

# Time for School: Transitioning from Child Development to Kindergarten

Prepared by the  
Los Angeles County Policy Roundtable for Child Care  
Los Angeles County Office of Education

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# Why is transition to kindergarten an issue?

- High quality, early education is critical to prepare children to succeed in kindergarten. (Matthews & Ewen, 2005)
- A body of evidence is building that underscores the importance of creating transitional mechanisms and practices in order to sustain and build on children's social, emotional & academic competencies. Early intervention cannot be viewed as an "inoculation" that ensures continued school **SUCCESS**. (M. Bohan-Baker & M. Little 2004)

## Why is transition to kindergarten an issue?

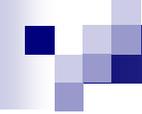
- The transition into kindergarten is an important time in children's lives and it influences later school careers.

(R. Pianta and M. Kraft-Sayre, 2003)

- Transition plans are **required** by the federal, No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

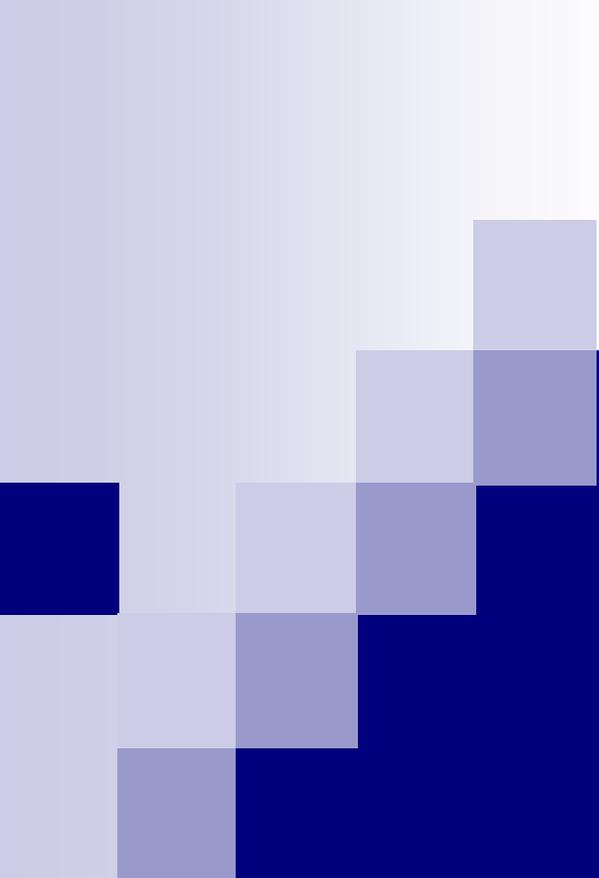
# Our assignment:

The Roundtable, in conjunction with LACOE, was directed to convene and facilitate a Committee, comprised of child care providers and elementary school districts for the purpose of developing policies and procedures for better coordination of early or pre-school education services for children transitioning to kindergarten & more formal public schooling.

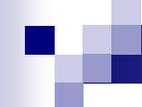


# Our approach to the assignment:

- Learn more about local & national practices related to assessments for and transitions to kindergarten
- Develop recommendations related to local practices
- Share our findings and recommendations with community stakeholders

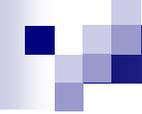


# Survey Process



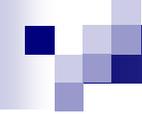
# Developed & distributed customized survey instruments to:

- 80 school districts in Los Angeles County,
- A stratified random sample of 546 child development centers, and
- 19 family child care associations.



# School District Responses to Survey

- 60% of districts responded to the survey.
- About 50% of responding districts reported assessing children prior to kindergarten entry.
- Assessments tended to be focused on the cognitive domain.



