

Supporting Preschoolers and their Families Through Transitions: Teacher Time Webinar Series

Treshawn Anderson: Hi, everyone. Happy Friday, and welcome to Teacher Time. Excuse me. I'm Treshawn Anderson, and joining me today is Judi Stevenson-Garcia. Hi, Judi.

Judi Stevenson-Garcia: Hi, Treshawn. How are you?

Treshawn: I'm doing good. Glad it's Friday. Hope you guys are happy, too. So we're from the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning, and we're excited to be here today to talk about Supporting Preschoolers and their Families Through Transitions, and you guys have already really started talking about the ways that you engage families in transition, so that's great. Keep it going in the chat box. So if you were here for our infant/toddler transitions episode last month, you met our guest expert, Gail Joseph, who is one of our partners here at DTL and who leads our work related to transitions. Well, she's going to be back again today later on to talk to us about preschoolers and their families and how we can support them through transitions, so she'll join us right after we go through some of these housekeeping items.

Judi: Yes. So just so you know, I can see lots of you have found the chat box already, so that's great. Keep chatting in there. If this is your first time on our new webinar platform, let me just go over some details really quickly about the way it's set up, and you'll see at the bottom of your screen several different widgets you can use. All of them are resizable and movable, so you can move your screen around and your widgets around to just make it the way that you want it to be for today's episode. We're using the blue chat room widget to interact with you all, but if you have any questions that come up you want to ask Gail or ask one of us, you can submit them in the purple Q & A widget. That's the question and answer widget, and we'll do our best to get back to you as quickly as possible during the webinar.

There's a copy of today's slide deck and the viewer's guide and then additional resources. They're all available in the green resource list icon, so you can go to that resource icon and download the viewer's guide and any of the other resources that we mention today. Definitely take advantage of those resources that are there.

You can also find some helpful answers to any technical issues in the help widget at the bottom of your screen, and then we'll also—You can also ask questions in the Q&A box if you're having technical difficulties, and someone will help you there. We're going to post this episode or a recording of this episode on MyPeers, so if you want to rewatch it, or if you want to share it with colleagues, you'll find it on MyPeers as soon as we have it available to share.

And then finally, at the end of the webinar, we'll post a link to an evaluate form. As always, we really appreciate your feedback. We use this information to approve our future webisodes and to inform the content and the topics that we are going to talk about. When you complete the evaluation, you can download a certificate of completion for your participation in the webinar, and if you're doing it together with some colleagues on one computer, and only one person is registered, you can forward the evaluation link to your colleagues, and then they can complete

the evaluation and receive a certificate of completion as well. And I don't think I mentioned Jan Greenberg is our chat facilitator. She's already been in there saying hello, so hi, Jan, and welcome, and thanks for being there. She's facilitating our chat room. We want the next hour to be as interactive as possible, so please feel to chat using that box. Use the question and answer icon to ask our guest host some of your pressing questions, and we're looking forward to a great hour.

Treshawn: Great. Thanks, Judi. So let's go ahead and set the stage for our topic today, Supporting Preschoolers and their Families Through Transitions. So if you've been with us for a while on Teacher Time this season, you know that we've based this entire series using the framework for effective practices, and sometimes we call it the house framework, and in our first preschool episode, we talked about creating safe and nurturing learning environments for preschoolers, which was all about the foundation of the house.

Our second preschool episode was about implementing curriculum with fidelity, and that was the topic related to the left pillar, which is implementing research-based curriculum and teaching practices, and for this episode, we're going to be talking about transitions and specifically how we can support families and their preschoolers through all the different kinds of transitions that they may experience. And as you can see, engaging with families is at the center of our house framework. Although many of our transition supports do fall within that foundation of the house in our interactions and or environments, the supports related to transitions, today we're primarily going to focus on the family, and how these and other activities help you partner with families to ease transitions for preschoolers. So that's why we've highlighted the center of the house today, and so transitions for preschoolers, as we know can be very challenging, but we do know that when families are prepared and engaged, it really helps to make that transition a little bit more successful.

Judi: Yeah. I'm excited about our topic for today. So now we're going to introduce our guest host for today's episode, Gail Joseph, so she'll pop on the camera in just a minute. Gail—Oh, there she is. Hi, Gail!

Treshawn: Hi, Gail.

Judi: Good to see. Welcome back.

Gail Joseph: Oh, hi. Thanks for having me.

Judi: Sure, of course. So, Gail is from the University of Washington, and she supports us here at the National Center leading our work on the development of resources around transitions. Gail was also the founder of Teacher Time back in the day, the original Teacher Time, and so this is really part of her vision to connect directly with teachers in this way, using technology, so we're so glad you're back on Teacher Time today to help us understand how we can support children and families through transitions.

Gail: Yay! Yeah!

Judi: So let's get started. We'll jump right in. Can you just help us set the context for what we'll be talking about when we say transitions because I think a lot of people have different ideas.

Gail: Oh, absolutely. So we can think about transitions in two ways, two main ways, I think. So first are the smaller transitions that we can think about that children and families kind of go through or experience each day, so these are small transitions between routines and activities. It can include dropping children off, picking them up. Within the classroom, those little—those little transitions, moving from lunchtime to nap time or going from free play to outdoor time, so those are kind of the smaller transitions that happen every day that I'm sure all of our listeners are very familiar with.

And then the second way that we can think about transitions is we can think about kind of the big transitions that children and families experience together, such as moving being at home to—or a home-based setting to a center-based preschool program, or even transitioning from one classroom to the next classroom, like going from the 3-year-old classroom to the pre-K classroom as another example, but one major transition that preschoolers and families will make is that transition from preschool to Kindergarten, and this can be a big one.

