



SAVREMENA SURVEY REPORT ON KEY COMPETENCES

GROUP OF EXPERTS



CARE2LEARN

Supporting the Transition from Early Childhood Education and Care to Primary School

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CARE2LEARN

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University of Zagreb
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Savremena Report on key competences of children and parents for supporting the transition from early childhood education and care to primary school

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Interviews were conducted live in Savremena primary school, with five respondents. Two first grade teachers, one educator, a school pedagogue and a school psychologist.

1. What do you think contributes to a smooth transition for children from pre-school to primary school?

Each of the respondents listed some competencies that she personally considers important, but in the end all five respondents agreed on the following. Knowledge of some basic life skills and habits, such as going to the toilet on your own, performing hygienic habits, keeping utensils and the habit of sitting in class, contributes to an easier transition from preschool to elementary school. Respondents also agreed that a child's successful socio-emotional maturity is necessary for a successful transition. Existence of tolerance for the behavior of others, the habit of a child working and functioning in a group, to know what we are and what we are not, to have a routine and to know what activity means and to have set limits. The last important thing was the developed graphomotor skills and the ability to maintain attention and concentration.

2. Which competences of children do you believe are the most important for the successful transition of children from ECEC to primary school?

All experts agreed that socio-emotional competencies are most important for a successful transition from preschool to school. They believe that it is important for a child to come to school ready to understand why he is there, to be mature for school obligations, as well as to know how to communicate his needs and be ready to cooperate, in other words to have competencies for cooperation and communication.

a. Do you notice the lack of specific skills in children) for this transition (that you previously specified)?



Based on the answers to the previous two questions, the experts agreed that children generally lack communication competencies, as well as the ability to concentrate and pay attention. Experts state that children are often egocentric and want to get what they want right now, and in that sense they lack self-regulation of emotions and behavior. And besides, independence and a sense of responsibility towards things.

3. What do you think the current ECEC system is lacking for preparing the children for this transition?

All five experts agreed that the main drawback of the ECEC system is that the programs are increasingly imitating school and what is done in school and neglecting to teach children important things such as nurturing social relationships, empathy and positive emotions. The focus is on children's academic achievements, to learn to read, write and count, instead of learning to get along in a team, to work in a team, to have understanding for their friends, as well as to learn why it is important to do something and learn. The educator, as an expert, added that the ECEC programs strictly adhere to the prescribed programs and rules, that everything is strict and authoritative, and that there is a lack of stories with children and explanations why something is being done. There is a lack of knowledge of the causal relationship, to know what will happen if they do something and what will happen if they do not do something.

4. Do you receive any guidance for helping the children in your group/classroom transition to primary school?

Part of the expert group that works as teachers and educators said that they did not officially receive any guides or guidelines on how to facilitate the child's adaptation to the first grade. The only thing that the teachers singled out was that the professional service at the school at the beginning of the school year and the first grade introduced them to the characteristics of the class, as well as the individual characteristics of each child, so they could prepare and adapt their work to each child. As for the expert work of a psychologist and pedagogue at the school, they state that they found the guidelines independently through various professional trainings and seminars, but that the Ministry certainly does not prescribe any specific activities that could contribute to and facilitate teachers.

a. What kind of specific guidance do you believe was or would be helpful?

The experts agreed that it is personally most important for them to get individually for each child and group of children what their characteristics are, as well as recommendations on how such a



child should be approached. They agree that knowing the characteristics of children and the group that comes to the first grade makes it easier for teachers to adapt to that group and each child. As before, this type of assistance can be provided by the professional service that enrolls in the primary school, but they also agreed that it would be good to receive a report on the child from ECEC with a description of the characteristics.

5. Which competences do you think are important for parents to have to support their children in the successful transition to primary school?

As the most important competence of parents that facilitates the transition from ECEC to primary school, experts say, the willingness of parents to cooperate and communicate with the teacher. When a parent is ready to hear and actively listen to the teacher, he is flexible and interested in the child's progress, which facilitates the child's adaptation and transition from ECEC to primary school. They also add that parents nurture independence in their children, instead of overprotecting them, and they also believe that the transition will depend on the parents' style. Disagreements among experts regarding the importance of parents' educational status, with some believing that the educational status of parents is important, as well as that the more educated parents are, the more they value education and have broader perspectives, while the other half that it is not so important.

