



FACILITATING TRANSITIONS

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Our American cities, small and large, are filled with streets and roads. The streets and roads connect neighborhoods, shopping areas, schools, hospitals, and most of the important institutions and organizations that make up each city. Those cities are then connected by larger freeways, and states are connected by even bigger interstate expressways. All sorts of signage accompany the roads and streets and freeways and interstates, helping guide us to where we want to go and facilitating our trips from place to place. Entrance and exit ramps make it possible for us to easily maneuver from neighborhood streets to multilane routes to reach our destinations however near or far we may be destined. Without the signage, and certainly without the on and off ramps for the highways, it would be a great challenge to get from place to place. Clearly defined directions and well-paved thoroughfares make facilitating our journeys much more efficient and successful.

Now imagine our early childhood world. What is actually meant by the phrase “kindergarten readiness?” What do parents think? Preschool teachers? Kindergarten teachers themselves? This issue of the *Head Start Dialog* includes articles about efforts to more readily and efficiently navigate the complex early education landscape, between caring for infants and ultimately helping children to become “kindergarten ready” on their road to elementary school ready, secondary school ready, and ultimately college ready.

Where Are We Going and Are We There Yet?

This issue of the *Head Start Dialog* starts off with a study investigating preschool and kindergarten teachers’ perspectives on defining the phrase “kindergarten readiness” in one state. Experienced teachers at both levels were convened during the spring semester of 2022 and through multiple focus groups, discussed scoring variants on the North Carolina Early Learning Inventory (NCELI) on the 60th day of kindergarten. The good news is that there was much agreement between the preschool teachers and the kindergarten teachers and the meaning of the phrase. Additionally, the importance of children having a preschool experience prior to kindergarten rang through loud and clear from the kindergarten teachers.

Our second research article answers the question, “Where is convergence and divergence in how parents and educators interpret child development when preschoolers transition in kindergarten?” Marisa Macy, of University of Nebraska at Kearney with the Buffett Early Childhood Institute, investigated interrater agreement between the parents of young children and the early childhood professionals working with their families from a rural Head Start program in the Midwest as the children transitioned from preschool to kindergarten.



The third research article in this issue is titled “Bridging the gap: Feasibility, appropriateness, and acceptability of an integrated attachment-based training for teachers and parents in Early Head Start.” The research team is large and dynamic, with a total of 8 researchers across 4 different institutions, including Carla Caringi Barron of Wayne State University, and Claire Vallotton of Michigan State University. This study moves toward answering the “How will we get there?” question by investigating the perspectives of parents, infant/toddler teachers, and university-based facilitators to provide insights to support the implementation of ongoing, reflective training models across the early childhood education system.

Our final research article by Rebecca P. Jordan of Salem College and Teresa Sumrall of Appalachian State University is titled “Capitalizing on early literacy standards in play.” Their study helps with both determining where we are going as well as how we need to get there by addressing the Early Learning Development Standards that have been developed in all 50 states, and investigating how play can be used to support children’s progress towards meeting developmental milestones. Focusing on early literacy standards, they propose that through “sensitivity”, preschool teachers can address standards through play, identifying early developmental milestones, and consequently play learning-rich extensions that build on children’s developmental readiness.

Following these four research articles are four Research-to-Practice articles to help bring these studies to a level where the rubber meets the road. We hope you enjoy learning as you read these new studies that aim to shed light on our journey and help to guide the way toward a more seamless and effective early childhood education for every child.