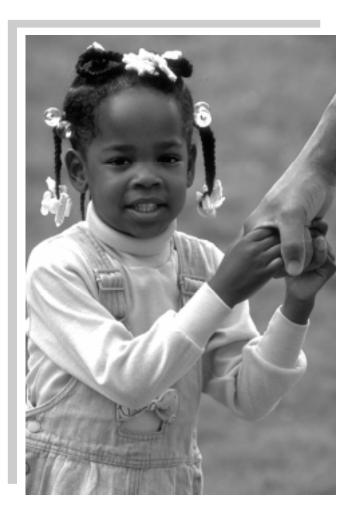


From Preschool to Kindergarten



his booklet was created by the staff of *Paving the Way To Kindergarten*, a project seeking to maximize successful transitions to kindergarten and community resources. It was funded through a grant from the New York State Disabilities Planning Council.

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Moving On was developed and edited by Dianne Apter and Anne Winschel Graphic design by Leigh Harrison, Harrison's Creative

Special note:

Transitions are hard for all of us. The quotations throughout this booklet are from parents of both typical children and children with special needs. Can you guess which are which?

"Leaving is harder than being gone!"

an you really believe it? Can you believe your child is moving on to kindergarten? This move from preschool to kindergarten is a major milestone. It is a very important transition. You may have thought you would never see the day. You may be feeling scared, sad,

You probably know the staff and other parents at your child's preschool program and feel comfortable with them. You may be unfamiliar with the new people you and your child will be relating to. You may have concerns about the size of classes, the attention your child will receive, your child's

excited or relieved! Maybe you are experiencing all these feelings at the same time.

As with any change, this transition creates challenges and opportunities for growth. And as with any change, this transition can



ability to cope or the support you will receive. Depending on the needs of your child and the resources of your school district, some transitions require more planning than others.

An important thing for you to

cause stress, anxiety/ fear or confusion. That is why we wrote this booklet. We want to try to answer some of your questions, give you information that you may need, give you tips to help you make sure the special needs of your child are met by his/her school district and provide you with a timeline so you know what to expect. know is that you can continue to have input into your child's education. You will be meeting many NEW people who will care about your child and you.

Our hope is that you find some useful information in this booklet, no matter what your particular situation.

A Few Thoughts To Share With You

emember that **you are an expert about your child**, You know what she is good at and what she needs help with. Y**our opinions matter. Please share them freely.**

It is your right to ask questions and offer suggestions. That is how you and the school staff make certain you understand each other and everything about your child's school program.

This is a good time to **think about what you want most for your child**. As you plan for kindergarten, it is helpful to think about the one thing that would be most important to your child's well-being and success at school. Working toward what you want most for your child can provide the framework for his or her entire school program.

The people who put together this booklet are, first of all, parents of children with special needs who have "transitioned" into kindergarten. Some of us are also professionals who have worked for many years with parents of "transitioning" children. All of us have tried to use our own experiences and those of others to provide some guidance and assistance to parents like you, who are new to this process.

We wish you well as you begin what, we hope, will be a smooth and wonderful journey.

66 The year my child transitioned from preschool to kindergarten was my "Di-Gel" year.

Confused?

Not sure where to turn?

If you have questions about school or about services in the community ...

If you have questions or don't even know what questions to ask ...

Give us a call.

We can help you sort out what might be wrong and send you useful information. We are free, confidential and easy!

Early Childhood Direction Center. We are a statewide network. Call 1-800-962-5988 for the Center nearest you.

66

I worry about Michael going to kindergarten. Will he be able to do all that they ask of him?

Some Questions and Answers

What happens?

Moving On: The Process

When does it happen?

~	Begin to learn about kindergarten programs in your	
	school district	Fall/Early Winter
~	Preschool program refers your child to CSE	Early Winter
~	Preschool parent meeting to explain the transition process	Winter/Early Spring
•	Preschool meetings with you to begin discussion of school options	Winter/Spring
~	School psychologist or others from your district may observe your child at preschool and conduct an evaluation	Winter/Spring
~	Possible discussions with CSE Chairperson, principal, others to discuss options	Spring
~	CPSE Annual Review and recommendation for next year	Spring
~	CSE Meeting to make placement decision & develop IEP for next year (note: in some districts the Preschool Annual Review/CSE meeting are held back-to-back)	Spring
~	Find out about and participate in the kindergarten orientation activities offered to typical kids (registration, visiting the school, etc.)	Spring
		Shring

When should I start thinking about my child's kindergarten program?

