

# Inclusive transition



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Introduction session

# Transitions in inclusive education



# Introduction session: Transitions in inclusive education

## Key points to cover during this session

Whether you run a full-day training session or just a very short discussion, try to include these key points:

- Inclusive educators support all children to learn and develop by recognising and valuing children's diverse identities and abilities and responding to their needs.
- Transition often means children moving from home to education settings and on to new settings or within these settings. Transitions present opportunities and challenges for children's learning and development. Managing transition inclusively helps all children benefit from change.

# Activity A1 – Diversity and inclusion

🕒 30 minutes

## Main purpose of this activity

To prepare participants for the inclusive transition workshop by exploring diversity and disadvantage in inclusive education.

Draw a simple outline of a child in the middle of a flipchart page.

## Present the following:

**All children are unique. They can differ from each other in many ways, such as the families and communities they belong to; what they can and can't do; what they like, dislike and aspire to; what they know and understand; and their appearance. Of course, on top of this, they are constantly changing! As children grow biologically and participate in new social and physical environments, they learn and develop: physically, socially, emotionally and intellectually.**

Ask the group for examples of how children differ, and write these on the flipchart, around the picture of the child. Encourage them to give specific examples, e.g. 'hair colour' rather than 'appearance', or 'visual impairment' rather than 'impairment'. Prompt participants to mention a wide range of possible differences including impairments, and minority differences.

## Possible answers to expect from participants

You can use these sample answers to fill gaps if necessary.

### **General ways in which children differ**

Age

Introvert/extrovert; calm/energetic/excitable/aggressive

Number of siblings

Size of family

Where they live

Likes, dislikes (moving/sport, building/making, drawing/crafts, listening/reading, silence/noise, music, crowds, being alone, animals/insects)

Aspirations – give examples

Hobbies– give examples

### **Impairments**

Blind or visual impairment

Intellectual impairment

Learning disability

Speech or communication impairment

Deaf or hearing impairment

Physical disability

Health condition

Mental health difficulties

### **Minority characteristics**

Migrant, refugee or displaced

Minority language (majority language is their second language)

Ethnic or racial minority

Sex or gender diversity

Cultural minority

Religious minority

Street-connected children

Travelling families

## Present the following:

Children have a range of characteristics which make them more and less like the children around them. Often, children with characteristics that differ from shared ideas about 'typical children' in a particular setting are disadvantaged. Either their differences are not recognised, or they are seen as 'problems'. For example, the home languages and festivals of some children may be routinely absent from their education setting. Negative attitudes towards children with impairments or from minority communities can mean that they are misunderstood, leading to inappropriate practices.

Inclusive education is about ensuring all children can access, participate and achieve in education. This means learning about who children are as individuals and the families and communities they belong to. Inclusive educators recognise that giving children equal opportunity to learn and develop does not mean treating all children the same. Indeed, in settings where there is a single, rigid way of doing things, children are very likely to be excluded.

In this workshop we will explore practical ways to make transitions in education more inclusive. We will use case studies of diverse children to check our ideas. Next, I will ask you to work with a partner to imagine a child, with diverse abilities and needs.

Give participants the following instructions:

- Work with a partner.
- Think of an example child. This might be a child you know, it could be you when you were a child, or an imaginary child, or a mixture. The child should have at least one minority characteristic and/or impairment.
- Draw an outline of the child in the middle of your paper.
- Write the name of the child (not their real name if based on a real child). In the next 10 minutes, add as many of their characteristics as you can to the paper using words or pictures.
- Join with two other pairs. This is your **core group**. You will work together for activities using the case study children. You have 5 minutes to learn about the children by asking and answering questions. Note down any additional ideas on your paper.
- Display the diagrams on the wall. We will use these later.

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**Note for trainer:** Ask participants to decide the age of the child based on the focus of your workshop, or don't give the child a particular age, so you can consider their experiences at different ages. We recommend you keep the groups formed in this session throughout the workshop, so participants can use their case studies across different activities.

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# Activity A2 – Education settings

🕒 40 minutes

## Main purpose of this activity

To prepare participants for the inclusive transition workshop by exploring different learning, development and education settings and significant transitions that children experience during their education.

Distribute flipcharts and crayons or coloured pencils. Give participants the following instructions:

- Divide into your core **groups**.
- Make sure your group has a flipchart and crayons or coloured pencils.
- Draw three different pictures: one home setting, one early childhood development and education setting, and one school setting.

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**Note for trainer:** Make these settings applicable to your participants; include the settings they work in and the preceding and following settings that children attend. It is important to emphasise that this is not a design task, but a fun way to think through the elements of interactions, activities, space and resources in these settings.

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- Include in your picture:
  - The people in this setting
  - How they interact
  - The activities they do
  - How the space is organised (e.g. room layout)
  - Furniture, equipment and other objects (e.g. tables, clocks, trees).
- Drawings can be basic, with stick people or symbols, or more detailed if you want. Include labels or short notes to help other people understand your drawing. You have 20 minutes for this task.



After 20 minutes, give participants the following instructions:

- Add the age range of children in each setting based on the education system in your area.
- Put your three pictures on the wall. Display them in a way that shows the link between them.
- Now, you have 10 minutes to move around the room and look at other groups' work. Notice what is the same and what is different between drawings.

After 10 minutes ask for volunteers to share some of the similarities and differences. Notice how the three pictures have been arranged, are they in a line or arranged in a hierarchy or other pattern?



Session 1

# Inclusive education transition starts at home



# Session 1: Inclusive education transition starts at home

## Key points to cover during this session

Whether you run a full-day training session or just a very short discussion, try to include these key points:

- Parents<sup>1</sup> and families are children's first and most enduring educators. Family, home and community remain central as the child moves between levels of education.
- Transition to early childhood settings and school does not mean the end of learning at home. For a smooth transition into an inclusive education setting, it is important to involve parents.
- Educators can learn from parents about how best to support the child, and parents can provide emotional support to their child during change and transitions.



**Facilitate your preferred selection from the following activities. You could re-watch the related segment of the video found at 03:07-04:33**

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this manual, 'parents' refers to parents, caregivers and guardians.

# A Basic workshop activities

## Activity 1.1 – Learning and development at home

🕒 60 minutes

### Main purpose of this activity

To consider the importance of children's families for education and educational transitions and reflect on the additional responsibilities of parents for children with diverse backgrounds, abilities and needs.

### Present the following:

Children learn at a fantastic rate in their first few years, by interacting with caregivers and the world around them. As children get older they attend a series of educational settings: early years, primary and secondary schools and ongoing education. Nevertheless, families continue to play a decisive role in the lifelong learning journey of their child. Professionals, teachers, educators, peers, role models, support people, service providers and many others come and go, but parents and families are the *first and most enduring educator*.

Give participants the following instructions:

- Divide into your **core groups**.
- Think of families you know who have a very young child at home with them (or your own family if you have a very young child).
- Brainstorm in what ways families support children's early learning and development at home.
- Choose three examples to write on post-it notes and stick on your group's **education setting** picture developed in **Activity A2**.

Next give participants the following instructions:

- Think of families you know who have a child attending an early childhood setting (or your own family if you have a child at this stage).
- Brainstorm in what ways families continue to support children's learning and development each day.
- Choose three examples to write on post-it notes and stick on your group's **education setting** picture developed in **Activity A2**.

Next give participants the following instructions:

- Think of families you know who have a child attending school (or your own family if you have a child at school).
- Brainstorm in what ways families support children's learning each day.
- Choose three examples to write on post-it notes and stick on your group's **education setting** picture developed in **Activity A2**.
- Move around the **education setting** pictures to look at the examples other groups chose. Were they the same or different from your group's examples? Was it hard to think of three things families do every day to support children's learning at each level of education?

### Present the following:

**In their early years, most children thrive in safe and stimulating environments with people who are sensitive and responsive and who value and love them unconditionally. However, many children and parents need additional support to make the most of this unique period of growth.**

Give participants the following instructions:

- Working in your **core groups**, choose two of your case study children (prepared in the **Introduction Session Activity A1**) and consider the role of parents in each case. What might parents and families of these children need to do to support their child's well-being, growth and development in their early years at home (over and above the typical role of parenting).

### Possible answers to expect from participants

Answers will vary depending on the details in the case study. Here are some possible answers:

- Accessing and using rehabilitation services
- Obtaining specialised equipment or resources. For example: ramps and handrails, hearing aids, braille books
- Modifying the home environment. For example, wheelchair accessible, hand rails, braille labels
- Finding a suitable home
- Accessing support from specialists
- Finding extra financial support
- Research and new learning
- Learning new skills

- Accessing additional medical and hospital services
- Teaching your child additional language(s) e.g. sign language, a majority language or other ways of communicating
- Finding friends in the community for your child
- Networking with other parents in a special interest group

On the board or flipchart write the following three statements:

1. When children transition, their families transition too.
2. Families influence transition.
3. Transitions influence families.

