

Managing Transitions in Early Years settings.

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Student Number- 1803428

Module Code- EAEE4009C

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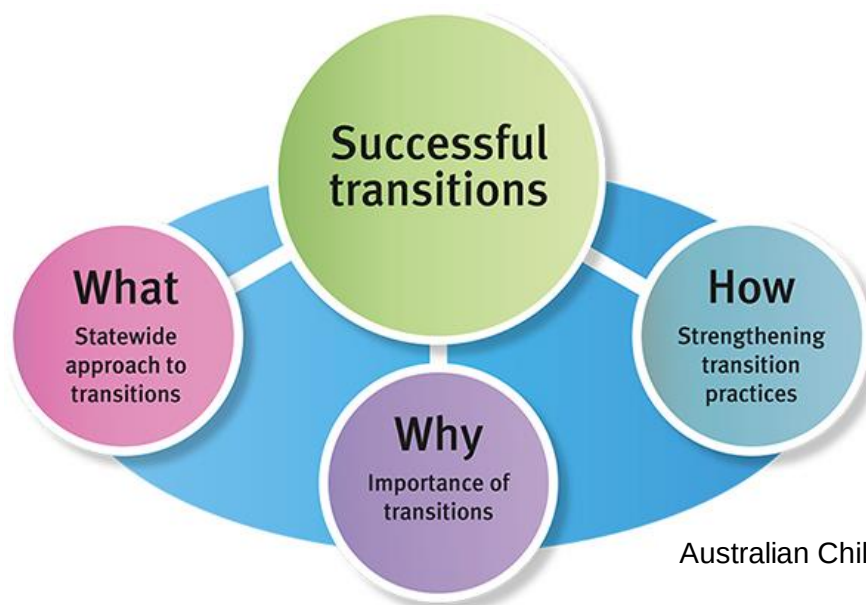
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Introduction

Transitions can be challenging for a child, whether it be from nursery to reception class or primary school to secondary school but with the right support and guidance a well-planned transition can be a positive change for any child. Understanding how a child develops can help determine how children adjust to change and transitions.

Recognising that all children can be vulnerable when facing changes is important. Carefully planning, sharing information and having a mutual understanding with families all contribute to a happy transition. Giving a child the time to settle in at their own pace at the new setting is key. Letting a child stand back and watch before getting involved could help them avoid feeling overwhelmed.

This handbook will assist key workers in supporting children in their transition to preschool or nursery phases. The importance of a positive relationship built between children and early year practitioners can be an effective influence on a child's achievements, behavioural problems and other relationships within a school setting. The handbook is designed to support practitioners in early years to assist children who may become vulnerable or uncertain during the transition period. When surroundings and routines are different and unfamiliar it is important for practitioners to show children that a transition is "a process rather than an event." Early years matters. (2018)



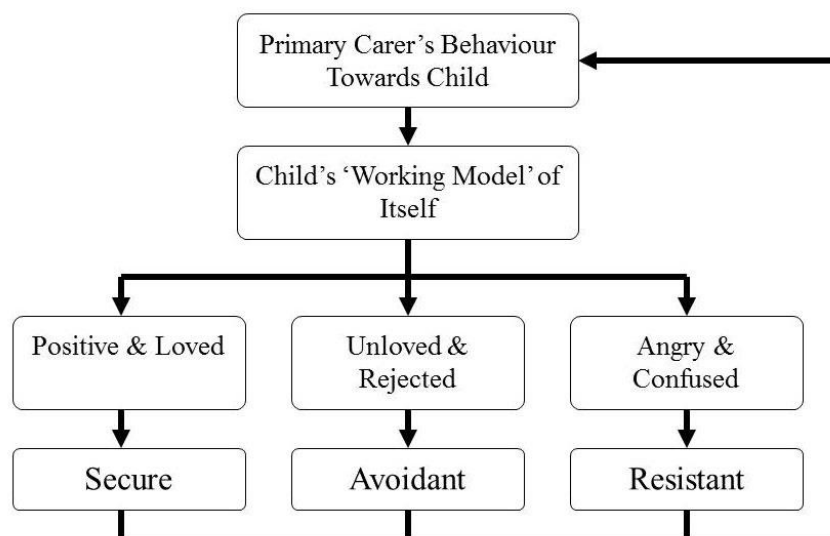
Australian Childcare Alliance (2015)

Importance of a positive transition

One of the first transitions a child will experience is from home to a nursery setting. This process will have an impact on their future at school which is why it's important to prepare any child for a positive transition to a new environment. A positive transition will presumably have a positive effect on a child and the changes they are facing. Preparing children for these changes is important to aid smooth progress throughout their early year's education. Ideally children should be comfortable therefore confident. Some children may be more vulnerable than others and it's essential that the transition stage is as smooth as possible. It is especially important for children who may have disabilities, come from disadvantaged families or a different culture to know that they have support, however challenging things may be. "All students can benefit from increasing their preparedness and skills for adjusting to change." Brown, A. (No date)

It is very important at this stage that parents are made to feel comfortable with the transition. If they are nervous or ill at ease they can easily convey these feelings to the child. Some parents might feel it is a little too soon to release their child into the care of a stranger and in the company of a large group of other children. It is important to allay these fears from the outset. This can be done by encouraging the parent to attend an open day.

