P5221

ENTERING A NEW PRESCHOOL

How Service Providers and Families Can Ease the Transitions of Children Turning Three Who Have Special Needs

Family And Child Transitions into Least Restrictive **Environments**
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

About the FACTS/LRE Information Series: This booklet is one in a series designed to provide practical information to the various audiences concerned about transitions: families, educators, service providers, and members of state and local interagency councils. For more information about FACTS/LRE, please turn to the back of this publication.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF TRANSITIONS— AND THE AIMS OF FACTS/LRE

Transition—a process in time that occurs between events—takes place throughout our lives. There are the transitions we make quite frequently—traveling between home and work, picking up children after school, cleaning the house or apartment before receiving guests. And then there are transitions that signal the start of a whole new set of activities and routines.

Remember your first day of school? Your child's first day of school or day care? The first day on a new job?

How did you plan for these important transitions? Did you visit in advance? Purchase new clothes? Get a haircut? Double check the bus route?

Transitions often work best if they are planned. Presidents and governors have "transition teams" to assist with these milestones in their lives. The rest of us generally get by without dozens of paid helpers. Still, the decisions that are made, the events that take place and the feelings that arise during transitions have profound consequences in all of our lives.

Young children with special needs and their families experience several transitions. The first transition occurs when the child is born and becomes a member of the family. Other transitions take place as a child's disability or special need is identified and relationships with service providers are established. Later transitions take place as changes are made from one service provider or educational setting to another.

FACTS/LRE means Family And Child Transitions into Least Restrictive Environments. Our project produces publications and offers direct technical assistance to see that the transitions experienced by young children with special needs and their families are not treated as an afterthought but are given the serious attention they deserve. We focus especially on the transition that occurs as a child approaching age three prepares to exit from early intervention services. However, most of our materials are also relevant to transitions that occur at other ages.

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Families as well as staff working in early childhood and early intervention programs have come to recognize the beginning of preschool as a period of adjustment for many young children. This booklet discusses some of the issues children and families may experience during this transition period and presents some ideas that may help minimize adjustment problems for young children with special needs entering preschool. An important focus for early intervention programs serving children with special needs is to begin a transition plan early with families so that options can be explored adequately, an optimal preschool placement can be secured, and steps can be taken to enhance the transition. Strategies recommended in this publication may help prepare children for the change, and also assist family members and the staff who will receive the children in the new settings. We elaborate on these strategies and demonstrate how early intervention staff, staff in the new setting, and families can work together to provide a satisfactory transition for children with special needs. One of the last segments of this booklet tells the story of Marcus and his transition. This is a fictionalized account based on the research and experiences of FACTS/LRE staff. It illustrates many of the steps that service providers and families can take to support children's adjustment to a new setting.

ENTRY INTO A GROUP

An important milestone of any young child's life is attendance in a group care setting. In earlier generations, this step was often associated with the beginning of first grade or kindergarten. In America in the 1990s, this is no longer the case: The majority of children attend some kind of half-day or full-day preschool, day care or Head Start program prior to their entry into kindergarten. For young children with identified delays and disabilities, the first attendance in a group care setting often occurs on or shortly after the child's third birthday in accordance with the legal requirement that special education services be made available to eligible children at this age.

Young children often require support in order to say good-bye to a familiar setting and enter a new program. Some children experience distress adjusting to a new group setting while separating from parents or familiar caregivers. Even if a child with special needs has been receiving special services or attending some type of group care setting from infancy, entry into a special education preschool (or a community-based preschool with specialized services) for the first time can be a stressful event.

SAYING GOOD-BYE TO THE SERVICE PROVIDERS WHO SUPPORTED THEM DURING THE PERIOD WHEN THEY FIRST LEARNED ABOUT THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF THEIR INFANT OR TODDLER CAN BE VERY EMOTIONAL.

A MAJOR CHANGE FOR PARENTS TOO

Family members can also experience stress regarding a child's transition to a new educational setting. Major concerns expressed by parents when children transition from early intervention to preschool classrooms include being away from their child on a regular basis for the first time, allowing the child to be transported on a bus, and learning to trust a new teacher. Saying good-bye to the service providers who supported them during the period when they first learned about the special needs of their infant or toddler can be very emotional. Now they have to establish new relationships with school personnel, adjust their schedules and routines, and become familiar with different facilities and procedures. Changes in service delivery at age three are often associated with a shift from family-focused to child-focused services. In this context, sending their tiny child on a bus to school may symbolize more than a change in the nature of services: It can leave parents feeling that decision making and control are passing out of their hands.

