



Site Leadership Interview Protocol

Intended for: [Head Start Center Director / Elementary Principal]

Before we begin, I would like to note that all information we collect from you and all others today and in the future will be kept private. Your responses today will be used to help better understand how Head Start programs, elementary schools, and community organizations are supporting children and families as they transition into kindergarten. We estimate our conversation today to last approximately one hour and thirty minutes. Additionally, federal law states that an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB number for this data collection is 0970-0XXX and the expiration date is XX/XX/XXXX. I can repeat that, if you'd like to keep it for reference.

In this interview, we would like to learn about your role and what you and your [center / school] do to support children and families' transition into kindergarten. Specifically, we are interested in any collaboration you may have with local [districts and elementary schools / Head Start programs].

We recognize that this past year or so has been unprecedented with the COVID-19 pandemic. For the purpose of our study, we would like you to think about your experiences during this [program/school] year.

I. Background



I'd like to begin by learning a little about you and your background and your [center / school].

1. How long have you been a [Head Start center director / principal]? How long have you been at this [center / school]?
2. What did you do prior to becoming a [Head Start center director / principal] at this [center / school]?
 - a. *Probe for prior elementary and early childhood experience (elementary-level teaching or admin, childcare settings, school-based preschool settings).*
3. How would you describe the racial/ethnic and/or cultural/linguistic characteristics of the staff in your [center / school]?
 - a. How similar or different is the staff racial/ethnic and/or cultural/linguistic backgrounds from the characteristics of the community served by this [center / school]?
 - b. *If not mentioned, probe for racial/ethnic diversity of staff and of the community served*
 - c. *If not mentioned, probe for cultural/linguistic diversity of staff and of the community served*

II. Transition Perspectives and Supports

In this next set of questions, we would like to learn more about your views about transitions into kindergarten, including how you define successful transitions, who you engage with around transitions, and what roles and responsibilities people take on.

4. What does a "successful transition to kindergarten" mean to you?
 - a. *Probe for what it means for children, families, and teachers*

- b. *[If school readiness comes up] Probe for how school readiness is tied to transitions*
5. When do you consider the transition process to begin and end? *[Share that for the remainder of interview, we will be thinking about transitions as from year before kindergarten, through their entry into kindergarten, until the end of their kindergarten year]*
6. What types of training or supports are provided by your [center / school] to improve children's transition from pre-k to kindergarten? Can you share a specific example?
- Probe for roles and responsibilities of [center / school] staff.*
 - Did you receive any training related to diversity, equity, and inclusion? If yes, how, if at all, has that training informed your approach to transitions?
 - In what ways, if any, does your [agency / district] support your center/school around the kindergarten transition?
 - How do you and other [center / school] staff support teachers around the kindergarten transition?
 - How do you and other [center / school] staff support children and families around the kindergarten transition?
 - Probe for differentiated supports for special populations of students and families (e.g., exposure to trauma, special education needs, cultural and linguistic variations, exposure to the child welfare system)*
7. How has COVID-19 impacted the strategies and practices your [center / school] uses to support kindergarten transitions?



8. Who else in your [center / school] is responsible for supporting transitions?
 - a. How do you collaborate with these other [center / school] staff around kindergarten transitions?
9. Do you work with any community or social service organizations/agencies to help support families and children around the transition into kindergarten?
[If yes]
 - a. What is your relationship with these organizations/agencies?
 - b. In what ways, if any, do you work together to support children and families around the kindergarten transition?

III. Family Engagement in Transition Process

Now I'd like to learn a little more about how your [center / school] involves families in the transition process.

10. What do you believe families can do to help support their child's transition to kindergarten?
11. How does your [center / school] involve or engage with families around the transition to kindergarten?
 - a. How, if at all, has this changed since COVID?
 - b. About how many of your families participate in these practices?
 - c. What strategies has your [center / school] used to involve families that are harder to reach?
 - i. How successful have those efforts been?



IV. Partnership with [Districts and Elementary Schools / Head Start Centers]

This next set of questions will focus on how your [center / school] partners with [elementary schools / Head Start centers].

[For school-based leaders only] We would like to hear about your experiences working with Head Start programs specifically, rather than with other types of preschool or early childhood care and education providers.

12. Approximately how many children transition from [your Head Start centers into kindergarten / from Head Start centers into your kindergarten classrooms] this year?

a. How many different [schools do children in your center transition into / Head Start centers do children transition from] this year?

13. Do [center / school] staff collaborate with staff from any of these [elementary schools / Head Start centers] around kindergarten transitions? [If no, skip ahead to question #25.]

[If yes]

a. With how many [schools / Head Start centers]?

b. Do you work with [district / school / Head Start program in our case study]?

For the next set of questions, we will focus specifically on your relationship with [district(s) / school(s) / Head Start program(s) in our study].

