



CONNECTICUT
BIRTH TO THREE SYSTEM
PRESCHOOL SPECIAL
EDUCATION

BIRTH
through news

• Working together for children with disabilities • INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES AND PROFESSIONALS
SPRING 06, VOL. 7 NO. 3

Getting to the Heart of Transition

Teri Nowak, Project Coordinator
National Early Childhood Transition
Center



This article is translated into Spanish on page 2. Ver la versión española de este artículo en la página 2, y todos los artículos a www.birth23.org

Produced by the
State Department of Education
and the
Connecticut Birth to Three System
in collaboration with the



University of
Connecticut

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM
College of Agriculture and Natural Resources

As parents and early childhood providers, we want our children to be successful. A child's success takes many different forms as children grow and develop, learn new skills, and attain new milestones. But when the time comes for children to move from one program or system to another it can be quite scary. Two such anxious transition times are when children move from their early intervention program into preschool and when they move from preschool into kindergarten. This article highlights what we know about these transitions and suggests some activities to help develop the skills and relationships necessary for children to be successful as they move into new services and settings.

We know that there are a number of things that positive transitions seem to have in common. One of them is that lots of people from different backgrounds work together to ensure that the child and family have a successful transition. Important people in the transition process include the child and their family, early intervention and school providers, other program personnel, individuals from community agencies and even people working at the State level. The most successful transitions include established, positive relationships amongst people in which everyone works together.

Research findings tell us that there are skills and activities that can be carried out to ensure positive relationships and smooth transitions. Skills that promote positive relationships include building mutual trust among the people involved in the transition process. Activities such as sharing resources and information as well as aligning expectations and practices across settings and programs are important.

To help support positive transitions, we also need to help children develop the skills and behaviors that they will need in new settings. Helpful skills and experiences include listening and following directions, having experiences interacting with other adults, and having opportunities to play cooperatively with other children. For example, a family may want to look beyond the child's early intervention teacher with whom the child may be very comfortable to figure out whether a child can follow directions from a less familiar adult. Children who are not accustomed to developing relationships with other adults may take longer to adjust to a new experience with someone who is unfamiliar to them. Children who have experiences and opportunities to develop relationships with other children learn skills such as the give and take of toys. When children have positive experiences

(Continued on page 2)

and opportunities that help prepare them for a new setting with new people, they will be less likely to feel stress or develop a dislike for their new program. Aside from developing mutual trust and giving children new experiences and skills, family involvement and participation in the process increases a child's success during transition.

Programs need to recognize that children are more successful when families are comfortable with the upcoming changes. Family-provider relationships that place families as a key member of the team help families know what to expect. When families are an integral member of the team they can help prepare and assist their child through the new changes. Activities that a family can carry out with their own child include helping to provide their child with new experiences, such as taking the child to visit the new program, reading to the child, visiting the library, participating in a playgroup or story time,

singing songs, playing games and talking to the child every day about day to day activities.

Not only do children need to develop new skills and knowledge, but providers and school personnel do as well. Providers and school personnel need to know about each other's programs in order to help prepare a child for a new setting or to receive a child into a new setting. This means that 'sending' providers and 'receiving' providers need to develop positive relationships and visit each other's programs to better understand the things that are similar and different between the two programs. Staff from the receiving and sending programs should meet with families prior to the child beginning a new program. This provides families an opportunity to ask questions and share information they feel is important about their child. Such communication amongst the sending and receiving providers and the child's family leads to

developing positive relationships and mutual trust, which is the hallmark of successful transitions.

Lastly, programs are key to ensuring that children feel successful. Regular routines, schedules, and structure result in predictable programs. When children are able to predict what is coming up next, they tend to adjust much more quickly than in programs in which structure or routines are inconsistent or do not exist.

Positive relationships, well structured programs, and thoughtful, well planned preparation for changes on multiple levels gives children the best opportunity to adjust to new programs, new services, and new people. A positive transition moves us towards our goal of child success. A team effort, in partnership with parents, is worth our time and effort.



