Objectives for Today

• Discuss the anxiety and fear associated with transitions

• Examine current research on transitions

• Explore practices that promote successful transitions

• Provide helpful tools and strategies to be used to promote successful transitions

Transition

• A process of movement or change from one environment to another.

• Begins at birth
  – Early intervention in the home
  – Preschool program
  – Public and/or private education (elementary through middle and high schools)
  – Adulthood
What Do We Know?

- Demographic factors influence the use of transition factors (Rous, McCormick & Hallum, 2006)

- Children are most successful when directly taught the skills needed in the transition setting (Kemp & Carter, 2000)

- Culturally and linguistically diverse children have more academic and social problems (e.g., communication; misbehaviors; resources)

What Do We Know?

- Families report anxiety surrounding transition issues such as:
  - Scheduling “preparation” events
  - Special education “jargon”
  - Needing teachers to be factual, supportive and nonjudgmental

What Do We Know?

- Allowing parents to experience the new setting in a progression from neutral (empty classroom) to active observation to partial and finally, full participation (Lovett & Haring, 2003)

- Parents who are familiar with special education procedures and can advocate for their child have more successful transition experiences

- Transition must be a “Family Centered” process (Rous, 2008)
What Do We Know?

• Parent Supports - Learning from others who have walked in their shoes is beneficial to families

• Children are most successful when directly taught the skills needed in the transition setting (Kemp & Carter, 2000)

• For young children, teachers are more concerned about social behaviors than academic preparation

THE PURPOSE OF “IDEA”

• “To ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for employment and independent living…”

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) - Populations Served

• Part C: infants & toddlers-ages birth through 2

• Part B: specifically preschool special education: ages 3 to 5
Part C Eligibility Criteria

A. Children with a developmental delay
   1) Functioning at least 25% below chronological or adjusted age* in one or more areas:
      a. cognitive development
      b. physical development (including fine motor, gross motor, vision & hearing)
      c. communication development
      d. social or emotional development
      e. adaptive development

   -OR-

   * For children born prematurely (<37 weeks gestation) up until 18 months of age.

B. Children who have a diagnosed physical or mental condition that has a high probability of resulting in a developmental delay

Part B Eligibility Criteria

Children must be found eligible under one or more of the 14 disability categories:

- Autism
- Deaf-blindness
- Emotional disturbance
- Hearing impairment/deaf
- Intellectual disability
- Learning disabilities
- Multiple disabilities
- Orthopedic impairment
- Other health impairment
- Severe disabilities
- Speech or language impairment
- Traumatic brain injury
- Visual impairment
- Developmental delay

Part B Related Services

- Counseling (Rehab & Psych)
- Early identification & assessment
- Interpreting & transliterating
- Medical services required for diagnostic & evaluation purposes
- Orientation & mobility
- Other programs determined necessary for child w/disability to benefit from special education
- Parent counseling & training
- Physical & occupational therapy
- Psychological services
- Recreation, including therapeutic recreation
- School health services
- Social work services
- Speech language pathology and audiology services
- Transportation
Part B Related Services (cont.)

The list of related services is not exhaustive and may include other developmental, corrective, or supportive services (e.g. artistic & cultural programs, art, music, or dance therapy) if they are required for a child with a disability to access the general education curriculum.

Yesterday’s special ed student...

- Not expected to do as much work
- Completed modified or different curriculum
- Not included in general classroom instruction
- Learned helplessness
- Given off-level assessments
- Self-esteem concerns

The Current Reality

- High failure rate
- Limited transfer of skills
- Low self-esteem
- Not independent
- Lack of motivation
The “New” Special Ed Services

- Students will be in the general education classrooms to the fullest extent possible.
- General and special education services use the same general education curriculum and make it accessible.
- General education teacher is the teacher of record.
- High expectations for EACH student.

The “Typical” Classroom

- Will have students of varied skill levels
- May have students with disabilities
- May have students who are gifted
- May have students who speak little English
- May have students with health issues
- May have students with family problems

Will not really be very typical at all.

Why talk about transitioning at 3, Pre School, Kindergarten?

