

Education Manager Series: Let's Talk Transitions

Roselia Ramirez: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the Education Manager Series. My name is Roselia Ramirez, and I am one of the facilitators or the facilitator for this webinar series. I am really excited to welcome our colleagues and partners at the University of Washington today to present on this topic, "Let's Talk Transition!" So, welcome again.

Before we get started, though, we're going to take just a few minutes to kind of ground ourselves in the moment, want to clear our minds. We know that there's a lot going on out there, and so we just kind of want to get focused for the information that we have today. Mindful moments, now more than ever, can help us to manage stress and those feelings of just being overwhelmed. Taking a few minutes to just really connect with our breath kind of allows us to just kind of feel that calmness. This activity is also something that you could do with children, so we just wanted to share that in case you want to pass it along to any of our families, just kind of teaching children how to self-regulate just with the use of the breath. So, I'd like to ask you to join me now just for a couple, to kind of practice and get ourselves grounded, so if you want to kind of sit up in your chairs, plant your feet on the ground, and then just practice taking a few deep breaths and kind of releasing those just to kind of get us set for the webinar that we have planned for you today. So, let's do that. Join me now in just taking a few deep breaths. So, a breath in and then release. Let's try that again. In and out. All right. Well, thank you. Again, we just want to emphasize the importance of just taking some time to take care of yourselves. We understand that there's a lot going on and so, just again, just the importance of being mindful and focused. So with that, I'd like to welcome our guests from the University of Washington, and I'm going to turn it over to them and have them introduce themselves.

Katie Miller: Hello and welcome. My name is Katie Miller, and I am with the University of Washington, though I do work remotely actually from Nebraska, and I am a content specialist, and I work on training as well as a few projects with the Office of Head Start. Rilee?

Rilee Larsen: Hi. I'm Rilee Larsen. I'm also with the University of Washington. I work as an early childhood content specialist and have been doing a lot of work on transition to kindergarten, so excited to share.

Katie: Great, so in today's webinar, we're going to go over a few of our objectives. We plan to stress the importance and the benefits of a collaborative approach to effective kindergarten transitions. We will explore research-based strategies that support those effective transitions, and, finally, we want to discover several resources designed to support programs with the development and implementation of effective transition processes, and Rilee will start by walking us through the nature of transitions.

Rilee: All right. So, during a child's life, change is inevitable. Families move. Siblings are born. School begins, and consequently transitions happen. So, really, this goes beyond just a child's life, and it impacts all of us. Change is all around us. Sometimes, we're ready, and sometimes

we're not. As adults, we have the knowledge and power to see the bigger picture when it comes to change and realize that our current situation may not last forever. When program staff collaborate with families, they can learn how individual children experience change and help children to prepare for change and realize that there is sort of an end in sight. Staff can use their understandings of child development to learn how to help children feel secure and comfortable during transition. This also extends to how staff help families feel secure and comfortable when they experience challenging situations and change.

We actually know a lot about how to facilitate effective transition since we do it every day. As adults, we have experienced transitions frequently throughout our lives: moving, finishing school, changing jobs, having children. These are all major transitions, and through each one, we lean on a variety of supports to help us get through them smoothly. As adults, we've developed the tools we need to make these things happen on our own, but children need our help.

So, let's pause for a moment to think about transitions we have experienced or are currently experiencing. What people, types of information, and resources did you find helpful during those time periods? So, we'll just take a little break to think about some of the resources that we've leaned on throughout changes in our lives. And with that in mind, consider the education staff that you work with, so what kinds of supports might help them to navigate and cope with changes that they're experiencing, and what kind of supports could help them to navigate and cope with the changes that they're facilitating for children?

So, we've all experienced feelings as we anticipate or react to change and transitions. Children, just like adults, experience many of the same feelings and show them in their behaviors. Their responses reflect their developmental stage and readiness for change, as well as who they are as unique individuals. How do we support all children during life's big and small transitions? Adults, including family members, teachers, caregivers, family service workers and home visitors, play an important role in supporting young children through transition. Adults can help children feel safe and secure and can turn transitions into learning experiences that support children's growth and development in all domains. Supporting children during transition can have far-reaching effects on their emotional well-being and academic success.

