

Best Practices & Self-Assessment Guide

Developed by the Indiana Department of Education & Purdue University's Center for Early Learning







# **Success in Transitioning to Kindergarten**

In 2022, the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) issued the following definition of readiness for kindergarten:

Kindergarten readiness is achieved when children are prepared in all domains of early learning; and families, schools, and communities collaborate to positively impact educational outcomes.

IDOE adopted five core values for transition (*Racing into Kindergarten Transition Toolkit*):



**Communication** is the overarching transition value because without communication, successful transitions cannot consistently occur. Communication between multiple points of connection must be in place before opportunities for respect, collaboration, leadership, and data sharing are feasible.

2 Respect

Professionals **respect** all children and families and are responsive to diverse values and cultural backgrounds. Professionals individualize their approach to transitions into or out of a program based on the needs of each child and family.

3 Collaboration

Professionals in all early learning settings and services **collaborate** with professionals in other roles, disciplines, and sectors to facilitate mutual understanding and collective contribution to improving outcomes for children.

4 Leadership

**Leadership** roles across systems and services are committed to supporting collaborative transition practices.

5 Data Sharing

With consent, professionals **share relevant data** and information about children and families across early learning settings and services.





To meet the definition of kindergarten readiness and the five core values of transition, opportunities, activities, and support should be designed for children, families, sending teams (early learning/preschool), receiving teams (kindergarten), and the community. According to research (i.e. Kraft-Sayre & Pianta, 2000; Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000; Sun et al., 2024) and field knowledge, success in transition planning should be demonstrated through the following.

#### **Children & Families**

- Children have the skills needed to be successful upon entry into kindergarten, including pre-academic, adaptive, and self-help skills;
- Families understand the academic, adaptive, and self-help expectations of kindergarten, and
  - Are able to support learning at home;
  - Are able to advocate for their child;
- Children and families understand kindergarten procedures, rules, and processes, knowing what to expect and who to connect with (e.g., registration);
- Children and families feel safe, comfortable, and welcomed with a(n):
  - Increased comfort with environment and staff;
  - Decreased overwhelm and anxiety;
  - Decreased "jolt" of the change of moving from early learning/care programs or home into the kindergarten classroom;
- Consistency in supports are provided throughout the transition; and
- Families understand that if the child has been involved in a preschool early learning program, the relationship with preschool does not end just because kindergarten has begun.

#### Staff & Professionals

- Sending and receiving teams regularly collaborate, communicate, and share information;
  - Sending team helps receiving team get to know the children through active communication and appropriate data and paperwork (including assessment data);
  - Release forms and memorandums of understanding/agreement are incorporated into kindergarten registration so that teams are able to collaborate and provide consistent supports for children and families;
  - There is open communication about program expectations;
  - Teams share relevant information regarding children and families;
  - Communication and collaboration is increased particularly for children with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs);
- There is a comprehensive understanding of the expectations with each system (i.e. sending and receiving teams);
- Program expectations (standards, curriculum, assessment) are transparent and shared openly;
  - Instructional practices and procedures are aligned and communicated through joint professional development and professional learning communities that include educators and administrators from both the preschool/early learning and kindergarten programs;





- There is a shared understanding of what transition is and what success looks like;
  - o Communities have a value statement; and
- Administration and not just educators are involved in the collaboration and communication.

## Within Communities

- Policies and partnerships are in place so practices don't disappear when someone leaves their role/position;
- Policies include collaboration, communication, and information sharing across all entities involved in the care and education of children; and
- Timing of activities is inclusive of a multi-year approach from the start of the preschool year (or one year prior to the transition to kindergarten) through the entire kindergarten year.

