

Framework Webinar Series: Webinar 5 – Program Foundations for Effective Transitions

Maria Pizano: Good afternoon. Welcome to the fourth webinar in our Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Webinar Series. I'm Maria Pizano. I'm a Research Specialist at the Harvard Family Research Project, one of the partners in the National Center on Parent, Family and Community Engagement (NCPFCE). I'll be moderating today's event.

Our first webinar in the series gave us a broad look at the PFCE Framework's Program Foundations. In the second and third webinar, we took a closer look at the two Program Foundations: Program Leadership and Continuous Improvement. And in the fourth webinar, we took a deeper dive into the Program Foundation of Professional Development.

This webinar, we will explore how implementing strategies connected to the PFCE Program Foundations (Program Leadership, Continuous Program Improvement and Professional Development) lead to making progress toward both family and child outcomes. Specifically, today we will be focusing on the Family Engagement Outcome of Family Engagement in Transitions. Our learning objectives for today include connecting strategies from the PFCE Program Foundations (including Program Leadership, Continuous Program Improvement and Professional Development) to make progress toward both family and child outcomes.

Our second objective is working with families and multiple community partners to achieve successful transitions to school. Lastly, we will learn how to use NCPFCE resources to support your efforts to make progress on the Family Engagement Outcome, Family Engagement in Transition. We have a great set of presenters today who are going to share their expertise and on-the-ground experience with the Family Outcome of Family Engagement in Transitions.

Today, we are joined by Kiersten Beigel, who is a Family and Community Partnership Specialist at the Office of Head Start (OHS). We are also joined by Christine Patton, who is a Senior Research Analyst at the Harvard Family Research Project. From Youth Development Inc., we are joined by Lisa Lackmann, who is a Transition Manager, and Anna Marie Garcia, who is a Special Education Manager.

Our first presenter, Kiersten Beigel, has been with the Administration for Families and Children and Health and Human Services for 10 years. She has been in her role as a Family and Community Partnerships Specialist at OHS for five years. Kiersten is a social worker by training. Prior to her federal work, she worked with parents and children in schools and hospitals, child welfare in mental health settings and childhood programs. Kiersten, I'll turn it over to you now.

Kiersten Beigel: Hi, everybody. How are you doing? I'm so glad you could join us this afternoon. We have a really great team of TA providers and program experts with us today. And this is a really great topic. I am going to just say a few things about why this topic is important. You know, there's things we know really well from research and experience about this. We know that, for instance, when children's experiences build on what came before and what's coming next, that there's really a stronger likelihood they'll be more successful learners in kindergarten, of course, and over time.

And we also know that when families are continuously engaged as partners and are part of children's learning and developmental experiences across different programs and into schools that they actually strengthen and support the continuity between Head Start and schools. So, they strengthen -- they help to strengthen those partnerships and they certainly help to strengthen that continuity for kids. And one of the things that we often spend our time thinking about with regards to family engagement strategies is that the more intentional strategies are -- they assure better gains for -- they really do help to ensure that there are better gains -- that the gains that are sustained in Head Start. So, the gains that occur for children in Head Start are sustained. So, that's why we focus a lot on those home/school connections.

I think we make a lot of effort in Head Start to align early learning standards and guidelines and curriculum wherever you can and you know, your MOUs with the local educational agencies. Certainly, we have many standards in the Head Start Performance Standards that are designed to support families as their children make transitions -- things we do around sharing information, helping to facilitate relationships between families and new teachers in the children's kindergarten. You make a lot of efforts around doing joint training and home visits and so forth. And I think these requirements are in place to really help sustain children's gains. And they're critical for this reason. They're also critical to things that we do for families -- to support families' leadership and advocacy -- are a really critical part of this.

There's skill development around advocating for their children's learning and development. And also, just setting -- giving families opportunities to get more comfortable in those conversations they have with teachers, when they're being asked in Head Start to give input on their children's development and learning, when they're given information about their children's progress and engaging in those discussions. Those really build a nice foundation, I think, for moving forward on the educational pathway. And I think the fact is that we don't have children and families for so long. In fact, sometimes, we don't have them for very long at all. So, our emphasis on transition is really important, because it does help us establish and potentially maintain some of those pathways that help families be engaged and that help children be successful in school.

So, there's a lot of reasons why this is an important topic. I'm going to just highlight a couple of resources from our National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement, before I turn things over to the really interesting people. There's a few things that are really -- that we've pulled together -- that are really useful to programs, depending on what you're looking for. For starters, we have a video that really charts some of the course at the Laguna Pueblo in New Mexico Head Start program -- some of their activities and processes around preparing children and families for the transition to kindergarten, so you can see kind of how they work it. For those of you who are interested in research and really understanding what some of the science is behind this idea of transitions and why it is so critical a practice to prioritize, we have a Research to Practice paper that you can check out. And we have also a school readiness series -- Family Engagement School Readiness Series -- that is an e-newsletter where I think, in June, our topic was transitions. So, we have a number of resources.

