EARLY CHILDHOOD TRANSITIONS: BEST PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor: a tribe learning to survive, a band of artists seeking new forms of expression, a group of engineers working on similar problems, a clique of pupils defining their identity in the school, a network of surgeons exploring novel techniques, a gathering of first-time managers helping each other cope.

Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.

(Wegner, 1998)
2013 Community of Practice in Transition: Early Childhood Members

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Purpose: improve transitions for children and their families
- research-driven
- informed by our experience

Products
- Guidance Document
- Website: www.uwyo.edu/wind/cop/
- Transition workbook
- Videos on the transition experience
TRANSITIONS THAT FAMILIES EXPERIENCE

- Family -> Family with a child with special needs
- Family with a child with special needs -> Family that is receiving services
- Part C services -> Part B services
- PreKindergarten -> Kindergarten
SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS

- Involve the family
- Are processes, not single events
- Are carefully planned
- Are flexible
OUTCOMES OF SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS

- Families show **positive attitudes** toward school and learning
- Teachers recognize and **value differences** and provide developmentally appropriate practice
- All stakeholders are **linked** through positive and mutually-supported and focused efforts

(adapted from Rous et al 2008)
HONOR A FAMILY-CENTERED APPROACH TO TRANSITION

- Create high-quality learning environments for children ages birth through five years of age, including hiring and retaining highly qualified teachers and staff.

- Invest in trainings and workshops

- Create classrooms designed to be a place for learning for **all children**.

"High quality child care and developmentally appropriate classrooms for young children are associated with better academic outcomes, work habits, and social adjustment after the transition to the next setting." Rosenkoetter et al (2009)
In order to create high-quality learning environments, "public policies need to include necessary funding for research to identify effective screening, assessment, and early education practices for young children with learning difficulties and disabilities" (Horowitz et al, 2007). This investment is crucial to the success of children with special needs and “is the most important factor in predicting outcomes.” (Horowitz et al, 2007).

- Involve primary caregivers in discussions and decisions regarding strategies for successful transition.

- Maintain communication with community agencies (e.g. schools, doctors' offices, therapist offices) as a way to provide additional supports during transition.
INCREASE COLLABORATION AND ALIGNMENT OF TRANSITION PROCESSES

- Stakeholders have a shared understanding of the child’s IFSP or IEP including timelines for achieving goals and outcomes. School districts and preschools should maintain an accurate, thorough, and up-to-date record on the child’s progress.

- Conduct shared training between district, preschools, parents, and administrators.

- Provide substitute teachers and parent supports to increase participation in joint trainings.
INCREASE COLLABORATION AND ALIGNMENT OF TRANSITION PROCESSES

- Ensure that the child's records promptly follow him or her to new programs and information in the records is discussed between the school districts and preschools.

- Ensure receiving district and preschool staff has access to specific information on a child's special needs so that what worked well in one setting may be carried over into the new setting.

- Provide options to families for future placements, procedures, and continuum of service delivery.
INFORMATION, TRAINING AND PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS FOR STAKEHOLDERS

- Ensure that primary caregivers have access to information and resources that identifies potential delays. This could include having healthcare providers disseminate information during well-baby checkups (Horowitz et al, 2007) or supporting trainings or forums for questions (online or otherwise) to caregivers, healthcare and related service providers.

- Preschools and school districts should be trained to administer the same screening tools in the same way across the state.
INFORMATION, TRAINING AND PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS FOR STAKEHOLDERS

- Teachers and service providers should regularly monitor the child's progress to determine the effectiveness of interventions. This could be done through:
  - regularly scheduled meetings with members of the child's IEP or IFSP team
  - quarterly progress monitoring shared with families
  - development of a child portfolio, including standard paper-and-pencil work, videos of the child completing certain tasks, observations or interviews with parents, doctors' notes, therapists' notes, etc.

- Refer stakeholders to Quality Indicators for Assistive Technology (QIAT, 2012) which is a guidance document that outlines the roles and training necessary for the child and team members. It also contains subsequent steps for assistive technology use and support after the transition has taken place.
HIRE A TRANSITION COORDINATOR

- arranges training for staff members and families on transition strategies.
- facilitates the development of a plan to address the unique needs of the child. This plan should include assistive technology strategies and services.
- informs and educates families on all possible placement options, procedures, and expectations of the programs.
- provides opportunities for families to meet with all receiving school staff prior to transitioning to the new setting.
- attends a transition meeting with the receiving staff to discuss the possible modifications, accommodations, and service options for incoming students.
- arranges reciprocal visits between preschool and kindergarten staff.
Districts should administer a survey (or have another follow up process) to the family/primary care givers in order to evaluate the success of the transition after the transition occurs. The survey should ask questions regarding how the transition went, what the agencies did well (both sending and receiving), and what could be done differently to improve the transition.
Transition checklist and timeline for staff and parents

- Transition timeline and checklist for parents and staff

- *When I’m 3 Where Will I Be*
  Workbook that provides key steps for transition from part C to part B to ensure successful transition
The transition includes assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation which continues throughout the school career.

Systematically gathered information over multiple transition points can assist in identifying patterns of successful adjustments and factors that contribute to or detract from such changes.
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RESOURCES

- Wyoming Institute for Disabilities website at http://www.uwyo.edu/wind/cop/

- WDE Wyoming Instructional Network at http://wyominginstructionalnetwork.com/
THANK YOU