# **Transition Model Development**

This model was created to promote positive outcomes for children, families, sending teams (i.e., early learning programs), and receiving teams (i.e., elementary schools and kindergarten programs) as children begin kindergarten. The competencies that make up this model were developed from a review of research literature surrounding kindergarten transition practices and have been aligned with the Indiana core transition values of communication, respect, collaboration, leadership, and data sharing. Additionally, a series of professional learning community meetings with preschool and kindergarten educators and administrators influenced the creation of the model as a perspective of field knowledge. This resource helps local educational agencies (LEAs), early learning programs, and communities to evaluate and, ultimately, improve practices around the transition to kindergarten.

## **Transition Model Use**

This model serves as both a resource and an evaluation method to enhance local practices around the transition to kindergarten, ensuring the best outcomes for children, families, and programs. LEAs, early learning programs, and communities should evaluate their practices against the five identified competencies and revisit completed areas as needed. An annual review of the model is recommended for continuous improvement.

The indicators are designed to build upon one another, with the progression of levels moving from *Emerging* to *Progressing* to *Excelling*. It is expected that programs conduct the tasks in "lower" levels before proceeding to the next level; therefore, if a user indicates that their program is *Excelling*, that means they are engaging in all the activities identified as *Emerging* and *Progressing*.





#### **Model User Resources**

There are examples provided throughout this model; however, below is a list that model users may find helpful.

#### **IDOE Early Learning Resources**

## 2023 Indiana Early Learning Standards

This resource outlines Indiana's Early Learning Standards, a sequence of core foundations and skills aligned to the <u>Indiana Academic Standards</u>. This resource provides descriptions of learning outcomes and indicators of child progress on a developmental continuum from birth to pre-kindergarten.

#### Indiana Early Learning Family Guides

This resource provides an overview of the primary skills developed in the early learning years in the areas of English/language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, social studies, student wellbeing, approaches to play and learning, creative arts, and physical health and growth, sharing how families can support the development of these primary skills at home.

#### **IDOE Kindergarten Resources**

## Kickstarting Kindergarten Collection

This resource provides definitions of kindergarten readiness for children, families, schools, and communities, summarizing three major components that contribute to kindergarten readiness including early childhood experiences, summer enrichment programs, and effective transition practices.

#### Kindergarten Readiness Overview

This resource summarizes skills that promote children's kindergarten readiness and success in the areas of early literacy, mathematics, student wellbeing, and physical health and growth, as well as practices families can engage in to promote these skills at home.

2023-2024 Racing into Kindergarten Transition Toolkit

This resource describes the five Indiana transition values (communication, respect, collaboration, leadership, and data sharing), recommended practices, and resources to promote successful kindergarten transitions and prepare children, families, schools, and communities for kindergarten and school success.

#### Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC) Resources

Educator Practices to Support Successful Transitions to Kindergarten (PDF)
 This resource provides a list of research-based transition activities for educators to implement in the months, weeks, and days before kindergarten entry and during the kindergarten year. The transition activities occur at four points of connection with kindergarten educators: child-school, family-school, program-school, and community-school.





Leadership Practices for Successful Transitions to Kindergarten (PDF)
This resource provides a list of research-based transition practices with activity examples for
early learning programs and elementary school leaders to strengthen connections that
support a successful transition to kindergarten for children, families, schools, and the
community. The resource identifies practices for elementary school leaders, early learning
program leaders, and shared practices. There are four connections that are promoted in this
resource: program-school, child-school, family-school, and community-school.

## Activity Calendar for Educators (PDF)

This resource explains what, why, and how early learning program educators can support a successful kindergarten transition beginning the year before children enter kindergarten. Additionally, this resource provides suggested activities and an interactive monthly activity calendar for educators to effectively plan transition activities to support connections with children, families, schools, and communities during the transition to kindergarten.

## Activity Calendar for Families (PDF)

This resource explains what, why, and how families can support a successful kindergarten transition beginning the year before children enter kindergarten. Additionally, this resource provides an interactive monthly activity calendar for families to effectively plan activities to support their children's transition to kindergarten in the preschool, home, and kindergarten settings.

