

Transitioning In the Classroom

Transitioning from one activity to another during a school day can be where much of the day is spent. This can be a positive experience and one that also provides for more learning opportunities. Unfortunately, this period frequently becomes a trying time for teachers and students alike. It is most helpful to plan for transitions by having many ideas at your disposal, as this will make your day go that much more smoothly. Without organizing for these times of switching from one activity to the next, chaos ensues!

Transitioning is the movement or change from one position to another. Those times you experience a change in the classroom are upon arrival, clean up, snack, lining up and dismissal. It is during these times that you must be prepared to gather the children in a “somewhat” peaceful manner.

Before any change in activity is to take place, a warning **MUST** be given. This is when you need an attention grabber of some kind. A simple hand clap, that your class has been made aware of, will do the job. Once they have all “ears” on you, then let them know they have 2 minutes before they will move forward with the day. This helps ease the anxiety from simply saying you must stop what you are doing now. They have been warned that the building they are constructing is about to come down and they will be prepared. A chart with the days schedule is a great visual for the children to know what to expect. You can have one child take on this job per day by removing those activity cards that have already occurred. At the beginning of the year is the time to establish these habits. Teach children the hand clap, learn the song for cleaning up, show them the spot they are to stand on while waiting for the line to move. Consistency and perseverance, (on your part) are keys to a stress-free day.

It is also during the beginning of the school year that you and your assistant will benefit from observing and making notations of those children who may need extra assistance in transitioning, (it almost always happens!) It is important to identify those children that struggle during these times. If a student does not do well with the bell you ring as an attention grabber, it is time to find another method. You may also find that another child may need a teacher by his or her side as you walk down the hall. Make changes where necessary so each child will be successful. If there are too many transitions you may need to group activities or work with smaller groups at a time, allowing for longer time periods separating the movement. If you have too many specials scheduled for one day, check to see if you can change your schedule with another teacher. In the best way possible, structure your day so that the children know what to expect and can move about in a positive manner.

I used to compare teaching to running on a treadmill, you can't just jump off and not be hurt. You must always be prepared. Children who are bored most likely will lead to craziness in the classroom. By this I certainly do not mean you need to be dancing throughout the school day. However, have something available to keep their little hands busy. The more they are engaged the less discipline problems you will have. Have a basket of books available for them while you take a few at a time to wash their hands. Everyone waiting in line at the same time to wash their hands or go to the bathroom may lead to other undesirable behaviors.

The great news is that transitioning can be a time of getting to know your students, reinforcing skills, and even accessing your students. It is also a time to promote teamwork amongst your students. The goal is to keep your class actively engaged!

Please continue for specific ideas for transitioning assistance.

Arrival

It is best to make the arrival to school a smooth transition in order to get everyone's day off to a great start. Teach your students the morning routine from the very beginning. Hang up their bag, get out their lunch, put their folder in the basket and whatever else is helpful to you and assists the child in becoming responsible and settled into the classroom environment. I suggest you have some activity for them to sign in or do upon entering the classroom. Once the children can recognize their name, they might find it on a board and put it on the "I Am Here" tree. They might move their name clip from home to the school bus. You might have a question of the day where they move their clip to yes or no to answer the question. (Do you own a pet?) Once they have practiced this for a few weeks, the arrival transition will be mastered!

ATTENTION GRABBERS

This is exactly as it says, something to make your children STOP - LOOK and LISTEN to you!

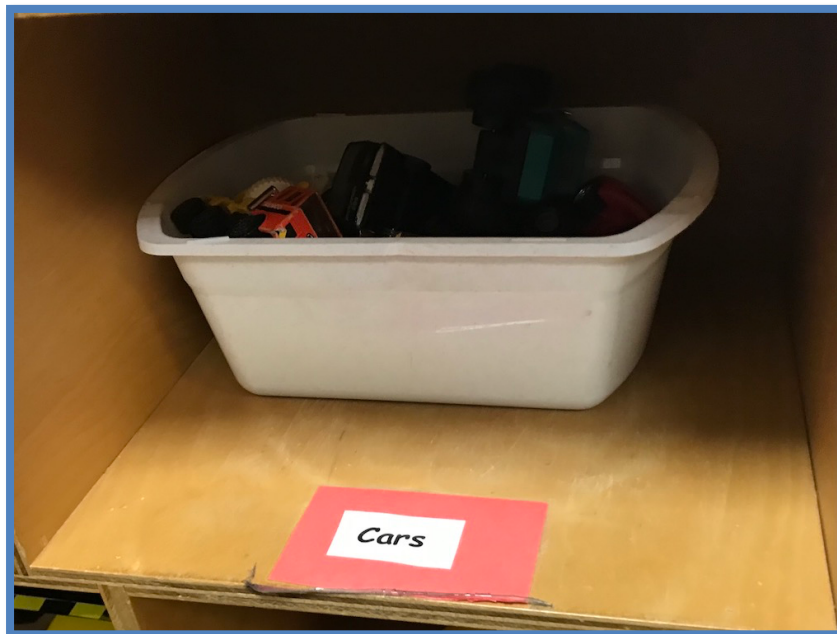
- Clap a pattern - they can freeze or repeat the clap back to you to show they are listening
- Whistle, bell, or another noise maker but remember it doesn't need to be so loud that the whole school stops
- If you can hear me touch your nose, touch your ear, touch your head, continue until all are participating
- Whisper to get their attention, start out at one level and continue to get softer and softer
- 1,2,3 eyes on me, (children can respond, 1,2 eyes on you)

Try not to use the method of turning out the lights to get their attention.

