

REL Southwest Ask-A-REL Response Early Childhood Education

July 2017

Question:

How effective are early childhood education (ECE) transition plans in increasing student achievement in Pre-K/ECE and early elementary school (K–3)?

Response:

Following an established REL Southwest research protocol, we conducted a search for research reports as well as descriptive study articles on the effectiveness of early childhood education (ECE) transition plans. The sources included ERIC and other federally funded databases and organizations, research institutions, academic research databases, and general Internet search engines (For details, please see the methods section at the end of this memo.)

We have not evaluated the quality of references and the resources provided in this response and we offer them only for your reference. Also, we searched the references in the response from the most commonly used resources of research, but they are not comprehensive and other relevant references and resources may exist.

Research References

Cook, K. D. & Coley, R. L. (2017). School transition practices and children's social and academic adjustment in Kindergarten. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 109*(2), 166-177. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1128907>

From the ERIC abstract: “The transition to kindergarten is a critical period for children and families, with successful transitions setting the stage for short- and long-term academic and social success. This study explored the practices used by kindergarten teachers to help ease children's and families' transition into primary school (termed "transition practices"), and assessed their relationship to children's social and academic adjustment to school in a nationally representative sample of children in the United States (N = 4,900). On average, kindergarten teachers engaged in 3 transition practices, with outreach to parents and child or parent classroom visits most common, and structural changes to the school schedule less frequent. Private schools and more experienced teachers engaged in more transition practices, whereas ethnic and racial minority, immigrant, and urban children had teachers who reported fewer practices. Prospective, lagged regression models found that engagement in more types of transition practices was

predictive of heightened prosocial behaviors among children, but was not associated with children's attention or academic outcomes. Examination of specific types of practices found that transition activities geared toward parents were associated with children's heightened academic skills in kindergarten. These results provide limited evidence to support the "more is better" view of transition practices and instead suggest that specific types of transition practices are linked to particular aspects of children's functioning.”

LoCasale-Crouch, J., Mashburn, A. J., Downer, J. T. & Pianta, R. C. (2008). Pre-Kindergarten teachers' use of transition practices and children's adjustment to Kindergarten. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 23(1), 124-139. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ783144>

From the ERIC abstract: “This study describes pre-kindergarten teachers' use of kindergarten transition practices and examined the extent to which these practices were associated with kindergarten teachers' judgments of children's social, self-regulatory, and academic skills upon their entry into kindergarten. Participants were 722 children from 214 pre-kindergarten classrooms participating in the National Center for Early Development and Learning's (NCEDL) Multi-State Pre-kindergarten Study. Of nine transition practices intended to promote children's adaptation to kindergarten, pre-kindergarten teachers reported implementing, on average, six transition practices, with notable variation across pre-kindergarten classrooms. Children were judged by their kindergarten teachers to have more positive social competencies and fewer problem behaviors when they attended pre-kindergarten classrooms in which more transition activities were implemented and, specifically, in which teachers discussed curricula or specific children with kindergarten teachers. In addition, positive associations between kindergarten teachers' perceptions of children's social competence and pre-kindergarten transition activities (total number of activities and activities that children experience directly) were stronger for children who experienced social and economic risks. Implications of these findings related to alignment across the pre-kindergarten to kindergarten settings to improve children's school readiness are discussed.”

Nelson, R. F. (2004). The transition to Kindergarten. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 32(3), 187-190. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ732284>

From the ERIC abstract: “The transition to kindergarten is a significant event for young children and their families. The methods teacher use to orient children and families to formal schooling can have a long term effect on academic achievement. This study examined the transition activities of over 3000 kindergarten teachers that participated in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The results show that most schools do not provide a comprehensive transition plan that allows teachers and parents to exchange important information about child development and school expectations.”

Rous, B., Hallam, R., McCormick, K. & Cox, M. (2010). Practices that support the transition to public preschool programs: Results from a national survey. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 25(1), 17-32. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ864535>

From the ERIC abstract: “The number of children participating in public school preschool programs has steadily increased over the last two decades. While the use of

specific practices to support the transition to kindergarten has received a great deal of attention, there are little data on the use of transition practices by public school preschool teachers to support children's entry into the public school preschool setting. This article presents findings from a national sample of 2434 public school preschool teachers on the use of 25 transition practices to support the transition of young children into public school preschool programs. The study represents a collaborative extension of the National Center for Early Development and Learning (NCEDL) Kindergarten Transition Survey [Pianta, R. C., Cox, M. J., Taylor, L., & Early, D. (1999). Kindergarten teachers' practices related to the transition to school: Results of a national survey. "Elementary School Journal, 100"(1), 71-86]. Public school preschool teachers reported using an average of 12.81 of the 25 transition practices included in the survey, with a total of 12 of the 25 transition practices reportedly in use by 70% or more of teachers responding to the survey. Findings from this study indicate that three variables--training on the use of specific transition practices, classroom composition, and school context--were related to the use of transition practices by public school preschool teachers. (Contains 5 tables.)”

