

New Jersey Department of Education
Division of Early Childhood Education

Master Teacher Seminar – Rosanne Regan Hansel

Building Bridges

Transition Practices that Support Children



What is P-3 Transition?



<http://www.prek-3rd.org/>

NJ State Transition Policy

*Code 6A:13A-6.1 The district board of education shall include in its **five-year preschool program plan** and/or annual update, as required and approved by the Department, that describe:*

1. The process for collaborating with other preschool through grade three administrators in the school district.
2. Methods for communicating information about individual children to their new kindergarten and elementary teachers; and in particular the results of the comprehensive performance-based assessment.
3. The process for identifying and communicating the curriculum and pedagogical information about the preschool program to the kindergarten and elementary teachers.
4. The process for providing information to parents about the kindergarten program and the transition plan from preschool through grade three.

Code 6A:13A-6.1 is currently being revised.

DECE Requirements for Districts

The Division of Early Childhood Education requires districts receiving state funding to plan for P-3 transition in the:

- Five Year Preschool Program Plan or Plan Update
- SAVS (for districts using the Self-Assessment Validation System)

Preschool Program Plan

The DECE asks districts to provide a narrative for the school year on the district's preschool through grade three transition plan, including the points below:

- How is collaboration among preschool administrators and other offices (e.g. special education, bilingual) achieved?
- What methods will the district use to communicate to receiving teachers about children with disabilities transitioning from early intervention programs to preschool and all children from preschool to kindergarten?
- List any changes in the district positions that will make up the transition team.
- How is the alignment of curriculum, standards, assessment, and professional development for preschool through grade three achieved?

SAVS: P-3 Articulation

Criterion 1: Transition plans are made for children entering the preschool program from other programs.

Criterion 2: Transition plans are made for children entering the preschool program from early intervention programs.

Criterion 3: A plan has been developed for transition of children from the preschool program into grades K-3 as outline in 6A:13A-6.1.

DECE/RTT Guidelines & Initiatives

- *Preschool Implementation Guidelines*
- *Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines*
- NJ Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) – *TS GOLD*
- Kindergarten Seminar
- New this year: *Approaches to Learning, K-3 Guide* and the *New Jersey Department of Education First through Third Grade Implementation Guidelines*