Meollo de la transición

*Teri Nowak,
Coordinadora de Proyectos
Centro Nacional de Transición en la
Temprana Infancia*

Como padres y proveedores de la temprana infancia, queremos que nuestros niños tengan éxito. El éxito de un niño toma muchas formas diferentes según el niño crece y se desarrolla, aprende nuevas aptitudes y rebasa nuevos hitos. Pero el momento de promover a un niño de un programa o sistema a otro puede

ser pavoroso. Hay ansiedad cuando los niños pasan del programa de temprana infancia a la preescola, y también hay ansiedad cuando pasan de la preescola al kindergarten. Este artículo enfatiza lo que sabemos de estas transiciones y sugiere ciertas actividades que pueden ayudar a desarrollar las aptitudes y relaciones necesarias para que los niños se desplacen satisfactoriamente hacia nuevos servicios y ambientes.

Sabemos que las transiciones positivas suelen tener en común varias cosas. Una es que muchas personas de diferentes ámbitos



trabajan de consuno para asegurar que la transición resulte satisfactoria para el niño y para la familia. Entre la gente importante en el proceso de transición están el niño y su familia, los proveedores de la temprana infancia y de la escuela, personal del programa, individuos

de agencias de la comunidad e inclusive personas que trabajan al nivel del Estado. El proceso de transición tendrá más éxito cuando las relaciones entre toda esa gente son positivas y bien establecidas y todos trabajan de común acuerdo.

Los estudios de investigación nos dicen que hay aptitudes y actividades asequibles para asegurar relaciones positivas y transiciones suaves. Las aptitudes que promueven relaciones positivas incluyen las que fomentan la confianza mutua entre los participantes en el proceso de transición. Son importantes actividades tales como compartir recursos e información y alinear expectativas y prácticas a través de ambientes y programas.

Para ayudar a apoyar transiciones positivas también necesitamos fomentar en los niños aptitudes y conductas que van a necesitar en los nuevos ambientes. Entre las aptitudes y experiencias útiles están el escuchar y seguir instrucciones, tener interacción con adultos, y tener oportunidades de jugar cooperativamente con otros niños. Por ejemplo, la familia puede ir más allá del maestro de intervención temprana con que el niño puede sentirse muy cómodo, para ver si el niño es capaz de seguir instrucciones de un adulto menos familiar. Un niño que no está acostumbrado a relacionarse con otros adultos puede necesitar más tiempo para adaptarse a un extraño. Los niños que han tenido experiencias y oportunidades de desarrollar relaciones con otros niños adquieren aptitudes tales como la de dar y recibir juguetes. Cuando los niños tienen experiencias y

oportunidades que ayudan a prepararlos para un nuevo ambiente con gente nueva es menos probable que se sientan estresados o desarrollen aversión al nuevo programa.

Aparte de crear confianza mutua y proporcionar a los niños nuevas experiencias y aptitudes, la participación de la familia puede en sí aumentar el éxito del niño durante la transición. Los programas necesitan reconocer que los niños tienen más éxito cuando las familias ven con confianza los cambios que vienen. La creación de relaciones con la familia y la convicción de que la familia es un miembro clave del equipo le permite saber qué esperar. La familia, cuando es un miembro integral del equipo, puede ayudar a preparar y asistir al niño a través de los cambios. Entre las actividades que una familia puede realizar con su propio niño está el proporcionarle nuevas experiencias. Por ejemplo, llevarlo a visitar el nuevo programa, leerle, visitar la biblioteca, participar en grupos de juegos o de cuentos, cantar, jugar y hablarle al niño todos los días de actividades cotidianas.