Learning how to manage change requires certain skills. They need adults to help them manage and master how they deal with and learn from the changes that occur in their life. There are many ways we can help children and their families learn how to cope with the big and small changes that are part of life. One way is to provide them with information in advance about predictable changes. Also, we can share information with families and the range of reactions to these changes that can be expected in children at different developmental stages.

Some transitions are predictable. They have a consistent, familiar timing and order to them, like mealtimes and bedtimes. Other transitions are unpredictable, such as when a child is sick and cannot go to school. Unpredictable transitions have an inconsistent timing that is unknown to the child and their family. Predictable routines make transitions easier for children and families. Very early in life, children learn to anticipate routines and like knowing what happens next.

Familiarity helps a child feel safe, secure, and cared for. Stability and continuity help children gain self-confidence and the capacity to manage transitions effectively, eventually on their own. With all of this in mind, let's look more closely at a specific monumental transition in a child's life, the transition to kindergarten.

Katie: Before we dig into the research and strategies that support successful kindergarten transitions, let's take a moment to remember why this work is so important. We all want children to successfully adjust to school so that they can go on to reach their full potential in the classroom and beyond.

So, as you see in the graphic here, the linear approach is what is depicted, merely getting the child from one place to the next, and it's really an inadequate view of transition. As we support children and families through the transition to kindergarten, we really need to think about all of the different connections that support the child in their current setting and how we can transition not only the child, but their network of support into that new setting. So, let's leave this old view behind and take a look at what a robust transition looks like.

Research shows that it's more useful to take an interactive and connected view of the transitions as shown here. In other words, there are both relationships and information that support children and connect them to their surroundings. When they move to a new setting, we don't want to leave these connections behind, causing major disruptions for the child's sense of security and normalcy. We really want them to move with these connections and structures intact. This network around the child provides a great web of potential support that we as educators can tap into. We want to think about the people involved in that child's life, family members, peers, community groups and educators, and how they can connect with each other and work together to support the child before, during, and after the transition. This framework and not the child-only framework should guide best practices for transition planning.

So, now that our minds are in the transition-to-kindergarten zone, we appreciate the value of smooth kindergarten transitions, and we understand what a big change it is for children and families. We see that consistency really eases that transition, so let's dive into evidence-based and effective transition practices. We like to view the transition to kindergarten as children and families crossing a bridge from their Head Start setting to the new kindergarten setting, where that bridge is built from three key evidence-based practices that support successful transitions to kindergarten. So, those three key practices that lead to successful adjustment and smooth transitions are sharing information, building relationships, and aligning settings.

If you'd like to hear more about this, you can check out this video on the ECLKC Transition to Kindergarten page. The video, "Building Bridges: Leaders Supporting the Transition to Kindergarten," features a number of Head Start and elementary school leaders about how they employ these three key areas of practice in their successful kindergarten transition efforts. You can also find the [inaudible] for educators and families on that same page. They're really great tools and conversation starters to share at collaborative meetings with school districts, information events for families, or joint professional development for educators.

So, here is a little opportunity for reflection. Consider the three key practices for supporting successful transitions to kindergarten: sharing information, building relationships, and creating alignment. Which of these practices do you most hope to strengthen? And depending on your unique setting, program needs, how social-distancing measures are impacting your staff, children and families, and resources currently available to you, your answer might involve a blend of two or three practices. So, we're going to pause for just a few seconds for you to reflect on this and even make some notes. We really encourage that as you go along.

Rilee: All right. So, let's talk about connections – the practices of sharing information, building relationships, and creating alignment support – four points of connection that are critical to effective transitions. Let's start with an overview of the four points of connection that support smooth transitions. Then we'll discuss each point of connection in depth, provide specific examples of how information sharing, relationship building, and alignment can support those connections, and we'll share some individual resources, all available on the ECLKC Transition to Kindergarten website. Ultimately, this will all support building stronger connections and improved outcomes for children and families.

So, there are four key points of connection with the receiving elementary school. These are relationships that we can nurture and leverage when enacting the three key practices of information sharing, relationship building, and alignment. You'll hear us saying those things a lot, which we previously discussed. The four points of connection are the child-to-school connection, through which we can foster children's familiarity with the new classroom and people they will encounter in kindergarten. There's the family-to-school connection, which involves collaborating with families and supporting them to be confident and involved at the new school. There is the program-to-school connection where leaders from both the Head Start setting and elementary school setting collaborate to provide children with consistent, supportive transition and learning experiences. And then there's the community-to-school connection, where available community resources and community efforts help spread information about and provide support to children and families making the transition to kindergarten.

