

School Readiness: Supporting the Transition from Head Start to Kindergarten

Dawn Williams: This is Dawn Williams' voice you're hearing. What you see right in front of you is the welcome screen that you see when we start every webinar, and there are greetings from many different tribes from across the country.

So, with us, today, we have a presenter. Cecilia Robinson will be, here, with us today. Sher'ee and Vanessa, our regular fabulous presenters, aren't here with us, but it's only because Cecilia has some particular expertise in this topic. So, I'm there with my two girls, they're ages 2 and 4, and this is my voice you hear talking. And then, Susan Stewart is also here with us, too. She's the one that's usually responding to your questions and keeping everything running smoothly and really is the magic behind our webinars. So, we all welcome you, here, with us, today. All right, so for our time together, we're going to learn from each other, by drawing on your knowledge and experiences. We'll be also -- we'd like to offer resources to support the work you are already doing. And we also want to take time to reflect on the data collected during CLASS observations and utilize it for continuous program improvements.

So, now, I have the pleasure of introducing our speaker for today. Cecilia J. Robinson is an independent education consultant who resides in Tulsa, Oklahoma. She is a former Senior Director of Early Childhood Programs at Community Action Project of Tulsa County, one of Head Start Centers -- one of the Head Start Centers for Excellence. Her formal training is as -- is as an education administrator and has served as an associate superintendent, school principal, and teacher in public schools in Oklahoma, Connecticut, and Missouri. Working in the field of early education is a passion for her and an area that she feels is vital to the success of public education and underserved children and families. She is currently pursuing her doctorate at the University of Oklahoma in Education Administration and Curriculum Supervision. We are very pleased to have her with us today.

Cecilia Robinson: Great. Thank you so much, Dawn. So, I'm going to jump right in and let's talk about early school success and why it's so important. And so, we all know that we have a great big focus in Head Start on school readiness and we understand that that focus is about a commitment between teachers, the community, and family members. And this is important that this agreement exists, because, in order to have effective transitions, you're going to have to have commitment and understanding on all of these levels.

And we're going to speak about that today. Also, we want to ensure that children are prepared to meet the challenges and the opportunities that they're going to experience in school. And so, we understand that through research, that this transition from pre-K to kindergarten can actually lay and determine the foundation for children's future success.

So, really focusing on that as a program is paramount to ensuring that the investment that you have given, in regards to preparing children in your program, pays off, in the long term, in regards to their experience in school. So, the way that we're going to talk about transitions, today, is going to be in three parts, what we're calling the elements to foster successful transitions. And the first element is information. And so, we want to make sure that we're providing appropriate information. The next element is going to be for relationships, ensuring that we have proper relationships to ensure that we have successful transitions. And then alignment, alignment between all of the entities that are involved with the child, making sure that they're all going in the same direction, so that it leads to successful transitions.

So, in regards to information, and just one, kind of, programming note, you'll notice that when we speak to information, that up in that left-hand corner you can tell that we're talking about information because we've identified it. Because this -- this webinar is largely informational, so, we want you to be able to have certain reference points. So, when we're speaking of information, you'll be able to reference in the top left-hand corner that we're speaking to information. So, in that regard: What does research say about the importance of transitions? What do LEAs expect, our local education agencies? And what kindergarten opportunities are available in your community?

So, research was gathered around successful transitions and trying to determine where we should focus our efforts. And one piece of information that was gathered was around how successfully children are entering kindergarten. And so this was done with about 3,500 kindergarten teachers and what we wanted to know, or what the research wanted to know was: How did they deem this activity or this transition? So, about 52 percent thought that the transitions they had were generally successful. About 32 percent thought that it had some problems. And then about 16 percent thought that it was somewhat difficult. And this is really important to highlight, because you see that without our support and our intentional work towards ensuring effective transitions, that 50 percent of the children are going to struggle or have some problems in kindergarten. So, you want to make sure that you understand and relate the importance of successful transitions to your staff and your families.

This next slide highlights the type of difficulties that children are having once they get to kindergarten. And this slide ranges from difficulty following directions to difficulty communicating and language problems. But you see that the largest percent of concerns come, in regards to children being able to follow directions, and then, lack of academic skills. And so, when you think about focusing on school readiness and the goals that you put out, you want to make sure that you're also encompassing kind of these self-regulation items as well, so that children are better prepared when they get to kindergarten. Once again, this is research taken from kindergarten teachers.