## **Additional Resource**

Pianta, R. C., & Kraft-Sayre, M. E. (2003). Successful Kindergarten Transition: Your Guide to Connecting Children, Families, & Schools. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

This book provides system level support as well as example documents and data collection processes to improve outcomes through the process of transition.





# **Indicators for Supporting Families**

**Description:** Use the self-assessment at the end of each indicator to determine your progress on the corresponding support for families.

## Indicator/Description

## Communication and respect of transition needs and expectations

**Emerging:** Families have access to information on best practices in transition and how to prepare your child and family. This should be easy to understand with some step-by-step instructions on activities.

- Head Start provides many resources that can be shared with families.
- Mailings or info sheets (i.e., <u>Preparing for Kindergarten</u> and <u>Steps to Success</u>) at local venues such as early learning providers, family-focused community events, at the public library, and disseminated through social media.
  - Include information such as school calendar, Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) meetings for LEA, kindergarten registration (round-up) dates, etc.
  - o Include the Kindergarten Readiness Overview.

**Progressing:** Families attend an <u>informational event</u> on transitioning to kindergarten hosted by the local school/receiving team within 12 months of the transition time.

**Excelling:** Families attend events focused on families supporting children in their education beginning at least one year prior to the transition to kindergarten. These events may provide information on activities that can be conducted at home to support growth and development in all areas such as what is found in the <u>Indiana Early Learning Standards Family Guides</u>.

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Goals:	
	Indicator/Description
	Gather needs and expectations of families
	plete <u>survey/needs assessment</u> in the spring prior to kindergarten to gather rts and expectations regarding the transition.
	arranged for the kindergarten program to speak with the early learning ild was enrolled to problem-solve and discuss ideas if and as needed.
	tend family-focused events and listening sessions from the spring prior scuss needs and desired support to prepare families for expectations of the
kindergarten transition. The kindergarten and the entire	cipate in a <u>survey/needs assessment</u> beginning a year prior to the nen, <u>follow-up is conducted with each family</u> throughout the year before re year of kindergarten to determine if needs are being met and/or if arding the transition are needed.
Self-Assessment Rating:	
Reflection:	





Goals:
Indicator/Description
Gather information from families about the experiences and successes of the transition
<b>Emerging:</b> Families complete a <u>survey/needs assessment</u> early in the kindergarten year to reflect o family and child experiences before, during, and after the transition to kindergarten.
<b>Progressing:</b> In addition to completing a survey early in the kindergarten year, families are invited to <u>listening sessions</u> several times from the spring prior through the fall after their child's transition to kindergarten to discuss their experiences before, during, and after the transition. Discussion includes their perception of how well their child has transitioned into kindergarten.
<b>Excelling:</b> In addition to completing a survey and participating in listening sessions, families comple a <u>survey/needs assessment</u> beginning a year prior to the kindergarten transition. Then, a <u>follow-up is conducted with each family</u> throughout the year before kindergarten and through the entire year of kindergarten to determine if needs are being met and/or if extensions of support regarding the transition are needed as well as their perception of how well their child has transitioned into kindergarten.
Self-Assessment Rating:
Reflection:





Goals:			





# **Indicators for Sending Teams**

**Description:** Use the self-assessment at the end of each indicator to determine your progress on the corresponding support for sending teams (i.e., early learning programs/pre-K) for improving transition practices.

## Indicator/Description

**Transition expectations evaluation:** ongoing evaluation of children and communication with families at the beginning of and during the prekindergarten year

**Emerging:** Sending teams assess children as they are leaving pre-kindergarten/preschool with <u>ISPROUT</u> and provide data to the receiving team.

Maintain a <u>release form</u> between sending and receiving teams to share child information.

**Progressing:** Sending teams hold at least one family meeting during the winter/spring of the prekindergarten/preschool year to discuss child evaluation data from the <u>ISPROUT</u> or any other observations and assessment information available, along with the family's needs and concerns regarding the transition to kindergarten. Sending teams also ask families to write a letter to their child's future kindergarten educator and administrator sharing information about their child, as well as their hopes, dreams, and concerns.