# School District Responses to Survey

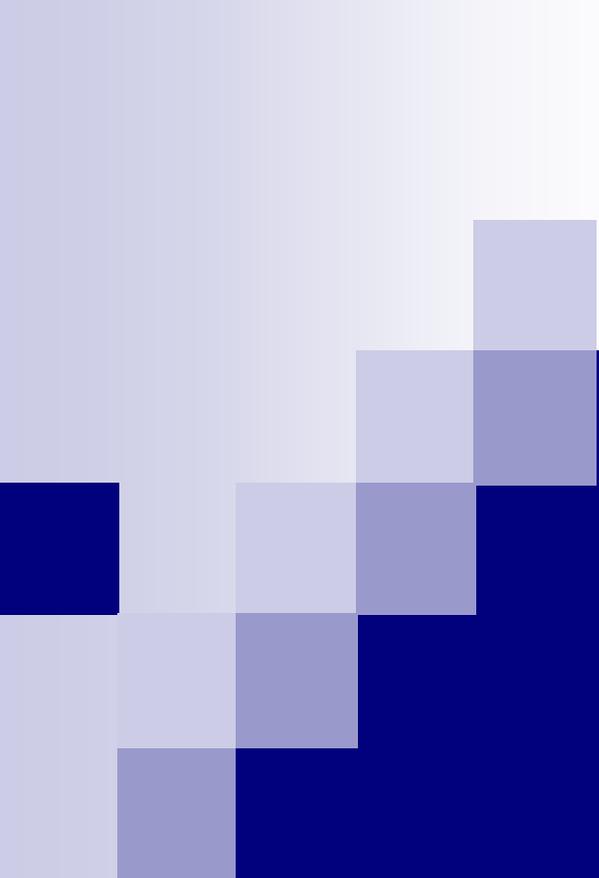
- Less than half of the districts engaged in outreach activities with community-based child development centers or family child care homes.
- Less than half of the districts shared their school readiness indicators with child development programs.

# Child Development Program Responses

- 23% of centers responded to the survey.
- 12% of family child care providers responded.
- Only 30% of centers and 19% of family child care homes reported outreaching to local kindergarten programs.
- 83% of centers and 50% of family child care homes reported that they assess the school readiness of the children in their care.

# Conclusions from Survey

Additional communication is needed between child development and kindergarten programs to align curricula, ensure appropriate assessment practices, and facilitate the transition of young children from child development programs to kindergarten.



# National Trends

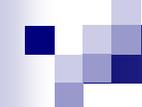
- Related to Assessment
- Transition Planning

# National Trends on Assessing School Readiness

- The younger the child, the more difficult it is to obtain valid assessments. Early development is rapid, episodic, and highly influenced by experience. (Epstein 2004)
- Assessments can provide information on the children entering school, guide efforts to support the learning of individual children and inform schools on the skills of children entering kindergarten.

# National Trends on Assessing School Readiness

- There is not a consensus on the definition of school readiness – frequently parents, child development and kindergarten teachers define school readiness very differently.
- The readiness of young children for kindergarten depends largely on the demands that individual kindergarten programs place on children and the supports provided, as well as the knowledge and skills of the children. (Ackerman & Barnett, 2005)
- An alternative is to focus on the readiness of the school to effectively serve all age eligible children.



# National Trends on Transition Planning

- Recognition that the discontinuities between child development programs and kindergarten pose real challenges for children, parents and teachers.
- Transition is a process – not an event.

# Core Elements of Effective Transition Practices

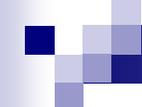
1. Foster relationships as resources – parents and children benefit from positive relationships.
2. Promote continuity from preschool to kindergarten – when preschools and kindergartens work collaboratively, they are more likely to develop programs that are consistent and build on one another.
3. Focus on family strengths – families are encouraged when their interactions with schools are based on their strengths.

# Core Elements of Effective Transition Practices (continued)

4. Tailor practices to individual needs – successful transition planning and practices are menu-driven not proscriptive, and build on the strengths of families, classrooms and communities.
5. Form collaborative relationships – where communication is valued, a common frame of reference is shared and conflicts are resolved.

# Promising Practices: School Initiated

- **Contact with preschool families** – phone or face to face, to begin sharing information about the child.
- **Kindergarten visits** – during the spring prior to a child's enrollment in kindergarten.
- **Home learning activities** – including summer booklists & activities prior to school.