So, we want to make sure that you understand the goals and what the good outcomes should be from effective transitions. So, research has shown us -- and this is a study that was conducted that told us -- that if transitions are done properly, then we have fewer learning problems for children; we have more positive approaches to learning, meaning kids are coming prepared to learn, coming wanting to learn; fewer conduct problems: Children are able to behave and meet the expectations of the teacher; they have better social skills; and they have greater frustration tolerance, meaning that they're not pushed off of tasks easily, when they become frustrated. And so, good transition plans help us, kind of handle these issues that could arise, as a result of children making that transition from pre-K to kindergarten.

So, it's important to know that transitions are not -- it's not a program; it's a process. And so, I know lots of us have transition coordinators, and so, it turns into this thing to do, but transition is a process that should happen over the whole span of a pre-K child's and a pre-K family's year. Supportive relationships are paramount for this, because we need to make sure that everybody who has a hand in transitions are doing what they can to make sure that it's successful. And that different sets of relationships fit different needs. Some are supportive, some are informational. For example, if you're working with the community, a lot of times that's just working with the community to provide information to parents so that they understand what's happening. And last, the connections serve as a bridge for the child and family and school across time and contexts. And so, making sure that the connections and the foundations that are laid for children are what they need to send them on to the next level.

So, we've come to our first chat. And we spoke a little bit about the information that you received. Now, I want to, kind of, challenge you about the information that you may be giving out. And so, what have you done as a program with LEAs around the early learning framework, if anything, understanding that utilizing the early learning framework that all of us have developed school readiness goals, and that those school readiness goals should lead children to successful transitions with the LEA.

But, maybe you haven't had that conversation; maybe, you have had that conversation around the early learning framework. But, we want to hear from you, in regards to what you think LEAs are expecting for children entering kindergarten, given the information that I've already shared and kind of your own experiences.

Susan Stewart: So, this is Susan, and I want to encourage you to use the question box. We called it "chat," but really on your screen it shows that it's the questions and answers box. So, go ahead and type in there some of the things that you think LEAs expect for children to have coming into kindergarten in your community. And, as those comments come in, I will be keeping an eye on them, and I'll let you know what people are saying about that. So, we'll give you a minute or so of silence, so that you'll be able to type and get those ideas sent our way. Again, we're looking, specifically, for what you think LEAs expect for children who are entering kindergarten. What should they be coming in with, what kinds of skills?

All right, we're getting some answers here, and the first one was "Too much!" with an exclamation point. "The expectations are very high!" Again, an exclamation point. "We do our best to prepare them on a social-emotional base, counting to 20 and recognizing letters in their name." So, counting, knowing their numbers, their names, having some of those social skills, those emotional capabilities. Someone else said that they need to be more academically prepared than in the past. Social skills seems to be a theme here. Also, we've got someone saying that the LEAs are expecting the children to be able to read coming in.

Cecilia: Wow.

Susan: Yeah, and the opposite side of that was somebody says pre-reading skills, so sounds of letters, but not necessarily letters and reading themselves.

Cecilia: Great. Wonderful feedback. I like the way you guys added to the information that I'd shared before, much more specific. It shows that you, maybe, are having these conversations or likely having these conversations with your LEAs and so, you know what they're expecting. I'm just going to touch on one, where LEAs are maybe expecting too much. When we get to alignment later on, I'll talk a little bit about agreement between LEAs. And so, maybe, as a course of this webinar, you'll be able to go back next year and have a more productive conversation with your LEAs about what you're actually able to provide versus kind of them wanting everything.

We can only do so much, and some things are, you know -- we have to be realistic in how we prepare families. What research tells us is that if children are socially adjusted, they are more apt to be academically -- to be able to receive academic preparation, once they're in kindergarten.