On the positive side, the child's entry into a group preschool setting may free parents to begin thinking about some of their own needs and aspirations. They may be able to go back to school or work or increase their hours at work. This may help them to pay off debts and reduce the strain on the household budget. But even when families desire such changes, there is still stress involved in making them. These, too, should be viewed as part of the child's transition. Those who work with families need to be aware of the multiple aspects of transitions that contribute to the successful or unsuccessful entry and adjustment of children.

PROBLEMS WITH ADJUSTMENT MAY LEAD STAFF TO CONCLUDE THAT A CHILD IS NOT READY FOR SCHOOL OR BELONGS IN A MORE RESTRICTIVE SETTING.

HOW DO CHILDREN REACT ?

Children have varied reactions to the changes in familiarity and routine that result from starting a new preschool. Some children will acclimate themselves readily to a new schedule, caregivers, and setting. Others will demonstrate through tears, tantrums, mood swings, or silent withdrawal that they are having trouble making the adjustment. An adjustment which looks smooth to the preschool staff may be perceived differently by parents who see aggression toward siblings or other new behaviors at home. Some children may exhibit tears and distress only during the first day or two, while others will hold their anxieties inside until they have become a bit more accustomed to the new setting.

Events in a child's life which are unrelated to the school experience but which happen to coincide with the child's entry into the new program may sometimes be the source of the child's painful emotions. Examples can include the child whose parent starts back to work when the child enters preschool, the child who has recently experienced the birth of a new sibling, or the child who has been exposed to violence in the home or the neighborhood.

MINIMIZING ADJUSTMENT PROBLEMS

The passage of time and a consistently caring and nurturing environment are important components in supporting the child's successful entry and adjustment to a new setting. However, attention to the transition process by service providers and families can decrease the time required for a young child to make a successful adjustment.

Why is it important to shorten a child's adjustment period? One reason is to minimize the distress that the child and family experience throughout this time. Another important reason is to reduce the amount of one-on-one staff attention required to respond to crying or aggressive behavior. Problems with adjustment may lead staff to conclude that a child is not ready for school or belongs in a more restrictive setting. In situations in which a young child with special needs is placed

in a community-based setting designed for children who are typically developing, such as a nursery school or child care center, this is especially problematic.

TRANSITION PLANNING BEGINS WITH THE IFSP

Professionals and parents can help minimize adjustment problems for three-year-old children through a transition plan within the Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP). What is the IFSP? As specified in Part H of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), it is a written plan developed by a multi-disciplinary team and the parents or guardians of the child (which may be drawn up shortly after birth or any time up to the age of three that a child's needs are identified). The IFSP contains statements regarding the child's present levels of development, the family's resources, concerns, and priorities, major outcomes expected to be achieved for the child and family, and specific early intervention services. The IFSP also includes projected dates for initiation and duration of services and the name of the service coordinator. Finally, it identifies steps to support the child's transition out of early intervention and into a new set of services that will be made available after turning three. The term that is commonly applied to the program that a child is exiting as he or she approaches the third birthday is the *sending organization* or *sending program.* The term that is applied to the program which will be the child's next educational placement is the *receiving organization* or *receiving program.* In the remainder of this publication these terms will be used.

In focusing on eligibility and the identification of appropriate educational placements and services, the transition aspects of these plans can become an afterthought to both parents and service providers. In doing so, they overlook the key role that transition planning plays in the success or failure of an educational placement. For program staff and family members who want to avoid this common mistake, the balance of this publication offers concrete strategies to follow.

SIX STRATEGIES TO USE BEFORE THE TRANSITION

WHEN TRANSITIONS ARE HANDLED HASTILY, THE ONLY SOLUTION MAY BE TO "PLUG" THE ELIGIBLE CHILD INTO A SLOT IN AN AVAILABLE CLASSROOM. THIS DOES NOT REPRESENT THE RANGE OF OPTIONS MANDATED BY THE LAW AND RECOGNIZED AS BEST PRACTICE.