So, let's start by looking at ways to foster the connection between each child and their receiving elementary school. Here are some examples of specific activities to support the child-to-school connection, adapted to accommodate physical-distancing measures. Supporting children through the kindergarten transition means providing opportunities for them to familiarize and form relationships with new teachers and peers; talk, read, and play about what kindergarten will be like; and, where possible, creating consistency between their familiar environments and the new setting. So, consider how activities that you've practiced in the past or plan to practice this year might be adapted for children who are not currently in a program setting due to social distancing. If your program will reopen during the summer, also consider activities that would be beneficial and possible during the period of time before children begin kindergarten. The ultimate goal of this connection is to help children feel more prepared and comfortable as they make the move.

This resource for educators offers a list of specific research-based activities organized around the four points of connection. So, based on individual circumstances, children and families, educators can responsively select from and implement these activities to support successful kindergarten transitions. Many of these activities can be adapted to occur over the phone, through virtual interactions, and at home with the support of families, and the activity suggestions here specifically focus for the most part on the child-to-school connection since educators are at the heart of that connection.

Educators can also refer to this list when reading or suggesting books for children, stocking books in reading areas, and sharing ideas with families. So, when physical distancing is a factor, read-alouds of many of these books can be found on YouTube and shared with families, or educators can call or video-chat with children and families to do a personalized read-aloud and discuss the book in the new setting with the child and family afterward.

So, while the transition practices we are discussing today are applicable to all children and families, it's important to look at the transition to kindergarten through the lenses of children and families who may have additional support needs. Warm, responsive interactions between children and adults are important during transition, especially for children who are dual language learners. They may feel nervous or confused if they do not understand or speak the language spoken in the new early education or kindergarten setting, and, whenever possible, at least one staff member should speak the language spoken by the children. Even when this is not possible, educators can still help children who are dual language learners overcome communication challenges and feel welcome and comfortable in the program. The use of nonverbal cues, such as gestures, facial expressions, and words in the child's home language, will help the child understand what is going on and what to expect. Stories, activities, and music that reflect the child's home language and cultural traditions will also help the child develop a sense of belonging.

We want to highlight this focus guide to supporting children who are dual language learners and their families during the transition to kindergarten. So, this guide offers a list of kindergarten transition practices that are recommended for all children alongside a list of modifications to those practices that can be made to further support children who are dual language learners. Since many transition practices can be adapted and implemented remotely, the modifications for children who are dual language learners and their families can be adapted as well.

And all children need support to manage big and small transitions. Children with disabilities or special health care needs may need additional support or coordination of services to effectively manage transitions. While we – I don't know if this is – this is a short video from the connect modules to reflect on. You can watch this on your own after the webinar to reflect on how your program supports children with disabilities during transitions. We're not going to include that in this session right now just with technology going on, so make sure to take a note of this one if you're interested in coming back to it and using that as sort of a reflection piece independently.

This document, also available on the ECLKC website, is a practical guide to supporting children who have individualized education programs, or IEPs, and their families through a successful transition to kindergarten. It can be shared with both educators and families alike to set expectations and guide the process of planning a smooth transition for children with disabilities. It's crucial that goals, efforts, and team members included in a child's IEP are still being met and prioritized during times of change and challenge, including when support must be offered remotely for a time.

With that in mind, let's take a moment to reflect on how your program can support the child-to-school connection, including obstacles that may pose a challenge such as social distancing, what efforts and resources could strengthen this connection, and what adaptations or new activities might work this year. You may also want to write down a few of your ideas or just jot some notes or resources that stood out to you, and the resources that we discussed and that we will discuss throughout this webinar are, again, available via the resource widget on your screen, so make sure to visit that if you see any of that pique your interest.

Katie: OK, next, let's look at ways to foster the connection between families and the child's receiving elementary school. This connection, of course, becomes ever more important as many programs are closed temporarily, and families are tasked with greater responsibility in preparing their children for the transition to kindergarten.

