

Diverse Early Childhood Delivery Systems and the Transition to School

France

- Schools, including écoles maternelles, are governed by the national Ministry of Education.
- Elementary school is in a separate building and is intentionally quite different from the école maternelle.
- France has a systematic method for easing the transition between these settings. The educational trajectory is divided into educational cycles which cross the normal school transitions. Cycle 2 includes the last year of école maternelle and the first two years of elementary school.

Cycle 1: The early learning skills cycle	École maternelle: level 1
	École maternelle: level 2
	École maternelle: level 3
Cycle 2: The basic learning skills cycle	Elementary school: first grade
	Elementary school: second grade

Germany

- The early childhood sector bears some similarities to the United States: the influence of individual states, financing primarily from the state and local level, and substantial autonomy at the individual agency and program level.
- Traditionally in Germany there has been a strict separation between Kindergarten and school. These Kindergarten and school worlds are beginning to collide, with social welfare and education agencies seeking to control kindergarten. Kindertartens have been operated by two major entities.
- The municipal agencies operate about half of kindertartens with religiously affiliated programs providing the remainder.
- The transition from Kindergarten to elementary school is still considered as problematic (in 2003, 5.6 % of all children of the legal school entrance age delayed school start for one year), so new models of the school entry class are being developed.

Japan

- Prior to elementary school children may attend kindertartens (which are under the authority of the education ministry) or nurseries (which are under the authority of the health, labor and welfare ministry).
- Both the education and health ministries are seeking avenues to build greater cohesion between the systems.
- Seventy-nine percent of kindertartens are private, with an additional 20% provided by municipalities.
- Nurseries, providing what in the United States would be considered child care, are also prevalent in Japan. Privatization of public nursery centers is increasing, and there is a large group of uncertified private nurseries as well.
- Children experience a dramatic shift from very child centered settings where children have a great deal of autonomy in their activities to a school setting where cooperation and group identity are highly valued and there is a strong emphasis on academic performance.

New Zealand

- The Ministry of Education provides a system that maintains and supports the diverse range of services currently available to children including Education and Care Centres, Home-based Services, Kindergartens, Kōhanga Reo (Maori language and customs), License-exempt Playgroups, Parent Support and Development Programmes, Playcentres, and Correspondence School early childhood services.
- These programs may be privately owned, non-profit making, community-based services; operated as an adjunct to the main purpose of a business or organization (e.g. a crèche at a university or polytechnic); home-based caregivers; community-based groups of parents and children; or collectives supervised and managed by parents for children up to the age of five.

Sweden

- Sweden made a conscious decision to keep preschool in community settings separate from elementary school even as preschool was brought under the purview of the national agency for education.
- Preschool was originally a part of the social service sector, and is now under the auspice of education and is guided by a national curriculum.
- Swedish children age six and younger can attend preschool three hours a day and 170 days a year, with a focus on instruction. After lunch, those children can go to the leisure time center, which provides full time child care outside the home.
- In 1998 the Preschool Class for six year olds was established as a special grade level of school. These classes are part of the elementary school and are seen as helping to accomplish the transition from preschool to school.

United States

- A variety of different providers, both public and private, provide pre-school-age education and care.
- These programs are supervised by a complex set of local, state and federal agencies including both educational and health and human services agencies.
- The transition to kindergarten is a major issue in early education in the United States. Most three and four year olds are still served in non-public school settings. Various initiatives exist at the national level to forge improved connections between early care and education providers and the public schools their young students will attend.

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