

Planning For Transitions During The Day

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Transition times are often challenging for children and teachers. These can include cleaning up before a new activity to preparing to leave the classroom. Children tend to lose focus and attention during times of transition. Establishing a routine and using attention-grabbing activities during these transitions can bring the stress level down for both the children as well as the teachers/adults. How well your day flows in your classroom can depend on how well you handle transitions.

Source: eHow

What are Transitions?

Transitions are those times in the classroom schedule when teachers and children move or pass from one activity, place or adult to another. Transition times can occur many times during the day. These transition times help children learn schedules and what to expect next. Transitions take time and children often spend a lot of time waiting. This can be stressful and frustrating to children and teachers. Smooth transitions will help to establish much better “discipline” in your classroom, preventing behavior problems. They allow for more time for educational activities. Transitions that flow easily help children to respect you and feel secure, knowing that you are capable and confident and the classroom is not out of control.

Source: Child Care Lounge, 2010

Transition Times

- Morning arrival into the classroom
- Gathering for circle or meeting time
- Cleaning up
- Lining up to go to different places
- Settling down for rest
- Changing group or activities
- Getting student's attention
- Waiting
- Going with or working with another adult
- Ending the school day

Source: Jean Feldman and Alice Terry



Stand up! Sit down! Clean up! Calm down! Hurry up! WAIT!. Is this what we want to keep saying to our children all day everyday? It doesn't have to be that way. With careful planning and a few “tricks” your day can move more smoothly and many behavior problems can be avoided. Transitions provide a great time to “exercise” children's brains.

Source: Early Childhood News

Why Do We Need To Plan For Transitions?

Think about what transitions look like in your classrooms. You may find that you need to minimize transitions or that you may have challenging behaviors during these transitions that can be addressed through implementing transition strategies. You need to plan a schedule that supports smooth transitions. If transition times are not implemented into your daily schedule, it will be relatively easy for you to lose control of your classroom.

There are many things that a teacher can do in the classroom to transition from one activity, place or adult to another in a fluid manner. Plan transitions to complement or balance out your students' energy levels and prepare them for upcoming activities.

Children need routine. They “tell time” by knowing what's coming next. A daily schedule that is consistent will help those transition times to become more predictable and not so confusing for the children. Think about how much time your transitions take and add those times into your planning. Doing this will save you a lot of time, frustration and wondering why, you only had 10 minutes to play outside, instead of 30 minutes.

Why do many challenging behaviors occur during transitions?

Transitions from activities, places or adults to another are times when children are more likely to engage in challenging behavior. Within most preschool settings, there are likely to be only a few children with persistent challenging behaviors. However, on a given day, a number of children may engage in some form of challenging behavior. These behaviors can sometimes be related to being in a group care setting for the first time, not knowing the expectations for a setting, not having the social skills to behave appropriately, being bored, and not knowing how to communicate emotions in appropriate ways. Challenging behaviors during transition times may be related to how program staff structure, schedule and implement transitions. Challenging behaviors occur most often when there are too many transitions, when all children transition at the same time and in the same way, when transitions are too long and children have to wait for long periods and when the instructions or expectations are unclear.

Some children may have a difficult time with transitions for a variety of reasons. For example, difficulty with change, limited communication, social emotional or cognitive skills. Some children may take longer to process directions. Teachers may view the child as engaging in challenging behavior rather than recognizing that the child may need to learn a skill to understand the directions. Other times, children may engage in challenging behaviors during transition because they just do not want to stop what they are doing, or the transition may occur without warning. If a child is not motivated for, in need of, or interested in the next activity, this may result in challenging behaviors.

As teachers, we may not realize why children are engaging in these challenging behaviors. We may just assume they are having a bad day, are stubborn or are just ignoring your requests.. However, the child may in fact, not know what to do. It is very important to consider all the possible reasons why a child is having a difficult time and then to identify strategies to support the child during transitions.

Take the time to look at the needs of your students and take note of the times when they need more guidance. Also, know when to take a step back and allow them to figure things out for themselves.

Source: *Beyond the Journal*, 2008

Planning and Implementing Successful Transitions: *What does it look like?*

Original Schedule		Revised Schedule	
8:15-8:25	Arrival/hand washing	8:15-8:45	Arrival/hand washing/table toys— <i>Children have a choice of table activities, ie: playdough, cutting scraps or manipulatives, allowing easy entry after finishing arrival routine. 8:40 Play “Simon Says” to get kids quiet and ready for large group.</i>
8:15-8:45	Free play	8:45-9:00	Large group— <i>A few routine activities, plus review of the day’s schedule and center plans. 8:55 Use a “magic wand” to dismiss children to centers.</i>
8:45-9:15	Calendar, weather and lesson	9:00-10:20	Center time/hand washing/snack— <i>Teachers support play and teach skills in small groups. or w/individual children. Snack is a center choice, allowing varied lengths of time to eat. 10:15 Clean up—have children pretend to be a certain animal while picking up</i>
9:15-10:00	Centers/small groups— <i>Children rotate every 15 minutes between 3 sm.grp. activities or play in a designated center.</i>	10:20-10:40	Book time and music— <i>Children finish cleaning up, then choose a book to read. A few children at a time are dismissed to get coats while other children continue singing.</i>
10:00-10:15	Hand washing/snack	10:40-11:00	Physical play— <i>Play I Spy on the way back to the classroom.</i>
10:15-10:30	Music	11:00	Dismissal— <i>Sing good-bye song and play games. waiting games until they are picked up</i>
10:30-10:40	Book time— <i>Everyone is dismissed from circle at the same time to put on coats.</i>		
10:40-11:00	Physical play		
11:00	Dismissal— <i>Children wait to be picked up</i>		

