

Webcast Transcript
Are We Ready? Districts and Programs
Collaborating around Language-Focused PreK-3 Transitions

Welcome to *Are We Ready?* Districts and Programs Collaborating around Language-Focused PreK-3 Transitions. This webcast is about transitions and how districts and programs can collaborate to promote equitable opportunities for multilingual children and their families across early elementary settings and early care and education settings.

This webcast is intended for district and program leaders working to ensure equity for multilingual children and their families. By district and program leaders we're referring to directors or leaders of curriculum and instruction, of language programs, early care and education programs, special education and others who create program and district-level policies and practices.

Here are the learning goals for this webcast. You will be able to: Explore what equitable transitions look like for multilingual children and their families, identify why PreK-3 transitions are an important and timely topic for districts and programs, and identify ways to lead equitable transitions for multilingual children in your district or program. So we're going to go over the what, why, and how of PreK-3 transitions for multilingual children.

As we move through the webcast, I invite you to make connections to your local setting, practices, and possible changes to ensure equitable transitions for multilingual children. I'd like to pause here and give you a chance to reflect. What do equitable transitions for multilingual children look like for you at a district or program level?

So what do we mean by PreK-3 transitions? We're referring to transitions across one district, program, school, classroom, or other learning space to another one. Meaning transitions from PreK to Kindergarten, Kindergarten to first, first to second, and second to third. And the district or program level policies and practices that support them. This could include practices that support a child moving through a particular school or district, a child coming from another district, or someone who has newly arrived to the U.S. at any time during the year.

We are also focusing in on PreK through third grade to emphasize the importance of building a foundation for equitable policies and practices for multilingual children and their families across your district and programs.

This webcast is specifically grounded in the WIDA PreK-3 Essential Actions. You can find a list of these Essential Actions on the WIDA website in the Resource Library or on the Teaching in PreK-3 webpage.

For this webcast, we are focusing on Essential Action 5. Collaborate to promote and support multilingual children's language development, dynamic language and cultural practices, and learning. While the other actions still play a role, it is the responsibility of district and program leaders to collaborate and lead the transition process.

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So why are PreK-3 transitions for multilingual children an important and timely topic for districts and programs?

Transitions are connected to multilingual children's right to language and learn using all of their dynamic language resources. Researchers Castro and Meek highlight how, "Castañeda vs. Pickard, Lau vs Nichols, and other court cases before and since, are ultimately about children's civil rights related to educational opportunity. Those rights should not be contingent on a child's age and should include their right to develop and maintain their two (or more) languages as resources for learning and understanding the world around them."

The previous quote connects to transitions as a call for more asset-based notions of school or grade level readiness—to reframe readiness from only focused on what children and families need to do to refocusing on what district and program leaders can do and the right and opportunity for children to language and learn.

The right and opportunity to language and learn includes investing in curriculum, assessments, programs, and services that promote multilingual children's dynamic language and cultural practices, providing ongoing professional development about culturally and linguistically sustaining policies and pedagogy, promoting reciprocal family engagement and community engagement, and pushing up early childhood policies and practices like joyful play-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and anti-bias education.

Those were just a few of the reasons why this topic of transitions is important and timely. Taking an asset-based and language-focused approach to transitions in your district and program builds a foundation for success across PreK-3 and beyond. Children are often sent into English dominant environments when they transition across districts, programs, or schools. This is a call to be a leader in promoting and incorporating children's and families' multilingualism and multiculturalism.

This concept tool, *Adopting a Language-Focused Approach to Transitions across PreK-3 Settings*, is a tool we have that provides a general overview of PreK-3 transitions. It is for all audiences—administrators, educators, and more. It's a good starting place for thinking about transitions. You can find this concept tool on the *Teaching in PreK-3* page or the *Resource Library* on the WIDA website.

Now we are going to talk more specifically about how district and program leaders can support multilingual children during PreK-3 transitions.

This part of the webcast will reference two handouts. These handouts can also be found on the *Teaching in PreK-3* webpage or in the WIDA *Resource Library*. As I go through the rest of the webcast, look for the green bubble in the upper right-hand corner for page numbers I'm referencing. Feel free to pause the webcast here and download these resources before moving forward.

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There are three ways that I'll highlight to support multilingual children during PreK-3 transitions in your context: Engaging in self-reflection; collaborating with children, families, and communities; and collaborating with other district or program leaders.

First, we're going to start with self-reflection. Let's explore a few voices from the field to consider important topics for self-reflection.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children, or NAEYC, published a position statement on equity that offers leaders ideas for reflection. They noted that, "Recommendations for administrators include providing regular time and space to foster a learning community among administrators and staff regarding equity issues. Include opportunities for all individuals to reflect about their own cultural attitudes and behaviors as well as to uncover and change actions that reflect implicit bias toward children, families, school staff, and administrators."