Parents, other family members, and service providers can all help to prepare the child for the change that is coming.

- Begin early
- Talk about the new setting in positive ways
- Encourage the child to ask questions and express fears
- Engage the child in concrete experiences
- Teach the child specific skills and routines which will be useful in the new program
- Communicate and share information between programs in advance

BEGIN EARLY

The law requires that transition planning for children preparing to exit early intervention begin at least 90 days before the third birthday. In practice, a minimum of six months should be built into the process; even eight to nine months before the third birthday would not be excessively early. By developing transition goals six to nine months before the anticipated transition date, early intervention staff and parents can take time to prepare the child as well as themselves. This also assures that there will be adequate time to search for a setting which is the least restrictive and most appropriate for the individual child. When transitions are handled hastily, the only solution may be to "plug" the eligible child into a slot in an available classroom. This does not represent the range of options mandated by the law and recognized as best practice.

TALK ABOUT THE NEW SETTING IN POSITIVE WAYS

By equating transition with getting to be a "big boy" or "big girl" and showing pride in the child's increasing maturity and independence, parents and the staff of the sending program can help the child focus on the positive aspects of this change. This is sometimes referred to as positive forecasting and it helps the child to begin to anticipate what to expect in the near future. Another way of presenting the new setting in a positive light is to keep on hand (in either the home or the child's current setting) a copy of a brochure from the new program, particularly if it contains photographs of the building, the classrooms, smiling

children and affectionate teachers. Some programs have produced videos that can be shared with children at home or in an early intervention setting.

Helping shop for a new book bag, backpack or lunch box—which will not be used until the first day of the new program—can present another opportunity for positive forecasting and give the child some sense of control regarding the upcoming changes.

ENCOURAGE THE CHILD TO ASK QUESTIONS AND EXPRESS FEARS

Be sensitive to and accepting of child's fears or ambivalent feelings, rather than dismissing them or making light of them. For example, when a child says he won't go to the new school unless his brother or sister also goes, an adult can say-something like, "it feels scary when we go to a new place for the first time." By providing a safe environment to express concerns through words or through play, the young child can gain reassurance and encouragement.

Use dramatic play, storybooks and simple games to anticipate upcoming changes. Pretend play can assist children to work through their anxieties as they pretend to take a bus or find their cubby at the new school. Parents and caregivers can choose story books to share in which a child starts school or goes to day care for the first time, or in which a parent leaves for work and returns home. Reading about and discussing characters in books who are starting a new school can help children understand that it is all right to feel sad and afraid, but also that things generally work out just fine. (See **Books to Prepare Children for Transition** listed on pages 17 and 18.)

ENGAGE THE CHILD IN CONCRETE EXPERIENCES

Children who have had no group experiences or who have only been in very small groups of children before will benefit from exposure to larger groups of children in new environments. For example, bring the child to a story hour at the library. Children who are currently in a toddler program with a very small number of children may benefit from being exposed to a larger group. Teachers at a sending program can simulate a larger classroom by combining groups for selected activities if there is more than one group of two-year-olds conducted at the same time.

If parents are able to obtain a list of phone numbers of other families whose children will be attending the receiving program, they can arrange play dates in advance with one or two of the other children. Knowing at least one other child's name and face before going to the new environment will help the child look forward to the experience.

Arrange for visits to the receiving program to meet teachers, observe or participate in classroom activities, and try out the playground equipment. Arrange

an orientation time in which there are fewer children present so the child can explore the classroom and become familiar with some of the staff. Help the child to identify similarities and differences between current surroundings and future settings. For example, the adult may point out to the child that the new school has a slide just like the one at the nearby park. "Are these the same kinds of swing like you've been on before? Or are they different?" If the receiving program gives permission, videotape some of their activities, including close-ups of the staff. Let the child watch this as many times as he or she would like.

Sending program staff can invite the receiving program staff to visit and bring along toys, puzzles, a class photo album, or anything else they think will heir the incoming children to feel good about the transition.

Whenever possible, give your child the opportunity to make some concrete choices. For example, when saying good-bye to the sending program, the child may choose what special treat he or she would like to bring for the staff and the other children. In preparing for the new program, let the child choose a transitional object that can travel back and forth with him and sit in his cubby during the school day.

