Harvard Family Research Project

Resource Guide for Early Childhood Transitions:

Annotated Bibliography

Harvard Family Research Project
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Introduction

This bibliographic resource provides a selected listing of journal articles, research briefs, and reports that focus on early childhood transitions and school readiness.. The resource covers a variety of topics central to the issue of early childhood transitions, including family engagement and home–school and program–school partnerships. Because the Head Start program is one of the most frequently studied early childhood initiatives, many of the resources focus on the transition from Head Start to preschool/kindergarten. The resources in this guide are organized into sections by topic, as follows:

- **Family Engagement and Transitions: Head Start**
- **Family Engagement and Transitions: Early Childhood Programs other than Head Start**
- **Head Start–School Partnerships and Transitions**
- **Home–School Partnerships and Transitions**
- **General School Readiness**

Harvard Family Research Project is committed to providing information on a range of research in the area of family engagement and early childhood, and we developed this resource as an aide to help your own research in early childhood transitions. The resource was put together based on information contained in journal and report abstracts; inclusion in this bibliography does not equate with endorsement of the reports and/or articles. Links are provided to resources which are publicly available on the Web, and DOI numbers[1] are provided for those journal articles which may be available electronically for a fee.

About HFRP

Since 1983, Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) has helped stakeholders develop and evaluate strategies to promote the well being of children, youth, families, and their communities. We work primarily within three areas that support children's learning and development—early childhood education, out-of-school time programming, and family and community support in education. Underpinning all of our work is a commitment to evaluation for strategic decision making, learning, and accountability.

Building on our knowledge that schools alone cannot meet the learning needs of our children, we also focus national attention on complementary learning. Complementary learning is the idea that a systemic approach, which integrates school and nonschool supports, can better ensure that all children have the skills they need to succeed.

For more information about HFRP's work in early childhood education, please visit: www.hfrp.org/earlychildhood

[1] Many of the citations in this bibliography include a Digital Object Identifier (DOI); this alphanumeric string is assigned by the International DOI Foundation to help identify content and provide a consistent link to its location on the internet. You may access the article by clicking on the DOI link, or by entering the number into the DOI Resolver at CrossRef.org.

Family Engagement and Transitions: Head Start

Boyce, L. K., Innocenti, M. S., Roggman, L. A., Norman, V. K. J., & Ortiz, E. (2010). Telling stories and making books: Evidence for an intervention to help parents in migrant Head Start families support their children's language and literacy. *Early Education and Development, 21*(3), 343–371.
doi:10.1080/10409281003631142

This study analyzed the effectiveness of the Storytelling for the Home Enrichment of Language and Literacy Skills (SHELLS) intervention in conjunction with Head Start services, compared to Head Start services alone. Mothers and children were evaluated in the mothers' language-supporting behavior, home language and literacy environment, and the type and frequency of words used during a shared narrative. Mothers in the SHELLS group were more likely to use language elicitation strategies and therefore increase the quality of the child's home language and literacy environment. This type of intervention (e.g., culturally sensitive, explicit instruction about literacy, tools for enhancing children's literacy) can be successful in supporting children in families that face at-risk factors like poverty, language, and migration.

Stormshak, E. A., Kaminski, R. A., & Goodman, M. R. (2002). Enhancing the parenting skills of Head Start families during the transition to kindergarten. *Prevention Science, 3*(3), 223–234.
doi:10.1023/A:1019998601210

This study examined the effects of a parenting group and home visiting program (Project STAR: Steps to Achieving Resilience) on caregiver involvement among rural Head Start families. Results revealed that both parenting groups and home visiting interventions were effective at enhancing parenting skills. Home visits conducted by familiar staff (i.e., the parenting group facilitator) were particularly successful at improving parenting skills. The authors conclude that home visiting interventions are an effective means of maintaining a connection with Head Start families as they transition from Head Start to kindergarten.

