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Transitions

Transitions are when a child moves from one activity to the next. In a classroom, transitions will consume a majority of classroom time if not planned out correctly. Using a planning board, a specific cleanup song, and a predictable schedule will stop the children from asking you what to do next.

Creative Transitions

When the entire group is required to change at one time—for example, going from Circle to Outside Time—do not just say “Line up,” or you will have all the children making a mad dash to the door. Use different strategies in getting a few children to transition at one time.

<p>Legs-out Method</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have all the children put their legs out straight. Tell the children to look at their shoes. First, have all the children who have slip-on shoes line up. Then, the children who have buckles on their shoes can line up. Last, the children who have tie shoes can line up at the door. 	<p>Theme Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the children to do something related to the theme before they can line up, such as naming a farm animal, a dinosaur, or a fruit or vegetable; or give an example of a tool a firefighter uses.
<p>Pattern Method</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can also make patterns with the children as you call them to line up. Patterns may include boy/girl, long sleeve/short sleeve, long hair/short hair, or any other pattern you can create. The children enjoy trying to figure out what pattern you are creating and who will be next to line up. 	<p>Pull Names from a Cup</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can also use the tongue-depressor method. Write the children’s names on tongue depressor sticks and store them in a cup or container where the sticks can stand upright. Begin by pulling out one stick. Read the name on the stick, and that child lines up. Repeat until the entire class is lined up. This is a random way of calling the children to transition. You may want to remind the children that if they are not sitting the right way, their names go back into the cup if they are pulled.

teacher
tip



Keep transition times predictable, but be creative. Remember, some children do not like change and need a warning when a transition is about occur.



Cleanup

Cleanup time comes directly after work time. This is when the children are responsible for putting the used materials away. Cleanup time can be frustrating for both the children and teacher. First, create a routine. Having a specific song on a record or CD that the children are familiar with will help you from having to repeat “Cleanup Time!” For example, use the song “Zip-a-Dee-Doo-Dah” or “Mickey Mouse March.” These songs are upbeat and long enough for cleanup, and the children know the words.


Five-Minute Warning

Give the class a five-minute, a three-minute, and a one-minute warning by showing them the number of minutes with your fingers while giving the verbal warning. This will help the auditory and visual learners in your class to know that cleanup time is coming. It will also eliminate a child being caught off guard and getting upset because he or she is not done yet. Furthermore, it gives the class some warning to start finishing up the projects they are working on.

As the Song Begins

- As soon as the children hear the beginning of the song, they will know it is time to stop what they are doing and start cleaning.
- At the beginning of the school year, establish some ground rules regarding cleanup.

teacher
tip



Cleanup is a group effort. All the children get a reward, or none of the children. Remember to be fair and encourage a sense of community.

Tell the class: “I do not pick up after you. You are responsible for putting away what you have worked with. Everything goes in a special spot, and they have been labeled for you. When you are done, find a friend who needs help.”

Reward a Job Well-Done

The next step, if the group worked well together, is to reward a job well-done to establish a sense of community. See page 127 for two methods of rewards.



Cleanup *(cont.)*

Sticker or Rubber Stamp Method

- If the room is clean before the song is over, give everyone something special like smelly stickers or a rubber stamp on the hand.
- During the first few weeks, give them something every time they finish before the song is done.
- During the weeks that follow, gradually replace the concrete reward with thumbs up, or say, “Give yourself a pat on the back for a job well-done!”
- After a few months, the children will no longer require a reward. They will just be happy they got everything put away on time.
- Occasionally, give out the concrete rewards when cleanup was an outstanding group effort.
- If the class doesn’t get everything put away on time, it is the group who doesn’t get the reward. Do not single out one or two children; this will hurt their self-esteem. Just remind the class that, if they are done, to find a friend who may need help; and if they see someone not helping, remind them it is cleanup time.

The Marble Jar

Another option for reward at cleanup time is to use the marble jar. The concept of the marble jar is easy.

- At the beginning of the school year, bring out an empty plastic jar with a line drawn around the middle. Have a jar large enough to take the children some time to fill. Large peanut butter jars are good for this purpose.
- Each time the class finishes cleaning before the song is over, a specific number of marbles is placed in the jar.
- The goal is to fill the marble jar to the top.
- When the class fills the jar to the middle line, have the class take a vote on what kind of celebration they would like to have (ice cream party or popcorn and movie day).
- When the class successfully fills the jar to the top, invite parents to join the class for a grand party, such as a pizza party. Have the children create invitations, prepare the pizza, and plan the event.
- You can also use the marble jar in other ways. If you see the children performing random acts of kindness or if you see an outstanding job of teamwork, add a marble.
- Any time you emphasize positive behavior in a child, it can have a lasting effect. Once a marble has been placed in the jar, do not take it out. The class has worked hard to earn every marble placed in the jar.



Lunchtime


In a full-day program, lunch is usually served around noon. This is when all the children in the class sit at tables and eat lunch. Either a hot lunch made by the school cook or sack lunch brought from home is eaten at this time, depending on your program. Setting a routine for lunchtime will help this part of the day run smoothly. The children will know what to expect.

Prior to eating lunch, the children should wash their hands. Establish a procedure for using the sink in the classroom or for sending the children to the restroom so that nine students are not trying to use the sink at once. Consider playing music or doing finger plays with the children as they are individually or in small groups sent to wash their hands.

While Eating

- Create name cards to be placed on the table to identify where each child should sit for lunch. Fold index cards in half and write the children's names on the cards, one per card. Decorate with stickers and laminate for durability, if desired. The children must find their names in order to know where to sit each day. Mix up the seating arrangement each day. Assigning seating allows you to separate children, if needed.

teacher tip



By sitting at the table and eating with the children, you can model proper table etiquette.

- If the school provides the children's lunch, eating together family style is a special way to engage the children in conversation. Eating family style often requires the children to pass around the serving dishes and use their self-help skills. Preparing the table can be one of the jobs assigned to the children on the helper chart.
- The children will naturally carry on conversation during the course of lunch; however, be prepared to have a conversation starter to use if the conversation dies or becomes inappropriate. Conversation starters can be as simple as a question such as, "Would you rather go on a train or an airplane, and why?"

After Lunch

Routines for what happens after lunch may vary from school to school. The children have playtime outside at some schools. At other schools, the children go directly to nap time. Students should know what to do when they are finished eating. Either way, each student should be responsible for cleaning up the area in which he or she ate, as well as washing the hands and face.