

# TATS TALKS WITH FAMILIES

## ABOUT TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN



### *What is transition for children with disabilities from preschool to kindergarten?*

If your child will be five (5) years old by September 1st, it's time again to think in terms of transition. For most children with disabilities or special health care needs this is usually a transition from a special education preschool program to a public school kindergarten class. This transition may be from a partial-day program to a full-day program, from school district prekindergarten to kindergarten or from one school to another.

During the transition process, the IEP team will determine if your child is still eligible for special education services. As an equal partner on the IEP team, you should take time to become informed on special education rules and requirements, reflect on options and ask questions. You and the rest of the IEP team will determine what services, supports or other choices are best for your child. Decisions regarding your child's placement and services will be made by reviewing evaluation/assessment information and other documentation from your child's teachers and/or therapists, as well as any other professionals who may have been providing services for your child.



School districts and schools develop their own programs to serve their students in the most effective way possible. The Florida Department of Education/[Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services](#) (BEES) provides training to school staff, district administrators, families and others on important issues and current instructional practices and gives the districts information on state and federal laws relating to the education of exceptional students.



In addition, the [BEES Resource and Information Center](#) (BRIC) provides many materials to help parents understand their child's exceptionality, their child's right to a free appropriate education and the processes and activities that are involved in exceptional student education.

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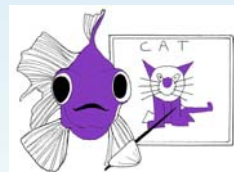
## What is your role in the transition process?

### Your role in the transition to kindergarten may include the following:

- Participating in training opportunities provided by the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) and the Florida Inclusion Network (FIN) in your school district's region
- Preparing a list of questions and/or concerns to ask at the IEP review meeting
- Participating in the IEP review process
- Visiting your child's new classroom/school, if possible
- Meeting your child's teacher at kindergarten orientation or another pre-arranged time
- Facilitating communication between your child's Pre-K teacher and kindergarten teacher by utilizing the resources below that are available for download in both English and Spanish on the Florida Transition Project's website ([www.floridatransitionproject.com](http://www.floridatransitionproject.com)):
  - \* *Getting to Know Me & My Family* — a booklet for you and your child to complete with information you want to share with the new kindergarten teacher
  - \* *Teacher to Teacher* — a booklet the Pre-K teacher can complete to provide information to help the kindergarten teacher better understand the way your child participated in the Pre-K classroom



**Getting to Know  
Me & My Family**



**Teacher to  
Teacher**

## What are some questions you may want to ask?

Q: What information will I need to provide to the school district?

A: If your child is transitioning from a non-school district program into kindergarten, you will need to provide registration information, such as proof of residence; release of information and consent forms; birth certificate; immunization records; and other information as required by the school district. Check with the new program to find out what additional documentation is needed.

Q: What type of classroom will my child be in, and will there be accommodations for my child to help him or her learn new rules and skills?

A: Most programs have an informational brochure or document to help parents become aware of what new skills children will be learning and how the teachers can make accommodations to assist your child (See page 3 for suggestions). You will also participate in the development of your child's IEP, and you can discuss services and accommodations that are important for your child.

Q: How will I know if my child is making progress?

A: The school district will provide you with updates on your child's progress, and there will be an annual review of your child's IEP. You can always request a review earlier if you have concerns.

It is helpful to keep a list of questions. Be sure to ask them when meeting with your child's teacher or school administrators. Make sure you get all your questions answered in a way that you understand.

## What are some terms you may hear at an IEP or other meeting?

- \* **Inclusion**—a term used to describe the concept that supports the right of all children, regardless of abilities, to participate actively in natural environments within their communities. Natural environments are those in which the child would spend time if he or she did not have a disability. These settings include, but are not limited to: home, kindergarten, neighborhood school classrooms, child care, places of worship, community recreation (such as playgrounds and community events) and other settings that all children and families enjoy.

- \* Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) — an educational setting or program where a child with disabilities receives services designed to meet his or her needs while being educated with children without disabilities, to the maximum extent appropriate.
- \* Modifications and Accommodations — tools and procedures that provide equal access to instruction and assessment for children with disabilities. (See below for details.)
- \* Self-contained Classroom — a class composed of children who would benefit from special services within a structured classroom composed solely of children having special needs.

## What are accommodations for children with disabilities?

Accommodations are different ways for children to receive information and to demonstrate their learning. Accommodations are the types of changes that allow the child equal access to the curriculum.

The changes do not alter or lower the expectations or content standards; they are adjustments to the instructional methods. Examples of accommodations: Books that are recorded, additional time to complete tasks, oral tests, preferred seating, amplification systems, braille writers, adaptive keyboards, adaptive writing utensils, providing space for movement or breaks, providing textbooks for use at home — *Special Education Resources for General Educators (SERGE)*



## What are some ways teachers make accommodations in the classroom?

1. Literacy and writing materials are available at a variety of learning levels.
2. Toys and learning games are provided for children to promote learning at varying learning abilities and levels.
3. Materials can be adjusted for children's different ways of learning and may include accommodations to assist children in seeing, handling or understanding the materials or activities.
4. Assistive technology (AT) is evident throughout the entire classroom to increase the level of participation of children with disabilities in all activities. Assistive technology is defined as any tool or device that a student with a disability uses to do a task more easily, faster or in a better way.
  - \* AT for Communication: single or multi-message voice output device (a piece of equipment with a programmed message); communication (picture) boards
  - \* AT for Art: adaptive tool grip, stabilized materials with clamps/tape; alternative tools for painting (paint rollers/dot markers); adaptive scissors; computer software
  - \* AT for Books and Literacy: stabilization of books with Velcro, bookstand; adaptive page turners (glue dots, page fluffers); tactile books
  - \* AT for Play and Participation: adaptive positioning equipment; switches and switch toys; toys adapted with hand splints/straps for grasping; computer with software for play/games with switch or adaptive keyboard



## Helpful Resources



### 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 understand your concern" or "I heard you say..."
- 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/>;

McKay Scholarship <http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/information/mckay/>

#### **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 Division of Early Learning**

A statewide division with the goal of ensuring access and affordability of high quality early childhood program. DEL's website provide resources for families and teachers. [floridaearlylearning.com](http://floridaearlylearning.com)

#### **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>



### Books to read to children

- ***Bernard Goes to School***, by Joan E. Goodman
- ***Billy and the Big New School***, by Laurence Anholt
- ***Hello School***, by Dee Lillegard
- ***Froggy Goes to School***, by Jonathan London
- ***Little Cliff's First Day at School***, by C. L. Taulbert
- ***Little Monster Goes to School***, by Alison Inches
- ***Off to School, Baby Duck!*** by Amy Hest
- ***Special People, Special Ways***, by Arlene Maguire
- ***Susan Laughs***, by Jeanne Willis
- ***Timothy Goes to School***, by Rosemary Wells

