

**Webcast Transcript**  
*Are We Ready? Educators*  
Collaborating around Language-Focused PreK-3 Transitions

Welcome to Are We Ready? Educators Collaborating around Language-Focused PreK-3 Transitions. This webcast is about transitions for multilingual children and how educators can collaborate with families, communities, and colleagues to promote equitable transitions across early care and education settings and early elementary settings.

This webcast is for educators. By educators here we're referring to teachers, paraprofessionals, family liaisons, and others who work directly with multilingual children and their families.

We have three learning goals for this webcast. You will be able to: Explore what equitable transitions are for multilingual children and their families; identify why PreK-3 transitions are an important and timely topic for educators; identify ways to collaborate around transitions for multilingual children in your practice. So we're going to go over the what, why, and how of PreK-3 transitions for multilingual children.

Throughout the webcast, I will invite you to make connections to your own context and practices. I'd like to pause here and give you a chance to reflect. What do equitable transitions for multilingual children in PreK-3 look like for you?

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 from PreK to Kindergarten, Kindergarten to first grade, first to second, and second to third. And the practices in a classroom or other learning space that support these transitions. This could include practices that support a child moving through a particular school, a child coming from another district to your school, or someone who has newly arrived to the U.S. at any time during the year.

We are also focusing across PreK through third grade to emphasize the importance of early language development and weaving equitable practices for multilingual children across programs and grade levels.

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're focusing in 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, the way that you collaborate with families, communities, and other educators really impacts the way that multilingual children experience transitions.

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

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Transitions are connected to multilingual children's right to language and learn using all of their dynamic language resources. The National Association for the Education of Young Children, or NAEYC, published a position statement on equity that emphasizes that, "All children have the right to equitable learning opportunities that help them achieve their full potential as engaged learners and valued members of society. Thus, all early childhood educators have a professional obligation to advance equity.

This quote is connected to a call for more asset-based notions of school and grade level readiness – to reframe readiness from only focused on what children and families need to do to refocusing on what educators and leaders can do to promote the right and opportunity for multilingual children to language and learn.

This includes not expecting multilingual children to assimilate into a classroom or learning space but instead co-constructing the learning environment and incorporating children's and families' dynamic language and cultural practices such as translanguaging. It also includes getting to know families as individuals and engaging with families and communities as partners and having two-way relationships. And it includes creating spaces where multilingual children have authentic opportunities to language and learn like through facilitating 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 for educators. Taking an asset-based and language-focused approach to transitions in your classroom or learning space builds a foundation for success across PreK-3 and beyond. It is a call to advocate for and make space for children's language and cultural practices, interests, and all the brilliance that children are already coming to us with.

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 – educators, administrators, and more. It's a good starting place for thinking about transitions. You can find this concept tool on the WIDA website or Resource Library.

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

The rest of the webcast will reference two handouts. You can find these handouts on the WIDA website on the Teaching in PreK-3 webpage or in the Resource Library. As I go through the rest of the webcast, the blue bubble in the upper right-hand corner will show you the page numbers that I'm referencing. Feel free to pause the webcast now to access and take a look at the handouts before continuing on.

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Throughout the rest of the webcast, I'll highlight how you can support multilingual children during transitions across three different areas: Engaging in self-reflection; collaborating with children, families, and communities; and collaborating with other educators. First, we're going to start with self-reflection by exploring a few voices from the field.

Nguyen and Commins published a working paper, *Teaching for Equity: The CLEAR Paradigm*. This paper addresses how teaching practices do not change without accompanying changes in professional dispositions or mindsets. The authors wrote, "Teachers' classroom practice is driven by their beliefs, values, and knowledge about teaching and learning, as well as about their students. Effective teachers are reflective professionals who examine their assumptions and practices in order to meet the needs of all students."

Here is a reflection from a veteran teacher about her experience in US schools after immigrating. "I immigrated to the US when I was eight. I didn't speak English at the time but had a rich educational background. I was placed in a Kindergarten classroom. At eight years old! I felt less than my peers. I was taught I just needed to learn English quickly. As a teacher now I know how important it is to foster all the languages and cultures of the children and families I work with. And to do this, I need to get to know them individually—their histories, interests, and goals."

And here's another story from a teacher whose bilingualism was supported in school. He said, "I had a bilingual poem printed in the school newsletter when I was 7 years old. This was one of the experiences that made me decide to be a teacher and a writer."

