

Transitions in Early Childhood

By Samantha Bonenfant

Imagine suddenly being uprooted from your job, the next day being put in a new building with a new group of co-workers and different expectations from your previous setting. How would you react? Would you immediately be able to jump right in and learn your new responsibilities or would you need time to get your bearings and make sense of what just happened? Now imagine only knowing some of the language being spoken to you or not being able to convey your feelings and emotions. That sounds terrifying, right?

If that sounds unsettling for you as an adult, imagine if you were only two or three years old. You just started being able to use the language (or maybe your second language) and you are being put into a new situation with other small people that you are supposed to be with all day... and they want your toys! Children being introduced into a child care or preschool setting have to learn to cope with a multitude of changes all at once: being separated from their parents, finding comfort and taking direction from unfamiliar adults, getting their needs met, being surrounded by a group of new children, an unfamiliar setting, a new routine – and that's just to name a few!

Good early childhood educators understand this process, as they see it every day and are trained on how to make transitions easier. They see some children jump right in to a new setting and thrive, and conversely, they see others that are apprehensive or just flat-out cannot handle that many changes at once. The key to a successful start in school is in the preparation. Children at all levels, even the most fearless, need and crave to know what is happening to them. Proper transitioning from one activity or setting to the next helps children feel some measure of control. Just as an adult would flourish with warning before a major change is going to take effect, children can surprise you with how adaptable they can be when transitioned in the right way.

At World Academy, our Early Childhood programs, from Infants through Preschool Four, begin in June. While earlier than a "typical" school-year, transitioning in the summer allows students to adapt and move into their new setting, meet their new friends and teachers, and explore at a slower pace to allow for their personal level of comfort and trust to be reached. The start of school at any age is an anxious beginning, but when facilitated by well-trained educators, both new students and parents can feel at ease knowing that all of their experiences are going to be individualized to meet everyone's needs.



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Samantha joined World Academy in 2011 and serves as the School's Director of Admissions. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration/Marketing from the University of New Hampshire.