 Maintain a written <u>release form</u> between sending and receiving teams to share child information and family needs and concerns.

**Excelling:** Sending teams engage in multiple meetings throughout the prekindergarten/preschool year with families, providing information to and requesting information from families, as well as conducting a <u>family needs assessment</u>. Sending teams formally check in with families after the start of kindergarten to discuss child/family needs and evaluate the success of the transition process.

- Keep a regular calendar of events and information for families.
- Maintain a written <u>release form</u> between sending and receiving teams to share child information and family needs and concerns and contact the family after they leave the early learning program.

Self-Assessment Rating:	
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Reflection:		
Goals:		

#### Indicator/Description

**Communication/collaboration with receiving teams:** Identify what is expected from kindergarten educators and environment; share information about child, family, and early learning programs.

**Emerging:** Sending team educators and administrators meet with the receiving team educators and administrators at least one time per year to discuss expectations of the receiving team.

- Program will plan for class coverage and/or compensation for staff working outside of contract hours.
- Discussions center around standards, curriculum, routines, school calendar dates, etc.

**Progressing:** Sending team educators and administrators engage in multiple meetings throughout the year (i.e., two to three times) with receiving team educators and administrators to discuss expectations and transition concerns and successes. Additionally, the sending team will tour the receiving team environment(s).

- Program will plan for class coverage and/or compensation for staff working outside of contract hours
- Joint professional development is provided to ensure each program (sending and receiving) fully understands the others' expectations, programming, policies, etc.

**Excelling:** Sending team educators and administrators engage in frequent meetings (i.e., monthly throughout the academic school year) with the receiving team to exchange information including sharing child information, inviting the receiving team to the sending team's facilities to observe and learn more about the receiving program's curriculum, etc., as well as follow up with the receiving





team after the transition.

- Program will plan for class coverage and/or compensation for staff working outside of contract hours.
- Keep a regular <u>calendar of events</u> and information for engaging with receiving teams.
- Maintain a written <u>release form</u> between sending and receiving teams to share child information and family needs and concerns and contact the family after they leave the early learning program.

Self-Assessment Rating:	:	 	
Reflection:			
Goals:			

## Indicator/Description

Hosting transition meetings bringing families and receiving teams together: Communicating expectations to families and connecting families with kindergarten educators.

**Emerging:** Sending teams host a meeting in the spring for families and receiving team(s) to discuss transition to kindergarten.

 Program will plan for class coverage and/or compensation for staff working outside of contract hours.

**Progressing:** Sending teams facilitate multiple information exchanges or meet and greets (i.e., fall, winter, spring) between families and receiving team(s), during which child information, family needs and concerns, and program expectations are shared and discussed.





- Program will plan for class coverage and/or compensation for staff working outside of contract hours.
- Maintain a written <u>release form</u> between sending and receiving teams to share child information and family needs and concerns.

**Excelling:** Sending teams facilitate multiple <u>information exchange/meet and greets</u> (i.e., fall, winter, spring) beginning one year prior to the transition and *continuing through the kindergarten year* between families and receiving team(s), during which child information, family needs and concerns, and transition concerns and successes are shared and discussed.

- Program will plan for class coverage and/or compensation for staff working outside of contract hours.
- Maintain a written <u>release form</u> between sending and receiving teams to share child information and family needs and concerns.

Self-Assessment Rating	:		
Reflection:			
Goals:			



# **Indicators for Receiving Teams**

**Description:** Use the self-assessment at the end of each indicator to determine your progress on the corresponding support for receiving teams (i.e., kindergarten programs/elementary schools) for improving transition practices.

## Indicator/Description

## Communication and collaboration with sending teams

**Emerging:** Receiving team educators and administrators meet with sending team(s) educators and administrators at least one time per year to discuss expectations of the receiving team.

- Program will plan for class coverage and/or compensation for staff working outside of contract hours.
- Discussions center around standards, curriculum, routines, school calendar dates, etc.

