

A Message from the Editor  
Meredith Lewis, Editor  
Center for UPK

## Universal Pre-K at Bank Street

**T**ransitions are a natural part of our daily lives.

As adults, we do not often talk about what we do throughout the day in terms of “transitions,” nor do we verbalize what it is we do to make things run smoothly; yet, when we move successfully from one event to another, it is exactly that—a “transition.”



prior experience with the upcoming activity, and when we are alert for unexpected changes in our schedule. When we are prepared, we tend to respond to a change by moving calmly through its stages. We have taken time to think about situations in terms of our prior experiences and are therefore better equipped to move forward with ease.

When we are unprepared, we tend to react with discomfort. This is sometimes expressed in anger, cries, hitting, or with harsh words. These behaviors present themselves quickly, with little time to consider the consequences these actions and words may have on the situation and on other people.

We impact other people in everything we do and in every word we speak. I challenge you to step back—and then to look and listen to what is happening around you. Take

time to observe interactions and seek to understand relationships. You will acquire a deeper insight into what is needed to help make transitions effective for you and for those around you.

We guide children through their days and expect them to follow our lead in an ever-changing world. In this issue of NewsFlash, you will find a compilation of articles that look at transitions from many different angles for many different situations that involve working with our children. Whether you are a teacher, a director, a parent, or a researcher, I am confident that you will take something from the issue that you will be able to implement, whether it is talking about how to guide children through changes that can be predicted, or learning strategies to teach children how to deal with unexpected changes.

*Meredith*



We tend to be more prepared for a transition when our routines are predictable, when we have

# universal pre-k newsflash

issue 7/ jun 2003

2 upk reflections

from the director's desk

3 transitions & preschoolers

4 one teacher's journey

5 preschool to public school

6 transition tips for the classroom

7 resources



## From the Center for Universal Pre-K Director's Desk

María Beneján, Director  
Center for UPK

**T**ransitions, transitions, transitions. So many changes have taken place in our world and our nation, in our classrooms and programs, and in our personal lives. One would think, hey, transitioning should be easy. Change happens all the time...yet it is scary for many of us. When I think about who I was 20 years ago—10 years ago, even 5 years ago—all I can think is that so much has happened. So many transitions have occurred. I'm definitely not the same person I was even a year ago. Were my transitions during these past years smooth, rough or unnoticeable? Who helped me along the way?

As I reflect, I recognize that some of those transitions were smooth, some were quite rough, and some simply happened, almost undetectable. I find myself questioning what made this difference. Were these transitions meaningful in my life? Did having someone support me make it easier? My sense is that yes, these transitions were meaningful, and how I handled them played an important role in my adult development. I truly feel my inner security or insecurities, my ability to trust my instincts and intuition and having someone support me through these times had much to do with how I handled transitions.

How have you handled transitions in your life—in your classroom—in your program? As this school year comes to a close, and you are thinking about your students' futures, we hope this edition of NewsFlash challenges you to reflect on who your children are, where are they developmentally, and how you will prepare them for upcoming transitions.

Have a great summer—relax and enjoy your transition. You earned it.



### Upcoming events

June 15—18

*NAEYC's 12th Annual National Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development*, Portland, Oregon

August 10—14

*Learning the Project Approach*, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, presented by Dr. Lilian Katz and Dr. Sylvia Chard

October 10—14

*Council for Exceptional Children's 2003 Annual International Division for Early Childhood Conference*, Washington, D.C.

## Summer plans?

New Perspectives Courses are being offered throughout the summer! Childcare for New Professionals Course and Certificate Program as well as additional early childhood education courses are available.