**Present the following:**

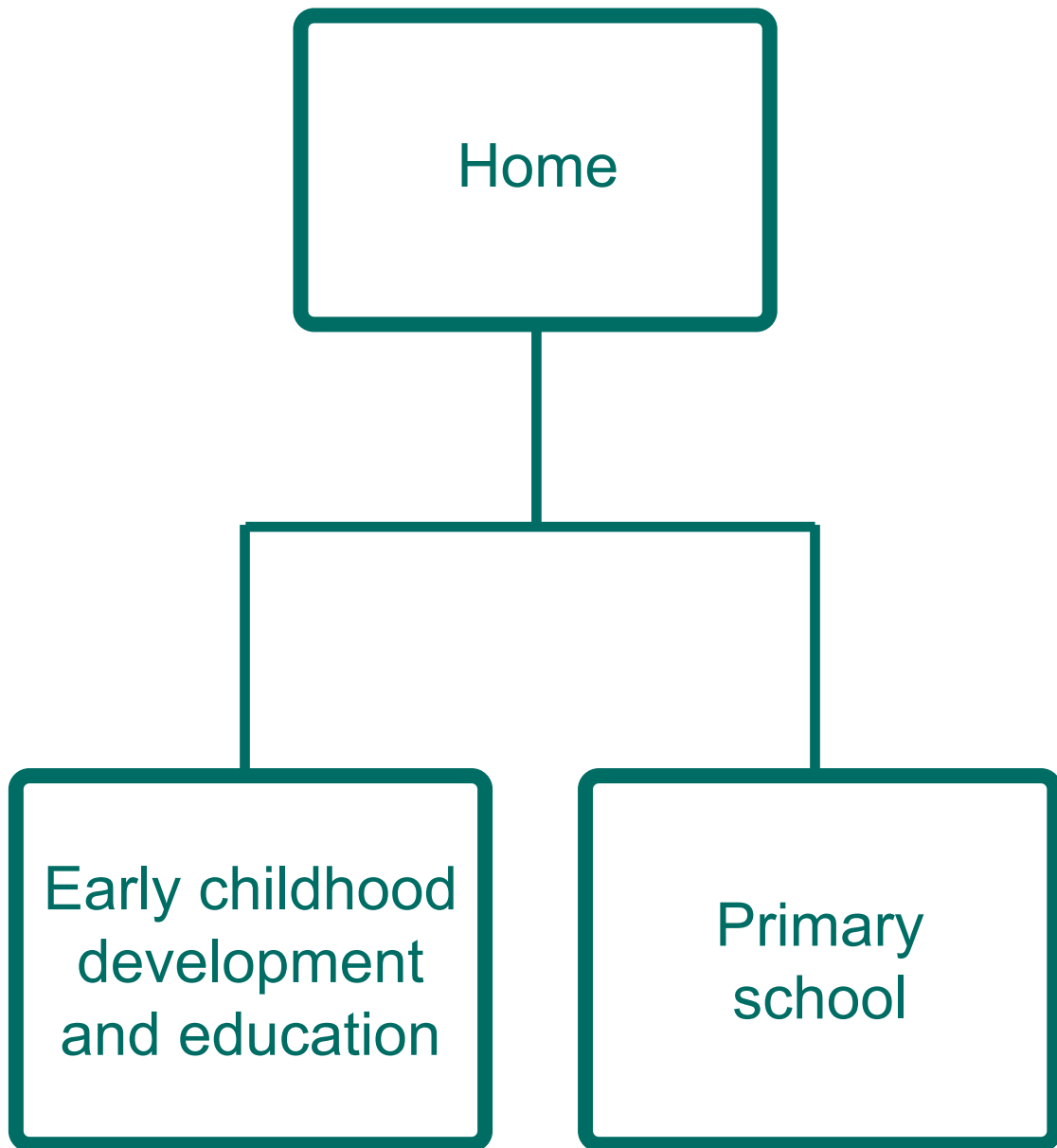
**From the moment a child is born, they face changes; developing and learning new things, meeting new people and experiencing new settings. Children arrive into the arms of their parents and family. The first learning and development setting that children experience is with their families, home and community. While children move between levels of formal education, their families, home and communities remain central throughout.**

Give participants the following instructions:

- In pairs, reflect on the three statements.
- Share your thoughts or understanding of each statement.

Ask one volunteer to share with the whole group what they understand the meaning of one of the statements to be. Encourage discussion.

Ask groups to look again at their **education setting** drawings. How are they arranged? After considering the role of the family in ongoing learning and development, could they be rearranged? You can show a possible arrangement of the settings to demonstrate this idea as below:





# B Important theoretical issues to discuss

## Activity 1.2 – The family’s role in transition

🕒 90 minutes

### Main purpose of this activity

To reflect on the concerns parents and families might have surrounding their child’s transitions, and plan for involving and engaging them in transition programmes.

### Present the following:

Children’s families and backgrounds are part of who they are and go with them through changes and into new learning settings. Transition is as much about the family as the child. Children are not transitioning out of their family into education settings. Instead, the child is transitioning with the ongoing support base of their family.

Transition is not parents and families ‘handing over’ their child. They are welcoming others into their child’s education journey.

Give participants the following instructions:

- Work in your **core groups**. Have a representative from each group go and examine the drawings of **education settings** from **Activity A2**. Are the parents and family evident in all settings?
- Discuss in your groups why, or why not. Make a list of the involvement of parents and families in education settings from your experience. Use the following questions to guide if needed:
  - How often are parents or family seen at the education settings? What do they come for? In which setting are parents most visible, in which are they less visible? What makes them visible or not?
  - Are parents involved in decision-making? Do they have a say in what takes place in the education setting? If so, how?
  - How do educators communicate with parents and families?
  - What are the responsibilities/expectations of parents and families?

### Present the following:

Parents and families are often the first advocates of inclusive education during transitions. They might be selecting education settings, advocating for education settings to recognise and cater for their child's needs, ensuring their child has all the resources they need to be fully included, and preparing their child for change. They are also often highly expert in relation to their child's support needs.

Professionals and educators coordinating transitions should enable parents and families to lead the process if they wish, and/or consult them at every step of the way.

Give each group two blank sheets of A4 paper and then give participants the following instructions:

- Working in your **core groups** revisit two of your case studies developed in **Activity A1**.
- On two sheets of A4 paper (one for each case study), write 'family of [insert name of child from your case study]'. You could also draw the child in the centre.
- Imagine you are the family of that child. Fill the rest of the sheet of paper with words and phrases describing the feelings, emotions and concerns that parents and family members of this child might experience as they are planning to transition their child into a new education setting.
- Notice which words and phrases were common to both case studies and which were unique.

### Possible answers to expect from participants

Answers should be different for each group based on their specific case studies. The type of answers might include the following:

- Will others understand my child?
- Will others recognise my child's strengths?
- Will others see my child as a person first and foremost?
- Is my knowledge about my child likely to be valued?
- Excited
- Looking forward to support from others
- Interested to meet other families
- Hoping my child will make friends
- Worried about exclusion
- Will my child be safe?

- Will educators listen to our needs and requests?
- Will my child be happy?
- Do educators have the time to understand child's needs?
- What if my child gets unwell?
- Will they know how to teach my child?
- Will they like my child?
- What am I supposed to prepare?
- What if my child isn't ready?
- Will my child get too tired?
- Is it too early to send them?
- Should I keep them safe at home?
- Will other children tease them?
- Will the other parents judge me?
- Will the teacher believe me?
- How will my child understand?
- What must I send to school with them?
- How will I know what is happening each day?
- How should I dress my child?
- What type of shoes, bag and hat should they take?
- How much does it cost?
- What will I do if my child is unhappy?
- What will I do if I don't like the education setting?
- Who speaks our language?
- Do they understand the way we do things?
- Are there other children there like mine?
- Are there other families who come from where we do?
- What if I can't afford things?

### Present the following:

**When children and their families are involved in transition processes, there is a greater chance of success. If families are not proactively getting involved, they may need encouragement and support from educators. This is particularly important for children who are commonly disadvantaged. We must ensure that every child, no matter their background, has equal opportunity to access a supported transition into an inclusive education.**

Give participants the following instructions:

- Working in your **core groups** revisit the two case studies developed in **Activity A2**.
- Think why the families of these children might hesitate to send their child to school or an early childhood setting.

### Possible answers to expect from participants

Answers should be different for each group based on their specific case studies. The type of answers might include the following:

- They do not know that their child is allowed to attend school.
- They know that no one else knows their child as well as they do.
- They are unaware of the education system.
- They wish to protect their child or keep them away from the community.
- They are ashamed.
- They believe their child is better off at home.
- They do not think their child will benefit from education.
- They think their child is not able to learn.
- They think their child will not be able to keep up.
- Their child speaks a different language so they think there is no school for them.
- They do not know if they are entitled to education in this community.
- They are afraid.
- They do not know anyone in the community.
- They cannot afford to enrol their child into education.
- They have personal negative experiences of education.

Next, give participants the following instructions:

- Each **core group** should divide into two small subgroups.
- Each subgroup decides on a child (one of the case studies) and a transition stage (e.g. is it for home to early childhood, or from early childhood to school setting)
- Each subgroup should choose one of the following questions to answer:
  - How can you use a **home visit** to address the family's concerns and encourage them to be an active part of the transition process?
  - What **information, support and awareness materials** could be developed to address the family's concerns and encourage them to be an active part of the transition process?
  - How can you use an **orientation session** (inviting the family to visit the education setting) to address the family's concerns and encourage them to be an active part of the transition process?
- Join back up with your **core group** and present your case study along with your answer to one of the questions.

# C Digging deeper into specific issues

## Activity 1.3 – Preparation for formal education

🕒 60–90 minutes

### Main purpose of this activity

To highlight how parents can prepare children for a smooth transition into inclusive education through early identification of impairments and removing barriers to learning and development at home.

### Present the following:

**When parents identify that their child has impairments and additional needs early on, learning and development support can begin before the child begins formal education. There are a range of service providers and organisations that can offer ideas, resources or support directly to families.**

Give participants the following instructions:

- Work in your **core group**. Look at one of the case studies you prepared of a child with an impairment (from **Activity A1**) and answer these questions.
  - How might parents have identified this child's needs and challenges? How early might they have identified it?
  - What might they have already done to remove barriers to learning and development in the home?

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**Note for trainer:** It might help to offer a sample answer to each question so participants know what type of answers you are looking for.

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### Possible answers to expect from participants

The following list can be used to prompt participants or fill gaps if needed.

#### **How might parents have identified this child's needs and challenges? How early might they have identified it?**

Comparison to the development of their other children or those of friends

Health visits might have highlighted delays or different development

Some disabilities are very obvious and may have been apparent from birth

#### **What might they have already done to remove barriers to learning and development in the home?**

May have found specialised resources

Learned sign language/other methods of communication

Modified their environment to be more accessible

Obtained mobility resources like wheelchair, crutches, walking frame, etc.

Glasses or hearing aid

Special medication to reduce impact of a medical condition

Following a programme provided by a speech therapist or other professional

### Present the following:

For a *smooth* transition into an inclusive education setting, it is important to use the experience of parents. For example, what barriers have parents identified? How do they overcome them? This helps to make sure that barriers do not re-emerge as the child transitions into a new setting. Rather than sending the child on a bumpy ride, educators and families can share information so that the way ahead is as smooth as possible.

**Next, present the following:**

Parents and families may not recognise the crucial role they play in their child's learning and development at home or know how to prepare their child for entering the education system.

However, they already have an abundance of know-how when it comes to their child, and they will have already had a powerful effect on their child's learning. Everyday activities that parents do with their children are what is important in these first few years.

For example:

- Story telling
- Songs and rhymes
- Drawing
- Playing
- Interacting with children to recognise, sort, match and describe everyday items around the home
- Including the child in shared activities such as mealtimes, celebrations, shopping for groceries and chores.

These activities increase their child's competences and their eagerness for learning.

