

# Preparing Kids for School

*Missouri's plan for helping children transition from early care and education programs to school.*



Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
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Starting school is an important time for young children, their families and educators. A successful transition from home to school has a positive, long-lasting effect on a child's ability to learn. Smooth transitions occur when children know what to expect and are excited about learning and when parents are active participants in the education process at home and at school.

## ► Transition Activities

*What schools can do to assist children and families:*

**Home visits:** Many schools have found that a home visit by a teacher or principal before a child enters school has a substantial impact on a kindergartner's adjustment to the new setting. A home visit allows the child to share some favorite items such as toys, books or games. At the same time, a home visit allows parents to gain information and to ask specific questions about the child's new school.

**Community links:** Elementary schools can help ease the transition to kindergarten by forming links with the community, local early care and education programs, local Head Start programs, and Parents as Teachers. Finding out where children have spent their early care years can be a first step of the kindergarten intake process. Some schools compile a list of local programs (including family-care homes), contact the directors or caregivers, and plan transition activities appropriate to the community.

**Pre-K standards:** Work with early care and education staff using such resources as the Missouri Pre-K Standards to establish realistic expectations on kindergarten readiness that will help with consistency from program to program.

**Resource centers:** Create parent and family resource centers that include books on parenting and school-related information and provide a referral system to community services, classes and/or workshops. Additional activities may include back-to-school fairs, open houses, parent/teacher conferences, etc.

**Parent/teacher meetings:** Provide opportunities for parents and teachers to meet and work together. In Missouri, the Practical Parenting Partnerships (PPP) program uses resources and training opportunities to help parents, schools and communities work together for children’s growth and success in school.

**Field trips:** Invite pre-kindergarten children to visit corresponding elementary schools to increase children’s familiarity with the elementary school environment.

**Development programs:** Encourage participation in programs such as Parents as Teachers and family literacy programs that help parents develop language and pre-literacy skills in their young children.

**Health:** Encourage parents to take their children for regular visits to the doctor and to update immunizations as needed.

**Summer school:** Provide a summer school program for children entering kindergarten in the fall. This would allow the children to become familiar with the classroom and the school facility and allow the kindergarten teachers to get to know the children through observation and involvement in activities.

### *What early care and education programs can do to assist children and families:*

- **School visits:** Schedule visits to the new school so that children can become familiar with the school. Allow children to express their feelings about the new school through dramatic play activities.
- **Discussions:** Read books to the children that discuss changes and moves.
- **Visitors:** Invite a kindergarten child or older sibling to visit the early care and education programs and talk about school.
- **Orientation sessions:** Encourage parents to attend kindergarten “round-up” and/or other orientation sessions that are planned for incoming parents and children.
- **Child-care options:** Discuss child-care options with working parents.
- **Parent groups:** Introduce parents to parents of other children who will be attending the new school.
- **Role play:** Develop a prop box of items that will allow the children to role play being in kindergarten.

## ► **Benefits of Implementing a Transition Plan**

### *Benefits for Children:*

When early care and education programs and kindergarten teachers help children move more easily into a new environment, results for the children may include:

- Continuity with earlier educational experiences.
- Increased motivation and openness to new experiences.
- Enhanced self-confidence.
- Improved relations with other children and adults.
- A greater sense of trust between teachers and children.

### *Benefits for Parents:*

When parents are involved with teachers and other school staff in providing a smooth transition for their children, the parents gain:

- Increased confidence in their child’s ability to achieve in school.
- Improved self-confidence in their ability to communicate with school staff and have a positive influence in the educational system.
- A sense of pride and commitment in their ongoing involvement in the education of their children.
- A greater knowledge and appreciation of early childhood programs and staff.

### *Benefits for Teachers:*

Teachers who cooperate with others to ease children’s transition between early care and education programs can expect:

- Increased knowledge of the children and an enhanced ability to meet individual needs.
- Increased parent and community support.
- More resources and a larger network of professional support.
- Increased awareness of the early care and education programs in the community.
- A renewed sense of professionalism and pride in their efforts to reach out to young children and their families.

**Source:** *Easing the Transition from Preschool to Kindergarten: A Guide for Early Childhood Teachers and Administrators* – Head Start Information and Publication Center



## *A successful transition plan requires that:*

- Families are a critical part of the home, school and community partnership and are the decision makers concerning the child's care and education.
- A wide range of home, school and community partners (e.g., parents, Parents as Teachers educators, early care and education staff, kindergarten teachers, and other school staff) share leadership and guide decision making.
- Care, education, health and social services focus on the full range of needs and circumstances of individual children and their families. Plans are flexible and include a range of practices.
- Home, school and community partners maintain open communication.
- Schools and community partners effectively manage resources such as people, time, materials, space and funds.
- Home-school and community partners document their efforts and use evaluation information to improve policies, programs and practices. Examples of information to collect include children's comments and drawings, parent surveys and feedback, and documentation on children's progress in kindergarten.

Administrators in both early care and education programs and kindergartens can set the stage for successful transition activities by supporting ongoing communication and cooperation among early childhood teachers. Opportunities for communication and cooperation should occur throughout the program year. Depending on the size of the community, it may be helpful to establish a communitywide transition committee to involve all programs in planning transition activities.

## ► **Developing a Communitywide Transition Committee**

*To establish a communitywide transition committee, start by:*

- Developing written policies and procedures that will guide transition efforts.
- Planning informal visits to meet the staff of the early care and education programs and kindergarten programs. This will provide an opportunity for staff to get to know each other, share information about the program and discuss the need for transition activities.
- Including representation from early care and education programs, public schools, Parents as Teachers, parents, private schools, and other agencies in the community.
- Developing in-service workshops that focus on transition as well as other issues facing early childhood educators.
- Planning kindergarten registration in conjunction with early care and education programs.
- Meeting with health and social services staff to discuss consistency of services for children and families.
- Developing a plan for transferring specific records to the elementary schools. This would include records of families who have participated in the Parents as Teachers program.
- Scheduling follow-up meetings in the fall to answer questions and discuss children's progress.

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## Resources

### DESE Early Childhood Education Section

Missouri Pre-K Standards – Booklets available for Literacy; Mathematics; Physical Development, Health and Safety; Science; and Social and Emotional Development. Web site: [dese.mo.gov/divimprove/fedprog/earlychild/PreK\\_Standards.html](http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/fedprog/earlychild/PreK_Standards.html)  
Grade-Level Expectation Documents – Web site: [dese.mo.gov/divimprove/curriculum/GLE%20Documents.html](http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/curriculum/GLE%20Documents.html)

### Practical Parenting Partnerships (PPP)

2412-C Hyde Park Road, Jefferson City, MO 65109. Phone: 573-761-7770 • Web site: [www.pppctr.org](http://www.pppctr.org)



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