

# TATS TALKS WITH FAMILIES

## ABOUT TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN Part 2— TIPS FOR SUCCESS



### *What are some tips to help your child have a successful transition from prekindergarten to kindergarten?*

Learning about what to expect as your child leaves prekindergarten (pre-k) and transitions to a new class or school will help make the process go more smoothly. Some things that happen at the end of the pre-k school year prior to your child’s transition to kindergarten may include:

- If your child participated in pre-k for at least six months with an Individual Educational Plan (IEP), an exit assessment, Battelle Developmental Inventory, Part 2 (BDI-2) will be administered by pre-k staff. This assessment will measure the progress your child made in pre-k, and a Parent Report will help you understand the assessment results. If this report is not offered to you, feel free to ask pre-k staff for a copy.
- Your child’s IEP will be reviewed, and because you are an integral part of the IEP team, you will want to ask questions and share concerns about what options are best for your child in the new setting.
- Assessments and staff observations may provide information about skills your child is working to gain and how you can support your child at home in practicing and learning the skills.
- There may be meetings for you to attend such as the IEP review meeting, an opportunity to meet with the new teacher and staff, or an open house in the new school setting. These events are a very important part of your child’s transition, so you will want to be sure to participate.



In addition, there may be specific forms for you to complete that are required by the school. These may include information about:

- Changes in your family information: your address and contact information, approved people to pick up your child, your child’s physician, other health information about your child, etc.
- Your child’s need for transportation to and from school, if your child is eligible.

This may also include any other information that the school needs to ensure your child’s safety and a successful transition.

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## What questions should I ask about the new classroom or school?

### What options may be available for my child?

**The options listed below may vary from one school district to another.** Not all districts have all of the options, so being sure to ask questions about the resources and options available for your child in your school district is a very important part of the transition process.

Programs or school choices may include:

- Zoned district school programs—This is your neighborhood public school.
- Magnet programs—These are public schools with a particular theme or academic focus and offer student's specialized programs and create innovative learning approaches in a diverse environment.
- Charter schools—Charter schools are public schools of choice and operate under a performance contract (charter) allowing them to focus on specific goals embedded in their charter, while holding them accountable for academic and financial results. For more information, visit <http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org>
- *Separate Day School*—This is also known as an Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Center School where all of the students have disabilities.



Programs within zoned district schools may include:

*General Education*—a regular Kindergarten classroom with:

- Consultation by the special education teacher who provides face-to-face support to the kindergarten teacher for students with disabilities.
- Support Facilitation by the special education teacher who provides direct services to students with disabilities in the regular kindergarten classroom for part of the instructional period.
- Co-teaching with the special education teacher who provides direct support to students with disabilities in the regular kindergarten classroom for the entire day or for a subject, i.e. language arts or math.

*Resource Room*—a separate classroom where a special education teacher provides instructions to students with disabilities.



*Self-Contained or Separate Class*—a separate classroom where a special education teacher provides instruction to the students, all of whom have disabilities. There may be separate classrooms for varying exceptionalities (VE), Autism Spectrum Disorder, Emotional/Behavior Disabilities, Intellectual Disabilities, Orthopedically Impaired, or Deaf/Hard of Hearing.

### How can I help my child be independent and ready for kindergarten?

Kindergarten classes have more students and there is usually just one teacher, so it is important to help your child be independent. Some things to think about include:

- Have your child wear shoes that have zippers or Velcro instead of laces.
- Have your child wear pants that he/she can pull up and down easily, such as those with elastic waist.
- Have your child wear outerwear that he/she can put on independently on cool days.
- Make sure your child wears clothing without belts.
- Be sure your child can independently open and use the lunch box and food items—without adult help.
- Make sure your child's backpack or bag is the right size and allowed at the school he/she will attend.