TEACH THE CHILD SPECIFIC SKILLS AND ROUTINES WHICH WILL BE USEFUL IN THE NEW PROGRAM

FINDING OUT IN ADVANCE HOW DAILY ROUTINES SUCH AS BATHROOM, NAP, AND TRANSITIONS BETWEEN ACTIVITIES ARE HANDLED IS VERY HELPFUL.

Children with special needs can benefit from opportunities to acquire and practice independent skills which are considered important in the next environment. Practice in selected classroom survival skills can be done throughout the year or a few months before the transition. For example, putting toys back where they belong after playing with them can be taught all year long. However, skills more specific to the receiving program—for instance, sitting on a carpet square for circle time—may be introduced shortly before the transition to the new setting.

In order to determine expectations for the child in the receiving program, a current staff member can accompany the parent on a visit to the new classroom. Questionnaires and interviews with the receiving program staff as well as direct observations can help to determine skills that will need to be addressed in order to prepare the child to function as independently as possible. Finding out in advance how daily routines such as bathroom, nap, and transitions between activities are handled is very helpful.

Regarding the bathroom: Are children taken to the bathroom as a group? Are they expected to tell the teacher on their own when they need to go? Or do they go without telling anyone?

If there is a nap time, is each child expected to recognize his own blanket, or to find her own name on a cot? Is she expected to carry her cot to a designated spot? What is the signal when the teacher wants everyone to be quiet?

What is the signal that it is time to come inside when children have been out on the playground? Do they form a line? Is the same cue used for transitions before or after other activities?

Letting the staff of the receiving program know what progress the child has made in mastering these various skills will also be important, especially if the new environment is a regular early childhood setting in which this child will be one of only a few children with special needs. Enlisting the receiving program staff to support and continue the instruction of these skills is critical to ensure continuity and success for the child.

COMMUNICATE AND SHARE INFORMATION BETWEEN PROGRAMS IN ADVANCE

Staff from the sending program may be helpful in demonstrating positioning, handling, or feeding techniques to the teachers of the new program. They can inform receiving program staff about behavior management strategies that have been effective.

It is also a good idea for programs to generate with parents ground rules regarding privacy and confidentiality. If the new environment is a regular preschool or child care setting, and parents of the other children have questions about the child's special needs, how much sharing of information is desired by the family? For instance, does the family wish the child's diagnosis and information about medications to be kept in confidence by the staff? Or would they like this information shared in the interest of educating other families and children? How much is the child able to explain to other children about his or her special needs, special equipment, and so forth?

By including parent release of information forms as part of the intake procedure, the sending and receiving programs can better coordinate exchange of information between staff. By working together, sending and receiving staff can assist children and families as they bring closure to their former school setting and develop a sense of comfort and trust in the new setting.

FOUR STRATEGIES TO USE AFTER THE CHILD'S INITIAL ENTRY INTO THE SETTING

Working together as the child begins the new preschool program, families and providers can help to ensure a successful adjustment.

- Incorporate information obtained from the sending program and family into the receiving program plan
- Maximize parental involvement and support during the initial entry and adjustment
- Individualize communication with the child's family
- Adjust expectations for the child's behavior

INCORPORATE INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM THE SENDING PROGRAM AND FAMILY INTO THE RECEIVING PROGRAM PLAN

Knowledge about the child's history, development, abilities, and likes and dislikes, available from written records as well as direct communication with family members and sending program staff, will be very important to incorporate into the daily program. If the receiving staff has had an opportunity to observe the child in the sending program or at home prior to the start of the new program, they will have even greater insight. Use the available information to make a "curriculum bridge" between programs; that is, use some of the same finger plays, group games and story books that are already familiar to the child. If the only animal whose name the child can verbalize is ***dog,*** then it might be wiser to read *The* ***Big Red*** *Dog* on the first day the child attends, rather than *Millions of Cats* or *Curious George.* If you have learned that the child tends to be more responsive when the person talking isn't looking directly at her, then you can sit behind her while she is playing with cars or blocks, rather than directly across from her. Assuming there is philosophical compatibility between the sending and receiving program, you may also want to continue specific behavior management approaches that were used effectively by the staff of the sending program.