Source: *Beyond the Journal*, 2008

Transition Activities



Links on how to make visual schedules: www.kids-first.com.au/how-to-make-a-visual-schedule

Also, challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu/do/resources/teaching_tools/toc/

- ◆ Songs and Fingerplays
- ◆ Visualization scenarios/listening games (“You are at the beach. The sun is warm...”)
- ◆ Relaxation Techniques
- ◆ Review your morning or previous day; Talk about things together
- ◆ Have children wiggle specific body parts
- ◆ Have children move like, or pretend to be specific animals
- ◆ Read or tell a story, or have children look at books
- ◆ Identify things in the room that start with certain letters; look for shapes, colors, numbers, etc. within the room
- ◆ “Simon Says”
- ◆ Exercising or stretching activities
- ◆ Play the “Telephone” game
- ◆ Use puppets to give directions, reinforce concepts, or just be silly
- ◆ “Freeze” - no one can move - “We’re all frozen!”
- ◆ “Quiet Bubbles” - challenge children to be quiet (or sit) before bubble pops
- ◆ “Get your wiggles out!” Wiggle different parts of their bodies
- ◆ Guessing games
- ◆ Memory games or clapping games

Source: Child Care Lounge

Visual Schedules

Visual schedules are used to communicate routine, sequence, activity or transition to a child. It is a symbol or picture, representation of a series of activities. These schedules can decrease anxiety and establish clear expectations. Visual schedules are extremely effective with children with autism spectrum, communication expectations, children with ADHD, in teaching routines and for children who have difficulties with transitions. Providing visual cues and supports is a good idea for all children in your classroom. Outlining your expectations visually takes planning and organization, but the PAYOFF IS HUGE!

Source: Rainbows Within Reach and Playful Learning

8:15-8:45 Arrival/hand washing/table toys



10:20-10:40 Book time and Music



8:45-9:00 Large group



10:40-11:00 Outdoor time



9:00-10:20 Center time/hand washing/snack



11:00 Dismissal



Experiment with different methods to see what works best for you and your children. Keep it simple and concise. Involve the children in the planning of your schedule. Display it in a highly visible location that is easily accessible to you and your children. Be consistent. Always use the same picture and label for a specific activity.

Remember, your schedule may change from time to time. Be sure to have pictures available to put on your schedule for those changes.

Daily Transition Tips

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|-------------------------------------|--|
| Arrival/hand washing/
table toys | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have children move their picture or name from “home” to “school” on an Arrival Chart.• Make a feelings poster with pictures of faces showing different emotions. When they arrive, children place clothespins labeled with their names on the “feeling faces”. |
| Large group | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask children to come to circle as if they were moving through jello, a plane flying in an airport, a marching band, etc... |
| Center time/hand
washing/snack | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hang a chart on the wall. Children write their name under “Yes, I ate snack today” or “No, thank you, I’m not eating snack today.”• Make a snack menu providing visual directions of what to eat (“Take 2 apple slices and 3 pieces of cheese, please”).• Have 1 child wear a hard hat and inspect each center during cleanup to see if it is picked up. If it is, the child makes an X over a picture list of all centers. If not, he recruits helpers! |
| Book time and music | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sing the expectations of the transition: “If you’re finished cleaning up, please choose a book” (tune: “If You’re Happy and You Know It”)• Create a basket of easily accessible favorite books that work well for independent reading. |
| Gross motor | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Draw pairs of different colored shapes on the end of wooden craft sticks. Give each child a stick and then call a shape. Matching pairs line up together. |
| Dismissal | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hide an item in a bag and give clues to help children identify it. |

Source: *Beyond the Journal*, 2008

For a complete list of sources from this bulletin, contact ECDC at ecdc@syr.edu by email or 1-800-962-5488 by phone.

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**WHILE WE TEACH OUR CHILDREN,
THEY TEACH US.**



30 Years
Caring for All Children

Workshops of Interest

The ECDC can provide information and workshops on a variety of topics tailored to the interests and needs of parents and early childhood professionals. Resources are available on such topics as general child development, developmental issues for children with special needs, coping strategies, and specific disabilities.

Workshops include:

- Including All Kids
- Parent Partnerships
- Developmentally Appropriate Practices
- Early Childhood Development: The Meaning of Red Flags
- Supporting Social Emotional Development
- Positive Guidance and Behavior Strategies
- Moving On: Transitioning Families (EI-CPSE) & (CPSE-CSE)
- What Are Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education?
- What is an Individualized Education Program (IEP)?
- Writing IEP Goals
- Getting Ready for Kindergarten

Who We Are

The Early Childhood Direction Center (ECDC) is a regional technical assistance center for the State Education Department providing information, referral and support to families, professionals, and community agencies concerned with young children birth to five. We are located at Syracuse University’s Center on Human Policy.

**ECDC services to families are
free and confidential.**

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