West, J., Malone, L., Hulsey, L., Aikens, N., Tarullo, L. (2010). *ACF-OPRE Report: Head Start children go to kindergarten.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation.
http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/hs/faces/reports/hs_kindergarten/hs_kindergarten.pdf

The Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) was first launched in 1997 as a periodic longitudinal study of program performance. This report is the fourth in a series that uses data from the FACES 2006 cohort to describe the population of 3- and 4-year-olds who entered Head Start for the first time in fall 2006, their families, and their classrooms. Based on findings from teacher reports, the most common activities to ease the transition from preschool to school included phoning or sending information to parents, having parents and children visit the kindergarten program, and offering an orientation for parents prior to the start of the school year. The report also documents parent involvement in kindergarten, with the most common type of involvement being attendance at parent–teacher conferences.

Family Engagement and Transitions: Early Childhood Programs Other Than Head Start

Bohan Baker, M., & Little, P. (2002). *The Transition to Kindergarten: A Review of Current Research and Promising Practices to Involve Families.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project. www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/the-transition-to-kindergarten-a-review-of-current-research-and-promising-practices-to-involve-families

This review of research about the transition to kindergarten focuses on promising transition practices and the role that schools might play in their implementation. Findings include developing core partnerships (parents–school personnel, parent–child, and community groups), clearly defining the parents' roles in children's education (through home visits, informational meetings, and kindergarten visits), and teacher professional development (in facilitating transitional practices in the classroom and with families).

Cooper, C. E., Crosnoe, R., Suizzo, M., & Pituch, K. A. (2010). Poverty, race, and parental involvement during the transition to elementary school. *Journal of Family Issues, 31*(7), 859–883. doi:10.1177/0192513X09351515

This study analyzed the effects of poverty on parent involvement with children transitioning into kindergarten, and examined whether racial differences influenced these dynamics. Using data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study–Kindergarten Cohort, the authors found that although poverty has negative effects on children's home environments, this can be mediated through the provisions of cognitively stimulating materials, organized activities, and school-based parent involvement. In terms of racial differences, only Asian children were unaffected by poverty in terms of their kindergarten achievement; Hispanic children's reading abilities benefited the most from home-learning activities; and school involvement was a significant factor in mediating poverty and mathematics skills for Black and White families. The authors suggest the effects of poverty vary by race, and early achievement implications of parental involvement may not be the same for children of different races.

Giallo, R., Treyvaud, K., Matthews, J., & Kienhuis, M. (2010). Making the transition to primary school: An evaluation of a transition program for parents. *Australian Journal of Educational & Developmental Psychology, 10*, 1–17. www.newcastle.edu.au/Resources/Research%20Centres/SORTI/Journals/AJEDP/Vol%2010/V10_giallo_et_al.pdf

This study assessed the effectiveness of a Transition to Primary School Parent Program in Australia. The program focused on strengthening parent knowledge and confidence to manage the transition process, increasing parent involvement in children's learning, and improving children's adjustments to starting school. Parents participating in the program had positive outcomes in parental self-efficacy, involvement, and program satisfaction.

Higgins, L., Stagman, S., & Smith, S. (2010). *Improving supports for parents of young children: State-level initiatives*. New York: National Center for Children in Poverty, Columbia University, Mailman School of Public Health. http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_966.html

This report offers information for states to support parent involvement in young children's learning. The report discusses research that links parenting to child outcomes; provides questions to guide decisions about programs that could address different families' needs in a state or territory; outlines efforts by four states to establish specific goals related to parenting supports and to make progress

toward achieving those goals; and makes recommendations for state-level work in this area that reflect current research and states' experience. The report seeks to build states' and districts' knowledge about how to prepare for parents' needs, questions, and concerns about school readiness.

Schulting, A. B., Malone, P. S., & Dodge, K. A. (2005). The effect of school-based kindergarten transition policies and practices on child academic outcomes. *Developmental Psychology, 41*(6), 860–871.

This study examines the effect of school-based kindergarten transition policies and practices on child outcomes across the kindergarten school year based on data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study–Kindergarten Cohort. Results show that the effect of transition practices in academic achievement is stronger in children from average- to low-income families than in those from high-income families; however, low-income children often receive fewer transition practices than high-income families. The study also found that kindergarten transition practices have a positive impact on parent-initiated school involvement, which have positive impacts on student academic achievement.