Some choices include:

- School Entry and the Process of Separation
- Setting Up Learning Centers
- Introduction to Child Development
- Building Healthy Relationships with Families
- Healthy Approaches to Discipline and Classroom Management
- Integrating Curriculum Activities to Support Children's Growth
- How Young Children Learn Through Play

Request a catalog or check out the offerings on-line today!  
[www.bankstreet.edu/ce/newpers](http://www.bankstreet.edu/ce/newpers)  
or 212.875.4649

# Transitions:

## What it Means for Preschoolers

Amy Flynn, Director  
Bank Street Family Center

The first five years of life are full of transitions for children and parents. Children are growing and developing at a rapid rate. Acquiring new skills and establishing primary relationships are the essential work of the young child. Children may also be transitioning to the care of people other than their parents during these early years, which can be a difficult and complicated task for both the child and the parent. As parents, we may experience children's growth and development with a bit of wistfulness. It is bittersweet when your child has her last bottle or takes her first steps. Though we rejoice in our children's accomplishments, we are often saddened as well, because these new skills mark our children's ever-growing independence and separation from us. These changes, we recognize, are hard for adults, as well.

Parents and teachers of young children are responsible for teaching them how to cope and deal with separation and transitions in healthy ways, even though we also find them difficult. We are well aware of how challenging it can be when we ask children to move from one activity to the next. Transitions happening at home may frustrate parents who can't get their children out of the house in the morning. Similar difficulties may be experienced throughout the school day by teachers, who strategize about the difficulty many children experience moving from free-play to circle, or from snack to outing. But it is vitally important that adults help children learn how to make transitions in ways that work for both the children and the adults.

### Setting the Stage: Structure and Routines

What educators find is most important in easing these transition struggles is the imposition of structure and routines. This framework gives the child some control and understanding of what comes next. For example, "We are going to read one more book and then it will be time to leave the house." Teachers often use a count-down system so children know they have "5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 more minute left to play, then it will be time to clean up for circle."

These kinds of predictable routines help children to make the transition to the next activity. As adults, we use similar strategies to make sure our own days move along smoothly. We allow ourselves time to transition from activity to activity, and we usually have a predictable morning routine that helps us to get out of the house on time without forgetting something. By sharing our routines with our children, we help make conscious connections to the transitions we move through daily.

### Preparing for the End of the Year

The end of the school year is often a stressful and emotional period for young children. Children have made attachments to teachers and friends, and they feel comfortable and confident in their routines. Often children feel worried about the next school year, whether it brings them to a new school or to a new classroom. Sometimes, they are excited about going onto a new school, but worried at the same time. Helping children cope with these complicated emotions at this young age will help them with the changes they will be facing throughout their lives. Adults need to listen carefully to children's concerns and questions, so they can help them make sense of what they are experiencing and feeling. For example, "It is so exciting to be going to a new school, but I see you are also worried about making new friends. Remember how you made new friends this year? You are very good at making friends and next year you will still see some of your old friends at the playground." In this way, you are acknowledging the child's feelings while also giving him strategies to work through these changes.

Transitions happen throughout our lives. Giving children the tools to cope with change in both a positive and productive way is one of our most important tasks. ●

# One Teacher’s Journey with English Language Learners

Fern Stampleman, Head Teacher  
Marble Hill Nursery School

Whenever the word “transition” comes up for those of us who are preschool teachers, my guess is that our thoughts turn to the problems encountered when shepherding our children through the changes we make from one activity to the next during the course of a regular school day, be it the traditional half-day program or in the daycare setting. But transitions come in many different shapes and sizes. In fact, almost anything we do in life can be viewed through the lens we call “transition.”

One of my goals this year has been to provide a developmentally appropriate program in which my afternoon students, many of whom enter school speaking little or no English, feel safe enough to express themselves in a new and different way, absorbing a new language in their new and different environment—school. My team and I have continuously organized and reorganized our thinking around how best to facilitate this transition.

One of the first things that became apparent to us in September was the need for modeling. The first time we tried what we thought was a simple circle game, we were met with curious stares. So my team, Zaida, Magaly and I, spent the next few sessions singing and modeling, “This is what I can do, see if you can do it too,” repeating this process with each new activity.

Our next discovery came shortly thereafter, during story time. In a usually quiet room, we noticed that some children were asking Zaida and Magaly questions about the stories as I read aloud to them. After that, we made it a habit to translate into Spanish for everyone. In addition, while we had always done circle time in both English and Spanish (the days of the week, the months of the year, counting, etc), we began to add Spanish to our songs, games and finger plays. This turned out to be both challenging and fun for everyone.