**Progressing:** Receiving team educators and administrators and sending team(s) educators and administrators engage in multiple meetings (i.e., quarterly) throughout the year to discuss expectations and transition concerns and successes. Additionally, the receiving team will tour the sending team environment(s).

- Program will plan for class coverage and/or compensation for staff working outside of contract hours.
- Professional development is provided to ensure each program (sending and receiving) fully understands the others' expectations, programming, policies, etc.

**Excelling:** Receiving team educators and administrators engage in frequent meetings (i.e., monthly) with the sending team(s) to exchange information including teaching strategies and program expectations; child information (i.e., <u>ISPROUT</u> or any other assessment information); observing the other's environments; learning more about the other's programs' curriculum, etc. Finally, there is discussion around follow-up between the sending and receiving teams after the transition to discuss concerns and successes.

- Program will plan for class coverage and/or compensation for staff working outside of contract hours.
- Maintain a written <u>release form</u> between sending and receiving teams to share child information and family needs and concerns and contact the family after they leave the early learning program.





Reflection:
Goals:
Indicator/Description
Kindergarten exposure and experience
<b>Emerging:</b> Receiving teams invite children and families to tour the kindergarten setting prior to the transition.
<ul> <li>Program will plan for class coverage and/or compensation for staff working outside of contract hours.</li> </ul>
<b>Progressing:</b> Receiving teams will host children and families (as appropriate) for a half or full day experience in kindergarten classroom prior to the transition.
<ul> <li>Program will plan for class coverage and/or compensation for staff working outside of contract hours.</li> </ul>
<b>Excelling:</b> Receiving teams will host children for a multiple-day experience in the kindergarten setting including typical daily activities and routines (for example, classroom, lunchroom, specials, recess, bus schedule) before the transition.
<ul> <li>Program will plan for class coverage and/or compensation for staff working outside of contract hours.</li> </ul>
<ul> <li>Camps (<u>Kindergarten Countdown Camp</u>) and multiple days in the kindergarten classroom may be planned.</li> </ul>
Self-Assessment Rating:
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Reflection:		
Goals:		

## Indicator/Description

## Kindergarten Registration Event (i.e., Round-up/Open House)

**Emerging:** Receiving teams will host a one-day evening event during which screenings are performed with children and families can learn about kindergarten expectations.

• Program will plan for class coverage and/or compensation for staff working outside of contract hours.

**Progressing:** Receiving teams will host multiple events during which screenings are performed with children and families can learn about kindergarten expectations. Families will have various appointment times to choose from that meet their schedule and needs.

 Program will plan for class coverage and/or compensation for staff working outside of contract hours.

**Excelling:** Receiving teams will host multiple events during which screenings are performed with children and families can learn about kindergarten expectations. When possible, the sending team/preschool educators are present to ensure children and families are comfortable in the new environment. Families will have various appointment times and locations (such as, school, home, preschool, virtual option, etc.) to choose from that meets their schedule and needs. As appropriate and depending on the setting chosen, families are provided the opportunity to engage in discussions about kindergarten and children may be observed in play and interaction with other children.





hours.

## KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION MODEL

Self-Assessment Rating: \_\_\_\_\_\_

Reflection:

Goals:

Program will plan for class coverage and/or compensation for staff working outside of contract

#### Indicator/Description

Transition evaluation meeting(s): Ongoing evaluation of children and communication with families.

**Emerging:** Receiving team along with sending team educators and administrators maintain a <u>checklist</u> <u>of transition activities</u> reviewed at the start of the calendar year to prepare for transition the following fall.

 Program will plan for class coverage and/or compensation for staff working outside of contract hours.

**Progressing:** Receiving team along with sending team educators and administrators maintain a <u>checklist of transition activities</u> reviewed at the start of the year prior to transition and at least quarterly to ensure activities are occurring as planned, and to discuss and evaluate the success of the transition planning and activities. The meeting at the start of the school year also includes discussion of the current class of children transitioning to kindergarten and the sharing of successes and concerns.

