

Handbook for Early Years Practitioners

TRANSITIONAL DEVELOPMENT

From Nursery to Full Time Education



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Introduction

Early Years Practitioners play a very important role in the development of children (Welsh Government, 2017). This handbook will provide practitioners with the essential information about children's transition process from Nursery to Full Time Education.

What is a Transition?

Transition is a period of change from one significant role to another. A transition isn't a singular event, it is a process that will happen over time which requires partnership and continuity (Starting Blocks, no date). It is important to remember that a transition isn't a one-off event, but a process. Transitions are changes that offer significant challenges and opportunities.

Transitions can be challenging, especially when the timescales have changed or when they've moved from one environment to another. Twinkl (no date) states as children develop, they encounter several transitions which may impact them in a number of different ways. There are many transitions that are common to most children. However, according to Twinkl (no date) many of these transitions may be expected, whilst a few may be unpredicted or unexpected. It is critical that Early Years practitioners understand what impact these transitions have on children going into full time education and how it can affect the child's wellbeing and self-development. Attentive planning in advance should take place in order to meet the needs of the child and family as they enter a new phase in education.

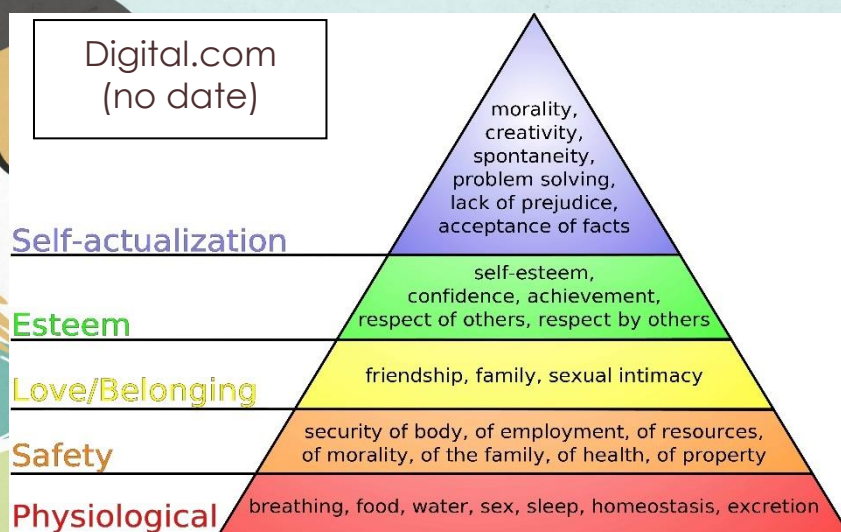
The Needs of The Child

All children are entitled to an education that is appropriate to their needs, to help them achieve the very best possible outcome and to fulfil their potential (GOV.UK, no date). While gaining better relationships with the children, you will notice that all children develop at different rates, some may find a task quite challenging whereas a different child may find it quite easy to complete. This process is completely normal and part of the child's development, with small or big amounts of support, a change in teaching methods and encouragement, excellent progress can be made (GOV.UK, no date).

As shown below, Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a theory that explains how motivation is based on different levels of needs. It is a theory in psychology comprising of a five-tier model. The five levels of hierarchy are Self-actualization, Esteem, Love/Belonging, Safety and Physiological. We must aim to have all children at the top of the pyramid. The lower level, for example, food, water and safety must be met first of all in order to fulfill the higher level of needs. However, according to McLeod (2023) the three middle levels aren't fixed in order. Some children may self-actualize despite poverty, and for some esteem outweighs love. Maslow argued that the human body cannot function optimally if the lowest stages aren't met. The first stage (Physiological) is what motivates our behavior (McLeod,2023).

- We must ensure all children have access to water and must be encouraged to bring a healthy snack for break time.

Once that level is fulfilled, to see the next level is what will motivate us.



The next level is safety, this step can be fulfilled by close family, friends and society. For example, school and medical care. Children need to experience order and control in their lives to be able to achieve the next step (GOV.UK).

- We must ensure that all children have a stimulating and safe place to play within a school environment.

Love and belongingness needs refers to a human emotional need. Examples of belongingness include friendship, acceptance, trust, intimacy and love. This need is shown to be strong throughout childhood and could potentially override the need for safety. McLeod (2023) explains that this is why some children hold onto abusive parents/ caregivers.

