



What are some tips to help your child have a successful transition from Pre-kindergarten Exceptional Student Education (Pre-K ESE) to kindergarten?

Learning about what to expect as your child leaves Pre-K ESE 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 ESE school year prior to your child's transition to kindergarten may include:

- If your child participated in Pre-K ESE for at least six months with an Individual Educational Plan (IEP), an exit assessment related to the Child Outcomes Summary (COS) will be conducted by Pre-K ESE teachers, therapists, and others who have worked with your child. You are included in this process and your input will be valuable to the team. The COS will document the progress your child made in Pre-K ESE in three outcome areas. The COS considers skills in the following three areas of functioning:
 - Positive social and emotional skills including relationships
 - Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills
 - Use of actions and behaviors to get needs met
- 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 and supports are best for your child in the new setting.
- Progress monitoring data, assessments and 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 attempt 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.
- Any other information that the school needs to ensure your child's safety and a successful transition.



This *TATS Talks* discusses the transition process from Pre-kindergarten Exceptional Student Education to kindergarten and tips for success that are involved to ensure a smooth transition for the child and the family.

What options may be available for my child?

Options for types of programs and locations of available programs vary among districts, making it important that you focus on the resources and supports that are outlined in your child's IEP while gathering information about the options available in your school district.

The U.S. Department of Education's Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) defines specially designed instruction as "adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child under this part, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of the child that result from the child's disability and to ensure access of the child to the general curriculum"

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is an important component in the development of your child's IEP. LRE refers to the setting where a child with a disability can receive an appropriate education designed to meet their educational needs, alongside peers without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate. LRE is individual to each student and LRE for your child will be based on the needs for specialized instruction and supports in specific areas of learning. As a vital member of the IEP team, you should provide input, as well as ask questions related to your child's strengths, needs for support, current educational goals and present levels of performance.

Details about your child's needs for specialized instruction and ESE supports are indicated on the IEP, along with specifics related to accommodations. These IEP details are specific to the following:

- Amount of time the specialized instruction is provided
- Type of environment for the specialized instruction (i.e., general education, special education classroom)
- Staff responsible for providing the specialized instruction (i.e., special education teacher, general education teacher in consult with the ESE teacher)

If your child requires intensive supports, the IEP team might recommend that services be provided in a classroom in which all the students have disabilities. Students who receive specialized instruction and intensive supports in self-contained classrooms often have opportunities to attend activities with general education peers based on the details of ESE services in the IEP.

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

As your child transitions to kindergarten, they may:

- Be screened for progress - Kindergarten students may receive a school readiness screening at the beginning of the school year, and then periodically throughout the kindergarten year to measure student progress.
- Be expected to follow standard curricula - Kindergarten students will be expected to follow academic standard-based curricula.
- 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, providing examples, modeling the task and encouraging your child to attempt to complete the work independently.

General suggestions prior to the start of the school year

- Remember that transitions to unfamiliar places, along with developing new relationships with adults and peers can be difficult for many young children. It is important that family members speak in positive terms about the transition to kindergarten so that your child will look forward to the experience.
- Collaboration with all staff involved in your child's transition is vital as you gather, as well as share information about strategies that will assist your child in becoming familiar and comfortable in the new setting. This collaboration might include one or more visits to the receiving school and classroom, opportunities to meet staff, and opportunities for you to practice some situations with your child. It is vital to plan ahead with the school if you would like to arrange a visit.
 - Help your child feel more comfortable with school settings and staff that might be new experiences. Examples include the school office, lunchroom, media center, playground and others associated with daily routines.
 - Show your child where the bathrooms are located. Practice entering and exiting the bathroom and practice processes of indicating needs for the bathroom, hand washing and other hygiene-related needs.
 - 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 riding the bus if applicable. 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.



What are some other questions I may need to ask?

- What information do I need for enrolling my child? Do I need to do anything to enroll my child, such as completing new forms?
- What are the schedules for breakfast and lunch? Are menus for breakfast and lunch available?
- Will my child be able to ride the bus? If so, what is the schedule? What safety precautions are available on the bus?
- 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 teachers, therapists and classroom staff?
- 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?
- Are classes such as Physical Education, Art and Music taught by the kindergarten teacher or by specialists? When and where are these classes taught?
- How will special assistance (i.e., personal care tasks, transitions from one area of the campus to another, behavior difficulties) be provided?

Technical Assistance and Training System (TATS) Florida Transition Project section of the website titled "Getting to Know" contains a series of forms to assist both receiving teachers and families in sharing information about the school, classroom, and child. Website: <https://tats.ucf.edu/getting-to-know-resources-and-books-for-home-and-school/>

Florida Department of Education (FDOE) – Division of Early Learning (DEL) toolkit for kindergarten transition contains numerous resources to assist you in gaining and sharing information that will facilitate a smooth transition for your child. Website: <https://www.floridaearlylearning.com/vpk/transition-to-kindergarten/transition-to-kindergarten-toolkit-resources>

How can I help to increase my child's independence?

Your child's use of skills functionally and independently is important not only during the transition to kindergarten, but throughout the school years. Some ideas to consider are listed below:

- Have a plan to encourage your child to go to sleep at an appropriate time starting several weeks before school starts and wake your child up as early as they would have to get up on a school day. This will help get your child on a school schedule.
- Allow time and practice for your child to become familiar with school supplies and provide practice in recognizing his or her name on personal items.
- Have your child wear shoes and clothing that are easy to remove, put on, and pull up and down easily.
- Practice with your child on skills of using items in the lunch box and items associated with eating, including opening containers, using utensils, and cleaning up their area when finished.
- Practice with your child on skills related to requesting help. If your child is not yet stating the need for help, collaborate with the teacher to develop and practice a method that your child can use to indicate the need for assistance.
- Practice strategies aimed at increasing your child's willingness to attempt new tasks, as well as remain engaged with an unfamiliar or difficult activity. Possible strategies to encourage engagement are use of phrases such as "let's try one more time" and "taking turns" with your child as a way of providing assistance and modeling.



Resources for additional information

Florida Department of Education (FDOE) - Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEES) The bureau in the Florida Department of Education that administers the IDEA, Part B program for children with disabilities. Website: <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/>

Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources System (FDLRS) FDOE provides access to Special Ed Connections resources to families of individuals with disabilities who are enrolled in special education programs. Website: <https://www.fdlrs.org/parent-services/special-ed-connection>
FDLRS also provides recorded webinars about a variety of subjects related to students with disabilities. Website: <https://www.fdlrs.org/about/recorded-webinars>

TATS Florida Transition Project This section of TATS website has resources related to Transition from Pre-K ESE to kindergarten, along with fillable forms to assist with providing information about your child to the receiving teacher. Website: <https://tats.ucf.edu/transition/>
TATS website also has resources related to supporting students with disabilities. Website: <https://tats.ucf.edu/curriculum-and-instruction-contents/>

Division of Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children: Promotes policies and advances evidence-based practices that support families and enhance the optimal development of young children who have or are at risk for developmental delays and disabilities. Website: <http://www.dec-sped.org>



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