Moving Through Classroom Transitions in Child Care Settings

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Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Children
Positive Behavior Support Model

- **Prevent** – change our behavior; change the classroom
- **Teach** – teach the children the skills they need to function in the classroom; teach the children how to communicate appropriately
- **Reinforce** – praise the positive
Transitions

What is Transition?

-noun
  movement, passage, or change from one position, state, stage, subject, or concept to another

-verb
  to make a transition
Types of Transitions

**Major life transitions:** home to school, crib to bed, bottle to cup, crawling to walking, potty training, moving to a new house

VS.

**Daily transitions:** home to school, asleep to awake, play to clean up, inside to outside, play to bathroom, play to circle time
Transitions are difficult

- In a survey of Georgia educators, more than half reported that challenging behavior is most likely to present itself during transitions (53.6%; N=74)

Why???
Too many transitions during the day

All children transition at the same time and in the same way

There are not clear instructions

Transitions are too long and children spend too much time waiting

Children do not understand the expectations for the transition

Transition expectations/routines differ from day-to-day

Adults give too many instructions

Adults give oral instructions without visual cues

Some children may take longer to process directions
Jim

Jim, a 4-year-old, is a new preschool student. He and the other preschoolers in his classroom are playing on the playground. When Miss Johns calls them to go inside, they all gather next to the entrance door. Jim stays in the sandbox. When Miss Johns approaches him and asks him to come with her, he starts crying and screaming, then drops to the ground.

What are some possible reasons for Jim’s behavior?

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We spend a good part of the day transitioning from one activity to another. How do we make daily transitions meaningful and less stressful?

- **Plan for Success** – PREVENT, TEACH

- **Transition activities** – PREVENT, TEACH

- **Praise Transition Behavior** - REINFORCE
Plan for Success = PREVENT

- Reduce the number of daily transitions
- Teach students the expectations for transitions
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Schedule</th>
<th>Revised Schedule</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:15-8:25 Arrival/hand washing</td>
<td>8:15-8:45 Arrival/hand washing/table toys – children have the choice of table top activities when they arrive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:15-8:45 Free play</td>
<td>8:45-9 Large group</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:45-9:15 Calendar, weather, and lessons</td>
<td>9-10:20 Center time/hand washing/snack – teachers support play and teach skills in small groups or with individual children. Snack is a center choice, allowing varied lengths of time to eat</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:15-10 Centers/small groups – Children rotate every 15 minutes between three small group activities or play in a designated center</td>
<td>10:20-10:40 Book time and music – children finish cleaning up and then choose a book to read. A few children at a time are dismissed to get coats while the other children sing</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-10:15 Hand washing/snack</td>
<td>10:40-11 Outdoor time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:15-10:30 Music</td>
<td>11 Dismissal – class sings good-bye song and plays waiting games until arrival of families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30-10:40 Book time – everyone is dismissed from circle at the same time to put on coats</td>
<td></td>
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When children struggle with transitions --- TEACH

- Ask yourself...Do they understand the expectations and steps?
- If not, how do we TEACH them.
  - Use pictures and role play each step during group time
  - Place the pictures near the area where the transition is going to occur and model the expectations while referring to the pictures
  - Children can model for their peers while the teacher narrates, “Let’s watch Noel at the sink. First, she turns the handles a bit. What does she need next? That’s right, soap! She pumps once because that’s all she needs! Now she is rinsing off the bubbles and is ready for her paper towel. How many pulls does she need? Let’s say it together – 1, 2, that will do!”
Your average day....

Arrivals
Calling Attention
Cleaning Up
Waiting
Lining Up
Walking in a Line
Let’s Eat
Nap Time
Departures
Your average day....

Arrivals
Calling Attention
Cleaning Up
Waiting
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Let’s Eat
Nap Time
Departures
On your own, list every transition your children manage throughout the day in your classroom
(or in a typical classroom if you are not currently a teacher)
Your average day....

Arrivals
Calling Attention
Cleaning Up
Waiting
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Walking in a Line
Let’s Eat
Nap Time
Departures
Arrivals
Arrival time is...

- ...a time to say “hi” to each and every **child** and to refer to them by name, “How is our Sebastian today?”
- ...a time to say “hi” to each and every **parent** who brings in your students. Ask them questions (e.g., how was his night? How did he eat this morning?)
Arrival time is not...

- ...the time to check your email on a computer in the corner of the room
- ...complain to the parents about having to be at work that day
- ....the time to talk to parents (in front of the children) about their children’s misbehavior the previous day
- ...time to *independently* prepare materials for the days’ activities
Arrival time is...