Children also need emotional support to prepare for change and transitions. Everyone experiences varying degrees of anxiety, stress and fear about change. Parents and families can help their children by modelling and encouraging positive anticipation, excitement and interest. Whatever mixture of feelings a child is experiencing, the strong connection families have with their child can help guide them through a positive experience of change.

Distribute A4 paper and coloured markers, crayons or pencils. Give participants the following instructions:

- Work in groups.
- Prepare a brochure or attractive information sheet that can be duplicated and given to parents and families.
- Include tips for supporting their child to start school.



- Tips should include:
  - How to talk about school positively and avoid negative pressure
  - Building their child's independence and confidence
  - Getting to know the school community
  - Ideas to celebrate starting school
  - Supporting the child's wellbeing as school starts.

Ask groups to present their brochures to everyone, and encourage participants to give feedback on the content and layout.

Encourage participants to think about how they could produce and distribute such a brochure in their setting. Recommend that participants get feedback from families who have already transitioned their child into education settings to see if they have suggestions for additional tips or amendments.



Session 2:

# A continuum of transition support – the first education setting



# Session 2: A continuum of transition support – the first education setting

## Key points to cover during this session

Whether you run a full-day training session or just a very short discussion, try to include these key points:

- Homely settings give children a sense of safety, security and belonging so they can continue learning. Educators can make inclusive early childhood settings homely by learning about each child's home and community.
- Early childhood settings and schools should work as partners to coordinate successful transition. Transitions plans can be tailored to the needs of diverse children.
- Learning and development portfolios can also be used to support individualised and inclusive transition.



**Facilitate your preferred selection from the following activities. You could re-watch the related segment of the video found at 04:34-08:56**

# A Basic workshop activities

## Activity 2.1 – Homely early childhood settings

🕒 60–90 minutes

### Main purpose of this activity

To recognise how homely early childhood settings smooth the transition into education.

### Present the following:

One of the ways to support transitions from home to the first education setting is to make early childhood settings *homely*. A ‘homely’ education setting is one that looks and feels somewhat like a home in terms of being informal and comfortable, even though it may not look like the children’s own homes. Homely settings give children a sense of safety, security and belonging so they can more quickly feel welcomed and secure to continue play and learning.

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**Note for trainer:** Before you begin this activity, prepare a copy of **handout 2a** with the words cut out and collected in a container or hat. Make enough copies so all participants can be given a word.

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Give participants the following instructions:

- Pull out a word from the container/hat.
- Use your word to answer the following question:
  - How can educators bridge the gap between home and the first education setting?
- Share your answer with the whole group.

Tell participants that next you will think about what would make an early childhood setting in **your** community more homely.

Give participants each a blank sheet of A4 paper and then give them the following instructions:

- Fold your piece of A4 paper into three parts. Next, tear the paper, so that you have 3 separate sheets.
- Answer these three questions, a different question on each sheet of paper:
  1. What will home-like settings and resources look like?
  2. What will home-like relationships look like?
  3. What will home-like experiences look like?
- Use words, drawings, lists, diagrams or symbols to represent your answers.
- Each participant shares one of their answers.

### Possible answers to expect from participants

Answers should reflect participants' communities. These answers may be used for prompting or as a sample if needed.

#### **What will home-like setting and resources look like?**

Mats/rugs, cloths, cushions, comfortable chair, attractive and nicely scented plants, herbs or flowers from the surrounding area, photos (from families if possible or relevant images cut from magazines), spaces where children can put their belongings

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**Note for trainer:** Guide participants to think about what is unique about homes in their community. For example, couches may be common in some countries, others may use mats and cushions on the floor; one community may use wooden bowls for eating, another eats from a shared tray in the middle; one community may hang photos on the walls, another might hang decorative mats.

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#### **What will home-like relationships look like?**

Educators who form strong attachments to children. Comforting actions, kind and warm words. Families, grandparents, community members welcomed to spend time in the setting. Educators who remember important things about the child's home life and ask questions or talk about and value the child's home experiences.

**What will home-like experiences look like?**

Eating and resting routines. Celebrating important occasions. Reading stories in small groups. Extending children's home experiences through activities in the setting. Using minority languages. Children invited to bring special items from home to share or show. Familiar foods shared. Familiar games, songs and stories repeated.

**Present the following:**

**Inclusive homely early childhood settings should reflect the homes of diverse children. This highlights the importance of educators learning about each child's home and community.**

Give participants the following instructions:

- Divide into your **core groups**. Choose one of your case study children who has a minority characteristic such as religion, language or other aspect of culture.
- Discuss and answer the following questions:
  - What additional measures could be taken by educators to create a sense of familiarity in the early childhood setting for this child?
  - How could educators cooperate with the parents to make inclusive homely settings?

# B Important theoretical issues to discuss

## Activity 2.2 – Early childhood and school links

🕒 90 minutes

### Main purpose of this activity

To consider how strong and well-planned links between early childhood settings and school support smooth transitions.

### Present the following:

**Transition from an early childhood setting to a school setting is not a point in time. It is a process that starts well before and extends far beyond the first day of school. It is important that early childhood educators and schools work as partners to coordinate this process.**

Give participant a number from 1 to 3. Form three big groups: all participants who were given number one go together, all the twos go together and all the threes together. Give each group a cue card from **handout 2b**.

Give participants the following instructions:

- Each group brainstorms ideas relating to the area on their cue card:
  - Group 1: **Shared responsibility and collaboration**
  - Group 2: **Transition activities**
  - Group 3: **Sharing information**
- Choose someone from the group to read the questions and prompts aloud to the others.
- Choose someone else to record ideas on a flipchart.
- Finish with a presentation by each group. Other groups can ask questions and add ideas.



## Possible answers to expect from participants

These are some suggestions you can use to prompt groups as they brainstorm, or add to their presentations.

### **Shared responsibility and collaboration**

Early childhood educators

School administration

School teaching staff

Parents or caregivers and other family members

Older siblings

Other specialists involved with the child/family who could help smooth the transition (e.g. health worker, social workers, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, speech therapist, etc.)

### **Transition activities**

Open days

Parent information meetings

Taster days

Lunchtime visits

Materials for parents

Information for children

Opportunity for families to meet other families

School visits

Two-way exchange visits for children (early childhood group visits school / school class visits early childhood setting)

Two-way exchange visits for teachers

Specialist visits (e.g. health, psychologist, physiotherapist, social worker, advisors for deaf)

Home visits

After first day of school

Exchange days (return visits when children are already at school)

Half days

### **Sharing information**

Child portfolio showing the child's learning journey

School booklets introducing people, routines and spaces

Child's strengths and interests, style of learning, motivation, personality and preferences

Information and strategies from other key support workers/services

Information about pedagogy approaches that have been effective for the child

School curriculum information so the transition team can make initial plans for removing obvious barriers and considering differentiation needs

Key dates and welcome information from the school.

Return to your **core groups**.

- Choose one of your case studies from **Activity A1** to focus on.
- Using the ideas from the brainstorming, prepare a mock transition plan tailored to the needs of the child in your case study. In the plan ensure the following questions are answered:
  - Who will be involved?
  - Who will coordinate the process?
  - When will the process start and finish?
  - What materials will parents need?
  - What activities will be involved? What, who, where and when?
  - What information will be shared?
- Share your plan with the whole group.

# C Digging deeper into specific issues

## Activity 2.3 – Portfolios

🕒 60–90 minutes

### Main purpose of this activity

To consider how learning and development portfolios can be used to support inclusive transition (as part of transition planning).

Write **'learning and development portfolio'** on the board.

### Present the following:

In this session we will consider how learning and development portfolios and transition portfolios can be used to support transition. First let us think about learning and development portfolios generally.

**Note for trainer:** It might help to point out to participants that transition portfolios should be used as part of transition planning (see **Activity 2.2**).

Ask if anyone has used a portfolio, either as an educator or a learner.

- Who used it and when?
- What did they use it for?
- What did it contain?

### Ask two or three participants to share their experience, and/or present the following:

Learning and development portfolios are increasingly popular in early education settings. They are used to help children, parents and educators keep records of and reflect on children's learning, development and achievement. They can contain examples of work, records of activities and achievements, children's reflections, aspirations and plans for future learning. Children, parents and educators can add information and review portfolios together.

**Portfolios can also be used to support transition for children of any age and ability. I am going to read a story about how a portfolio supported one child's transition from an early childhood setting to school. Please listen and notice how the portfolio helped.**

Read aloud the story in **part 1 of handout 2c**. Then, distribute post-it notes (or small pieces of paper) to all participants, and give them the following instructions:

- Write on your post-it note, one positive outcome for the child Gaurav.

Next, read aloud **part 2 of handout 2c**. Write the following headings on the board or flipchart.

1. The teacher learns about the child.
2. The teacher uses the portfolio to engage the child.
3. The child uses the portfolio to interact with the other children.

Give participants the following instructions:

- Place your post-it note beside the heading you think it matches. If it does not match any of the headings, stick the note at the top.

Review any participant notes that do not match the three headings. Ask participants if there are any other ways a portfolio can support transition.

### **Present the following:**

**Next, let us think in more detail about the contents of a general learning and development portfolio. Let's write a 'menu' of ideas on the board/flipchart.**

Ask participants for ideas and write them down.

### **Possible answers to expect from participants**

The content will differ depending on the age of the child and type of setting.

- Objects collected in or out of education, for example, leaves, tickets
- Stories and cartoons
- Art work or creations
- Photos of activities and events
- Comments from the child, from peers, from the family, from educators
- Records of development and learning plans

**Present the following:**

We have just looked at learning and development portfolios in general. A *transition portfolio* will be a shorter version of the child's learning and development portfolio that has been developed over time in their early childhood setting. The transition portfolio contains pages from the main portfolio that the child might like to show to the educators and peers in the new education setting.

Ask participants in the whole group:

- How could educators decide what to copy from a child's main portfolio to include in the transition portfolio to be sent with them to school?

**Possible answers to expect from participants**

These points should be added if they do not arise in discussion:

Educators could engage with the child to choose their favourite pages from their general portfolio and to comment on what they feel is important to include. Their comments can also be noted in the transition portfolio.

The child may like to choose whether they take their entire general portfolio to school with them or if they work together with an educator to create an edited version of the general portfolio. Some children like to keep their general portfolio as treasure and only use copies of some (or all) pages to take to school.

Early childhood educators can include additional comments and explanations that might be useful for school teachers in understanding and appreciating the content of the child's transition portfolio.