Research tells us about the importance of engaging families throughout the transition to kindergarten. Family participation in this transition is strongly associated with children's self-confidence, impressions of school, school readiness, academic achievement, and just overall happiness in kindergarten. When programs and schools actively engage families in the transition to kindergarten and are responsive to families' efforts to participate, families show increased involvement during the – pardon me – during the kindergarten year. Family engagement efforts should happen throughout the transition and be tailored to families' cultural and linguistic backgrounds as well as any individual learning and support considerations. While we might typically share information and engage with families about the transition to kindergarten in person, we can get creative about contacting them to share information virtually and via phone contact and at central service locations such as food-distribution centers.

But before implementing any transition activities or resources, it's important for programs to really ask, "Are the transition resources and materials presented in ways that are representative of and honor the culture and language backgrounds of the families we serve? And are the transition activities selected and planned responsibly to value and accommodate the various strengths and needs of the families in our specific learning community? And, finally, are transition activities and resources equitable and accessible to all children and their families, including remotely during temporary program closures?"

Here are a few examples of transition activities to support the family-school connection during physical distancing. The transition to kindergarten is a major event, not only in the lives of children but their families as well. It's a pivotal point for helping families to stay involved in

their child's learning, advocate for them, and ensure that their child sustains the gains made during their early learning settings. When families are informed about what to expect and feel confident navigating the new school environment, they are prepared to support their child. So, I'll just pause on that one just for a second because there's such great suggestions.

So, here is another great resource. The family tip sheet for "Your Child Is Going to Kindergarten: Making the Move Together" was developed by the National Center for Parent, Family, and Community Engagement, and it provides succinct lists of ideas to help families prepare for kindergarten. The ideas are organized by incremental time periods leading up to the first day of kindergarten, starting broadly with the fall and winter before kindergarten all the way up to the very specific night before starting kindergarten. Many of the activities are meant to be done at home and amongst families, so they're really well suited for physical-distancing measures. Education staff can discuss these activities and help them to create a kindergarten transition activity plan.

Another resource is called "Early Child Transitions: Supporting Children and Families," and it offers information and strategies for educators to learn about the importance of supporting children and families during transitions. This resource would be ideal to share with educators virtually to start thinking and conversation about the transitions we're currently experiencing as well as future transitions.

One way to help children and families prepare for the transition to kindergarten is to plan and host kindergarten registration events. When program closures impact the ability to do so, it's important to plan ahead and offer modified transition-to-kindergarten support services. Kindergarten registration events might become virtual. They might be rescheduled for program reopening in the summertime or otherwise. This guide, which is available on the ECLKC Transition to Kindergarten page, is titled "Ready, Set, Go: Planning a Kindergarten Registration Event," and it walks program leaders through each step of planning, advertising, hosting, and reflecting on a successful kindergarten registration event. The event will support families to register their children for kindergarten and also gather information about what to expect and what might be expected of them in the new setting. With programs needing to rethink and reschedule their kindergarten registration efforts, you can consider using this guide to plan a modified transition event.

So, take another moment to reflect on how your program supports the family-school connection. How does your program typically support that connection? How can those efforts be adapted to fit your current program operations? What resources or practices could support these efforts? And you may also want to jot down a few ideas or resources that you want to remember, such as those we just mentioned. So, we'll pause for 20 to 30 seconds for some opportunity for reflection. All right. We're going to pause for just a moment. We might have a little technical glitch, so give us just a moment. Thank you with our patience as we go through this.

OK, so now we are going to look at ways to foster the connection between Head Start programs and receiving elementary schools. This connection is where leaders from each setting

collaborate to make information sharing, relationship building, and alignment happen. A strong relationship between school and program leaders can really bolster the strength of all other connections and transition practices. Initiating and sustaining this relationship can be a challenge, especially in very large districts or when children from one Head Start program are transitioning into multiple different elementary schools, which happens a lot. Well, let's talk about the resources for leaders to facilitate this connection and enact kindergarten transition practices at a broad level.

Here are some examples of high-quality program-school transition activities. Some are adapted for shelter in place or similar situations where collaborating remotely is necessary. Leaders can plan transition to kindergarten efforts together, plan online joint professional development trainings, meetings, and virtual classroom-tour opportunities for educators. Share and align curriculum and routines. They can share assessment expectations, share videos or photo tours of each other's settings, create data-sharing agreements, and find ways to simplify the enrollment process, such as through universal and/or online kindergarten enrollment forms across multiple schools.