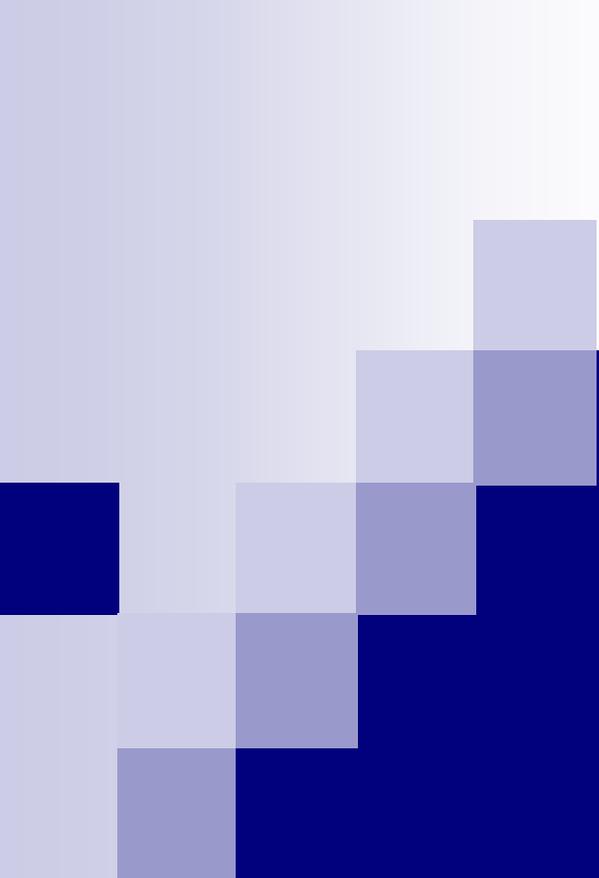


# Promising Practices: Child Development Initiated

- Host open houses for kindergarten teachers
- Conduct joint in-service training with kindergarten teachers
- Coordinate the transfer of parent-authorized records

# Promising Practices: Community Initiated

- Institute citywide transition system
- Engage families and communities in the planning and implementation of transition programs
- Facilitate the adoption of common measures to assess the readiness of schools to effectively serve all age eligible children



# Recommendations

# 1. Outreach & Communication

**A. School boards,** in conjunction with representatives of their local child development community, should establish policies which promote communication between local schools, child development programs, families, and the community so as to facilitate the transition of young children to kindergarten.

# 1. Outreach & Communication

- **Individual schools** should engage in regular communication with local child development programs for the purposes of:
  - Promoting programmatic consistency between kindergarten and child development programs,
  - Fostering developmentally appropriate expectations & practices, and
  - Facilitating communication with families prior to enrollment of children in school.

# 1. Outreach & Communication

**B. Child care resource and referral agencies (R&R)** should serve as liaisons to school districts, individual schools and the larger child development community. They should identify the full range of child development resources (including licensed family child care) within specific service areas and facilitate communication between child development programs and individual schools.

# 1. Outreach & Communication

**C. Child development programs (CDP)** should communicate with local schools and families, for the purpose of facilitating the transition of young children into formal education. CDP should work with the teaching staff of local schools to facilitate developmentally appropriate expectations of young children.

# 1. Outreach & Communication

- CDP should be aware of the expectations which schools hold for kindergarteners & should work with families & children, in developmentally appropriate ways to foster the physical, social, emotional and cognitive skills that children need to succeed in formal education.
- CDP should actively support the development of social competencies of young children and inform families of the long term importance of these competencies



# 1. Outreach & Communication

**D. Families** should be engaged in promoting developmentally appropriate school readiness skills and behaviors with their children, and in determining the readiness of the local school to serve their child.

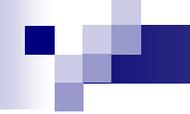
## 2. Standards and Assessment

A. School districts should adopt district wide policies regarding how children transition to school and if the transition process is to include an assessment.

- Individual schools that conduct pre-kindergarten assessments should do so consistently, with the capacity to assess children in their home languages. Assessment should address all 5 domains, incorporate input from parents & child development programs, & resulting information should be shared with families.

## 2. Standards & Assessment

**B. CDP** should be aware of the assessment processes used by local schools, able to accurately discuss these processes with families, and share with families and schools, if authorized by the families, the results of developmental profiles or observation narratives.



## 2. Standards & Assessment

**C. Families** should be aware of their children's development in the various domains, and use this information to determine their child's readiness for kindergarten.