I always think that if you—You know, if you Googled the first day of Kindergarten, you know, there's thousands of little videos pop up, and someone is almost always crying in them. You know, it's either the child, or it's the parent, or it's the teacher, you know? And it doesn't have to be that way, and so we want to make sure that we can think about how we can really support young children and their families and teachers during these big transition times, and so that's how we're—we're going to spend a lot of our time today thinking about that big transition from preschool to Kindergarten because I'm sure all of our teacher listeners today are thinking about that. They're probably about to send their preschoolers off into Kindergarten or getting close. You know, it's getting toward the end of that year so start [Inaudible].

Judi: And I'm going to be—I'm going to be listening because I'm sending my preschooler to Kindergarten in the fall so...

[Laughter]

So I'll be listening closely, yeah.

Treshawn: That's funny, and I—and I experienced some tears when I sent mine off to Kindergarten.

Gail: Yes.

Treshawn: No, not from her but from me, which is interesting.

Gail:

[Inaudible]

Treshawn: But, thanks, but so before we dive in, really into this great content, I want you guys to think about the first word that comes to your mind when you think of preschoolers and their families transitioning to Kindergarten. Go ahead and write a word. Tell us in the chat box. I think mine is, like, tears.

Gail: Aw. Or—or...

Judi: The first I think about when I think of the transition from preschool to Kindergarten—
Yeah, it's like a happy-sad feeling, right?

Gail: Yes.

Judi: It's like a proud and a sad moment. Like, I'm so proud. He's so big that I'm, like, so sad that he's so big. It's a weird mixed feeling.

Treshawn: Yeah. We've got scared, nervous, crying. Thanks, you're there with me.

Judi: Big.

Gail: Yeah.

Treshawn: Anxious. Change. Yeah.

Gail: Change is a big one.

Judi: Yeah. It's a huge change.

Treshawn: These are great.

Judi: A big leap.

Treshawn: Oh, stressful.

Judi: Mixed emotions. Yep, I feel that.

Treshawn: Are they ready? I know. Growing up too fast.

Judi: Growing up too fast. Yes.

Treshawn: Unknown. That's great.

Gail: Oh. Yes.

Treshawn: There's so many things you don't know about what happens in Kindergarten.

Judi: Yeah.

Treshawn: That you wish you knew. Great.

Gail: Yeah. I think—I mean, these are all just such great responses. I mean, they're not all great things to feel, but they're so—These are real—real examples. I just think about, like, if I was thinking about how I was feeling, I don't even know if you can see this, but I remember when I was sending my children to Kindergarten, feeling really excited, and they were excited, too, so it's not all sad and a little bit nervous but kind of nervous excitement. Feeling proud and feeling sad, I think, of that—of that loss that you're experiencing, but I almost remember that as a teacher, as a Head Start teacher, just, you know, spending the whole year or more if I was that lucky to be with the children, and then sending them to this next place, so I had kind of those same feelings as a teacher.

Gail: So if we're feeling this way as the adults, and we're thinking about this as adults and teachers, just imagine how those children are feeling, and their families are feeling when we think about that, you know, making that big transition, and I think that one of the things that

happens with transitions is that we're often thinking about transitions in maybe an overly simplistic way. Right?

So sometimes—Or I think the old way we used to think about it is that we would kind of think about it as just, like, the movement from a child being in preschool to now being in Kindergarten and that being the only thing, right? They were going to go from preschool. We helped get them ready in Head Start. They're ready to go, and then we get them, you know, on the bus, and they go to Kindergarten, and that's it, and what we know is that that's just not a very supportive transition for anyone. It's not a supportive transition for the child. It's not a supportive transition for the family. It's not a supportive transition for the sending or that receiving teacher, and so instead of thinking about it as just the child getting moved from one place to the next, which I'm sure very few of us think about, we want to think about it as kind of a complex interactive view or web, and this really comes from Bob Pianta and Marcia Kraft-Sayre's work. They gave us this nice illustration to really be thinking about this, and just like with webs, like, the tighter the web is woven, the more supportive that web is going to be, and so we can think about that when we think about these transitions, making all of these connections to kind of tighten that web for children and families to feel supported.

So for example, thinking about the child and their relationship with or their connection to the teacher and the receiving environment. How can we think about ways that the child can get to know that Kindergarten teacher even before Kindergarten starts that first day, right? How can we get the child to have some information or feel—know a little bit more about the school and the school community and the culture before they are in that environment? So we don't really want transitions from—by shock and awe. Nobody does well with those, especially young children, right? Because they'll start to demonstrate some adjustment problems that are concerning. We really want to think about support, and the same thing is support for families. We want families, our families, to be engaged and ready to advocate for their children and support their children and be engaged with their school right from the very beginning, but if they're lacking some basic information about, you know, where—How will my child get fed? How, you know—how does my child use the restroom in Kindergarten? If they're worried about kind of basic information, they're less likely to be ready to engage and volunteer in those different ways, so we want to think about, like, all of those interactions weaving a tight web.

Treshawn: Yeah. That's great, so we know that big and small transitions are a part of life for children and families. This is something that happens, but that means it's really important for teachers and family child care providers to really understand how we can provide that support, this web, through these transitions and communications with our families, so that transitions are successful for everyone that's involved, and that's a lot of people when you look at that web.

Treshawn: So, Gail, can you tell us a little bit about how effective—a little bit about how effective transitions can help children, like, especially in these early years?

Gail: Absolutely. So we all know, this is why we we're here in Head Start, comprehensive early care and education experiences, like early Head Start and Head Start, can close opportunity gaps, but we also know that stability and consistency between settings, such as that transition from Head Start into Kindergarten or between classrooms or between home and school, is

really crucial for children's continued success. So we want to provide a stable and consistent environment, and that's one that has very little change, right? It's familiar. It's predictable, where routines and activities are done in the same way every day, so you can imagine that going from preschool to Kindergarten, we want to try and create as much stability and consistency and familiarity as we can so that we don't have to act out because of adjustment problems.

Judi: Mm-hmm.