You can find all those on the ECLKC on the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement web space. And also, I should just point out that on the Quality Teaching and Learning web space on the ECLKC, there are also some handy resources, some planning resources, and a video that looks at transitions from a child's perspective and then from a community perspective. So, those are some things to check out, if you haven't already.

Maria: I'm excited to introduce you all to Christine Patton. Christine Patton is a Senior Research Analyst at the Harvard Family Research Project. Christine has produced briefs on the transition to kindergarten for both the U.S. Department of Education and the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, and also the Office of Head Start. She presents on the topic at both local and national conferences. I'll turn it over to you, Christine.

Christine Patton: Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone. So Kiersten talked to us about why the topic is so important and I want to add a little bit more context, before I talk to you all about quality transition practices. So, the transition to school and kindergarten affects a number of people. What does that mean exactly? So, it affects people in terms of scale. Here are the most recent numbers that we have: In 2012, 4.2 million children transitioned to kindergarten. In 2013, nearly half a million children in Head Start were of transitioning age. And the children reflected in these numbers also touched their caregivers, their current teachers -- if they have them -- future teachers, and community service providers, whose centers they might be ageing in or out of. It also affects people in terms of the emotions, desires, and needs that are experienced during this process.

Children, families, educators, and community and staff experience a range of emotions and have a number of needs associated with the transition process. Before moving to the next slide and discussing these emotions, desires, and needs, I want to talk about the visual emphasis that we placed on the word "process" on this slide. Throughout this presentation, and in all of the work that we do on this topic at the National Center, we think of the transition to kindergarten as a process, rather than a single event that occurs on the first day of school. So let's talk about emotions.

Children experience positive and negative emotions as they transition. They may lose friends from their center or home-based care settings. At the same time, they experience positive emotions, like pride, over mastering new skills. For parents, they also experience a range of emotions, from uncertainty to joy. Families may wonder if their children are ready for kindergarten. At the same time, they're joyful about their children reaching a new milestone. The same goes for educators. They experience both sadness and connection. For educators, the transition is a time to prepare for saying goodbye to children who have won a place in their hearts.

Yet it's also a time to connect to new families, new students, and other educators, and also to pass on and receive information. In terms of needs and desires, children need stability and alignment and benefit from continuity in the types of relationships and practices that they encounter from setting to setting. Families want information about what kindergarten is going to be like, if their child has the skills he needs to succeed, what they can do to prepare, and how to find out about and access after-school options.

Educators want transition plans in place and the funding and support from their administrators to implement them. So, responding to these emotions, needs, and desires requires quality transition practices -- ones that focus on collaboration among everyone involved in the transition. Collaboration involves three components. Collaboration, first, is the relationship that exists among and between all of the people involved in the transition. Transition work is most effective when strong relationships that link early childhood educators, children, families, school staff, and community and locally-based staff, such as librarians and after-school providers, are established before the kindergarten year even starts -- and continues throughout the year. In terms of libraries, I know that the Office of Head Start has a partnership with IMLS -- the Institute of Museum and Library Services. And I know that other library-based partnerships are forming around the country.

At Harvard Family Research Project, we actually recently featured an on-the-ground example of how Maryland is working to improve how libraries partner with families. And, I'll post a link to that in the peer-to-peer research chat at the end. So, we have relationships as the first component. The second component involves continuity and alignment. It involves the consistency of routines, curriculum, and expectations. For example, families should have the information that they need to establish consistent bedtimes and meal routines in the months leading up to kindergarten, if not before. Thirdly, collaboration involves information, focused on the provider-to-provider, provider-to-family, and family-to-provider information sharing that occurs.

Schools on the sending and receiving ends should have processes in place for sharing and receiving information about children. Early educators should also work to set up parents for later success in data-sharing conversations that they will have in elementary school. Student data can be used to regularly connect parents and teachers as active partners in children's success. Establishing effective data sharing practices in early childhood programs has the additional benefit of helping to build a strong foundation for families' ability to access, understand and act on data about their child's learning and growth as the child moves through the elementary, middle, and high school years. Head Start centers and other early childhood programs and elementary schools should also work to give families information about finding out about after-school options.

I've mentioned after-school a number of times in my presentation. There's a movement in the field that is looking at the role of after-school providers in the transition -- and the importance of connecting families to after-school staff. Families play an important role in accessing appropriate after-school programs for their young children, particularly during the transition to school.

So that families can easily identify, navigate, and choose from available after-school programs, a coordinated effort among Head Start and other early childhood staff, school staff and after-school providers needs to occur.