What differences can I expect between Preschool Special Education and Special Education for School-Aged Children?



A You can start getting general information as soon as you want! Find out what school the kids in your neighborhood go to and ask your neighbors what the kindergarten is like. Visit the school and introduce yourself to the principal.

The actual planning for your child usually begins with you and the preschool staff in the late fall or right after the December Break. If you haven't heard anything from your child's teacher or therapist by February you can give her a call and start things off yourself.

As a preschooler your child received her services in a special education preschool program, in a child care setting, nursery school, Head Start or home. All your child's special education services, even if they were delivered in a school district program, were funded by the County and NYS Education Department. Your school district was responsible for chairing the Committee on Preschool Special Education where placement and service decisions were made and for making sure your child's services were provided.

As a school aged child with special needs, your child can be served in a variety of settings depending upon her/his needs. Many kids go to their neighborhood school and are in a typical kindergarten with supports and services as needed. Some kids attend schools other than their neighborhood school in order to have their needs met. Some kids go to programs where all the children have special needs. Your district is responsible for providing an appropriate program for your child. Think about what you feel is most appropriate for your child. The decision making committee is now called the Committee on Special Education. Sometimes the Chairperson of that Committee.

66

I felt as if I were sending Brian into a huge, black abyss when I sent him to kindergarten. There is so much more contact between parents and school, parents and teachers, in preschool 99

I have heard that my child will now have to be "labeled." What does that mean?

Who is on the Committee on Special Education (CSE)?



When your child was in preschool he was designated a "preschooler with a disability." Educational law in New York does require a more specific designation for children aged 5 to 21. We have included a list of these educational "labels" and brief definitions of them at the end of this booklet. If you are unclear about what this will mean for your child, discuss it with the preschool staff, those who may have evaluated your child and your child's doctor. No parent likes to have their child thought of in terms of a disability or handicap! It is important for you to understand what the labels mean and what services your child is entitled to, both in school and in the community because of these categories. It is also important for you to always think of your child as a child first and to make sure all those working with you and your child remember that, too. Some parents bring a picture of their child to their CSE meeting so everyone can remember who they are talking about.

The CSE consists of:

- a chairperson from the district who is qualified to provide or supervise special education
- the parent of the child
- a "regular" teacher
- a "special" education teacher
- an evaluator or someone who can interpret evaluation results
- a school psychologist
- a physician (can be invited)
- · another parent of a child with a disability
- other people who you invite who have knowledge or special expertise about your child.



- Will my child continue to have an IEP?
- **Q** What should be included in the IEP?



A Yes, a new IEP will be written at your CSE meeting.

- The IEP is a summary of assessment results and a statement of how your child's needs will be met ... including what the teacher and support staff will need to do so your child can be successful. It should include:
 - a statement about how your child is doing now ... including all his strengths, interests, and skills.
 - a description of how your child's disability or special needs might affect his progress in "general" education, including any behavior management needs she may have.
 - the classification (or label)
 - annual goals that can be measured
 - measurable benchmarks to be able to see how your child is progressing toward his goals
 - the special adaptations, modification, aids, equipment, etc. that your child will need to be part of "regular" education
 - a list of all the special education and related services and the amount of time for each service
 - the program or placement that is being recommended
 - the class size
 - how and when the teacher will let you know how your child is doing
 - 12-month programming if appropriate
 - the date services will start
 - the date the services will be reviewed (usually once a year, but could be sooner).

We have included some guidelines and things to think about when you go to your child's CSE meeting beginning on page 13



How do I find out about what is available in my district?

What if my district doesn't offer what I think my child needs? A There are lots of ways to get this information. The folks at your child's preschool may have had experience with your district and know about the kindergarten programs there. You can call your Director of Special Education or the CSE Chairperson or your neighborhood school principal for this information, also. You can ask to visit some of the kindergarten programs. And you can ask other parents.