6. Do you notice a difference in a child's preparedness for school nowadays compared to previous generations?

All experts agreed that today's generations, unlike the previous ones, have less developed ability to concentrate and pay attention, as well as fine psychomotor skills. Today's generations are growing up with digital devices and technology, and as a result, their concentration and attention are weakened, because they are constantly bombarded with various stimuli from those devices. In addition, due to the use of devices, they draw, write and paint less, so their graphomotor skills are less developed. However, digital devices also have a good side, and that is that children have much more information and know how to reach them. Another thing that differs about which everyone agrees is the attitude towards adults and authority, as well as socio-emotional maturity and independence. They believe that children used to be much more independent, and therefore more mature when they started school. Authority was more respected and boundaries were set that children respected.



7. Do you think that the Covid-19 pandemic has affected the children’s performance in terms of competences and skills necessary for successful transition to primary school?

a. And if yes, what competences were most absent?

All experts agreed that Covid-19 did influence the development of competencies in students. They believe that the pandemic affected the ability of students to maintain concentration and attention and to have some structure. The children spent more time at home, with their parents, where they were allowed many things and there were no boundaries or structure and certain rituals that they had to adhere to. As a result, they are less willing to cooperate and obey, and more focused on their own needs and themselves. The self-control of emotions and behavior was reduced, due to the fact that they lost the opportunity to learn in the team how to express and communicate their emotions, because everything was allowed to them at home. They did not pass the preschool program, so they used a pencil less and practiced writing and drawing, so the graphomotor skills are worse.

8. Which competences do you believe are the most important for the successful transition of children from ECEC to primary school? (Rating scale from 1 to 5: not all important – extremely important)

The competencies that the experts ranked as most important for a successful transition from ECEC to primary school are as follows:

All experts agreed that the following competencies are extremely important

Relating and interacting with others	5	100.0%
Self-regulation of emotions	5	100.0%
Attentiveness	5	100.0%
Self-care (e.g. brushing teeth, going to the bathroom, dressing up, eating)	4.8	96.0%
Communication	4.8	96.0%
Behavioural self-control	4.8	96.0%
Ability to follow instructions	4.8	96.0%
Self-regulation of attention	4.8	96.0%
Willingness to learn	4.8	96.0%
Curiosity	4.6	92.0%
Persistence	4.6	92.0%
Keeping focus	4.6	92.0%



Fine psychomotor skills (e.g. writing, drawing, cutting)	4.40	88.0%
Early life science concepts and general knowledge of the world that surrounds us	4.4	88.0%
Sorting, ordering, classifying	4.2	84.0%
Interpersonal skills	4.2	84.0%
Vocabulary	4.2	84.0%
Storytelling	4.2	84.0%
Fluent communication	4	80.0%
Overall health	3.80	76.0%
Gross psychomotor skills (e.g. running, jumping, climbing)	3.80	76.0%
Early numeracy skills	3	60.0%
Awareness of the written text	2.8	56.0%
Pre-mathematical knowledge	2.8	56.0%
Knowing letters	2.4	48.0%
Reading	2	40.0%

9. In your opinion, do the children lack some of the competences listed above in the period of transition from ECEC to school? (choose one answer)

All experts agreed that children lack some of the competencies offered.

9a. If yes, please specify which competences listed above are they lacking the most and could need additional support to develop them

The competencies that state that children are missing from the previous list are: Attention, motivation, communication, self-regulation of emotions, ability to follow instructions, independence, attention self-regulation, fine motor skills, graphomotor skills, perseverance and willingness to learn.

10. Which competences do you think are important for parents to have so that they can support their children in the successful transition to primary school?

The competencies that the experts ranked as most important for a successful transition from ECEC to primary school are as follows:

Explaining (rules, causes, consequences etc.)	4.8	96.00%
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Explaining (rules, causes, consequences etc.)	4.8	96.00%
Communication	4.8	96.00%
Supportiveness	4.8	96.00%
Emotional warmth and tenderness	4.8	96.00%
Providing opportunities for interactions with peers	4.6	92.00%
Play	4.6	92.00%
Supporting child's autonomy	4.6	92.00%
Stimulating curiosity, motivation and learning	4.6	92.00%
Responsiveness	4.4	88.00%
Answering questions	4.4	88.00%
Providing various experiences (neighborhood, local community, etc.)	4.2	84.00%
Building quality relationship with the child	4	80.00%
Reading	3.6	72.00%

11. In your opinion, do the parents lack some of specific skills/behaviours listed above to support their children for successful transition from ECEC to primary school? (*choose one answer*)

All experts agreed that there are some specific competencies from the list that parents lack.

11.a. If yes, please specify which competences/behaviours are they lacking and could need additional support to develop them.

Experts list the following competencies: Communication, support, building a quality relationship with the child, supporting the child's autonomy, stimulating curiosity, reading, quality time, and emotional connection with the child.

12. Is there anything that I/we did not ask you regarding successful transition of children from ECEC to primary school and you think it is important to mention?

There were no additional comments.

