

WOW Response 1

Hi! My name is Cindy Dollinger and I am the mother of seven children. Of these seven, five of them have been in the EI program. Our youngest, Emily, is two years old, and we have started her transition process into Preschool. I have some suggestions for a smooth transition.

- *START EARLY! Begin transition meetings with the EI and IU staff early. Six months in advance is not too early if the child has significant delays. By starting this early, this provides the parent or caregiver the time to ask questions and voice concerns. It also provides the EI staff with the necessary preparation time to ensure that the proper services are in place by transition time.*
- *COMMUNICATE! Many problems can be minimized or avoided with good communication between the parents or caregivers, providers, and coordinators. Establishing and maintaining good relationships among all of the team members helps the system of services flow more smoothly. Doing this throughout the entirety of the child's participation in the EI program will allow for a better transition experience.*
- *ASK QUESTIONS! A parent or caregiver should never assume that the providers and service coordinators know what is best for the child. Although the EI providers and staff play an important role in helping the child to learn necessary skills and achieve developmental milestones, it is the parent who knows the child best. So if there are any concerns or questions that parents have, it is important that they ask the appropriate EI staff. Don't be afraid to speak up!*
- *VISIT THE PRESCHOOL OR KINDERGARTEN! If the child will be transitioning into a preschool or kindergarten setting, it is very helpful for the parent or caregiver and the child to visit the classroom while class is in session. This will require advanced notice so that the teacher can make necessary accommodations, but it shouldn't be a problem. It is so important for the parent/caregiver and the child to meet the teacher. Also, the parent/caregiver should make a list of questions to take along on the visit. Questions may include: What is a typical class day schedule? What types of toys do the kids play with? What kinds of chairs do the kids sit in? When is bathroom break? When do therapists work with the child? Do they get a snack? What about pick-up and drop-off? It is amazing how much easier transition can be once many of these details are discussed.*

- *BE PATIENT AND OPTIMISTIC! When transition is near and a service plan is set in place, have a positive attitude. Optimism is a necessary component for success. If transition goes well, then congratulations! If transition is rougher than expected, DON'T BE DISCOURAGED! Give it time, be an active part of the team, and initiate changes to the plan if necessary. In time, your child will adjust.*

*I hope these are some helpful thoughts! Thanks for contacting me!
Cindy Dollinger*

WOW Response 2

It has been quite a few years since my son's transition to kindergarten, but what I have found helpful to him, "each" year before the new school year, is to make a booklet for them with actual photos of their room/rooms, the school building if this is new, and anyone he/she will need to be familiar with, e.g. teachers, aides, principal, nurse, custodian, lunch workers, etc., and a brief explanation of that person's duties.

*We would go over it through the summer, and then arrange to visit the school shortly before the new year started, when teachers are there, but no students. This has helped the anxiety of the unknown ease somewhat.
Annette*

WOW Response 3

*I have been through this twice, not just once.
I have two boys with Autism that are almost 10 yrs apart.
The best advice is to make sure to include the child in with the planning of the new school every chance you get. Show them like it was the new toy store that just opened in the neighborhood get them excited.
My biggest advice is to walk out of the class when they are crying. It will break your heart but know most times they are truly fine as soon as that door shuts.
Enjoy them, they are all great kids.
Thank you,
R.Ibbetson*

WOW Response 4

Don't be afraid to communicate with the people that can help you. When my children started to receive services I was often suspicious of the teachers. I thought they were looking to see what I did wrong. I often did not want to open up to my children's teachers at first. Then I realized that they asked a lot of questions because they were truly interested in finding ways to better service my child and track their progress. The more I shared with them the better they were able to service my family. I had to lay aside a lot of fear.
Antionette Jones

WOW Response 5

As a parent of a child with Down syndrome I have followed the teacher's instinct inside and kept positive and calm. The more relaxed the parent the more relaxed the child. Be sure to attend any orientations the school provides, or ask to have your child meet with his/her teacher in the classroom before the year starts. If there is a play area, visit it with your child. Send a letter to the teacher introducing your child. Follow a routine for getting your child ready and to school beginning with day 1. Remain calm.
Jackie Pisano

WOW Response 6

My district (Keystone Oaks) did a great job of sending in the teaching team to observe and consult with me before my son's transition, and that way the teachers got to see Josh in action and meet me. During the summer, my son and I were able to visit the kindergarten room as part of the district's program for the incoming students, and meet other students/families. The only thing I added to that was a social story that we read every week during the summer that talked about this is where kindergarten will be and a separate story about riding the school bus. It was a smooth transition for both of us! Susan Wuenstel

WOW Response 7

The best advice I can give for a family transitioning, is that you need to attend any training you can in what is an Individual Education Plan or Section 504 plan. Understanding the system goes a long way in making sure your child is getting the supports and services they need to get their Free Appropriate Public Education.

Start with your Parent Training and Information Center (each state has at least one) and your school districts' Intermediate Unit to see what training is available. Schools are not going to offer you this knowledge and without it,

the districts have an advantage which might not be in your child's best interest.

Melissa Allen

WOW Response 8

I am responding to your question about transitioning to kindergarten. I have an 8 yr old son with autism.

1) We would drive by the school and tell our son that is where he would be going to school.

2) We also had the school do a picture booklet with pictures of his classroom (circle time, desk), teacher, speech room, speech therapist, cafeteria, gym, library, playground, bus, bus driver etc and then we waited about 2-3 weeks before school and would read it every day.

3) We had a big monthly calendar by our front door and we posted pictures for each day of where he was going-Monday - Friday, picture of the school and then Sat & Sunday was a picture of home. You can add other pictures for the day if your child has soccer, swimming, doctor appt. etc.

I think insuring a smooth transition would have to include some kind of communication book or email with the child's teacher.

Also, I suggest trying to be really accurate about your child's academic level and behavior level.

Those are my suggestions. This is a great idea having hot topics for your newsletter.

Susan Bolig

WOW Response 9

Q: what is a hot tip you use to insure a smooth transition?

A: It is my personal experience that we have a smoother transition between programs with our 5 year old son, who has Cerebral Palsy when we take an advocate to any meetings between my family and the school district/ I.U. We have used an advocate from the ARC for the past 3 years. We have seen a considerable difference in the attitude of the school district/ I.U. when we would take an advocate with us to meetings verses when we did not take an advocate.

Q: what can you do to prepare your child for the first days of school?

A: I have found that it has made it easier for my son and for myself when sending him to a new program/class when we would visit the class together ahead of time. My husband and I would speak with the teacher and set up a time that we could take our son and visit the classroom while it was in progress. It made it easier on all of us to be able to meet the teachers and staff, see how they interacted with our child and the other children and to also view the classroom and program. We also found books about going to

school or riding the bus and read them to our son and then we talked with him about how he would be doing the same thing as the character in the book. We also used the process of slowly introducing our son into the program by increasing his time in the program from maybe an hour a day then add an hour more each day until he was attending full-time.

I hope this will be helpful to parents who will be new to the transition process.

April Gambino