Are we doing everything we can to make sure that:

- Children are prepared for school?
- Teachers and schools are prepared for the children they will receive?
- Parents are prepared to participate in the process?
All I Really Need To Know I Learned In Kindergarten
by Robert Fulghum

Most of what I really need
To know about how to live
And what to do and how to be
I learned in kindergarten.
Wisdom was not at the top
Of the graduates school mountain,
But there in the sandpile at Sunday school.

These are the things I learned:
Share everything.
Play fair.
Don’t hit people.
Put things back where you found them.
Clean up your own mess.
Don’t take things that aren’t yours.
Say you’re sorry when you hurt somebody.
Wash your hands before you eat.
Flush.
Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you.
Live a balanced life.

Transition Responsibilities:
What is Best for the Child?

• Sending Agency/School/Classroom
  • Prepare parents and family - socially, legally and emotionally

• Prepare child academically, socially, and emotionally

• Prepare the receiving school for the child

Transition Responsibilities:
What is Best for the Child?

• Receiving School/Classroom
  • Prepare for and learn about the child’s academic and social needs

• Partner with parents to meet child’s needs

• Communicate with sending school

• Include child in school community
Family Responsibilities

- Collaborate with Sending and Receiving Schools
- Share their insights about their child with teachers and other professionals
- Learn to advocate, advocate, advocate!
- Have administrators and teachers advocating with them
- Keep expectations high
- Visit classes – understand what their child needs for success

Community Responsibilities

- Collaboration and agreements with community agencies and service providers (e.g., therapists, counselors, clinics, private and public schools)
- Participation of all partners in child care team.
- Provide support and resources for parents, families, and children.

Why Inclusion and Transition Are Important? (AKA We’re Off to Great Places)

- Research supports inclusion for children with Down syndrome
- Special Education policies directed toward inclusion
Challenges of Inclusion

Children
• Age and grade appropriate placement
• Understanding of the inclusion process
• Administrator attitudes
• Teachers understanding and lack of knowledge about disabilities
• Children with behavior challenges

Teens and Adults
• Age and developmentally appropriate social activities for teens and adults
• Understanding ADA
• Community & Workplace Attitudes
• Society’s understanding and lack of knowledge about disabilities
• Teens and adults with lack of social competence

Building Bridges through Transition

• Supportive infrastructure
• Attention to relationships and communication among agencies
• Continuity and alignment between sending and receiving programs
• Preparation of families and children

Building Bridges through Transition

• Program visitation
• Instructional activities
• Community resources that strengthen relationships
• Assist families with advocacy
How Do We Build These Bridges?

Current Trends

- Introduction Portfolios
- Attitudes continue to be a problem
- Life Skills is the default placement for young children
- Young adults struggle to find satisfying work and social activities

Project Foundations

- Comprehensive Portfolios
- Provide tools as a vehicle for change
- Advocacy
- Provide Tools for Advocacy and Independence

Parents Are Their Child’s First Teachers

Have a Vision

- What are your hopes and dreams?
- Where is your child going after school is over?
- What is your child’s dream?
- What steps will it take to get there?
- Map out a plan because every decision, every action, is a piece of the puzzle that is your child’s life.
What information about a child is important for the teacher/employer to know?

- About the family
- Learning levels/styles
- Skill development
- Social interactions
- Favorites

L.E.A.P. Class at KinderFrogs School

Life, Experience and Promise Class
- KinderFrogs School serves children ages 18 months to 6 years of age with Down syndrome and other developmental delays; also serve a small number of typically developing children.
- LEAP serves ages five to six years
- Serves as a bridge class to regular education kindergarten class
- Small group & large group instruction
- Child centered & play based
- Phonics and Sight Based Reading
- Handwriting Without Tears
- Saxon Mathematics
- Hands-On Science (Theme Based)

Transition Curriculum

- Social skills
- Friendships
- Classroom routines
- Adaptive skills
- Academics
- Technology
What We Know

- Directly teaching the skills is critical
- Skills have to be contextual
- Strong transition program is needed
- Placement is critical - working placement
- Without individual needs being met, achievement and adaptive skills decrease
- Consistent and frequent monitoring of progress is critical to ongoing success in inclusive classrooms

Positive Behavior Support plans rather than generalized classroom discipline programs are necessary for children with behavior problems

- Pre Team Meetings are critical
- Preliminary meetings help develop relationships
- Support and advice from other families is very useful
- Advocate, advocate, advocate – pick your battles

