

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

Welcome to Are We Ready? Schools and Programs Collaborating around Language-Focused PreK-3 Transitions. This webcast is about transitions and how school and program leaders 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 school and program leaders working to promote equity for multilingual children and their families. By school and program leaders we're referring to principals, early care and education program administrators, coaches, teacher leaders, and others who create program and school-level policies and practices.

Here are the three learning goals for this webcast. Viewers 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 schools and programs. And identify ways to lead equitable transitions for multilingual children in your school 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. So 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 school or program level?

So what do we mean by PreK-3 transitions? We're referring to transitions across one school, program, 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 school 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 to yours, or someone who has newly arrived to the U.S. at any time during the year.

We're also focusing on programs and grade levels from PreK through third grade to emphasize the importance of putting down roots and embedding equitable policies and practices for multilingual children and their families across your school 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.

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For this webcast, we're 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 school and program leaders to collaborate and lead the transition process in your school or program and set the tone around the right to language and learn.

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

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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, "The right to language is a human right. Minoritized languages, and their speakers, should be accorded at least some of the protections and institutional support that majoritized languages already enjoy. The right to an education in, and to maintain, their home language is among the most important rights of any minoritized group."

This 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 school and program leaders can do and the right and opportunity for children to language and learn.

Specifically, this is a call for all school and program leaders to push back on programs and policies that lead to language and cultural loss and implement policies and practices that incorporate children's and families' dynamic language and cultural practices. And to develop and sustain reciprocal family and community partnerships. And also, there's a need for school and program leaders to provide time, funding, and other resources for practices that are often central to early care and education but fade as children move on in elementary school. 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 school and program builds a foundation for success across PreK-3 and beyond. It's a call to be a leader in advocating for and making space for children's and families' agency, learning and language goals, 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—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 school 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 WIDA website on the *Teaching in PreK-3* webpage or in the *Resource Library*. As I go through the rest of the webcast, look for the orange bubble in the upper right-hand corner for page numbers I'm referencing. Feel free to pause the webcast here and use the link or QR code to take a look at the tools before continuing on.

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 school 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.

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The National Association for the Education of Young Children, or NAEYC, published a position statement on equity that gives school and program leaders some suggestions for self-reflection. They noted that, “Recognizing that both institutional and interpersonal systems must change, our recommendations begin with a focus on individual reflection. Build awareness and understanding of your culture, personal beliefs, values, and biases. Recognize that everyone holds some types of bias based on their personal background and experiences. Identify where your varied social identities have provided strengths and understandings based on your experiences of both injustice and privilege.”

A school leader shared, when I think about my own experiences in school, I felt badly that I couldn’t read at the end of Kindergarten in English or Mandarin. As a school principal now, I don’t want our children to feel that. I think about how I can set the tone in terms of transitions and support play-based and whole-child approaches.

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

On page one of the School and Program Guide and Notetaker, there are a set of questions to support you as you engage in self-reflection. These questions focus on growing your own self-awareness on what you’ve learned and believe about school readiness and transition practices, what you already know and the skills you have, the role of families and other caregivers and communities, and what collaboration looks like during transitions. Self-reflection is a critical first step for equitable transitions.

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

Researchers Rabadi and Souto-Manning shared that, “Unlike the traditional notion of remediation that typically blames individual children and families for perceived gaps or problems and seeking to fix or remedy them as if they were behind, [we need to] honor and value the practices of young children of color who are multilingual and of families and communities whose cultures do not mirror the culture of power.”

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 mean my hope is that they, my children, can be bilingual. Part of that would be that they are bicultural as well. The reason why that is important is I feel like it’s a part of them and I try to encourage them to explore that part of their family, their culture, and to grow up to appreciate it and value it.”

A principal, Apryl Lowe, shared some family engagement practices her school does. She said, “Teachers have about four days built in before the school year to try to get ahold of families and travel to their homes.

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These visits are a regular part of our program that we do. It's part of how we get to know every family and best begin to connect with and support their children. We also host an open house at the beginning of the year. And for families who come in the middle of the year, we make sure we do classroom visits before starting."

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 School and Program Collaboration Guide there is a set of practices we recommend for seeding and growing your collaboration with multilingual children, families, and communities during transitions across PreK-3 settings. You may already be doing many of these practices and we invite you to consider new practices. Some of these include: Allocating school resources to make home and community visits. You can use this and other family engagement activities during transitions to get to know and partner with families and find out what they want around transitions and what resources the community offers that families want or need. Host orientation meetings at your school, program, and in the community. Also, offer opportunities for incoming children and families to visit the classrooms and other learning spaces they will be in. Connect incoming multilingual families with current multilingual families. You can also involve families of multilingual children who just left that program, grade, or classroom in transition activities like orientation meetings. Also, be sure to incorporate information you've learned from families and community members into your school environment to welcome multilingual children and their families.

Finally, we're going to talk about collaborating with other school or program leaders during PreK-3 transitions. Collaboration is incredibly important for ensuring that multilingual children feel supported, and their language and cultural practices uplifted throughout their experiences in PreK-3. As Drummond and their co-authors said, "Key findings for preschool and K-3 alignment include opportunities for peer collaboration and guidance by mentors, such as coaches."

Principal Lowe also shared, "We have early learning coaches that help early learning and kinder teachers partner with each other. Teachers fill out a transition plan for children to give to new teachers. There's a transition meeting that families attend too. There is also an option for new teachers to observe the previous classroom. The best transitions have been when new teachers both observe a child's former classroom and come to a transition meeting."

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

Pages three and four of the School and Program Collaboration Guide have a set of practices that we recommend for growing your collaboration with other school and program leaders during transitions.

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We know that you may be already doing many of these practices and we hope there are also opportunities for growth. Some of the practices in the Guide include: Creating formal linkages between the programs and schools that serve multilingual children in your area. For example, organize visits to the learning spaces of partner programs and schools.

Organizing professional learning communities or other team meeting time, coaching time, or professional learning time to focus on transitions including alignment across PreK-3. Providing time for peer observations of classroom practices to provide teachers with opportunities to see equitable, culturally and linguistically sustaining learning environments. And checking for deficit approaches in school-based programming, policies, practices, and curriculum used during transitions and addressing them like one-way communication approaches with families, restrictive policies about when and where English use is required, and only using standardized test data with no observational data about individual children's language practices.

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 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 all the related resources including the Are We Ready Recommended Resources and References list that's on the Teaching in PreK-3 webpage and in the WIDA resource library. We also invite you to visit the WIDA website for more resources.

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