So, asking that they become reading -- I mean, if we could all wave a magic wand and make it happen, I'm sure we would, but we're not in charge of developmental stages, so I wouldn't focus too much on that one. This information that I'm presenting to you now is another study, and this was done in Indiana, in the state of Indiana, over multiple school districts with about 700 kindergarten teachers. And basically they were asked: "What do you expect from children entering kindergarten? What should they be able to do?" And you see as a result of that, they ended up with following simple directions and daily routines, asking for help, listening to gather information, completing simple tasks, following classroom rules, accepting guidance and limits -- and I love this -- from familiar adults, and taking care of personal needs. And taking this study, and this study was done in about 2009, in 2009; I feel like all of these are actually saying that as early childhood providers that we can provide. All of these are pretty good. And so, if we can apply this example from the state of Indiana to what maybe all kindergarten teachers should be expecting, I think this is really doable, and a good template to say -- to give to LEAs to say: "This is what we believe we can provide."

The next area we're going to talk about is relationships, and we're going to focus on four different types of relationships: The child-to-school relationship, the family-to-school, the community-to-school, and then, the school-to-school. And so, it's very important in those child-school connections that we make sure that we're going to foster children's familiarity with the classroom setting and those people within it. That is paramount. And you all know that for good instruction that the children need to be at ease with the adults in the room.

So, the reasons obviously that they need for this to happen is, because, we want to increase that comfort and decrease anxiety. We've got to build those teacher-child relationships. We know that learning is not going to occur if children don't have that good relationship with the adults. And we want to make sure that we expose them with that new setting prior to school. I know it's tough, you know, when we've spend the better part of the first three or four years with children, and they're going to go on to the big school.

You know, trying to think about acclimating them to a new society where they have to hold their own lunch tray and they have to walk to different places and have three or four different teachers. Exposure to that new setting, before they get there is really, really important, in order to support the transition process.

The next one is the family-school connections. We want to make sure that we're fostering that family collaboration and involvement with the school and the transition process. And so we're going to talk about, later on how we share information about the individual children, because once we finish with our children in May, the parents have to become the advocates for their child in the next level. And so, they have to be able to speak to teachers and administrators about their child's strengths and their needs. We want to get parents familiar with school routines. I'll focus a little bit later on in the webinar about the difference in expectations for attendance, the difference in expectations for parental involvement. Homework might all of a sudden be something that parents are faced with that they weren't faced with before; so, making sure that we alert parents to that is really, really important. And then, informing parents about how they become partners in this process, so that they understand that this transition can really lay the foundation for their child, for the remainder of their school career.

So, I'm sharing a little bit more research here. And this one is about child-family connections with the school. And this is done on a national level -- again, about 3,500 teachers in this study -- and they were asked -- I'm sorry, families. And they were asked: What activities were helpful in supporting transition for your child from pre-K to kindergarten? And so, the transition activities are listed on the left, and the percentage of families who used it, this activity, and found it helpful are on the right. And so I will give you a minute to go over those, because it's, kind of, a lot of data. And you'll see that they range from -- they had a visit to the kindergarten classroom, to the parent visited the kindergarten classroom, or the child visited the classroom. Some schools held a workshop for parents. Some people met with their anticipated kindergarten teacher. And so these are activities that were taken from a national survey and so, is maybe indicative of the activities that many families find helpful.

So, what I thought would be useful for doing this was to review what might be helpful, if you are in a different area, if you have different needs, would these same activities be as helpful for you? And so, Susan, I'm probably calling this a chat, again, and maybe, it's a question, but our next kind of way for you to participate and to let us know and to let your colleagues know activities that have been successful for you or not successful for you in the transition activities, is for you to choose which one of these activities maybe you've used and post them, the numbers that you support or have also found helpful, in our chat box.

Susan: Great. Yeah. We're going to use that questions box. And so, we wanted to make it simple for you, and to do that, we gave those transition activities numbers. And I see that a number of you are already beginning to write in that questions box the numbers of those activities that you are using in your programs to support children as they transition to kindergarten. And so I will keep an eyeball on that, and it looks like so far we've got some folks encouraging children to visit the kindergarten classroom, taking a tour of the school, and the family is meeting with the child's anticipated kindergarten teacher.

So, a lot of collaborative work with the schools themselves. Wow, someone else has done almost all of them, but hasn't met with the principal. We've got -- a lot of us are doing the first four items. And six and ten -- visited the kindergarten classroom, met with the kindergarten teacher -- happens a lot. A little bit more -- not as frequent, but still happening is talking with preschool staff about kindergarten, which I think is important. Oh, this is one that's great and isn't listed, but someone mentioned, having lunch in the big school, as well as, let's see -- we've got somebody who is saying number three; that they need to check in with the principal, and has lots of question marks and exclamation points, like maybe that's something that really needs to happen that's not happening. And one more person says the only day our school district does any visitors is Friday. We don't have sessions on Friday; so, we're going to try working it with parents that want to do the tour and visits on Friday. And we thank you for that.

