Moving On: Game for children moving to primary school or moving up within the primary school

Introduction:

This game is based on research conducted by Jindal-Snape in early years settings in Scotland between 2008-2010. The areas included in the text on the board game were highlighted as aspects that facilitated successful transition if implemented well. Some participants also highlighted them as areas of concern. The data was collected primarily from parents regarding their child’s experience of transition along with in-depth review of literature in this area. To highlight parents’ views, here are some quotes to illustrate the thinking behind the game:

**Change in rules and expectations**

[Child’s name] has taken time to settle into the structure of school. We think she has taken time to conform to the discipline of a classroom environment.

**School visits**

The visits for the children and the parents throughout the year to the primary 1 class to spend time with the teacher and to do some work were very good for the children.

**School dinners/packed lunch**

…we both enjoyed the visits to the school canteen, so as he knew the way it was done!

**Discussion with mum/dad about what makes me happy/sad at school**

I feel that I took the time to thoroughly prepare my child for school. The transition was successful and I have a happy wee boy :-(

Further this game highlights that transition is a process and children are on a journey. They need support not only when starting primary school, but also as they progress through the school years. This game has been designed to work over this journey.

Objectives:

- To facilitate successful transition within the Early Years context
- To provide opportunities to children to explore issues around transition and practise their response to situations through play
- To provide teachers/parents with a range of cues to facilitate a discussion with child/ren about aspects that are important for successful transition to primary school
- To provide teachers/parents with a range of cues to facilitate a discussion with child/ren about aspects that are important for successful transition from one year to the other within the primary school
Instructions:

This game can be used in small groups (minimum 2/maximum 5) with children in class. If parents are playing just with their child, they might want to be the other player and answer according to their own prior experience or use a fictional character.

The player will roll the dice and move according to the arrows. The teacher or parent can use the scenarios in the boxes as cues for discussion about school. The scenarios can be used by teachers to provide information to the children or by parents to make a note of questions to ask the child's nursery/primary school teacher. If a teacher is concerned that children might not wish to discuss these feelings openly in front of others, they could use fictitious characters (e.g. from a recent book the children might have been reading, from a movie or made up by them). A brief discussion about the characters in that instance might help. This will provide children with a safe space to have crucial discussions without having to own those concerns.

How to play the game:

Teachers/parents can use counters and dice from another game or make their own. Each one would take turns to roll the dice and move forward.

1. If on a picture square, ask the child what that reminds them about school and have a discussion about their ‘feelings’. This should be symbolic but younger children might speak quite literally. With very young children, teachers/parents might want to miss the picture squares.

2. If on a writing square, discuss with children ‘what is happening or not happening in the nursery/primary school’. The teacher/parent should try to keep the conversation open-ended and let the child indicate whether something is positive or negative. The object of the game is not to win but to have a good discussion about these areas and make a note of any areas that should be discussed with the nursery or primary teacher/parents/child in future. Please ensure children do not try to rush through the game to win it. However, depending on your usual strategy, you might choose to give a reward to the winner/s.

3. Irrespective of who has landed on a particular square, all playing the game can discuss their views at the same time. When another child lands on the same square, check that nobody has anything further to add. If they don’t, the dice can be rolled again.
References

Dr Divya Jindal-Snape, University of Dundee, 2010

* This game and guidance paper can be printed and used for non-commercial purposes by professionals and parents. Any feedback on the game, especially advice on modification, will be appreciated. Please contact me on d.jindalsnape@dundee.ac.uk