In October, the children began to borrow books from the school library—one book each weekend, as a group, and during the week when parents wished to do so on their own. The library has many titles in Spanish, and through the years, we have found that both Spanish- and English-speaking children choose books written in both languages to share with their families. There is great excitement on Fridays, when books go home in canvas bags provided by the school. Frequently, children ask to have their books read during free play (or choice time), even before they leave the building.

Then, a presentation at the NAEYC Conference last November provided me with a fresh outlook on the value of retelling stories through dramatization. We realized that

when gestures accompany language, it helps create a non-threatening atmosphere, while promoting comprehension and acquisition of new language skills. Also, when we used stories with repetition, we saw an increasingly greater number of children becoming involved in a variety of ways. In order to help all of us remember each child’s part, we would write the names of the characters on stickers, and these stickers became “badges of honor,” to be worn home.

In January, our school psychologist, Chris, began making classroom visits, thereby guiding a program we call, “Teaching Tolerance.” This program provides an opportunity for children to name, explore, and express their feelings regarding developmental issues important to them. To our amazement and delight, everyone talked to her—a positive indication of how the level of comfort increased in our room.

Finally, we relearned something we have always known about young children and language—they learn from each other. Through the sheer desire to play and socialize, kids understand and begin to communicate with each other. Some children store up what they are learning, and one day you turn around, and they are speaking the new language. We are frequently in awe of them!

It’s June, and the levels of activity, focus and thinking are high; voices fill both the classroom and the playground. The children are on-task, for the most part, all of the time. They are independent and help each other out. When there are sad faces in the group, more often than not, another child will offer a hand or will intervene on someone else’s behalf. The chatter is constant; the choices are vast. Together we have all made the transition. ●

Here is one resource to help you get started!

*Ábranlas, Cíerrenlas / Open-Shut Them*

Open and shut your hands with the appropriate words.

Place them in your lap for the last line.

*Ábranlas, cíerrenlas, ábranlas, cíerrenlas,*

*Damé un aplauso.*

*Ábranlas, cíerrenlas, ábranlas, cíerrenlas,*

*Ponganlas acá.*

*Open them, shut them, open them, shut them,*

*Give me a clap.*

*Open them, shut them, open them, shut them,*

*Put them there.*

# The Pre-School to Public School Transition

Brenda Lawrence, Educational Director  
Bishop Sexton Head Start Center

At Bishop Sexton, we recognize the importance of smooth transitions for preschool children. As a result, we have incorporated several components into our program model to help the transition of students coming into our preschool program as well as for students moving beyond our school into kindergarten. A very successful piece of our transition plan is visiting the classrooms in the children's new setting. Our four year-olds visit a local kindergarten, and our three year-olds visit the UPK classrooms in our school.

Every year, we visit a local school with our children and parents. The Kindergarten Coordinator leads us on a tour of the school, and introduces us to the kindergarten teachers and the principal. Then the children are placed in a classroom, and have the opportunity to experience what it is like to be in kindergarten. Afterwards, the teachers of the host classrooms meet with the parents, children, and accompanying staff members. In this forum, parents and teachers share information about the school's program goals and educational philosophy, as well as parents' goals for their children.

As a result of these visits, many parents often feel they have developed a nice rapport with the host school's programs, and may choose to add their child's name to the school's enrollment waiting list. More importantly, the children develop a good relationship with the school's kindergarten teachers. This is extremely important for a preschool child in order to help him or her adjust to both a new routine and a new environment.

While our four-year olds are visiting kindergarten, our three-year olds visit the UPK classrooms. The teachers make adjustments to their lesson plans for age-appropriate activities and introduce the children to the classroom's daily schedule. Children are encouraged to participate in small group activities and to explore the classroom. The parents of our three-year olds are encouraged to attend in order to observe and to become active in their children's daily routines. Each parent receives a "Take Home Task" package, explaining why each routine exists and how it assists in their child's early developmental awareness. ●

## The Center for Universal Pre-K at Bank Street College of Education

The Mission of Bank Street's Center for Universal Pre-Kindergarten is *to help early care and education programs strengthen their services to young children and their families*. We provide a variety of services and resources at NO cost, for teachers, support staff, administrators, parents, policy makers, advocacy groups and researchers that promote quality Universal Pre-K programming.