Esteem needs are the fourth level in Maslow's hierarchy, this stage includes traits of accomplishments, respect and self-worth. To have more of an understanding of this level, you should split into two categories: (i) esteem for oneself (achievement and independence) and (ii) desire for respect from others (McLeod, 2023). This level is a typical humans desire to be valued and accepted by others. Article 12 of the UNCRC (1989) state that every child has the right to express their feelings and views if there is something affecting them. We must listen and take these views seriously.

- It is important to show the child that we are welcoming their voice and opinion. A well-being circle time in the classroom would allow the child's voice to be heard.

This then leads us on to the final stages of Maslow's hierarchy. This level is the highest level of the pyramid. It allows them to see their full potential, personal growth and self-fulfilment. However, this was later shown to be slightly more of a complicated next step by John Bowlby. Bowlby is a theorist best known for his theory to attachment (McLeod, 2023). Bowlby emphasizes how important childhood experiences are, and how they can significantly change the individual's personality and the way they would then behave. He developed a model of the relationship between children and their primary caregiver. Children can form an attachment with more than one caregiver, but the person they have bonded with from the very beginning is much more of influence on the child (Bowlby, 1997).

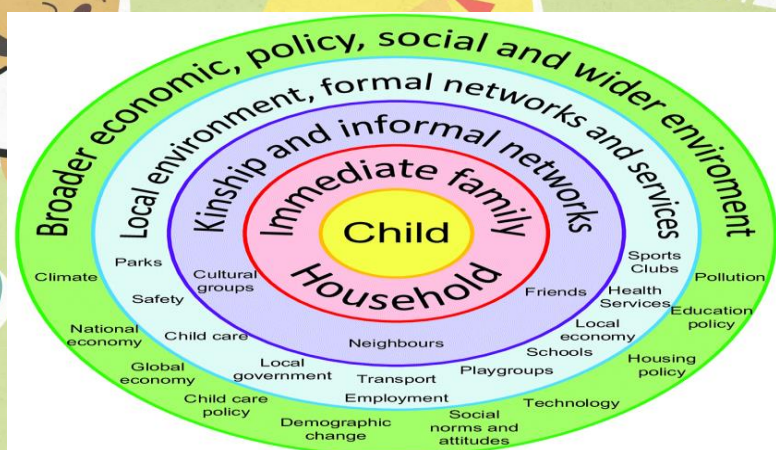
Bowlby believed that the earliest bonds that children create, have a colossal impact on their future decisions and relationships. As practitioners, we need to ensure that the child feels supported in order for them to progress (NSPCC, 2021). Both theorists are in support of the way to help a child transition from part time education to full time in a successful way.



The Role of The Adult

The role of the adult in early years education is pivotal as it is the scaffold to the child's learning (Glazzard and Percival, 2009). Glazzard and Percival (2009) explain that the adult's role is extremely important as it allows us as practitioners to pitch the correct level of learning tasks in accordance with the child's capabilities and level of needs.

Bronfenbrenner (1977) ecological system theory suggest that a child's development is heavily influenced by four interconnected systems. It starts with the immediate surrounds, which is parents, siblings and close family. To more broader structures such as culture (McLeod, 2023). Bronfenbrenner suggests that the environment the child has grown up in would affect every single outcome of their life, including how they feel and think (Santa Clara University, no date). Bronfenbrenner (1977) theory shows important steps that we should follow and will help the adult/caregiver understand how they can help the child transition to full time education.