Transitioning from Pre School to Kindergarten and Beyond

- Individualized
- Preliminary conversations with parents
- Visits to schools
- Planning meetings with district
- Pre-ARD (Multi-disciplinary team meeting)
- Formal ARD Meeting
- Placement in appropriate educational setting (working placement)
The transition process can be negatively impacted by:

- Not identifying/not recognizing academic and social/behavioral skills used by children in receiving classroom
- Not identifying early intervention strategies that will generalize to inclusive setting

The transition process can be negatively impacted by:

- Not taking advantage of ALL available supports including previous early intervention supports (when offered)
- Not sharing information with parents, kindergarten teachers, and support personnel
- Lack of continuing advocacy

Getting There (aka The Happenings Start)

Transition Portfolio
Four Rules for Effective Transition Planning Across Ages

- Be future-oriented,
- Start early, and review annually,
- Revise, revise, revise, and
- Focus on the process that will result in a realistic outcome.

Tools for Successful Transitions

- IEP Goal Bank
- Transition Portfolio
- Personal Learning Profile

IEP Goal Bank

Google Docs: IEP Goal Bank - Redmond, Georgia

Goals for All Content Areas

- English
- Functional Academics
- Independent Living
- Mathematics
- Mathematics Readiness
- Motor
- Recreation and Leisure
- Self-management and Daily Living
- Social Emotional
- Speech and Language
- Study Skills
- Vocational/Career Education
Transition Portfolios

- The Transition Portfolio is intended to be a practical tool for documenting the efforts of the student, his/her family, teachers, and other service providers to ensure smooth transitions between programs and/or to post-school opportunities and services.
- A portfolio should be tailored to the individual needs of each child and the contents will depend on the skills and expectations of the student and the student’s family.
- Districts have broad flexibility in the implementation and design of transition plans for their students.

Transition Portfolio

Early Childhood to Elementary School Portfolios

- Introductory Letter
- Journal Article
- Letter from Administrator
- All About Me Booklet
- Assessment Info (IFSP/IEP)
- Transition Passport
- Parent Narrative
- Resources from Teacher & Therapists
- Educator’s Manual
- The Tucker Turtle Technique used to assist in self regulation of behaviors
- Sample of a daily communication sheet
- Contact Information
- Teacher Evaluation
And... a gift for the class!!

Portfolio Evaluation

- Positive Feedback—consistently positive

"The portfolio is amazing! It is so bright and colorful and full of information. I felt like I knew the child immediately – I knew his favorite color was blue and that he liked soft things. I wish every child that came into my classroom had a portfolio like this. Everyone associated with the child wanted to come into my room and look through it because I had talked about how amazing it was. It helped all of us (teachers, therapists, administrators) get to know him. It gave me a snapshot of a person rather than a number."

Parent Portfolio

- Parent Portfolio Contents
  - Transition Information
  - Copies of Student Assessment Pieces
  - Special Education Resources
  - Medical Records and Information
  - Work samples of the child
  - Parent checklist—include copies of private therapy evaluations, etc.
From Elementary to Middle to High School: Portfolio Considerations

Aptitude
Learning Profile
Interests
Strengths and Challenges
What Works!

General Transition Recommendations

- Open day for educators

- Creating more transition opportunities for children in the sending school
  - Participate in larger group activities
    - Assemblies
    - Lunch
    - Classes

Suggestions for Families & Teachers

- Be involved in your child’s instruction, goals and plans

- Choose a school with balanced literacy instruction

- Keep expectations high

- Visit classes - understand what your child needs to be successful
Suggestions for Families & Teachers

- Administrators/teachers advocating with you
- Develop Friendships
- Prepare yourself and your child for the transition

Celebrate YOUR Child!!

What Does the Future Hold for Students With Down Syndrome?

- Post-secondary opportunities
- Real jobs for real people
- Relationships and marriages
- Actively participating in their communities
- Living independently or in semi-supported environments
What Does the Future Hold for Students With Down Syndrome?

- Amazing medical advances
- A potential cure for cancer found in people with Down syndrome?
- Research which will result in therapies or medications which could enhance cognition

People with Down syndrome have unlimited potential when given opportunities and support!
QUESTIONS!!!

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