By showing the benefits and positivity of the transition it can outline the importance of understanding the attachment needs for both the child and parent. John Bowlby's Attachment Theory shows the bond between a child and an important adult. He believes that the early bond between a mother and baby can give a child emotional stability later in their early years. During the 'clear cut attachment' stage of Bowlby's theory a child's emotional security will move from a constant dependency on a parent to being made aware "that they are held in mind by an important person in their life." Mickelburgh, J. (2011)



McLeod, S. (2007)

Preparing a child

Stability for a child in one of the most important aspects of their early years. Despite this, change is unavoidable throughout school which is why it's vital to prepare children for transitions.

One important factor is to build good, positive relationships with the child and their families. "Parents draw comfort from relationships with those caring for their child." Patel, A. (2018) Parents can be just as nervous as the children which is why it's important to gain their trust alongside the child's. The online article by 'teach early years' goes on to say that transitions can be an anxiety trigger and the separation can be hard for both the child and their parents.

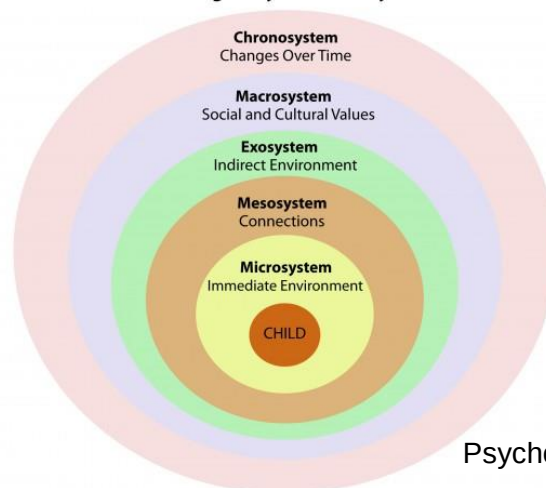
Urie Bronfenbrenner, a human development psychologist shows how parental involvement has an effect on a child's development. Adults such as teachers, parents and care workers who have a beneficial effect on the child's learning and social outcomes fall under the 'microsystem' category in his Ecological Systems Theory of Development. According to the 'mesosystem' when there is positive communication between practitioners and families about the child's education "children can rely on their support system and feel more confident in creating and pursuing goals." Landon, K. (2014)

Preparing the child for the changes they face can build their confidence and independence. Organising a school or class visit will help toward preparing the child where they can familiarise themselves with what they think is important to them which will aid the settling in process.

Another positive strategy which can be very beneficial for the child, parents and teachers is a home visit. Having one to one time with a child in their own environment can make the experience a little more comfortable. Being able to get to know a child better away from the classroom and other children and parents could give a teacher more of an insight in to their personality. A home visit also gives anxious parents the opportunity to discuss any private matters and concerns in their home.

Implementing certain routines that will be in the early years setting can also be beneficial. Encouraging children to put on their shoes or coats without assistance, or learning where the toilet is and when to go can make the transition period a little easier. Learning to recognise their name can give them confidence. Identifying the letters of their name can help towards ownership of their belongings.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory



Psychology notes HQ. (2013)

The role of the adult.

Adults such as parents, teachers and family service workers can all support a child throughout their transition. An important role for adults is making a child feel safe and secure while transitioning to a new setting. Preparing a child for what is going to happen will be beneficial for their well-being and the settling in process.

Regular meetings between practitioners and families before and during the transition period can allow important information and any concerns to be shared. Providing the child and their family with information in advance, about the changes and routines they are going to be facing will contribute to a smooth transition.

It's important for the adults in the child's life to help develop confidence and a positive attitude towards the transition, by doing so it will encourage their readiness for school. Reassuring a child that transitioning is a natural progression in education and having time to settle in is to be expected will put them at ease and will help towards making the transition less tense.

Building a positive relationship with the adults around is an important factor for any child as it encourages a healthy adjustment to their new surroundings. By familiarising themselves with the adults in their life, children can create a close bond and find comfort and security. "Among many important developmental features which occur, the principal change which is promoted during such child/adult interaction is the gradual movement towards the interdependence of thought and action." Williams, D. (2016)

For some children in Wales who are facing a transition in to a Welsh speaking setting this can be confusing and daunting. A child may feel confused if they don't understand therefore they should be reassured that the early years staff will also be speaking their first language at the new setting. Children must be reassured that teachers are there to support them in any challenges they may face, including communication.

