



Written By

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Introduction

The vision in the Early Year Learning Framework (EYLF) (DEEWR, 2009) of children's lives as characterised by belonging, being and becoming connects well with the topic of transitions. Keeping the EYLF vision in mind when developing policies and practices helps education and care services to stay focused on the issue from the child's perspective while managing other priorities including those of the family and service.

Transitions are times when children move between and adapt to different spaces or places and with different people, experiences, expectations and routines. The term encompasses regular transitions across a day and those that occur at significant times in children's lives such as starting in an education and care service or starting full-time school (EYLF, p. 16).

Children may experience a range of transitions including;

- Going from home and community into an ECEC service.
- Moving from one age grouping or room to another.
- Starting at a new ECEC service.
- Leaving an ECEC service and starting full-time school.
- Participating in before and after school programs when at full-time school.
- Moving between a universal service such as long day care and an early intervention service.
- Going from inside to outside time, or from play-based experiences to a routine activity or group time.

Not many adults experience the range of transitions some children deal with regularly. While adults can find transitions challenging, we sometimes have unreasonable expectations of how well children will cope with the changes they are experiencing. On the other hand, we can be sensitive to the impact of transitions for some children and take simple steps to support them in managing change.

Starting school is a significant milestone in the life of any child and family. Our service supports continuity of learning and transitions for each child by sharing relevant information, clarifying responsibilities and by developing strategies that support a positive transition to formal schooling. (Standard 6.3)

The education and care service will liaise with local schools to develop a smooth and comprehensive transition to school program. The education and care service will work in collaboration with families to support the individual strengths and needs of each child and provide a high quality program to help children experiencing the transition to formal school.

Strategies

Transition from home to early learning setting practices

Adopt a primary carer system where each child is allocated to a particular educator who is the key person to support the child and family especially during the orientation period and on arrival each day.

- Be aware of power dimensions that are present in relationships between professionals, families and children, especially when you are building relationships with a new family and child. Think about the differences between 'power over' (we tell families what we expect and what they will do) and 'power with' (we work in partnership with families – listening to and responding using a two-way exchange of information and ideas).
- Allow a new child to play with a sibling or a child they know in another group as a way of supporting the child through the transition period, or enable them to spend time with an educator they know from outside the centre while they are settling in.
- Ensure educators have time to welcome children and families individually each morning and to farewell them at departure time. Greeting children and families by name and conveying strong messages of welcome every day are important transition strategies.
- Display photos of adults and children in each group, noting who is present and who is away so that children are prepared for and supported to cope with the absence of staff or friends.
- Develop a transition plan in consultation with educators, the family and the child if transitions continue to be challenging.

Transitions to a new age group or room practices

- Consult with families and older children about proposed room changes and where possible respect their opinions or requests.
- Develop policies and practices related to room or group changes based on children's best interests and not merely on children's age.
- Instead of moving children to a new room with new educators, move educator/s up with a group of children.
- Provide families and children with advance notice about any room or group changes, the reason for the change and how you will support children and families through the process.
- Ensure a child has a friend in the new group or room and encourage them to visit their 'old' room or group.
- Conduct 'orientation' visits to the new room so that children are familiar with the room, its equipment and layout before they make the move; encourage them to use new or more challenging equipment during orientation visits.

Transition to school practices

Starting school is a major transition for young children. When children know what to expect they are much more likely to feel confident and happy about starting school.

The education and care program assists children to develop the following skills considered useful for engaging positively in the school environment:

- Concentrating on the task at hand
- Persevering when faced with difficulties
- Responding positively to new situations
- Taking some responsibility for their behaviour as it impinges on others in the group
- Developing the communication skills necessary for group or individual play
- Developing positive feelings about themselves and others
- Experiencing a sense of self satisfaction resulting from achievement.

Strategies**The Educational Leader will:**

- Establish systems across the education and care service to ensure there is continuity of learning when children transition to school.