<http://www.nj.gov/education/ece/rttp/ImplementationGuidelines1-3.pdf>

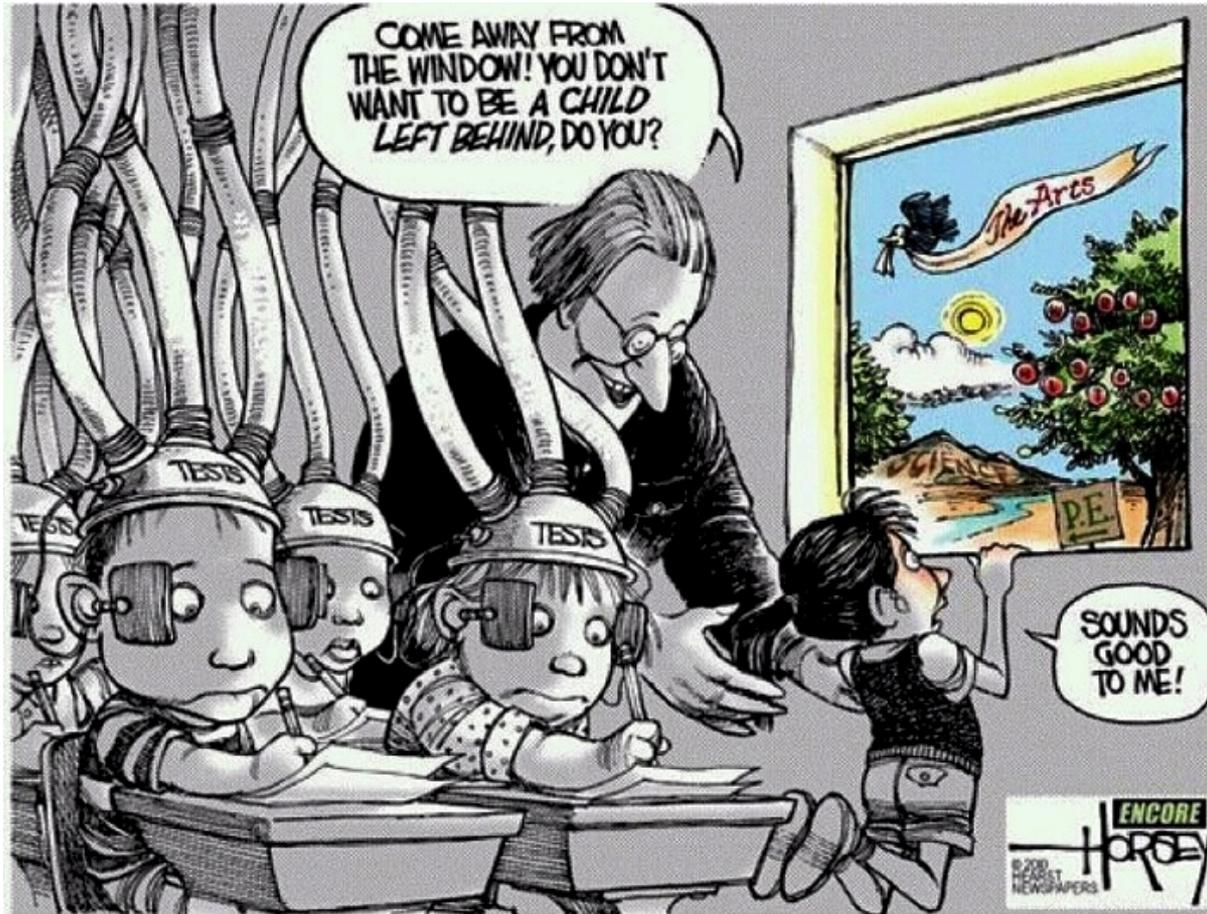
Preschool Guidelines

- The literature on early childhood practices provides a strong rationale for creating continuity in transitions during this period. Achievements made during preschool, especially cognitive gains, sometimes fade as children move through subsequent grades (Shore, 1998.)
- Children have been found to have difficulty adjusting to classrooms where the rules, routines and underlying philosophy differ from their previous experience (Shore, 1998.)
- The guidelines suggest multi-age groupings or looping to minimize transitions.
- The guidelines provide transition activity suggestions.

Kindergarten Guidelines

- While it is important for districts to prepare teachers, children and their families for transition, it is even more critical that districts intentionally provide seamless supports for all children as they move through each year, including summer.
- Schools with coherent P-3 programs are able to build on the social, emotional, physical and cognitive gains made in preschool.
- The guidelines describe the components of a strong P-3 program in areas of school organization, program quality, teacher effectiveness, student progress, accountability and family and community engagement.

NJ KEA – Appropriate Assessment



Kindergarten Seminar

- Know how to observe and document children's learning using an appropriate performance based assessment (NJ KEA using TSG)
- Engage students in active learning in welcoming classroom environments featuring learning centers with open-ended materials
- Help children meet state standards/TSG objectives for literacy, math and social emotional by customizing the curriculum to engage and motivate children in a more developmentally appropriate way (using fewer worksheets and cookie cutter activities)
- Integrate content areas and support 21st century skills and positive approaches to learning through long-term investigations and projects
- Provide emotional and instructional support for all children (DLLs, G&T, those with special needs and challenging behaviors) through high quality teacher/child interactions.

Crisis in Kindergarten

Dear Dr. Costanza,

My daughter began kindergarten this year. I have read the Kindergarten Guidelines and I believe there are things happening in the classroom that are not appropriate for kindergarten aged children. Her classroom looks like a third grade classroom! Shouldn't there be a morning meeting to welcome children and help them feel safe and secure in their environment? Where are the centers? When do they get a quiet resting time? When do they have outdoor play time? How can five year olds be expected to sit for a one hour math lesson? Is it appropriate to give kindergartners a pencil and paper diagnostic that takes 4 days for 30-50 minutes each day so early in September?

Lately my daughter has been refusing to attend school. Please...I hope you can help!

~ A Very Concerned Parent

Meet Maya, Nicole, Teresa, Tanya & Esther

TABLE ACTIVITY:

1. Each table will take on the role of one individual.
2. Each person will silently read the narrative.
3. At your table, answer the questions at the end of the narrative and read the five guiding principles.
4. Be prepared to respond to the reflection questions.