To build a positive relationship with parents and to get to know their child before he or she starts the new transition process asking questions could be beneficial.

Questions to ask parents.

- Does your child have any worries regarding the transition?
- What is your child's favourite thing to play with?
- What are some skills and strengths they may have?
- Have they been to a similar setting prior? (Day care, child minder, preschool)
- Do you have any fears or concerns?
- What would you like the school/setting to keep you up to date on?
- Is there any information regarding your child that would help us support them?

Tips to give parents.

- Discuss the transition in a positive way- Having regular discussions will in turn help the child become more comfortable with the thought of transitioning.
- Set up a playdate with other children who will be at the setting- having a familiar face on the first day of school will help the child adjust to the new experience.
- Implementing similar routines and responsibilities- By encouraging the child to follow the school routines such as putting their coat on, going to the toilet independently, looking after their belongings, will make the transition period a little easier and less daunting.

The needs of the child.

The needs of every child are extremely important and for some children with additional needs such as disabilities and educational needs, transitioning to a new or different setting can be stressful. It is important for the children to understand that if they require special support then their needs will be met.

According to the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child article 28 they believe that “children have the right to an education.” They believe that children have the right to an education whether their gender, disability or race. Education should encourage growth, respect and understanding towards themselves and others. Practitioners have a duty to ensure that they provide the children with positive and hardworking attitudes and that they know they can rely on them for support and encouragement.

The UNCRC believe that every child has the same rights and the right to education whatever their colour or creed. All children should have the right to primary and secondary education.

Play is very important and is one of the main ways a child will learn and develop. Because play is often fun and enjoyable children become fully engaged and don't realise they are learning at the same time. Developing skills such as language, emotions, creativity, problem solving and social skills helps nurture a child's imagination.

Bullying has always been a problem but is possibly more so today. It is therefore more important than ever that people in charge enforce a strong no bullying policy thus helping a child feel more positive transitioning to a new or different setting. We hear the words zero tolerance being used frequently and this must really be the case.

The aim of education is to focus on the children and ensure that they are pushed to the best of their abilities in all aspects. “Education must be child- centred and empowering.” Unicef, Committee on the Rights of the Child. (2001)

Practitioners can support children by-

- Observing- Observing a child on how they behave, interacts with others and how they react to new situations can help define their strengths and weaknesses. This can assist practitioners on meeting those children's needs.
- Role play- Having a role play area can help children express themselves and can encourage creative communication with others who feel happy and comfortable in that area.
- Circle time- Circle time interaction can enhance social skills which could benefit children who may be feeling a little shy or anxious. It can give children the opportunity to gain awareness of others going through the same transition as them.
- Sensory Exploration- Having areas such as water and sand tables allows children to learn with hands- on materials and gain information through their senses.

Effective transition.

Some children who may struggle with the transition period must always feel a practitioner is available and approachable. This will enable them to face up to a problem quickly before it develops. There is no substitute for the bond created between practitioner and child. In addition certain practical resources will help.

“There are different expectations, equipment, rules and lots of new people to meet and learn about” Hunt, M. (No date) Therefore, having a visual timetable to see the order and process of the day can be beneficial and can also teach organisation and independence skills. “They are perfect for introducing new routines, rules and procedures at the beginning of the school year.” You clever monkey. (2016) Seeing the structure of the day can reduce anxiety for a child by allowing the child to prepare and cope with the transitioning experience.

A simple sticker chart for children who may find the transition stage a little harder than others could be beneficial. Receiving a sticker for arriving at school without crying or for interacting with other children could be a positive step for a child.

Iram Siraj-Blatchford, Professor of Child Development and Education is a promotor of sustained shared thinking. She believes that SST is a process which shows the understanding of a child's interests and developing an idea or skill together. “You can encourage the use of language, as well as understanding” Brodie, K.(2014) Interacting with children one to one in small groups can have a calming effect and encourage more discussions rather than having the whole class together.

The Montessori Method by Maria Montessori, a former Italian teacher, encourages independent and active learning. Her method allows children to make their own choices and to discover things hands on. “The adults' role is to create a stimulating environment and then leave the child undisturbed.” Cassidy, S. (2012) Laying out a number of activities that children are free to explore at their own pace can promote curiosity. By letting them find out information on their own can encourage a less anxious transition.

These are simple examples of helpful resources but could be helpful and beneficial for a positive transition so a new class room or setting. Gaining a reward or being able to see the structure of the day can put children at ease and promote a positive attitude.



