

Current Status and Optimization Pathways for Organizing Transition Periods in the Daily Routine of Younger Kindergarten Children

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Abstract: *In kindergarten education, transition periods in children's daily routines are key time slots that connect different activities and help children move smoothly from one activity to the next. These periods include moving from indoor to outdoor activities, the time before and after snacks/meals, and switching between teaching activities, among others. They play an indispensable role in maintaining order in daily kindergarten operations and improving educational quality. The study found several issues in transition periods for younger classes, including: overly long total transition time and chaotic transitions; uncreative content and monotonous organization; excessive teacher control and leadership during transitions resulting in low child participation and interest; teachers' lack of awareness of providing advance transition cues leading to children having nothing to do; and teachers being so busy managing transitions that they pay insufficient attention to children's emotions. Accordingly, this paper proposes countermeasures such as shortening transition time through effective and planned transitions, enriching transition content and organizational forms, negotiating transition rules with children, enhancing teachers' awareness of providing advance transition cues, and using multiple methods to regulate children's emotional fluctuations.*

Keywords: Younger class children, Activity transitions, Organization of routine segments.

1. Introduction

In the Guidelines for Kindergarten Education (Trial) issued in 2001, transition periods received attention from teachers. In Chapter 3, "Organization and Implementation," Article 9, "Arrange and organize daily routines scientifically and reasonably," the third point provides explicit guidance for transition periods: "Reduce unnecessary collective activities and transition periods as much as possible, and decrease and eliminate negative waiting situations." [1] The Interpretation of the Guidelines for Learning and Development of Children Aged 3-6 points out that "children's growth and development are manifested in their daily routines; the daily life of a kindergarten is also the process by which children interact with the environment and achieve self-growth." [2] With the continuous development of education in China, requirements for kindergarten education quality have gradually increased. As one of the main places where young children live and learn, every routine segment in kindergarten—including the organization and arrangement of activity transitions — contains profound meaning and real educational value. In education for younger classes, life routines are the foundation of children's holistic development, and the organization and management of transition periods are directly related to education quality and children's physical and mental health. Therefore, studying the current status of how transition periods are organized in younger classes is of great significance for improving educational quality and promoting children's comprehensive development.

2. Analysis of the Current Situation of Organizing Transition Periods in Younger Classes

2.1 Current Daily Schedule Arrangement for Younger Classes

According to the investigation, the daily routine of Xi'an X Kindergarten has been organized as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Daily routine schedule of Kindergarten X in Xi'an

Time	Activity Content
7:40-8:00	Arrival, morning routine, pre-breakfast preparation
8:00-8:35	Breakfast
8:35-9:10	Whole-group activity
9:10-10:10	Outdoor activity
10:10-10:30	Snack
10:30-11:10	Area/learning corners activity
11:10-12:15	Lunch
12:15-14:30	Nap
14:30-15:00	Snack
15:00-16:00	Whole-group activity / area activity
16:00-16:40	Dinner
16:40-16:50	Cleaning up and tidying
16:50-17:10	Departure

2.2 Duration of Transition Periods in Younger Classes

Transition periods refer to the connection between two activities and are related to whether children can smoothly enter the next segment [3]. Table 2 shows the average duration of transition periods for Class Y in Kindergarten X. Based on observations, the researcher categorized transitions into: morning arrival transition, pre-/post-breakfast transition, indoor-outdoor transition, pre-/post-snack transition, pre-/post-lunch transition, pre-/post-nap transition, pre-/post-afternoon snack transition, pre-/post-dinner transition, and departure transition.

Table 2: Average duration of transition periods for Class Y in Kindergarten X

Transition Segment	Duration (min)
Morning arrival transition	27
Pre-/post-breakfast transition	16
Indoor-outdoor transition	13
Pre-/post-snack transition (AM)	10
Pre-/post-lunch transition	16
Pre-/post-nap transition	23
Pre-/post-snack transition (PM)	10
Pre-/post-dinner transition	12

Transition Segment	Duration (min)
Departure transition	23
Total	150

2.3 Analysis of Teachers' Organization During Transition Periods

2.3.1 Teachers' organization methods during transitions

In children's transition periods, the organizational forms can be categorized as: whole-group, small-group, and individual. Table 3 shows that whole-group transitions account for 64%, small-group transitions 13%, and individual transitions 23% in Class Y. Teachers more often use whole-group transitions. Small-group and individual transitions are less common; interviews indicated that teachers generally believe transition time is usually tight and transitions need to be completed quickly, so whole-group transitions are more efficient.

Table 3: Organizational forms of transition periods in Class Y of Kindergarten X

Organization Form	Proportion (%)
Whole-group	64
Small-group	13
Individual	23

2.3.2 Teachers' advance transition cues before transitions

Advance transition cues refer to teachers informing children of the upcoming activity content before the transition begins. [4] Table 4 shows that "no cue" accounts for 20%, "cue before transition" 9%, and "cue during transition" 71%. This indicates that most teachers inform children only when the transition starts rather than beforehand, which leads children to be "at a loss" during transitions.