As part of the next part of my presentation, we're going to watch a quick video on how a group in Cambridge, Massachusetts handled this.

[Video begins]

Narrator: For many families, their child's transition to school is also a transition to after-school. As families navigate the selection of an after-school program, they need to know their families' needs, what programs are available, and how to apply.

Meghan White: I think it can be hard for families to know the differences between all of the programs and also where to go to register for particular programs. Each family's and child's needs are very different, and so they need to have the full picture of what the city offers, so they can make the best choice to meet their needs -- whether it's they need a five-day-a-week license to after-school programming, or they're looking for enrichment classes for their child to take, or they just need a couple of half-day programs.

So, I think navigating that – who to contact for the right program, what each program offers, and what that means, and what the cost is and scholarship money that's available. There is actually a mother of a child that was ageing out of our preschool programs and going to be entering kindergarten. And she had brought forward her concerns about how difficult it is to navigate finding an after-school program in the city. The city is full of so many options, which is such a great thing, but it makes it more challenging for families to figure out what's the right match for their child and where to start to find a program.

We felt that it was really important that if we were going to put out a resource for families, that in order to really support the families and their needs, that it really needed to give families a general overview of after-school programs in the city. The after-school programs brochure is a resource for parents of kindergarten and first- graders transitioning into school and therefore after-school programming for the first time.

A support for them about – letting them know the different programs that are offered in the City of Cambridge, what they should look for when they're touring after-school programs, resources that are available to them in finding an after-school program, also some examples of what might happen in a typical after-school program.

[Video ends]

Maria: I'm very excited to introduce you to our friends from Youth Development Inc. -- YDI for short -- from New Mexico Lisa Lackmann is a Transitions Manager and has been with YDI for 13 years and has 20 years of experience as an early childhood educator. Anna Marie Garcia has been with YDI for nine years and is a Special Education Manager. Anna has been in the field of early childhood for 20 years. Today, they'll be sharing their story with us and highlighting some of the on-the-ground examples of how their program is engaging families in the transition. I'll turn it over to you, Lisa.

Lisa Lackmann: Hello, everyone. Thank you. It is great to be speaking with all of you today. As you heard, I am Lisa Lackmann and I am the Transition Manager at YDI Head Start. We are a relatively large program and we serve approximately 1500 children in New Mexico. We offer Head Start, Early Head Start, and Pre-K at 27 NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) accredited centers. We are part of a large nonprofit called Youth Development Inc., which offers a large array of services to at-risk youth in New Mexico.

As Christine said earlier, successful transitions are a process rather than a single event. When people talk about transitions, they often give examples of specific transition events. We also have specific transition events and activities in our program and we will talk about those; but, we want to emphasize that engaging families during transitions is one aspect of our overall approach to engaging families in our program. We feel that transitions are successful when families have learned to advocate for for themselves and their children, which means they are able to speak on their children's behalf. They're able to understand and express their children's strengths and needs. And they feel that they are comfortable asking questions and can navigate educational settings. Successful transitions also require strong staff-parent partnerships, strong community collaborations, and comprehensive training. Successful transitions are the result of a systemic approach to Parent, Family, and Community Engagement where parent, family, and community engagement is a leadership priority.

Our program leadership sets clear goals for parent, family, and community engagement. Knowing that family engagement must cross all systems, all staff members are involved in PFCE and develop relationships with families. When we were first exposed to the PFCE Framework, we decided to form a PFCE committee to focus on strengthening our PFCE work. We used the Framework and the Beginning a Self-Assessment document to examine our parent, family, and community engagement strengths and to look at areas needing improvement. As a result of this committee work, our professional development for all staff focuses on building relationships with families that are strengths-based, respectful, and supportive.

Our trainings include the Nurtured Heart Approach -- which I will talk about shortly -- Closing the Achievement Gap, the PFCE Framework. And our service specialists also use the PFCE Simulation as a tool to look at their individual work with families.

As we look at transitions, specifically, we train staff about the importance of transitions and the need for strong staff-parent relationships and community partnerships to ensure smooth and successful transitions. In addition, we offer joint Head Start/kindergarten teacher trainings. These trainings are an opportunity for professional development and relationship-building between Head Start teachers and kindergarten teachers.

One group activity that took place during one of our joint Head Start/kindergarten teacher trainings addressed kindergarten readiness through the eyes of the kindergarten teacher and the Head Start teacher. It was interesting to note that the Head Start teachers expected the kindergarten teachers to want the children to arrive with what we might call academic skills, such as letter recognition and name writing. While the kindergarten teachers agreed that these were important skills, they were more focused on the need for social-emotional skills and self-regulation. They felt that these skills were better predictors of a child's success in kindergarten. It was nice to hear one of the kindergarten teachers express how pleased she was to receive our Head Start children, as they are accustomed to being in a classroom and become leaders in her classroom. Our most recent joint Head Start/kindergarten teacher training was on building healing connections and focused on brain development, stress, and building resilience.