MAXIMIZE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND SUPPORT DURING THE INITIAL ENTRY AND ADJUSTMENT

Encourage families to think in advance about what kind of transitional object, such as a small toy, stuffed animal, or photograph of the family would help the child feel at ease in the new environment. It should be something which can fit easily in a child's book bag or classroom cubby.

Consider letting the child attend for a shortened period of time for at least the first several days. If the new program is to be an all-day program, consider starting with a split day between the two programs before attending the receiving program for the full day. Encourage parents to plan in advance to stay around the building for the first few days, leaving the classroom for short periods of time. Even if the child appears oblivious to their presence, they should remain close by if at all possible. If busing is to be provided, the parent can escort the child to the bus at dismissal and follow its route home so as to meet the bus at the drop-off point.

IF BUSING IS TO BE PROVIDED, THE PARENT CAN ESCORT THE CHILD TO THE BUS AT DISMISSAL AND FOLLOW ITS ROUTE HOME SO AS TO MEET THE BUS AT THE DROP-OFF POINT.

When the parent and the receiving program teacher decide it is time for the parent to leave the child in the classroom, some parents sneak out, thinking it will be less upsetting to the child. This is almost never a good idea. Although some tears may result, it is in the child's best interest for family members to offer a straightforward good-bye (with a quick, not overly emotional hug or kiss) and provide reassurance that they will be back or that they will meet the child's bus at home.

INDIVIDUALIZE COMMUNICATION WITH THE CHILD'S FAMILY

Make a home visit prior to the start of the new school in which the parents and new staff can get acquainted, discuss concerns, and arrange convenient times and ways to communicate with one another. In some communities, a staff member from the receiving program accompanies a staff member from an early intervention program on a joint home visit to get acquainted.

Ask how parents prefer to be addressed—by such titles as *Mr., Ms., Mrs.,* or *Dr.,* or by first names. Let them know how you are most comfortable being addressed. Some parents are able to take calls at their places of employment, while others are not (unless it is an emergency). Find out what times of the day or week work best for phone calls, visits, and formal conferences. A notebook which is sent between home and school is a popular means of promoting communication, especially for those children who have limited verbal ability. Keep in mind, however, that some parents are not literate, or are literate in a language other than

English. You might have to try more than one communication system before you find one that works.

Once you do establish communication with families, pay close attention to what they say. Look and listen for the feelings as well as the content of their communication and respond as honestly as you can. Do not feel that you have to restrict all communication to the target child. If you know of a sibling's birthday, a parent's new job, or the death of a goldfish, comment on these topics. In doing so, you open up greater possibilities for open-ended communication and trust.

ADJUST *EXPECTATIONS*

Children with special needs may require extra time, repetition, or modifications in program practice in order to make a successful adjustment. The three-year-old with limited receptive language may not be able to attend to a language-oriented circle time that lasts 15 minutes. Instead, the child may do better if asked only to attend for five minutes, and then given the job of helping a teacher set up the snack tables or prepare the next activity. A child with developmental delays may need an adult sitting right next to him or her at most activities to help with focus and understanding. A child with behavior and emotional problems may need a more extended personal greeting when he or she first arrives, and may need to be given a longer advance warning when "clean-up time" is about to be announced. Regular early childhood and child care settings which only infrequently enroll children with special needs have to look carefully at their environments, schedules, and activities to consider the types of modifications which will be appropriate for an individual child. But even classrooms which are designed exclusively for children with special needs are not immune to the problem of making incorrect assumptions about children's abilities. They, too, will benefit by adjusting their expectations and modifying their practices according to the needs of the individual child.

LESS RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENTS MEAN FEWER TRANSITIONS

We have referred to the possibility that some children may be receiving the services to which they are entitled in regular early childhood settings rather than specialized programs. Early intervention programs and local education agencies (LEAs) can minimize the number of transitions young children go through by providing services in a variety of community-based programs. If four-year-old Kaitlyn attends child care and is found eligible for special education, she is likely in many communities to begin dual enrollment, dividing her day between child care and a specialized program, or to be withdrawn from child care and enrolled exclusively in a developmental center or special education classroom. But if appropriate services could be delivered in the child care setting, she could avoid the anxieties associated with either of these options. An unfortunate by-product of our current service system is that the very children whose learning and social relationships come most slowly are often the ones who have the most demands placed on them. They may be required to abandon relationships they have already formed, and begin mastering the rules and routines in a brand new place. Or they may be expected to accommodate themselves to two separate sets of rules and routines on a daily basis.