A This is when some other sections of this booklet may come in handy as you begin the process of working with your district to best meet your child's needs. For example, if your child has been in an "inclusive" preschool and your district doesn't offer inclusive kindergartens, they may be ready to develop one! Most school districts today want to move in this direction and will be ready to work with you, your child's preschool staff and others to meet this evergrowing need. You and your school district will be talking about available options and determining the most appropriate one for your child. "Appropriate" means services and supports that: 1) are based on the needs of your child 2) will allow her to make progress and 3) are agreeable to you and the school. As you can see, this leaves a lot of room for discussion, different opinions and convincing!

In other parts of this booklet you will find tips and suggestions for coming to agreement with your district. These tools will hopefully lead to a good conclusion for you and your child. You do have rights and there is a whole system of "due process" rights when you absolutely feel your district is demanding a program or placement you cannot accept. The Chairperson of your Committee on Special Education must give you these rights as well as a list of advocates available to you should you have to go this route.

Q

How will the new teacher/school learn about my child and her likes and dislikes, her strengths and needs?

Should I visit school right away to check how things are going? A The new teacher does get copies of the IEP and other information, but this may get to her after school starts. Therefore it may be up to you to let the teacher know the key information you think is important for her to know to work with your child. We have provided a few sample forms in this booklet that you can use to pass on this information.

A It may be a good idea to give the new teacher some "breathing room" and time to get to know your child before you schedule a conference. Certainly a first meeting in October or early November isn't unreasonable if you feel the need. Of course, if you have specific concerns or questions, go ahead and call or visit.

66 My Daughter, Vanessa, got on the kindergarten bus and never looked back. **99**

66

The question is 'how will Steven fit in?' Will he have friends? Will he be able to complete his work? Will he like public school kindergarten?

Working With Your School District

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR DISTRICT AND SCHOOL

Getting to know your school district and elementary school is an important step in the transition process. Here are some ideas:

- 1. Take advantage of what your district or school offers to all new parents of kids entering kindergarten:
 - · kindergarten orientation programs for parents and kids
 - school visit days
 - tours of a school or group of schools.
- 2. Create other or new opportunities for getting to meet district and school personnel.
 - Invite school personnel to visit with you and your child in the preschool setting.
 - Ask to meet with the principal and kindergarten staff to share your thoughts about your child and the school.
 - Visit kindergarten classes.
 - Visit non-classroom settings as well. Think about your child in the library, cafeteria, auditorium, gym, computer lab, etc. Do you have any special concerns about your child's needs in any of these settings that should to be addressed in the IEP?
- 3. Talk to other parents of kids with (and without) special needs who have already transitioned from preschool to kindergarten.
 - Contact a member of an existing parent support group.
 - Talk with members of the parent-teacher organization.
 - Ask friends, family members, acquaintances or the school to suggest names of parents who would be willing to speak with you.
 - Call an advocacy agency (see page 4 or ask your preschool or district to suggest one).



66 Preparing for Derrick's transition seemed like preparing for the trial of my child's life.



WHO ARE THE PLAYERS?

The Therapists

Occupational therapists (OT) focus on fine motor activities, use of hands and fingers, coordination and sensory development. (A COTA is an assistant to the OT and does many of the same activities. A COTA must be supervised by an OT.)

Physical therapists (PT) focus on large muscle and motor activities, such as crawling, sitting, walking, etc. They work on reflexes and mobility. They also help order and fit equipment such as walkers and wheelchairs. A PTA is an assistant to the PT.

Speech therapists focus on a child's ability to communicate. They work on speech sounds, language development, and listening skills. Speech therapists also can specialize in feeding and swallowing disorders.

The Teaching Staff

Teacher assistants and *teacher aides* help to carry out IEP activities. They can be assigned to a classroom or to a particular child.

Consultant teachers or *resource teachers* work with a child or group of children individually as well as with the classroom teacher to coordinate special education activities with classroom activities.

Classroom teachers are responsible for the entire classroom setting. Sometimes 2 teachers work as a team and share this responsibility for all the children.

Other Support Staff

Psychologists do testing, diagnosis and

treatment of kids with behavior, learning and/or developmental problems. A school psychologist specializes in working with teachers and children to improve a child's ability to learn and function in school. Psychologists are not able to prescribe medication.