Rilee: All right. So, similar to the "educator practices for successful transitions" resources we looked at... [inaudible] this resource was developed specifi- [inaudible]

Katie: I think Rilee might be experiencing a little bit of technical difficulties, so I'm going to go ahead and restart this slide for you. So, similar to "educator practices for successful transitions" resources that we looked at previously, this resource was developed specifically for leaders. Leaders in both settings can select from a variety of activities to support a successful transition to kindergarten and adapt them, really, as needed. This resource is organized by role, and the activities are also organized by the point of connection that they support.

This resource is called the "Policy Connections at a Glance," and it offers a one-stop overview of federal early childhood and K-12 policies to inform decision-making and practices during the transition to kindergarten. This policy document also describes transition requirements from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA. You can refer to this document to ensure that transition plans meet national standards for the transition to kindergarten, even during temporary program closures and social-distancing measures. This is also a valuable document to leverage while initiating and building relationships with elementary school educators and leaders since it features many shared requirements, making it a really great starting point for planning and collaboration. As program leaders look ahead to reopening programs and making changes to their original kindergarten transition plans, they can use this editable transition planning form and the corresponding example form to determine some of those next steps for transition to kindergarten.

OK, so it's an opportunity for reflection again. So, we're going to take a moment to reflect on how your program currently supports the program-school connection. How does your program support the program-school connection? What resources or adaptations could continue to support this connection? Remember to make note of any ideas or resources that come to mind. I know our "Transition to Kindergarten" page has a lot of resources, so it's a really good idea to

just jot down a few words or sentences if you can to look back at later. So, I'm going to give you just a few seconds to think about that.

All right. So, our final point of connection is the community-school connection, and especially in times of temporary program closures, community organizations can be particularly valuable for spreading information and awareness about the transition to kindergarten, reaching out to hard-to-reach children and families, and supporting their specific needs. This is really an area that we should really encourage programs to lean into during these times.

Some examples of ways that you can do that or sources for community support and information disbursement include those essential services that remain open during physical distancing, such as food access points, medical offices, and school supply stores, mail delivery services, posting public announcements on outdoor community bulletins, taking advantage of libraries hosting virtual story times, translation services or outreach by linguistic or cultural groups or programs, social services or intervention services operating via teleintervention or offering continued in-person services. So, as you can see, there's a lot of ways that we can think creatively to connect with our community and support our families.

Really, the big takeaways here, demonstrated by several nationally representative studies, are that children who experienced more support and connections between the key players in their lives experienced smoother transitions to kindergarten, which really sets them up for both social and academic success. Building those connections is a financially smart move. The transition activities we're discussing cost little or nothing to implement but really do yield big results in terms of child outcomes. Let's look at just a few more resources to support that big-picture thinking and the goals for successful kindergarten transitions.

To plan and implement practices that support all four connections, this set of activity and planning calendars is also available on the ECLKC website. You may be familiar with these already, in fact. The activities on these calendars can be mixed and matched to take place at different times of the year, or you can focus on activities listed in the months remaining until kindergarten begins. These calendars include the activity calendar for educators. That includes month-by-month activity lists for supporting the kindergarten transition in the year prior to kindergarten. Educators can use this calendar to plan, adapt, and act and document transition efforts throughout the year. That was one additional documentation note that was a really good idea. The activity calendar for families, that includes month-by-month activity lists for supporting the kindergarten transition in the year prior to kindergarten entry, and families can use this calendar to plan and enact at-home efforts to prepare and support their child throughout the transition. And, finally, the planning calendar for education managers, this includes planning tasks and activities for supporting educators with a variety of goals and in a variety of settings across the program year. The calendar includes specific notes and tasks for facilitating a kindergarten transition effort.

And coming soon to the ECLKC website, this resource guide contains the full suite of "Transition to Kindergarten" resources. It includes links, descriptions, and the intended use and audience for each resource as well as sample suggestions for how to choose, organize, and use bundles

of resources to meet specific goals. This is definitely a really cool resource to explore. You can also connect with peers and access resources related to transitions on the MyPeers "Head Start School Connections" page. This page is moderated with resources shared regularly, and members from school districts and Head Starts can use this page to exchange information as often as desired.

