
References for this Brief:

UCLA Mental Health in Schools publications:

After-School Programs and Addressing Barriers to Learning
Welcoming and Involving New Students and Families
Frequently Asked Questions About Transition
News Letter

Appendix B Transitions for:

Grade articulation, To and from Special Education, Readiness to learn/Early Childhood transition program, Before and after school programs, School to workplace, Welcoming and social supports

All publications can be found at <http://www.smhp.psych.ucla.edu>

ERIC Digest Publications:

Beyond Transition: Ensuring Continuity in Early Childhood Services. Eric Digest #ED345867, 1992
The Transition to Middle School. ERIC Digest #ED422119, 1998
Helping Middle School Students Make the Transition into High School. ERIC Digest #432411, 1999
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http://www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC_Digests/

The ERIC Home page is <http://www.ed.gov/index.jsp>

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The Hawai'i State Improvement Grant (SIG) is charged with improving systems providing early intervention, educational, and transitional services, through an innovative personnel development program supported by coordinated policy, procedure and practice interventions. Ultimately, the Department of Education (DOE) believes that this strategy will lead to significant gains in in-school and post-school outcomes for children with disabilities. The State Improvement Plan is an integral part of the overall DOE system improvement efforts and the vision of the State Board of Education for meeting the needs of all children so that they attain high performance standards. The Hawai'i State Improvement Grant is a collaborative effort of the Hawai'i State Department of Education and the University Center on Excellence/Center on Disability Studies, College of Education at the University of Hawai'i, Manoa, along with numerous other partners concerned with the education of children with disabilities in the State of Hawai'i.

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Effective Practices Brief



Another Quality Publication Produced by the Center on Disability Studies, COE University of Hawai'i at Manoa

Supporting All Students to Achieve High Standards

Creating Successful Transitions for Your Child

Helpful Tips for Parents

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Overview

This Effective Practice Brief is a condensed summary of research-based practices related to transitions that children make throughout their school careers and highlights the role that parents can play in assisting the ongoing process of change and new learning. The reader will also find local programs, supports, and contacts to help support children as they transition through their education.

What do you mean by transitions?

Transition is a part of life and indicates that a change of some kind is taking place. Families face points of transition with their children from the moment they know they are having a baby! Some transitions more than others, hold tremendous change and emotion for families and children. Schools are realizing that in order to ensure the greatest level of success for students, attention must be given to supporting students and families through various transitions. All students benefit from an increased awareness and focus on support through transitions, including students with special needs who may require well thought out, proactive planning to ensure successful change. Oftentimes the little bit of "extra" time, support, skill building, and attention is all any student needs to be able to stabilize and flourish in their new environment.

The importance of attending to transitions

Research indicates that transitions with appropriate supports contribute to reduced rates of grade retention, improved social adjustment and overall achievement. Transitions can bring up feelings for students and families, so it is good to discuss transitions with children of all ages, identifying hopes, fears, and ideas about how to best manage the changes associated with each pending transition. For parents it is often helpful to speak with other parents who have gone through or are going through similar transitions with their own students. This helps both students and parents to feel empowered when faced with change and to work together to create positive transition experiences for the whole family.

Research shows that one of the primary ingredients for successful transition experiences throughout your child's school career is... your involvement!

A school that has a well-developed transition program for all students, including those with disabilities will provide transitional supports at the levels of:

- **Prevention**, general and broad reaching supports to all students in easing a transition (good morning welcomes, student/parent nights at new middle school).
- **Early-Onset**, more specific and personalized assistance (outreach from school special interest clubs, buddies or ambassadors, parent-to-parent outreach, opportunities for choice making, mentoring and job shadowing).
- **System of Care**, continued personal contact with a smaller group requiring more intensive transitional supports (parenting classes for families, school based counselors focused supports, small groups for student supports, transition teachers to facilitate child centered planning in high school for post secondary goals).

Successful transitions require that schools, families and students think about transitions, plan for them and work together to create smooth and supported transitions for all students.

The transition to middle school is often the most difficult transition for students. Internal and environmental changes bring increased expectations and responsibilities at school, more teachers, more homework, greater social pressures and higher skills waiting to be developed.

