




STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



**TO:** Superintendents of Schools

**FROM:** Charlene Russell-Tucker, Chief Operating Officer 

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**SUBJECT:** Family Engagement High-Impact Practice – Transition to Kindergarten and Early Grades

This is the fourth in a series of monthly memos intended to support Connecticut’s new definition and framework for family engagement, [Full, Equal and Equitable Partnerships with Families](#).

The transition to kindergarten is an important milestone for children as well as parents. The degree to which families are positively engaged not only smooths the transition but also sets the stage for a productive school-family partnership going forward. Below are resources for engaging families during the transition to kindergarten and early grades that are aligned with the evidence-based approaches identified in Connecticut’s new framework.

### Transition to Kindergarten

The transition to kindergarten starts well before the first day of school. There is a series of actions that schools can take to ease the transition for children, families and staff, all of which share an underlying goal of relationship-building between schools and families. Sharing information with families and creating systems for staff and families to navigate this transition together help young children succeed in the new school environment.

#### Resources:

- Online Toolkit for Families: The Office of Early Childhood (OEC) and the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) recently published an online guide to the transition to kindergarten specifically for families. [Hello Kindergarten!](#) covers 11 key transition topics and offers online resources, a kindergarten checklist for the months leading up to the start of school, lists of books for children, and “Did You Know?” segments that complement the information on each page.
- Guide for District and School Leaders: A recent document by CSDE and the OEC called [Transition to Kindergarten: The Why, What and How of This Important Milestone for Connecticut Students](#) describes key components and outlines critical pre-transition activities, necessary collaboration between providers, teachers, leaders and families and identifies core transition activities based on best practices. It also includes guidance on professional development opportunities, developing family partnerships, leveraging existing resources, and the key components of effective communication before, during and after the prekindergarten to kindergarten transition.
- New Resource for Preventing Chronic Absence: The transition to kindergarten is an opportune time to address the importance of attending school regularly and to help families overcome challenges to getting to school. Students who miss 10 percent or more of the school year (just two days each month) in the very early years are at risk of falling behind in reading and math by the third grade. Supporting families to get their children to school regularly is especially important for vulnerable populations. Attendance Works, created a new toolkit [Early Matters](#):

[Integrating Attendance into Kindergarten Transition](#) that offers strategies, resources, and success stories about transition practices to help children and families as they enter elementary school.

### **Applying the Family Engagement Framework in the Early Years**

Connecticut's new framework illustrates how the [definition of family engagement](#) and [guiding principles](#) can be applied to common [early childhood](#) and [elementary school](#) family engagement practices to shift those practices from lower to higher impact. For example, in many early childhood programs, teachers send home written materials on developmental domains (e.g., social-emotional development, cognition, language and literacy). If programs held evening meetings where staff share information about specific domains with families and show how classroom activities support development in those domains, the impact on children's learning and development would likely be higher. The impact would likely be higher still if parents were able to participate in classroom observations during which teachers model strategies to support specific learning goals at home, followed by an opportunity for families to ask questions, practice strategies with each other, and go home with a "tip sheet."

Examples of transforming established activities to improve their likelihood for building strong partnerships with families are also available for [after school programs](#) and [high school](#). The CSDE has also produced a collection of evidence-based practices in [family engagement](#) and [early learning](#) that support implementation of the framework. These guides provide descriptions, citations and links to well-designed research studies.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Judy Carson at [judy.carson@ct.gov](mailto:judy.carson@ct.gov) or 860-807-2122.

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