



**PARTNERSHIPS
FOR SUSTAINED LEARNING:
A GUIDE TO CREATING
HEAD START-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS**



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Head Start

This document was prepared under Contract no. GS-10F-0311K of the Office of Head Start, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, by the Head Start Resource Center, 1000 Wilson Blvd., Suite 1000, Arlington, VA 22209.



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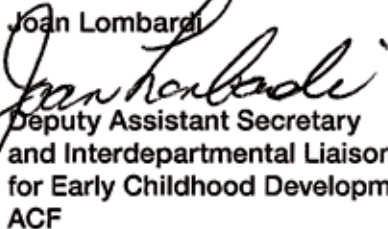
Dear Head Start Colleagues:

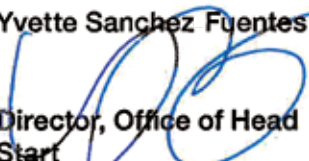
We are pleased to introduce a new Head Start resource, *Partnerships for Sustained Learning: A Guide to Creating Head Start–School Partnerships*. This *Guide* represents one important part of a larger Head Start school readiness agenda and focuses on the importance of creating better continuity across Head Start and the early years of elementary school. Research and experience have taught us that when children's experiences build on what has come before and connect to what comes next, they are more likely to be successful long-term learners.

This *Guide* is unique in that it is designed to be used at the local level by Head Start program directors and staff as a tool for working with their elementary school counterparts. The underlying assumption is that programs and practices established at the local level are best suited to meet the highly contextualized strengths and needs of the community being served and therefore are more likely to be effective. To that end, it places school leaders, classroom teachers and staff, and families squarely at the center of the work.

The *Guide* includes a Blueprint for Continuity that outlines key components, guiding principles, and enabling mechanisms that programs can use to lay a foundation for reaching out to and working with schools. In addition, the *Guide* provides practical planning tools and concrete examples of ways that Head Start programs and schools could agree to work together to create more continuity.

It is our hope that this *Guide* will become a valuable resource to you as you continue to work to assure that children are successful learners in Head Start and beyond.

Joan Lombardi

Deputy Assistant Secretary
and Interdepartmental Liaison
for Early Childhood Development,
ACF

Yvette Sanchez Fuentes

Director, Office of Head
Start

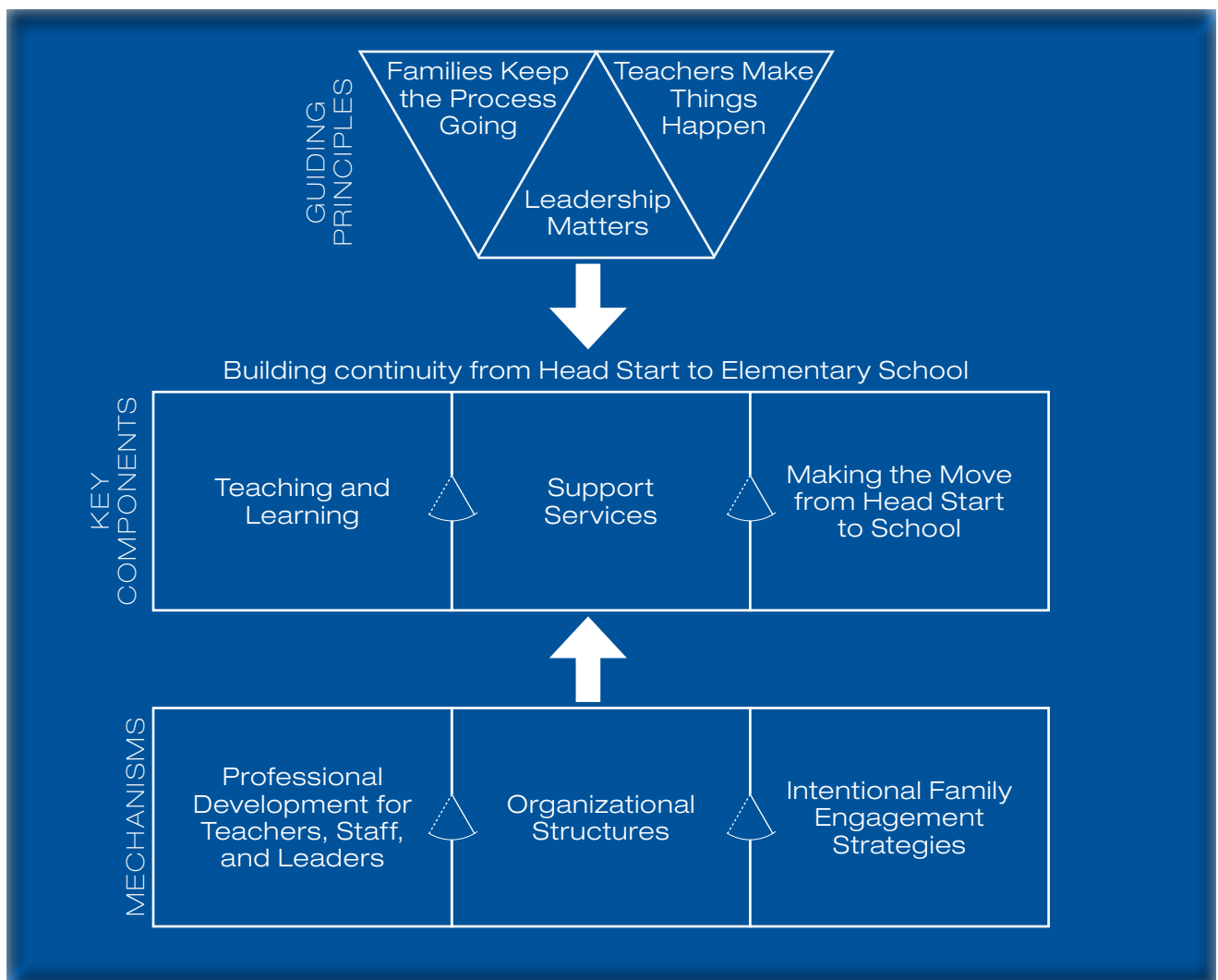
FOREWORD

THIS *GUIDE* IS INTENDED TO BE USED primarily by Head Start and early elementary grades staff and administrators to develop partnership agreements designed to increase continuity across their two systems. The underlying assumption is that programs and practices established at the local level by practitioners are best equipped to meet the highly contextualized strengths and needs of



