Transition to school or readiness for school – what’s the difference and why does it matter?

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Overview

- **Thinking about readiness:**
  - Who needs to be ready?
  - Ready for what?
  - What does it mean to be ready?
- **Transition**
  - Continuity and change
  - Relationship building
Some questions to think about…

• Whose readiness is assessed?
• How do we assess readiness?
• Who performs well, and who performs poorly, on measures of readiness?
• How does this affect our expectations around transition?
• Are measures of readiness designed to promote inclusion or exclusion?
• How does readiness contribute to experiences of transition?
School readiness

- School readiness incorporates several major components:
  - children’s readiness for school;
  - schools’ readiness for children; and
  - the capacity of families and communities to provide the necessary opportunities, conditions and supports to optimise children’s development and learning.
Children’s readiness for school

- Developmental domains
- ‘Essential learning skills’ – self-regulation, dispositions
- EYLF outcomes
- School-entry assessments
- Increased focus on importance of children’s skills – self-help skills, fine motor skills.
Challenges in assessing children's readiness

- Diversity of children as they start school
- One-off assessments or cumulative assessments?
- Pre-school skills assessments – poor predictors of children's school adjustment or achievement (Pianta & LaParo, 2003).
Family readiness

• How does each family support children’s learning?
• Home learning environment – not just resources but also family habitus – approaches to learning, encouragement, expectations…
• Recognition of the family as an educational context
• How do families support children's health and wellbeing – e.g. nutrition
Community readiness

• Resources available with communities
• Connections within communities
• Supports and services accessible for families within communities
• Includes access to high-quality prior-to school services
• Access to adequate health services
• Considers issues such as the safety and stability of the community
Ready schools

- Provide a range of supports for children – e.g. transition programs
- Are responsive to the children entering school
- Quality programs to support teaching and learning
- Support professional development for teachers
- Promote family engagement
- Are adaptable – have strong leadership that promotes flexibility through recognition of the strengths/needs of their school community
- Have high – but realistic – expectations for all
- Promote collaborative relationships – school, family, community
What do we take from this?

“school readiness does not reside solely in the child, but reflects the environments in which children find themselves” (Kagan & Rigby, 2003, p. 13)

Readiness is a “process that occurs over time and is not complete by the first day of Kindergarten” (Meisels, 1999, p. 62).

What happens at school has a major impact in assessments of children’s readiness. Children may be ‘ready’ for one school, but not ‘ready’ for another.
Readiness is more than a checklist of skills and contextually isolated knowledge and more than a set of behaviours that enable a child to be regarded as compliant in the classroom. Rather, readiness must be conceptualised as a broad construct that incorporates all aspects of a child’s life that contribute directly to that child’s ability to learn.

(Dockett & Perry, 2002)
Readiness is an interplay between children, family, community and educational elements, demonstrated in different ways in different contexts.

Different elements of readiness contribute to experiences of transition.
Transitions

Transitions are times when individuals change their role in a community.

In educational transitions, we focus on times when there is a change in roles within educational communities.
Transition to school

• Transition is embedded within social contexts and enacted through relationships and interactions

• Transition is a process – there is some lead-in; a change; and a period of adjustment/management

• Transition to school is a transition for all – not just children
Ecological model of transition

A child’s transition to school is understood in terms of the influence of contexts (family, classroom, community) and the connections among these contexts (e.g., family-school relationships) at any given time and across time.

(Pianta, Rimm-Kaufman & Cox, 1999, p. 4)
Some transition resources

Continuity of learning: A resource to support effective transition to school and school age care

http://arts-ed.csu.edu.au/education/communications/publications
Transition to school: Position Statement

Transition to school is characterised by:

- opportunities
- aspirations
- expectations
- entitlements
To think about:

• Opportunities – what opportunities by created by transitions…
• Aspirations – what do people hope for, wish for, desire...
• Expectations – what do people expect will happen...
• Entitlements – what rights, provisions, power do people have...
Opportunities for

• educators to build relationships with children, families, other educators amid communities that provide the basis for effective learning and teaching interactions; and

• communities to recognise this as a significant event in the lives of children and families.
Aspirations as

- children look forward to making friends and learning at school;
- families look forward to positive educational outcomes for their children – both social and academic;
- educators work towards professional partnerships that create strong and supportive educational environments for all children;
Expectations as

• children start school expecting to learn and face challenges; they expect to be with friends and to have support from responsive adults;

• families expect their knowledge to be recognised and respected; they expect to contribute to their children's education and to work in partnership with educators;

• educators expect to have support and appropriate professional recognition as they create positive learning and teaching environments, partnerships with families, other educators and professionals;
Entitlements as

- children access high quality education that demonstrates respect for existing competencies, cultural heritage and histories;
- families demonstrate confidence that their children will have access to education that promotes equity and excellence and that attends to the wellbeing of all children;
- educators receive professional regard and ongoing professional support;
Continuity and change

• Much focus is on promoting a ‘smooth’ transition
• What does this mean?
• Transition is a time of BOTH continuity and change:
  • Children feel a sense of mastery when they manage the changes
  • What re the implications of seeking to remove change and challenge from transitions?
What continuity do we want to promote?

- Curriculum continuity?
- Pedagogical continuity?
- Philosophical continuity?
- Physical continuity?
- Organisational continuity?
- Administrative continuity?
- Continuity of professional relationships?
- Continuity of support?
Continuity of professional relationships

Based on:

- Collaboration
- Professional respect
- Creating a shared vision for supporting children and families
- Generating new pedagogies and approaches
- Critical reflection

(Boyle & Petriwskyj, 2014; Moss, 2013)
References