# 3. Staff Development

**A. School boards** should implement policies which support multi-disciplinary training & exchanges among child development programs & kindergarten teaching staff.

# 3. Staff Development

- Individual schools should convene &/or participate in multidisciplinary training with child development programs on at least an annual basis, provide release time for kindergarten teachers to observe in local child development programs, and expect kindergarten teachers to have a working knowledge of the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten guidelines developed by the CA Department of Education (CDE).

# 3. Staff Development

**B. Resource and referral agencies (R&R) should serve as:**

- a contact point, facilitating multidisciplinary training for kindergarten and child development program teachers and families of young children, and
- local clearinghouses on training and educational options in their respective service areas.

# 3. Staff Development

**C. CDP** should convene &/or participate in multidisciplinary training with kindergarten teachers on at least an annual basis; provide release time for staff to observe in kindergarten classrooms; and expect teaching staff to have a working knowledge of the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten guidelines developed by CDE.

## 4. Family Engagement

- A. School districts transition policies should include outreach activities to families well before their children are enrolled kindergarten.
  - Individual schools should outreach to families using innovative techniques that are culturally & linguistically appropriate, and foster a sense of connection to the school.



## 4. Family Engagement

**B. CDP** should provide opportunities for families to develop & refine the skills needed to be effective champions for their children.

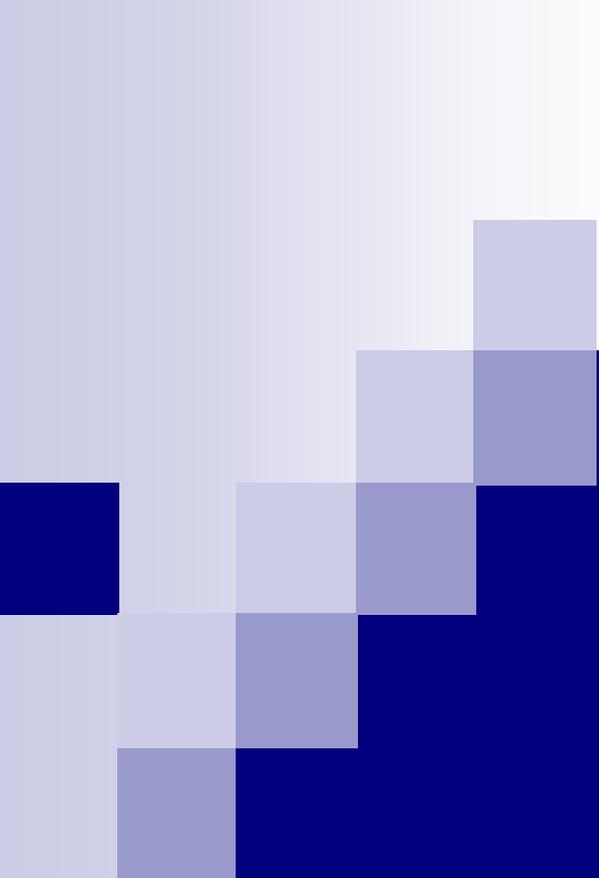
## 4. Family Engagement

**C. Families** should be their child's educational advocate.

- Families should partner with their child development program, well before kindergarten entry, to promote the development of the social, emotional & cognitive competencies of their children.

## 4. Family Engagement

- Prior to school entry, families should have the opportunity to meet with the kindergarten teacher, transition coach or other elementary school personnel, be informed of the school's transition and assessment practices, as well as behavioral and other expectations.



# Conclusion

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Work remains to be done in two key areas:

- aligning developmentally appropriate curricula between child development and kindergarten programs, and
- promoting consistent and meaningful engagement of families in their children's education.

# Conclusion

- CPIN Region 11 has agreed to partner with us and to incorporate those goals into their ongoing work.
- The Roundtable and the Superintendent will continue to promote effective transition practices.

# Conclusion

Education should be structured in a such a way that all children have learning experiences that build on those in previous years and connect with those to come, creating a smooth and predictable climb to the top. (*Ladders of Learning: Fighting the Fade-out by Advancing PK-3 Alignment* by Kristie Kauerz)