Gail: And so research shows that the more transition practices that are in place, and we're going to talk about some of those, the better the child and family adjusts to the new school, and better adjustments—So I'm familiar. I'm ready. I feel—I feel confident. I feel like I know things. I arrive at Kindergarten ready to learn and engage, and instead of arriving at Kindergarten and being so nervous about where things are and who these people are and why there's not three teachers. There's only one teacher, and why we don't sit on our teacher's lap, and why we go to—You know, if I'm thinking about all of those things, I'm really feeling more disregulated and likely to have some challenging behavior, so we know that the more supportive the transition can be, the better the adjustment for the child. So not only with their social/emotional adjustment, but also they're ready to dig in and start learning in their academic way as well, so it's both for social/emotional and cognitive continued gains that we see those transition practices really helping.

And we also know that—that stability and consistency are particularly important for children who are dual language learners. They rely on consistency and predictability as they learn to navigate new environments in multiple languages, and this means that—that we are paying close attention to transitions between settings. It's a very important part of our work, and we also want to make sure that we provide that stability and consistency within the daily experiences for children and families, and we're talking about those transitions, but those smaller transitions I mentioned earlier. And for children with suspected delays or a diagnosed disability, it's important to be aware of and make adaptations for their individual needs. So for example, some children may need more time during a transition, maybe a little individual warning, or they might need a picture cue to see what's coming next. So I have, like, this little picture cue, something similar that I'd use in my classroom, like brush your teeth. It's time to go brush teeth, so they'd know—They can see the picture here and my words and know where we're going next.

Treshawn: That's great. I got to start bringing props on Teacher Time.

Judi: Yes.

Treshawn: It's a great way to tell the story. So it's so true that stability and consistency are important even for adults, so with that in mind, we're going to take a quick poll. We're—we want you to think about maybe your first day of Kindergarten or maybe imagine what a preschooler's first day of Kindergarten could be like. What helped ease your transition into Kindergarten, or if you're imagining, what is one thing that might have helped your transition or a preschooler's transition into Kindergarten? So I put up a poll. You might need to either turn off your pop-up blocker and move some things around so that you can see, but if you want to

answer this question, what could have helped ease your transition as you're transitioning, either family, you know, talked with you ahead of time about what was going to happen next. You knew someone in the new environment or classroom. You had some supportive friends and family during the transition. Some neighbors were walking to school together. You were able to bring something familiar. We've got a couple answers coming in.

Judi: I feel like I'm going to need all of these as a parent to help me in my transition to Kindergarten.

Treshawn: Seriously. Yeah. So let's see what people are saying. So it looks like, you know, the family talked with you ahead of time about where you're going, what's going to happen at school. Knew someone who was going to be in the new classroom, that's always helpful to have a friend. So it looks like everyone picked a little bit of something. Riding the bus with a friend, walking to school together.

Great. Judi: Yeah. Perfect. Huge, I can imagine, for young children.

Treshawn: Yeah.

Judi: And that's like Gail talked about, right, that stability and consistency. Like, having a friend there for you is, like, something consistent in your life. Right? Or predictable for you. I think that's great.

Treshawn: Yeah.

Judi: So it seems like both adults and children rely on a lot of the same things because I said some of those things would be important for me, too. Right? Having information, knowing someone who goes there. Even for me, like, knowing a mom who's at the school will help me with this transition, right? And so, Gail, I know you have—You've brought with you kind of an easy way for us to think about what's needed for children and families, so can you just clue us in, and then we'll take some time to talk about the strategies.

Gail: Yeah. Absolutely. So this is right. It typically—When people are asked this question about what helped make a successful transition, their responses, no matter what the transition is, right, so if it's going to Kindergarten or going to middle school or going to high school or going to college or, you know, becoming married or becoming a grandparent, retired, whatever the transition is, it can usually be grouped into three categories. So usually people say that it was very helpful to have information about where they were going next so they knew something about what was going to happen next and what is was going to be like when they got there.

The second thing people stress is that it's really helpful to know someone, so one of the things we know about relationships is that they buffer the stress, and it's particularly important when you're going some place new if you know someone. You can start to just already feel yourself calm down a little bit, and third, people say that when—when things were aligned or when they could see that some things stayed the same. Some things were similar or familiar to them in the next environment, that that also alleviates some stress, and so this applies to both children and families, and I think the difference we have to think about is that as adults, we can seek this information out, but as young children, they need us to help do this for them. They need us to help gather information for them. They need us to help think about those relationships and also

to figure out some alignment for them, consistency. So to make any transitions more successful and less stressful, we really need those three things: information, relationships, and alignment or familiarity.

So while smaller daily transitions are different and hopefully and maybe not as dramatic as these big transitions like starting at a new school, remember what we said earlier about stability and consistency, predictable routines. For preschoolers, to experience stability and consistency on a daily basis, they need information about what's going to happen next, and that might just be that you have a predictable schedule, so they start to kind of internalize that. They need some relationships built, not only between you and between the child and the teacher, but also between peers, and they need alignment or familiarity even in those really small transitions, so think about the example given earlier about moving from free play to going outside. Information would be letting the child know that it's going to be time to clean up in a few minutes to go outside, and during the transition from clean up to putting jackets on, the relationship that you've developed with that child helps you to know which children might need a little extra help, which child might need a little bit more of a reminder, more—some gentle support, so that relationship helps you be more sensitive during that transition time. You can also think about peer relationships during transition time. Who might be a good buddy for you to transition with, who might hold your hand as you go from circle time to the sink to wash your hands, and maybe one child needs a little extra support to get their jacket on.

Maybe there's another child who you know when it's time to clean up, and you're about to ring that bell, and they are working really hard on that tower, you know that that's going to be a challenge for them because of that relationship you've built with them, so you give them a little extra warning. Maybe give them an alternative to put a sign on there that says under construction so nobody cleans it up, so that they can make that transition.