Head Start–School Partnerships and Transitions

Hoyt, L. (2000). Partners at last: Head Start and elementary schools working together. *Young Children, 55*(4), 71–73.

This article describes the physical and curriculum development of a Head Start–elementary school partnership in Oregon that aims to ease the transition into kindergarten. An essential element of the partnership is the First Steps program, which focuses on writing, spelling, and oral language development. First Steps provides a shared language and curriculum for Head Start and elementary school staff, which facilitates the seamless transition from Head Start into the elementary school's kindergarten.

Mantzicopoulos, P. (2004). The effects of participation in a Head Start–public school transition program on kindergarten children's social competence. *Perspectives in Education, 22*(2), 51–66.

This study examined students' social competence in a Head Start-to-Public School Transition project after one year of kindergarten. Participation in the transition program yielded positive outcomes in several categories of social competence, which included the following: self-perceptions of competence, teacher–child relationships, social skills, behavior problems, and overall school adjustment.

Ramey, S. L., Ramey, C. T., Phillips, M. M., Lanzi, R. G., Brezausek, C., Katholi, C. R., & Snyder, S. (2000). *Head Start children's entry into public school: A report on the national Head Start/public school early childhood transition demonstration study*. Birmingham: University of Alabama at Birmingham, Civitan International Research Center.
www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/hs/ch_trans/reports/ transition_study/transition_study.pdf

The National Head Start/Early Childhood Transition Demonstration Study was conducted to provide information about the impact of a program that extends Head Start-like supports (parent involvement, educational enhancement, family social support) during the first four years of elementary school to former Head Start children and their families. Though the success of the overall initiative varied, successful programs demonstrated a positive collaboration between Head Start and the public school, as well as strong leadership. Former Head Start children presented growth in their reading and mathematics skills in their first four years of elementary school, and were performing at the national

average at the end of second and third grade. Furthermore, the children's social skills scored at the national average, and many families decreased their need for public assistance over time.

Stebbins, H., & Scott, L. C. (2007). *Better outcomes for all: Promoting partnerships between Head Start and state pre-K*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy, Inc. (CLASP). www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/detail?accno=ED495373

This paper examines how Head Start and state pre-kindergarten programs can work together to better serve young children and their families. The paper provides ideas for developing a strong model for partnerships, including joint professional development, shared monitoring and accountability, and collaboration among coaches or leadership staff. The paper includes examples of exemplary programs from five U.S. states: Georgia, Illinois, New Jersey, Oregon, and Wisconsin.

Home–School Partnerships and Transitions

Barbarin, O. A., Downer, J., Odom, E., & Head, D. (2010). Home–school differences in beliefs, support, and control during public pre-kindergarten and their link to children's kindergarten readiness. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 25*(3), 358–372. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2010.02.003

This study focuses on partnerships between homes and schools and the influence of those partnerships on kindergarten readiness. The authors examine whether parental beliefs about children and parental support and control practices match those of their children's pre-kindergarten teachers (the "home–school match"), and the implications of this match for children's academic and socio-emotional competence at the beginning of kindergarten. Results show that positive home–school matches—in which adults both at home and at school are highly supportive, less control-oriented, and engage in child-centered practices—are associated with school readiness.

Quintero, N., & McIntyre, L. (2011). Kindergarten transition preparation: A comparison of teacher and parent practices for children with autism and other developmental disabilities. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 38*(6), 411–420. doi:10.1007/s10643-010-0427-8

This study compared best practices of preschool teachers for students with autism spectrum disorders (who tend to have difficulties with transitions) in the United States and Ghana. Results revealed that timing of planning and preparation, helping families to find resources, sharing information with families, and home visits were among the most important practices for preschool teachers. The implications for classroom transition practices include: collaborating with parents to start transition practices six months before kindergarten, assisting parents in different schooling opportunities, finding resources (e.g., afterschool programs) that will buffer the unfamiliarity and uncertainty of a child during transitions, and communicating with the child's kindergarten teacher to prepare for the transition.