Table 4: Advance transition cues by teachers in Class Y of Kindergarten X

Cue Type	Proportion (%)
No cue	20
Cue before transition	9
Cue during transition	71

3. Analysis of Problems in Transition Periods for Younger Classes

3.1 Excessive Total Transition Time and Chaotic Transitions

As shown in Table 2, the total time children spend in transition periods in a day reaches 150 minutes, accounting for 26.3% of the total time in kindergarten. This means children spend nearly one quarter of their day in transition states. Overly long transition time not only reduces time for formal activities, but also easily causes children to have nothing to do, leading to conflicts and other problems. [5] Observations found that after lunch, as children gradually finished eating and entered the post-lunch transition period, some children sat idly at their seats, staring blankly out the window. After about ten minutes, some children gradually came back from their dazed state.

3.2 Uncreative Content and Monotonous Organization

As shown in Table 3, teachers mainly adopt whole-group

transitions (64%). Interviews indicated that teachers play a dominant role during transitions. In terms of content, transition activities often include routine tasks such as tidying toys, washing hands, and drinking water—necessary parts of daily life that cultivate children's self-care abilities. For example, before lunch, transitions can be organized through games and role play, such as setting up a simulated restaurant where children play customers or waiters. However, such approaches are not widely used; most transitions still rely on simple verbal instructions.

3.3 Lack of Awareness of Advance Transition Cues, Leaving Children with Nothing to do

As shown in Table 4, 71% of teachers provide cues only during the transition rather than beforehand. This often leaves children unsure of what will happen next, making them prone to idling, daydreaming, or conflicts. Observations found that before the nap transition, teachers did not inform children in advance that nap time was coming; as a result, while other children began to tidy up, some still played.

3.4 Teachers are Busy with Transitions and Pay Insufficient Attention to Children's Emotions

Observations found that teachers often focus their attention on organization and management during transitions, while overlooking children's emotional changes. For example, during indoor-outdoor transitions, teachers mainly organized children to move from the classroom to the outdoor activity area, but did not promptly attend to or guide children with unstable emotions. In one observation, a child accidentally rubbed sand into their eyes while playing; the teacher did not notice in time and only handled it after another child reported it.

4. Optimization Pathways for Transition Periods in Younger Classes

4.1 Shorten Transition Time Through Effective and Planned Transitions

Teachers should plan the time for transition periods reasonably and avoid overly long transitions. Transition time can be shortened by preparing for the next segment in advance, using music or verbal cues as transition signals, and establishing clear transition procedures. For example, after lunch, teachers can place handwashing supplies ahead of time and play gentle music to cue children to start washing hands, thereby reducing waiting time.

4.2 Enrich Transition Content and Organization Forms to Make Transitions Pleasant

Teachers should design diversified transition activities according to children's age characteristics and interests. Games, nursery rhymes, finger plays, storytelling, and other formats can be used to enrich transition content. For example, before lunch, role play can be used for children to act as customers or waiters and complete transition tasks such as washing hands and taking seats within the game. At the same time, the proportion of small-group and individual transitions can be increased to attend to individual differences among

children.

4.3 Negotiate Transition Rules with Children to Promote Autonomous Transitions

Teachers should formulate rules for transition periods together with children so that children participate in managing transitions. For example, teachers can discuss with children questions such as “What should we do when washing hands?” and “What should we pay attention to when lining up?” to guide children to build a sense of rules and self-regulation. This approach can enhance children’s autonomy as well as their rule consciousness and self-management ability.

4.4 Improve Teachers’ Awareness of Providing Advance Transition Cues

Teachers should build the awareness of giving advance transition cues by informing children of the upcoming activity content before transitions begin. Multiple cue methods can be used, such as verbal prompts, music cues, and picture cues. For example, before nap time, teachers can play gentle lullabies to cue that nap time is coming, giving children sufficient psychological preparation.

4.5 Use Multiple Methods to Regulate Children’s Emotional Changes and Increase Interest in Transitions

Teachers should pay attention to children’s emotional changes during transitions and use multiple methods to help children regulate emotions. Body language, eye contact, calling children by name, and games can be used to attract children’s attention and help them complete transitions in a pleasant atmosphere. At the same time, teachers should observe each child’s emotional state and provide special attention and guidance to children with unstable emotions.

5. Conclusion

Transition periods are an indispensable part of children’s daily life in kindergarten. Their organizational quality directly affects the quality of kindergarten education and children’s physical and mental development. Through observations and interviews in the younger classes of Kindergarten X in Xi’an, this study found problems such as excessively long transition time, uncreative content, monotonous organization forms, lack of teachers’ advance transition cues, and insufficient attention to children’s emotions. In response, the study proposes optimization pathways including shortening transition time, enriching transition content and organization forms, negotiating transition rules with children, improving teachers’ awareness of providing advance transition cues, and using multiple methods to regulate children’s emotional changes. Kindergarten teachers should value the educational value of transition periods, continuously improve the organization level of transitions, and provide strong support for children’s healthy growth.

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Author Profile

Miaomiao Tang received her B.S. in Education from Sichuan Normal University in 2020 and her M.S. in Education from Xihua Normal University in 2023. From 2020-2023, she was engaged in research in China in the areas of principles of preschool education, preschool teacher education, and preschool education administration. She is currently pursuing his PhD at Northwest Normal University.