So you also use that time to build relationships, and then thinking about familiarity or alignment. This can mean just consistency in how you do the transition each time, so that children know what to expect. So I know when I was a teacher, I loved to play a clean up song, so there was always a song that I played on the CD or nowadays, you'd play it on an iPod, I suppose, but playing the same cleanup song every day, and it doesn't even have to be about cleanup, but that same song just was a reminder, like, "Oh, yeah. It's that song, and that's what we do. That's when we clean up." It might be that you turn the lights off to signal a transition, and it can be helpful to talk with parents about how they make transitions with their children from one activity to the next at home, so that you can use these strategies to increase consistency for their children.

Treshawn: Yeah. That's really great information, and I'd like to dive in to each one of these ideas individually. so information, supportive relationships and alignment, and you're going to give us strategies to support each of these things, right, Gail?

Gail: Mm-hmm.

Treshawn: Great. So we're going to go ahead and start with information, and to help us understand what you guys are already doing with families, as I know you've posted some things in the chat, we want to hear from you. So tell us in the chat box one thing that is important for

parents to know when they're going through the big transition with children, like moving from preschool to Kindergarten? What's some things that you guys do or information that you share with families as children transition? And if some of you are having problems, it keeps freezing up on you, try pushing F5, so that'll refresh your platform, and then maybe get you started back again. So we've got some answers coming in. Schedules and routines, so, yeah, sharing with parents what the schedules are, what the schedule is in the classroom and what routines you do.

Judi: I see Jacqueline says a transition readiness packet. That sounds great. Tell us what's in that transition readiness packet, please.

Treshawn: Right. Give us a copy.

Judi: How transportation works for the child, that's really—I think that's a huge question for families is what's going to happen with transportation.

Gail: Mm-hmm.

[Chatter]

Treshawn: Yeah, like are they going to ride the bus?

Judi: Exactly, right?

Treshawn: Yeah, these are great.

Judi: Making sure parents know that they need—Their child will need time to adjust. I think that's really helpful, too, right? It is a transition. It will take a little bit of time for everyone to adjust.

Treshawn: Yeah. Oh, I like that, the special routes ritual.

Judi: Using a special

[Inaudible]

ritual. That's great. Right? That'll bring some of that consistency, right, so if we have a routine that we're used to in the morning, if we can recreate that as we move to the next setting, that could be really comforting for the child and for the parent.

Treshawn: It makes me think. Every time my daughter gets out of the car, and we're like, "Bye. I love you. Have a good day." Like, that's, like, my mantra. I feel like one day soon, I'm going to be like, "You didn't say have a good day!" These are great. So any time that preschoolers move from one activity to the next, it's called—Or, sorry, or one learning environment to the next, they're experiencing transitions, and oftentimes, transition strategies are really geared to helping the parents feel comfortable, like, with the new people and new environment and new routines, but it is also about settling the child. And so just as it's important to provide a solid plan for parents, we also need to think about children and their needs when we transition, and we can help transitions go smoothly by providing information to both children and families, and so here is where Gail is going to give us some strategies that we can provide to families to help them through transitions.

Gail: Sure. So I think that one thing that's great is a home visit, so I'm thinking about this as children are transitioning into your preschool program. Of course, one of the great things we do in Head Start is home visits. Home visits can help children and families prepare for that transition into the preschool program. They get to know the children and families before they start in your classroom, so you get a lot of information about the child. You get to have some dedicated time to ask the family about their child. What are their—what do they love? What songs do they love? What makes them happy? How—how might I know that they're feeling scared or overwhelmed?

So you can get so much information so they're ready on that first day, or you're ready on that first day for them, but you can also answer questions during home visits about the transition to Kindergarten, so what is—what is that Kindergarten going to be like? Reminding them of Kindergarten registration, etc., so home visits can be huge for building really solid relationships and providing information and getting information, and I love to think about getting information beyond just kind of the, you know, the vital statistics, but really getting information about, you know, what's their favorite food? What's their favorite stuffed animal? You know, all of that stuff, and home visits can be especially useful for children who are dual language learners because you can use this time to engage with families and learn about their goals and their expectations for their child's transition to Kindergarten, and you can also learn some familiar words that their child might—that their child hears at home and be able to use them in their new learning environment.

And I know that—that our listeners are teachers in Head Start likely right now, but sometimes, Kindergarten teachers will do home visits, too, and can be encouraged, and they might not be as familiar with it, so it's a great time for Head Start teachers to also share with Kindergarten teachers about the value of home visits and how those can look. You could even do them together, if there was a coordinated effort. So for children transitioning into your preschool program, another thing to do is just provide a frequently asked question handout in the family's home language that answers common questions about whether it's your family childcare program or your classroom, what they can expect in terms of this is what the daily routine is like, these activities, transitions.

And the same thing is gathering some of that information about a Kindergarten—the Kindergarten classroom and being able to share that with teacher or with parents as well. Doing tours of your classrooms, so if a child is coming to your new classroom, you can do a parent night or a parent weekend, being aware of when parents might be able to make that and have them do a little tour through the classroom. Sometimes, those can be fun and self-guided, so I used to take pictures of things around my classroom and had the children and their parents do a little scavenger hunt around the classroom to see if they could find all the things, and then we had a little celebration, but things to get them familiar with the new environment, but also helping to answer questions about what children will learn in this preschool but also learning about that transition to Kindergarten.

And then if the child is in a center-based program and transitioning from one classroom to the next or even from one preschool into Kindergarten, staff can ask for information from the child's previous teacher, such as getting access to the development portfolio or their binder,

their ongoing assessment information, and sharing child development information from one classroom that helps—will help educational staff to support children's learning from one environment to the next, so we don't miss a beat, right? We can pick right up if we can look at that developmental thing and say, "Wow, they are already on their way with writing their name, and so we can work on this next challenge with them."

And staff can also share any goals or learning objectives with their families and ask families to share their own desires for their child. That's so important, and for children with suspected delays or identified disabilities, information should be shared related to adaptations in that environment or interactions that have been successful. I would say this is so important for going from one classroom to the next, is to remember what modifications and adaptations you've made for that child and to pass those along with the family and to that receiving teacher so that it's there right away on day one for that child in their new environment.