Parents and families might like to add a page into the transition portfolio commenting on their child's time at the early childhood service.

**Present the following:**

Listen to what this teacher had to say about transition portfolios:<sup>2</sup>

“When I was looking through his portfolio I felt that I really did know him ... like that it had such in-depth comments and such personal things that he had done and accomplished at kindy (early childhood setting) that I felt like from reading it that I knew and got a better understanding of what Louie was really like, that it actually made us feel that we had more of a connection with him.”

And here is feedback from a parent about the importance of transition portfolios:

One parent came into kindergarten (the early childhood setting) to tell us how the first days at school had gone for her child and reported that her child had been at a loss for the first few days. She was just delighted to hear the new entrant teacher had read a story from her child’s portfolio about her interest in building block towers. As a consequence, the teacher had gone to a nearby classroom and borrowed more blocks for the child to use to help her follow her interest in the new surroundings. This strategy also helped her form attachments with her new classmates. The teacher created a sense of belonging for this child, and added resources that she knew the child felt comfortable with and was capable of using.

Give participants the following instructions:

- Work in a group of three or four.
- Make a list of portfolio pages that can be created to support transition. For example: documentation of learning and development, photos of friends and special places, artwork and creations, photos and descriptions of activities. You have 5 minutes.

After 5 minutes ask groups to share ideas with the whole group. Write one idea from each group on the board, until there are no more ideas.

Next, divide the ideas between the groups so that each group has one or more different ideas to work on.

Give participants a piece of A4 paper. Ask them to write and/or draw what they imagine the portfolio page might look like.

Finally, collect up all the portfolio pages participants have prepared.

**Note for trainer:** After the session, place the examples into a folder. Leave the folder of all the examples prepared by participants on a table for them to browse through in their free time.

<sup>2</sup>Hartley, C., Rogers, P., Smith, J., & Lovatt, D. (2014). Transition portfolios: Another tool in the transition kete. *Early Childhood Folio*, 18(2), p.5.

Session 3:

# A continuum of transition support – moving to the next level



# Session 3: A continuum of transition support – moving to the next level

## Key points to cover during this session

Whether you run a full-day training session or just a very short discussion, try to include these key points:

- Educators in the old and new settings can work together to reduce differences between children's experiences across settings and smooth transitions.
- Educators can use information about learners to facilitate individualised transitions.
- 'Buddies' can offer support and information to new children when they need it.



**Facilitate your preferred selection from the following activities. You could re-watch the related segment of the video found at 08:58-17:01**



# A Basic workshop activities

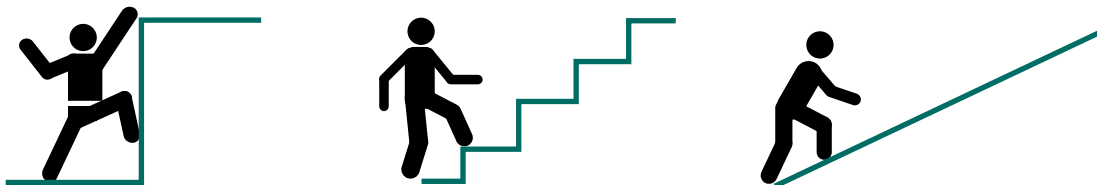
## Activity 3.1 – Schools ready for children

🕒 60–90 minutes

### Main purpose of this activity

To consider how schools can make transitions smoother.

Show the following pictures either on a PowerPoint slide, handout (**handout 3a**), or draw them on a board:



### Present the following:

Schools have an important role to play in the process of transition. Before the move, schools can offer transition activities to get to know the child and family, and familiarise them with the new setting. Schools can also ease transition by minimising the differences between the previous and current setting. Early classes at school should respect and reflect where children are coming from. This is where schools make themselves *ready for children*.

Children find transitions easier when there are similarities between the previous and new setting.

Ask the participants:

- How does each of the three pictures represent the role of the school in being **ready for children**?

### Possible answers to expect from participants

The pictures show that transitions are easier when change is gradual. It is much easier to support a child up small steps or a ramp than up an oversized step. Transition is a process, not an event.

Give participants the following instructions:

- In your **core groups**, review the drawings of the different settings you did in **Activity A2**. Focus on how school is different from the other two settings.
- In your group, write and discuss your answers to the following questions:
  1. Which differences cannot be changed?
  2. How could differences be reduced?
  3. What could be introduced to make the school setting more similar to the early childhood setting?
  4. What experience do you have of minimising the differences between settings to prepare children for transitions?
- Make a list of ideas for 'making schools ready for children'.

Write the heading: 'making schools ready for children' on the board or flipchart. Ask groups to present and write their ideas.

### Possible answers to expect from participants

The following points can be used to prompt participants or to fill gaps if needed:

#### **Differences schools may be unable to change**

Distance from homes to the school

The number of children in a single class or group and in the setting overall

The ratio of educators to children

The curriculum

Forms of assessment

Physical surroundings

The timetable

#### **Reduce differences and increase familiarity**

Find ways for the teacher to spend time with new students e.g. teaching assistant support, small group activities, other children doing independent work

Linguistic continuity e.g. support ongoing use of child's home language by using it in class if possible and valuing it

Teachers should visit the early childhood settings to find out what children are familiar with, then gradually introduce them to new ways of learning and teaching by starting with what they are used to

Physical surroundings could be examined and changed as necessary

Less rote-learning\*

Learner-centred teaching approaches\*

Opportunities for self-directed play\*

Include interest-led discovery\*

\* teachers should use instructional techniques children are familiar with

### Present the following:

**When children face too many challenges during transitions, there is a risk that their learning is interrupted or even lost. Smooth transition is not about avoiding change, but making change gradual and considered rather than sudden. To do this, educators learn about the practice of colleagues in different settings. This is a rich opportunity to reflect on their current practice and the practice of others and consider what suits particular children at different times.**

# **B** Important theoretical issues to discuss

## Activity 3.2 – Know the learner

🕒 90–120 minutes

### Main purpose of this activity

To think of ways to gather information about learners and use the information to facilitate individualised transitions.

Give a volunteer a post-it note with 'Education starts here' written on it. Ask them to place the note on the appropriate place next to one of the **education setting** pictures drawn in **Activity A2**.



Ask all participants if they agree or disagree with where the post-it has been placed.

### Present the following:

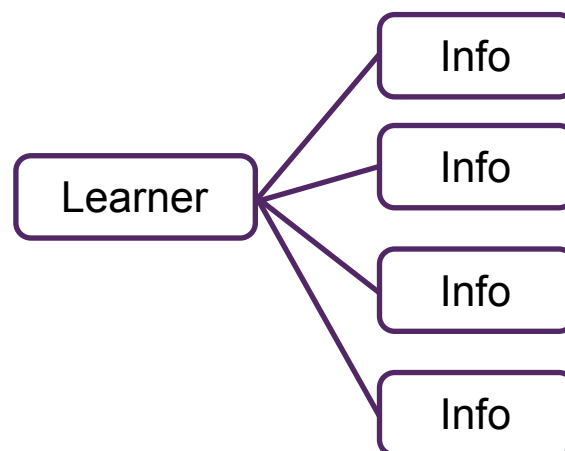
Some people say that education begins when a child starts school and everything before is preparation for this event. However, as educators we know that learning begins when a child is born, and even before.

During their education, children progress through a number of education settings. To be effective, each setting and stage should be appropriate for the child's developmental stage. In addition, effective education and transition recognises, values and builds upon the unique characteristics of each child.

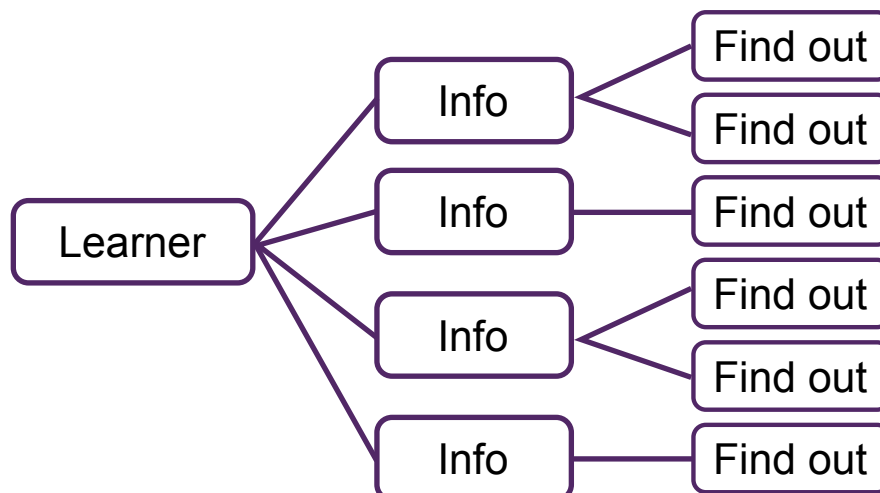
Give participants the following instructions:

- In your **core groups**, revisit both of your case study children (from **Activity A1**).
- Using the mind-map approach, make a diagram showing what information it would be useful for school teachers to know about each child. (See example below.)

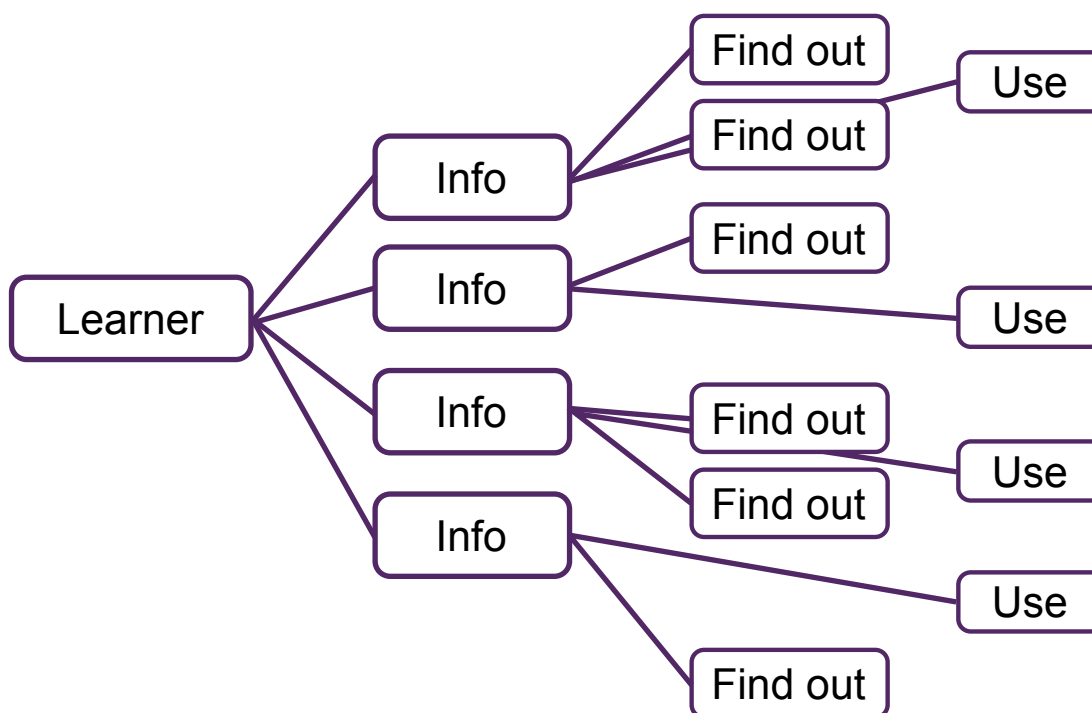
**Note for trainer:** You may need to explain a mind-map to participants and give an example. You can use one of the group's case study children and build an example mind-map with the group.