Educators will:

- Encourage children to start thinking and talking about school by exploring various elements of the school experience. (E.g. uniforms , eating packed lunches, talking to older children about school and how a school environment is different.)
- Talk with children about starting school, respecting any concerns and communicating these to families.
- Communicate with families to ensure the education and care service is meeting the individual strengths and needs of the children and families.
- Consider family priorities and any concerns about the transition process. Each families cultural and linguistic needs will be respected, along with family diversity.
- Develop a program to ensure a smooth transition for children from the education and care environment to the school environment. The program requires both parent and educator support for the child. This collaboration will ensure the best possible climate for this transition.
- Consider the individual rest or sleep needs of children in the months leading up to the transition to school and whether a reduction in sleep times may prepare some children for the longer school day routine. Children will continue to have rest periods and quiet activities during the day. Beds will be available for any child who requires rest or sleep.
- Focus on school readiness in all areas of development throughout the day. Children will be encouraged to extend their knowledge via their interests and educators will assist children to challenge their skills regularly.
- Regularly discuss children's development and readiness for school with families.
- Support each family's decision about when to send children to school, acknowledging the NSW Department of Education and Training's policy that "children must turn five by July 31 in the year they start Kindergarten. All children in NSW must start school by their sixth birthday".
- Develop an information package for families about the transition to school. This will include information on school readiness skills, how to support children and what to expect with the transition process. This package will be reviewed each year to meet the needs of the families and to incorporate updated information from local schools.
- Be supported to access professional development opportunities to ensure current knowledge and practice regarding transition to school is employed within the education and care service.
- Facilitate relationships and networking with local schools to support children and families with the transition process and to open lines of communication. The importance of school preparation through school visits, orientation days and meeting the Kindergarten teachers will be regularly promoted.
- Online digital transition to school statements will be completed for each child transitioning to school that includes educator, child and family perspectives.
- Participate with children and families in orientation to school programs.
- Share stories with children about going to school and encourage discussion so that you can identify and address any concerns or clarify misunderstandings.
- Support children's learning about road and bike safety as part of school readiness planning.
- Work with a local community early years' network to generate interest and support for children starting school (for example, local businesses display posters congratulating

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new school entrants or they sponsor transition forums or school bags for children; local government ensures children will be safe going to and from school by providing supervised crossings and informing families about driving and parking safely near schools).

- Invite children from the previous year who are at school to talk about transition to school from their perspective. Parents of the school children can be invited to talk to this year's parents.
- As part of your literacy program, visit the school library and work with the librarian to foster book borrowing and sharing stories at the centre and at home.

Conclusion

Children are actively trying to make sense of what is happening in their lives. Shifting transition policies and practices from 'doing things to children and families' to an approach of 'collaboration and consultation with children and families' resonates with the vision in the EYLF. Children's and families' sense of belonging in a setting is strengthened by transition practices that respond to their individual interests, abilities and strengths. Recognising children's being in transition processes means seeing the present time as valuable in itself, without over emphasising preparing for the next stage or setting. Who children become in a new setting partly depends on thoughtful, respectful and well planned transition practices.

Relevant Legislation

Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010
Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

Resources & References

Education and Care National Regulations 2011: 118, 148
The National Quality Standard (2010).
Being, Belonging and Becoming: The Early Years Framework for Australia (2009).
Early Childhood Australia's Code of Ethics
NSW Department of Community Services – School Readiness -
www.community.nsw.gov.au/DOCSWR/assets/main/documents/school_readiness.pdf
NSW Public Schools -
www.schools.nsw.edu.au/gotoschool/primary/startingschool.php

Relevant Documentation

The topic of transitions is particularly related to the National Quality Standard (NQS) (DEEWR, 2011) Quality Area 6 – Collaborative partnerships with families and communities – and the following Quality Standards:

- 6.3.2:** Continuity of learning and transitions for each child are supported by sharing relevant information and clarifying responsibilities.
- 6.3.3:** Access to inclusion and support assistance is facilitated.
- 6.3.4:** The service builds relationships and engages with their local community.

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