We don't want them to struggle and struggle and struggle and then for that receiving teacher to find out like, "Oh, they need adaptive scissors," or, "Oh, they need an extra warning during transition time." And when it's time to prepare children and families for the transition to Kindergarten, you can host a Kindergarten information night, have the local Kindergarten program come to your area, to your program for an information night, and have things ready for them to be signed up right away, like the Kindergarten registration packet from their base school, information about their immunizations, medical records, et cetera, things that they might need for that first day of school and information about the elementary school and teachers, and it's always fun to have representatives there to answer any of those questions. It's important to provide opportunities for children and families to have information about and get familiar with new environments and routines, such as taking the bus. So we know that there's sometimes "Get to know Kindergarten" days at children's museums or just events that are happening at a park during the summertime that would be good to pass on to families that are going to be going into Kindergarten where children get an opportunity to sit on a real school bus and things like that.

It's important to get to know, you know, how do children eat in the Kindergarten classroom? Will they be eating in a big cafeteria? And providing that information, and so when parents have this information, they feel more comfortable, and that's what this is about, is helping them to feel more comfortable with their next environment so that they can really support their child's comfort and adjustment into that next environment, too. Judi Stevenson-Garcia: Wow. That's a lot of great strategies, and actually everyone in the chat box has been sharing so many things that they do. A lot of things that you mentioned our staff are doing. Someone asked about whether or not programs have a formal, like, a written-up transition plan. Is that something that you would recommend, Gail?

Gail: Oh, yes, absolutely, something that's been done, that they're thinking about how they're going to do it, but that there also could be some joint alignment so with that Kindergarten teacher about how they'll do transition practices.

Judi: Yeah, I think this is great, and you mentioned asking questions during a home visit about children's home languages, and we have a resource on ECLKC, and we've included it in our resource tab in case you haven't seen it. Our participants, this is a great resource. This is even

something that would be great to share with your receiving schools, as well. It's called "Gathering and Using Information From Families," and it provides questions that we can ask families about their children's language experiences, and I also am interested in the chat box if any of you in your programs provide transition information in different languages? I would love it if you could share examples of ways or strategies that you've used to communicate with families who speak a language other than English, who might need that information about registration or, you know, taking the bus or, you know, all of those kinds of things. If you provide that information in a different language, I would love to hear about it. I think that would be really interesting. And I'm also thinking about what you talked about, Gail, about it being just as important to help preschoolers transition as it is for parents. This is that, you know, that whole web you talked about.

Gail: Mm-hmm.

Judi: So I'm thinking about providing information to families, but also—And all of your strategies really are kind of at that family level. What can we do in terms of talking through transitions with children?

Gail: Oh, yes. So preschoolers will feel so respected, valued and cared for when parents, teachers and their family childcare providers take time to talk them through that transition, to help ease some of their concerns, but also to join them in the excitement, so I don't want to give the impression that children are all worried about Kindergarten. Most of them are super excited about Kindergarten.

Judi: Oh, yeah.

Gail: So we also [Inaudible], but we just want to help them make that adjustment successfully, and so there's so many creative ways that you can do that. So you can certainly start dedicating, like, right in the spring, such a great time to start dedicating some of those circle times to thinking about Kindergarten, and there's so many great books about it.

So one of my all-time favorite books because it really draws on emotions and that emotion they might have around going to Kindergarten is "Wemberly Worried" because Wemberly worries a lot, but her biggest worry is about going to school. But there's so many great adjustment kind of strategies in there, and it's great to get children thinking about that feeling.

There's this one, just because it's so much fun: "Kindergarten Rocks!" It's about how great Kindergarten is, and it really does rock, and it's so much fun, and that's a great one that's there. I promise I'm not going through a million of them, but there are some to highlight. This one I love. It's a little bit outdated, but it's "When You Go to Kindergarten" by James Howe. The reason I love this one is, it has beautiful, real photographs of very diverse children and families, and it just gives them real pictures of what Kindergarten looks like. Right? That can help, like, "What is Kindergarten? What will it look like?" And this has some great real pictures in there, and then, of course, it's really important that we provide books in their home language, too, so this book is the "First Day Jitters," about having some jitters there, and I remember when I would have all of my children in Head Start come the day before we did a little open house, and I gave children some jitter glitter to put on their little head.

Treshawn Anderson: Oh.

Gail: Or to pour, it was so fun. So there's jitters, and then this one is, it's also offered in Spanish and multiple other languages, so you can definitely do that during circle time. You could take field trips to Kindergarten. That's such a great strategy to, you know, even if it's not the Kindergarten they will go to, just seeing a Kindergarten and being able to see that it's probably somewhat familiar but noticing what's different. So I had a friend that was a teacher, and she actually, when she did the preschool field trip to Kindergarten, she gave all the children some disposable cameras that they had been donated to them and let the children take photos of things that were interesting to them about Kindergarten, and they developed them and then kind of made a book about that or used that to discuss at circle time, and very creative photographs.

Judi: Hmm.

Gail: And I remember taking children on a field trip to a Kindergarten classroom and then also visiting the office and meeting the principal, you know, and talking about what the principal did, and the principal had a bathroom in their office, and the children, like, they all had to go in there. They thought that was great. It was just to kind of give them that—You know, helping to ease their worries, right, how do you get your food in Kindergarten? What's it like?

Treshawn: Yeah, those are awesome ways to think about helping children think about their transition to Kindergarten. I wish I had some of those. I have some of those books, but you named off some great ones there. So in your viewer's guide, there's several resources that can help you think about the timing of transitions, including the calendar for teachers and family childcare providers and then one for families, too. So we're going to shift our thinking to the smaller transitions, the everyday transitions, and so, Gail, it's important to share information with children about transitions, too, right? So can you tell us some of those ways that we can do this with children?

