

GROWING IDEAS

Daily Transitions – Time for a Change

What is meant by daily transitions?

Young children experience many changes during their day. Daily transitions in early care and education programs take place during an activity, or when children move from one activity to another or one location to another. Transitions include:

- Arriving at or departing from a program.
- Exchanging toys, entering or leaving a play area during free choice time.
- Cleaning up after morning activities and starting a group circle time.
- Getting dressed to go outside to play.
- Shifting from playing with friends to working with a teacher/therapist on a particular skill.



Why are carefully planned transitions important?

Thoughtful planning is needed so transitions can be positive and enjoyable learning experiences for every child. When planned, transitions provide predictability, help children feel safe and secure and can reduce or prevent behavior problems. Each child is different, and the way any one child reacts to transitions may be influenced by a variety of factors. Planning helps all children.

Why might children feel confused, frustrated, or overwhelmed by transitions?

- Temperaments vary; children can become very involved in what they are doing and not want to stop, or may not understand why they have to stop.
- Developmentally, young children may be unclear about time concepts and not realize that when family members leave them in the morning, they will return.
- Children's abilities differ. Understanding and following directions, exercising self-control, having language skills to express needs, physically moving from one place to another, and/or handling noise or confusion all impact transition success.

Early childhood educators can support successful transitions by:

- Observing transitions to see how they are working for children and adults and making adjustments, as needed.
- Reviewing daily schedules; planning and preparing ahead of time.
- Considering each child's development, temperament, abilities, language and culture.
- Arranging the environment, curriculum, and staffing to encourage independence.
- Making transitions fun and a purposeful part of the curriculum by providing learning opportunities in a variety of developmental areas.

Strategies for supporting young children during transition times:

Use observations to guide transition planning:

- How many transitions currently exist and how long do they take?
- Is the environment organized so children can move easily from one area to another and is it arranged so they know where things go?
- Are children actively engaged during transition times or do they have to wait?
- Are directions offered clearly and calmly in ways all children can understand?
- Are various types of cueing systems—such as music, songs, or digital photo cards—used to signal upcoming changes?

Schedule for successful transitions:

- Discuss the daily schedule with children at group times.
- Establish a regular routine and post a picture schedule to help children know what to expect.
- Reduce the number of transitions and the amount of time children need to wait.
- Assign teacher responsibilities during transitions, as with other planned activities.
- Offer activities that can be completed quickly during short wait times, such as puzzles and books.

Consider each child's unique qualities:

- Recognize children's feelings when they have to stop playing. Involve them in making choices about how to preserve their work: photographing, drawing, or storing special constructions on a shelf.
- Use rituals to ease transitions: waving goodbye at the window, drawing a picture, or dictating a story for family members.

- Confer with families about their child's transition experiences and offer consistent responses that are developmentally and culturally appropriate.
- Tune in and help children succeed: offer a small squishy ball or other fidget toy to help a child attend while waiting.

Some children and grownups handle change more easily than others. All children are different and you need to look at their personalities, ages, and experiences when you are considering how to help them make adjustments.

National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. (2006). Helping Children Make Changes: Big and Small. *The Daily Parent*, 34. Retrieved September 20, 2006, from <http://www.childcareaware.org/en/dailyparent/volume.php?id=34>

Create activity plans to help children learn to transition independently:

- Provide extra supports: invite a child be a "helper" and set the table for snack, pair up children of varying abilities, and/or make sure a caring adult is close by.
- Use puppets or social stories to act out, problem-solve, and model appropriate transition behaviors.
- Have children assess their own success during transition times to build awareness.

Make transitions educational and memorable!

- Support early literacy learning: keep songs, fingerplays, or poems handy using index cards on a ring for regular use.
- Engage imaginations and move: creep like mice or act out songs and stories.
- Plan playful games: pick a "cleanup card" out of a bag and put those toys away.
- Use children's interests to plan so they look forward to what happens next!

Where to learn more:

Daily Transitions—Time for a Change Selected Resources online at: <http://www.ccids.umaine.edu/ec/growingideas/transitionsres.htm>.



Maine's Network of Child Care Resource Development Centers

C E N T E R F O R

COMMUNITY INCLUSION & DISABILITY STUDIES

Maine's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service

<http://www.ccids.umaine.edu/ec/growingideas/>



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