

RESEARCH



Brief

Use of Transition Practices by Public Preschool Teachers

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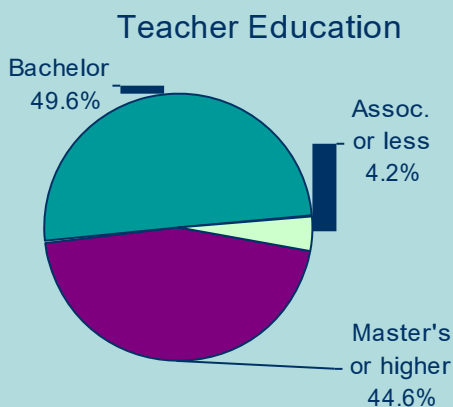
Public preschool teachers use a variety of transition practices to support young children as they enter and exit public preschool programs. A focus for the National Early Childhood Transition Center (NECTC) has been to provide information on the status of current practices by professionals in supporting the transition process for children and families. To this end, NECTC conducted a national survey of public preschool teachers. The survey was adapted from the National Center for Early Development and Learning Kindergarten Transition Survey (Pianta et al., 1999) and distributed to a stratified random sample of 10,000 public preschool teachers across the country. The response rate (24.9%) included 2,433 surveys. Findings reported in this Research Brief are based on this un-weighted sample of preschool teachers.

Information Collected

The survey included 47 questions that gathered demographic information on schools, teachers, classrooms, and children in the preschool program, along with information on preschool transition practices, kindergarten transition practices and sources of transition information. Opportunities were provided for open comments on the transition process.

Teacher Experience and Education

Teachers completing the survey were well educated, with the majority having at least a Bachelor's degree. The majority of teachers had some experience working with preschool children, had at least one child in their classroom that had special needs and at least one child who was served through the state early intervention program. Approximately one third of the teachers had specialized training to enhance children's transition to preschool and/or kindergarten.



Teacher Experience with Young Children

- With Infants and Toddlers = 17.4%
- Preschoolers = 33.5% 1-5 years; 30.3% 6-10 years
- Kindergarten = 43.4%

Children with Special Needs

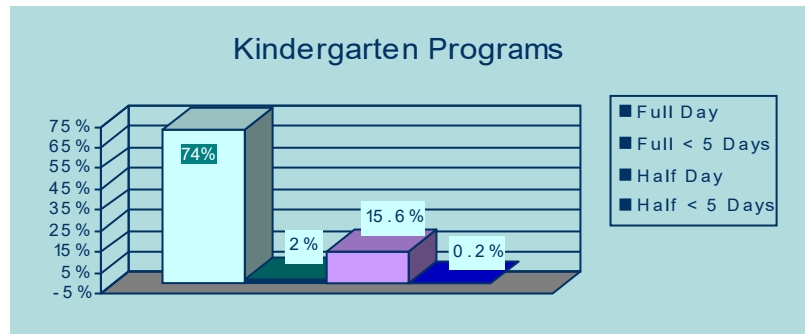
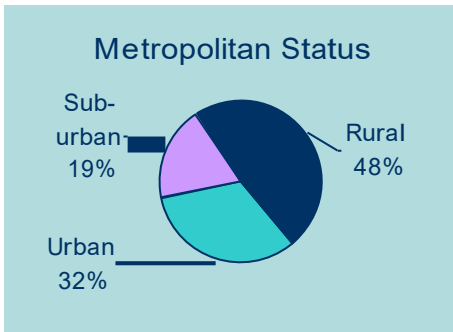
- 68% had at least one child with special needs in the classroom
- 62% had at least one child who received early intervention services

Specialized Training

- 35.7% had training to enhance the transition to preschool
- 39.3% had training to enhance the transition to kindergarten

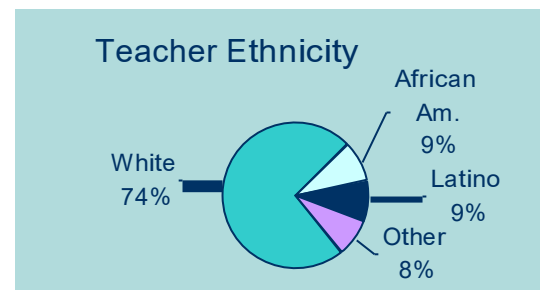
The Location of Preschool Classrooms

The classrooms represented urban, suburban and rural settings, with the large majority of the preschool classrooms located in elementary school buildings. When children transitioned out of the preschool program, they generally participated in full day Kindergarten classrooms.