Gail: Yeah, so I think first of all, like, helping, warning them, giving them a heads-up that it's time to transition to another activity, so it might be that you turn the lights out to get their attention before telling them, so making sure you get their attention before you tell them what's going to be coming next. It might be that you are, you know, making sure that you have a little warning bell or something that's consistent that you do, so it might be the lights. It might be a bell. It might be a tambourine. It might be—The point is, is that when children hear that, they know a change is going to happen and to give you their attention so they can have some information about what is going to happen next. I think another big thing is to make sure that—You know, I'm sure everybody knows that having a predictable schedule is one of the best ways to help children with transitions, but also giving them extra information when that schedule is going to change. So again, having some, you know, picture cue cards, or I like to think about it as a portable schedule, so I would put kind of the schedule of the day, pictures, and even put them maybe on a little metal ring and hang them around the room, so I always had them, but letting children know, especially children that might need a little extra support that, you know, "We always go from choice time to circle time, playground, but today instead of the playground, so exciting, we're going to go on a school bus because we're going to go on a field

trip," so giving them some extra information and remembering that all young children can benefit from not only language but pictures.

That's particularly important for children who are dual language learners, children who might have language delays, and giving additional reminders to children who might need that extra time or what I like to call a buffer activity, so a child that you know is going to have a really difficult time with that transition, having them move from something that's really, super exciting and their favorite thing to do, like, maybe they love to be on the computer, and maybe about 5 minutes before you're going to do cleanup, you have them move to sand and water table. It's soothing. They like it, but leaving that to go clean up is not going to be nearly as traumatic.

Treshawn: Oh, that's great.

Judi: Yeah, no, that's great, and you guys are sharing some awesome books, too, in the chat box, so I encourage you to read your fellow colleagues' book ideas. I had to write one down. Someone, they use a mantra pin with books that translates the words into different languages. That's pretty awesome.

Gail: Very cool.

Treshawn: Great.

Judi: That was Nelly. She said that, so that's great, if you could give us some information on that. So we've got some videos of real-life teachers with their preschoolers using creative ways to help children move through daily transitions, so let's watch them. And as you watch, tell us in the chat box what you notice about how they support children's learning through these transitions, so let's take a look.

[Video clip begins]

Man No. 1: Get in line or the ball?

Boy No. 1: Ball!

Boy No. 2: Ball!

[Inaudible]

Man No. 1: We can do either one.

Boy No. 1: Ball!

Boy No. 2: Ball!

Man No. 1: So if you want the ball, I can roll you the ball. If you want the drum, you can use the ball.

Boy No. 1: I want the ball, the ball, the ball, the ball, the ball.

Man No. 1: Okay. Well, when I call your name, then you can come—You can tell me what you want. I see Vera is ready. Vera, you ready? You want to do the drum or the ball?

Vera Awusuah: The ball. The drum.

Man No. 1: Okay. Come on up and do the drum. Listen how Vera is going to pound out her name.

Vera: Awusuah.

Man No. 1: Oh, you're going to do your last name. Let's try again one more time.

Vera: Awusuah.

Man No. 1: Awusuah. That was pretty good. Wow.

Boy No. 3: That's not your name!

Man No. 1: That was good. She did her last name. She said instead of doing Vera, she did Awusuah. She did an extra one.

Boy No. 3: Extra!

Man No. 1: Hmm. Okay, Jared, do you want to do the ball or the drum?

Jared Haynes: The drum.

Man No. 1: All right. Come on up. Are you going to do your first name or your last name?

Jared: My last name.

Man No. 1: You are? Haynes? All right. Let's see. Or do you want to do your mom's name, Atiria?

Jared: No!

Man No. 1: No. Okay. Which name are you going to do?

Jared: I want to do it like a chicken.

Man No. 1: All right. Go ahead. Show me how you can do it.

Jared: Richard.

Man No. 1: Richard? Oh, you did your full first name. All right. Good job. You can go get in line.

David: I want to do the ball.

Man No. 1: Okay. You want me to roll you the ball?

David: Yes.

Man No. 1: All right. Sit down. I'll roll you the ball. David has got the ball. All right. Do you want to—Who you going to give it to next?

David: Julio!

Man No. 1: All right. Julio. Okay, you want to do the drum? All right. I'll take the ball. Go ahead, David.

Julio De La Cruz: I don't want to do it.

Man No. 1: Okay.

Julio: I'll do it. I'll do—

Man No. 1: Are you going to do Julio, or you going to do De La Cruz?

Julio: Julio De La Cruz.

Man No. 1: Oh, you're going to do the whole thing? All right. Let's see.

Julio: Julio De La Cruz!

Man No. 1: All right. That worked pretty well.

Heather: ...does that song mean? ♪ Eyes and ears ♪ ♪ On Teacher Heather ♪ ♪ Eye and ears ♪ ♪
On Teacher Heather ♪ ♪ Voices quiet ♪ ♪ Bodies still ♪ ♪ Voices quiet ♪ ♪ Bodies still ♪

[End video clip]

Treshawn: So a lot of you guys are commenting on, you know, the teacher giving the child choices on how they wanted to line up. They get to pick their own way. It allows for this independence and individualization of the curriculum a little, or of the transition, and then in the song, it was a short song, but it really gives clues to children on, you know, what the expectations are at circle time, and using songs as a form of transitions can really be helpful for children who are dual language learners since hearing this familiar tune each day is another way to help them understand, you know, what's coming up next.

Judi: Exactly.

Treshawn: So what's coming up next?

Judi: And Misty said that children love singing songs, and it's so true. They respond to music. You could swing all day, and they would respond positively to that, so we definitely know that. Okay. So let's move onto supportive relationships, and you could see some really positive supportive relationships in those videos, and so we asked you about, Gail, some strategies. Oh, sorry. Our participants and Gail, we asked about strategies that help us when we transition, and knowing someone at a new school and having supportive friends and families is a few of those things that really helps. So, Gail, tell us about how supportive relationships help children and their families through transition.