And then an ESL teacher reflected on her language learning experiences in school. She said, "I took advanced Spanish classes. But I grew up in a white, monolingual English home and town. I got good grades. But I couldn't really communicate in Spanish. I went on to become a teacher thinking that with my love of languages I could "help" multilingual children. But later, I realized this approach wasn't actually helpful. I needed to take a step back and listen."

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 Educator Collaboration Guide and Notetaker, there are a set of questions to support you as you engage in self reflection: These questions focus on what you've learned and believe about school readiness and transition practices for multilingual children; our knowledge and skills around transitions; the role of multilingual families and other caregivers and communities in transitions; and what collaboration looks like. Self-reflection is a critical first step for promoting equitable transitions for multilingual children.

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

Researcher and teacher educator, Mariana Souto-Manning, highlighted how family and community engagement connects directly to learning and thriving in classrooms and other learning spaces. She said, "When teachers problematize their cultural assumptions, reposition themselves, and engage in learning from and with students, families, and communities, they unveil possibilities for building on students' strengths in culturally relevant ways."

Similarly, one mother, who was part of a WIDA research project, emphasized the need to create welcoming and belonging spaces for family and extended family and community members. She said about her child's school, "Teachers tell parents that they are welcome. Any day they want to participate in class, they are welcome, aunts, uncles, grandparents, parents, brothers and sisters."

And another teacher shared, "Whenever a family joins my classroom, I try to learn their language. I study their language and learn simple words. I try to find people in the community who speak the language."

Lastly another educator shared, "The most important thing I have been given is the gift of listening to the children. What are they wondering about? What do they know and want to know? From where they work, how they work, to what they draw, read, and observe, I plan questions and learning from that point. The use of natural materials allows a connection between all children. Leaves, rocks, seeds are universal materials that children of all languages can relate to. They are a natural place to build language and connections."

So let's pause and reflect. What have you heard from the multilingual families in your context about their experiences with PreK-3 transitions?

On pages one through three of the Educator Collaboration Guide there is a set of practices we recommend 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 ones. Some of the practices in the Guide include: Getting to know the multilingual children and families coming into your learning space by having an orientation and a home visit; visiting community spaces that multilingual children and their families have identified and learn about how language is used there; asking families about their goals for their children including language and learning goals, cultural goals, and social-emotional goals; sharing about yourself and about how you will affirm and incorporate children's interests, language practices, goals, and backgrounds into your setting.

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Finally, we're going to talk about collaborating with other educators during PreK-3 transitions. In the report, *PreK through 3rd: Challenging Common Myths About Dual Language Learners*, Linda Espinosa emphasized that, "Young dual language learners need frequent and intentional support for the home language while they are acquiring English in order to benefit academically, socially, and cognitively from their emergent bilingualism. Even when teachers do not speak the child's home language, there are many specific teaching practices that will support continued development of the home language. Teachers and other staff can support children's home language in all kinds of learning."

Collaboration is incredibly important for ensuring that multilingual children feel supported and that their language and cultural practices are uplifted throughout their experiences in PreK-3.

One ESL teacher shared, "I try to encourage teachers to incorporate and value students' home languages. Anything from morning greetings in a variety of languages, learning a new word, sharing cognates. Multilingual children have so much language knowledge but often don't realize how it's useful. Some teachers who are hesitant to incorporate children's home languages are worried because they don't know much other than English. Sometimes I will model it for them if I can or pop in and make a connection."

Let's pause and reflect. How have you collaborated with your colleagues around PreK-3 transitions for multilingual children?

Pages three and four of the Educator Collaboration Guide offer a set of practices that we recommend for collaborating with other educators. 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: Connecting with the previous educators of the children coming into your classroom or learning space and connecting with the future educators of the children leaving; reflecting on and sharing about culturally and linguistically responsive practices that worked for individual children; using shared protocols to observe colleagues' classroom practices and communicate across grade levels and programs; and checking for biases in your resources and messaging and then addressing these biases by connecting with colleagues, families, and community members to find alternative resources. Also, we recommend identifying and advocating for ways that school or program leaders can support you as you collaborate because while we know there is so much you as educators are already doing that's amazing, there's also so much that depends on the policies and practices of the leaders in your context.

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

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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 the best as you continue to grow equitable transitions for multilingual children in your practice.