BLUEPRINT FOR CONTINUITY

When children experience more continuous teaching and learning opportunities across Head Start and the early grades of elementary school, readiness gains are more likely to be sustained and children are more likely to continue to be successful. Effective continuity depends on attention to creating linkages across all aspects of children's Head Start-school experiences, including the right people in the process, and implementing strategies to build capacity and sustain progress.





the community/school population being served. This *Guide* provides classroom teachers—who play a central role in the partnership planning and implementation process—with examples and suggestions for working together to create more continuity across their respective programs. Preschool administrators, school principals, and program specialists are also important in providing leadership

as well as creating flexibility and opportunities for planning and working together. To that end, the *Guide* provides guidance and strategies for how leadership can be effective in supporting and sustaining efforts to increase continuity through partnerships. A common thread throughout the *Guide* is a strong focus on engaging families as members of the planning process and partnership team.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINED LEARNING: A GUIDE TO CREATING HEAD START–SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

“By fostering seamless transition of children and continuity of services between Head Start and the elementary schools, HHS will begin to better integrate Head Start into a continuum of care that will positively impact the school readiness and long-term success of Head Start children.”

—Improving School Readiness and Promoting Long-Term Success:
The Head Start Roadmap to Excellence

INTRODUCTION

As part of its overall school readiness goal, Head Start joins a growing national effort that recognizes the importance of creating more comprehensive systems of education that are linked from one stage of learning to the next—reducing the chances that children will be lost along the way and increasing opportunities for positive academic, social, and economic outcomes. The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 and the *Head Start Program Performance Standards* include many provisions calling on Head Start agencies to coordinate with school districts to promote the effective movement of children into the school system and increase continuity of pedagogy and support services. In addition, the *Head Start Roadmap to Excellence*, the quality initiative of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, sets a course for what it will take to reach improved school readiness and long-term success by laying out a set of specific actions, including those designed to integrate Head Start into a continuum of high quality early care and education spanning the years before and after children enter school (Head Start–grade 3).

Specifically, the *Roadmap* addresses “Supporting Seamless Transitions and Continuity through Head Start, Kindergarten and Third Grade” and lays out goals for supporting programs to build relationships with local elementary schools and families. Creating

Head Start–School Partnerships was conceived as an important strategy that could be used to build relationships with schools to support transitions and increase continuity across the two systems.

LINKING HEAD START PROGRAMS AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS THROUGH PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

This *Guide* focuses at the community level on the importance of supporting efforts to link local Head Start programs and their feeder elementary schools and families. It presents a blueprint that may be used by Head Start and elementary school staff and leadership to revise or enhance existing partnerships or establish new agreements designed to create more continuity for children as they move from one learning system to the next. Working together, Head Start programs and schools may use this *Guide* to collectively plan and implement a set of strategies and actions they intend to use to strengthen linkages and increase continuity across their programs. Identifying ways for local Head Start programs and schools to work together is not without its challenges. However, identifying successful strategies and activities that can be implemented locally across the two systems is important to assure that children are exposed to seamless learning experiences that can close the school readiness gap and help them to sustain gains made in Head Start.

The *Guide* is based on a Blueprint for Continuity that identifies three important areas or components where Head Start programs and schools may focus their partnership efforts. Further, the Blueprint identifies guiding principles and a set of key mechanisms that can inform joint planning. To ensure efforts to build continuity are comprehensive, effective partnerships will focus broadly on creating continuity across the following following three key components:

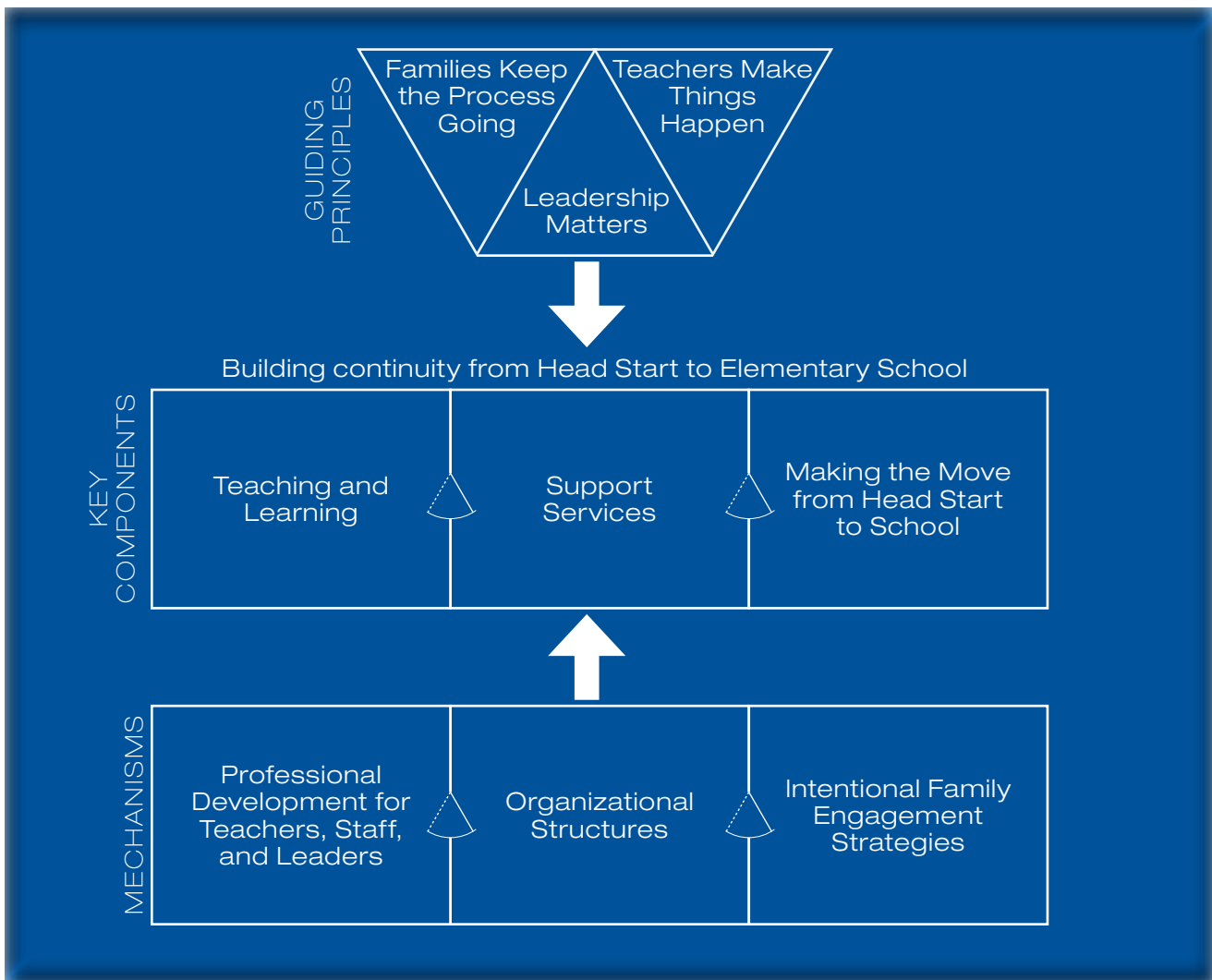
1. **TEACHING PRACTICES AND LEARNING EXPECTATIONS:** Creating new links to build on, sustain, and expand children’s learning.
2. **DELIVERY OF SUPPORT SERVICES:** Providing