Gail: Sure, and I'll go quickly, but I just think that we can all imagine or remember a time that maybe you've gone into a new environment. Maybe you went to a teacher workshop, and you went there by yourself, or you went to a new—you know, you had to go—you started at a new school or something, and you walk in, and it is a little bit unnerving, but as soon as you see somebody that you know, whew, it helps kind of buffer that [Inaudible], right? You know, like, "Okay."

Judi: Yeah.

Gail: "I can sit by that person. I can talk to that person," and so just imagining, that's really what we want to help do for transitions. We want children and families to walk in and feel that, like, "Whew, I already know you," right? So moving to a new environment can be very stressful for young children and families. It's also exciting. But especially if they're not familiar with the adults in that environment or with the new routines and so we really want to provide as much information, get them as familiar as possible.

It's important for us to help preschoolers and their families transition into our programs or out of our programs by building those relationships with them but also supporting them and developing relationships with people in their new setting, the new teacher, the other families, the other children, and understanding each other's cultural perspectives is a very important part of building these meaningful relationships. It's helpful to know the families' expectations for their child as they're coming into your program or for the program. This includes having families share in some of the decision-making for their child during transitions and approaching families as an equal partner in supporting their child's learning, so a child that's coming—A family that's moving their child into your center-based preschool classroom might want to stay with them a few days throughout the day, right, or they might think, "You know what? It's going to be better for them and me if we, like, do a quick goodbye and then, you know, I follow up a little bit later," so we want them to help make decisions. They know their child best around that.

Think of ways you might begin to build relationships between children, families and their next teacher and the school community, and we have a few examples, so supporting children to build relationships with the receiving schools and connect families who might be going into that same Kindergarten, so if you know that you're going to have some children go to that same Kindergarten, making sure you share that information with a parent, and then maybe they could do some playdates over the summer to get to know each other a little bit better. Host meetings with the children and their families and their new teachers. Plan new family nights or weekend open houses if they're coming to your program. Help families arrange play dates with other rising Kindergartners. I just talked about that one. Share information about receiving school activities with parents during pickup and drop-off, making sure that, you know, "Oh, I heard they're going to be doing this. I heard they're going to be doing that. Are you signed up for that? You'd be so great at that.

For children who are dual language learners, if the staff in the new program or classroom don't speak the child's home language, consider asking another staff person or a parent volunteer who speaks the child's home language to visit the new environment each day just to say a little something with them to help to help ease any anxiety they might have, and for children with diagnosed disabilities, there are actual procedures in place for transitioning a child with an IEP, and so you want to make sure that you're aware of those and participate in them.

Judi: Yeah, I think those are all so important. I also—Someone, I think, in the chat mentioned having former Head Start parents come back to the program and share their experience of how, you know, what happened when their children transitioned to Kindergarten, and I think as a parent, that would be so comforting, right, to be able to talk to a parent who's just been through that experience, and what a great way to build relationships within the community, and then you might even meet somebody, again, a familiar face that you would have, as a parent, walking into the school, which I think is great.

Do you guys have examples of—And I see some of you are posting some examples of how you build relationships, but think about how you use relationships and develop relationships to support children and families and communities through that whole transition process. Please definitely share, and some of your ideas already have definitely been focused on developing

and supporting relationships. So the last thing we want to talk today about is alignment, and I think everything kind of we've been talking about today is alignment or familiarity, so maybe help us understand just a little bit more clearly what we mean when we say alignment in terms of transitions for preschoolers and families.

Gail: Absolutely. So alignment, again, we can think about that as kind of some continuity or some consistency, some familiarity, and that is—And we can think about that in terms of the curriculum, assessment, the physical environment, the routines and activities that we do and more. So when some things are aligned or familiar in the next environment or within that current environment, it makes preschoolers and their families feel less stressed. It makes all of us feel less stressed. So keeping families' cultural perspectives in mind, creating alignment between what the child experiences at home and school requires us to resist making assumptions that the classroom way is the best and to work together with that common goal of providing children with consistent care that fosters healthy growth and development.

For example, families may have cultural considerations for what or how their child learns, with the expectation that school is for learning ABCs and should be mostly teacher-directed, so taking into consideration the family's expectations, we can work with them to find a solution that aligns with what is developmentally appropriate but also meets the child and family's needs. But also want to think about alignment for children maybe between classrooms or for children between preschool and Kindergarten, so thinking about ways we might support alignment and continuity for children and families between these environments.

For children transitioning within a preschool program, it might be just planning visits to the receiving program or classroom for the child with their trusted caregiver, so their teacher gets to go with them, or their assistant teacher goes with them from the sending program into that next classroom for a little bit of time each day, maybe, and then building it up. Ensure that staff from the receiving program visit the children in their current setting so that the children really get to know them. "Oh, hey, I know you. You came into my classroom before. You're my teacher's friend." Find out how teachers communicate with families. Is it online? Is it face-to-face? Is it notebook, daily sheets? And try and implement those in your program, so you're staying—kind of some alignment. Establish similar routines such as arrival and sign in, using a special song during transitions.

So you might know that song that they sing in the next preschool classroom, so you're going to sing that one, too, in your 3-year-old classroom. Use similar or aligned assessments and curriculum between classrooms. Have teachers from sending and receiving programs visit each other's programs or share in joint professional development opportunities so things are very similar and familiar so that the curriculums align. The expectations are aligned. Use the child's home language whenever possible. That's always such a very good idea. And use similar transitions or adaptations for children with suspected delays or diagnosed disabilities to make sure the teacher can meet them, can implement those from the current setting. I think I talked about that before, how important it is to transition a child with the modifications and adaptations they need to be maximally successful.