- Next, add suggestions for how teachers could find out this information. (See example below.)



- Finally, add ideas for how teachers could use this knowledge of the learner to better support their transition into school. (See example below.)



### Possible answers to expect from participants

Answers will vary according to the case studies.

#### What information is useful to know?

Background, strengths, interests, preferences, dislikes, learning and development, needs, favourite things to do/play with, pets, friends, relatives or siblings at school, language and communication, self-help and independence (support needs), etc.

#### How to gain knowledge of learners

Home visits  
 Parent meetings  
 Transition portfolio  
 Visits to early childhood setting  
 School visits  
 Meet other agencies involved with the child

#### How to use knowledge of learners

Adapt environment for access needs or other needs  
 Interest-based, familiar or comfortable activities/resources  
 Access funding or specialist support before they start school

Plan for communication (e.g. sign language, minority language or a child learning to speak/communicate)

Teacher could research and learn more about particular difference or disability

Prepare to build on earlier learning

Have realistic expectations

Plan individualised ways of teaching

Organise a buddy or peer support

Ask participants to display their mind-maps on the wall.

Give them 20 minutes to look at each other's mind-maps, ask questions and add ideas. One person from each group stays with their mind-map to explain. They swap with another group member after 10 minutes, so everyone has a chance to look around.

After 20 minutes, summarise by asking participants to consider who could use this kind of planning activity and at what point in the transition process.

### Possible answers to expect from participants

These answers may be used for prompting or as a sample if needed.

#### **Who could use this kind of planning activity?**

School teachers

Support teachers

Transition coordinators

School principal

Early childhood educators or educators in other settings could also follow the same process

#### **At what point in the transition process could it be used?**

It is best if this happens before transition to school.

This planning activity could be a part of a transition plan.

If it has not taken place before a child begins school, it should still happen as soon as possible.

It should happen immediately for children who unexpectedly transition into school or who move from another school/area.

It should happen when children transition to different classes in the same school.

The process may need to be followed again if a major change happens in a child's life (e.g. acquire an impairment, health or mental health difficulty, or there is a significant change in their living situation).

# C Digging deeper into specific issues

## Activity 3.3 – Buddies

🕒 60–90 minutes

### Main purpose of this activity

To consider how a buddy system can support transition.

### Present the following:

Transitions are a process and not a point in time. The transition period is a time of intense learning. Children get to know new settings and routines, and also new people. Buddy systems are a method of pairing a child who is already in the school with a newly enrolling child. The buddy acts as a mentor, able to offer support and information to the new child when they need it for as long as needed.

Give participants the following instructions:

- As a whole group, brainstorm all the different peers who could take on the role of a **buddy** for a new child at school.

### Possible answers to expect from participants

Ideas could include:

- Older student
- Classmate
- Older sibling attending the same school
- Close relative (e.g. cousin) attending the same school
- Friend



**Present the following:**

Some transition programmes include an *older student* from the school visiting the new child in their early education setting. This student plays with them, tells them about school and generally befriends them. During any school visits, the buddy will be there to show the new child around the school; then on the first day they will be ready to welcome the child. The buddy might spend time in their classroom and read to the new child and then show them around the playground at break times and introduce them to other children. This buddy support could continue for a few weeks as the new child becomes familiar with the new routines and setting.

A *classmate* could be assigned as a buddy to sit beside a new child. The buddy's role would be as a companion and also to show the new child routines, help them with things that are new and be a role model for the school expectations. They could also play with them at break times while they make new friends. This buddy can sometimes be a *friend* the child already knows.

An older *sibling* or close *relative* can be a buddy. They are particularly helpful in connecting the familiar with the unfamiliar in the transition process.

Buddies may also be selected due to sharing a minority language, common background, or living in the same area so they can go to and from school together.

Buddies may need some training or guidance on how best to engage with their partner especially if they communicate differently, may have unexpected behaviour, or just to help them understand a disability or difference.

Give each group a blank sheet of A4 paper and then give participants the following instructions:

- In your **core groups**, revisit your case studies from **Activity A1**.
- Fold your paper in half. On one half write what specific aspects of transitioning into school might be difficult for this child. On the other half of the paper, suggest how a buddy could help ease these difficulties.
- Share your ideas with the whole group.

### Optional extension activity – family buddies

- Give participants the following instructions:
- In your **core groups** revisit your case studies from **Activity A1**.
- Answer the following questions for both case studies:
  - How will making friends with other families ease the transition for this family?
  - How could they get to know other families?

Session 4:

# Support all transitions – big and small



# Session 4: Support all transitions – big and small

## Key points to cover during this session

Whether you run a full-day training session or just a very short discussion, try to include these key points:

- Children experience many other kinds of transition in their lives. Transitions present opportunities and challenges for children's learning and development.
- Enabling resources, equipment and support should be continued into the new setting. Transition plans and transition coordinators can ensure this happens.
- Listening to children and involving them in planning their transition helps parents and educators to provide efficient and effective support for transition.



**Facilitate your preferred selection from the following activities. You could re-watch the related segment of the video found at 17:03-24:40**

# A Basic workshop activities

## Activity 4.1 – Other transitions

🕒 30 minutes

### Main purpose of this activity

To explore transitions that children experience during their education.

### Present the following:

Transition is another word for change. In education people often use the word to talk about when children move between education settings. For example, between early childhood and primary school. This kind of transition is a major event and process for the children and families and all involved and is the main focus of our workshop. Managing transition inclusively helps to ensure that all children benefit from positive transitions.

However, moving schools is not the only significant change that learners experience in their early years and throughout school. The principles of inclusive transition can be applied to many different kinds of change. We can talk about three kinds of transition.

Write these three headings on the board:

1. Vertical transitions
2. Horizontal transitions
3. Daily living transitions

**Ask participants for ideas and/or present the following:**

- ***Vertical transitions*** describe when children move to a new educational setting.
- ***Horizontal transitions*** are much more frequent. They include moving between spaces (e.g. playground and class), moving from home to school and back again, changing activities (e.g. from meal-time to story-time), from typical to out-of-the ordinary routines (e.g. sports day), and changes in relationships (e.g. relief teacher, new children in the class).
- ***Daily living transitions*** happen outside of school (e.g. moving home, birth or death in the family). Nevertheless, they often impact a child's educational experience.

**Often transitions pass unnoticed or are a source of pride and excitement. Others can greatly influence a child or be a time of stress and insecurity.**

Give participants the following instructions:

- Think for 2 minutes about a horizontal or daily-living transition that you experienced as a child. How old were you? What happened? How did you feel? What benefits and challenges did you experience? In what ways did it impact your education?
- Pair up with another participant and share your stories with each other.

Next, place 2 boxes (containers, hats or envelopes) at the front of the room, labelled:

1. Vertical transitions
2. Horizontal transitions



Give participants the following instructions:

- Work in your **core group**. Have your child case studies in front of you.
- Take two blank pieces of paper. Fold each piece to make 8 small sections.
- On the first sheet write 8 different **horizontal transitions** learners may experience at school or early childhood settings.
- Tear or cut the sheet of paper along the folds so you have 8 different slips of paper. Place the slips into the 'horizontal transitions' box at the front.
- On the second sheet think of 8 different **daily living transitions** that could have an impact on a child's education.
- Tear the sheet of paper along the folds so you have 8 different slips of paper. Place the slips into the 'daily life transitions' box at the front.

When groups have finished, give participants the following instructions:

- Send a representative from your group to take, without looking, a slip of paper from each of the boxes at the front.
- Use the first slip with your first case study and answer these questions:
  - How would we know if the child is finding this type of transition challenging or stressful?
  - What could be done to ease this type of transition?
- Use the second slip with your second case study and repeat the same process.
- Send a representative from your group to take another two slips of paper and repeat the process.
- Share one of your examples with the whole group.

### Possible answers to expect from participants

You can use these sample answers to fill gaps if necessary.

#### Horizontal transitions

Friend leaving education setting

New teacher

Relief/temporary teacher

Out-of-ordinary routine (sports day, emergency drill, visitor to the class, field trip)

New children in the class

Moving between different parts of the school (class, canteen, toilets, playground, sports ground, hall, other class)

Transitioning between activities

Other out-of-the-home care settings (after-school care)

**Daily life transitions**

Family changes (divorce, separation, marriage, birth, caregiver change, economic changes)

Moving (moving house, town, school, community)

Illness

Trauma (bereavement, conflict, natural disaster, etc)

**Some other vertical changes that might need mentioning**

Advancing to a new grade level

Multiple levels for early childhood (child care for younger children, pre-primary setting)



# B Important theoretical issues to discuss

## Activity 4.2 – Continuity of support

🕒 90–120 minutes

### Main purpose of this activity

To recognise the importance of ensuring that any supports that are in place for children in inclusive education are not disrupted by transition processes.

### Present the following:

Many children need particular resources, adaptations to the environment, equipment and support to enable them to attend, participate and achieve in education. Taken together, we call these ‘supports’. During transitions to different education settings, it is important to ensure that such supports continue into the new setting. Often supports are not continued, due to differences in funding, staffing, educator training, resources or environment between settings.