### Early Childhood Mentoring Program

The Early Childhood Mentoring Program offers experienced early childhood teachers the opportunity to become trained mentors to beginning teachers.

### Universal Pre-K Fellows Program

The Universal Pre-K Fellows Program is a credit-bearing professional development program that strengthens teachers' and assistant teachers' understanding of developmentally appropriate practice through seminars, mentoring, resources and career development.

### Quality New York

Quality New York provides support to early childhood programs throughout New York City that are seeking accreditation through NAEYC. This program is a collaboration with Bank Street College's Center for UPK, Child Care, Inc. and the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies.

### Community of Learners Project

The Community of Learners Project brings together Bank Street College and Community School District 10 in the Bronx to provide professional development services to Universal Pre-K programs.

### Individualized training and technical assistance for programs

The Center for Universal Pre-K works with preschool programs throughout New York City to provide specialized professional development workshops and targeted on-site support.

For more information, please contact María Benejan at 212.961.3414 or visit our website at [www.bankstreet.edu/upk/index.html](http://www.bankstreet.edu/upk/index.html)

## Transitions

Adapted from the *Prekindergarten Performance Standards*  
New York City Department of Education

When we center the conversation of “change” around children, in the form of moving from one program to another, or from home to school, we begin to recognize the added challenges that the 4-year-old child brings to this already difficult process. Teachers and parents need to recognize that transitions are a time to plan for, to prepare for, and to expect, if we intend to do our part in alleviating stress and ensuring a successful adjustment to a new environment for our children. The following is an abbreviated list of suggestions in the *Prekindergarten Performance Standards*, created by the New York City Department of Education, to ease transitions for all parties involved in the transition process:

### Creating ongoing communication for staff

*When teachers plan for transitions, a more consistent approach can be implemented.*

1. Initiate opportunities for inter- and intra-staff communication in order to begin planning for transitions.
2. Invite staff of preschools and kindergartens to take part in an inter-visit program to share information and to discuss specific transition activities.
3. Establish joint in-service workshops focused on transition, curriculum and instructional practices.

### Creating ongoing communication for families

*If families feel comfortable and supported in this process, children are more likely to feel secure in their move.*

1. Invite school personnel, teachers, and principals to a parent meeting to discuss the kindergarten program, the role of parents in the school, and to be available to answer any questions.
2. Provide each family room with resources to support families in their preparation for kindergarten.
3. Assist parents in finding pertinent information with regard to their child’s new school, from providing contact information to scheduling a site visit.

### Planning transition activities for children

*When children feel prepared for a new experience, the transition is generally smoother.*

1. Read books that focus on moving to a new school.
2. Schedule class visits to the new school or invite children from the new school to visit your class to share information and experiences.
3. Mark important dates on your class calendar, including visits and celebrations. ●

## Transition Tips for the Classroom

Adapted from Ellen Booth Church’s *Terrific Transitions*

*“Focus on the journey, not the destination. Joy is found not in finishing an activity but in doing it.”*

—Greg Anderson

Transitions in the classroom provide opportunities for children to practice handling change as they journey from one activity to another. As an important part of your curriculum, transitions are most successful when they are planned for. In doing so, you can give children the direction they require while providing them with an opportunity to further develop skills.

- Children need to be able to anticipate predictable segments of the day. Take a series of photographs to show the events of the day (circle time, free play, snack, etc.) Display the photos on a bulletin board, wall, or clothesline so that children can easily refer to them during the day.
- Take time at the beginning of the year to teach children about transitions. Show them the different signals that you will use and what you expect from the children. Try to practice some transitions.
- Make transitions fun and meaningful.
- Indicate when a transition is about to happen, especially clean up. Tell children what is going to happen next. Preparing them for what lies ahead helps children deal with a fear of the “unknown.” In this way, children better understand what is expected of them and look forward to the change.
- Keep a collection of finger plays, games and songs on index cards in your pocket for instant activities.
- Grab student’s attention with dramatic verbal and nonverbal cues. Use the element of surprise, facial expressions, and voice changes to indicate that something different is about to happen. Suggested attention-getting signals: musical instruments (bells, drums, tambourine), puppet used as a classroom friend or announcer, hand motions, whispering.