Cecilia: Well, actually, that's a great segway where we're going to ask you to share transition activities in your community that are unique, due to your geography or to your culture. And what we mean by this is we have lots of programs that we're working with right now who might be in somewhat isolated communities or their program is really focused on their cultural heritage, but the elementary school that they're feeding into may not be. And so, if you have some transition activities that you can share with your colleagues that might strengthen what they're doing in this area, we'd love to hear from you right now.

So, the example that was just given that Susan shared was their program isn't open on Friday, and so, that's the only day that the school allows visits, and so, they're looking at how they can use parents that might be interested in participating in the transition activity on Fridays. So, that might be a good way for you and your community to figure out how to take advantage of visiting the elementary school to support the transition process.

Susan Stewart: So, there's a few more things that have come in. Several more people have mentioned that eating at the big school is really something that they like to do and that the kids love it. Things like helping the children do a tour of the school and know where the bathrooms are and where the playground is, really important things for kids to understand. Looks like there's some kindergarten round-up activities. People are talking about helping parents register their children, as part of a passage

into the summer activities. Some folks are, actually, having two visits a year to the LEA, so, maybe fall and spring, I don't know, but more than just once.

So, a little bit more happening there. And one person says that they wish the school would host a "Be Our Guest Day." That's an interesting idea. I haven't heard that phrasing that way, but that's an interesting idea that I would love to hear, for the person who said that, if maybe you can influence that and make that a reality in your community. Are there any other comments that are specific to your communities, that might be different because of geography or culture? There is one person who says that they are able to collaborate with the kindergarten teacher and the kindergarten teachers visit them, as well as the teachers meeting throughout the year. Oh, and the preschool transports children to kindergarten screening days or child find days, so there's that kind of level of connection.

Cecilia Robinson: Well, thank you very much for sharing. That is -- those are all great activities. And hopefully you guys can take away something new that you haven't thought of or heard of before, so, thank you for sharing. So, our next relationship that we're focused on -- and you guys have already alluded to this -- is that school-to-school connection, just making sure that we provide children with a stable and high-quality classroom experience across time. And so that means being informed about where you're sending children into, or at least to the best of your ability. And you do decrease that anxiety for children, when you can have this alignment through routines, curricula, learning standards, and assessments.

And somebody gave this example, actually; I can build off of that. Just showing children the cafeteria. Having to carry a tray for the first time is a very different routine from walking --from, you know, being served in your classroom and from having lunch in their classroom to having to go to a big cafeteria and sit at that table. Going to the playground from different places. If you have support schedules where PE is offered in the gym, and so they have to go to the gym for something else, or they have to go to a music teacher. All of those, understanding that is very important, and introducing those to children, if at all possible, beforehand, is really ideal. Curricula: I've got an interesting feedback, in regards to curricula. And one of the tribal liaisons actually shared with me that sometimes a difference in curricula is the difference in focusing on the home language or their tribal language, during class or small group time, where the child may come to expect that as part of their instructional day, but maybe when they go to the LEA it's not available anymore. And so, being able to have that conversation with the kindergarten teacher in advance and relating that that's an expectation of the children coming from your program, and then sharing with the family as well, that children, you know, although may not have their language reinforced or supported through instruction in kindergarten doesn't mean that they can't use it.

So, just having that conversation. Learning standards are, generally, when you get to kindergarten classrooms, are a little bit more rigorous, if you will. I think somebody said earlier, you know, the kindergarten teachers are expecting kids to read. And so, being able to document those learning standards for kindergarten teachers becomes a very different process than maybe what it was in your program.

And then, lastly, assessments. We know that children are likely to have more individual assessments that they're expected to do in paper or pencil or in isolation, if you will, from other peers, which might be different from the environment that they're in currently. So, you want to make sure that you have all of that information, so you can inform parents and try your best to prepare children to expect it.

