club
- Dramatic play activities/art projects to allow kids to explore feelings








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Transition to Kindergarten Mini-Grant Application 2014

Best practices in the early childhood field include implementing plans to assist children in the transition process from home or early childhood programs to local elementary schools. To support early educators, elementary schools, and child care sites in implementing transition events, Durham's Partnership for Children (DPfC) is offering a limited number of mini-grants to support transition to kindergarten activities in Durham.

GRANT REQUIREMENTS

DPfC will award mini-grants to applicants who design transition to kindergarten events and/or activities that address the **4 key connections** that research has found to support a smooth transition to kindergarten.

- 1) Child-School Connections:** Formal schooling is the place in which children make important conclusions about school as a place where they want to be and about themselves as learners. It is essential that the transition to school occurs in such a way that children and families have a positive view of the school and that children have a feeling of perceived competence as learners. Building child-to-school connections helps foster positive attitudes toward school and learning as well as positive teacher-child relationships.

How to build child-to-school connections:

- Preschoolers interact with kindergarten teachers
- Preschoolers interact with their future elementary school
- Preschoolers practice kindergarten rituals before their transition
- Kindergarten activities are incorporated into preschool settings
- Preschool teachers connects with former students after the beginning of kindergarten
- Kindergarten staff visit preschool children before the start of kindergarten
- Kindergarten Teachers employ Developmentally Appropriate Practices with their students.

- 2) Family-School Connections:** Studies show that when families are actively engaged in the transition process their involvement tends to continue throughout their child's school career. Family involvement has been linked to positive student outcomes. Transition to kindergarten activities are more effective when they involve and engage families in the transition process, fostering positive attitudes toward school and learning and helping families act as partners in their children's learning.

How to build family-to-school connections:

- Provide a parent orientation before AND after kindergarten starts
- Encourage families to participate in home-learning activities
- Encourage families to participate in their child's classroom and at school events
- Encourage families to contact school staff about transition issues of their children
- Families and preschool teachers share information with kindergarten teachers about individual students
- Teachers implement an assessment of family needs

- 3) School-School Connections:** Connection between public elementary schools, public and private child care



settings, and other community agencies serve a critical role in the transition process. Linking across programs helps to ensure continuity for children. Transition is well supported when kindergarten and preschools work together to identify needs and goals for children. Ongoing collaboration among professionals that serve children entering kindergarten is fundamental in the successful development and implementation of transition practices.

How to build family-to-school connections:

- Preschools and kindergarten teachers work in collaboration to discuss transition and classroom practices
- Preschools and kindergarten teachers work in collaboration to understand academic and behavioral expectations for transitioning children
- Preschools and kindergarten teachers work in collaboration to address concerns about specific children
- Preschools and kindergarten teachers work in collaboration to build connections for children and families with additional support through community agencies

4) Child-Child Connections: The ability of children to get along with their peers is a major source of concern for kindergarten teachers as children begin school. As children move from preschool into kindergarten connections between children and their peers help them feel more comfortable in their new environment and provide familiar peer experience prior to the onset of school. These connections can be developed through links between preschool children and peers, both inside and outside the classroom, links with kindergarten peers and links with children not enrolled in preschool who will be in their kindergarten class (Kraft-Sayre & Pianta, 2000).

How to build family-to-school connections:

- Encourage peers to make connections with other students attending their elementary school in their preschool class
- Encourage peers to make connections with other students attending their elementary school outside of their preschool
- Encourage preschool students to make connections with kindergarten students

SAMPLE TRANSITION ACTIVITIES are provided on the next page. These are examples of the kinds of activities that would be funded by Transition To Kindergarten Mini-Grants. You may use these ideas to create transition events/activities that work best for your school. You do not have to use any of these ideas or you may use a combination of activities. Remember to address the **4 key connections** that research has found to support a smooth transition to kindergarten.

Please be creative!

Sample Kindergarten Transition Activities	
Activity	Brief Description
Summer Transition Mini- Camp	Schedule a mini summer camp for incoming Kindergartners. The camp should address Kindergarten routines, procedures, and expectations.
Build “going to kindergarten” into the preschool curriculum	Create a "photo" album of the new Kindergarten. Photos might include: the front entrance, the school bus (inside and out), the block area, class pet, and teachers. Include all the schools in your school district, where your children might attend next year.

Spring/Summer Open Houses	Provide open houses that share key school information with parents and child care professionals, allow parents to tour the school building, meet school personnel, and have an opportunity to have questions answered. (May be an informal, floating event.)
Student Portfolios	Develop a portfolio of the child's work to share with the new teacher and include a "Passport to Kindergarten" of the student with a photo and two or three fun facts about that student.
Kindergarten Classroom Visits	Organize a day/night/weekend visit that dedicates time for incoming Kindergartners and their families to visit a "typical" Kindergarten classroom and meet Kindergarten staff.
Registration Events	To support families who may be challenged to register during the school day, provide evening/weekend registration hours or provide an off-site registration event to raise registration numbers.
Child Care/Pre-K Visits	Participate in a child care/preschool class trip to the elementary school; trip includes a brief tour; snack at the cafeteria; outdoor play on the playground; and story time or other activity in a kindergarten classroom.
Letter from kindergarten teacher	Kindergarten teacher sends incoming kindergarteners a welcoming letter
Letter from child to teacher	Child sends a letter including things about him/herself or a picture
Child Care/Pre-K and Kindergarten teacher conferences	Plan face-to-face communication between teachers about students
Parent support transition groups	Organize a group of current and rising kindergarten parents to discuss concerns about transition