needed services that contribute to children’s ability to be successful in school.

3. **MAKING THE MOVE FROM HEAD START TO SCHOOL:** Focusing on the move to school as a key transfer point and opportunity to support school readiness and family engagement.

Making partnerships work depends to a large extent on the relationships formed by individuals across the two systems. Effective relationships will move the process. Guiding principles for working together to create partnership agreements identify teachers, school and program leaders and administrators, and families as key

BLUEPRINT FOR CONTINUITY



contributors to the process. As they work together to create and maintain partnerships that result in strong and functional connections, Head Start and school staff are encouraged to follow these three guiding principles:

1. **LEADERSHIP MATTERS:** When Head Start and school leaders are engaged in and supportive of efforts to create more continuity across programs, the likelihood of success is enhanced.
2. **TEACHERS MAKE THINGS HAPPEN:** When teachers are given the information, flexibility, and support they need to work together for continuity, plans and ideas become reality.
3. **FAMILIES MUST BE PART OF THE PICTURE:** When families are continuously engaged as active partners in every aspect of their child's teaching and learning experiences, across programs, they strengthen and support Head Start–school continuity.

Finally, in order to assure that partnerships work, lead to positive results, and are sustained over time, Head Start and school staff are encouraged to utilize the following three key mechanisms as they plan specific strategies and approaches:

1. **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT** opens up communication, builds shared understanding, and creates more continuity in programs and practices across levels.
2. **ESTABLISHING ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES** for working and planning across Head Start programs and schools supports sustainability and institutionalizes best practices.
3. **INTENTIONAL FAMILY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES** assure that gains made are sustained at home.



HOW TO USE THE GUIDE

This *Guide* is intended to be used as a starting point to inform the work of each partnership to identify elements that fit the context and represent efforts that are within the capacity of the program and the school. It is not likely that any two agreements will look the same, but instead will reflect the unique characteristics of the communities served and the priorities set for working together. Each partnership agreement should address each of the three components, but specific agreement details should be determined by the Head Start and school staff working in collaboration.

HOW THE GUIDE IS ORGANIZED

The *Guide* is organized around the three key components, mechanisms, and guiding principles identified in the Blueprint for Continuity. It can be used as a communication and planning tool for programs and schools beginning to work together to create partnership agreements. It provides flexible guidance, strategies, actions, and concrete examples for Head Start and school staff to use to inform their planning.

For each component in the Blueprint, the *Guide* will provide:

- A goal statement and background information



- A section entitled “Get the Big Picture,” which provides an extensive menu of possible action items and strategies that early learning programs and schools could consider as they begin to think about ways to work together
- A section entitled “Scale Down to What Works,” which provides a more realistic example of what an actual Head Start–school partnership might look like for each component
- A set of worksheets to help narrow the focus and arrive at specific partnership items

Once the strategies for working together have been identified, then the worksheets can be used to carry out the harder work of deciding who should be involved, how the work will get done, what resources are needed, and when the work will begin. When these details have been determined and agreed upon, then a formal partnership agreement can be written and signed.

PLANNING THE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

STEP 1. Using the attached worksheets, review suggested strategies and activities, check ones that you feel could realistically be implemented in your Head Start–school situation, and brainstorm others that could be added.

STEP 2. For each strategy selected, discuss and answer the following questions:

- Who needs to be involved?
- What will we need to do to make this happen?
- What resources will we need?
- When do we need to get started on this work?
- How will we measure progress?

STEP 3. Based on your decisions, partners may choose to draw up a formal agreement that names the Head Start program and the school, summarizes the work to be done, and includes dates and signatures of program director and school principal. The worksheets can be used as a more detailed partnership plan that can provide timelines, guide the ongoing activities, and track progress and outcomes.

Component 1: Creating continuity in teaching and learning

GOAL: Support children’s sustained learning by identifying and implementing common elements of standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessments that are appropriate for all learners and can increase pedagogical alignment and continuity across programs.

For children to be successful learners, teaching approaches and learning experiences must be aligned—that is, delivered in such a way that they enable children to build on what they have already accomplished and be prepared for what comes next. When early learning standards, curricula, instructional practices, and assessment are linked to one another within a single grade or learning level, they are said to be in horizontal alignment. When curricula, instructional practices, assessment, and expectations for achievement follow continuous paths across levels of learning, they are said to be in vertical alignment. Keeping children on track and avoiding fade-out in learning gains is best accomplished when teaching and learning is aligned both horizontally and vertically.