Teacher and Child Ethnicity and Poverty Status

Teachers participating in the survey were primarily white/non-Hispanic, similar to national data (Schools and Staffing Survey, 2001). Child ethnicity as reported by teachers included a majority representing diverse races (44% white/non-Hispanic; 56% non-white). At least half of the children in the classrooms were reported to qualify for free or reduced lunch.



Teacher Use of Preschool Transition Practices

The survey included a list of 25 preschool transition practices for which teachers were asked to identify their current use. Of the 25 practices, teachers reported using an average of 12.81 practices (51.24%). In comparison with teachers reported use of kindergarten transition practices in the NCEDL study, preschool teachers used more practices than kindergarten teachers. Preschool teachers also reported using more practices after the transition than before the transition. Consistent with the NCEDL Kindergarten Transition study, practice use varied by metropolitan status, with teachers in rural settings reporting a higher use of practices than those in urban settings. Practice use also varied by training, with teachers who had received specialized training reporting a higher use of preschool transition practices than those who did not participate in training.

Most Common Preschool Transition Practices (Reported by at least 70% of respondents)

- A talk with the child's parents after school starts (95%)
- A letter to the child's parent after school starts (85%)
- Open house after school starts (77%)
- Open house before school starts (74%)
- Written records about the child's past experience or status are made available (74%)
- A letter to the child's parent before schools starts (73%)
- Contacts facilitated between parents of children in the class (73%)
- A meeting with the child and family after school starts (73%)
- Flyer or informational brochure sent before school starts (72%)
- Written records of the child's past experiences and status were reviewed (72%)

Barriers and Facilitators to A Good Transition

Teachers were asked to identify common barriers and facilitators to a good transition. Three of 22 barriers and 10 of 17 facilitators included in the survey were identified by at least 50% of teachers.

Most Common Barriers

- Parents Do Not read letters, etc. sent home (57%)
- Some parents are not interested (54%)
- Work required in the summer that is not supported by salary (51%)

Most Common Facilitators

- Parents are interested (69.9%)
- Class lists are generated on time (64.4%)
- Parents bring children for registration/open house (60.8%)
- Funds are available (57.4%)
- Summer work is supported with salary (56.7%)
- There is support to create a positive experience (56%)
- Contacts with parents encouraged prior to start of school (53.8%)
- Records received before child attends (53.2%)
- Materials are available (52.2%)
- Parents are able to read letters, etc. sent home (50.6%)

Teacher Use of Kindergarten Transition Practices

The survey included a set of questions related to supporting the preschool to kindergarten transition. For children participating in the preschool programs, the majority must go to kindergarten at age five, rather than staying in preschool, going to a transitional kindergarten or a K-1 classroom. The survey included a list of 11 kindergarten transition practices for which teachers were asked to identify their current use. Of the 11 practices, teachers reported using an average of 4.68 practices (42.5%). Practice use varied by location of the preschool classroom, with a higher use of practices by teachers in preschool classrooms located in an elementary school building, compared to those where the preschool was located off the elementary school campus. Practice use also varied by metropolitan status, with teachers in rural settings reporting a higher use of practices than those in urban settings. As with preschool practices, training impacted their use; teachers who had received specialized training reporting a higher use of kindergarten transition practices than those who did not participate in training.

Most Common Kindergarten Transition Practices (Reported by at least 50% of respondents)

- Arrange for a class to visit kindergarten class (62.6%)
- Send parents information on kindergarten (65.4%)
- Meetings with kindergarten teachers to discuss curriculum (62.6%)

Information on Enhancing Transitions

Less than half (44%) of teachers participating in the survey reporting receiving information on how to enhance transition services. Of those who received information, workshops were the main venue, followed by magazines and journals. Teachers preferences for receiving information was via direct mail, followed by workshops.

Pianta, R.C., Cox, M. J., Taylor, L., & Early, D. (1999). Kindergarten teachers' practices related to transition to school: Results from a national survey. *Elementary School Journal*, 100, p. 71-86.



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