Consider Antoine, a 33-month-old who is receiving early intervention services in a licensed family child care home and who has been found eligible for special education. If the LEA could continue delivering therapy and consultation services to the family child care home, just as the early intervention program did, then there would be no transition into a new setting. There would be a change in service providers, requiring the child and family to form new relationships. But this solution would preserve many of their existing relationships. For instance, Antoine's brother, Dominique, goes with him to child care. Dominique has had more success than their parents or any therapist in getting Antoine to use language and to play with toys. If the services could be brought to his current setting, Antoine would not be separated from his best peer model.

AN UNFORTUNATE BY-PRODUCT OF OUR CURRENT SERVICE SYSTEM IS THAT THE VERY CHILDREN WHOSE LEARNING AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS COME MOST SLOWLY ARE OFTEN THE ONES WHO HAVE THE MOST DEMANDS PLACED ON THEM.

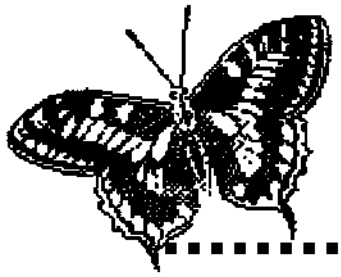
We see from these two examples that use of community-based least restrictive environments can reduce two different types of transitions: the ones that take place every day between settings, and the one that takes place as a child ages out of early intervention.

Enrollment of children with special needs in regular early childhood programs has been slowly increasing over the past two decades. In 1972, Head Start mandated that at least 10% of the children they enroll have special needs. A survey of day care providers in New York state found that 41 % of respondents (home-based and center-based) had served at least one child with special needs during the previous 12 months.[1] In the same study, the rising interest of families in such arrangements was also made clear: 45% of parents of children under age six with special needs selected "specialized services at a regular early childhood/ child care location" as their top choice from a list of nine possible ways the state might assist them to obtain child care, far ahead of all other options.[2]

It cannot be assumed that any given setting will be right for every child with special needs. But delivery of services and programs in a wider variety of settings is clearly consistent with the law, with best practices, and with easing the number and difficulty of transitions of young children with special needs.

'Fink, D.B. (1992). *In the Mainstream—from the beginning* Albany, NY: New York State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council. P. 13.

[2]Ibid. P. 7.



ONE CHILD'S ENTRY INTO A NEW SETTING

Marcus, a two-and-a-half-year-old with delayed language development and a history of seizures, was scheduled to start the Discovery Center special education preschool after his third birthday. Because this would be his first group experience away from home, his mother, Madeline, and home-based speech therapist, Sondra, accompanied him on a short visit to the classroom several months in advance. During this visit Marcus clung to his mother and refused to participate with the other students in "Ring-around-the-Rosie," which was unfamiliar to him. On the way home, Madeline skipped a stop she had planned to make for groceries because Marcus was throwing a tantrum. The transition was off to a rocky start.

Madeline and her husband Gus asked Sondra to help them find ways to ease the transition for Marcus. Sondra invited the Discovery teacher, Karen, to the early intervention center to meet with the staff members that had worked with Marcus over the past two years. Together they devised a plan to help Marcus transition to the Discovery Center.

Sondra suggested using bedtime reading as one opportunity to prepare Marcus for the transition. Choosing from a list of suggested books, his grandmother bought Marcus *Shawn Goes to School* and *Will I Have A Friend?* She and his parents read these to him several times.

Another suggestion from the teachers that the family accepted was to arrange for their baby-sitter to bring Marcus to a six-week Gymboree™ play group in the neighborhood. This would be his first large group experience and might help diminish his fear of the new setting. This proved to be a success, and Marcus began trying forward and backward somersaults in the living room.

Following another staff suggestion, Gus incorporated some transition preparation into the time he spent with Marcus on Saturdays. In conjunction with their regular stop at a neighborhood donut shop, Gus began taking Marcus to the playground at the Discovery Center. The first three times they parked there, Marcus said, "No! Go home!" Gus responded with comments such as "Yep, it's a big, new

place, isn't it?" And, "It's for big kids—like you're going to be in a couple of months." Marcus reluctantly let his father push him on the swing during those first visits, but by the fourth visit he was testing out the lowest portions of the two climbing structures and no longer demanding to go home.