No solo los niños sino también los proveedores y personal de la escuela necesitan desarrollar nuevas aptitudes y conocimientos. Los proveedores y el personal escolar necesitan saber de los programas de unos y otros para ayudar a preparar al niño para el nuevo ambiente – o para recibirlo en el nuevo lugar. Esto significa que los proveedores que envían al niño y los que lo reciben necesitan desarrollar relaciones positivas y visitar sus respectivos programas para mejor comprender las cosas que son

similares y las que son diferentes. El personal de los programas receptores y el de los remitentes deben reunirse con las familias antes de que el niño comience un nuevo programa. Esto da a las familias una oportunidad para hacer preguntas y para ofrecer información que consideren importante sobre su niño. Tal comunicación lleva a desarrollar relaciones positivas y la confianza mutua que es la marca de las transiciones exitosas.

Por último los programas mismos son clave para asegurar que los niños se sientan exitosos. Programas predecibles son consecuencia de rutinas, horarios y estructuras regulares. Cuando los niños pueden predecir lo que viene tienden a ajustarse mucho más rápidamente que en los programas en que falta o fluctúa tal estructura o rutina.

Las relaciones positivas, los programas bien estructurados y la preparación bien pensada y planificada para cambios en niveles múltiples, dan a los niños la mejor oportunidad de adaptarse a los nuevos programas, nuevos servicios y nueva gente. Una transición positiva nos lleva a alcanzar nuestra meta que es el éxito del niño. Un trabajo conjunto, en sociedad con los padres, vale la pena nuestro tiempo y esfuerzo.



Transition from a Parent Perspective

By Melvette Hill as told to Claudia Anderson

Melvette is the mother of four children, all of whom have received some form of special education. Two of her children received services from Birth to Three before transitioning to the public school preschool. For Melvette, the most difficult part of having her children transition from Birth to Three was putting them in an environment outside of her home with other children with similar concerns. It was also difficult putting them on a bus, although they enjoyed riding it. She admitted the transition was more difficult for her than her children. She found out that they learned new skills more quickly because classroom teachers expected them to do things that Melvette may not have thought they were ready to learn. They learned the effect of their choices, and through the freedom they experienced, Melvette saw them blossom.

Being prepared for transitioning her children into the school system is what made the transition successful. Melvette reported that her Birth to Three providers gave her the information she needed to understand the Planning and Placement Team (PPT) process and her rights as a parent. She knew what to expect when she attended meetings and how she could be an active participant. She also had a chance to visit preschool classrooms and community settings that her

children might attend so she could make an informed decision. One of her children attended both Head Start and a preschool special education classroom.

The advice that Melvette gives to other parents is to stay involved in their children's education. Visit their classrooms to see what they are doing; reinforce what they are learning; and read and play with them at home. She also suggests taking your children out of the house into the community so they can have new experiences. Do not give up if the first experience does not turn out well—keep trying. Melvette also feels it is important to attend workshops, such as those offered by the *Local Interagency Coordinating Councils (LICCs), WeCahr and Connecticut Parent Advocacy Council (CPAC), to prepare mentally for the transition. Getting involved in your local LICC is another way to provide support not only to your child, but to other families as well. Even if you had a poor transition experience, Melvette thinks that getting involved and helping to make a change will help future families and their transitions. Lastly, Melvette wants to remind parents that they are their child's best advocate!

* See contact information under resources on page 8



BIRTH through 5 news

Information for Families and Professionals

is published periodically by the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System in collaboration with the Connecticut Birth to Three System, the Connecticut State Department of Education and the Newsletter Advisory Board. We welcome readers' comments and contributions related to the special needs of infants, toddlers, preschoolers and their families. Please mail correspondence to the editor at 67 Stony Hill Road, Bethel, CT 06801.