Mini Grant Requirements

- ✓ **Eligible Applicants:** Kindergarten teachers, child care teachers and directors, school principals, and PTAs.
- ✓ Applications must be received by **March 3rd, 2014**. *Late applications will not be accepted.* You may mail or deliver a hard copy of your application to:
- ✓ All applications must identify a **primary and secondary contact person** who will be responsible for the project in the event of a staffing change.
- ✓ Mini grant award amounts may vary based on events/activities proposed. The grants in previous years ranged from \$400 to \$800.
- ✓ We will not fund the costs related to preschool graduation ceremonies.
- ✓ It is the expectation of this grant that transition events will occur during the **spring and summer of 2014**, prior to the start of the school year. All activities must be completed by **Friday, August 30, 2014**.
- ✓ Grantees must obtain participant feedback through a survey provided by Durham's Partnership for Children. **All completed surveys must be returned with the Final Report Form provided.**

- ✓ Successful applicants must complete and submit a brief final report on funded projects to DPfC by **October 6th, 2014**. A report on all funded activities will be compiled and shared with the community at large.
- ✓ Checks will be made payable to the center or elementary school where the teacher, director or principal is affiliated. In the case of a PTA, checks will be made payable directly to the PTA. For teachers and principals in the Durham Public School system, the DPS accounting procedures apply.

Transition to Kindergarten Mini-Grant Application

Applicant Information
Primary Contact's Name and Email:
Secondary Contact's Name and Email:
Phone Number:
Name of School, Childcare Center, or PTA:
Address:
Director or Principal's Name and Email address (if different from one of the above):
<i>I have read and understand the requirements regarding receipt of the Transition to Kindergarten Mini-Grant program.</i>
Director or Principal signature: _____

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Write a short paragraph describing the activities and events you will host with the Transition to Kindergarten Mini Grant. Make sure to address the <i>total number of families and/or children that will be served</i> by your activities and events.

✓ How will these activities build the following connections for rising kindergarteners?

- Child to School:
- Family to School:
- Child to Child:
- School to School:

✓ Target date(s) and time(s) for event(s):

✓ Location for event(s):

Budget Item	Purpose	Estimated Cost
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Total project estimated cost: _____

Grant check should be made out to: _____
(Fill in name of school, childcare center or PTA who will be administering funds.)



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Mini Grant Rating Tool 2014

Proposed Project:

Applying Schools:

Funding Request:

Date of Review:

Total Points:

Funding Award:

Scoring Key: 1 = Unsatisfactory: Does not meet criteria, 2 = Can be Satisfactory with revision/improvement: needs additional information, 3 = Satisfactory: Meets criteria, 4 = Excellent: Goes beyond meeting criteria

	Questions /Comments	Score (1-4)	Weight	Total Score
Application <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is the proposal complete? ▪ Was the proposal received by the deadline? 			NA	
Project Design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Does the proposal present a clear and concise description of program elements to be provided? 			NA	
School to School Connection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Does the project proposal build a connection for the students between “sending” and “receiving” schools? 			NA	
Family to School Connection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Does the project proposal build a connection between families of incoming kindergarteners and their child’s new elementary school? 			X2	
Child to School Connection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Does the project proposal build a connection between the child and their new elementary school? 			X2	
Child to Child Connection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Does the project proposal build a connection between the rising kindergarteners and future classmates? 			X2	
Budget <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is there a budget outlining how grant funds will be used? ▪ Is the amount requested justified and adequate? 			NA	



Previous Grant Recipient <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Has the applicant received a TTK mini grant previously? ▪ If so, how was previous grant used? 			NA	
Title 1 School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is the applicant an employee of a Title 1 School? 			X2	

Other Comments/Questions:



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Transition Teams

Who is on the Team?

Necessary Members:

- At least 1 kindergarten teacher (ideally the grade chair and at least 1 other)
- One school staff member who can make decisions about scheduling school events and/or has the principal's "ear". (i.e. assistant principal, instructional facilitator, etc.)

Ideal Members

- Data Manager and/or Secretary
- Preschool Teacher
- Parent
- Community Member

Transition Team Timeline:

September/October: Meet with principal and establish expectation for the Transition Team

January: Introductory Transition Team Meeting

February: Planning Meeting

March: Blast Off to Kindergarten Event

April: Debrief and Planning Meeting

May: Kindergarten Here I Come!

June-August: Kindergarten Club (Optional)

August: Popsicles on the Playground

August: Kick Off to Kindergarten

Transition to Kindergarten Events:

- ***Blast Off to Kindergarten:*** This event is designed to inform the parents about school registration and upcoming events. These events include dinner, a tour of the school, a question-answer session with the parents, and distribution of the Blast Off to Kindergarten Kits.
- ***Kindergarten...Here I Come!*** The goal of this event is to model to the families how kindergarten teachers engage with children around kindergarten activities. These events also include dinner followed by a teacher-led activity in the kindergarten classrooms with the parents and the children.
- ***Popsicles on the Playground:*** This event provides an opportunity for parents to meet one another while the children play together on their new school's playground.
- ***Kick Off to Kindergarten:*** Gather a group of 10-15 people to cheer on the kids as they enter school on the first day. This event helps children and parents feel welcome and excited on the first day of kindergarten.

Blast Off to Kindergarten Kits

Ticonderoga Beginners Pencil
Elmer's Glue Stick
Beginner Scissors
Pencil Sharpeners
Blank Books
Crayons

Leveled Books
Unifix Cubes
Express Yourself Card
Registration Information
Parent Guide
Parent-Child Activity Book