# Resources

Compiled by Tracey-Lee Lucas, Staff Developer  
Center for UPK

This is a list of suggested resources to assist you in supporting transitions for your preschoolers and their families. Many of these titles are available at the Bank Street Bookstore.

## Books for Children

- *Will I Have a Friend?*, by Miriam Cohen. A little boy forgets his anxieties on his first day at school when he makes a new friend.
- *Wemberly Worried*, by Kevin Henkes. Wemberly worried about everything. Then it was time for school to start. And Wemberly worried even more.
- *Off to School, Baby Duck*, by Amy Hest. Baby Duck is afraid of the first day of school until Grandpa asks the teacher some very important questions.
- *The Kissing Hand*, by Audrey Penn. When Chester the raccoon is reluctant to go to school for the first time, his mother teaches him a secret way to carry her love with him.
- *Hurray for Pre-K*, by Ellen B. Senisi. A child describes a day in pre-K, playing, snacking, resting, singing, and painting.

## Books for Teachers

- *Terrific Transitions*, by Ellen Booth Church. Keep children interested, engaged, and learning as they “transition” from one activity to the next.
- *Children Starting School: A Guide to Successful Transitions and Transfers for Teachers and Assistants*, by Hilary Fabian. Shows how practitioners, working in partnership with parents, can give children a successful start in school.

- *Transition Time: Let's Do Something Different!*, by Jean Feldman. Turn stressful transition times into fun learning experiences with these practical, simple activities.
- *Classroom Routines That Really Work for PreK and Kindergarten*, by Kathleen Hayes and Renée Creange. Use these ideas for introducing and managing essential early childhood routines and activities to foster children's independence and build community.

## Books for Families

- *Ready for Reading: A Handbook for Parents of Preschoolers*, by Ashley Bishop. Three professors of elementary, bilingual and reading education present book-sharing activities for parents of preschoolers aimed to promote reading-readiness.
- *When You Go to Kindergarten*, by Florence Karnofsky. Simple suggestions to help bring out the best in your child.

## Websites

- *Born to Read: How to Raise a Reader*  
[http://www.ala.org/alsc/raise\\_a\\_reader.html](http://www.ala.org/alsc/raise_a_reader.html)  
The American Library Association provides information on how to develop a love of language and reading in children from the time they are born.
- *Getting Ready for Kindergarten*  
<http://www.nncc.org/Release/ready.kinder.html>  
The National Network for ChildCare provides suggestions for preparing you and your children for the first day of school.
- *Zero to Three*  
<http://www.zerotothree.org/Search/index2.cfm>  
Promotes the healthy development of infants and toddlers by supporting families, communities, and those who work on their behalf. Check their website for specific articles on home routines and transitions to preK.

## Many Thanks

A BIG “thank you” to all of the writers who contributed to this issue of *NewsFlash*. Your work is much appreciated!

## A Special Thank You

The *NewsFlash* is brought to you through the generous funding of the following organizations: Altman Foundation, J.P. Morgan, Rockefeller Brothers Foundation, the United States Department of Education, the United Way and Vivendi Universal.

universal pre-k  
**newsflash**

## Issue 7, June 2003

UPK NewsFlash is distributed to UPK programs and staff, policy-makers, foundations, higher education faculty, advocacy groups, and the early childhood educational community.

**Editor:** Meredith Lewis

**Consulting Editor:**

Elisabeth Jakab

**Editorial Board:** María Beneján,

Wanda Frankel, and

Jasanna Poodiack

**Design:** Ellie Silverberg

The Bank Street  
College of Education  
610 West 112th Street  
New York, NY 10025-1898  
www.bankstreet.edu



Non-profit Org  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
New York, N.Y.  
Permit No. 6679

universal pre-k  
newsflash