Without continuation of supports, children face difficult transitions and their ability to attend, participate and achieve is undermined. Educators in the new setting have to re-discover the barriers which have already been overcome and work towards solutions which may have already been in place. Financial investment in supports may also go to waste

Give participants the following instructions:

- In your **core groups**, revisit your case studies from **Activity A1**. Consider which supports these children may have at home and at their early childhood setting. You may have done this as part of a previous activity, if so, jump ahead!
- Compile a list of the various measures that may have been put in place to support the children in your case studies to participate and learn at home and at early childhood level. You can refer to your notes from **Activities 1.1, 1.3, 2.1**.

**Present the following:**

Children may need different supports at different times in their education journey. Some supports may need to continue, some may be needed just for particular circumstances, others will be faded or stopped when the child no longer needs them. In itself, transition should not be the reason that a support is stopped. Transition plans should consider the supports that are in place and make careful decisions about how to ensure that support continues where it is needed.

Give participants the following instructions:

- Now ask these questions about each support identified for your case study children:
  - Should the support be continued in early childhood or school settings?
  - What would need to be done to ensure it continues?

**Present the following:**

Supports can take the form of people, such as specialists and teaching assistants, or can be expertise the educator has gained. Supports can be equipment and resources, instructional techniques, environmental adjustments, social settings, and even attitudes.

Place a copy of the 'spin the bottle' dial from **handout 4a** on the floor with a bottle on it. Tell participants that we are going to look at three types of supports as seen on the 'spin the bottle' dial: **people supports**, **resources or equipment**, and **environmental adaptations**. Groups may have some examples of these types of supports on the list they compiled earlier.

Give participants the following instructions:

- One group spins the bottle. According to where the bottle stops spinning, present to the whole group one support of this type from your list. The presentation should include the following:
  - Describe the support and explain why the child might need it.
  - A representative from the group goes to the **education settings** pictures (developed in **Activity A2**) and shows the whole group where the support might begin and continue.
  - A representative from the group explains what would be done to make sure this support continues through transitions.
- Repeat with each group.

**Present the following:**

Parents are often left alone to advocate for the continuity of support for their child. This can be stressful and undermine their ability to support their child's other needs in the transition process. One way to avoid this is to nominate a 'transition coordinator' to ensure that necessary supports continue across transitions into different settings.

# **C** Digging deeper into specific issues

## Activity 4.3 – Listen to learners

🕒 60–90 minutes

### Main purpose of this activity

To consider a number of ways we can learn about children’s perspectives on transition and why this is important.

### Present the following:

The move to a new education setting opens up a world of learning and development opportunities for children. However, transition can be a challenging process, and can even undermine children’s learning and development. Educators and families can plan how best to support children. Knowledge of children’s expectations, interests, concerns and questions is key as their perspectives may differ from educators’ and parents’. In addition, children should be involved in planning the support they receive. After all, it is a child’s *right* to participate in decisions which affect them, according to the UN Convention of the Rights of Children (CRC). In this session we will explore different ways of involving children in inclusive transition.

Give participants the following instructions:

- Work in a group of three. Decide who will be child A, who will be child B and who will be the educator.
- Child A, you are about to start attending an early childhood setting. Child B, you are about to move from an early childhood setting to primary school.
- Work together to prepare three questions for each child using words they would clearly understand. Aim to find out some of the following:
  - How do they feel about the transition?
  - What are they expecting?
  - What are they concerned about?
  - What do they already know? Is this accurate?

- Is there anything important that they do not know?
  - What do they want to know?
  - What support do they want?
- Role play with the 'educator' asking questions to each 'child'.
  - When you have finished, reflect on how easy or difficult it was to ask and answer the questions and why.

To finish, ask a few participants to share views on what was easy or difficult about the questions. Emphasise the need to adapt language for different children, and the idea that asking direct questions is not the only way to learn from children.

### Possible answers to expect from participants

The following can be used to prompt participants or fill gaps if needed:

#### **What are they expecting?**

What will the school/early childhood setting be like? (Use whatever early childhood setting name the child will be familiar with, e.g. kindergarten.)  
What happens at the school/early childhood setting? Who is at the school/early childhood setting? I wonder what the school/early childhood setting is like.

#### **What are they concerned about?**

I wonder what you are feeling about the school/early childhood setting.  
What does it make you think when we talk about the school/early childhood setting?

#### **What missing information or misinformation do they have?**

What will the school/early childhood setting be like? What happens at the school/early childhood setting? Who is at the school/early childhood setting? I wonder what the school/early childhood setting is like.

#### **What do they want to know about the new education setting?**

What do we need to find out about the school/early childhood setting still? Shall we write a list of questions?

#### **What support do they think they might want?**

Who is going to help you out at the school/early childhood setting?  
What will they do to help you? What is going to make the school/early childhood setting exciting? You know you can ask the teacher and other children for help; what do you think you might like them to help you with?  
What things do you think you will need to ask for?

### **Are they feeling uncomfortable?**

I wonder what you are feeling about the school/early childhood setting?  
What does it make you think when we talk about the school/early childhood setting?

### **Present the following:**

**Drawing can also be used to find out children's ideas, views and experiences.**

Give participants the following instructions:

- In your group of three, think of ideas for pictures you could ask each child to draw to find out the same information. For example, you could ask the child to draw the things they think they will like about the school/early childhood setting and the things they think they might not like.
- Join another group. Share your drawing ideas.

**Note for trainer:** You could extend this activity by asking each 'child' to do an example drawing.

### **Possible answers to expect from participants**

The following can be used to prompt participants or fill gaps if needed.

#### **What are they expecting?**

Draw a picture of what the school/early childhood setting looks like. Draw a picture of all the people who will be at the school/early childhood setting.

#### **What are they concerned about?**

Draw a picture of something you think you will like doing at the school/early childhood setting. Draw a picture of something you think you will not like at the school/early childhood setting.

#### **What do they want to know about the new education setting?**

Draw a picture of the things you want to know about at the school/early childhood setting.

#### **What support do they think they might want?**

Draw a picture of who is going to help you at the school/early childhood setting.

#### **Are they feeling uncomfortable?**

Draw a picture of anything – you can choose. Use the drawing as a starting point for discussion of how the child is feeling.

Next, ask the whole group, to brainstorm other methods you could use to find out what children are thinking, feeling, hoping for and expecting in the transition process.

Write ideas on a flipchart or board.

### Possible answers to expect from participants

The following answers can be used to prompt participants or fill gaps if needed:<sup>3</sup>

#### **Role play**

Children could play with an adult or peer to act out, for example, school/early childhood setting visits and what happens at the school/early childhood setting on the first day.

#### **Maps**

Children could draw a map of the school/early childhood setting, or mark off places on a map drawn by someone else. For example, they could mark places they know, places they do not like, places that look fun, places they are worried about, etc.

#### **Timelines**

Timelines could help identify horizontal transitions that are important to the child. For example, they can draw along a timeline all the things that happen, and mark the things they like, and mark differently the things they do not like.

#### **Guided walk**

Children can show us around and tell us what they see. For example, during a school/early childhood setting visit, a child could guide an adult and tell them what they know, what places they are excited about, what things they still have questions about, and what areas are their favourite.

#### **Photo elicitation**

Children can view photos and discuss them. For example, photos of the new education setting can stimulate the child to talk about what they are thinking, what they understand, what questions they have, and what they feel.

#### **Photography**

Children can take their own photos. For example, during a transition orientation visit the child could photograph all the things they want to find out more about, and all the things that look exciting.

<sup>3</sup>EENET (2018) Young Voices in Inclusive Education.

Ask each group of participants to share their favourite ideas for each age group (i.e. for child A and child B).

Ask participants why listening to children is important. List ideas on the board.

### Possible answers to expect from participants

Fill any gaps if needed:

Listening to children helps us to learn from them and about them, so that we can provide efficient and effective support for transition.

Children who are actively involved in thinking about transition are likely to feel more positive about the change.

Children who are actively involved in choices, decisions and planning for transition are likely to understand and commit to the activities planned.

Children have the **right** to be involved.

### Present the following:

**Another way to involve children in decisions that affect them is to directly offer them choices when you are planning transition activities.**

Give participants the following instructions:

- Work together in your group of three to prepare ideas for choices that could be offered to 'Child B' (the child who is about to move from an early childhood setting to primary school). Prepare choices for each of the following transition activities:
  - Information booklet for children
  - School visits
  - Two-way exchange visits for children (early childhood group visit to school / school class visit to early childhood setting)
  - Home visits
- Role play with the 'educator' offering choices to 'Child B'.
- When you have finished, reflect on how easy or difficult it was to think of choices to offer the child. Then reflect on what decisions the child made and why.
- Each group then shares one of their ideas with the whole group.



To finish, ask a few groups to share views on what was easy or difficult about offering the child choices and encouraging them to make decisions.

### **Possible answers to expect from participants**

The following suggested answers can be used to prompt participants if needed.

#### **Information booklet for children**

Children could decide what information they want and/or how they want the booklet to look (e.g. colour, they might want to decorate it themselves). They could decide where to keep the booklet and who to share it with. The booklet could be put together based on a list of questions that are developed with the children.

#### **School visits**

Children could decide which significant person/people to take with them for the visits. A child could take a camera and choose what to take photos of during the visit. Choices could be given to the child regarding what they do during the visit (e.g. observe only, play with other children, meet the teachers and other staff, tour the school, eat lunch at school, just look through windows or from the door, sit with the other children).

#### **Two-way exchange visits**

Children could make decisions about welcoming their visitors, offering tours, sharing food, creating artwork, doing activities together.

#### **Home visits**

Children could make decisions about what happens during the home visit (e.g. show the visitor around, share food/drink, play outside, read a story, draw a picture).

## Optional extension activity – Older children listening to younger children

 **40 minutes**

### Main purpose of this activity:

To consider the ways in which older children can support the transition of younger children.

Give participants the following instructions:

- As a whole group, brainstorm reasons why involving older children in listening to younger learners during transitions can be helpful.

Write ideas on a flipchart. Use the following answers to prompt and to fill gaps if necessary:<sup>4</sup>

- Children are often more comfortable sharing their experiences and ideas with other children than with adults. Adults might be seen as authority figures, likely to judge or punish.
- Children can support each other to express and develop ideas.
- Children may ask each other more probing or challenging questions than the adults ask. Children are renowned for being very direct!
- Older children may remember well what it was like for them, and so have more empathy than an adult. This can help them to ask younger children questions, and plan effective transition activities with them.
- Older children often have creative ideas for helping younger children to relax and talk.
- Older children gain valuable skills when they learn how to facilitate and support their peers and younger children with talking and thinking activities.
- Older children may reflect in more depth on their own experiences and ideas through the process of asking others to do so.