Welchons, L. W. & McIntyre, L. L. (2017). “The transition to Kindergarten: Predicting socio-behavioral outcomes for children with and without disabilities. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 45(1), 83-93. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1125238>

From the ERIC abstract: “The transition to kindergarten is regarded as a critical early childhood developmental milestone with important implications for later school outcomes. Little prior research has focused on predictors of socio-behavioral kindergarten outcomes using longitudinal research designs. Further, few studies have examined kindergarten transition using samples of children both with and without disabilities. The goal of the current study was to explore predictors of socio-behavioral kindergarten outcomes in children with and without developmental disabilities over time. Data collection involved parent, preschool teacher, and kindergarten teacher reports of child behavior and involvement in kindergarten transition practices across three time points during transition. Results of hierarchical linear regression analyses demonstrated that preschool child behavioral variables (i.e., adaptive and problem behavior) were stronger predictors of kindergarten outcomes relative to caregiver concerns and involvement in transition preparation. Best practices in kindergarten transition programming for children with and without disabilities are discussed.”

Additional Organizations to Consult

Bridging for Effective School Transition (BEST): Articles and Resources—

<http://coe.indstate.edu/ProjectBEST/articlesresources.htm>

From the website: “The main scope of the project, Bridging for Effective School Transition (BEST), is to facilitate collaboration among key stakeholders to achieve our goals for *Ready Child, Ready Schools, Ready Parents and Ready Community* that bridge an effective school transition for young children.”

National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University—

<http://nieer.org/about> and <http://nieer.org/state-preschool-yearbooks/the-state-of-preschool-2015>

From the website: “The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) conducts academic research to inform policy supporting high-quality, early education for all young children. Such education promotes the physical, cognitive and social development needed for children to succeed in school and later life. NIEER provides independent, research-based analysis and technical assistance to policymakers, journalists, researchers, and educators.”

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)—

<http://www.naeyc.org/>

From the website: “The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is a professional membership organization that works to promote high-quality early learning for all young children, birth through age 8, by connecting early childhood practice, policy, and research. We advance a diverse, dynamic early childhood profession and support all who care for, educate, and work on behalf of young children.”

NYSED.gov—State Education Agency—<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/>

Transition document excerpt: “Building relationships, partnering and collaboration are extremely important to facilitate the transition of prekindergarten students to kindergarten. This is a time of great change for children, parents, families and schools in which new relationships, new expectations and new competencies are being developed. The local school district should have a comprehensive plan for supporting its newest incoming students and their families as they transition into a K-12 system.

This checklist will help to determine how complete your school district’s prekindergarten to kindergarten transition plan is. It may signal areas for improvement for your district to work on to ensure a positive start for young children in the school community.” Access the document at:

http://www.p12.nysed.gov/earlylearning/documents/FinalDistrictPKKTransitionSelfAssessmentmar19FINAL_1.pdf

U.S. Department's Early Learning Web Site—

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/earlylearning/index.html>

From the website: “Find the latest information about ED’s work in supporting our nation’s youngest learners.”

U.S. Department's Early Learning Web Site: Editor’s Picks—

<https://www2.ed.gov/teachers/how/early/edpicks.jhtml>

Methods

Keywords and Search Strings

The following keywords and search strings were used to search the reference databases and other sources:

Kindergarten transitions
PreK transitions
Early Childhood Education transition plans and achievement
Transition plans in Early Childhood Education
Early Childhood Education websites

Databases and Resources

We searched ERIC for relevant resources. ERIC is a free online library of over 1.6 million citations of education research sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences. Additionally, we searched Google Scholar and PsychInfo.

Reference Search and Selection Criteria

When we were searching and reviewing resources, we considered the following criteria:

Date of the publication: The most current information (primarily published from 2011 to the present) is included.

Search Priorities of Reference Sources: Search priority is given to study reports, briefs, and other documents that are published and/or reviewed by IES and other federal or federally funded organizations, academic databases, including ERIC, EBSCO databases, JSTOR database, PsychInfo, PsychArticle, and Google Scholar.

Methodology: Following methodological priorities/considerations were given in the review and selection of the references: (a) study types – randomized control trials, quasi experiments, surveys, descriptive data analyses, literature reviews, policy briefs, etc., generally in this order (b) target population, samples (representativeness of the target population, sample size, volunteered or randomly selected, etc.), study duration, etc. (c) limitations, generalizability of the findings and conclusions, etc.

This memorandum is one in a series of quick-turnaround responses to specific questions posed by stakeholders in the Southwest Region (Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas), which is served by the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southwest at SEDL. This memorandum was prepared by REL Southwest under a contract with the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES), Contract ED-IES-12-C-0012, administered by SEDL. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.