You can find all of the "Transition to Kindergarten" resources mentioned here today and even more on the "Transition to Kindergarten" page on the Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center website. As you can see, we took a screenshot here. This set of briefs is focused on supporting transitions in general, but is also available on the ECLKC under the broader topic of transitions. So, in case you're on the website, please know that there are two different pages, one for the broad transition topic and then one that is very much much more specific to transition to kindergarten, and you can find different resources on those. So, each brief focuses on a different partnership level: the child and family, early educators, early care and education programs, and ECE partners.

So, in summary of what we've covered in this session today, successful transitions support children's social, emotional, and academic success and boost family engagement in kindergarten and beyond. They can be implemented across a variety of contexts, including in person or at a glance, and well-supported transitions include practices in three key areas: sharing information, building relationships, and creating alignment. And effective transitions include the four key connections: child-school, family-school, program-school, and the community-school connection.

So, we hope that you will start to explore the resources or go on to explore the resources. You may have seen that there are a lot of new ones, so if you've been on the "Transition to Kindergarten" page a while ago, please come back again. There are a lot of updated resources and a fresh look on the page. So, you can click on the green resource widget to explore some of the resources shared with you today, and if you haven't already, take a moment. I would really encourage you to take a moment to do that. So, take some time to open up any resources that stood out to you, including any that you made note of early in the webinar. So, I'm going to pause just a second for you to allow you to do that. All right. So, we're going to move on and review and discuss the information we covered today, but be sure to come back after the webinar concludes to continue exploring these resources.

All right. One last opportunity for a little bit of reflection. We will take one more moment to reflect on how your program currently supports that community-school connection. What role does your community typically play in the transition to kindergarten, if any? What community resources remain available to you? What are some new community resources that you might be able to use? So, I encourage you to take a moment and note any of those ideas or resources to remember.

So, as our time together comes to a close, we would like to review the topics discussed today and take a little bit of time to answer your questions. You may not know there is a robust team supporting us behind the scenes who have been collecting your questions in the Q&A, and

we're going to take a moment just soon to review some of those. So, today we set out to address a number of objectives, so during this webinar we reviewed the four points of connections for successful kindergarten transitions. We discussed the essential practices that strengthen connection, familiarized with new and updated essential transition- to-kindergarten resources as well as how they support the different components of the transition to kindergarten, and we identified new resources to support your specific goals and efforts.

So, now we are going to open it up for a few minutes of question and discussions. So, you can submit your questions using the Q&A box, and we will try to address some of the more frequently asked questions that come in, and then when we're finished with the Q&A time, we will talk just briefly. We have one more slide right after that before we will close. So, stick around.

Roselia: All right. Hey, Katie. Thank you. That was a lot of information. Sorry that we lost Rilee due to some difficulties there, but thanks for stepping in there. Hey, we did have a question that came in, and so this question is, "Do you have any strategies to deal with multiple school districts?" So, they're saying that they have a total of 19 in their service area.

Katie: That's a lot. So, we also have on the line Tam O'Donnell, who is one of our colleagues from the University of Washington, so I would encourage her to jump in with any additional information. With that, I think we can rely on some of the common ground. So, there was recently a document encouraged by the Association of Superintendents to create MOUs, kind of a common MOU, and that common MOU, memorandum of understanding, can be used with multiple school districts because it's supported at a national level. So, I encourage you to explore that. Within the resource "Policy Connections at a Glance," you will see also some suggestions and tips for working with school districts kind of along more standard kind of guidelines. So, those are two big resources. And then there's also an S-O toolkit that we can look more into and possibly connect on MyPeers.

Roselia: OK. Does anyone have anything else they wanted to add to that question there?

Tam O'Donnell: Oh, I just agree with Katie there. I think the S-O toolkit is a really great resource to kind of get your foot in the door and have the conversation but also repurposing the MOU as much as possible so you're not recreating the wheel, the memorandum of understanding, but then tailoring it slightly depending on the different schools that you're working with.

Roselia: All right. All right. So, we had another question that came in, and this one has to do with, "What are some ways to make the decision to help to make? So, what are some ways to help make the decision to stay in preschool versus sending their child to, like, a Young Fives class with a waiver for early entry?" Then if you guys have any suggestions for this individual that asked this question.