2006 ADVISORY BOARD

Cathy Malley, Editor

UConn Cooperative Extension System
Claudia Anderson, Danbury Public Schools

Jane Bisantz, Jane Bisantz & Associates, LLC and Hartford Public Schools
Marlene Cavagnuolo, Fairfield Public Schools

Ann Gionet, Parent/CT Department of Public Health

Linda Goodman, CT Birth to Three System

Eileen McMurrer, CT Birth to Three System

Kathy Slade, CPAC representative
Maria Synodi, State Department of Education

You are encouraged to reproduce articles or excerpts from *Birth through 5 News*. Please give appropriate credit to this newsletter and authors. *Birth through 5 News* is distributed free of charge to those interested in issues related to children, ages birth through five, with special needs. The mailing list includes families and providers active in the Birth to Three System, directors and providers of preschool special education services, special education directors, families in various preschool special education programs, local ICCs and others upon request. To add or delete your name from the mailing list, or to notify us of a change of address, please send your name, address and phone number to Birth through 5 News, CT Birth to Three System, 460 Capitol Ave., Hartford, CT 06106.

Produced in Communication and Information Technology, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of Connecticut. Graphic Design by Poshen Wang.

The University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System is an equal opportunity program provider and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director; Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W; Whitten Building, Stop Code 9410; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call (202) 720-5964.

On the Move, and Ready to Go! ...Parents and Providers Partnering for Smooth Transitions

By Deb Pietras Nolan

Birth to Three Program and Transition Coordinator, Danbury Public Schools

Transition, although a familiar word for Early Intervention and Early Childhood providers, is a unique process for each child and family based on strengths, needs and circumstances. All of us experience numerous transitions throughout our lifetime. Most would agree that the word transition typically suggests movement; movement from one thing to something else, a change from one situation to another. Change is managed differently by each of us; it typically involves a variety of emotions with endless contributing variables. Transition for the purpose of this article will focus on the movement from Birth to Three services to services at age three. The basic principles however, are appropriate for various transitions.

Transition is a process, a process that requires planning and coordination. A well developed, detailed written plan can help guide discussions and direct a thoughtful sequence of activities. Adequate time is needed to work through the many details and activities. It is important to start early! Recognize that time is also needed to develop relationships—relationships in which all participants, parents, Birth to Three, school, and community

providers feel comfortable working together toward common goals. Each individual involved has an opportunity to set the tone for all future communications. Demonstrate an interest and a willingness to work together!

Both parents and providers clearly have a need for information in order to make informed decisions and to participate fully. New and unfamiliar information often can be confusing and overwhelming. Providers can assist parents and other participants in identifying questions, needs and concerns. They can help to create a system for organizing the information so it is accessible and useful.

It is important to develop an understanding of the various school and community options available to children at age three and older, including eligibility, registration, and various program requirements. Providers need to provide information to parents and support parents in following through with phone calls, completing applications, and gathering necessary documents. Although the responsibility ultimately belongs to each parent, each of us needs support with new responsibilities.

Providers should encourage parents to ask questions and to visit various school and community settings and activities, as seeing with one's own eyes helps to make things real and meaningful. Providers should keep parents in touch with dialogue occurring between providers when they are not present, so they are fully informed.

Parents often worry that their child will not be able to separate from them to attend school, to communicate their needs to new people, or to sit for structured activities. They wonder how the bussing will work, who will change their child's diaper, and where and how their child's tantrums will be managed. Parent-to-provider and parent-to-parent connections can help answer questions and provide needed information. A Birth to Three provider's relationship with a parent is typically short-term. A parent's level of comfort often is communicated to their child in a variety of ways and is a key factor in the success of the transition. Providers can make sure the transition plan and the visits focus on activities and events that will help prepare the child for new expectations! This too will help to ease a parent's anxiety.

Most importantly, providers need to help parents understand and embrace their role as partners in their child's education. This is the beginning of one of the most significant, most valuable responsibilities in life to their child. Support in these early stages will make a child's future success a reality!



Birth to Three System Update

By Linda Goodman, Director

There were some changes and clarifications to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 (the federal law that governs both Birth to Three and special education for children ages 3-21) that affect the process of transition from Birth to Three.

