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A GUIDE FOR INTERSECTORAL STAKEHOLDERS IN THE ESTRIE REGION TO PROMOTE EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

THE TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN

The Transition to Kindergarten is aimed at encouraging concerted efforts toward helping children and their parents make a smooth transition to school, in particular for families living in vulnerable circumstances.

Its goal is to provide intersectoral stakeholders with a resource that encourages cooperation and the implementation of transition to kindergarten activities based on parameters whose effectiveness have been borne out by research.

Who is this guide for?

The guide is intended for managers and front-line workers from various sectors involved with children and their families, such as:



TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN

The transition to kindergarten refers to a child's movement from home to preschool – in other words, starting school. School transition is defined as “a period during which children gradually adjust to a new physical, social, and human environment.” This progression takes place over a little more than 12 months, as illustrated in the figure below.



FAMILY PARTICIPATION

Beginning school is a transition not only for children but also for their parents. It is vital to adapt transition activities in order to eliminate barriers to parental involvement and to ensure that the activities themselves are a positive experience for parents.

Based on taking a local approach, a number of factors encourage participation, particularly among families living in vulnerable circumstances:



PRINCIPLE

CONDITIONS

ACCESSIBILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Assist with transportation. → Offer a snack. → Offer childcare services.
COMMITMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Do not require a commitment to take part in many activities. → Keep expectations realistic and avoid setting parents up for failure.
COMMUNICATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Use simple language and short sentences. → Disseminate information in languages used in the neighbourhood or territory. → Personally invite certain parents, and explain the activity's benefit for them or their children.
ASSISTANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Personally remind parents shortly before the activity begins to reduce barriers to participation.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Recognize the abilities and knowledge of all parents. → Emphasize the successes of parents. → Do not set yourself up as an expert.
INTERSECTORAL COOPERATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Collaborate with intersectoral stakeholders who have already created bonds of trust with families.

RESEARCH SHOWS THAT CHILDREN FROM FAMILIES LIVING IN VULNERABLE CIRCUMSTANCES ARE MOST IN NEED OF TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN ACTIVITIES AND BENEFIT MOST FROM THESE ACTIVITIES, BUT ACTUALLY RECEIVE THEM THE LEAST.

“Everything depends on the bonds that are created.” -mother

SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE

A review of the literature over the past ten years has identified key findings and characteristics regarding the effectiveness of activities to support the transition to kindergarten. The content is presented using the ecosystem model.



CHILD

- While group activities generate positive results, individual activities are even more beneficial.
- The activity will be more effective if offered before school starts.
- It is important to introduce children to their new environment before the official start of school.
- Activities carried out in the school have a greater impact than those that take place elsewhere.
- It is important to offer the activities to children from families living in vulnerable circumstances.

FAMILY

- Parents need to understand the expectations of the school system and their child's strengths and challenges with starting school.
- To support parental participation, talk about the child's needs rather than their negative behaviour.
- Parental support may be compromised if the parent receives negative messages about their child in the first weeks of school.
- Cooperation and communication among families, childcare services, and schools is a key condition for a successful school transition.
- It is important to offer activities for parents and children that differ in terms of intensity, involvement, schedule, and design (individual, group, personalized, etc.) to better meet their needs.

COMMUNITY

- Providing teachers with a list of students early in the year allows them to carry out more personalized activities for parents and students.
- In communications between childcare educators and teachers, prioritize discussion of the education program, pedagogy, and the characteristics of children.
- Joint training among childcare educators and kindergarten teachers promotes knowledge sharing and helps to develop a shared vision of school transition.
- Having a transition team in the school in charge of coordination supports the success of activities.
- Having an intersectoral school transition plan promotes the consistency and diversity of activities.

"When I met my teachers and saw what kindergarten would be like, it was OK."