Another piece of data, in regards to school-to-school connections, and we wanted to share this information with you, because we thought it was really important, that more than anything you notice how often preschool teachers and kindergarten teachers were aligned in their thinking. I think often we feel like, maybe, we think totally different from kindergarten teachers, but this data really tells us that we're pretty somewhat aligned. Only -- I mean, in most areas, and the only one where there was a pretty large discrepancy was in regards to holding an elementary schoolwide activity with preschool children.

I can understand where kindergarten teachers would feel like that was important and it needed to happen, and I think preschool teachers, I think we still kind of hold on to, you know, we don't want our kids kind of in this great big activity and being, maybe, lost and swallowed up by all the grades of an elementary school. But other than that, preschool and kindergarten teachers alike thought that the other ones were pretty good activities to support successful transitions. And I thought one was really interesting, was sharing written records, very, very important, and we'll speak to that a little bit later on.

The next relationship is our community and school connections. And we want to make sure that we're facilitating the transition process within the community. And the first really most important thing to do is to get the word out, just having an understanding about what needs to take place in this process, what parents are responsible for, what teachers are responsible for, what the expectations for the LEA are, all of those conversations are important.

The next is providing resources where they're needed. I heard somebody say that the pre-K could provide or their program provides transportation to screening or child finds, which is really, really important, because we want our parents to be able to participate in those activities and don't want their circumstances to hinder them from setting up their child for this really important process.

The next one, the next point, is to make sure that you clarify community needs and expectations regarding schools and transitions. It sounds like lots of you are having these conversations. They may not be to the point of clarity, but we at least know that it's going two ways right now. And I spoke to this a little bit earlier, when someone said, you know, they expect too much. You know, having those connections are very important, but also those agreements with those key players, and LEAs being one of them. It's really difficult for a program to ask an LEA what they want from them and then the LEA ask for the moon.

So, using an early learning framework and maybe some of the data that's presented will give you an idea about really what's possible according to the research, and then you and the LEA working through that to say, of these things that research says are possible and what Head Start has told us is important to provide, this is the framework that we can use to support the transition process; so, how can we use this to make sure that children are prepared? And then, communicate information effectively. And this is -- should be effectively and timely.

Some communities -- you have to work really hard to be informed about what's going on, and so you have to make sure, that either, you do it through your family support workers or you have someone designated in the organization; but, there's nothing worse than families missing out on enrollment opportunities, because the program wasn't informed in enough time, because we were waiting on someone to tell us. So, it's really important that you get out there and get the information in a timely fashion so, that you can inform parents effectively.

So, back to the conversation about kindergarten in your community and having these conversations with LEAs; this is a pretty interesting poll. You guys might think, "Oh, my goodness, it's April. Surely, we know what's out there." We wanted an opportunity to kind of know from our participants what opportunities were available for you for kindergarten next year. Are they part-day options, are they full-day options, or are they other options? And what we mean by other options is: Some of you have choice schools or a magnet school; some of you have alternating days. And we wanted to ask you this information for ourselves, but also for you to share with your other -- with your colleagues, because no program -- no two programs are alike, and as spread out as we are, we wanted to share kind of -- we sometimes sit in our part of the world, if you will, and feel like our options are limited or our options are

difficult, but I think hearing that other people have very difficult options or it's not just a cakewalk for them, sometimes helps us in dealing with what we have to deal with. So, Susan, do you want to describe the poll?

Dawn : Sure. So, you should see the poll available on your screen. So, what we'd like you to do is select one of those options for the question of, what options for kindergarten are available in your community? So, if it's part day, you can click that little white box next to that, full day, or if it's other, we'd like to hear what those are, and if you could put those into the question box and tell us that, that would be helpful, too. So, I see almost everyone has voted. You guys are pretty used to doing these polls. So, we have a couple more coming in, and then I will go ahead and publish it. There are your results. Okay. So, what the results are showing is that around 71 percent of people said that they're full day, about 58 percent, part day, and a few "others" were described in chat. And, for example, one of those was that California has lots of charter schools that offer various options: Half day, full day, homeschooling, but not in our -- but in our rural areas, it's mostly full days. And also in Washington State, full-day kindergarten can cost anywhere from \$205 to \$305 a month. It's absolutely true. Also, the option available to parents is that there is a public school, nearby, where parents have an option to send their children, as well as, the BIE school where the majority of our children attend.

