

Appendix B—Recruitment Materials

B1: Project Overview

About the study: The purpose of this project is to better understand how to improve children’s transitions from Head Start programs to elementary schools. Central to this project is a systems approach that recognizes that effective transitions require intentional engagement from *both* the sending programs (Head Start) and the receiving programs (elementary schools). Transition strategies and practices must be implemented at multiple levels – among classroom teachers in Head Start and kindergarten, families and teachers, elementary school principals and Head Start directors, Head Start grantees and school districts, and state and federal agencies.

Study sponsor: The Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) within the Administration for Children and Families, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is the study sponsor.

Research Questions: The project aims to explore the definition of “successful transitions” by addressing the following research questions:

1. What strategies and practices are Head Start programs implementing to support children as they transition from Head Start to kindergarten? What is the content, quality, and quantity of these strategies and practices? How are they experienced by children, families, teachers, and other direct service providers?
2. What strategies and practices are elementary schools implementing to support children as they transition from Head Start to kindergarten? What is the content, quality, and quantity of these strategies and practices? How are they experienced by children, families, teachers, and other direct service providers?
3. What characterizes relationships among Head Start programs, elementary schools, and other community partners that support children’s successful transitions from Head Start to kindergarten? What are the specific facilitators of, and barriers to, successful transitions?
4. What are the key short- and long-term outcomes of transition strategies and practices for children, families, Head Start teachers, and kindergarten teachers? What are the key contextual factors and mechanisms that result in these key outcomes?

Project Activities: The project includes several key activities:

1. Review of the knowledge base regarding kindergarten transitions, including a literature review and qualitative interviews with key informants that will catalogue current transition strategies, operationalize “successful” strategies, and situate those strategies in various community and organizational contexts.
2. Development of a theory of change for kindergarten transitions that takes into account important contexts within Head Start and elementary schools, and assesses whether current strategies align to the theory of change in promoting positive outcomes for children, families, and Head Start and kindergarten teachers.

3. Scan of existing measures and data sources to determine alignment with the theory of change and identify any gaps or limitations in measurement that could inform development of new measures.
4. Implementation of a comparative multi-case study describing approaches to supporting transitions from Head Start to kindergarten.
5. **Development of new instruments intended to measure Head Start and K-12 systems-level supports for the transition from Head Start to kindergarten.** This is the focus of our ask today.
6. Secondary analyses of existing data related to kindergarten transitions.
7. Development of design options for future descriptive research studies of supports for and outcomes of transitions from Head Start to kindergarten.

Stakeholders and experts are being engaged and consulted at critical junctures throughout the project.

Sharing what's learned: Insights from these key tasks will identify promising kindergarten transition strategies and inform changes to practices, professional supports, and policy in Head Start, other early care and education settings, and elementary schools. Findings will only be shared in internal reports. High-level (summary) findings may be shared in public reports.

About the project team: OPRE has contracted NORC, with subcontracts to Child Trends and the National P-3 Center, to conduct the project. The point of contact at OPRE is Kathleen Dwyer.

B2: Cognitive Interview FAQ

Researchers from Child Trends, NORC, and the National P-3 Center are working on a project to better understand existing organizational strategies and supports for the kindergarten transition, as well as barriers to and opportunities for collaboration between the Head Start and K-12 systems.

To expand upon the information we currently have and fill in important knowledge gaps regarding transition practices, systems and policy level alignment, and organizational level partnerships across these systems, we have developed a new survey, and we are looking for educators and education administrators like yourself to participate in a one-time voluntary cognitive interview to help improve the survey.

For your time and expertise, you will receive a \$40 gift card.

What is a cognitive interview?

A cognitive interview helps researchers learn whether all study participants understand questions on a survey the same way, and in the way intended by the researchers. It also helps us to streamline a survey by letting us know whether some questions are more difficult to answer than others.

What will I be doing in a cognitive interview?

You will be given a survey and asked to fill it out as if you were filling out any other survey alone at home. The only difference will be that you will narrate your thought processes by reading out loud and thinking out loud. Throughout the interview, an interviewer will ask you questions about your experiences and thoughts as you answer each question on the survey. There are no right or wrong answers. Rather, we are interested in hearing your perspective on the questions asked.

How long is the cognitive interview?

The cognitive interview should take about 90 minutes to complete.

When and where will the cognitive interview take place?

The cognitive interview will be held on a date that works for you and the interviewer, ideally over the next few weeks. You will be asked to participate virtually. The interview will be conducted via an online video conferencing software service.

B3: Outreach Email to Head Start Grantee Directors

Note: The purpose of this email is to notify the Head Start grantee about the interview and to request participation in a phone/video call to assess interest in participating in the cognitive interview. It will be sent after interest in the project is provided via an initial email conversation with a study team member or referral from another participant.