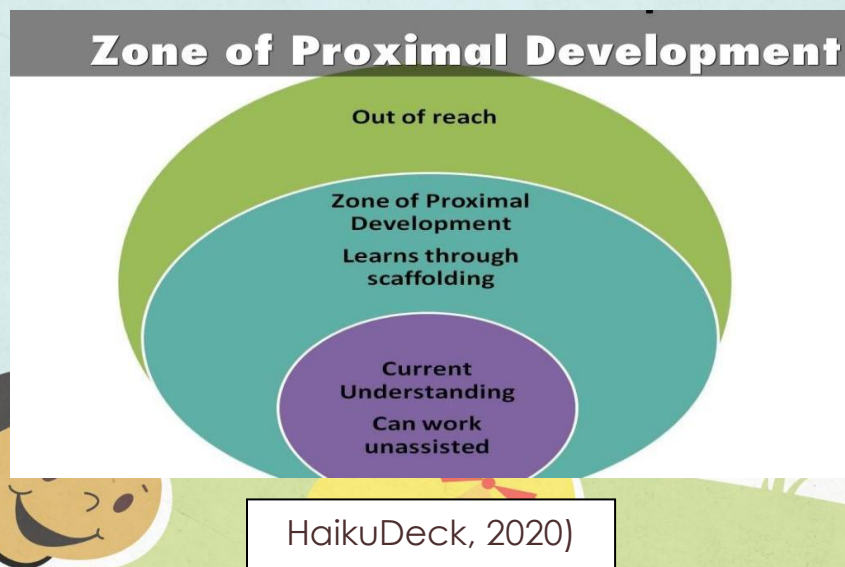


Scott,K

2016

This practise was first shown by theorist Lev Vygotsky (1934, 1978) and his categories of proximal development. Which is a range of small tasks that the child can perform with the help of the caregiver at hand (Cherry,K, 2023). Vygotsky believed that development is heavily influenced by cultural and social factors. McLeod (2023) explains that Vygotsky believed social interaction is the most important part of development in early years. The primary care giver of the child is a solid guide for the child to learn within their surroundings. The child's surroundings at home and in school, if both helpful and supportive will allow the child to have a successful and enjoyable transition into full time education.

We as practitioners should allow and help the child find their own interests within education by observing or by giving them options of different tasks to complete.



It is extremely important that practitioners communicate with parents and caregivers as we then form a relationship. We then get to know the child on a closer level and are informed of the needs of the child. The caregiver will know the child best, therefor it is important to listen to their voice and concerns for their child in education (raising children, 2021).

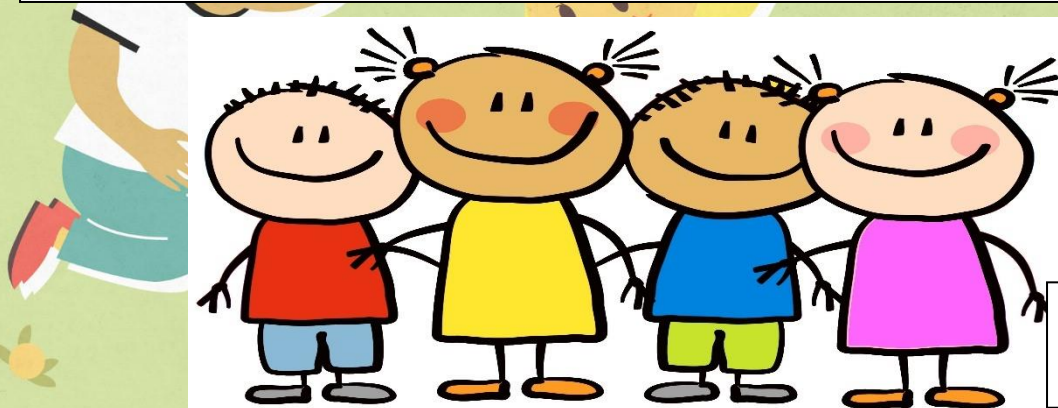
There may be some children starting full time education who may find the transition difficult. It is important that you help the child transition easily (GOV.UK, no date).

Ways to help:

- Get to know the child; ask the questions, allow them to also ask questions.
- Listen to them, repeat what was said so they know that you understand.
- Allow them to do tasks that they are fully comfortable with, do not push them to a place of discomfort - this could set them back.
- Introduce play to the day, this can help the child gain confidence and begin to trust that you are a safe place.

The transition to full time education should be made easier by the practitioner for the child and the caregiver. You must meet the needs of the child and any additional needs that they may have. You must be open, honest, available and accessible. You can keep the adult involved by using learning journals (Seesaw App), written diaries about the child, PTA meetings but also conversations when they collect their child at the end of the day (TeachingExpertise,2008).

Communication is Key!



Elkorn Public
School, 2018

Partnerships

In a supported and encouraging transition, there should be continuous updates from practitioner to caregivers. Everything should be planned and prepped accordingly, adjustments should be made when needed and support should be put in place, in case it is needed (Department of Health and Social Care, 2022).

You must...

- Clearly explain to all caregivers the transition process, therefore they can plan ahead and make their choices.
- Consider the diverse needs and the vulnerabilities of the child and family.
- Identify the children/families that may need additional help through the transition process and comfort them in knowing that you are open to a conversation or have questions asked.
- Promote independence – involve them in the decision making, reinforce that a good way to learn is through making mistakes.
- Explain that this transition is an ongoing process, not something that will pass after the first day.
- Ensure the caregiver that all information about the child will be documented and will be shared to the relevant members of staff. (West Sussex County Council, 2023).