BIG PICTURE OPTIONS

**HEAD START AND
ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL LEADERS
working together
can:**

- Facilitate teacher time to exchange information or plan together
- Support classroom efforts to create more continuity in standards, curriculum, assessment, and instruction across programs
- Participate in cross-program efforts to align curricula, instruction, and assessment (such as mapping curricula and identifying gaps and redundancies)
- Create a continuum of learning by aligning state early learning and K-3 standards and the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework with curricula
- Develop mechanisms to share assessment data and create cross HS/school teams to study and use data
- Participate on each other’s governance or planning committees to increase understanding of organizational culture and educational priorities
- Attend joint training sessions and establish leadership learning communities

**HEAD START AND
SCHOOL STAFF
working together
can:**

- Meet together regularly to exchange information on the learning environment and activities, time allocation, assessment and tracking progress, instructional approaches, and rules and routines used in Head Start and early grades classrooms
- Participate in classroom exchanges to learn about instructional techniques and materials used and to develop new ideas about how to align instruction
- Develop lessons collaboratively, share outcomes and discuss implications
- Map curriculum goals across levels and use standards to align instructional practices vertically
- Develop common assessment tools, such as observation records, anecdotal observations or portfolios, that can be used over time across preschool and the early grades

**PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
OPPORTUNITIES to
support continuity
in teaching and
learning include:**

- Joint training workshops to increase common understanding of child development and pedagogical approaches for teaching children in Head Start and the early grades
- Establishing cross-system learning communities of teachers to increase communication, exchange of teaching strategies, and peer support
- Provision of in-class mentors or coaches who work across program/grade levels
- Leadership academies and communities of practice for school administrators and program directors
- Convening Head Start–school end-of-year meetings for teachers and leaders to discuss effective instructional practices and sustain their use in subsequent years.
- Create study groups/action teams to develop joint plans to address toughest problems in areas such as tracking child progress and addressing achievement disparities, student engagement, family outreach, etc.

Component 1: Creating continuity in teaching and learning (continued)

BIG PICTURE OPTIONS (CONTINUED)

STRUCTURAL ARRANGEMENTS that support continuity in teaching and learning include:

- Joint Head Start–school Leadership Teams to review current approaches and practices and work together to find areas where continuity in curriculum, instruction, and assessment could be increased
- P-3 partnerships are part of annual Head Start and school improvement plans

WAYS TO ENGAGE/ SUPPORT FAMILIES in efforts to increase continuity in teaching and learning include:

- Creation and use of common protocols across Head Start programs and schools for communicating with families about their children’s school experiences, such as:
 - Hearing about and planning ways to support children’s learning at home
 - Receiving regular information about children’s classroom experiences
 - Receiving regular updates on children’s individual progress and engagement
 - Being asked about their perceptions and concerns regarding their children’s progress
 - Being part of developing individual learning plans for their children
 - Support parent engagement on Head Start and/or school decision-making and planning committees

SCALE DOWN TO WHAT WORKS

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS for creating continuity in teaching and learning might include plans to:

- Participate in joint professional development activities and training designed to build common understanding of child development, research, and best practices in teaching and learning for children in early learning through grade 3
- Convene leadership academies and peer learning communities that build the capacity of early learning/school administrators to lead efforts to increase continuity
- Implement information exchange opportunities for teachers and administrators to become familiar with classroom environments, teaching practices, and program operations in early learning programs and schools
- Establish shared data points and procedures to track learning progress and other indicators such as chronic absence across early learning programs and schools
- Align K-3 standards with the state early learning guidelines and *Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework*
- Designate common characteristics of curricula, instruction, and assessments that must be in place across early learning and K-3 to increase continuity and alignment
- Designate early learning–school leadership or planning teams to oversee and facilitate efforts to create more continuity across curricula, instruction, and assessments
- Develop and use common protocols for sharing information on children’s learning experiences with families

HOW TO USE THE WORKSHEETS

Using the attached worksheets, review suggested strategies and activities, check ones that you feel could realistically be implemented in your Head Start–school situation, and brainstorm others that could be added.

For each strategy selected, discuss and answer the following questions:

- Who needs to be involved?
- What will we need to do to make this happen?
- What resources will we need?
- When do we need to get started on this work?
- How will we measure progress?

Worksheet 1a. Creating Continuity in Teaching and Learning

WHAT PROGRAM DIRECTORS AND SCHOOL LEADERS CAN DO TO LINK TEACHING AND LEARNING

Strategy	Who needs to be involved?	What will it take to make this happen?	What resources will we need?	When should we start?	How will we measure progress?
<input type="checkbox"/> Establish communication process to share information on curriculum and expectations					
<input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate teacher time to exchange information, plan or attend joint training					
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop common or aligned definitions of school readiness					
<input type="checkbox"/> Support classroom efforts to create continuity in standards, curriculum, assessment, and instruction across programs					
<input type="checkbox"/> Participate in cross-program efforts to align curricula, instruction, and assessment (such as mapping curricula and identifying gaps and redundancies)					

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...

Worksheet 1a. Creating Continuity in Teaching and Learning

WHAT PROGRAM DIRECTORS AND SCHOOL LEADERS CAN DO TO LINK TEACHING AND LEARNING

Strategy	Who needs to be involved?	What will it take to make this happen?	What resources will we need?	When should we start?	How will we measure progress?
<input type="checkbox"/> Participate on each other's governance or planning committees to increase understanding of culture and educational priorities					
<input type="checkbox"/> Attend joint training sessions for program directors and school leaders, and establish leadership learning communities					
<input type="checkbox"/> Review and analyze Head Start and kindergarten assessment data, and make joint plans to adjust curriculum and instruction for quality improvement					
OTHER THINGS THAT PROGRAM DIRECTORS AND SCHOOL LEADERS CAN DO					
<input type="checkbox"/>					
<input type="checkbox"/>					