1	IDEA says:	Transition conferences with the school district may be held as early as nine months prior to age three.
	As a result:	Birth to Three now encourages service coordinators and families to refer children to their school districts as early as 24 months of age.
2	IDEA says:	Birth to Three must notify the responsible school district about each child from their town that is enrolled who will “shortly reach the age of eligibility for preschool special education.”
	As a result:	Unless a parent signs the Birth to Three’s local school district referral form and indicates “I do not give consent to refer my child for an evaluation to determine eligibility for special education nor do I authorize release of any information to that school district” the child’s name and family contact information will be sent to the district sometime within 90 days of the child’s third birthday.
3	IDEA says:	For children attending a private school in other than the town of residence, the school district in which the child’s private school is located is responsible for conducting child find activities—in other words, conducting the evaluation to determine a child’s eligibility for special education. The child’s town of residence would be responsible for developing an IEP for the child if he/she is determined eligible. Children whose families opt not to accept the IEP may, but are not entitled to some of their special education and related services by the town in which the private school is located.
	As a result:	Families that enroll their child in a preschool or nursery school in a town different from where they live may experience difficulties if that preschool offers any part of an elementary school education because it is considered part of an elementary school under the IDEA. Currently, the definition of an elementary school includes Kindergarten programs. Service coordinators need to alert families to this issue as transition time approaches.

State ICC Takes an Active Role in Assuring Quality Early Intervention for Children and Families

By Lolli Ross, State ICC Chair

The State Birth to Three Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) advises and assists the Connecticut Birth to Three System in effectively managing the delivery of early intervention services and supports. One important way this is accomplished is by serving, along with others, as Stakeholders in the Focused Monitoring system designed to measure the quality of services provided to children and their families. Stakeholders choose which of many important topics need to be looked at in detail and how to measure quality

for that area. This information is included in reports to the federal government that helps to fund Birth to Three.

“Smooth transitions” was chosen as being extremely important to all families whether the child goes on to preschool special education or another community learning activity. ICC members represent various state agencies, providers of early intervention, parents, pediatricians, Head Start and others, all working together at the state level to make sure that transitions go smoothly at the local level for every child and family.

Discussions at meetings every other month help to shape policies within agencies serving young children and their families and written interagency agreements impact the processes and experiences for families locally.

Active parent members are vital to ensuring the strength, knowledge and understanding of the Council on all matters. Our ICC Vice Chair, Jeannie Mazzaferro, is a parent member who has shown talent, energy, wisdom and dedication. Openings for parent members occur periodically, and parents of a child under age twelve with a developmental delay who are members of the Latino or African-American communities are particularly invited to apply for appointment to the ICC. Call the Birth to Three office at 860-418-6146 for more information.

All meetings are open to the public. Future meetings are scheduled for: June 12, August 14, October 16, December 11.

Visit www.birth23.org and click on State ICC for directions and the meeting agenda one week before each meeting.



Preschool Special Education Update: Transition

By Maria Synodi, Coordinator,
Preschool Special Education

UGH! Just when everything is going well, I have to change. A change of teachers, just when my child's teacher has really gotten to know my child's learning strengths and needs. A change of classrooms, just when my child has gotten familiar with the classroom schedule, routines and expectations. A change of schools, just when my child has gotten familiar and is comfortable in the program or school he attends. My child has friends; he likes his teachers and therapists, and is doing well. Why must we change?

Transition is just that—a change. Very often it is changing from something we know that is familiar and comfortable to something we do not know and do not trust. It is a time when we are anxious and upset and want to understand and control what is happening. And yet transition is


the thing that is consistent through our lifetimes. For those of us working with young children, especially the preschool population, there are two huge life transitions for children and their families. One is from the Connecticut Birth to Three System to preschool special education and the other is from preschool special education to kindergarten. As professionals we need to recognize the emotions and sometimes fear that these transitions create and should help guide children and their families through this process. As parents we need to acquire as much information as possible to better understand the transition process and feel comfortable with the activities taking place. Transition from teacher to teacher, from classroom to classroom and school to school is inevitable. However, inevitable does not mean easy.

