Dialogue tool
for collaboration
between daycare centres, schools
and after-school centres

Working together for a good start at school

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Introduction

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The transition from kindergarten to school is an important time in the life of children, and a good start at school may contribute positively to children's learning and well-being at school. Therefore, it is important that all children get a really good start at school and in after-school centres.

Dialogue strengthens collaboration
When the people who work with children up to their school-start enter into a dialogue about the values of this work and the purpose of the transitional activities, this will enhance and qualify this collaboration. This will also contribute to ensuring children the best possible transition from kindergarten to school and after-school centres.

Collaboration about more transitions
The transition from kindergarten to school and after-school centres encompasses many changes. For many children, the first change is from kindergarten to after-school centre. The second change is when the children start pre-school class, and the third change is when the children leave pre-school class and start their actual first year of primary school. A strong collaboration, which includes all professionals working with children in the transitions from kindergarten child to school pupil will therefore form a solid basis for providing the children with a good start at school.

Dialogue tool
This tool will guide you through a dialogue on collaboration. The tool is a process ensuring that you will talk about your values and the purpose of your activities and also agree on the next steps in your collaboration. The tool is based on a number of dialogue cards which are used as a common hub for the talk.

Who's behind the tool?
The tool was developed by the Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA). Three experts have contributed with sparring: Professor Stig Broström from the Institute for Education and Social Science at Aarhus University, Assistant Professor Anja Hvidtfeldt Stanek from the Department of Psychology at the University of Southern Denmark and Steen Ebdrup, Head of School, from the Regional Municipality of Bornholm. Managers and employees at three schools, three after-school centres and four daycare centres in two different municipalities have contributed to the development of the tool through a number of trials. The tool includes two articles with interviews with two researchers, Assistant Professor Anja Hvidtfeldt Stanek as previously mentioned and Assistant Professor Ditte Winther-Lindqvist from the Institute of Education and Pedagogy at Aarhus University.

About the dialogue tool

The tool will guide you through two phases as well as a review where you will agree on the next steps to be taken.

Phase 1: What is our common start point?
In the first phase you will talk about the values of your work with the children before and after they start school. Together you will decide the start point for your collaboration on the children's transition from kindergarten to school and after-school centres.

Phase 2: How should our collaboration be realised?
In the second phase you will talk about the realisation of your collaboration. Here you will talk about what you want to achieve when you begin transitional activities. You will talk about specific activities either already realised or which you would like to start in order to reach the goals which you find important in working with children's transition.

REVIEW: What is our next step?
Finally, you will review your discussions and agreements and decide your next step.

Who can participate?
Participants should include daycare centre pedagogues, pedagogues at after-school centres pre-school class managers and first-grade teachers. It is important for the dialogue that the group includes participants from different professional groups. School masters, managers of after-school centres and daycare centres may also participate, but consider whether managers and employees should be part of the same dialogue group or whether there should be separate dialogue groups.

The dialogue tool has been developed for use by anyone who has not collaborated before as well as for those of you who have established a collaboration and who want further development.

How many people can participate?
There can be 6-7 participants in a dialogue group, but for example 20 or 100 participants may use the dialogue tool in smaller groups. This means that the dialogue tool can be used in the collaboration between an individual school, daycare centre and after-school centre and in a process involving all the schools, after-school centres and daycare centres in the municipality.

How long will it take?
It may take about three hours, but if you have formed many groups, extra time should be allocated to be able to review everything in plenum.

The tool includes

Dialogue cards
The cards are used to underpin the dialogue about your collaboration on children's transitions between kindergarten, school and after-school centres. The cards show pictures and text orchestrated to trigger dialogue. There are also blank cards which you can use to make your own dialogue cards if you want to add something during the process and if you want to make a note of activities and agreements on future collaboration.

Process guide
The guide will tell you how to use the dialogue cards and give you advice about how to engage well in the dialogue so that everyone is given the opportunity to contribute and so that you thoroughly discuss the themes which are important to you. The guide is read by the person responsible for the process and communicated to the other participants. You can also return to the guide during the process.

Articles
The tool includes two articles about the transition of children from kindergarten to school and after-school centres. You may want to read these articles as an inspiration prior to the dialogue, but they are not a prerequisite for being able to use the tool. The articles are based on interviews with researchers who work with the transition of children from kindergarten to school.

The material can also be downloaded
from http://english.eva.dk/goodstartatschool

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