School nurses provide health care and give prescribed medication at school.

Social workers provide a variety of services for kids and their families, such as counseling, support groups and help with finding community services.

Vision specialists work with kids with impaired vision. They can be teachers of the visually impaired who assess skills and help the classroom teacher make adaptation or mobility trainers who assist a child to learn to move about in his environment.

Administrative Staff

The principal is a very key player, setting the tone of the building. He/she provides support to parents and teachers and often makes the children's classroom assignments.

The CSE chairperson is responsible for running the CSE meetings, making sure that there is an appropriate IEP and that the IEP is being carried out.

The parent advocate is a parent of a child with special needs. She/he attends the CSE meeting and can be a resource or support to you.

Others

Board of Education members Director of Special Education

66 We feel excited for Matthew, for all he will learn and the friendships he will develop. Still, we have some anxiety ... we hope he will be in a warm and caring environment in kindergarten. **99**



YOU MAY WANT TO ASK

Here are a few questions that might be important to you and your child's kindergarten program:

- Where will my child attend school ... In the neighborhood? At a different school in the district? In a different school district?
- How many adults and children will be in the classroom? Does my child need an assistant?
- Will my child go to school full day? Half day?
- Will my child be in a typical kindergarten classroom with other children? A small class with all special needs children? A resource room and classroom?
- Will my child need any special equipment?
- Will my child need any teaching or testing modifications?
- Will my child go to summer school (twelve month programming)?
- Will my child ride a school bus? Will there be an aide on the bus? Will it be a special bus?

BEFORE YOUR CSE MEETING...

1. Take time to read your child's past records ahead of time. Preschool reports, medical history, etc., may have information that will be helpful to your new school. Your child's preschool

program or district CPSE chairperson can provide you with these reports if you don't have them.

2. Call the CSE chairperson and ask for copies of any <u>recent</u> reports and materials to be presented at your child's meeting.

3. Invite others (a teacher or therapist, a family member or friend) to come to your CSE meeting. Any of these people

may be helpful, even if they come with you to listen.

4. If the time of the meeting is not good for you, request that it be rescheduled. Be considerate of everyone's schedule. Let the CSE chairperson know as soon as possible if you do need to change the date of the meeting.

AT YOUR CSE MEETING ...

Issues that are important to you can and should be dealt with on your child's IEP. Your views and priorities for your child are important!

Some questions to think about:

1. What skills would you most like your child to learn?

2. Are there concerns about your child's functioning at home that could be helped by work at school? (Toilet training? Self-help?

Talking/communicating? Behavior?)

3. What do you believe to be your child's strengths and weaknesses?

4. What methods have you found to be effective with your child at home? What does he like to do? What rewards work for her?

6. To what extent does your child interact with children in the neighborhood? Do you want help

increasing your child's social skills?

7. What are your feelings about providing opportunities for your child to interact with "typical" children?

OTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE ...

Write down any additional questions you may have about your child's program, the people who will be working with him/her, what activities and supports there are for you, or anything else you are wondering about!

Adapted from Parent/Professional Interactions by Ann Turnbull in Curriculum for the Moderately and Severely Retarded, Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co.

66 As I send the last of my three children off to kindergarten, I have feelings of the freedom that I longed for and now no longer want.



COMING TO AGREEMENT WHEN THERE IS A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION ...

- Enter into discussions with a positive attitude.
- Begin by identifying and acknowledging those areas you do agree on. This will provide for common starting points.
- Express your differences or concerns clearly and calmly.
- Know your priorities and make these the focus of your discussion.
- Identify specifically what it is that you want (e.g., changes, additions or deletions to the proposed IEP).
- Be a good listener. Give others a chance to express/explain their points of view.
- Remember that differences can often be resolved through clarification and/or compromise.
- Allow for some flexibility on both sides.
- Maintain a level of fairness and reasonability throughout the process.
- Express you willingness to meet again if final agreement cannot be reached within the allotted time.
- Try to remain optimistic that some form of agreement can be reached.

66

I'm happy that Janine is moving on to public school kindergarten. Still, it's a scary transition for our entire family.

TIPS FOR PARENTS

- You are an excellent source of information about your child.
- Your input to your child's program is valuable and important.