We do provide many specific transition activities for our Head Start families and I will tell you about a couple of those. Each year, we offer Kinder Parent Workshops at various locations for our Head Start kinder-bound families. During Kinder Parent Workshops, I share information about pre-registration for kindergarten and services available from our public schools, such as free or reduced lunch, transportation services, before and after-school care, summer prep programs, special education services, et cetera. The focus is on giving families the information they will need to access these services. I then share information about kindergarten readiness, parent engagement in kindergarten, and being an educational advocate for your child.

The kindergarten teachers in attendance share information about the kindergarten day, welcoming activities, and answer questions that families may have about kindergarten in general. Families are asked to answer three questions at the beginning of the workshop: What do I need to know? What am I excited about? What am I worried about? We make sure that we address each of these during the workshop. Families that have already sent an older child to kindergarten are asked to share some thoughts on their experiences with the new kinder-bound families.

As continuous improvement should always be a priority for Head Start programs, I would like to share with you one way that our PFCE work has had an impact on this particular transition activity. One of the PFCE goals that came about as a result of our PFCE committee work to create family rooms, where space permitted. Our family rooms allow our families to have greater access to information, create a more welcoming environment, and allow for greater peer-to-peer relationship-building. The Kinder Parent Workshop at our La Mariposa Center took place in the family room. Due to space limitations, this was the only Kinder Parent Workshop that actually took place in a family room.

The parents that attended this workshop had a different level of comfort than those that attended other Kinder Parent Workshops. It was obvious that many of them had built peer-to-peer connections. They were more talkative and more engaged. Our Policy Council representative from La Mariposa volunteered to interpret for our Spanish-speaking families, even though I had a staff member available for that purpose. The families asked questions of each other and seemed much more comfortable asking questions of the kindergarten teacher. This level of comfort and the peer-to-peer connections seemed to strengthen their ability to be educational advocates for their children.

Having this family room at La Mariposa has contributed to creating a sense of community at this large center, which has a total enrolment of 148. Another specific transition activity that I would like to tell you about is our kindergarten field trips. To help children prepare for the transition to kindergarten, our teachers schedule a field trip to a local elementary school in the spring. This field trip allows children to see a kindergarten classroom and participate in kindergarten activities with the kindergarten children and teacher. This visit to kindergarten helps transitioning children to feel comfortable with the idea of going to elementary school and facilitates conversations between Head Start teachers, families, and children about the move to kindergarten. Parents are encouraged to attend these field trips. As I stressed earlier, we're always looking toward continuous improvement.

One way that we improve services is to look at our outcome data. Outcome data from kindergarten field trips helps us to ensure that this is a meaningful activity for our kinder-bound children. Each teacher completes a form where she or he briefly describes the activities that took place during the field trip. As a result of this, we have made a few changes this year. Several of our teachers had noted that one of our partner elementary schools struggled with accommodating our children on the field trips.

Some of the kindergarten teachers seemed unprepared to engage the children in meaningful activities. The principal at that elementary school had also contacted me to express concerns that some of her teacher weren't sure how to handle the kindergarten field trips. As a result of this feedback, I scheduled a meeting with the principal and I included a teacher representative from the partner Head Start center. We discussed ways to make the kindergarten field trips more meaningful and successful. Specific activities were planned for our Head Start children. This helped the kindergarten teachers to have clear expectations about the visit. The activities included large group activities, singing songs, a story time, and a tour of the school. The Head Start children were then paired with an elementary buddy for small group activities, including art projects and classroom exploration.

The outcome forms that I received after this meeting and after these new field trips demonstrated that our Head Start teachers felt that the experience was much more positive. Other specific transition activities that we do include activities for the transition of children with special needs. Anna Garcia, our Special Education Manager, will speak to you about that.

Anna Marie Garcia: Thank you, Lisa. Special care is warranted when transitioning children with disabilities. YDI Head Start collaborates with local early intervention agencies and the local education agencies to assist the children transitioning between agencies and to develop transition plans to meet the individual needs of the children. Transition planning for children with disabilities includes the discussion of the child's strengths, needs, current developmental levels, and any special considerations that should be addressed. Transition meetings for special needs children entering our program are strengths-based and family-focused. Knowing that the family is most knowledgeable about their child, transition planning meetings provide the family an opportunity to share information about their child.