### What are some other questions I may need to ask?

- Do I need to do anything to enroll my child, such as completing new forms?
- What are the schedules for breakfast and lunch, and what is my child expected to do on his/her own?
- Will my child be able to ride the bus? If so, what is the schedule?
- What do I do if my child is absent? What if my child arrives early, or late?
- Where are the drop off and pick up areas for parents?
- Is there a before— and after—school care program and how much does it cost?
- Is there an open house or a special time for meeting the new teacher?

## What are some other things I may need to know about transition to kindergarten?

As your child transitions to kindergarten he or she may:

- *Be screened for progress*—Kindergarten students may receive a school readiness screening at the beginning of the school year, and then again at the end of the kindergarten year to measure student progress.
- *Be expected to follow standard curricula*—Kindergarten students will be expected to follow standard curricula with include grade level expectations in the following areas:
  - \* English language arts
  - \* Mathematics
  - \* Science
  - \* Social studies
  - \* Art
  - \* Health
  - \* Physical education
- *Receive grades and progress reports*—Kindergarten students receive progress report cards during the school year. You must sign and return the report card to your child's teacher. Your child's teacher may also use interim progress reports between grading periods. You can ask your child's teacher about this.
- *Receive homework assignments*—Kindergarten students may receive work to complete at home. You can help your child by explaining the instructions and encouraging your child to complete the work independently.



## General suggestions prior to the start of the school year

- Visit the school with your child before the first day.
- Find out where the following are located so you can help your child feel more comfortable:
  - \* School office
  - \* Kindergarten classrooms
  - \* Cafeteria
  - \* Media center
  - \* Playground
- Show your child where the bathrooms are located.
- Practice where you will meet your child by finding out about parent drop off and pick up, and the times for both.
- Talk with your child about rules for riding the bus.
- Ask for a list of the classroom supplies you are expected to provide for your child (paper, crayons, pencils, etc.).
- Put your child's name inside all personal items, such as lunchbox, backpack, sweater and jacket.
- Be sure your child goes to sleep at an appropriate time starting two weeks before school starts, and wake your child up early as he/she would have to get up on a school day. This will help get your child on a school schedule.
- Be positive about going to kindergarten so your child will look forward to the experience.
- When you drop your child off, leave after just a few minutes with a smile on your face.
- Pick your child up right on time after school.



# Helpful Resources



## Still have questions?

If you still have questions, you can:

- Ask your child's pre-k special education teacher
- Ask your child's school pre-k staffing specialist
- Call the school office



## Ways to get involved in the classroom and school

- Join the Parent Teacher Association
- Attend school meetings
- Participate in classroom activities
- Ask the teacher for specific ways to be involved
- Find out if the school has a web site with school activity updates
- Ask if the teacher has a web page and how to email the teacher
- Ask for a school calendar of events

## Helpful communication tips

- Speak openly and honestly, focusing on one issue at a time
- Communicate positively whenever possible
- Listen carefully with total attention to the speaker
- Gather additional information to clarify issues
- Give concrete examples with observations to explain a situation
- Validate the other person's perception by saying "I heard you say..." or, "I understand your concern"
- To avoid divisiveness, use words such as: *we*, *us*, and *our* instead of *you*, *I*, *yours*, and *mine*
- Consider the impact of your tone of voice and body language
- Put your questions in writing and bring them to meetings

## Useful website links:

### **Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services**

The bureau in the Florida Department of Education that administers the IDEA, Part B program for Pre-K children with disabilities <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/>

### **Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS)**

A statewide program that provides diagnostic, instructional and technology support services to school district exceptional education programs and families of students with disabilities. <http://www.fdlrs.org>

### **Florida's Transition Project**

A statewide project that assists local communities in developing and implementing interagency agreements for a seamless system of transition for young children with disabilities, birth to kindergarten, and their families. <http://tats.ucf.edu>

### **Technical Assistance and Training System (TATS)**

A statewide project providing technical assistance and training to programs serving prekindergarten children with disabilities. It provides information to families, teaching staff and program administrators. <http://www.tats.ucf.edu>