Cecilia Robinson: Right. Well, thank you. And, I'm sorry for calling you Susan. That was Dawn on the poll.

Dawn Williams: No worries.

Cecilia Robinson: So, one of the things that we wanted to do -- thank you all for giving us your feedback. And it's great that lots of you have a full-day option, but one of the things we wanted to share with you was how important it was to know what your options are. And I can tell you as a result of this process I've learned lots. And so, one of the examples that we chose to share with you just about an option, and somebody, actually, just highlighted this, in regards to Washington.

So -- and, actually, this example was taken from Washington State, and this district has a full-day option for kindergarten and a part-day option. So, the full-day option for kindergarten is tuition-based. And so, what we have to determine for parents is, if they're a Head Start parent, is there a waiver, is there some way we can support parents through this process, can we help them find a way to pay this tuition? Because, we want to be able to provide children with the best possible option for kindergarten so that, once again, all of the hard work we've put in for the two or three years that we've had them really doesn't -- doesn't fall off.

So, how can you help parents and support them if it's a full-day option only based on tuition, or I've heard, in some cases, it's based on lottery. So, you'd have to be informed about what you can do to help them with tuition or what community resources you can send them to. Or, if it's a lottery, you have to be informed about how you can help them apply in enough time that they get fair consideration within the lottery.

The next option was part-day kindergarten, which every child has an option to. And in this particular example, they're divided in red and blue days. And the schedule is, if you're red, you go Monday, Tuesday, and alternate Wednesdays, and on blue, you go alternate Wednesdays and Thursdays, Fridays. And so, if you have parents who are subject to this part-day kindergarten, what happens on the days that they don't have kindergarten? Who's helping watch their child? Are they in some other learning environment? What can you do as a program to support that? These are all very, very important questions to ask when you think about the relationships that you need to establish to support this transition process.

So, if you have a school district that puts out these types of options for parents, all of those connections that I spoke to are really, really, really important to support that child and that family through getting through the kindergarten process. So, if you are a program that feeds into a district that offers a schedule like this, you definitely want to make sure that you've made all those appropriate connections, so that you can support families.

The last area that I'm going to focus on is alignment. And the first thing we're going to talk about in alignment are timelines and making sure that they are identified and communicated. This goes back to your conversation with LEAs and families. You want to prepare parents to be an advocate. Once those children leave us in May, the parents have to tell their stories. And you want to prepare the children for those differences in learning environments. They're going to walk into a place where they're going to be expected to do a lot of things a little differently than what they've probably been exposed to in the past.

So, the first part of this is this timeline that I spoke to you about, and this is just an example. It by no means is inclusive of all of the activities that need to take place, but it highlights some really important ones. And so what's important to note about this is that it lasts, from the time you're in preschool through the summer to kindergarten. And in preschool, it needs to start in September, if not August. But, that's when you start to prepare families for this transition to kindergarten. It's when you start having conversations -- and if it's not the child's teacher, it might be your family support, but you start having the conversation about what they're interested in for their child in kindergarten and how you can begin that process.

And as -- branching out of that, you need to be able to tell them what's available in the community. If you have kindergarten options like the ones I described, it's very important that parents start planning for that at the beginning of the school year, the beginning of their child's 4-year-old year, so that they're prepared for kindergarten.

The next one, sometime in the spring -- we just chose March, but it could be February -- you want to help parents finalize their plans for the child. Like, you've told them about the options; you've got them all the information they needed; it should be worked through your family support worker, when they're following up with them as well. You know, have you done this? Have you filled out an application? Have you thought about that? But you should be at the point to where you're finalizing.

Parents shouldn't still not know, in the spring, where their children are going to go in the fall. You want to prepare the parents to speak to the child's strengths and their needs. And once again, I'll share some strategies for doing that. And then you want to initiate that meeting between that preschool and the kindergarten teachers, however you can. Sometimes, it might have to be after school, if the LEA is not willing to provide relief time for those kindergarten teachers. But, doing what you can as a program to initiate that conversation, because it's important. And then, trying to solidify class lists as much as you can, depending on that agreement with your LEA and your relationships with them. But if you have children who need certain teacher temperaments and you know that in advance, it's very advantageous to go ahead and start identifying that early. Before you release parents in May -- some of you may end in June -- you want to provide parents with transition activities for home and I'll talk to you a little bit about that towards the end of the presentation.