During transition planning meetings, families also learn about the Head Start center, classroom, and teacher. These transition meetings are often the first meeting that the family has with Head Start staff. Through conversation and sharing, the family is able to discuss their child's strengths and needs and gain skills in advocating for their child. For a parent of a child with special needs, this is often the first of many formal transitions they will experience with their child and our goal is to set a strong, positive foundation for successful transitions throughout the child's education. We are very fortunate to have two special education preschool support teachers employed by Albuquerque Public Schools that act as liaisons between our programs.

We meet regularly to discuss children that are concurrently enrolled in Head Start and APS Special Education Programs. We also discuss children in the referral process and children for whom the transition to kindergarten may be challenging. We also actively participate in progression IEP (individualized education program) meetings for children receiving special education services, as they leave us to go to kindergarten. During these progression IEP meetings, our Head Start teachers are able to share with the team the child's progress while enrolled in Head Start. This is also beneficial for the parents, since having a familiar face at the progression IEP helps them to be comfortable opening up about their child's strengths and needs. It also is an opportunity to develop a relationship with a particular public school so that they can contact us with any question once the child has started kindergarten.

Now, Lisa will continue with more on community collaborations.

Lisa: Thanks, Anna. Community collaboration is an essential part of transition services. As I already mentioned, we collaborate with kindergarten teachers and principals for our kindergarten field trips and Kinder Parent Workshops. As Anna spoke about, we also have very strong collaborations with our community early intervention providers and our LEA for transitioning children with special needs. We have also found that collaborative community groups support our work around transition in all of our Head Start services. For example, we participate in and host the Albuquerque Public School's Early Childhood Collaborative. The Albuquerque Early Childhood Collaborative is a group of professionals working in the field of early childhood education and services that meet to discuss such topics as child advocacy, professional development, collaboration, and transition. Members of this collaborative are committed to providing high-quality comprehensive services to children and families. This collaborative group works to integrate services and community resources and to strengthen relationships between agencies.

One particularly beneficial result of this collaboration is our implementation of the Nurtured Heart Approach. The Nurtured Heart Approach, developed by Howard Glasser, is a relationship-focused methodology founded strategically in "The Three Stands" for helping children and adults build inner wealth. The essence of the Nurtured Heart Approach is a set of core methodologies originally developed for working with difficult children. It has proven effective on every child including those who were challenged behaviorally, socially, and academically.

While we implemented the Nurtured Heart Approach to help our teachers build nurturing relationships with their students, we have seen that using the approach also helps staff to build supportive, positive relationships with parents and with each other. Introducing the Nurtured Heart Approach to the Albuquerque community has truly been a collaborative effort.

Through an initiative of Albuquerque Public Schools called the "Safe School Healthy Students Initiative," several of our staff members were able to attend the Nurtured Heart Approach certified training intensive. We have since trained all of our teaching staff to implement the approach. We also offer Nurtured Heart Approach trainings to our Head Start/Early Head Start families and the community at large. We have trained over 75 parents and 400 community members in the approach. Albuquerque Public Schools have several hundred staff members that have been trained to use the approach. It has been interesting to see how the approach has strengthened our community collaboration.

Most members of the Early Childhood Collaborative have attended Nurtured Heart Approach training. The Nurtured Heart Approach has become a common framework for our collaborative group and aligns beautifully with the PFCE Framework emphasis on positive goal-oriented relationships.

Building collaborative relationships with community partners is a process that is unique to each community and agency -- and does come with challenges. We have seen that programs often work in silos, having their own program requirements. It's not always easy to share. Sometimes groups, because they have their own funding sources and requirements, are not eager to participate in group initiatives. Inviting community partners to the table is the key. Along with participating in existing community groups, such as early childhood advocacy groups, sometimes we hit roadblocks and need to try another route.

For example, I have had kindergarten teachers tell me that it is too overwhelming to host our children for a field trip. I was able to reassure one teacher by telling her about the expectations and letting her know about some of the activities other kinder teachers do with the Head Start children. Usually, our kindergarten field trips are very short and sometimes it's surprising to hear that kindergarten teachers, who routinely work with young five-year-olds, might feel uncomfortable with four-year-olds. But reassuring them and letting them know what our expectations are helps in some cases.

However, there was a case where we just had to change our visit to another kindergarten teacher. We always want the activities to be positive for the children, so if the teacher really isn't comfortable and is not providing a welcoming, nurturing experience for our children, then it is best to just go with another kindergarten teacher. I have found that it can be quite helpful to offer something to community partners as a way to build connections. For example, because we have opened several of our trainings up to the greater community, we have made new connections. Meeting people face-to-face and building that personal relationship really enhances collaborative efforts.

The picture that you see on the PowerPoint here is one of our Nurtured Heart Approach trainings. We open these up to the community at large and because so many people in the community are really interested in the Nurtured Heart Approach, we have a packed house every single time -- as you can see in the picture. Meeting people face-to-face, building that relationship, it helps to build those community partnerships. Because building community partnerships can be challenging, they need to be mutually beneficial and we've found that offering these trainings to the community is a way that we're benefitting other organizations.