Young children who will soon transition to another level (for instance, from early childhood to primary) may find it reassuring if they have already met older children and had a positive experience. Sometimes it may be possible for the older children to have a supportive role for their younger friends when they move to the next school.

Next give participants the following instructions:

- As whole group, brainstorm which **older** children may be able to assist in listening to younger children.

<sup>4</sup>EENET (2018) Young Voices in Inclusive Education.

Write ideas on the flipchart. Ideas might include older siblings, senior students in the school, older children from the same community, older cousins.

Then, give participants the following instructions:

- Write one question that you might give to an older child for them to ask a younger child about transition.
- Play volunteer tag to get 10 questions written on the flipchart:
  - A volunteer writes their question on the board or flipchart.
  - The volunteer nominates another participant by saying their name, pointing or touching them lightly.
  - The next participant writes a different question then tags another participant. If they do not have a different question they directly nominate another participant.
  - Continue until 10 questions are written on the flipchart.

**Present the following:<sup>5</sup>**

**Educators should prepare older children to facilitate activities with younger children to ensure they are empathetic and effective. The following game can be played with older children to help them think through these principles.**

Distribute a copy of **handout 4b** to each group (prepare the handout by cutting it into cards).

Give participants the following instructions:

- Work in your **core groups** with one set of cards.
- Divide the cards into 2 piles:
  - We **should** behave like this....
  - We **should** not behave like this....

<sup>5</sup> EENET (2018) Young Voices in Inclusive Education.



Annexes

# Film transcript and handouts



# Film transcript

## Inclusive transition

### Why is transition an issue in inclusive education?

All children experience many periods of transition in education – from home to their first day in pre-school or school, to their last day in school, college or university, and then starting work.

Moving to a new school or class can be exciting, frightening, confusing or upsetting.

It can feel disruptive for the child and their family.

It is a very worrying stage when children transition to school. A new group is formed; they are growing and trying to show their characters. It is tough when children are getting used to each other in a new group.  
*(Olha Serova, Mother of Artem, Pre-school No. 2, “Romashka”, Mykolayivka)*

Every time a child joins a new education setting or class it takes time for them to settle in, and for the teacher to get to know their individual needs.

This means that during transition periods there is a risk that participation and learning will be disrupted, particularly for children who have additional support needs.

Iliia is now comfortable in the kindergarten. Of course, as a mother, I am anxious about what's next, what his future will be, and I understand the next step is a primary school. Obviously it must be an inclusive class. Yes, I do worry. But such schools are already available in Kharkiv. They have gathered knowledge and experience and accept children with disabilities. So I hope by the time Iliia graduates from the kindergarten we will find a perfect inclusive school where we are welcome and accepted.  
*(Nina Arsentieva, Mother of Illia, Community Pre-school No 74, Kharkiv City)*

Inclusive education systems must make sure that every transition period is well planned and supported, with the full involvement of parents and caregivers, so that no child becomes excluded from or within education during this difficult time.

## **Inclusive education transition starts at home**

Parents and caregivers have the biggest influence on their children's development and learning, from even before they are born.

They support their child's social, physical, intellectual, creative and emotional development, which helps the child to become a resilient and independent thinker, communicator and doer.

Parents and caregivers best support this development through play.

Play-based activities can also help parents and caregivers notice if their child is experiencing difficulties.

Building early development and learning foundations at home helps to make the transition to the first education setting less challenging.

Children learn and practise lots of different skills at home that they will need to use during their education.

## **A continuum of transition support**

Inclusive transition means that when learners move from home to their first education setting, or to new classes or settings, it is a smooth process for them, their families, and the teachers.

There are no unexpected changes or shocks.

There is minimal stress, and the children continue to receive the support they need to help them build on what they already know and can do.

How can you contribute to this continuum of support?

## **The first education setting**

A child experiences their first education transition when they start attending a preschool or school for the first time.

You can reassure parents and caregivers that there is no need for them to push their young child to learn reading, writing or maths before they enrol in their first education setting.

It is more important that they encourage children to play and develop daily living skills and the curiosity and confidence to pursue things that interest them.

You may decide it is appropriate to make home visits. This can help you build the relationships that will make the transition process less stressful for everyone.

During these visits you might work with parents and caregivers to create a transition plan to help everyone prepare for the child's first move into education.

I just come and visit them to see how life is going.  
(*Sakhile Jane Stewart, Senior Care-giver, Gogo Centre, Lunju*)

Today we are at Lee-Ann's homestead. I'm with Lee-Ann's mother. We include all the children in our programming. We can have even children using wheelchairs to attend the pre-school.  
(*James Tsabedze, Programme Officer, Vusumnotfo, Piggs Peak*)

Children usually feel more confident at home.

They may feel more comfortable meeting their future teacher for the first time in this familiar setting.

You will probably find it helpful to see the environment your new learners are coming from.

You should also encourage children and parents and caregivers to visit the new education setting before enrolment.

You can invite them to join in sample sessions and fun activities.

Their participation can gradually increase in the term before enrolment.

If children know what to expect, then the transition into their first education setting will be less of a shock.

## **Moving to the next level**

The time when Denys needs to go to school is my big fear. It is a fear of the unknown; we do not know what to expect. It is very difficult for him to adapt to new people and environments. It is difficult for him to establish contact with someone new. So, this is our big fear, how he will feel among new people. I think it would be beneficial for him to have an inception visit to the school.

(*Maria Tkach, Mother of Denys, Pre-school No. 37, Lviv*)

As well as supporting children and their families during transition into their first education setting, you need to help them transition smoothly to the next class or level of education.

Inception or orientation visits can be useful during these transitions.

These are the children these are our graduates. They are going for grade 1 next year. Just now we are taking them to the primary school where they will be doing their grade one visit for their orientation.

(*Deli Ndzinisa, Teacher, Mahlabaeni Neighbourhood Care Point (NCP)/Pre-school, Goboyane, Big Bend*)



You know it's every parent's anxiety how the child will take the transition from pre-school to grade 1. You don't know how they will react. So that is why I'm also of the fact that if they are orientated before they go to school it makes things easier and they know their teachers for next year. So meanwhile while you are with them you are able to talk about the teacher as well. What did you see at the primary school, did you like it?

*(Makhosazana Vilakazi, Children's Home Officer, Nqaba Yethu Children's Home, Big Bend)*

We are welcoming the newcomers for next year, the pre-school leavers. Orienting them is very very important simply because it's going to help them adapt to the new setting, to the new environment. It will help them gain confidence.

*(Sithembiso Matse, Deputy Headteacher, Mahlabaeni Primary School, Big Bend)*

I think it is very very important because these they are just young learners and it is their first time and their school is just a big school environment. They have never been. They have never seen so many teachers. They have never seen so many learners. Each and every time they shake, they are frightened by the situation. So for them, for their orientation to be held here it really helps them because they get to know the environment. They get to know the classroom situation. I think it helps, it really really helps them.

*(Nondumiso Dlamini, Teacher, Dingizwe Primary School, Dingizwe, Mhlambanyatsi)*

Today we have arranged a visit of our last year class to Ivan Puliuy Lyceum [a nearby school] to help children understand what school is, to meet the head teacher, their future teachers. To see the gym so that in the future when it's time for them to go to school they have less anxiety and stress. To help them feel more comfortable in the school environment.

*(Lesia Kovalchuk, Headteacher, Pre-school No. 37, Lviv)*

Early childhood educators and teachers from the nearby primary schools need to be in regular contact with each other, and with parents and caregivers who know their children best.

By communicating and sharing with each other about how you work and the children's needs, you will better support these needs before, during and after the transition from one setting to the next.

The kindergarten I am managing has been collaborating with a neighbouring school for a long time. Our relations with the school staff are very close and this greatly facilitates the transition from pre-school to school. School teachers often come to our festivals. We invite them, and children from our kindergarten are frequent visitors to the school. Such co-operation with a primary school is necessary for every preschool to ensure smooth transition from kindergarten to school.  
*(Olha Lavrynenko, Headteacher, Pre-school No. 2, 'Romashka', Mykolayivka)*

When children move from one education setting to another, they will each be at a different stage of development and learning.

When you or your colleagues are welcoming children into a new setting, be flexible and respond to each child's individual needs, interests, and abilities.

Be welcoming and friendly always, and notice the child's verbal and other communications with you.

Here are some more ideas to help you facilitate inclusive transitions between education settings.

You and the child's parents or caregivers can compile a portfolio to share with their new teacher.

It could show the child's interests, strengths, support needs, communication preferences, medical or rehabilitation information, and more.

You can work with colleagues in both settings to prepare a simple booklet about the next school for parents and children. It could include photos and useful information.

Older children could help to prepare welcome information about their school too.

You can organise a buddy system.

For instance, primary school children could meet and play with preschool children before transition, and then continue to play with and help each other after transition.

You could organise joint events so that children from both settings visit each other and learn, play, and perform together.

You could 'team teach' to help children meet and get used to a new teacher.

For instance, the children's future teacher could come to one of your sessions and work with you.

## **Support all transitions – big and small**

Children who are experiencing a big transition to a new class or setting have lots of challenges to deal with.

Here are just a few examples.

They may have to spend more time away from home and family, which can be frightening.

You can create a familiar, friendly, and fun environment, especially when learners are enrolling in their first education setting.

Children may find it difficult meeting lots of new children and making friends.

You can use play and social time to help children build new relationships, and you can encourage buddying and sibling support.

Children may find unfamiliar approaches to teaching and learning confusing.

You should find out what children are familiar with.

Help them gradually get used to the new ways of teaching and learning and new expectations.

Keep trying to make your class or setting more learner-centred and inclusive.

We must also remember that transition is not just about the big changes that happen when moving from one class or setting to another.

Children experience transitions all the time during their education.

For example, moving from one lesson or activity to another is a transition.

Moving from lessons or other activities to lunch time is a transition.

As is moving back into class after lunch.

Arriving at school each morning is a transition, as is finishing the school day and going home.

Such transitions can be confusing, upsetting, or physically challenging for some children, even if they happen every day.

You need to be aware of the regular transitions that children experience.

Find out how they cope with these changes and whether they need more support at these times.

## An example of listening to young learners

It is essential that we listen to learners during transition periods.