- A TIME TO SMILE!!!!!
- Smiling is one of the first facial expressions decoded by infants
- (17 MUSCLES IN SMILING)
Arrival

- Have children move their picture or name from “home” to “school” on an Arrival Chart.
- Make a feelings poster with pictures of faces showing different emotions (happy, shy, sleepy, excited, frustrated, sad, and so on). When they arrive, children place clothespins labeled with their names on the “feeling faces” that best represent their emotional state at that time.
Morning Greeter

- Place yourself near the door as school begins and say to each child, “I’m so glad to see you,” or “I’ve been waiting for you.”
- Give them a pat on the back, hug, or handshake as they enter the room.
- Fist bumps, high fives.
- Add this chant:
  - Hello, [Child]
  - You’re looking mighty fine
  - Come on in,
  - And have a good time.
Arrival Songs

- **Good Morning to You**
  - When children walk in the room

- **Good Morning [Child], How Are You?**
  - During morning gathering
Arrival: Hugs, Smiles, Shakes, and High Fives & Bear

- Cut a heart, lips, hand, and the number five out of felt or laminated paper
- Place the shapes on the floor, and explain what each symbol represents
  - Heart – give me a hug
  - Lips – give me a smile
  - Hand – give me a handshake
  - Five – give me a high five
  - Bear – growl like a bear
- Children stand on a symbol, then you give them the greeting they request
Arrival: Helping Children Separate

- Make available to them games and objects they like

- Provide points of reference to give them a feeling of security. Tell them beforehand what they will be doing during the morning. Remind them of what happened the day before.

- Implement a ritual with the parent upon arrival, such as the parent giving the child a hug and kiss, taking the child to the door of the room, and waving good-bye
Any Others?
Calling Attention

- Brother John
  - Magic finger, magic finger
  - On your mouth, on your mouth
  - Put the magic finger, put the magic finger
  - On your mouth, on your mouth
Calling Attention

- Song
  - One two three
  - Eyes on me
  - Hands are on your head
  - Smiles are on your faces
  - Looking at me

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HMDeJn4RbM
Calling Attention...sort of

- Child playing with the velcro on their shoes, encourage all of the children to make noises with their shoes then briefly discuss the different noise made.
Clean Up
Clean up

- Count the number of toys during clean up
  - English
  - Spanish
- Give children small challenges
  - Who can put away three objects?
  - Who has arms capable of putting this truck back in place?
  - Who can carry the mat as quietly as a mouse?
- Prompt clean up with music or an instrument
  - How About You? (31)
Role play during clean up

- An astronaut who travels slowly through space carrying blocks to their box
- Delivery boy who delivers crayons and paper to the shelves
- Robots carrying materials back to the shelves
- Wear glasses like a scientist or use a pirate’s telescope to look for things that need to be put away
- A magician’s glove may pick up toys or wash the table
- Pretend to be a detective or reporter who is fact-checking to see if everything is back in place
Move around like animals
Timers to Clean Up

Use these occasionally, as their effectiveness can wear off and they can be stressful if used too often.
Simon Says, “Clean Up!”
Clean up song
(Tune: Mary had a little lamb)

- Time to put the toys away
- Toys away, toys away
- Time to put the toys away
- So we can have our snack (or another action)

- Now it’s time to tidy up
- Tidy up, tidy up
- Now it’s time to tidy up
- And put our toys away
Let’s Hear From You!

Door prize
Waiting

“Long periods of waiting encourage children to behave inappropriately. This is not because children wish to behave inappropriately. This is not because children wish to misbehave. It is merely their natural desire to keep busy.” (p. 196, Davidson, 1982)
Waiting

- Freeze dance (iPhone)
- I spy with my wicked little eye
- Think of animals that live in the air/ground/water
- Invent the beginning of a story and let the children develop it
- Throw a light object into the air (tissue, piece of paper). When the object is in the air, the children perform a required action (scratching their nose, clicking their tongues, humming). The children stop when the object hits the ground.
Waiting Continued

- With eyes closed, children try to guess what object has fallen on the ground: pencil, ball, spoon, paper plate, and so forth.
- Guess the name of a song hummed by a teacher or child
- Guess the sounds heard in the surrounding environment: “What sounds are coming from the next room?”
- Ask children to imitate various simple rhythms you make with your body: loud or soft claps, a finger hitting a palm, clapping with two hands, and so forth
- Tell a familiar story (Three Little Pigs) but introduce some errors into the story. Children should try to identify the errors
Waiting Continued

- Mime simple actions: stretch like a cat, move like a flower in the wind, rock like a baby, crawl like an animal, repeat a recent outdoor activity (skipping)

- “Do what I say, and not what I do.” A child names an action while performing another.
  - e.g., a child asks others to brush their hair while he brushes his teeth.
Waiting continued

- Pretend to tickle the ceiling and the wall at the same time while keeping the body up and down (vertical).
- Push away the big black clouds in the sky so that the sun may come out. Pull the sun rays toward you and place them in a basket.
- Star and planet: Have children lie down, keeping distance between them. Ask them to spread their legs and arms to form a star. Then have them make a ball with their body to form a planet. Alternate a few times between each posture.
- Imitate a flower opening slowly. Start crouching and slowly stretch the arms while getting up on tiptoe.
Waiting Continued

- Invite children to imitate actions you perform while you describe (NOT SHOW) what to do. “Hands on head.” “Hands on shoulder.” “Index finger on nose.”