TO: [HEAD START GRANTEE DIRECTOR]

FROM: [PROJECT DIRECTOR]

CC: [OUTREACH COORDINATOR]

SUBJECT: Participation in a study on the Head Start to kindergarten transition

Dear [NAME],

Thank you for your interest in helping us improve our administrator surveys on Head Start to kindergarten transitions!

We are in the early stages of a project that seeks to examine organizational factors that facilitate successful transitions from Head Start to kindergarten. To fill a key gap in the knowledge base around kindergarten transitions, we have developed a set of surveys meant to record administrators' experiences with and knowledge of kindergarten transition practices, policies, perspectives, and professional supports. We hope to recruit a small group of Head Start and K-12 administrators to test this survey and provide feedback.

To provide feedback on your survey experience, we are requesting to conduct a "cognitive interview," where we will ask you to take the survey alongside one of our researchers and 'think aloud' as you work through it. We may also ask you about your understanding and decision-making process regarding specific questions. For context, I am going to attach a document that has more details about the cognitive interview process.

As a thank you for your time and expertise, we are pleased to offer a \$40 gift card.

If you are interested in participating by completing a survey and interview, please respond to this email with available times and dates for a brief phone call (maximum of 10 minutes). For any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach me at [email] or [phone number].

Thank you,

Sara Amadon

Attached: Project Description and Cognitive Interview FAQ

B4: Outreach Email to Local Education Agency Administrators

Note: The purpose of this email is to notify the Local Education Agency Administrator about the nomination to participate in the interview and to request participation in a phone/video call to assess interest in participating in the cognitive interview. It will be sent after interest in the project is provided via an initial email conversation with a study team member or referral from another participant.

TO: [LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCY ADMINISTRATOR]

FROM: [PROJECT DIRECTOR]

CC: [OUTREACH COORDINATOR]

SUBJECT: Participation in a study on the Head Start to kindergarten transition

Dear [NAME],

Thank you for your interest in helping us improve our administrator surveys on Head Start to kindergarten transitions!

We are in the early stages of a project that seeks to examine organizational factors that facilitate successful transitions from Head Start to kindergarten. To fill a key gap in the knowledge base around kindergarten transitions, we have developed a set of surveys meant to record administrators' experiences with and knowledge of kindergarten transition practices, policies, perspectives, and professional supports. We hope to recruit a small group of Head Start and K-12 educators and administrators to test this survey and provide feedback.

To provide feedback on your survey experience, we are requesting to conduct a "cognitive interview," where we will ask you to take the survey alongside one of our researchers and 'think aloud' as you work through it. We may also ask you about your understanding and decision-making process regarding specific questions. For context, I am going to attach a document that has more details about the cognitive interview process.

As a thank you for your time and expertise, we are pleased to offer a \$40 gift card.

If you are interested in participating by completing a survey and cognitive interview, please respond to this email with available times and dates for a brief phone call (maximum of 10 minutes). For any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach me at [email] or [phone number].

Thank you,

Sara Amadon

Attached: Project Description and Cognitive Interview FAQ

B5: Reminder Email for Administrators after Screener Call

Note: The purpose of this email is to thank the Administrator for participating in the outreach call and acknowledge 1) interest in participating in the study or 2) declining further consideration.

TO: [AGENCY ADMINISTRATOR]

FROM: [PROJECT DIRECTOR]

CC: [OUTREACH COORDINATOR]

SUBJECT: Your participation in the study “Understanding Children’s Transitions from Head Start to Kindergarten (HS2K)”

Dear [NAME],

Thank you very much for talking with us about the Head Start to Kindergarten Transition (HS2K) project.

[IF INTERESETED AND WOULD LIKE TO BE CONSIDERED]

We are glad that you are interested in participating in an interview. As noted on the call, the interview will be:

[INSERT TIME AND MODE OF CONTACT]

We look forward to connecting then!

[IF NOT INTERESTED AND DECLINED FURTHER CONSIDERATION]

We are sorry to learn that you will be unable to participate in an interview. We completely understand and appreciate that you took the time to consider it.

Regards,

[Name]

Attached: Project Description

B6: Thank You Letter for Participation



1155 East 60th Street
2nd Floor
Chicago, IL 60637
(773) 256-6000
fax (773) 256-6001

www.norc.org

Dear <Name>,

Thank you for taking part in the *Understanding Children's Transition from Head Start to Kindergarten (HS2K)* project. We appreciate your time and insights!

The information you shared will provide the Administration for Children and Families with important information about Head Start grantees' strategies and practices on transitioning children from Head Start to kindergarten.

If you have any additional questions, you may contact us at [number] or HS2Kproject@norc.org.

Thank you again for your help with this important research.

Sincerely,

Stacy Ehrlich, Ph.D.

NORC at the University of Chicago

Kyle DeMeo Cook, Ph.D.

K Research Strategies, Inc.