General School Readiness

Children Now. (2009). *Kindergarten readiness data: Improving children's success in school.* (Policy Brief). Oakland, CA: Author. www.childrennow.org/index.php/learn/reports_and_research/article/198

This policy brief explores kindergarten readiness and efforts by California counties and other states to measure school readiness, in addition to offering guidance for moving toward statewide use of kindergarten readiness observation tools. This brief outlines early efforts to improve children's long term educational outcomes; provide meaningful school readiness data to families, schools, and communities for proper action planning; and offer steps for transitioning toward a statewide kindergarten readiness observation system for policymakers, early childhood and elementary teachers, parents, school principals and district-level administrators, researchers, and other stakeholders.

Daily, S., Burkhauser, M., & Halle, T. (2010). A review of school readiness practices in the states: Early learning guidelines and assessments. *Child Trends Early Childhood Highlights, 1*(3). www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2010_06_18_ECH_SchoolReadiness.pdf.

This brief outlines how states address school readiness for kindergarteners and offers guidelines on how to frame school readiness, such as focusing school-readiness factors on more than just academics; aligning standards in appropriate ways; carefully considering the common challenges associated with assessing young children; and recognizing that readiness depends on supportive families, schools, and communities.

Emig, C., Moore, A., & Scarupa, H. J. (2001). *School readiness: Helping communities get children ready for school and schools ready for children* (Research Brief). Washington, DC: Child Trends. http://www.childtrends.org/files/schoolreadiness.pdf

This research brief aims to help communities invest wisely in school readiness initiatives, and presents a framework for community investments based on an ecological view of child development. This framework considers factors related not only to the child but also to the child's family, early childhood care and education, schools, and neighborhood.

Klein, L. G., & Knitzer, J. (2007). *Promoting effective early learning: What every policymaker and educator should know* (Issue brief). New York: National Center for Children in Poverty, Columbia University, Mailman School of Public Health. http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_695.html

This brief—designed for policymakers, practitioners, and families—discusses the effective implementation of preschool curricula and teaching strategies in order close the achievement gap and prepare children for kindergarten. The brief also contains links to related articles in supporting early childhood learning.

Kraft-Sayre, M. E., & Pianta, R. C. (2000). *Enhancing the transition to kindergarten: Linking children, families, and schools.* Charlottesville: National Center for Early Development & Learning, Kindergarten Transition Project, University of Virginia. www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/detail?accno=ED479280

This manual describes an approach to enhancing children's transitions into kindergarten by focusing on forming a network of social connections that support children and families during the transition to school. It provides action steps for practice as well as key principles in formulating a community transition plan.

Raikes, H., Love, J., Chazan-Cohen, R. (2004). Infant-toddler intervention on the road to school readiness: Lesson from Early Head Start. ***The Evaluation Exchange, 10*****(2).** http://hfrp.org/evaluation/the-evaluation-exchange/issue-archive/early-childhood-programs-and-evaluation/infant-toddler-intervention-on-the-road-to-school-readiness-lessons-from-early-head-start

This article suggests that early interventions for infants and toddlers can help at-risk children be better prepared for school. The research findings show that Early Head Start yielded benefits in children's socio-emotional behavior (e.g., children were less aggressive, more attentive, and better able to engage parents in play). Further, Early Head Start parents exhibited increased support for language and learning, were more likely to read daily to their children, and had lower rates of punitive discipline practices.

Raver, C. C., & Knitzer, J. (2002). ***Ready to Enter: What research tells policymakers about strategies to promote social and emotional school readiness among three- and four-year-old children*** **(Policy Paper No. 3). New York: National Center for Children in Poverty, Columbia University, Mailman School of Public Health.** http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_485.html

This policy brief describes strategies for social and emotional readiness in early childhood, and offers practical conclusions for policymakers and researchers. Recommendations for policymakers include looking for interventions that target cognitive, social, and emotional issues, and pushing for timely distribution of "research to practice" knowledge at the state and community levels about promotion of social and emotional resilience in young children. Recommendations for researchers include collaborating with a network of researchers to share measures and methodologies, and designing research studies to answer questions about child care quality and practices that affect social and emotional development.