- Christophe, 8 years old



WORKING COLLABORATIVELY

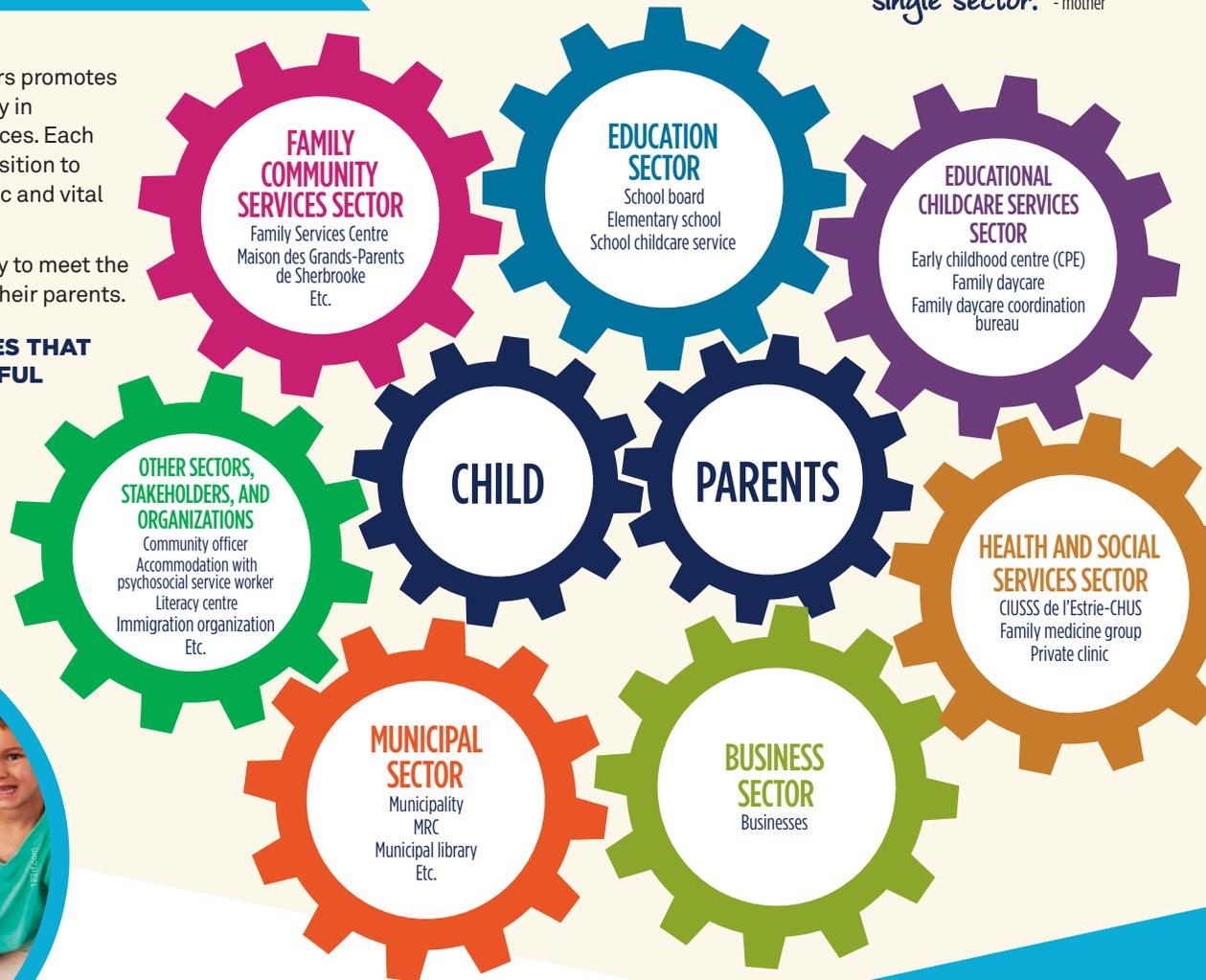
Cooperation among sectors promotes continuity and consistency in children's school experiences. Each sector involved in the transition to kindergarten has a specific and vital contribution to make.

Joint efforts build capacity to meet the needs of all children and their parents.

IMPROVING ACTIVITIES THAT SUPPORT A SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL TRANSITION RELIES ON USING EVERYONE'S STRENGTHS AND WORKING TOGETHER.



"There can't be a single way of doing things, and it can't all be done by a single sector." - mother



A COLLABORATIVE SCHOOL TRANSITION PLAN

A collaborative school transition plan must come out of an intersectoral process. Its goal is to align practices and support collective efforts in order to improve activities and meet all the needs of children and their parents, in particular those living in vulnerable circumstances.

A collaborative school transition plan:

- Confirms a shared vision of the transition to kindergarten;
- Validates and specifies the concerns and priorities conveyed by the territorial transition committee;
- Comes together around an approach that fosters the participation of families;
- Analyzes the diversity, strengths, redundancies, lacks, or gaps in services for the transition to kindergarten;
- Specifies partnerships and respective roles for activities;
- Supports best school transition practices.

"I don't want to go to school because I don't really know the school." - Cédric, 3-and-a-half years old

THE TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN INCLUDES:

- An overview of the benefits of partnership and the contributions that each sector can make to a successful school transition;
- A description of some 10 collaborative activities in the Estrie region;
- A list of sectors, institutions, and stakeholders who could contribute positively to a successful transition to kindergarten;
- An analysis chart with parameters to help paint a portrait of activities and their diversity;
- A model of a collaborative school transition plan;
- A list of questions to support intersectoral collaboration and partnership.

