



Are transitions a hectic part of your day? Transitions are an important part of daily routines in early childcare setting. Often, challenging behaviors occur in the classroom at times of transition because moving from one task to the next can be difficult for young children. It can also be difficult to wait for the next activity to begin! What are your expectations for the children in your room during transitions?

The Preschool Climate of Healthy Interactions for Learning and Development (CHILD) is a tool for assessing the mental health climate in early childhood care settings. This tool records the quality of interactions in the classroom on a spectrum. The CHILD examines transitions in three parts: the departure, the mobilization, and the arrival. Furthermore, they state that a mentally healthy transition is smooth, efficient, flexible, and productive.¹ This week we will discuss the importance of providing children with mentally healthy transitions by looking at four specific learning dimensions. These four dimensions include ECE staff facilitating a smooth transition, having enough staff present and helping during transitions, staff interacting to promote continued learning during transitions, and finally, staff having activities set up and ready to engage post-transition. Below we will discuss these learning dimensions and specific ways staff can promote positive mental health in the classroom during transitions both small and large.

FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT:

Contact our warm line at, (303) 245-4418, to talk directly to an Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant.



¹ Gilliam, W and Reyes, C. 2016. *The PreK CHILD draft manual. Preschool climate of healthy interactions for learning and development: an assessment of the preschool mental health climate (draft manual).*

Transition Activities to Try²

Turning transitions into opportunities for children to have fun and learn can help educators and children move more smoothly through the day. Try these transition activities to engage children's auditory, visual, and kinesthetic senses while changing from one part of the day to the next. Remember to cue children verbally and nonverbally as a transition approaches, during the transition activity, and as the transition ends to help children understand the sequence of events and what is expected of them.

- **Bubble Pop:** Blow bubbles and encourage the kids to pop them and/or watch how they flow and fall to pop on the ground and other surfaces. Verbalize how many times you will blow the bubbles before you begin, and then name what number you are on with each blow to help children know when the transition activity is coming to an end. When all the bubbles are popped, it's time for the next activity. 
- **Music:** Choose one song, or a few songs (the idea is for children to hear the song as a predictable/familiar indicator to transition) to use as an auditory transition signal. Name that the transition song is about to start and that when the song stops, it will be time for the next activity. As the song is playing and close to ending, additional verbal cues can be helpful.
- **Dance It Out:** Put on a song and encourage children to move, dance, and get the wiggles out of their bodies. Provide cues before, during, and as the song stops, that when the music ends, it's time for their bodies to slow down and start the next activity.
- **Move like an animal:** Create a transition activity that engages children's bodies and creativity as you all move from one space in the room or center to a different location. For example, you can "Hop like a bunny" or "Walk like a turtle". You could even ask each child to pick their own animal to move like!
- **"Simon Says" or "I Spy":** These games can be helpful strategies to engage children's attention while creating learning opportunities, such as listening skills, developing body and spatial awareness as well as color/object identification. Try playing them as a group before beginning a new activity or with children as they wait for the next activity to start.
- **"Smell a flower, blow out a candle":** Try this breathing exercise to help children learn emotion regulation while focusing their attention to their bodies. Model the inhale and exhale with the children and elicit the children's ideas of what they might pretend to "smell" and "blow".

If children finish the transition activity and are waiting for others to join them, a second transition activity can help with the waiting – books to read, fidget toys, or a teacher there waiting and able to play a guessing game or sing a song with the children who are waiting.

² Butler, A.M., & Ostrosky, M.M. 2018. *Reducing challenging behaviors during transitions: Strategies for early childhood educators to share with parents.* naeyc. <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/sep2018/reducing-challenging-behaviors-during-transitions>
Heffron, C. 2017. *10 calming techniques and transition strategies for kids.* The Inspired Treehouse. <https://theinspiredtreehouse.com/transition-strategies-preventing-tantrums-during-daily-routine/>

Reflective Questions for Teachers³

1. *Are transitions a stressful part of your day? When and why?*
2. *What transition seems to go smoother? What contributes to that?*
3. *How much control do you expect to see during transitions? Do you feel it's important for children to be quiet or completely silent, and/or not touching others? Why or why not?*
4. *Are enough staff present during transitions? If not, can it be arranged to have more support?*
5. *Can children be involved in the set up and clean up of activities? What would you need to do to make that happen?*
6. *Are you able to have meaningful interactions with children during transitions?*
7. *Think about the importance of transitions from the children's perspective. Review your class schedule. What can you do to improve transitions and classroom flow? If you could eliminate/change two or three transitions in your school day, which ones would you pick? Why?*



³ Ph.D., Reyes, R. Chin. Ph.D., Gilliam, S. Walter. Ed.D, Horwitz, Carla. *Consultant's Quick Guide to the CHILD Tool. Climate of Healthy Interactions for Learning & Development (CHILD).*