But remembering that they're leaving us, but we need the work that we've started to continue with parents. Ensure that parents have completed enrollment; they're confirmed; they know where they're going -- as much as we can to our ability. We realize that we can't control the LEAs and their timing, but as much as we can, we want to make sure that parents know where they're going. And then you want to not only coordinate that classroom visit, but family visits to the LEAs, so that parents are informed about the school and their expectations.

You want to inform parents in May, before they leave you, about potential open houses, so, that they're aware of them and try to set up, if at all possible, a meeting with the kindergarten teacher or facilitate when the timing should happen. And you want to make sure -- and I heard someone say this -- that if you can, you support parents getting kids to those kindergarten screenings; because it's going to help with placement; it's going to help with instruction; it's going to help the child be more successful;

so, you want to support that process. And lastly, you want to make sure that you have informed parents about Back-to-School nights and that you've fostered those connections with teachers. And so, while this is -- a lot of this has passed, I just wanted to highlight the types of activities that should be happening and then, if it's not something that you've worked on with your staff traditionally in the past, you go ahead and lay something out like this for the fall. In regards to alignment and preparing parents as advocates, the one thing we want parents to be able to do is to speak to their strengths and needs of their child. And being able to provide a framework for that will help to smooth the process.

Some LEAs will allow programs to exchange some written information about children, if there's some agreement in place. Some don't if it's not an official record, if you will. But parents can take whatever they want to, in regards to having a conversation with their teachers or their receiving teacher about their child. So, the first example that I show you is a child profile. And I thought it was really important that on here you highlight the child's home language. If they speak a tribal language or a second language, I think it's really important that the teacher, the kindergarten teacher, be informed about that. The second area that I want to focus on is attendance, because for parents, this is going to be one of the biggest differences that they are going to experience, in regards to their child's transition. And that's because Head Start requires that we have 85 percent attendance.

However, most school districts are going to bump that up to about 94-95 percent attendance. And just so you kind of know what that means, that goes from being able to be absent about three days a month to being able to be absent only one day a month. And so, for parents who may have struggled throughout the year to have their children at school every day, this is a time for teachers to impress upon them how important it is and how much those expectations will change, as a result of their child entering kindergarten. And so, research tells us that chronic absences for children begin at age 4, and they only get worse, as they go through school. Most documentation only starts in kindergarten, because that's generally, when the child's official record starts, but we know it starts in pre-K, so, we know those parents and we know those families. But, if children are chronically absent in kindergarten, by the time they get to third grade, they're still chronically absent; you can determine in third grade whether or not they're going to be successful in school, based solely on their absence.

So, you want to make sure as teachers you highlight that. The other areas to highlight for the parents are in the areas of development -- and this is simply using the data from child outcomes that you have gathered all year long; I wouldn't make up anything new -- and just simply highlight the strengths and the areas that need to be developed. And then, you also want to put on any pertinent comments that you feel like might help the child or ease the child's transition.

And it might be something like: The child is shy, or the child is a social butterfly, but something that'll alert to the teacher to behaviors that they might need to watch for the child. And I want to caution that you don't want to put negative behaviors, because you want to make sure that you're sending the child there on definitely a good strength and a good note.

And remember the parent will be conveying this information. And so, you want parents to be able to really speak to what their child is able to do and what the teacher needs to support in the classroom. The second example is just using a child portfolio. And this can be done lots of different ways, and I'm sure many of you use this.

Obviously, we've only captured the pictures, but you would obviously support this with some writing that speaks to the strengths or the behaviors that are demonstrated in this portfolio, remembering that you still want to make sure that you highlight attendance and the importance of attendance to parents when you present a portfolio, as well. But, this portfolio and the pictures allows the parent to speak to their child's strengths in certain areas and gives a visual for them to share with the teacher, as well.

And then, we loved this picture that was highlighted from one of our grantees, and it's an "All About Me," and you see we've used her in our relationships and we just thought she was great. But -- and this All About Me, this is a perfect way also to prepare parents to be advocates. So, you can prepare this and also have some information about the child, in regards to where they live, how many people are in their family, what their favorite color is, what their favorite book is. But this gives a parent also a way to have a conversation with the teacher and introduce their child with the teacher, so that when the child comes in, the teacher is familiar with them and can jump right into supporting them in the learning process. And so, those are three ways that you as a program can prepare parents to be advocates, because once again, once they leave us, they are -- they have to see the transition process through and hopefully make that connection, so that the process for their child will be beneficial.