Worksheet 1b. Creating Continuity in Teaching and Learning

WHAT TEACHERS AND STAFF CAN DO TO LINK TEACHING AND LEARNING

Strategy	Who needs to be involved?	What will it take to make this happen?	What resources will we need?	When should we start?	How will we measure progress?
<input type="checkbox"/> Meet together regularly to exchange information on current classroom practices, assessment, and instructional approaches used in preschool and early grades classrooms					
<input type="checkbox"/> Participate in classroom exchanges to learn about instructional techniques and materials used, and to develop new ideas about how to align instruction					
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop lessons collaboratively, share outcomes, and discuss implications					
<input type="checkbox"/> Map curriculum goals across levels and use standards to align instructional practices vertically					

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Worksheet 1b. Creating Continuity in Teaching and Learning

WHAT TEACHERS AND STAFF CAN DO TO LINK TEACHING AND LEARNING

Strategy	Who needs to be involved?	What will it take to make this happen?	What resources will we need?	When should we start?	How will we measure progress?
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop common assessment tools, such as observation records, anecdotal observations or portfolios, that can be used across Head Start and the early grades					

OTHER THINGS THAT HEAD START AND SCHOOL STAFF CAN DO

<input type="checkbox"/>					
<input type="checkbox"/>					
<input type="checkbox"/>					
<input type="checkbox"/>					

Worksheet 1c. Creating Continuity in Teaching and Learning

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES THAT COULD BE PLANNED TO LINK TEACHING AND LEARNING

Strategy	Who needs to be involved?	What will it take to make this happen?	What resources will we need?	When should we start?	How will we measure progress?
<input type="checkbox"/> Establish joint preschool/school Leadership Teams to review current approaches and practices and work together to find areas where continuity in curriculum, instruction, and assessment could be increased					
<input type="checkbox"/> Include aligned or articulated curriculum goals and expectations for children entering kindergarten into annual school and Head Start improvement plans					
<input type="checkbox"/> Where possible, offer job-embedded professional development to Head Start and school teachers and staff through mentoring and coaching					

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Worksheet 1c. Creating Continuity in Teaching and Learning

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES THAT COULD BE PLANNED TO LINK TEACHING AND LEARNING

Strategy	Who needs to be involved?	What will it take to make this happen?	What resources will we need?	When should we start?	How will we measure progress?
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop leadership academies and communities of practice for school administrators and program directors					
<input type="checkbox"/> Convene end-of-year meetings for Head Start and school teachers, and program directors and principals, to discuss effective instructional practices and sustain their use in subsequent year(s)					
OTHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES					
<input type="checkbox"/>					
<input type="checkbox"/>					

Worksheet 1d. Creating Continuity in Teaching and Learning

STRUCTURES THAT COULD BE PUT IN PLACE TO LINK TEACHING AND LEARNING

Strategy	Who needs to be involved?	What will it take to make this happen?	What resources will we need?	When should we start?	How will we measure progress?
<input type="checkbox"/> Meet together regularly to exchange information on current classroom practices, assessment, and instructional approaches used in preschool and early grades classrooms					
<input type="checkbox"/> Participate in classroom exchanges to learn about instructional techniques and materials used, and to develop new ideas about how to align instruction					
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop lessons collaboratively, share outcomes, and discuss implications					
<input type="checkbox"/> Map curriculum goals across levels and use standards to align instructional practices vertically					

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Worksheet 1d. Creating Continuity in Teaching and Learning

STRUCTURES THAT COULD BE PUT IN PLACE TO LINK TEACHING AND LEARNING

Strategy	Who needs to be involved?	What will it take to make this happen?	What resources will we need?	When should we start?	How will we measure progress?
OTHER STRUCTURES THAT COULD BE PUT IN PLACE					
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Are Families Engaged?

- Are families encouraged and given guidance on ways to support learning at home?
- Do families receive ongoing information on classroom experiences?
- Do staff routinely communicate with individual families about their child's progress and engagement in school?
- Do staff seek feedback from families on their perceptions of children's progress and engagement in school?
- Are families actively involved in developing individual learning plans for their children?

Component 2: Creating continuity in delivery of support services

GOAL: Increase continuity of service delivery across Head Start and elementary schools as a way to reduce both academic and nonacademic barriers to achievement and ensure sustained learning.

Conditions that children encounter outside of school can play a significant role in how well they are able to engage in learning. When barriers to learning are reduced or eliminated, children are more likely to perform well in school. Head Start programs and schools recognize that meeting the needs of children in all areas—including health, social-emotional, and cognitive development—play an important role in assuring school readiness and sustained learning success. However, when children make the move to elementary school, there is an increased risk that they may become disconnected from important family support services.

When Head Start programs, elementary schools and community service providers work together—especially across the crucial time when children and families are moving from Head Start to elementary school—the likelihood that existing services will be sustained and needed new services will be accessed increases. This is especially critical for the support of special populations of children and families, such as dual language learners, children with developmental delays or disabilities, children in the welfare system, and children who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Children and/or families need:

- Information and access to school-based educational and non-educational services
- Information and access to community-based services
- Information on health and nutrition resources
- Targeted support and information to address the needs of children with disabilities
- Help navigating the service-provision process
- Targeted Head Start–school support to sustain existing and access new services needed at school entrance
- Access to resources and information in their home language
- Support to families to build a sense of efficacy and become confident advocates for their children

BIG PICTURE OPTIONS

HEAD START AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEADERS working together can:

- Share information on current service delivery resources offered through early learning programs, schools, and the community
- Identify protocols for developing and disseminating joint resource guides on services
- Agree to share family support and parent outreach staff to work with individual families to provide information and help them access needed services
- Use joint participation on local community early childhood councils to increase understanding of available resources and improve communication and collaboration for serving families in early learning programs and in schools

HEAD START AND SCHOOL STAFF working together can:

- Involve community service providers on planning teams
 - Offer joint training and information sessions for parents on accessing community services
 - Conduct joint family needs assessments as part of transition planning
 - Exchange information, with parental consent, on services and supports currently being used by families
 - Include service delivery in individual transition plans
 - Conduct meetings with parents and prepare print materials in a language that parents can understand
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Component 2: Creating continuity in delivery of support services (continued)

BIG PICTURE OPTIONS (CONTINUED)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES to enhance service delivery continuity include:

- Joint training for teaching staff, leaders, and program specialists on topics such as the impact of non-academic barriers to achievement, availability of local support services, recognizing family stress, and working with families to identify needs and access services
- Leadership training on the impact of non-academic barriers to achievement and organizational strategies to address barriers

STRUCTURAL ARRANGEMENTS that support continuity of services include:

- Shared family support staff and parent outreach staff
- Cross-system comprehensive services planning team or early childhood council services subcommittee
- Creation of parent-to-parent support groups that include parents of children birth to eight
- Joint efforts to create service hubs centralized out of Head Start programs and/or elementary schools

WAYS TO ENGAGE/SUPPORT FAMILIES in efforts to increase continuity in service delivery include:

- Create Head Start–school family peer support networks
- Conduct joint needs assessments with families as part of transition planning
- Confer regularly with parents regarding the needs of children and provide information on available services

SCALE DOWN TO WHAT WORKS

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS for continuity in delivery of support services might include plans to:

- Develop a protocol for exchanging information about existing services being provided and new services needed
- Meet jointly with families to discuss needs, connect children to available school-based services such as after school care or academic tutoring
- Develop joint plans for assessing needs and connecting dual language learners and their families to services
- Offer joint training to families and provide resources to inform families of available school- and community-based services
- Participate in joint professional development activities focused on linking services
- Designate staff to serve as service delivery liaisons for families as children make the move to school

HOW TO USE THE WORKSHEETS

Using the attached worksheets, review suggested strategies and activities, check ones that you feel could realistically be implemented in your Head Start–school situation, and brainstorm others that could be added.

For each strategy selected, discuss and answer the following questions:

- Who needs to be involved?
- What will we need to do to make this happen?
- What resources will we need?
- When do we need to get started on this work?
- How will we measure progress?

Worksheet 2a. Creating Continuity in Delivery of Support Services

WHAT PROGRAM DIRECTORS AND SCHOOL LEADERS CAN DO TO LINK SERVICES

Strategy	Who needs to be involved?	What will it take to make this happen?	What resources will we need?	When should we start?	How will we measure progress?
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide opportunities for family support, health, and extended services staff from schools and Head Start programs to meet together to exchange information and work together					
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop an understanding of the services offered in Head Start programs and schools by meeting together to share information on existing services offered to children and families					
<input type="checkbox"/> Participate on local community early childhood councils to increase understanding of available resources and improve communication and community collaboration					

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Worksheet 2a. Creating Continuity in Delivery of Support Services

WHAT PROGRAM DIRECTORS AND SCHOOL LEADERS CAN DO TO LINK SERVICES

Strategy	Who needs to be involved?	What will it take to make this happen?	What resources will we need?	When should we start?	How will we measure progress?
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OTHER THINGS THAT PROGRAM DIRECTORS AND SCHOOL LEADERS CAN DO

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Worksheet 2b. Creating Continuity in Delivery of Support Services

WHAT TEACHERS AND STAFF CAN DO TO LINK SERVICES

Strategy	Who needs to be involved?	What will it take to make this happen?	What resources will we need?	When should we start?	How will we measure progress?
<input type="checkbox"/> Schedule time to meet together to exchange information on services currently offered to children and families					
<input type="checkbox"/> Share information, with parental consent, on needs and existing services being delivered to children and families					
<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct joint needs assessments with parents					
<input type="checkbox"/> Include strategies for sustaining existing and providing new school-based extended learning opportunities in individual transition plans					

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Worksheet 2b. Creating Continuity in Delivery of Support Services

WHAT TEACHERS AND STAFF CAN DO TO LINK SERVICES

Strategy	Who needs to be involved?	What will it take to make this happen?	What resources will we need?	When should we start?	How will we measure progress?
<input type="checkbox"/> Work together to compile and distribute information to families about how to access community-based services such as health, cultural, recreational, social support and programs linked to learning skills					
<input type="checkbox"/> Work together to create social networks of support for families					
OTHER THINGS THAT TEACHERS AND STAFF CAN DO					
<input type="checkbox"/>					
<input type="checkbox"/>					
<input type="checkbox"/>					

Worksheet 2c. Creating Continuity in Delivery of Support Services

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES THAT COULD BE PLANNED TO LINK SERVICES

Strategy	Who needs to be involved?	What will it take to make this happen?	What resources will we need?	When should we start?	How will we measure progress?
<input type="checkbox"/> Offer joint training for Head Start and school teachers and staff on topics that build staff capacity to understand the importance of and support access to local or school-based services and extended learning opportunities for children and families. Topics could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of non-academic barriers to achievement • Recognizing family stress • Working with families to identify needs and access services • Identifying available services in the community 					

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Worksheet 2c. Creating Continuity in Delivery of Support Services

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES THAT COULD BE PLANNED TO LINK SERVICES

Strategy	Who needs to be involved?	What will it take to make this happen?	What resources will we need?	When should we start?	How will we measure progress?
<input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate classroom exchanges for Head Start and kindergarten teachers to help inform them of practices and procedures in each setting					
<input type="checkbox"/> Create communities of practice or offer joint leadership training to principals and program directors on transition issues and best practices					
OTHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES					
<input type="checkbox"/>					
<input type="checkbox"/>					
<input type="checkbox"/>					

Worksheet 2d. Creating Continuity in Delivery of Support Services

STRUCTURES THAT COULD BE PUT IN PLACE TO LINK SERVICES

Strategy	Who needs to be involved?	What will it take to make this happen?	What resources will we need?	When should we start?	How will we measure progress?
<input type="checkbox"/> Designate and support shared family support or family outreach specialist between Head Start programs and schools					
<input type="checkbox"/> Establish joint Head Start–school parent-to-parent support groups					
OTHER STRUCTURES THAT COULD BE PUT IN PLACE					
<input type="checkbox"/>					
<input type="checkbox"/>					

Are Families Engaged?

- Do families have information on available community resources?
- Are staff trained to identify family stress and use of best practices for linking families to services?
- Is the school/center environment welcoming to families? Are families aware of services available through the school/center?
- Are family members consulted regularly with regard to the needs of their children for support services and extended learning opportunities?
- Does the center/school have a designated parent resource area?