<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/469359592387139963/?lp=true> (no date)



Policies and procedures

A transition is the movement or change from one setting to another. Policies and procedures can be adjusted to support specific children in their settling during period. Starting in a new classroom or school can be stressful for any child and every setting should be aware that the aim of their policies is to promote a smooth transition.

Having an information pack about the children who are starting at the setting will be helpful to focus on child's interests, circumstances, routines or any medical/ additional needs. Collecting relevant information will encourage a positive transition as practitioners will have a deeper understand of the child.

Any other applicable information such as care issues, educational needs, social or emotional concerns will help teachers and staff to meet the child and family's needs.

If a child has previously been to a similar setting such as preschool it could be valuable to work with them to gain further information prior to the transition. Organising a visit to the previous setting to meet the children could help implement a specific routine if needed.

Priorities of the school and teachers

- Ensure that transitions are smooth for both the children and their families.
- Make parents aware of school routines and how to support their child.
- Encourage children to be more independent and develop confidence during the changes.
- Good communication between the practitioners and families for positive outcomes.
- The children's wellbeing, safety and security is always considered.
- All children have equal opportunities.
- Working together for the interests of the child.

Children with additional learning needs

A child who has additional learning needs may find the transition period more stressful than others. This could also have an effect on how well their parents cope with the changes their child is about to face.

A transition for a child who has additional needs or disabilities may need further planning to ensure that it goes positively and smoothly.

A child with ADHD or similar symptoms may find it tougher to manage their emotions compared to other children. "Research that shows that the wiring in the brain centres that are involved in helping kids exercise control over their emotions are less developed" Martinelli, K. (2018) which explains why some children show extreme emotion when they are unsettled or if they're asked to do something they don't want to do.

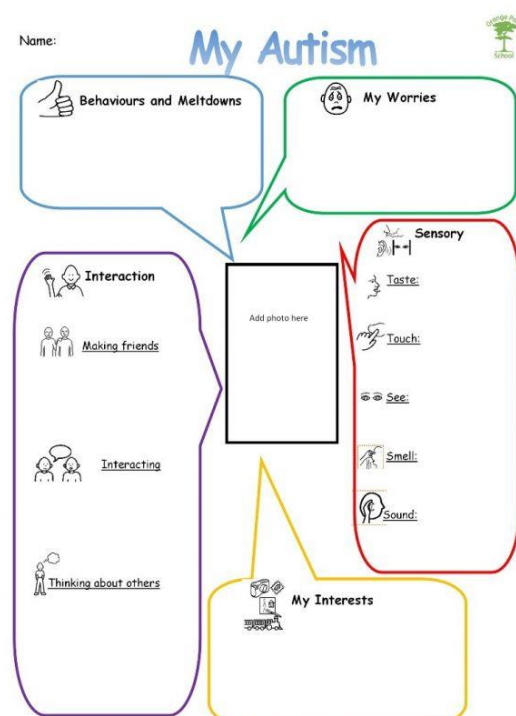
Supporting children with additional learning needs.

Transitioning to a new or different setting can be challenging enough, but changing from one activity to another can be just as hard for a child with ALN. Moving their focus from one activity or location to another can be difficult therefore having a timetable or a timer can help a child visually see what is coming up next and how much time they have.

To help with the transition period, making the new setting as comfortable as possible for a child can be beneficial. Brining a toy from home for comfort or having activities planned which are to their interest can put them at ease.

A behavioural reward book or chart could be helpful to a child to track how they are doing. By visually seeing their behaviour progress it can be very motivational. Reward books and charts can help the child, practitioners and parents target specific behaviours which can lead to setting positive goals. "Behaviour charts help with determining the triggers and coping strategies for behaviours associated with autism spectrum disorders." Sidther, I. (2014) By making the process as clear as possible is can help a child associate good or positive actions with rewards.

Network Autism. (2016)



Conclusion.

Whether adult or child making a transition to a new social situation is rarely easy. If as adults we feel apprehensive, it is unlikely that a child will feel any different.

Taking steps to ensure that a child's transition in to a new early years setting goes smoothly can have an impact on their future transitions. Having a positive start will encourage comfort, a feeling of belonging and value.

A child must feel comfortable and contented in his or her new environment. They need to feel that they belong and above all else they need to trust the people in charge of their development and welfare, and feel that they can turn to them whenever they need reassurance, help or simply comfort.

When managing a child's transition in the early years there are several important factors; the setting the child is leaving, whether it be a home environment or a nursery setting, the new setting for the child, the child's parents and other adults, and most importantly the child himself.

It is vital to consider these factors if the transition is to be smooth and successful.

By meeting families it will be possible to learn about the child and also to give the parents confidence in the new settings and dispel any fears they might have.

By looking closely at the child's character and behaviour in the previous setting it will be much easier to organise and manage the situation in the new setting and prepare a system that will suit the child.

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