High intensity points for transition supports

Children adjust to many changes. These changes can create both opportunities and challenges. Different children require different levels of support in various areas of their school lives. For example, some students may move easily through their day but have great difficulty beginning a new grade. The goal is to have parents work with the school to support their children in negotiating transitions in a positive and empowered way and for the school to support the parents' involvement in these efforts. The Comprehensive Student Support System (CSSS), which is being implemented state-wide to support students and families, pays close attention to all transitions through training and supports to school professionals.

The general point of contact for your transition questions and concerns is the Student Services Coordinator at your school, or the Transition teacher for Special Education and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) students at the high school level. As you think about transitions consider the following specific points of transition and your child:

- **Early childhood/readiness-to-learn transitions to kindergarten**
The statewide Steps to Transition system is in place to support children and families as they transition from early intervention to preschool services. Many schools have specific supports for children and families as they transition from early intervention to preschool. Many schools have specific supports for children and families as they transition into kindergarten. Programs of this kind show national results of increased achievement, social adjustment, and reduced rates of grade retention.
- **Transitions between special and general education programs and transitions between behavioral support programs and a general school setting**
The CSSS has supports and training in place for school professionals as they help students and parents negotiate these transitions.
- **New student transitions**
Past research shows that programs experiencing the greatest success have a high component of parent involvement and support with parents serving on planning committees, volunteering, sharing their expertise, and receiving parenting classes and supports (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 1999.) To the extent that each individual family is able, every little bit counts!

- **Grade-to-grade transitions or articulations**
Programs show success with peer-to-peer support and school-based supports to reduce stress and anxiety associated with new developmental tasks and expectations on students.
- **Elementary-to-middle school transitions**
Research shows that the transition to middle school is the single most difficult transition point for many children. Supports must target developmental issues of great physical, emotional, moral and intellectual growth and change, and help students with lowering anxiety, negotiating multiple classrooms and teachers and peer relationship changes in school settings that are oftentimes larger than elementary environments.
- **Middle school-to-high school transitions**
Programs with high counseling, academic and mentoring components tend to show the greatest impact for improving graduation rates and reducing grade level retention, criminal/delinquent behavior, and teen pregnancy rates.
- **High school to post secondary or work/life transitions**
Research shows that transitions that focus on vocational training and life skills for all students with group counseling and increased self-awareness and career awareness for students with Learning Disabilities were reported as successful. Students with disabilities do best with skills in self-determination, self-advocacy, and career development, so they receive the services, accommodations, and technology supports that will allow them to achieve to their level of ability. Once in post-secondary educational settings, these students do best where there are mechanisms of support management to aid them in managing their educational and health support services. Encouragement from parents may be crucial at this time to follow up on connections to outside opportunities and services are being made for students while they are still in school.

How can I help?

Research shows that one of the primary ingredients for successful transition experiences throughout your child's school career is...your involvement! Parent involvement both in partnership with your school and at home has been identified as one of the constant and primary ingredients for student success. In preparation for transitions parents can:

- Speak with your children about the up and coming transition, visit the campus or classroom, allow them an opportunity to share their thoughts, hopes, fears, concerns and ideas about what might help support them in the time of transition.
- Speak with your school to identify what supports and activities are planned for your child, their peers, and yourself.
- If you are able to participate at the school in any capacity, do so!
- Consider getting involved on a school complex* wide level to help with transitions throughout your child's school career, from K-12 and beyond. Join a complex wide Quality Assurance Team!

* A school complex is a cluster of schools within a geographic area, so children flow from an elementary school into a middle school within their complex.

Summary

Parents serve a primary role in advocating for their child and negotiating smooth transitions. This requires the parents of all students, particularly those with children receiving special education services, to research and network with others to learn what resources are available. Although schools and community based organizations are partners with the family, it is ultimately up to parents to fill the leadership role as the expert on the needs of their child and family. Parents are the keepers of their child's history (including records, report cards and more). Parents must draw from this history in building and embracing the vision of future successes for their children.