And for children transitioning into Kindergarten, find out how local Kindergarten teachers communicate with their families and try and implement those in your program. It's really

important to have your own professional development day where you visit a Kindergarten classroom and you know what the expectations might be in Kindergarten in receiving schools where your children typically go, and try and work in some of those routines and some familiar things into your classroom routines as you're kind of moving through spring or ending summer and those children will be moving on, so that you can say, "Remember, in Kindergarten they do this," or, "I visited a Kindergarten, and this is how they line up.

Let's try that. Let's try and line up like Kindergartners do." So work with children on those routines that might be less familiar to them, such as getting their food in the cafeteria, holding a tray, opening milk, so I know that when my daughter started Kindergarten, they needed, like—It was almost like a one-to-one volunteer situation just to help children open their milk on that first day. You know, they might have an assigned seat, or they might get to sit where they want to, so it might even be practicing, like, how do you sit down next to someone and start a conversation? So when possible, using a similar or aligned assessment or knowing what that assessment might be so that you can talk to a parent. When you're going over their last assessment that you've conducted in preschool or Head Start and saying, "So this is how you get information. In Kindergarten, it might look a little different. This is what they typically hand out," right, so you're helping parents understand how those are aligned, as well.

And when possible, participate in joint professional development with Kindergarten teachers. Head Start, we do so many great professional development opportunities. Invite those Kindergarten teachers in. They're often left out of some professional development, so let's invite them into our P.D. so that we can start to align our expectations and routines.

Judi: Yeah, I worked with some programs, some preschool and Kindergarten programs in Chicago, and one of the things the Kindergarten teachers decided to do was to try to set up their classroom so that it looked very much like the pre-K classroom, so that for the first month or two, kids came in and felt like it was familiar. Like, there was a block area and a dramatic play area and a sand and water table, so they did—They spent more time in center time at the beginning of the year and then kind of gradually moved it back, but that was—It was a big change for them, and they relied on the preschool teachers to kind of figure out how the preschool teachers organized their day and managed center time with a lot of busy kids. So that was great, where they were learning from each other and really helped to ease the transitions for the kids, which I think is great.

Gail: Wonderful.

Judi: So, Gail, you've given us so much to think about, and I'm going to go back and rewatch this episode so I can write things down, so I can prepare for my transition to Kindergarten. But is there anything you want to share with us, any, like, kind of last big ideas or thoughts that we can think about, especially as we really are heading into this season with our big kids getting ready to move on to Kindergarten next year?

Gail: I say we do such great work in Head Start where we provide comprehensive early care and education that really helps improve child and family outcomes and closes that opportunity gap, and we really want to help sustain that gain that they make by making some supportive transitions for children and families, so that when they get to Kindergarten, their teachers are

ready for them. They know so much about them. They're ready to work with them on day one. The children know their teachers. They know the environment. They know the routine, and they're feeling really excited about that transition, and parents know all the basic information. They know how their child is going to get lunch. They know everything, and so they're ready on day one to engage and ask, you know, "Where's the PTA?" all of that, so more is better with transition practices, and that's what I'd leave you with.

Judi: And I have to shout out Julie B. here. She said they have tray days, so the kids can practice balancing a tray and opening up a milk carton.

Gail: Oh, great.

Judi: I can imagine, like, feeling like such a big kid, like, practicing with a tray. That's fantastic. I love that. Thank you for sharing that idea.

Gail: Great.

Judi: And I think this is such a helpful way to think about these things, right? We want to make sure children and families have information. We want to make sure we're developing and establishing those relationships that'll really support them through big and small transitions and then wherever possible making sure we can have that alignment, and that map that you gave us at the very beginning, that interactive web, is so helpful to think of, that it's not just one child moving from one space to the next, but it's the community and the families. And as we can see in the chat box, our teachers here are so invested in supporting children and families. They have some really great strategies that we've—And we're going to save this chat...

Gail: Okay.

Treshawn: Oh, yeah.

Judi:...because there's some really fantastic ideas in here, so thank you all for being so engaged here. And we did—There was an additional video we were going to show you, but we didn't want to run out of time, so we are going to post that for you along with this episode on our MyPeers group. If you guys are not on MyPeers yet, you should be.

So MyPeers is the place where Head Start and hopefully soon our local school districts are going to be engaged in these conversations. We have a Teacher Time community there. Hopefully lots of you are already in there. We also just started a new community. It's called the Head Start School Connections MyPeers community, so this is a space where we really hope that teachers will be able to connect with other educational professionals to share resources and strategies just like you're doing today and questions related to transitions, either into Early Head Start, to Head Start and even on to Kindergarten, so please go into MyPeers. Join this community, and then invite your local school friends because MyPeers is open to the broader educational community now, so if you have school districts where you would like to bring them in so that we can have conversations with Head Start, and you can—This will be another place where we can have alignment and build relationships.

We would love for you to share MyPeers, this community, with your colleagues in your local school districts. And as you know, we also have other resources for you: Text4Teachers. Again, that's something you could share with Kindergarten teachers. There's some really great

resources that get sent through Text4Teachers. And then ELOF2GO, obviously, if you want receiving schools to understand what you guys have been working on in Head Start, the ELOF is a great place.

You can say, "This is what we're learning in Head Start. This is where our children are when they come to you." It's a great way to share information with your receiving schools about the focus and the learning goals that children are reaching.

So thank you. The last thing we'll want to say is, we have two episodes left this season. It's gone by in a flash. Our next episode will be talking about ongoing assessment in infant-toddler programs, and then our final episode will be ongoing assessment for preschoolers, so if you guys are interested in learning about how to use assessment to improve your teaching practices and help your children meet their goals, that's where you want to be.

So thank you, Gail. This has been so much fun. I wish we had two hours with you.

Gail: Yeah.

Judi: Bye. Bye to your Kindergartner moving into Kindergarten.

Treshawn: And your school bus.

Judi: Thank you for being here with us today. And your school bus.

Treshawn: Yeah, this was great. Thank you guys for joining us. We'll see you next month. Bye, Gail. Bye, Judi.

Judi: Sounds good. Bye. Thanks, everyone.

Treshawn: Okay.