- Mime various feelings: happy, sad, scared

- Mime a daily action by making small gestures or large gestures (brushing teeth, putting on a sweater, eating)
Waiting Continued

- Candles – Stretch all five fingers of a hand to represent candles. Blow out each candle and close each finger in turn.
- The Piglet’s Nose – Place an index finger lightly on the tip of the nose to make a turned-up nose, breathe through the nose, and then exhale through the mouth while leaving the finger on the nose.
- The Wind – Imitate wind sounds by blowing through the mouth: light wind, strong wind
- Smells – Make children aware of pleasant smells in the environment – “Something smells nice in the kitchen. What do you think it is?”
Rap the directions! Children can clap their hands at the same time.

Make a megaphone with a cardboard cylinder and speak to the children through it. Hands on either side of the mouth can serve the same purpose.

Teach children to whisper, and make them aware that vocal chords stay inactive during true whispering.
Waiting Continued

- Whipping Cream: Wave and shake arms or other parts of the body to make imaginary whipping cream. Then pretend to lather it onto legs, face, hands, and so forth.

- Tactile Drawing: Have children make an imaginary drawing on their forearm, then erase it. Repeat two or three times.
## Waiting Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educator’s Call</th>
<th>Children’s Response</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PARA</td>
<td>CHUTE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHEWING</td>
<td>GUM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RATADIDADA</td>
<td>DADA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HO HE</td>
<td>HO HE</td>
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Let’s Hear From You!

Door prize
Lining Up
Lining Up

- Ask children to come to the line as if they were
  - moving through peanut butter
  - wiggling through Jello
  - in a marching band
  - a plane flying to the airport
  - a car driving on a road
  - a bird flying to its nest
Lining Up

- Draw pairs of different colored shapes on the end of wooden craft sticks. Give each child a stick and then call a shape. Matching pairs line up together. Collect the sticks as a ticket to the next activity.

- Tape cardboard cutouts of feet (or other shapes) on the floor to indicate where children will line up. Change these to introduce new vocabulary (ladybug, butterfly, cricket) or work on concepts (patterns, emotion faces, colors, shapes, letters).
Walking in a line
Walking in a Line

- Use a fun, simple song to remind children about the expectations for walking in the hallway:
  - "We’re walking in a line, . . . one in front and one behind, we’re walking in a line" (tune: “Farmer in the Dell”).
Walking in a Line

- Move behind each other as a train
- Take on an imaginary role as a whole group (centipede, robot)
- Walk in an unusual way – on heels, as a cat
- Bells on ankles
Walking in a Line

- Walk pretending to carry a sleeping baby in your arms
- Walk like a mouse
- Walk with “magic” shoes on that do not make noise
- When you arrive at your destination, use a password or gesture for each child to be authorized to leave the line
- All children hold on to an extended spring toy (e.g., a slinky) so that they stay together
Dismissal
Dismissal

What did you do in school today?

- Go around the room using this chant:
  - Hey [Child]!
  - What do you say?
  - What did you do
  - In school today?

Recall Roundup

- Sit in a circle
- Children think of something new they learned that day and share it when ball is tossed to them
Dismissal

- Happy Thoughts
  - Children sit in a circle
  - They go around and whisper a word of encouragement in each child’s ear
  - They look at the friend sitting next to them and say something nice to each friend

- Hugging Game
  - Simon says touch your knees
  - Simon says touch your head
  - Simon says give yourself a big hand (clap, clap)
  - Simon says give yourself a big hug for having such a good day at school (mmm!)
Dismissal Songs

- **What Shall We Do When We Go Home? (8)**
  - General dismissal time

- **Hickory Dickory Dock (6)**
  - As each child departs
Reinforce
How do we reinforce smooth transitions?*

- Provide positive attention or feedback to children following smooth transitions
- Give very specific positive feedback after transitions
  - “Nicholas and Jorge did a great job cleaning up the block area and moving to the carpet.”
- Movement during transitions is naturally reinforcing

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Let’s Return to Jim

Jim, a 4-year-old, is a new preschool student. He and the other preschoolers in his classroom are playing on the playground. When Miss Johns calls them to go inside, they all gather next to the entrance door. Jim stays in the sandbox. When Miss Johns approaches him and asks him to come with her, he starts crying and screaming, then drops to the ground.

What transition activities could we use to make transitions easier for Jim?

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References