Because she had learned from the Discovery staff that it would be an important survival skill, Sondra showed Karen and Gus how to teach Marcus to put on his jacket. She showed them how to get him down on his knees, place the jacket on the floor with the collar near him, place his hands into the sleeves, and flip the jacket over his head. Next, she got them started on a toilet training program. She introduced more tabletop activities such as puzzles and peg- boards into the home visits that she conducted, hoping to increase his tolerance for sitting on a chair, as well as and his attention span.

A week before school started, Karen visited Marcus, Gus, and Madeline at home. Although Marcus was shy, the visit gave Karen, Gus, and Madeline an opportunity to discuss their concerns. Karen asked questions about how to respond in the possible event of a seizure. After the discussion, they decided that during the first week Marcus would leave an hour early each day. Madeline would stay in the classroom the first two days, and remain within the building the other three days.

They agreed that after the first week, Karen would make one phone call a week to Madeline during both of their lunch breaks on Thursday or Friday to report on progress. After the first few weeks, they would use the telephone only if there were problems and would begin sending a notebook back and forth. Gus would let Marcus pick out the notebook from *Target Stores*™ during one of their Saturday outings. They also let the Discovery Center know that in the event of an emergency, Gus was the one the school should try to call first, since he owned his own small business and was freer to interrupt his schedule.

During the first day at Discovery, Madeline saw that instead of "Ring-around-the-Rosie," Karen introduced the "Hokie-Pokie" at circle time, something they had told her was familiar to Marcus from a tape they played at home. Also, while other children were only prompted about going to the toilet before snack time, Madeline was delighted to see that Gus and one other boy were taken to the bathroom two additional times by the teaching assistant.

On his third day of preschool, while Marcus was showing interest in a road that two other children were building for their trucks, Karen suggested to Madeline that she leave the classroom for a while. Marcus cried

when his mother told him she was going down the hall but would be back periodically. Several minutes later Madeline returned and he ran to her. During the week she left for longer periods and Marcus no longer reacted with distress. There hadn't been any seizures, so Karen was less nervous about that as well. Things were off to a good start for Marcus, his family, and the Discovery Center.

MARCUS RELUCTANTLY LET HIS FATHER PUSH HIM ON THE SWING DURING THOSE FIRST VISITS, BUT BY THE FOURTH VISIT HE WAS TESTING OUT THE LOWEST PORTIONS OF THE TWO CLIMBING STRUCTURES AND NO LONGER DEMANDING TO GO HOME.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Odom, S.L., Bender, M., Stein, M, Doran, L., Houden, P., Mclnnes, M., Gilbert, M., DeKlyen, M., Speltz, M., & Jenkins, J. (1989). *Integrated preschool curriculum.* Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Paulu, N. (1992). *Helping your child get ready for school with activities for birth through age 5.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

Rosenkoetter, S.E., Hains, A.H., & Fowler, S.A. (1994). *Bridging early services for children with special needs and their families: A practical guide for transition planning.* Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Sainato, D.M., & Strain, P.S. (1993). Integration success for preschoolers with disabilities. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 12,* 23-30.

BOOKS TO PREPARE CHILDREN FOR TRANSITION

We would like to acknowledge Rosenkoetter, Hains and Fowler (1993), who included this list in their book, *Bridging early services for children with special needs and their families: A practical guide for transition planning* (see publishing information on previous page), citing its original source as *Transition* published by the Head Start Bureau, U.S. Administration for Children, Youth, and Families, Washington, DC.