We're sharing resources and that's helpful for everybody. It's a way to bring people into the world of Head Start and to have them realize that even though their systems may be different, partnering with us is mutually beneficial. Community collaboration is really essential to creating successful transitions for our children and families and for providing all of our Head Start services. When we talk about our really successful community collaborations, as Anna talked about earlier -- we are very fortunate to have two liaisons assigned to us by the public schools. That is a challenging partnership to create in a community sometimes and we're lucky that we have that strong partnership for transitioning children with special needs or even children who are suspected of having a special need or just needing extra support as they go into kindergarten. You know, as we've gone through the years of setting up this collaborative relationship, we've had challenges. There's always staff turnover. At the elementary school level, there were several different directors of their Special Ed. programs that came in over the last few years.

And so what we did: Every time that a new director came in to that position, we would host them -- you know, a breakfast meeting or a lunch meeting -- and we would explain to them what Head Start is, how important it is that we have a strong partnership for providing services for our children with special needs. And we would kind of give them the Head Start 101, so that they understand why it is that we're referring children to them, what our federal performance standards look like around services for children with special needs. And having those meetings with the new person that comes in really helps us to create that strong partnership which has been essential in serving our children with special needs, and in fact, serving all of our kinder-bound families.

As a lot of our children with special needs transition into kindergarten -- Anna spoke about those progression IEP's -- but we're also identifying children that we're just a little bit concerned about. Maybe, they were borderline on evaluation or maybe, they're somewhere in that process of evaluation to IEP. We want to make sure that everything is followed up on as they enter kindergarten. Is there anything else you want to add?

Anna Marie: I think that you've covered all of the bases.

Lisa: Okay, thank you. That's it for us. Also, I'm seeing on the question bar that somebody is wanting some information about the Nurtured Heart Approach. I believe at the end, there is going to be some information on the website that you can link to. As I mentioned earlier, the Nurtured Heart Approach is really a set of strategies for building relationships and it was originally founded on working with difficult children.

The first book that came out was about working with difficult children. It became a bestseller for working with children with ADHD. But as people started to implement the approach, they found that it really is successful for working with all children and that it strengthens relationships and it's very strengths-based. It builds inner wealth in child, resilience, all of those wonderful qualities that we know lead to school readiness and school success. So, we were really excited about the approach, as we became exposed to it through our partnership with Albuquerque Public Schools and that is why we have implemented the approach in our program. But at the end, there will be a link or some information on the website. You can go on – there are some courses available on the website -- online courses.

There are Nurtured Heart Approach trainers in pretty much every state and also in several other countries; so if you look under the resources tab on the Nurtured Heart Approach webpage, which is in the Children's Success Foundation, you'll see all of the states listed with the trainers of the approach listed there as well.

Maria: Great, thank you so much, Lisa. And I'm seeing a number of questions coming up about the Nurtured Heart Approach; so, we do invite you to check out all those additional things that Lisa just mentioned. A big thank you to all of our presenters today. So, right now we're going to move into our moderated question and answer session. I can see that many questions are already coming in. You can continue to submit questions through the chat box, for any of the presenters from today. We'll give everyone a few minutes.

So I have a question here. And this participant is really excited to connect with other people on this topic of transition. But they're wondering if there's anywhere else that they can go to connect with other people on this important topic. So, I'll open that up to all of the presenters at this time.

Christine: This is Christine. I can jump in and then turn it over to others who might have additional ideas for this. So, I know, in terms of engaging with other educators and practitioners who are doing transitions and working through transition practices and have some go-to practices that they're excited to share -- we, at Harvard Family Research Project, created a discussion board. It's called, "Let's Talk Transitions Discussion Board" and it's on WordPress and it's going to be available in the reference list that we will be providing to you at the end of the webinar. It's a great space to share resources, get resources from other practitioners, and then also work through a goal that you might have around engaging families during the transition to kindergarten. So, I encourage you to see that space.

Regional and national conferences are also a great space to do that. And we also know that a couple of community practices have popped up in different venues across the country. And those are mostly being established through TA networks. So I encourage you to check with your local TA staff to see if something exists or could be created due to interest. Do others have ideas?

Maria: So, I have another question coming in. The question is for the kinder workshops, do you have teachers from the public schools come to answer the questions that parents have? And I think Lisa and Anna this is a question for you.

