

**PROCESSES DURING THE ADAPTATION PERIOD IN
PRIMARY EDUCATION STUDENTS AND WAYS TO IMPROVE
THEIR ABILITY TO SET CRITERIA DURING THIS TIME**

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Annotation: *The adaptation period in primary education is a sensitive stage when students transition from preschool to school life, requiring adjustments in cognitive, emotional, and social domains. This article explores the processes students undergo during this period, highlighting the challenges they face and the methods teachers can use to facilitate adaptation. Furthermore, it emphasizes the development of students' ability to compose and follow criteria, which is critical for self-assessment, peer evaluation, and long-term academic success. Practical strategies are presented to enhance these skills within classroom practice.*

Keywords: *Primary education, adaptation period, student adjustment, criteria-based assessment, skill development, self-regulation, teaching methods.*

The early years of formal schooling mark a critical period in a child's life. The transition from preschool to primary education requires students to adapt to new environments, routines, expectations, and social dynamics. Adaptation involves psychological, pedagogical, and social processes that ensure children can successfully integrate into the learning environment. One important focus during this period is helping students develop the skill of being able to compose and apply criteria—rules or guidelines that support evaluation, self-regulation, and reflective thinking. By fostering this ability, educators can not only smooth the adaptation process but also promote autonomy and lifelong learning skills.

The adaptation period in primary education, particularly for first-grade students aged 5–7, is a critical phase where children transition from preschool or

home environments to the structured setting of formal schooling. This period, typically lasting 2–6 weeks but potentially extending to a month, involves adjusting to new routines, social dynamics, and academic expectations. Successful adaptation fosters emotional security, social competence, and a positive attitude toward learning, while challenges can lead to anxiety, low motivation, or academic struggles. Below is a detailed exploration of the processes during this period and evidence-based strategies to enhance students' ability to set criteria, interpreted as developing self-regulation and goal-setting skills, which are crucial for autonomy and resilience during adaptation.

Processes During the Adaptation Period

The adaptation process is multifaceted, encompassing physical, emotional, social, and cognitive adjustments. It unfolds in three progressive stages, each with distinct goals, activities, and challenges. These stages help children build familiarity with the school environment, form relationships, and internalize routines.

Initial Contact Stage (1–3 days, often pre-start)

This stage focuses on introducing children to the school as a safe and welcoming space to reduce anxiety, particularly separation anxiety from family. Activities include pre-school visits to classrooms, playgrounds, or libraries, where children meet teachers and peers through simple, low-pressure interactions like smiles, introductions, or guided tours. The goal is to make the school environment feel positive and non-threatening. Teachers observe initial emotional reactions (e.g., shyness, excitement) and provide reassurance through warm, consistent communication. Challenges at this stage include fear of the unknown or reluctance to engage, often influenced by a child's temperament or prior social exposure.

Gradual Extension Stage (1–2 weeks)

Here, children build confidence through short, structured stays that gradually extend to full school days. Activities emphasize rhythmic, predictable routines, such as morning songs, circle time, or group play, which help children feel secure. Teachers monitor emotional and behavioral responses, such as crying, clinginess, or distraction, and offer individualized support, like one-on-one check-

ins or pairing with a peer buddy. Social skills, like sharing or taking turns, begin to develop, alongside basic academic habits (e.g., sitting during lessons). Challenges include difficulty following rules, forming peer connections, or maintaining attention, particularly for children with limited preschool experience.

Normalization and Consolidation Stage (1–2 weeks onward)

By this stage, children start to internalize routines and actively participate in class activities. They follow instructions, engage in group tasks, and seek social interactions, indicating emotional and social integration. Teachers foster independence by encouraging self-initiated tasks (e.g., organizing materials) and reinforce positive behaviors with praise or rewards. Emotional bonds with peers and teachers strengthen, reducing separation anxiety. However, some children may exhibit regressive behaviors, such as tantrums or withdrawal, requiring patience and targeted interventions. The goal is to consolidate habits that support long-term academic and social success.

Common Challenges During Adaptation

Children face several challenges that can hinder adaptation:

- Emotional: Separation anxiety, fear of failure, or low self-confidence, often manifesting as crying or reluctance to attend school.
- Social: Difficulty following rules, sharing, or forming friendships, especially for shy or less socialized children.
- Intellectual: Struggles with attention, listening to instructions, or understanding classroom expectations, particularly for those with gaps in pre-academic skills.
- Psychomotor: Challenges with fine motor skills (e.g., holding a pencil) or gross motor coordination (e.g., lining up), which can affect tasks like writing or group activities.