We are more likely to consult children these days, but it is still often assumed that very young children cannot express their thoughts and ideas adequately.

This is not true!

The problem is we don't ask in the right way or give them the right opportunities to communicate what they think and feel.

We talk about how with the child as well. How it would make them feel. How it would be easier for them to go to school and like it and not be so afraid.

*(Makhosazana Vilakazi, Children's Home Officer, Nqaba Yethu Children's Home, Big Bend)*

Very young children do have opinions.

They know that they feel excited or scared about going to a new education setting or class, and they will have lots of questions.

There are lots of different ways that we can support young children to communicate their thoughts, feelings, and ideas about transition.

One idea that was used with the learners you have seen in Swaziland and Ukraine was for older children to discuss with younger children about education transition issues.

Older children can often encourage younger children to talk more.

Young children may feel more relaxed about sharing their fears or ideas with someone who is closer in age and not as intimidating as an adult.

Education settings for younger and older children can work together to organise activities like this.

The idea of the project is about communication with kindergarten kids. Only it is not adults who communicate, not their parents or teachers, but teenagers from other schools. The idea is to make it easier for the children to open up and tell teenagers about their problems, anxieties, as well as joys and things like that. It will be easier for teenagers to talk to them, considering that most of us have younger brothers or sisters and talk with them at home about various topics that are important to young children. This way, we will be able to prepare them for the future school years, help them transition easier and not worry as much as we did.

*(Khrystyna Kelio, Student, Ivan Puliuy Lyceum, Lviv)*

Or you can just encourage older children to have informal discussions with younger children at home and in the community, to support them with the challenges of starting school or moving to a new school.

You can find out more about how to organise activities like this in EENET's guide: "Young Voices in Inclusive Education: A guide to help young researchers conduct action research with peers and younger children".

Transitions in education often go unnoticed – we take them for granted.

But these large and small changes can impact significantly on children's participation and achievement in education.

Transitions that are not managed inclusively can even lead to children dropping out of education completely.

Every teacher needs to find out about and take action to support the transition needs of all their learners.

# Handout 2a

## Homely

Print and cut out the cards. Print enough copies so that every participant can have a card.

|                 |             |             |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|
| Family friendly | Happy       | Safe        |
| Secure          | Inviting    | Caring      |
| Nurturing       | Loving      | Predictable |
| Comfortable     | Attachments | Belonging   |
| Familiar        | Happy       | Relaxed     |

# Handout 2b

## Early childhood and school links

Cut up this handout into three cards. Give each card to a group to read aloud together.

Group 1: **Shared responsibility and collaboration** for transition between early childhood setting and school.

Who will be involved? What other stakeholders could be involved. How will they all cooperate together? List everyone on the team. Identify who will take a lead and why. How can they overcome the challenges of different work hours and different work places?

Group 2: **Transition activities.**

Make a list of all your ideas for transition activities. Describe each activity and who will be involved. Which activities will happen before the first school day and after the first day of school? Which activities help children and families become familiar with: physical surroundings, peers, adults/teachers, rules and routines?

Group 3: **Sharing information.**

What information about the child and family will be shared with the school? How will this information be shared? Who needs to know it? How will this information be helpful? What information about curriculum is useful to be shared? How will this information be shared? How will this information be helpful? How will you deal with privacy and confidentiality when sharing information?

# Handout 2c

## Transition portfolio<sup>6</sup>

Read aloud

### Part 1

Gaurav was a quiet child for whom English was an additional language. When he began school, he took his portfolio from his early childhood setting with him.

His teacher sat with him to read his portfolio. She was able to get a sense of his interests and personality.

Other children in the class wanted to see the portfolio. Gaurav allowed them to browse through and look at the photos and pictures. They had conversations with Gaurav as they looked through. He began to find his place in the classroom and he began to communicate in English and build relationships in a non-threatening way.

Other children brought in their portfolios and they spent time together laughing and talking about their portfolio stories.

Read aloud

### Part 2

- The primary teacher learnt about Gaurav's capabilities, interests and dispositions which would help her in teaching him.
- The teacher also found it useful to have an easy way to engage with Gaurav about his learning and learning methods by using the stories and the conversations they started.
- The portfolios also worked as a vehicle for Gaurav to interact and build relationships with the other children.

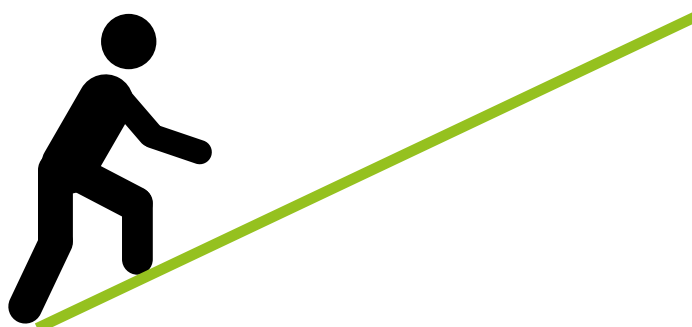
<sup>6</sup>Hartley, C., Rogers, P., Smith, J., & Lovatt, D. (2014). Transition portfolios: Another tool in the transition kete. *Early Childhood Folio*, 18(2), 3-7.



# Handout 3a

## Schools ready for children

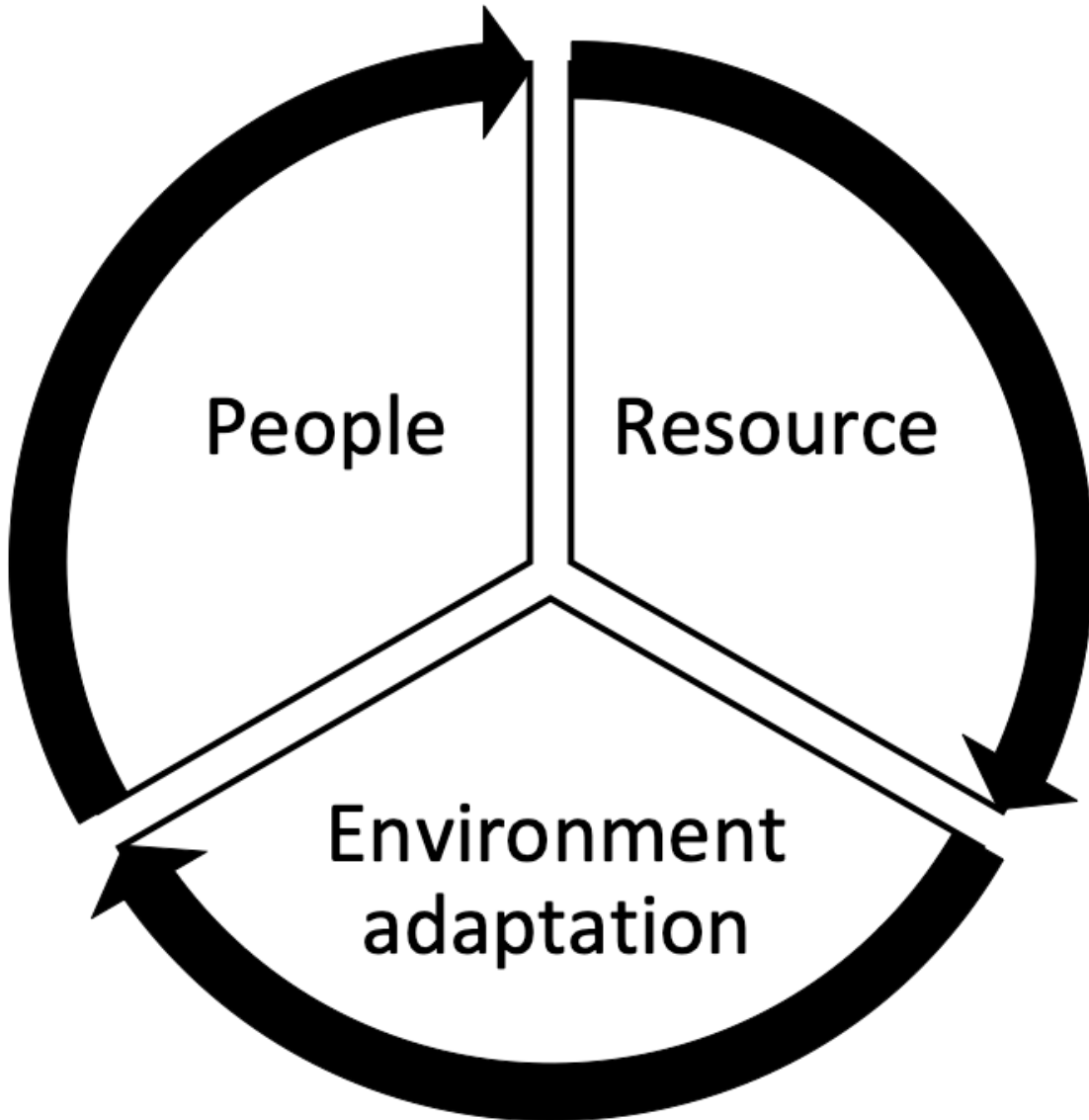
Show the following pictures either on a PowerPoint slide or board, or print copies for all participants.



# Handout 4a

## Continuity of support – spin the bottle

Print a copy and place on the floor with a bottle in the middle to spin (a large copy would be best).



# Handout 4b

## Older children as good child voice facilitators

Print a copy of this handout for each group, cut out the cards and shuffle them.

To help the facilitator know which card goes in which pile, the 'should do' answers are in the left column and the 'should not do' answers in the right column. However, make sure you mix up the cards well before giving them to the participants.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Give everyone a chance to say something or join in the activities.   | Shout at children when they do not give you an answer or when they cannot do the activity.                 |
| Make the activities fun.   | Pick the children who seem most clever and ask them all the questions.                                     |
| Find an alternative activity for any child who is having difficulty. Be creative and 'think on your feet'. | Tell children what you want them to say.   |
| Find an alternative activity for any child who is having difficulty. Be creative and 'think on your feet'. | If children do not understand, keep repeating the same instructions or questions until they do understand. |
| Use simple words and short sentences.  | Behave like a strict teacher.  |
| Be encouraging – whatever the child says, that is what you want to hear.                                   | Tell children they have given you a wrong answer.  |
| Respect answers – if a child feels or believes something, it is not wrong.                                 | Make children join in if they are reluctant.   |
| Make sure children do not miss important lessons to do activities with you.                                | Stop children from playing and chatting – they must stay focused on the task you have given them.          |