Katie: I'm going to let Tam start while I think about that for a moment if she has ideas.

Tam: Can you read the question one more time?

Roselia: Yeah, so they're asking about, what are some ways to help make the decision to stay in preschool versus sending their child to, like, a Young Fives class? So, I think this is for those late birthdays, and so the child is still fairly young going into kindergarten, and so what are some strategies, perhaps, to kind of help them just kind of make an informed decision as to whether or not they should stay in preschool versus going into that, you know, Young Fives classroom or asking for a waiver for early entry?

Tam: I would say that's a little bit outside the grounds of what we're talking about here today, but I think that's a conversation that would need to incorporate a lot of family input in terms of where the child is developmentally and really what's going to be in the best interest of the child.

Roselia: OK.

Katie: And also, that's not usually something Head Start is allowed to kind of do. Like, there's pretty clear guidelines in terms of ages, so, you know, if that child is participating in Head Start, please just be aware that that might not be an option. So, then, that's one place where, like Tam said, really engage with the family, and perhaps some do really in-depth, individualized planning for that child as they transition. We'll make that plan together.

Roselia: OK. There was a clarifying question that came in around, "Can you go over what creating alignment means?"

Katie: Sure, so we can talk about a couple different ways. So, there are a couple levels of creating alignment. One of them is the very simple idea that the early childhood classroom and kindergarten classroom mid-day don't often look the same. And so helping children kind of get an actual picture of what their day looks like, so seeing what lunch looks like, visiting the classroom, whether that's virtually or in person, talking to the kindergarten teachers so they understand what happens in the Head Start day, and Head Start teachers understand what happens in the kindergarten day. And then there's kind of the more broad checking out the alignment of your curriculum and the assessment practices and seeing how those connect or any points of disconnect, and, Tam, feel free to jump in, too.

Tam: No, that was great, Katie. I'd like to jump in really quick. I noticed a lot of questions coming in were around specifically how educators and programs can be supporting during this time of social distancing, so maybe you and I can share out some other ideas related to that. One thing I wanted to point out right off the bat is that in your resources list that we provided for this webinar, there are two transition plan examples that have been filled out, and one is a short-term plan, and that's if your program is focusing on other more important issues, such as food accessibility, et cetera, and they're going to be able to really focus in on the transition to kindergarten until just a few weeks before school starts. And then there's a long-term example so that if your educators in your program are in a position where they can continue that work to support transitions right now, there's a plan filled out for that with examples. Then a lot of the strategies really zero in on taking a more creative virtual approach to supporting the transition. So, I know several questions came in stating that some families don't have Internet

access, and I would expect a majority of families do have a smartphone, and so if there are any ways that you can utilize the phone, either making a phone call or sending information digitally via their phone or a text, that's one way. I'm going to change my audio. Just a second here. Am I coming through a little more clearly now?

Katie: Yes, that's better.

Tam: OK, great. So, smartphones are a wonderful way to reach out to families, and that can be via a phone call to check in and say hi and have conversation but also to send digital information. And then also sites can be a little bit creative about creating a drop spot or a pickup spot where materials can be printed off for families, such as registration forms in their home languages so that families can still access print materials if they don't have a printer and they want to print something off and fill it out. There's also a lot of alignment strategies that can be happening virtually. You can reach out to receiving kindergarten teachers and see if they're willing to create a short video introducing themselves to children who will be coming into their schools and then sharing that video out with families. There are also ways that virtual PD could be taking place over the summer, so programs and leaders can work together to figure out a creative way to do some kind of virtual PD where early childhood educators are coming together as well as receiving school educators to work on that alignment piece, where maybe they're trying to figure out ways to make things a little bit more developmentally appropriate in kindergarten and have discussions about that. So, those are just a few ideas to share around virtual [inaudible].

Katie: Yeah, I would say just kind of, I want to reemphasize that here is where your community resources should be something that you really look into and use partnership. So, distributing print materials but think about places that your families still need to go. So, if there are food distribution places, whether that's a school district or Head Start program or a shelter or a food pantry, those might be places that you could have materials available in the neighborhoods and the communities. All of those community bulletins that might still be available, so really make sure that we are thinking about, kind of creatively, ways that we still connect with families and ways that families still need to connect to the world.

