Change is challenging for any child and, since all children are unique, even typical children struggle with transition. This guide is intended to share the common challenging experiences and possible ways to defuse them. As the parent, you are an important part of making the process a positive experience for your child.

This guide is intended to help:

* Increase understanding and knowledge to help parents make informed decisions as your child prepares for Kindergarten
* To provide families with practical strategies to help children feel more prepared
* To ease parents’ concerns of the unknown

In Kindergarten, your child may encounter new situations that go hand in hand with developing independence and include managing:

* Belongings (Such as backpacks)
* Lunch (Sitting down to meals, opening containers, and cleaning up)
* Does your child need extra supports during meals?
* School supplies (Correctly holding pencils, using scissors, and glue)
* Levels of independence in the bathroom
* Following directions
* Attention (Listening to a story)
* Communicating feelings
* Academic skills (recognizing letters, numbers, and child’s name)

When preparing to make the transition it is important to think about your child’s needs. Newness can be one of the biggest challenges to overcome. (New building, new teachers, new Principal etc.)

1. **Planning Ahead of Time**

What can you do?

* Pick up a Kindergarten packet from your zoned school
* Attend Kindergarten Round up in the Spring (on the Knox County Schools Website)
* Turn in the paperwork to enroll
* Update shot records
* Practice readiness skills at home
* Visit school (with your child) prior to start date
* If your child needs support to do these things, it is addressed in the IEP?
* Start talking about graduation and goals for the future

1. **Practice Transitions**

In Kindergarten, the day is very structured and changes frequently. Practicing making transition with your child would be very helpful. An example would be telling the child “In 5 minutes we are going to clean up our Legos and we will go to the store”. Another idea is to mix up the schedule from time to time to help encourage flexibility.

1. **Gathering Information and Resources**

* Ask about classroom procedures, daily schedule, and specific contact information such as the school nurse and case manager.
* If appropriate, ask/ check for accessibility
* Does your child need a group or individual orientation
* Other supports:

**Parent Liaison (Sue Ownby)**

**865-594-8889**

[**sue.ownby@knoxschools.org**](mailto:sue.ownby@knoxschools.org)

1. **Developing an IEP**

There will be an IEP meeting in the spring (also known as a “Transition Meeting”). The meeting will be similar to previous IEP meetings however this one will focus on the child’s unique needs and will be focused on encouraging success in Kindergarten.

Questions to ask:

* What are the attendance and discipline policies?
* Are there specific accommodations needed (Cafeteria, Library, or Bus Room)?
* What does dismissal look like? (Car line versus bus procedures)
* Are there specific needs in transportation?
* What are the emergency and evacuation plans? (Are there any special considerations needed?)
* Are there any additional supports needed to be added to the IEP?
* Do teachers have additional communication (Such as Newsletters or Announcements)?
* What is the best method of communicating with my child’s Case Manager?
* What type of accommodations and modifications for daily work and home work?
* Will the size or layout of the school affect my child’s ability to navigate?
* Additional information including contact information, community calendar with free events and trainings and other important information is available at: <https://www.knoxschools.org/domain/5429>

1. **Kindergarten Academic Expectations**

* Name and recognize upper and lower case letters
* Demonstrate an understanding of spoken words, syllables and sounds
* Practice conversation skills
* When reading a story, ask and answer questions about key details
* Identify main topic and retell key details
* Learn about numbers and what they represent
* Addition and subtraction
* Identify shapes
* Counting and comparing numbers value
* Remember all children will have a variety of skills and challenges. Specific needs can be addressed in IEP.

Helpful hints to practice at home:

* When going out of your house, practice “packing up” with your child’s belongings and letting your child practice carrying the backpack
* Encourage your child to practice asking for help when needed
* Use visuals to help encourage independence in the bathroom (Pulling down pants, washing hands, flunhing, using buttons and zippers)
* Begin to combine directions such as “get your back pack and go to the door”
* Help practice things like waiting, putting things away, and cleaning up areas
* Practice writing their name or use magnetic letter or blocks to spell their name
* Build number concepts with activities such as getting out 4 forks for dinner, stacking 3 blocks, or putting 5 goldfish in a bowl
* Encourage your child to listen to a story as you point out pictures and talk about the book
* Begin to label your child’s feelings helping them to learn the words. For example, “you’re frustrated because this is hard to open’ or you’re excited to go to the movie”

**Parent Check List**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED | CHECK | NOTES/ COMMENTS |
| I have reviewed the classroom and school expectations for the parents and the children |  |  |
| Reviewed/ understand the drop off and pick up procedures |  |  |
| I have reviewed any new accommodations |  |  |
| I have the contact information for my child’s teacher/ case manager |  |  |
| I have reviewed the emergency and safety plans |  |  |
| I have reviewed the plans for transportation |  |  |
| I have met my child’s teacher |  |  |

**Notes**