Component 3: Creating continuity for making the move from Head Start to elementary school

GOAL: Establish cooperative relationships between families, Head Start and school staff to increase collaboration, involvement, and understanding of the process of moving from Head Start to school and ease the transition by increasing children’s preparation across domains of learning and familiarity with the new school environments and expectations.

Family-school relationships established in Head Start and sustained as the child enters elementary school can have a positive, lasting impact on family engagement and children’s learning. Equal exchange of information and opportunities to share concerns and insights helps to build a foundation for successful transition for children and families. When Head Start and school staff plan and work together to create opportunities for families to be engaged in supporting the move to school and in sustaining their involvement in leadership activities, the resulting continuity of care and education helps to increase families’ sense of effectiveness in the process and ensure continued engagement in their child’s learning at home and at school.

For the transition from a Head Start program to school to be a productive and positive experience, activities and experiences must be both intentional and targeted to the needs of children and families. Practices must take the best of Head Start and schools to create a coordinated process that involves families, teachers, school leaders, support staff, and community members. Activities must be varied to meet the needs of all children and families, ongoing to make the greatest impact, and focused on both individuals and groups of children and families. The importance of assuring that transition planning and activities are appropriate and responsive to the cultural and linguistic characteristics of children and families must be a key consideration across transition strategies.

Families need opportunities to:

- Learn about the new school environment and expectations
- Share information and insights about their child with Head Start and elementary school teachers
- Be a part of planning the transition from Head Start to elementary school
- Connect with other families
- Link with other parent leaders to sustain leadership roles established in Head Start through membership on committees and parent organizations
- Learn about ways to prepare for transition and support learning at home
- Understand the importance of transitioning from Head Start to school and its impact on learning

Children need opportunities to:

- Learn about their new school and school routines
- Meet their new teacher
- Maintain connection with their former preschool teacher
- Practice new skills they will need in school
- Connect with peers

Component 3: Creating continuity for making the move from Head Start to elementary school *(continued)*

BIG PICTURE OPTIONS

TO SUPPORT CHILDREN AND ENGAGE PARENTS IN MAKING THE TRANSITION TO SCHOOL

HEAD START AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEADERS can:

- Provide common times for Head Start and school staff to meet together to plan activities and exchange information
- Make planning for the transition to elementary school a part of annual Head Start/elementary school improvement planning process
- Take an active role in Head Start–school transition planning
- Facilitate the exchange of data across programs

HEAD START AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS can:

- Develop a series of home activities that families can do with their children to build new skills both during the Head Start and kindergarten/first year of school
- Conduct family meetings about issues related to making the move from Head Start to school
- Create newsletters and other resources that go to families during the Head Start and kindergarten years
- Plan jointly offered family training and orientation sessions
- Develop common messages on important issues such as regular attendance, good health and nutrition
- Conduct kindergarten registration events and parent information sessions
- Create a formal process for sharing data and information about children
- Work together to identify discontinuities children may encounter in making the move to school and develop strategies to alleviate or help children to deal with them
- Plan summer orientation events and activities
- Make arrangements for the Head Start teacher to visit students in their new classrooms
- Plan activities and provide materials across the Head Start and kindergarten year that help children understand and cope with transition issues

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES can be offered that include:

- Joint training for Head Start and school staff on issues relating to transitioning to school, such as a review of current research on transitions and their impact on achievement and best practices for working with parents and supporting children during the move from Head Start to elementary school
- Communities of practice and training academies for principals and program directors
- Classroom exchanges to inform teachers of practices and procedures in Head Start and kindergarten classrooms

STRUCTURAL ARRANGEMENTS can be established that:

- Create cross-program transition planning teams to develop formal plans for making the move to school
- Identify family-school liaisons to facilitate and work with families to plan for making the move to school
- Establish parent-to-parent peer mentoring programs to match Head Start parent leaders to school parent leaders to create or sustain engagement in leadership roles

Component 3: Creating continuity for making the move from Head Start to elementary school *(continued)*

SCALE DOWN TO WHAT WORKS

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS for creating continuity for making the move from Head Start to school might include plans to:

- Implement, with parental consent, a procedure for transferring and receiving records
- Conduct joint meetings with families to discuss needs of individual children and develop plans that reflect the language and culture of each child and family.
- Plan and conduct early learning program and school activities designed to help parents:
 - Become familiar with school staff, environments, policies, and procedures
 - Understand the academic and social expectations for children
 - Continue to support children's learning at home – including preparing for the move from early learning program to school
 - Sustain or assume parent leadership roles at the school
 - Meet with other parents to exchange information and make connections.
- Plan and conduct Head Start program-school activities to facilitate on-time kindergarten/school registration
- Participate in joint professional development activities and training focused on working effectively with parents

HOW TO USE THE WORKSHEETS

Using the attached worksheets, review suggested strategies and activities, check ones that you feel could realistically be implemented in your Head Start-school situation, and brainstorm others that could be added.

For each strategy selected, discuss and answer the following questions:

- Who needs to be involved?
- What will we need to do to make this happen?
- What resources will we need?
- When do we need to get started on this work?
- How will we measure progress?

Worksheet 3a. Creating Continuity in Making the Move from Head Start to School

WHAT PROGRAM DIRECTORS AND SCHOOL LEADERS CAN DO TO LINK SUPPORTS FOR MAKING THE MOVE FROM HEAD START TO SCHOOL

Strategy	Who needs to be involved?	What will it take to make this happen?	What resources will we need?	When should we start?	How will we measure progress?
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide opportunities for Head Start and school teachers and staff to meet together to plan transition activities					
<input type="checkbox"/> Make the transition to school part of the respective annual Head Start and School Improvement planning process					
<input type="checkbox"/> Be active participants in joint Head Start–school transition planning and activities					
<input type="checkbox"/> Create a formal process for sharing data and information about children entering school (with parental consent as needed)					

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...