And then, lastly, we want to talk about preparing children for a different learning environment. We're going to share a little bit about what the research says and then, talk about what steps we want to take to inform the parents and the children. And so, changes in learning environment -- I know many of you guys are looking at this and saying, "Yep, that's about right."

So, this is based on data taken in 2009, where you can see pre-K is in the blue and kindergarten is in the purple, where you can see a dramatic drop in the amount of free choice that children are going to be provided, which really goes back to where a kindergarten teacher is saying we really need them to be able to follow directions. Well, it's because they have decreased time to make choices on their own, and

so they really have to now be able to respond to the teacher's directions. The amount of individual work is going to increase dramatically, as well. They'll still have a good amount of small group work, but what's important for teachers to highlight to parents and kids to understand is that in a pre-K classroom your ratio's going to be about 1 to 10, 1 to maybe 12 at the most. In a kindergarten classroom, it's going to be about 1 to 24. Lots of times kindergarten classrooms don't have more than one teacher in the classroom with them, and so that small group might turn in -- instead of being 5 to 6, it might be 10 to 12. And, obviously, that group, that increase in whole group instruction is something that's very different, which would require children to sit quietly for a longer amount of time, while the teacher is addressing the whole group.

So, doing what you can as a program to prepare children for this, to inform parents about that, so, that when they speak to their child -- child's teacher, if they're a kid with a short attention span, they can share that, because the expectation is going to be that they are able to withstand this decreased amount in choice and whole group instruction increase.

Lastly, for families we want to make sure that when they're supporting the transition process in the summer, that they keep up routines. Like, it's paramount that they help us out. I'm guilty of this, as a mother myself, that in the summertime, when they're out of school, you want to give them a rest; you want to give their brain a rest; but, it's so important that we relate to parents that in the summer they need to continue waking up children and getting them ready in the morning. It doesn't matter if the time changes; what matters is that they keep the routine going. We want to make sure they keep consistent mealtimes with children and keep habits at mealtimes, whether it's washing hands or setting the table or putting their own plate away. We want to make sure that they keep that in mind.

We want to make sure that they keep children involved in community and home activities, such as grocery shopping, church, and visiting family. Not only does this continue to increase the language that children are exposed to over this period of time, it also gets them interacting with familiar adults, it gets them in a habit -- or keeps them in the habit of following directions, and it allows them to continue with those kind of school rituals, if you will, of following routines that will allow that transition to continue to be successful. And then the last one is getting ready for bed -- just making sure that there's a process for that. Whatever the parent's timing is is not really what we're worried about as much as we are making sure that they have a process for getting kids to bed every night.

Obviously, we'd like for them to have the full 8 to 10 hours of rest, so that they are ready to go in the morning. But when parents say, "What can I do?" All of those concerns that teachers expressed earlier about following directions, listening to familiar adults, finishing tasks, these types of things will help parents reinforce that without having to be an educator in the summer. And they're all things that kids are already involved in.

So, just kind of to wrap this up, we've talked about the relationships and how they are important, and what I like about this graphic is it shows how the Head Start and the school need to support the family. And, that through the information, relationships, and alignment, we can keep that emotional support going, because this is hard; it's a hard transition for families. Any of us that have young children know that our babies going from programs to a full-fledged kindergarten is a really hard thing to do. So, we want to make sure that we support families and we continue through collaboration communication and continuity with our LEAs, so that we make it successful for families.

We want to end with a quote like we always do. "One of the greatest dignities of humankind is that each successive generation is invested in the welfare of each new generation." And that is from "The World According to Mister Rogers," and I think that really highlights what we've talked here about, is making sure that our kids are successful and laying that foundation through that transition to kindergarten, so that they can go on to do better.

And our last slide is our resources. And this will come out to everyone. But, I've tried to highlight transition activities or school districts that have great transition activities for children for them to – for you all to use in supporting your families in this process. So, thank you very much.

Dawn: All right, thank you, Cecilia, and we look forward to being with you all again next month. Take care.