A district curriculum director shared, "We have encouraged school leaders and educators to interpret standardized assessments with caution as children transition from grade to grade. As someone who grew up in a monolingual English home, I realize that earlier in my career, I over-relied on tests for decision-making. Now I advocate for dual language and bilingual approaches. If you know more than one language, you should be supported in this and not held to a monolingual norm."

Let's pause and reflect. How has your story, and other stories, caused you to reflect on your practices?

On page one of the the District and Program Collaboration Guide and Notetaker, there are a set of questions that you can use as you engage in self reflection. These questions focus on what you've learned and believe about school readiness and transition practices; what you already know and the skills you have; what you think about role of multilingual families, other caregivers, and communities during transitions; and what you think collaboration around transitions should look like. Self-reflection is an important first step for leading equitable transitions for multilingual children.

Next, we're going to talk about collaborating with children, families, and communities during PreK-3 transitions.

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine published a report on Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English. They found that, "Families are critical partners in the goal of maintaining and supporting home language development, and the entire district or program benefits when leaders and educators incorporate diverse cultures, languages, and talents of multilingual families into learning environments and curriculum."

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And families of multilingual children hope that transitions in schools or programs promote all of their children's language resources. One mother from a WIDA research study shared, "I feel like when they're young, their brain is so small, but it's clear. With language, the earlier, the better, because they get more grasp of what they're doing. I feel like that's what helped me develop all of these languages that I know. And I can see it for my children too. Once your brain is open to languages, you can nurture them more and more."

Another leader shared, "Our district provides support for family liaisons. Every school has a parent liaison whose job is to connect families and schools. All of the family liaisons are bilingual. One thing they do is host family nights; some for all families and some just for multilingual families. They have showed families a copy of their WIDA ACCESS scores and explained what they mean. They also talk about families' language and cultural goals and how they and administrators and other staff can advocate for these goals."

Let's pause and reflect. What have you heard from the multilingual families in your district or program about their experiences with PreK-3 transitions?

On pages one through three of the District and Program Collaboration Guide there is a set of practices that we suggest for collaborating with multilingual children, families, and communities during transitions. You may already be doing many of these practices and we invite you to consider new practices. Some of the practices in the guide include: Reviewing how your district or program shares information with multilingual families about Pre-K and K enrollment; getting to know and partnering with families of multilingual children around transition activities; budgeting for interpreters and translators during enrollment and transition activities; and sharing information with families about your English Learner identification process, language program models, and how each model supports the language goals families have for their child.

Finally, we're going to talk about collaborating with other district or program leaders during PreK-3 transitions.

Collaboration is crucial to ensuring that multilingual children feel supported and their language and cultural practices uplifted throughout their experiences in PreK-3. As early childhood author and consultant, Karen Nemeth said, "Ideally, every school district will invite all of the local child care providers—including Head Start, chains, private programs, faith based programs and family child care home providers—to discuss, collaborate, and plan together. Compromises can be reached. Resources can be shared. Policies can be adjusted. Common goals can be established."

Principal, Apryl Lowe, shared, "For the first time in a long time our district did professional learning across PreK and K. They asked us to look at units together and focused in on standards, learning targets, and connected language targets. The district leaders wanted to make sure language is embedded from the beginning and things are streamlined across grade levels."

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Let's pause and reflect. How have you collaborated with other district and program leaders around PreK-3 transitions for multilingual children?

Pages three and four of the District and Program Collaboration Guide have a set of practices we recommend for collaborating with other district and program leaders to form the building blocks for transitions for multilingual children across PreK-3 settings. You are likely doing many of these practices and we hope there are opportunities to build on what you're already doing. Some of the practices in the guide include: Exploring research and what other districts and programs are doing for transitions and creating formal linkages between your district or program and the programs that multilingual children in your area attend for PreK; offering professional learning opportunities around creating a welcoming environment for multilingual children and their families; providing time and resources for vertical and horizontal collaboration; and checking for and addressing deficit approaches and biases in district programming, policies, and data-informed decision making.

This brings us to the end of this webcast. So where do we go from here?

Let's return to our previous conversation around reframing transitions from what children and families need to do to how you can ensure the right and opportunity for children to language and learn.

This slide offers some ideas for how you can move towards reframing transitions to build equitable policies and practices for multilingual children and their families. We encourage you to take a moment to jot down one next step for yourself.

We invite you to come back any time to revisit this webcast and check out the related resources including the Recommended Resources and References list that's on the Teaching in PreK-3 webpage. The WIDA website also has additional resources you could explore.

Thank you so much for viewing this webcast! We wish you all the best as you lead equitable transitions for multilingual children across PreK-3 in your districts and programs.