All children will experience a number of transitions during their time in education. Changes can happen at home with caregivers and in the school setting. All transitions should be managed according to the child and their emotional capacity. The support you give to the child now, will help them as they mature (ToolsForSchools, 2023).

The Welsh Governments Family Toolkit

The Welsh Government have developed a toolkit for schools in Wales in which it helps enable and to strengthen their approach to families and communities. There are five levels to this toolkit and the fifth level focuses on how we can develop partnerships within the community and with multi-agencies.

This toolkit will help us on how we can plan effective transitions whilst still focusing on not only the child, but as well as their families. Community partnerships can support the families and help strengthen their relationship with the school (GOV.UK).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory (1979) (as shown on page 7) explains that a child's development is a process lead by their environment and those in their surrounding environment (Antony, E.M, 2022). This includes parents, caregivers and neighboring communities. According to Mitchell, L. et al, (2021) partnerships with the caregivers, close family and their community show a better outcome for a transition to full time education as you can build on a relationship, gain trust and understanding of the child. Actions at home, while supporting the child can help support their personal transition through education.

It is important to work alongside caregivers, multiagency and the community as you as a practitioner would be supporting families in a holistic way, you would be continuously addressing their needs and challenging them to improve. According to Dunlop (no date) the partnership between parent and practitioner will be more effective if you have balance. Dunlop (no date) further explains that a parent/caregiver would appreciate being treated as an equal and an active participant while decisions are being made for the child's needs rather than being told what to do.

Example:

Case Study: Harrison (3)

Harrison has been attending full time school for 2 months and has settled in well. Helen, his key person has begun noticing some concerns regarding his development.

Helen's observations have shown:

- Harrison won't initiate conversations with the other children, but his speech is quite good 1-2-1.
- Is starting to have a lot of accidents in school after not having them for a while.
- Is getting upset at school gates.
- Not eating his packed lunch at school.

Helen has built a good, trusting relationship with Harrison's mum and would regularly have conversations regarding Harrison's day/ progress. Now Helen has built a relationship with his mum, she is able to sensitively ask questions about home life.

Mum has also shared concern over Harrison not wanting to build conversation with children his age. Mum has asked if Helen is willing to help develop communication skills through play – Helen agrees and targets this area in the classroom.

Through patience and time, Harrison is able to communicate and play with his peers confidently.



Early Years Training & Consultancy
(2015)

Interventions

Starting full time school is one of the biggest transitions a child will undertake. It is important to document all observations in order to gain an understanding over time of how the child has settled. Twinkl (no date) explains that this can help identify problem areas and will help practitioners plan for the child's next steps.

There are several interventions you can take in order to allow the transition to run as smooth as possible:

- Initially, you can offer a 'Meet the Teacher' session or a personal handout to the parents/ caregivers.
 - 'Settling In Sessions' – these are sessions in which you would allow a child to come into the classroom for a few hours along with their parents in order to become familiar with the new surroundings while also having a known face in the room. Early Years Careers (2015) explains that these sessions are a very important time for yourself as a practitioner and the child to start a bond and to find out everything you may need to know about the child.
- ✓ **These two strategies will help your child feel settled, happy and become familiar with a new setting within their school and help prepare them for a full-time education.**

Below are examples of what you can use in the classroom (right) and a handout you are able to fill and give to the caregivers (left).