- Let school people know that you want to be involved It is your right to work with the people who are teaching your child.
- A team approach, in which you and the school district are working together, is the best approach.
- Make sure you understand the implications of test results, written reports and discussions related to your child. ASK QUESTIONS about ANYTHING you don't understand. REMEMBER YOU DON'T HAVE TO SIGN ANY PAPERS UNTIL YOU ARE COMFORTABLE THAT YOU UNDERSTAND AND AGREE.

- It is always helpful to keep good records. Organize folders or boxes early so that you have a place to store medical records, written reports, test results, etc. This will help you later if you need them.
- Try and meet and talk with other parents. Get to know parents through informal talks or by joining a parent group at your preschool or in the community. Other parents are a wonderful source of support and information.
- Contact your child's teacher on a regular basis. Informal conversations, phone calls, notes, and meetings are all excellent ways to stay informed and establish a relationship with your child's teacher.
- Pay attention to your child. Listen when he/she talks about school. Pay attention to his/her feelings and to behavior changes that may be early signs that something is wrong. Also, share any positive changes or observations with school

66 We were worried that my daughter wouldn't find the same kind of caring people to work with her in kindergarten that worked with her in preschool. Fortunately, we knew that we didn't have to worry once we and she met the kindergarten and therapy staffs.

Educational Disabilities In New York State

Classifications

Autistic

Autism is a behaviorally defined syndrome which may occur in children of all levels of intelligence. There is usually difficulty in responding to people, events and objects. Responses to sensations of light, sound and feeling may be exaggerated and delayed speech and language skills may be demonstrated. These difficulties are usually observed before two and one-half years of age.

Deaf

A student who is deaf has a loss of hearing so severe that it prevents processing linguistic information through hearing. The severity of this hearing loss usually necessitates the use of specialized training, through an alternative means of communication or use of speech sounds

Emotionally Disturbed

Such students have difficulties in school that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory or health factors. Over a long period of time, the student is usually unable to build satisfactory relationships, may be generally unhappy, may develop physical symptoms or have fears associated with his or her school experience, or have inappropriate behaviors or feelings.

Hard of Hearing

A student in this category has a hearing impairment which adversely affects his or her educational performance. The hearing loss may or may not be permanent. He or she may have difficulty following instructions or have difficulty in other areas relating to the hearing loss; they may have problems discriminating speech, sounds, or have speech and/or language difficulties, as well as frequent middle ear infections.

Deaf-blindness

A student with both a hearing and visual impairment, which causes educational issues that can't be accomodated in programs solely for students who are deaf or blind.

Learning Disabled

These students have a psychological processing disorder that causes them to have a problem in understanding or using language. A child who is learning disabled has difficulty listening, thinking, speaking, reading, writing, or doing arithmetic. This child is learning at only about half or less than half of the level expected for him or her in that subject or skill area. A learning disability is not primarily due to a physical, mental or emotional disability or to environmental, cultural or economic reasons.

Mentally Retarded

These students have a general intellectual functioning level that is 1.5 or more standard deviations below the general population. This is determined by a comprehensive evaluation, which must include an individual psychological evaluation.

Multiply Disabled

A student with two or more disabilities that result in sensory problems (e.g., vision *and* hearing) and motor problems and/or significant developmental lags. Students in this category need a special education program that is different than any one disability would require.

Orthopedically Impaired

Students in this classification are physically disabled and have a severe orthopedic impairment which adversely affects their educational performance. The term includes impairments caused by congenital anomalies, impairments caused by disease and impairments from other causes (e.g., cerebral palsy, amputation, and fractures or burns which cause contractures).

Other Health Impaired

Such students have limited strength, alertness or vitality due to health problems that impact on the ability to learn. This can include (but is not limited to) heart conditions, asthma, sickle cell anemia, diabetes and leukemia.

Speech Impaired

These students have a communication disorder such as stuttering, an inability to correctly produce speech sounds, a language impairment, or a voice disorder.

Traumatic Brain Injured

A student who has had injuries caused by medical conditions (i.e., stroke or brain tumors), or physical force which results in impairments affecting educational performance. This term does not include injuries that are congenital or caused by birth trauma.