Lisa: Yes, we do. Actually, we invite kindergarten teachers from the closest five or six elementary schools around each of our Head Start centers that we're holding a workshop at. And sometimes, it can be challenging. Fortunately, I have been doing this job long enough that I've formed some really good relationships with about half-a- dozen kindergarten teachers; so, I can always, you know, count on them to be there. Getting new kindergarten teachers to come in can be challenging; so, sometimes talking to the school principal about the value of this -- all of the elementary schools do have requirements around welcoming new families. They have transition requirements also. So, they're usually very happy to partner. Sometimes, even principals will come in for some of our trainings to introduce themselves to our families.

Maria: Thank you, Lisa. So, I have another question and this question is: How long it takes for programs to establish a PFCE committee and what the target of the professional -- what target -- I guess they're asking is: What other staff members are they including in the committee? I hope I got that question right.

Lisa: Okay, I think I understand the question. Forming the committee was not time-consuming. We have a Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Manager. She basically took the new Framework when it first came out to our Service Specialists and did group trainings and got input from them and did the self-assessment document with them to kind of get an idea of where they felt we were and then asked for feedback and then asked for volunteers to join the committee. And then, of course, a few of those, you know, were brought in because our work directly impacts everything within the Framework. So, Anna and I are both on that committee, as is our Director. We find it really important to have administration involved, especially your director/associate directors. We need to have buy-in at that level for the committee work to progress and move forward. I hope that answered that question.

Maria: That was great. Thank you, Lisa. So, one thing I do want to say, before we move on to the other questions is I see a number of questions coming in regarding the availability of slides. We will launch those at the end in our resource pod. So, those will be coming to you. Just hold tight for a few minutes.

So, the next question I have is if you could discuss how all of your staff handled the extra duties that go along with all the different activities that you were describing -- night meetings, before and after-work meetings, and then going into the community and introducing themselves.

Lisa: Well, you know, we are lucky. Even though we're a large program, I think we're one of the only Head Start programs I've ever encountered that actually has a staff person assigned to transition. That's me. I've never met another Transition Manager. That's my sole duty; so, that is my job. And do Head Start staff have a lot of commitments? They absolutely do. Kinder Parent Workshops are traditionally done right at the end of the school day and I encourage Service Specialists to attend. Sometimes, our teachers attend as a way of bringing families in. You know, we do offer child care; so, our teachers are staying a little later to provide child care. So that is -- there are all of those demands that are normal for all Head Start programs, but I think the way that we're able to really form those partnerships and plan all of those transition events is that we have a Transition Manager. I hope that answers that question.

Maria: Thank you, Lisa. And I have another question for you all which is -- how does the transition look -- and is it different -- for children whose primary language is not English?

Lisa: Can you say that one more time?

Maria: Yes. So, I think the question is -- if you think the transition process looks different for students and their families if their primary language is not English?

Lisa: You know, if their primary language is a language other than English or Spanish, that can be challenging in Albuquerque. We are a community that has a lot of Spanish-speaking families and we have a lot of Spanish-speaking staff. And the elementary schools in Albuquerque have a lot of Spanish-speaking staff. As a matter of fact, we have a dual language program within our Head Starts and we also have partner elementary schools that have dual language programs also.

So, because Albuquerque is sort of a unique community that is primarily English and Spanish, we're able to support those families fairly effectively. We do have or sometimes have children come into the program that speak a language other than English or Spanish and that can be a little more challenging. As a matter of fact, we have a brand-new family coming into the program that speaks Vietnamese and does not have a family member that's able to interpret; so, I am actively seeking an interpreter through the community that, of course, we'll hire for transition events, parent-teacher conferences, home visits, all of those functions that happen in our Head Start program. Luckily, our public school system is a great partner for that. They do have a Division of Cultural Equity and a list of interpreters and they shared those names with me. I've been able to contact that interpreter. Of course, you know, there's a fee for that -- a couple of hours come out of our budget and not the public school's budget -- but we partner to meet that need.

Maria: Great, thank you, Lisa. So, the next question I have, I think it's for Christine. And the question is: When is the best time to begin a transition plan for kindergarten?

Christine: I'll answer this and then also pass it over to Lisa and Anna too, if you guys have a transition plan in place when you start forming that would be great to know. But, I know a couple of programs from the Head Start community and outside that start the plan the year before the transition is to happen. So, they typically have transition teams in place that include staff from the preschool and elementary school, families, and other community providers. And that team starts meeting and as soon as this school year starts for the previous year in which the children are going to transition. So, they start marking out what they're going to do in each month leading up to the transition. And then a great place to look at how to form this plan, and also to think about all of the activities that you want to do as part of the plan, is through NCQTL's resource page up on ECKLC; so, I encourage you to go to that. They have a transition calendar with activities that you can do in the month and specifically the year leading up to the kindergarten transition. And they also have a template available for you to use to start coming up with a transition plan. And Lisa and Anna, if you guys have anything to add about any plans that you guys have in place, please do.