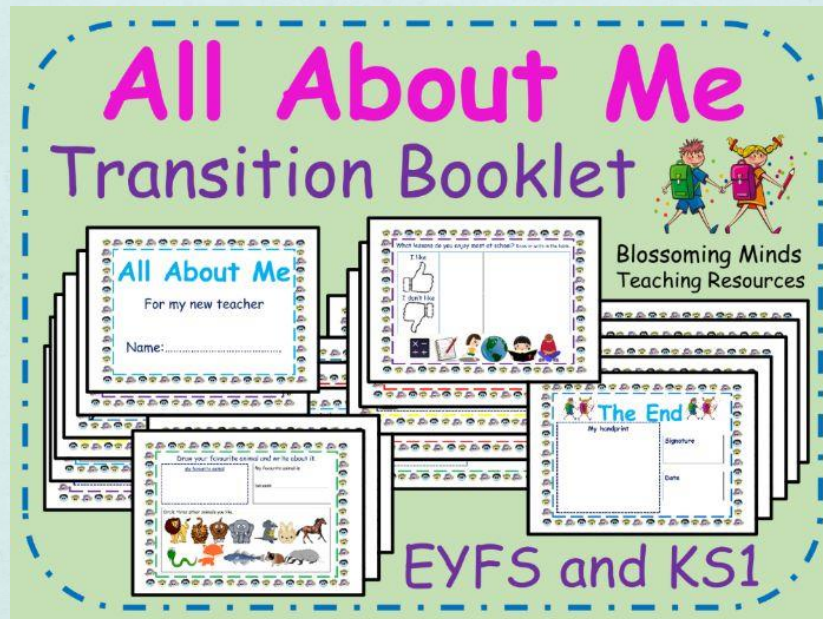
A colorful handout titled "MEET THE TEACHER" with a rainbow border. It contains four sections: "HELLO!" with a speech bubble, "EDUCATION" with a rectangular box, "CONTACT ME!" with a dashed rectangular box, and "FAVORITES" with a dashed rectangular box.

Pinterest (no date)

A worksheet titled "My Favourite Things Settling in Sheet" with a cartoon border. It contains seven sections: "My friends are..." (rectangular box), "My favourite toys at school/nursery..." (rectangular box), "My favourite area to play in is the..." (rectangular box), "My name is" (circular box), "My favourite games to play..." (rectangular box), "At home I like to..." (rectangular box), and "I can concentrate for a long time doing..." (rectangular box).

Twinkl.com (no date)

When transitioning to full time education it is important to keep everything well documented. TES (2023) share a transitioning booklet that could be used in order to help gain an understanding of not only the child's interests but their abilities.



(TES,2023)

As well as documenting all of the important information that we have to obtain, it is crucial that we listen to the child and what they have to say.

What's their favorite activity?

Do they have a favorite animal?

What is their favorite color?

The Importance of Play

Montessori famously taught “*Play is the work of the child*” (Edwards, 2020). This phrase indicates that children work through play. *Dr Maria Montessori, an Italian educator in the 20th century, who elaborated how children can be successfully educated through play.* Pacific Northern Academy (2021) explains that play is a way of exploring your surroundings and discovering the world, not a relief from learning. It is key in helping children explore their own natural abilities.

Montessori expressed the importance of using real tools. This approach would help children understand risk assessment. In a typical Montessori classroom, every item would have its own space, and all would be organised. This way of planning would allow the children to develop respect for the items and understand the responsibility behind the risk of using the item (Spring stone, Montessori School, no date). It would also allow the practitioner to observe the children and see their needs, likes and dislikes.

All practitioners must understand that play is a significant factor to learning. It is the central part to how children learn.

The Welsh Government (2002) definition of play is it surrounds children's behavior, which is **freely chose, personally directed and intrinsically motivated.**

There are 7 core aims for children under the Welsh Government's scheme, play is established as one under Core Aim 4 – Play, Sport, Leisure and Culture. (Welsh Government, 2012).

Proposed Outcomes

Research into transitions and practice according to the ETC Research Group (2011) suggests that helping children in making important relationships would help if the transition was a positive experience. A positive start to full time education would help children experience a sense of wellbeing and belonging.

It is extremely important to remember that transition is a slow process, it won't resolve itself overnight. High quality transitions help recognise how important it is to have a voice and feeling known (birthto5matters, no date). In order to gain a successful learning journey, it is important to ensure continuity between their home, their key people and within the school setting.

As shown previously, Maslow's hierarchy of needs (page4) demonstrates how motivation is based on different levels of needs. We must aim to have all children at the very top stage, after completing the previous levels and the child gaining basic needs.



Love and belongingness are a human emotion. A child has a right to express their feelings and views. We must listen and take these views seriously. Having a reliable caregiver that is able to communicate and listen to the child's needs is pivotal. It will allow you to align the child's capabilities and needs alongside the correct level of learning. Bronfenbrenner's theory (Page7) explains that children's development is heavily influenced by their surroundings and how it can help the caregiver help their child's transition.

It is important to remember that some children may find the transition process daunting and will need that extra bit of help. Ask the questions, listen to their answers, allow their opinions, and help them gain confidence. There should be continuous updates from the practitioner to caregiver. Adjustments should be made, and support must be given when needed.

The support you give to the child now, will help them as they mature.



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