

Ask the Expert Q&A #5

Transition from Preschool to Elementary School

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What are the most important parts about transitioning from preschool to elementary school?

Transitioning from preschool to elementary is a really scary time for families. All parents worry about when their student goes to kindergarten. Involving the parents and making sure that their needs and concerns are addressed is very important during the IEP meeting and also throughout the year. When planning, it's important to consider those school readiness skills and the things that the student will need to be able to do in kindergarten. This may include self-help skills, social skills, being able to sit at a table next to or in close proximity to other students, and being able to sit and work more independently. Lots of cutting and pasting and exploring letters happen in kindergarten, so the student needs to be able to work for longer periods of time than in preschool. As the preschool year goes on, preparing the student for longer work periods will be very beneficial.

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What are things the IEP team should consider when bringing in a parent for collaboration during their child's IEP planning process?

When the IEP team is considering transition for a student, the parents should be asked to participate from the beginning. Although this should not be the first time that the IEP team works with them. Parents should feel comfortable coming in and being part of their child's IEP process and it is very important the IEP team to listen to their concerns. Also, including the kindergarten staff in the meeting is beneficial so that the parents can meet the staff, begin to develop a relationship with them, and ask any questions they may have.

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Behavior and expectations of the kindergarten classroom can be a big part of the transition process. Are there any tips for getting the student ready?

Remember that preschool has some supports in place that help students with ASD with their behavior. Some students have individual strategies that help them be successful, perhaps they work with something special, or maybe they like stickers, or any variety of reinforcers. It is important to consider how those supports might transition to the kindergarten classroom and how students with ASD can become more independent with managing their behavior. Any effective strategies in the preschool environment need to be communicated to the kindergarten staff so that there is a smooth transition to help with students behavior. It is also important to remember that students with ASD are more like everyone than they are different, so a lot of the things that work for all students might work for students with ASD as well. Remember that good consistent teaching, supporting students, and helping them to feel safe and welcome in the kindergarten classroom will go a really long way.

This Q&A has been taken from "Ask the Expert Series" which are short videos that discuss important topics for parents, educators, community members, and individuals with ASD and can be found on the VCU-ACE website: <https://vcuautismcenter.org/resources/asktheexpert/>