Worksheet 3a. Creating Continuity in Making the Move from Head Start to School

WHAT PROGRAM DIRECTORS AND SCHOOL LEADERS CAN DO TO LINK SUPPORTS FOR MAKING THE MOVE FROM HEAD START TO SCHOOL

Strategy	Who needs to be involved?	What will it take to make this happen?	What resources will we need?	When should we start?	How will we measure progress?
<input type="checkbox"/> Participate in a center/school mapping exercise to identify elements in the respective environments that differ from each other and consider ways to create more environmental continuity where possible					
OTHER THINGS THAT PROGRAM DIRECTORS AND SCHOOL LEADERS CAN DO					
<input type="checkbox"/>					
<input type="checkbox"/>					
<input type="checkbox"/>					
<input type="checkbox"/>					

Worksheet 3b. Creating Continuity in Making the Move from Head Start to School

WHAT TEACHERS AND STAFF CAN DO TO LINK SUPPORTS FOR MAKING THE MOVE FROM HEAD START TO SCHOOL

Strategy	Who needs to be involved?	What will it take to make this happen?	What resources will we need?	When should we start?	How will we measure progress?
<input type="checkbox"/> Review data and information on children, including individualized transition plans developed during the Head Start year					
<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct joint kindergarten registration events and parent information sessions					
<input type="checkbox"/> Connect the Head Start child and kindergarten teacher by scheduling classroom visits and joint home visits					
<input type="checkbox"/> Introduce children and families to new school settings by inviting them to school events during the year before kindergarten entry					

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...

Worksheet 3b. Creating Continuity in Making the Move from Head Start to School

WHAT TEACHERS AND STAFF CAN DO TO LINK SUPPORTS FOR MAKING THE MOVE FROM HEAD START TO SCHOOL

Strategy	Who needs to be involved?	What will it take to make this happen?	What resources will we need?	When should we start?	How will we measure progress?
<input type="checkbox"/> Plan and conduct joint summer orientation events and activities to introduce children and families to the new school environment and routines before school starts					
<input type="checkbox"/> Participate in a center/school mapping exercise to identify elements in each environment that differ and consider ways to create more environmental continuity where possible					
<input type="checkbox"/> Jointly develop and distribute informational materials for families and children during the Head Start year and summer to introduce them to their new school/school expectations					

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Worksheet 3b. Creating Continuity in Making the Move from Head Start to School

WHAT TEACHERS AND STAFF CAN DO TO LINK SUPPORTS FOR MAKING THE MOVE FROM HEAD START TO SCHOOL

Strategy	Who needs to be involved?	What will it take to make this happen?	What resources will we need?	When should we start?	How will we measure progress?
<input type="checkbox"/> Make arrangements for the Head Start teacher to visit students in their new kindergarten classroom(s)					
OTHER THINGS THAT TEACHERS AND STAFF CAN DO					
<input type="checkbox"/>					
<input type="checkbox"/>					
<input type="checkbox"/>					
<input type="checkbox"/>					
<input type="checkbox"/>					

Worksheet 3c. Creating Continuity in Making the Move from Head Start to School

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES THAT COULD BE PLANNED TO LINK SUPPORTS FOR MAKING THE MOVE FROM HEAD START TO SCHOOL

Strategy	Who needs to be involved?	What will it take to make this happen?	What resources will we need?	When should we start?	How will we measure progress?
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide joint training for Head Start and school teachers and staff on issues related to making the move from Head Start to school, including for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and literature on transitions to school and their impact on learning • Research and literature on family involvement in the learning process • Best practices for engaging and working with families as their children make the move to school 					
<input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate classroom exchanges for Head Start and kindergarten teachers to help inform them of practices and procedures in each setting					

CONTINUED...

Worksheet 3c. Creating Continuity in Making the Move from Head Start to School

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES THAT COULD BE PLANNED TO LINK SUPPORTS FOR MAKING THE MOVE FROM HEAD START TO SCHOOL

Strategy	Who needs to be involved?	What will it take to make this happen?	What resources will we need?	When should we start?	How will we measure progress?
<input type="checkbox"/> Create communities of practice or offer joint leadership training to principals and program directors on transition issues and best practices					
OTHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES					
<input type="checkbox"/>					
<input type="checkbox"/>					
<input type="checkbox"/>					
<input type="checkbox"/>					

Worksheet 3d. Creating Continuity in Making the Move from Head Start to School

STRUCTURES THAT COULD BE PUT IN PLACE TO LINK SUPPORTS FOR MAKING THE MOVE FROM HEAD START TO SCHOOL

Strategy	Who needs to be involved?	What will it take to make this happen?	What resources will we need?	When should we start?	How will we measure progress?
<input type="checkbox"/> Establish Head Start–school planning teams to develop formal procedures for supporting children and families as they transition to school					
<input type="checkbox"/> Identify family liaisons to work across early learning programs and schools to share information with parents and facilitate transitions					
<input type="checkbox"/> Establish parent-to-parent peer mentoring programs to match Head Start parent leaders and school parent leaders to assure parents stay/ become engaged					
<input type="checkbox"/>					

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Worksheet 3d. Creating Continuity in Making the Move from Head Start to School

STRUCTURES THAT COULD BE PUT IN PLACE TO LINK SUPPORTS FOR MAKING THE MOVE FROM HEAD START TO SCHOOL

Strategy	Who needs to be involved?	What will it take to make this happen?	What resources will we need?	When should we start?	How will we measure progress?
☐					
☐					
☐					

Are Families Engaged?

- Are families involved in transition planning?
- Are families informed about transition issues?
- Are Head Start family members connected to parent peers in the schools?
- Do families understand expectations for their children when they start kindergarten?
- Do family members have opportunities to be involved with their child at school?

CONCLUSION

As work to create effective practices and policies to support continuity across Head Start and the early grades continues, it will take additional effort to ensure that systems are linked in meaningful ways. Linking systems requires more than simply putting adjoining pieces together. To be effective, attempts must be intentional and build interrelated sets of experiences and expectations that can ultimately result in better outcomes for children.

Early learning programs are well-positioned to assume a leadership role in demonstrating effective approaches to building continuity through partnerships that recognize the importance of engaging families and that are aimed at increasing continuity in teaching and learning, the delivery of support services, and making the move from Head Start to school. Successful implementation can lead to models of best practice that will inform the work of other schools and programs and contribute to long term student success. ■