Guiding Principles

- 1. Children learn and develop in many contexts.**
- 2. Family engagement is a shared responsibility.**
- 3. Family engagement matters across settings.**
- 4. Family engagement is continuous across time.**
- 5. Family engagement is a key element to achieve educational goals for all children.**

Reflection Questions

- What are the different assumptions that people in the case make? How might these assumptions influence their abilities to share responsibility for Maya's learning?
- What are the transition activities initiated and put into practice across different settings in this case (e.g., early childhood program, elementary school, library, community, home)? Think about the transition activities described in this case, including the transition plan that Esther develops. What other transition activities might have been included? What other community settings might take a role in supporting the transition to school?
- What are the barriers to successful transition practices? Consider the individual biases different people might hold as well as the organizational barriers that might exist.
- How might networks of engaged parents and parent leaders take a larger role in supporting parent mentors during the transition to school?
- How might Nicole or Tanya begin their conversation? If you were Nicole, what might you say? If you were Tanya, how might you respond to Nicole's concerns and what specific suggestions might you make?

Transition Practices in Your District

- Does every preschool family know where their child will go to kindergarten? Are they familiar with the registration process? Is it centralized or at individual schools?
- What is the transition process for children with IEPs?
- What PK to K transition activities does your district offer?
- How are records shared between PK and K? Are children screened before they enter kindergarten? When?
- What comprehensive services are available to children as they move from PK to K? Over the summer?
- Do you receive data from your district on how children are doing in kindergarten? How does this inform instruction?
- What other concerns do you have about children as they move from preschool to kindergarten?

Building Strong Bridges Together

Everyone must do their part to ensure that children have safe passage to the next level in their care and education. What can we do to build stronger bridges?



Components of a Strong P-3 Program

Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines

School organization:

- Preschool (in district and community settings) for three and four year olds;
- Full day kindergarten;
- District resources reallocated to the early years; and
- Common planning time designated for leaders and teachers to ensure strong communication and alignment at each level.

Program quality:

- Low teacher-child ratios;
- Teaching assistants for preschool and kindergarten;
- A center-based classroom environment;
- A developmentally appropriate curriculum aligned within and across grades and connected to the standards with a focus on the whole child; and
- A classroom observation instrument used for the purpose of identifying areas needing improvement.
- [Master teachers to support classroom quality.]

Teacher effectiveness:

- Qualified staff certified to teach P-3;
- Staff skilled in teaching young linguistically and culturally diverse children;
- Staff supervised and mentored by school leaders [and coaches] knowledgeable about developmentally appropriate practices and who receive professional development targeted toward kindergarten and the other early elementary grades.

Student progress:

- Valid screening tools to identify children in need of learning supports;
- A system to track progress of children over time using appropriate performance-based assessments; and
- Collaboration with families and child care or preschool administrators to gather information about children prior to school entry.

Accountability:

- Systems for data collection and analysis to provide information about student progress, program quality, and teacher and administrator effectiveness to families, communities, the school district, and the State.

Family and community engagement:

- Opportunities for families to work with teachers toward educational goals for children;
- For families and community members to become involved in the life of the school; and
- For schools to provide comprehensive social services and learning supports.

Note: Refer to Appendix 5 for a *Preschool through Third Grade Transition Plan* checklist for School District Administrators, the Transition Team and Teachers.

Appendix 5

Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines

Transition Team

- Include a process for collaborating with families, early learning providers, and local public and private agencies to gather information about children and families prior to school entry.
- Establish goals to ensure seamless supports for all children as they move through each year, including summer, and create transition activities based on those goals.
- Provide information for families on the transition process including registration, placement options, teacher expectations, and health and nutrition information.
- Generate a timeline for implementing the transition plan.
- Revisit and update the transition plan annually.

What Can Master Teachers Do?

- ❑ Become familiar with transition plan expectations in state code, guidelines, and SAVS outlined here.
- ❑ Participate on the transition team and provide support for activities that ease the PK-K transition for children and their families.
- ❑ Meet with teachers within and across grade levels to discuss age appropriate vertical and horizontal alignment regarding standards, curriculum and assessment.
- ❑ Continue to support preschool program quality, teacher effectiveness and student progress.
- ❑ Work with teachers to prepare and disseminate developmentally appropriate home learning activities, such as booklists and other literacy activities, including the summer months.
- ❑ Ensure that teachers build strong, respectful relationships with every child and family.