Tam: Yeah, I know actually a couple educator managers typed in some ideas into the Q&A box, and one of them was posting a piece of paper up near the school or even in parks with phone numbers that families can call to access information. So, that's another way to kind of present information in the community.

Katie: Great. OK, so should we go on to more Q&A? Or as follow-up questions coming through about those.

Roselia: Yeah, there was a lot of – Yeah, I was just looking to see if there were some other questions that came through, but a lot of them were around that, you know, some comments around that they kind of have a grasp on some of the things you guys are talking about but just really interested in what that looks like in the current situation with social distancing.

Tam: So, I can also give you a couple examples. I work with a few teams who are made up of half Head Start and half public schools, and some of the ways that they've talked about connecting is, they've used some Google Classrooms to kind of share resources back and forth between educators and as a way to, you know, share kindergarten resources with early childhood families, so that's kind of their point of connection. They've also talked about shared food distribution resources and then also a YouTube video of a child going through the various parts of the school that the new children will have access to, and then they shared that YouTube video. And the kind of cool thing about using a YouTube video as part of that alignment of settings element is that the children can play it and replay it as many times as they want. So, even more than a field trip, this is an opportunity that they can become very familiar with their new setting.

Roselia: I don't know if either of you could comment a little bit about specifically children with IEPs and, just again, in the context of the current situation with social distancing and schools not being – someone had commented that the school districts are not providing those IEP services to children, and then as well as what transition might look like for these children that are in IEPs.

Tam: Again, I would like to just remind everyone that there is a resource specific to the transition for children with IEPs in the resource list, but then also and similar to some of the other ideas that we shared before, you can go to schools to see if there are ways to virtually connect with service providers, and then there's also a variety of ways that can be connecting with families, again, via their phone if they don't have access and for continuing to provide some kind of services as well as just, again, calling and checking in with the families to see how they're doing with their child at home and giving them lots of ideas that they can be doing at home with the materials that they have available to them in the home.

Katie: And also, I'm sure most are well aware of this, but the CARES Act specifically prioritizes children who are transitioning to kindergarten and children with IEPs for the summer programming dollars that are available for application right now. So, consider if that might be an avenue to prioritize maybe carrying out some programming that's specific for children with IEPs.

Roselia: OK. All right. Well, I know we're kind of down to the last couple of minutes, Katie, so if you want to kind of move forward because I know you guys have one more slide you wanted to share before we close out. Thank you.

Katie: Absolutely. So, just to kind of remember, just kind of a reminder that we are a strong community. And, in fact, you might have seen Dr. B from Head Start using the hashtag #HeadStartStrong, and if you don't follow her on Twitter, I highly recommend it. She shares some wonderful stories and resources there. But in these trying times, we really want you to stay safe and aware, and you can find a link to the ECLKC COVID-19 information page in the green resource widget, so that link is posted here on the slide, but it's also inside the resource

widget. So, know that we are constantly monitoring the situation and updating resources as frequently as possible. You can always let us know if there's something specific that could be helpful to you, but know that we are absolutely working on that all the time. And we really challenge you to tell the next person that you interact with one thing that you appreciate about them.

So, we're going to bring it back just on that final note of mindfulness and kind of the return to calm and some gratitude. We know it's not an easy world that for a lot of our families, for a lot of us. We really want to emphasize that is one of your strategies to deal with this. We very much appreciate your time and engagement today.

Roselia: Awesome, well, thank you. We really appreciate you guys coming on today and sharing. This is great information. We know that this is the time that, you know, folks are starting to think about transitioning children to kindergarten, and you know with the new current situation, there are some challenges and then lots of questions. With that, we do encourage you to continue the conversation on MyPeers. If you're not already a member of the Education Managers community, we do encourage you to join that and continue to share strategies and things that are happening in your communities with each other. Again, thank you to our presenters today, Katie, Rilee, and Tam for jumping on and sharing some strategies there. We appreciate your time, and with that, we are at conclusion of our session. So, thanks again for joining, and we look forward to seeing you for our next session, which will be in June, and we're super excited that we will have Dr. Sherryl Heller joining us for a session on reflective supervision, so please look for that information coming out soon. Thank you, and enjoy the rest of your day.