AUTHOR	TITLE
Alexander	*Sabrina*
Allard	*Miss Nelson Is Missing!*
Anderson	*Carlos Goes to School*
Arnold	*Where Do You Go to School?*
Barkin	*I'd Rather Stay Home*
Barkin	*Sometimes I Hate School*
Behrens	*What I Hear in My School*
Berenstain	*The Berenstain Bears Go to School*
Boyd	*I Met a Polar Bear*
Bram	*I Don't Want To Go to School*
Breinburg	*Shawn Goes to School*
Buchmeier	*I Know a Teacher*
Burningham	*The School*
Calmenson	*The Kindergarten Book*
Cassidy	*We Like Kindergarten*
Caudill	*A Pocketful of Cricket*
Charles	*Calico Cat at School*
Cohen	*No Good in Art*
Cohen	*When Will I Read?*
Cohen	*See You Tomorrow, Charles*
Cohen	*Will I Have a Friend?*
Cohen	*First Grade Takes a Test*
Cole	*What's Good for a Five-Year Old?*
Del ton	*The New Girl at School*
Elliott	*Grover Goes to School*
Frandsen	*/ Started School Today*
Gordon	*A Special Place for Johnny*
Haas	*A Special Place for Johnny*
Hamilton-Meritt	*My First Days of School*
Harris	*The School Mouse*
Hillert	*Who Goes to School?*
Hoffman	*SteffieandMe*

Holland	*First Day of School*
Horvath	*Will the Real Tommy Wilson Please Stand Up?*
Hurd	*Come with Me to Nursery School*
Isadora	*Willaby*
Jones	*Going to Kindergarten*
Lenski	*Debbie Goes to Nursery School*
Lexau	*I Hate Red Rover*
Lystad	*Jennifer Takes Over P.S. 94*
Mann	*The 25 Cent Friend*
Marino	*Where Are the Mothers?*
Marshall	*Fox at School*
Marshall	*Miss Nelson is Back*
Mason	*I Go to School*
Matthias	*Out the Door*
Mclnnes	*Goodnight Painted Pony*
Meshover	*The Monkey that Went to School*
Nichols	*Big Paul's School Bus*
Oppenheim	*Mrs. Peloski's Snake*
Ormsby	*Twenty One Children*
Oxenbury	*First Day of School*
Parish	*Jumper Goes to School*
Quackenbush	*First Grade Jitters*
Relf	*The First Day of School*
Relf	*Show and Tell*
Rockwell	*My Nursery School*
Rogers	*Mr. Rogers Talks about. . .*
Schick	*The Little School at Cottonwood Corners*
Schwartz	*Bea and Mr. Jones*
Simon	*I'm Busy Too*
Stein	*A Child Goes to School*
Steiner	*I'd Rather Stay with You*
Steptoe	*Jeffrey Bear Cleans Up His Act*
Thwaite	*The Chatterbox*
Tobias	*The Dawdlewalk*
Udry	*What Mary Jo Shared*
Welbar	*Goodbye, Hello*
Wells	*Timothy Goes to School*
Wisema	*Morris Goes to School*
Wittman	*The Wonderful Mrs. Trumbly*
Wolde	*Betsy's First Day at Nursery School*
Wolf	*Adam Smith Goes to School*
Wooley	*Gus Was a Real Dumb Ghost*

THE FACTS/LRE PROJECT

The FACTS/LRE project, initiated in January 1993, is an outreach/technical assistance grant funded by the federal Office of Special Education Programs, Early Childhood Branch. The Project Director is Dr. Susan Fowler.

BACKGROUND

The passage of Public Law 99-457 in 1986 created two early childhood programs for children with special needs, intended to provide a seamless service system for families and their young children between birth and age 5. Planning is required to avoid ruptures in this system when families and children change service providers.

Programs report confusion regarding their roles and responsibilities related to transition between services, screening, referral, evaluation, exchange of records, planning of transition, provision or continuation of services and conflicts regarding placement decisions, extended school year, procedural safeguards, preparation of personnel and other issues. At the same time, families describe a service system that too often is not responsive to their needs, not culturally and linguistically sensitive, and not delivered in the least restrictive environment.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Our two outreach channels are publications and technical assistance. In both our writing and our direct technical assistance, we encourage communities to build the following five components into the transition process:

1. Interagency agreements among service providers at the state and local levels
2. Transition planning for families to ensure they can make informed decisions
3. Timelines and guidelines which cover child assessments, transfer of records, program visits and other matters
4. Strategies to promote entry and adjustment of children—with specific emphasis on successful entry into non-specialized, community-based settings to receive services in the least restrictive environment
5. Evaluation of the process

DESIGN: GRAPHIC SOLUTIONS, CHAMPAIGN, IL