



Governor's COVID-19 Education Pre-K to Kindergarten Transition Newsletter

Gratitude and Support

The Wyoming Department of Education (WDE), the Department of Health (WDH), and the Department of Family Services (DFS) wish to take this opportunity to thank each of you for your determination and perseverance as you continue to offer ongoing support to our children and families across Wyoming. Your desire and drive to instruct and connect with your students and families, no matter the circumstances or time commitment, is commendable. Wyoming is blessed to have top-quality teachers who continue to demonstrate such praiseworthy attributes.

As we continue to move forward into this "new normal," we welcome you to contact any of the agency representatives with questions or concerns that may arise. The purpose of this newsletter continues to be to address your needs from the feedback we received from the survey this spring.

Preparing for Kindergarten Transition

Regardless of school district reopening formats based upon local health regulations, there are four main points that are critical for kindergarten transition, including continued learning and academic success throughout the school year:

Relationships

- During the COVID-19 crisis, it is imperative that transition teams and relationships between the CDCs/Preschools and Districts continue to be maintained and strengthened. If there are strong partnerships among all members of a transition team, teams are more efficient at planning and implementing program plans. Shared resources then become deep and wide, which enhances our ability to meet the individual needs of our students. Children and families are relying on CDCs/Preschools and Districts to aid in a smooth and effective kindergarten transition. The responsibilities of forming and/or maintaining a relationship is not one-sided. Be the first to contact the other agency to engage and/or enhance the relationship.
- Continue to maintain and sustain relationships with your students and families to best identify their needs. Remember, people have an easier time weathering stressful and frustrating times when relationships are already formed and are strong.

Communication

- Successful relationships require ongoing open and effective communication. Staying connected with your transition team and your families is the foundation to build mutual trust and to be able to problem solve through stressful and challenging times. Teams and families will feel more comfortable expressing their concerns and desires if communication has already been established.

- Whether instruction is delivered in person, virtually, or in some distance format, communication is vital in keeping students and families engaged in learning and apprised of plans/changes along the way.
- As we think about supporting families, take time to reflect on these questions:
 - Is my need to help in alignment with the level of support that the family wants or needs?
 - Are my expectations of families realistic given all of the stress that they are under?

Collaboration

- Transition teams should ensure that all members feel connected. Collaborate often as kindergarten transition planning and implementation move forward.
- CDCs/Preschools and Districts should meet to collaborate for transition planning, the transition process including high impact activities, and post kindergarten transition (see the Kindergarten Best Practices below for more information).
- Kindergarten transition can be a very scary and stressful time in normal circumstances for many students; however, consider the individual needs of students with disabilities. IEP teams from the CDCs/Preschools and Districts should collaborate early enough to ensure the proper accommodations are provided for each student and family to feel more at ease.

Data/Documentation

- Document, document, document. Data is imperative to making proper decisions as you move forward into this school year. Use three meaningful data points to assess and compare data from instructional time pre-COVID-19, during COVID-19, and upon returning from summer break.
- Do not make assumptions. Take time to understand each child's needs. Realize that the needs of your students may have changed from pre-COVID-19 times. Remember to give everyone, including yourself, time to adjust to the new "normal."

News to Know

On July 1, 2020, the WDE released a SMART START guidance document in preparation for the reopening of schools amidst COVID-19. The guidelines were developed by a working group of stakeholders, including Wyoming's education and health agencies. Four areas are included that are critical to the opening of schools: communications, safety and wellness, school operations, and instruction and technology.

The framework consists of three tiers:

- **Tier I – Open:** In-person classes and activities, as appropriate. Minimal adapted learning on a limited, as-needed basis. Most students in school at the same time under the provisions of current health orders. Social distancing and face coverings to the greatest extent possible. Buildings open to all students.
- **Tier II – Hybrid:** Combination of in-person and adapted learning is required due to local or state health directives. Social distancing and face coverings to the greatest extent possible for those attending in person. Buildings open to some students.
- **Tier III – Closed:** School buildings closed to students due to local or state health directives or orders. School districts will follow provisions in the approved adapted learning plan. Buildings not open to students.

Superintendent Balow offers, "The working group placed the bulk of decision-making in the hands of communities – health officials, school boards, educators, parents, and even students. Communities know best how to address their unique challenges."

<https://1ddlxtt2jowkvs672myo6z14-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Smart-Start-Guidance.pdf>

For more information, contact your local school district.

For further guidance or information, refer to the Kindergarten Transition Best Practices and other associated documents at: <https://wyominginstructionalnetwork.com/pre-k-to-kinder-transition-summit/>



Transportation

by Michelle Tucker, Child Care Licenser, Albany and Laramie Counties

Did you know...

As much as 30% of morning traffic in the United States is generated by parents or caregivers driving children to school?

There is little more exciting as a child (and worrisome for the parent/provider) than going to school as a Kindergartener.

To help families feel more comfortable with yet another facet of this transition, and to help early childhood providers to feel confident while transporting children to a school or other location, DFS would like to share a look at some of the child care rules that pertain to field trips and transportation:

- Vehicles used to transport must be properly maintained and comply with all motor vehicle laws.
- The driver must be at least 18 years old and have a valid driver's license.
- There must be a seat belt for each individual in the vehicle and not exceed the manufacturer's recommended capacity.
- Each child must be properly restrained as required by law.
- Each child needs written authorization to be transported to any location, including elementary school, including walking trips to school.
- When the child care program is off-site, there shall be
 - a first aid kit.
 - emergency medical releases.
 - current/updated attendance records.
 - adult supervision of all children at all times.

To assist families in finding a child care program that offers school transportation, or for more information about a program, including licensing requirements, visit the DFS website at findchildcarewy.org or dfs.wyo.gov.

Licensed programs may also request additional information or assistance with transitions, and transportation ideas by contacting Child Care Technical Assistance Coach Penny Hotovec, at 307-754-2245 x 22 or 307-254-1620 (cell) or penny.hotovec@wyo.gov.

Resources for Families During COVID-19

Helping Your Child During the Pandemic (NCPMI): https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Pandemic_family_infographic.pdf

- Spanish version: https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Pandemic_family_infographic_sp.pdf

Parent Information Center of Wyoming: <http://www.wpic.org/>

Healthy Children: <https://www.healthychildren.org/>

Division of Early Childhood: <https://www.dec-sped.org/>

ECTA Center: <https://ectacenter.org/topics/disaster/coronavirus-talking.asp>

National Institute of Early Childhood: http://nieer.org/covid-19_resources

Governor's COVID-19 Pre-K to Kindergarten Transition Working Group

For more information, contact us:

[Dicky Shanor](#), Wyoming Department of Education, Chief of Staff

[Deana Smith](#), Wyoming Department of Education

[Kathy Escobedo](#), Wyoming Department of Health

[Stoney Busch](#), Wyoming Department of Family Services

[Wanda Maloney](#), Wyoming Department of Education