 Program will plan for class coverage and/or compensation for staff working outside of contract hours.





**Excelling:** Receiving team, along with sending team, educators and administrators engage in monthly meetings throughout the year to share and discuss transition processes, successes and concerns, and information received from child data (i.e., <u>ISPROUT</u> or any other assessment information), as well as family information regarding transition. This approach takes a two-year view of a child's transition. The regular meetings include not only discussion of upcoming transition but also the transition of the current class of children who have transitioned to kindergarten.

- Program will plan for class coverage and/or compensation for staff working outside of contract hours.
- Maintain a written <u>release form</u> between sending and receiving teams to share child information, family needs and concerns, and contact information for the family after they leave the early learning program.

Self-Assessment Rat	ing:		
Reflection:			
Goals:			







**Description:** Use the self-assessment at the end of each indicator to determine your progress on the corresponding support for collaboration within the community.

## Indicator/Description

Communication and collaboration with community organizations (i.e., public library, pediatricians, faith-based organizations, coalitions, and employers) informing families and supporting educators in the transition process.

**Emerging:** Community agencies and organizations make transition informational handouts available (i.e., <u>Kindergarten Readiness Overview</u>, <u>Preparing for Kindergarten</u>, and <u>Steps to Success</u>), providing families updates on events such as registration and school calendars.

**Progressing:** Community agencies and organizations engage the kindergarten program(s) educators and administrators to be present at community events to discuss policies, procedures, and expectations related to school and the transition to kindergarten. These events may include sessions for families hosted by a local early childhood coalition, at the community library, or through Purdue Extension.

• Program will plan for class coverage and/or compensation for staff working outside of contract hours.

**Excelling:** Community agencies and organizations will collaborate to **co-host** multiple events throughout the year with kindergarten and early learning programs to discuss and provide information (i.e., the <u>Indiana Early Learning Standards Family Guides</u> and a <u>Transition Calendar for Families</u>) regarding transition and potential supports needed for positive outcomes for families and children. These events may include sessions for families **co-hosted** with kindergarten and early learning programs by a local early childhood coalition, at the community library, or through Purdue Extension.

 Program will plan for class coverage and/or compensation for staff working outside of contract hours.

Self-Assessment Rating:					
Reflection					





Goals:	
	Indicator/Description
Sharing <b>summary of trans</b>	ition data expectations and evaluations of transition and education needs children and family to community organizations.
Emerging: Community age family needs and expectation	ncies and organizations will collect and report on data regarding child and ons as related to transition.
•	ovide information on the value of assessment data, and using the <u>ISPROUT</u> ty allows for easier transfer of information to local education agencies.
	gencies and organizations will create a <u>formal report</u> that can be shared family needs and expectations as related to transition.
	ncies and organizations will regularly meet with and share reports or data nmunity groups, agencies, and organizations sharing child and family n.
Self-Assessment Rating: _	
Reflection:	





Goals	:
	Indicator/Description
Pi	roviding support across early learning and local education agency programs for positive transition outcomes for children and families.
planni	<b>ging:</b> Community agencies and organizations conduct at least one community-wide transition ng meeting per year for collaboration across early learning and kindergarten programs to ve transition practices.
•	For example, On My Way PreK or education service centers host a meeting for programs to collaborate regarding the needs of children, families, programs, and the community to support positive transition practices.
•	Program will plan for class coverage and/or compensation for staff working outside of contract hours.
_	ressing: Community agencies and organizations create a network for collaboration across early ng and kindergarten programs.
•	For example, On My Way PreK or education service centers host multiple meetings throughout the year for programs to collaborate regarding the needs of children, families, programs, and the community to support positive transition practices.
	Program will plan for class coverage and/or compensation for staff working outside of contract

• For example, a transition coordinator whose role is completely focused on improving transition

practices in the community.

Self-Assessment Rating:	
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info about each child.





Reflection:		
Goals:		





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