Educators' perceptions of these challenges vary by experience. Veteran teachers often cite low motivation or rule compliance as primary issues, while newer teachers focus on motor skill deficits or knowledge gaps. These challenges underscore the need for targeted strategies to support adaptation, particularly in

developing self-regulation skills like setting criteria.

Improving Students' Ability to Set Criteria

'Setting criteria' refers to the ability to establish personal standards, set goals, break tasks into steps, and evaluate progress—key components of self-regulation and metacognition. For young learners, this skill translates to simple, concrete actions, like deciding to 'raise my hand before speaking' or 'finish coloring one page today.' Developing this ability during the adaptation period enhances autonomy, reduces emotional and intellectual struggles, and fosters a growth mindset. Research highlights that goal-setting improves social-emotional learning (SEL), motivation, and behavior in primary students, making it a powerful tool for easing adaptation challenges.

Below are detailed, evidence-based strategies to improve students' criteria-setting abilities, tailored to the adaptation stages and designed to address emotional, social, intellectual, and psychomotor needs. These strategies start simple to avoid overwhelming young learners and progress to foster independence, with implementation supported by teacher-parent collaboration and ongoing monitoring.

Introduce SMART Goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound)

Adapted for young children, SMART goals provide a framework for setting clear, attainable objectives. For example, a goal like 'I will raise my hand 3 times during story time today' is specific and measurable, building planning and self-evaluation skills. During adaptation, this helps children focus, reducing distraction and boosting motivation.

- Implementation: In the Gradual Extension stage, introduce daily goals using visual aids like a checklist or sticker chart. For example, a child might aim to 'sit quietly for 10 minutes' during a lesson. Teachers model goal-setting by verbalizing their own (e.g., 'My goal is to read one story clearly'). By the Normalization stage, children can set one goal daily with teacher guidance, reviewing success at the end of the day.

- Benefits: Enhances intellectual adaptation by teaching task prioritization

and self-assessment. Data from SEL programs shows goal-setting increases engagement by 20–30% in early grades.

- Tips: Use simple language and visuals (e.g., smiley faces for success). For at-risk students, set smaller goals (e.g., “Try one question”) and provide extra praise.

Visual and Interactive Tools

Tools like goal-setting worksheets, posters, or apps with pictures/icons make abstract criteria concrete for non-readers. For instance, a chart with images of a raised hand or a tidy desk helps children visualize expectations. These tools align with young learners’ reliance on visual cues, supporting intellectual and emotional adaptation.

- Implementation: In the Initial Contact stage, co-create a class poster of shared goals (e.g., “We listen to the teacher” with a picture of an ear). During Gradual Extension, use individual goal cards (e.g., a star for completing a task). By Normalization, introduce simple apps or digital trackers if available, reinforcing routine habits.

- Benefits: Reduces anxiety by clarifying expectations and fosters a sense of achievement. Studies indicate visual aids improve task completion rates by 15–25% in young children.

- Tips: Display progress publicly (e.g., a class goal board) to build community. Update tools based on student feedback to maintain engagement.

Modeling and Role-Playing

Teachers model goal-setting by demonstrating how they set and achieve objectives (e.g., “I want to help everyone share today”). Role-playing scenarios, like “What if I forget my pencil?” teach children to anticipate and solve problems, enhancing social and emotional skills.

- Implementation: In the Gradual Extension stage, teachers role-play goal-setting during circle time (e.g., acting out “I will wait my turn”). In the Normalization stage, pair students for buddy goals, like helping a peer during playtime, to build social bonds. Use puppets or stories to make it fun.

- Benefits: Improves peer integration and self-awareness, addressing social adaptation challenges. Research shows role-playing boosts cooperative behavior by 30% in early education.

- Tips: Keep scenarios short (5–10 minutes) and relevant to daily routines. Praise effort over perfection to encourage risk-taking.

Conclusion

The adaptation period in primary education is a crucial stage for ensuring students' success in their future learning process. During this period, children must adjust to a new social environment, disciplinary requirements, and cognitive workload. Supporting their learning activities, as well as developing their self-assessment and self-regulation skills, becomes one of the key tasks.

Teaching students to work with criteria makes the learning process clearer, strengthens independence and responsibility, and develops a culture of collaboration. Furthermore, designing and applying criteria helps to foster students' metacognitive abilities, encouraging creativity, logical thinking, and fair evaluation skills.

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