

There are numerous strategies that support smooth transitions between activities.

Examples of strategies you can use before the transition:

- Plan your daily schedule to include the minimal number of transition times possible.
- Consider what the children and adults will do during these times (e.g., which adult is responsible for greeting the children and who will begin looking at books on the carpet with children?).
- Provide verbal and nonverbal cues before transitions (e.g., “5 minutes ’til snack,” “It’s almost time for cleanup,” show pictures of the next activity, ringing a bell). Teach children expectations such as which shelves hold which blocks.
- Minimize the number of transitions during which all children have to do the same thing at the same time (e.g., Do all children have to go to the restroom at the same time? Can some children come over to the rug and get ready for large group while others are finishing an activity?)
- Structure the transitions so that children have something to do while they wait.
- Have a picture board available to the children where you velcro picture clues. As you finish one activity, take the picture down and hang a picture for the next activity for the children to see what’s coming next. For example – use pictures of toys for free time; pictures of food for meals or snacks; crayon pictures for art; musical notes for singing or dancing, etc.

Activities for Transition Times

Listen to the Bells

Materials: Different types of bells (ex. Jingle Bells, bike bells, cow bell, school bell)

Procedure: Ringing bells is a pleasant auditory way to announce the change of routines. Be creative! Choosing different bells for different routines makes it easier for children to distinguish the change they are about to make. Ring jingle bells to symbolize music time and a cow bell to signal play time outside. Play a xylophone to indicate clean-up time or changing from one learning center to another. Ring a soft bell as children tip-toe to naptime.

Ring the bell gently to remind the children that one activity is ending and another is about to begin. Always ring the bell at least twice, first giving them warning to finish up what they are doing and then to signal clean-up time. Remember to include verbal cues with the bells when you introduce new ones. Children need to understand your expectations. One or two directions at a time is all that children need or can process at one time.

Never use the fire alarm bell (or any that sounds similar) as an auditory cue. That should have its own distinct sound to alert children to danger.

Variations: Sing this song as you ring the bell. It’s sung to the tune of “Mary Had a Little Lamb.”

Ring, ring, ring, ring, ring the bell.
Ring it loud. Ring it clear.
To tell the children in the room,
That clean-up time is here.

(Then, as the children finish cleaning have a teacher positioned in the next meeting area-ex. lunch table, large group area, etc...and sing the next verse of the song.)

Sing, sing, sing, sing, sing with me.
Sing out loud. Sing out clear.
To tell the children in the room,
That (lunch) time is here (or near).

1

¹ *Transition Magician*. Larson, Henthorne, and Plum. Redleaf Press

² Helping Children Make Transitions Between Activities. Retrieved August 25, 2009, from Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning Website (CSEFEL): <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/index.html>