



Teacher & Staff Interview Protocol

Intended for: [Head Start Teachers / Kindergarten Teachers / Elementary Staff]

Possible elementary “staff” interviewed might include a school psychologist/counselor, instructional leaders who work with early grade teachers, or special education staff.

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 / one hour / one hour and fifteen 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 do to support children and families’ transition into kindergarten. In addition, we are interested in learning more about how you work with staff in local [Head Start centers / elementary schools].

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 teacher / kindergarten teacher / [insert staff role]]?

How long at this [center / school]?

- a. [Head Start only] What age children do you teach?
2. What did you do prior to becoming a [Head Start teacher / kindergarten teacher / [insert staff role]] here?
 - a. *Probe for prior elementary, ECE experience (elementary-level teaching or admin, childcare settings, school-based preschool settings)*
 - b. *Probe for how long they have been in elementary education and ECE-based work altogether*
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 in your [center / school] 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 do you do to support children around the transition to kindergarten? Can you give me an example?
 - a. What do you do to support families? Can you give me an example?
 - b. How do you support children and families with specialized needs?
 - i. *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. What types of training or supports are provided by your [center / school] to improve children's transition from preschool to kindergarten? Can you share a specific example?
 - a. How does your [center director / principal] support you and other staff around the kindergarten transition?

- b. 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?
8. What kinds of transition activities do you think are most beneficial to children? To families?
 - a. Do some children or families benefit more than others from certain types of transition activities? If so, please explain.
9. Who else in your [center / school] is responsible for supporting transitions?
 - a. How do you collaborate with these other [Head Start / school] staff around kindergarten transitions?
10. 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 you involve families in the transition process.

11. What do you think families can do to help support their child's transition to kindergarten?
12. How do you involve or engage with families around the transition to kindergarten?
 - a. How, if at all, has this changed since COVID?
13. Of the strategies you use, which do parents engage in the most?

- a. About how many of your families would you say do these practices?
 - b. What strategies have you used to increase engagement with families that are harder to reach?
 - i. How successful have those efforts been?
14. What benefits have you seen as a result of families' efforts to help their child prepare for the kindergarten transition?
15. What challenges do you see families face in preparing their child for the transition?
 - a. *Probe for challenges as experienced by special populations of students and families (e.g., exposure to trauma, special education needs, cultural and linguistic variations, exposure to the child welfare system)*

IV. Partnership with [Head Start / Elementary School] Teachers and Staff

This next set of questions will focus on how you collaborate with teachers and/or staff in local [elementary schools / Head Start centers].

[For school-based teachers/staff] 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.

16. Approximately how many children transition [from your center to kindergarten / into your classroom from Head Start] each year, if you know?
17. How many different [elementary schools / Head Start centers] did the children in your [center transition into / classroom transition from], this year?

- a. [For Head Start teacher only:] How many different kindergarten classrooms did they transition into this year?
18. Do you collaborate with any teachers or staff at any of these [schools/ Head Start programs] around kindergarten transitions? [IF NO, move to question #30]
- a. [If yes] With how many different [schools / centers]?
- b. [If yes] Which [schools/ Head Start centers] do you work with the most around kindergarten transitions?
- c. Do you work with [school(s) / Head Start program(s) in our case study]?

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

19. How did your relationship(s) with staff in these/this [school(s) / program(s)] develop?
- a. Who do you work with most closely in these/this [school(s) / Head Start programs(s)]?
- i. *Probe for name(s), position(s), and title(s)*
- b. How long have you had a relationship with [school(s) / program(s) in our study]?
- c. How often do you collaborate with [Head Start program(s) / elementary school(s) in our study] staff?
20. How has the way you collaborate with [elementary school(s) / Head Start program(s) in our study] staff changed since COVID-19, if any?
21. When you collaborate with staff from [elementary school(s) / Head Start program(s) in our study] around kindergarten transitions, what do you do together?

- a. *Probe for specific practices and activities, such as: information sharing, meetings, professional development/training and/or coaching around transitions, opportunities to learn about kindergarten standards, etc.*
 - b. *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)*
 - c. Please describe how you collaborate around those practices.
22. What, if any, barriers or challenges have you faced in working with staff from [elementary school(s) / Head Start programs in our study] around kindergarten transitions?
- a. How, if at all, has this changed since COVID?
23. Please think of your own goals around supporting children's transition into kindergarten. How much are those goals consistent with those of [elementary school(s) / Head Start program(s) in our study] staff you work with?
- a. In what ways are they consistent?
 - b. [If goals are consistent] What has helped you and the staff you work with from [elementary school(s) / Head Start program(s) in our study] be on the same page about how to support children and families around the kindergarten transition?
24. In what ways are your kindergarten transition goals different from those of the staff at [elementary school(s) / Head Start program(s) in our study]?
- 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?
25. Of all the ways you have collaborated with [Head Start program(s) / elementary school(s) in our study] staff, what has been most useful?
- Probe: For you? For other teachers? For children? For families?*
 - Can you give me examples of some of the benefits you've seen for children and families?
26. Of all the ways you have collaborated with staff from [elementary school(s) / Head Start program(s) in our study], what has been least useful? Why do you think that is?
27. You just described your relationship with [Head Start programs / districts / schools in our study]. Is there anything notable that you would like to share about how you work with staff from *other* [schools / Head Start programs]?
28. What kinds of supports have helped you better collaborate with [elementary / Head Start] staff around transitions?
- Probe for the role that the [center director / principal] plays in helping to initiate these opportunities*
 - Probe for time available to collaborate, professional development opportunities, etc.*
29. How has collaboration with [elementary / Head Start] staff changed how you approach kindergarten transitions?
30. In your opinion, how necessary or important is it to connect with [elementary school / Head Start] staff in order to successfully support children and families for the kindergarten transition?

V. Final Reflections and Wrap Up

Lastly, I have a couple of wrap up questions for you.

31. Overall, what kinds of supports do you wish you had to better help families and children transition to kindergarten?
32. Is there anything else you would like to share about how COVID-19 impacted your approach or collaborations with [elementary school / [Head Start](#)] staff around kindergarten transitions?

Those are all the questions I have for you. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about transitions?