In order for transitions to be effective we should:

- establish positive relationships between the child, their parents, and the school;
- recognize that each child is capable and competent;
- involve all partners from both

the sending and receiving programs;

- plan for the transition and ensure that it takes place in a timely manner;
- be flexible and responsive to the needs of all partners;
- build mutual trust and respect with all partners, and
- ensure on-going reciprocal positive communication with all partners.

In an effort to make as much information available to help guide one of those big transitions, preschool special education has a web-based training available for Birth to Three, school district personnel, and parents on the transition from the Connecticut Birth to Three System to preschool special education. That web-based training can be accessed through the preschool special education web page at <http://www.state.ct.us/sde/deps/Early/PreschoolSE/index.htm>. As this school year comes to an end, and the inevitability of transition is before us, professionals and parents should be working together to ensure a smooth, effective and positive transition for the child. Have a great summer! 

Latinos with Disabilities Breaking Barriers through Multicultural Awareness

A Conference Promoting Multicultural Awareness among People with Disabilities and Those Who Serve Them

Thursday, June 22, 2006

Central Connecticut State University

Registration: 8:00 AM

Conference sponsored by:

Department of Social Services/Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities

Proyecto Vision

Latino & Puerto Rican Affairs Commission

Padres Abriendo Puertas

Department of Mental Retardation

For more information, please contact Ada Suarez at 860-297-4378.

Resources

Printed Material:

Harbin, G.L., & Salisbury, C. (2000). *Policies, Administration & Systems Change*. In Sandall, S., McLean, M.E., & Smith, B.J., (Eds.), *DEC Recommended Practices in Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education* (vol. 1, pp. 161-174). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, Inc.

Websites:

www.state.ct.us/sde/deps/readiness/alerts/index.htm. This state Department of Education web site includes a School Readiness "Alert" on Transition to Kindergarten.

www.state.ct.us/sde/deps/Early/Preschool/SE/index.htm. This state Department of Education web site includes a web-based training on Transition from Birth to Three.

www.ihdi.uky.edu/nectc. This is the site for the National Early Childhood Transition Center. Included is information that promotes successful transitions between infant/toddler programs, preschool programs, and public school programs for young children with disabilities and their families.

www.nectac.org/topics/transition/transition.asp. This is the site for the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center. Included is information about transition including Federal Laws and Regulations, National Data and Resources.

www.birth23.org/publications/default.asp. This is the site for publications of the Birth to Three System. It includes information on transitions.

<http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v3n2/docket.html>. Check this site out for Starting School: Effective Transitions that focuses on effective transition-to-school programs and reports on the research conducted by the Starting School Research Project.

<http://www.terrifictransitions.org/>. Terrific Transitions: Supporting Children's Transition to Kindergarten is a website developed through collaborative efforts of the SERVE Regional Educational Laboratory and the National Head Start Association. It includes a wide variety of transition information and resources for families, professionals, and community partnerships.

Contact Information:

CPAC (CPACINC.org) or 1-800-445-2722

WeCahr (WECAHR.org) or (203) 792-3540

LICCs are listed at (Birth23.org) or call Infoline 1-800-505-7000



Calendar Please note that some events advertised may be full and space availability may be limited or unavailable.

May 26 *Assistive Technology for Young Children*

NEAT Marketplace, Hartford
9 AM-3:00 PM

No registration fee.

Contact: Kathy Granata at Birth to Three, 860-418-6146

Sept 19 *Disability Convention*

Connecticut Expo Center
Hartford

For information contact Jayne Kleinmen,

jjk1009@hotmail.com

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM
1376 Storrs Road, Unit 4036
Storrs, CT 06269-4036

PRSRST STD
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
UNIVERSITY OF
CONNECTICUT
STORRS,CT
PERMIT NO.3