Lisa: Well, as we mentioned earlier, transition really is a process that is sort of ongoing and so for specific events, we do plan them well, well in advance. For example, when we set out our master calendar -- which just came out with now for next school year -- I've already set all the Kinder Parent Workshops.

Field trips are scheduled for a month-long period of time. And we do some specific transition paperwork that is forwarded to the elementary schools for all of our Head Start children that are transitioning. That we do towards the end of their participation in the program just because, at the time, we also review the child's accomplishments while in the program and the child's developmental assessment; so, we want to make sure that we're reviewing that toward the end of the program participation, so that the parents are aware of where their child is developmentally and then we then forward that assessment data, along with the transition paperwork that we forward. And so, we do those meetings usually in March, you know, as the children are leaving us just because we want to make sure we don't do them so late that we run out of time but that we do them late enough, as the parents are getting an accurate understanding of where their child is developmentally at that point in time.

Maria: Great, thank you, Lisa. So, I have a question and I think, Kiersten, this one's for you. The question is: Are there Head Start regulations regarding the transition process and transition practices?

Kiersten: Yes, there are. You can find those on the ECLKC too, under the Policy tab. The Head Start Performance Standards are 1304.40, 41, I think, the family engagement-related standards and the community partnership-related standards that revolve around transition practices. And, if you feel like reading the Head Start Act too, there's lots of language in there about transitions and effective transitions. They're really prioritizing this question that came in around language and thinking about how to help families that speak languages other than English also effectively transition.

Maria: Thank you, so I have -- I think this is going to be our last and final question. And the question is in terms of collecting and documenting data for transitions, what are some tools that you all recommend? I think I'll open this one up to all of the presenters.

Lisa: So, I'm not sure if the person asking the question is talking about child data, count of children transitioning -- what data specifically are they looking for? A lot of the data that we collect -- we're able to collect data out of our data management system and we use the PROMIS system; so, we're able to generate reports of children transitioning. I use a simple Excel spreadsheet to keep track of where the children are going and, if they have an IEP and if they've turned in their consent for me to actually communicate with their kindergarten.

So that's all done on an Excel spreadsheet. I'm able to populate that spreadsheet from our database. And I have to keep a very good list, because, we transition approximately 800 children every year; so I need to make sure I've figured out where they're going, where their paperwork's going. If I have that consent to share that information, I share that spreadsheet with the public school, so they know which children came out of our Head Start program. And then, our paperwork that is forwarded has a consent form signed by the parents attached giving us consent to speak to the school for the whole first year that the child's enrolled. That allows us to share any other information that the school may need about the child. It allows us to answer questions that kindergarten teachers may have. I've had kindergarten teachers just call me, because they're concerned about a child. Maybe, the child's unusually shy and hasn't spoken the first two weeks of kindergarten and they call me just wanting to see how the child did while they were in Head Start. Were they super shy? Can they speak? Were we concerned about their speech development? And by giving, you know, giving them that master list, so they know who our kids are and getting that consent to exchange information good for a whole year, that enables me to look up their Head Start records, contact their Head Start teacher, if needed, to answer any questions they may have. I'm not sure that really answered the question because I'm not sure I knew exactly what they were looking for. So if it didn't, let me know.

Christine: And this is Christine and I'll answer the question in a slightly different way. So hopefully with your answer, Lisa, and with mine, we've address the question. So, I know that a number of programs are also working to assess the effectiveness of their transition practices, those practices that occur as single events and then also transition practices as a year-long process. So, I know of a number of programs who are surveying parents at the end of the year to understand how well the transition practices work for specific families and specific children. And then making adjustments to the practices that might not have worked so well in the following year. I also know of a couple of programs -- Head Start programs and other early childhood programs -- who are surveying and informally interviewing kindergarten teachers to find out what information they think will be helpful to know for their incoming children. So, they'll ask questions about: What, specifically do you need to know? What information do I need to include; what's the best way for me to get that information to you? So, a lot of ways for data collection is happening, in terms of assessing the effectiveness and figuring out what works best for children, families, and future teachers.

Maria: So, at this time, I want to thank you all for asking your questions and a big thank you to the presenters for their thoughtful answers. And I'm going to transition us into this peer-to-peer chat. I encourage you to join us and use the public chat feature that just launched and you'll be able to talk to all of our presenters and also all of the other participants. And we encourage you to share what your program is doing around transition. So, without further ado, I think that networking chat is available. Also at this time, we have launched the handouts pod and that's available under the networking chat box. And you'll be able to download the slides and some additional resources around transition.

[Pause]

Maria: [Not audible] being shared in the peer chat, but unfortunately we are coming to the end of our time together for today. I want to thank the presenters for all their hard work and great presentations. I want to thank the participants and I hope that you will all join us on future NCPFCE events. Have a good afternoon, everyone. Thank you.