Clean up

When setting up your room, it is best to remember, the more toys you make available to your class, the bigger the mess. Until they learn how to properly clean up, I suggest limiting the toys on the shelves. You can gradually add toys as the year progresses or better yet, switch out the toys regularly. It is like Christmas when they have something new available to them. Here are more suggestions for a successful cleanup:

- Do not assume children know how to clean up. This should be taught at the beginning of the year. They should know that toys stay in their designated area, blocks in the building area. They also should not lump all varieties of items together but keep them in their individual bin. Bins should be labeled.
- Label your shelves with pictures of the item and the visual word. This shows them where the toy returns to, and they are beginning to identify the letters and that each item has a word assigned to it.



- Everyone who played in the center, must contribute to cleaning up!!
- Assign a clean up “policeman” who checks out the centers after cleanup and gives a thumbs up or down.
- Numerous clean up songs can be sung or played during clean up time.
(Tune – jingle bells, Tidy up, tidy up, put the toys away. Tidy up, tidy up, we’re finished for today. Tidy up, tidy up, put the toys away. For we’ll get

them out again the next time that we play) OR play a song and when it is over the cleanup should be complete.

- Hang a star or smiley face on the center that did the best job cleaning up in a timely manner. This gives the children an incentive and they will be excited when they have been awarded.

Circle Time

Circle time is another time to bring the children together for a purpose. It is important to “train” them from the beginning of the year to know what is expected of them. Typically circle time is a time of reading, doing the news for the day or teaching a concept. You will want to get their attention and here are a few helpful ways:

- Children should know where to sit for circle. Perhaps they have small dots or letters or something with their names, but they should have an assigned spot. It will take a few weeks, but you will soon know which students sit best near each other.
- Start off with something they can learn and repeat each day to get you started. *Ex. Hands up - Open shut them, Open shut them, Give a little clap, clap, clap. (Begin to whisper) Open shut them, Open shut them, Place them in your lap, lap, lap!*
- Use a puppet to get their attention.

Plan circle so that you have some movement involved and it is not all sitting and listening.

Dismissal or Line Up

From circle or group time you will most likely dismiss to a line or back to centers. An orderly way of doing so is best for the children and will make it easier on you. When dismissing one teacher should be receiving the children, at the door. The children should know where to stand if they are going into a line, it can be alphabetically or again on dots. Let the children know prior to dismissal what you are looking for, listeners and good behavior are generally recognized first. If time allows, you can add movement to your dismissal, walk on tiptoes, walk backwards and so on. If your time is limited choose dismissals that small groups will go together. Otherwise, you can individualize the transition by asking questions. Here are many examples to help you with this important time:

- Visuals are best - name this letter, color, shape

- Point to – a particular letter, something red, then go to line
- Tap a friend to get in line, emphasize the person they select should be following directions, it also helps to have girls select boys and vice versa
- Repeat the clapping pattern, change it for each child
- Describe a child's clothes, hair etc. until that child realizes it is them and they line up

Line up if... (more than one may line up at a time) this is a great way to learn more about your class and you can do some accessing at the same time.

- Your name begins with_
- Had pancakes for breakfast
- You are wearing shorts
- You are wearing a pattern
- You have blue eyes
- Your birthday is in April
- Have been on a boat

Line up if you can tell me... (this is more individualized)

- Your birthdate, address, phone number
- A zoo animal, farm, (anything related to your theme, season or holiday)
- Favorite restaurant
- Something that rhymes with, the opposite of, begins with the letter_____
- Something that makes you happy
- The name of a new friend (this is great at the beginning of the year)

There are truly numerous questions you can ask, change it up and have fun!

Once in line, ensure they are ready to go,

- *My hands are by my side, I'm standing straight and tall, my eyes are looking toward the front, I'm ready for the hall!*

Fillers

This most often is an unexpected time of the day when you just happened to finish centers early. It happens to all of us when we have a small gap of time and are standing in front of twenty 4-year-olds with NOTHING to do! It is almost frightening to think about.

I suggest you have a “treasure” box of spare items to use for just this time. Keep it at your circle spot ready to open and find objects or ideas to pull from. A ring of notecards with a variety of ideas, fingerplays, games and other activities is helpful to reach for RIGHT NOW!

This is precisely how my riddles book, Do YOU see ME in the SEA? came about. As a teacher I would write riddles that went along with my weekly themes. Upon having a few extra minutes, out came the riddles and I would read as many as we had time for.

Other ideas:

- Thumbs up or thumbs down game, make statements and the children respond accordingly, do you like pizza? Do elephants fly? Does it really rain cats and dogs?
- Simon Sez
- Describe an object in the room and let them look around and guess until they get it right.
- Peephole game – expose a small part of a picture of an animal, letter, or number, have them guess as you continue to reveal more of the item
- Quiet Game – children must be “as still as a statue and quiet as a mouse” boys choose a girl, girls choose a boy
- Move like a ... name a variety of animals and children move about the room like a snake, giraffe, butterfly
- Review nursery rhymes, letters, numbers etc.
- Roll a Cube – can be made from tissue box, on each side have questions, have the children take turns rolling the cube and then answering the questions. It is also fun to have movements listed on each side, jumping



jacks, marching, etc. let the children stand and perform what the cube is telling to do.

- I'm thinking of an animal who lives on a farm, has a long tail, gives milk, the guessing continues until they are correct.
- *Flashlight Flashlight in the air, shine your flashlight on something shaped like a _*, the children love this, make sure you have batteries and let them take turns walking around the room and shining the light on the answer.

I hope that these transition ideas will help make your day go by smoothly. I would love to hear your ideas for transitioning! Contact me and I can share with others. As teachers we can help each other by sharing what works in the classroom!