

PRE-ELEMENTARY EDUCATION LONGITUDINAL STUDY
PEELS PROGRESS

Notes

NCSEER 2010-3000

FINDINGS

Eighty-four percent of preschoolers with disabilities had a somewhat easy or very easy transition into kindergarten based on parent reports.

• *Parents of Hispanic children (26%) were significantly more likely to report that their children had a somewhat hard or very hard transition to kindergarten than were parents of Black children (16%) or parents of White children (13%).*

• *Based on teacher and parent reports, kindergarten transitions were more likely to be somewhat easy or very easy when the school took steps to facilitate the transition.*

Preschoolers with Disabilities: A Look at Transitions from Preschool to Kindergarten

The Pre-Elementary Education Longitudinal Study (PEELS) has been examining the preschool and early elementary school experiences of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children with disabilities. The study followed a nationally representative sample of more than 3,000 children who received preschool special education services until 2009, when they were ages 8 through 10.

This *PEELS Progress Notes* explores children's transitions from preschool to kindergarten. The data are from Carlson et al. (2009).

Kindergarten Transition

After the transition to kindergarten, children typically experience changes from the pre-kindergarten environment, such as greater child-to-teacher ratio, more group instruction, and higher teacher expectations of autonomy and academic skills (LaParo, Pianta, & Cox 2000; Troup & Malone 2002). The change may be more complex for young children with disabilities. A child with a disability may have new staff providing support services, a change in the location of pull-out services or in the mode of services provided in the class, and other adjustments to services received as part of his/her individualized education program (IEP).

Data Sources

Data in this document were drawn from several sources.

- **PEELS Waves 1–3 parent interviews.** A parent/guardian of each child in the sample was asked to complete a 1-hour computer-assisted telephone interview about his or her child's health and disability, behavior, school programs and services, special education and related services, child care, and out-of-school activities. Respondents also were asked a series of questions about their household, resources, and their family background. The response rates were 96, 93, and 88 percent in 2003–04, 2004–05, and 2005–06, respectively.
- **PEELS Waves 1–3 teacher questionnaires.** Researchers used the *Early Childhood Teacher Questionnaire*, *Kindergarten Teacher Questionnaire*, or *Elementary School Teacher Questionnaire* to ask teachers about each child's experiences in the class or program. Questionnaire items addressed classroom staffing

and materials, children’s interactions with nondisabled peers, and children’s transitions in and out of their current programs. They also included items about each child’s primary disability. The response rate was 79 percent in 2003–04, 84 percent in 2004–05, and 81 percent in 2005–06. The instruments can be found at www.peels.org.

To generate adequate sample sizes, information on children’s transitions to kindergarten was generated using three years of PEELS data, combining responses for children who were in kindergarten in 2003–04 with those in kindergarten in 2004–05 and in 2005–06.

Ease of Transition to Kindergarten

According to their parents, 84 percent of kindergartners had a *somewhat easy* or *very easy* transition into their class or program, and 16 percent (*S.E.* = 1.1)¹ had a *somewhat difficult* or *very difficult* transition. According to their teachers, 85 percent (*S.E.* = 1.1) of kindergartners had a *somewhat easy* or *very easy* transition into their class or program, and 15 percent (*S.E.* = 1.1) had a *somewhat difficult* or *very difficult* transition. There were no statistically significant differences in teacher perception of the ease of transition based on the child’s gender, race/ethnicity, disability category, or family income. However, when parents were asked about their child’s ease of transition, there were significant differences by race/ethnicity and family income. For example, parents of Hispanic children were significantly more likely (26%, *S.E.* = 2.7) to report that their child had a *somewhat hard* or *very hard* transition than parents of Black children (16%, *S.E.* = 3.0) and parents of White children (13%, *S.E.* = 1.1). Eleven percent (*S.E.* = 1.8) of parents of children in households with incomes of more than \$40,000 reported that their child had a *somewhat hard* or *very hard* transition, compared to 16 percent (*S.E.* = 2.5) of parents of children from households with incomes of \$20,001 to \$40,000 and 21 percent (*S.E.* = 2.5) of parents of children in households with incomes of \$20,000 or less.²

Transition Strategies and Supports

Teachers reported using a variety of strategies to help in transitioning children into kindergarten. Eighty-seven

percent of children’s kindergarten teachers reported receiving the child’s records (e.g., paper or electronic files) from the previous program (*S.E.* = 1.2); 86 percent encouraged parents and guardians to meet the child’s new staff (*S.E.* = 1.8); and 83 percent received information (e.g., communicated verbally or informally) about the child from the sending program (*S.E.* = 1.3).

Neither parent nor teacher perception of the ease of transition was significantly related to family-initiated support to facilitate the transition. However, significantly more parents and teachers reported that the transition was *somewhat easy* or *very easy* when the school initiated

Percentage of children whose kindergarten teacher reported the strategies used to help the child transition into kindergarten: School years 2003–04, 2004–05, and 2005–06 (combined)

Strategy Used	%
Received children’s previous records	87.1
Parents/guardians encouraged to meet new staff	86.3
Sending programs provided information about children	82.8
Children’s families visited the classroom or school	78.6
Provided parents with written information	75.0
Participated in children’s IEP development	63.3
Met with staff of sending programs	58.8
Called the children’s parents	54.8
Developed child-specific preparatory strategies	53.7
Visited children’s previous settings	43.1
Visited children’s homes	10.3

NOTE: Teachers could select more than one strategy. The number of preschoolers in the analysis for each row, from top to bottom, was 1151, 1015, 1099, 1124, 882, 1040, 974, 856, 1041, 959, and 954, respectively. The percentages were generated using three years of PEELS data, combining responses for children who were in kindergarten in 2003–04, 2004–05, and 2005–06.

¹ *S.E.* = standard error.

² All comparative statements made have been tested for statistical significance using chi-square tests. If the chi-square was significant, a *t*-test for dependent samples was conducted to examine differences between pairs of groups. Differences are discussed only if they were found to be statistically significant at the *p* < .05 level after correcting for multiple comparisons using the Benjamini-Hochberg (BH) method.

For young children who received preschool special education services, parent and teacher reports of the ease of transition to kindergarten, by type of support: School years 2003–04, 2004–05, and 2005–06 (combined)

	Parent Report: Somewhat easy or very easy	Teacher Report: Somewhat easy or very easy
Family initiation of action to support transition		
• Family initiated action to support transition	84.9%	85.1%
• Family did not initiate action to support transition	82.1%	82.8%
School initiation of action to support transition*		
• School initiated action to support transition	87.2%	86.1%
• School did not initiate action to support transition	72.7%	78.0%

* The chi-square analysis result was significant at $p < .05$ level.

ed support to facilitate the transition (parents: 87.2%, $S.E. = 1.3$; teachers: 86.1%, $S.E. = 1.1$) than when the school had not taken any steps to facilitate the transition (parents: 72.7%, $S.E. = 2.3$; teachers: 78%, $S.E. = 3.0$).

References Cited in This Report

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