Visually Impaired

Such students may be partially sighted or blind. The visual disability, even with correction, adversely affects their education.

Note: if you don't understand these definitions or have questions about your child's classification, ask the school psychologist, the chairperson at the CSE meeting, or your preschool staff.

What Do All Those Letters Mean?

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder
ADDH	Attention Deficit Disorder with
	Hyperactivity
ADL	Activities for Daily Living
PDD	Atypical Pervasive Developmental Disorder
ARC	Association for Retarded Citizens
BOCES	Board of Cooperative Educational Services
CA	Chronological Age
CAH	Care at Home (waivers)
CPSE	Committee on Preschool Special Education
CSE	Committee of Special Education
DD	Developmentally Disabled
DDSO	Developmental Disabilities Service Office
DOB	Date of Birth
DOH	Department of Health
DSS	Department of Social Services
ECDC	Early Childhood Direction Center
EI	Early Intervention
ED	Emotionally Disturbed
ECDC	Early Childhood Direction Center
EH	Emotionally Handicapped
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education
FC	Facilitated Communication
FSS	Family Support Services
HI	Hearing Impaired
HOH	Hard of Hearing
ICHAP	Infant Child Health Assessment Program
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
IFSP	Individualized Family Service Plan
ILC	Independent Living Center
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
LD	Learning Disabled
LEA	Local Education Agency (school district)
LEICC	Local Early Intervention Coordination
	Council
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
MH	Multiply Handicapped
MR	Mentally Retarded
MRI	Magnetic Resonance Imaging
NDT	Neurodevelopmental Treatment
NICU	Neonatal Intensive Care Unit
NYSOAD	New York State Office of Advocacy for the
	Disabled
OHI	Other Health Impaired
0I	Orthopedically Impaired
OMRDD	Office of Mental Retardation and
	Developmental Disabilities
OT	Occupational Therapy
02	Oxygen
PACT	Parent and Childhood Training

PHCP	Physically Handicapped Childrens' Program
PICU	Pediatric Intensive Care Unit
РТ	Physical Therapy
ROM	Range of Motion
SATIRN	Self Advocacy Training Information
	Resource Network
SC	Service Coordinator
SED	State Education Department
SEED	Sewell Early Education Development
SEPTA	Special Education Parent Teacher
	Association
SETRC	Special Education Training and Resource
	Center
SI	Speech Impaired
SLP	Speech Language Pathologist
SSA	Social Security Administration
SSD	Social Security Disability
SSI	Supplemental Security Income
ST	Speech Therapy
STARN	State Technical Assistance Resource Network
TBI	Traumatic Brain Injured
TOD	Teacher of the Deaf / Hard of Hearing
TVI	Teacher of the Visually Impaired
UAPDD	University Affiliated Program
	for Developmental Disabilities
UCPA	United Cerebral Palsy Association
VI	Visually Impaired
VESID	Office for Educational Services for
	Individuals with Disabilities
VAUNTE	W/:+1-:

WNL Within Normal Limits



Parent to Teacher

Helping Make Transition Smooth

Your child's teacher will fill out part of this form, and you are asked to answer the questions below. The information that you provide will help make the transition of your child to kindergarten a smooth one.

1.	What activities do you think that likes best at school?
2.	What does like to do at school?
4.	When is happy, how does he/she show it ?
5.	When is not happy, how does he/she show it?
6.	What do you think would like his/her new teacher to know about him/her?
7.	What are the things that you think will help the new teacher build a relationship with?
8. I	f you wish to add any other comments, please do
	ent's Name
	dent's Full Name
	school Program/Nursery School
Sch	ool District 1 9



Helping Make Transition Smooth

When a youngster's new teacher knows something important about him/her, the transition from preschool or nursery school can be a smooth one. Please take a few minutes in to answer some questions about your student. Try to include the most significant information.

What activities does	name like best?
When	likes an activity, how does he/she show it?
When	is happy, how does he/she show it?
When	is not happy, how does he/she show it?
What do you think _	would like his/her new teacher to know about him/her
	that you think will help the new teacher build a relationship with
acher's Name	

These forms have been adapted from *Information on Transition from Preschool Special Education to School District Kindergarten* by The Regional Council for Education Services, Nassau BOCES.