14. How did your relationship(s) with these/this [district(s) / school(s) / program(s)] develop?

a. Who do you or other [center / school] staff work with most closely within these/this [schools / Head Start centers]?

i. Probe for name, position, and title

- b. How long have you had a relationship with [district(s) / school(s) / program(s) in our study]?
15. How has the way you collaborate with [elementary school(s) / Head Start program(s) in our study] staff changed since COVID-19, if any?
16. When you or your staff collaborate with [the elementary school(s) / Head Start program(s) in our study] around kindergarten transitions, what do you/they do together?
- Probe for specific practices, such as: information sharing, meetings, professional development/training and/or coaching around transitions, opportunities to learn about kindergarten standards, etc.*
 - Probe for strategies and practices that are differentiated for special populations of students and families (e.g., exposure to trauma, special education needs, cultural and linguistic variations, exposure to the child welfare system)*
 - Please describe how you collaborate around those practices.
17. In what ways did your existing relationships with [elementary districts/schools / Head Start in our study] help your [center / school] navigate kindergarten transitions during the COVID-19 pandemic?
18. If done in collaboration with [elementary districts/schools / Head Start in our study], who funds the work? (e.g., PD/training/coaching around transitions)
- Probe for each of the practices and activities they do in collaboration with the elementary districts/schools/Head Start programs in our study*
19. What, if any, barriers or challenges have you faced in working with [district(s) / school(s) / Head Start program(s) in our case study] around kindergarten transitions?

- d. How, if at all, has this changed since COVID?
20. Please think of your [center's / school's] goals around the kindergarten transition. How much are those goals consistent with those of the [elementary school(s) / Head Start center(s) in our study]?
- d. [*If goals are consistent*] What has helped you and [elementary school's/ Head Start program's] staff be on the same page about how to support children and families around the kindergarten transition?
21. In what ways are your kindergarten transition goals different from these [elementary / Head Start] staff?
- a. *Probe around planning for transitions, sharing information, engaging families*
- b. What would help create more alignment in those goals?
- c. What are barriers to creating that alignment?
22. You just described your relationship with [elementary district(s) / school(s) / Head Start program(s) in our study]. Is there anything notable that you would like to share about how you work with *other* [elementary districts / schools / Head Start programs]?
23. In what ways do you think collaborations with staff from [elementary schools / Head Start programs] change how staff/teachers approach transitions?
- a. *Probe for practices, understanding of their roles, beliefs, engagement with families.*

24. How do you know when your teachers/staff have benefited from collaborative experiences with staff from [elementary schools / Head Start centers] (for example, joint PD or training)?

a. *Probe for whether they use particular data to evaluate and monitor effectiveness of collaborative practices around transitions*

25. Across all the transition-related practices your center/school is implementing, which ones do you believe are most effective? What makes them so effective?

a. *Probe for how these practices lead to positive outcomes for teachers, families, and children. If not mentioned, ask about the outcomes raised in response to Q3 (definition of a successful kindergarten transition).*

b. Are some transition practices more effective for certain types of families? If so, why might that be?

26. Are teachers in your [center / school] able to implement these practices well? Please explain.

V. Transition Policies

27. Do specific federal, state, or local policies directly influence your [center's / school's] work around kindergarten transitions? If yes, can you describe the ways they influence your work?

28. What, if any, policies, regulations, or formal guidance has your [center / school] put in place around kindergarten transitions?

- a. Do any of these policies (either federal or ones you have put in place) specifically focus on collaborating with [elementary schools / Head Start programs]? In what ways?
 - b. Do any of these policies specifically focus on coordinating with community partners around transitions? In what ways?
 - i. *Probe for information sharing, joint professional development, etc.*
 - c. [If don't bring up MOA/MOU] Do you have a memorandum of understanding with any local [school districts / Head Start programs]? If so, which [districts / programs]?
 - i. What is in the MOA/MOU?
 - d. What, if any, types of data do the [district(s) / elementary school(s) / Head Start program(s) in our study] share with you? What about from other partners?

[If they receive data]

 - i. Who collects those data?
 - ii. How are they shared?
 - iii. How does your [program / school] use those data?
 - e. What information/data, if any, does your [program / school] share with [district(s) / school(s) / Head Start program(s) in our study]
29. Are there any incentives or sanctions that influence how you are implementing these transition policies? If so, please explain.



30. What supports do you think would help you and your staff implement these policies most effectively?
- a. *Probe for resources, professional supports, shared vision/values, partners, specific practices and strategies, other policies.*

VI. Final Reflections and Wrap Up

I have a couple of final wrap-up questions for you.

[Mention to school-based leaders] Please think specifically about Head Start as an early childhood care and education program.

31. Among all of the practices and strategies you mentioned, what would you say are the ones you think are most useful/important for Head Start children's and families' transition success? For teachers? Why?
- a. What do you think is needed to help improve and sustain coordination, collaboration, and communication between Head Start and elementary schools in order to have effective Head Start to kindergarten transitions?
 - b. *Probe for differences in needs based on specific populations*

Lastly, at the beginning of the interview, we noted that COVID-19 may have impacted how your [center / school] typically functions.

32. What do you wish your [center / school] had in place to better support kindergarten transitions during COVID-19?
- a. What might help alleviate those challenges moving forward?



Those are all the questions I have for you. Is there anything else you think is important for me know about transitions that we have not discussed?