

SUPPORTING TRANSITIONS IN MIGRANT AND SEASONAL HEAD START

Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS) programs uniquely support the frequent transitions, including the transition to kindergarten, that children in migrant and seasonal families may experience.

Lessons learned from how MSHS programs support transitions may have implications for MSHS and other federally funded early care and education (ECE) programs. Data for this brief come from the 2017 Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Study dataset.ⁱ

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KEY FINDINGS



Center directors focus more transition efforts on directly engaging families compared to coordinating with other ECE programs or schools.

For example, MSHS center directors were more likely to report providing information to families about the transition than sharing information with other local ECE programs or schools or conduct joint trainings.



Collaboration with state Migrant Education programs may foster more MSHS transition efforts.

MSHS centers that collaborated more with Migrant Education reported implementing more transition practices.



Large and small MSHS programs implement similar amounts of transition practices.

The size of MSHS centers and the proportion of preschool children enrolled were not related to the types and variety of transition practices implemented.



Centers differ in the amount of transition supports they provide based on the population of children served.

When fewer than half of enrolled children were in migrant families (and thus proportionally more were in seasonal families), MSHS centers offered more transition practices.

The **Understanding Children’s Transition from Head Start to Kindergarten (HS2K) Project** team analyzed the **presence (type and amount) of three sets of transition practices** as reported by center directors in MSHS programs using the **MSHS Study 2017** dataset.ⁱ We used data from the center director survey to understand the different types of transition practices implemented within centers. We also examined whether **center and family characteristics** were associated with the types of transition practices offered in MSHS programs. We analyzed data at the center level, with **198 centers** represented in the dataset.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVED BY MSHS

Head Start serves children whose families have incomes below the federal poverty level or receive other benefits, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), as well as children who experience homelessness or are in foster care. MSHS more specifically serves families who work an agricultural schedule.

Migrant families have changed their geographic location within the past two years. **Seasonal families** have not changed their residence in the past two years.ⁱⁱ



Families may receive kindergarten transition supports from an MSHS center that **may not be in the same location** as the school where children will start kindergarten.

Migrant families are **geographically mobile** and travel large distances over the course of the season for work.

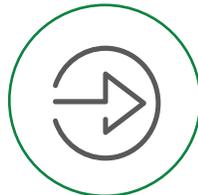


MIGRANT AND SEASONAL HEAD START



Children are more likely to **experience multiple transitions** before kindergarten.ⁱⁱⁱ

Migrant families often **leave with little warning**, heading to the next worksite.



Families follow an **agricultural schedule**.^{iv}

Families **may not receive information that aligns** with when the schools are focusing on the transition to kindergarten.^v



Parents of MSHS children (or other adults/caregivers in the household) **work longer hours** during peak agricultural seasons.^v

CENTER DETAILS

There are about **300 MSHS centers in the United States**.^{vi}

MSHS programs are marked by their commitment to family and community engagement, which require **accommodations of agricultural work schedules**.^v

MSHS programs are required to **provide general transition supports**—supports that are not specific to kindergarten transitions—when children leave programs **due to the mobile nature of their families' work**.^{vii}

“ A migrant or seasonal Head Start center must undertake efforts to support effective transitions to other migrant or seasonal Head Start or, if appropriate, Early Head Start or Head Start centers for families and children moving out of the community in which they are currently served. ”

Source: The Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS; 2016) Part 1302.72

TRANSITION PRACTICES

THREE SETS OF TRANSITION PRACTICES OFFERED IN MSHS CENTERS

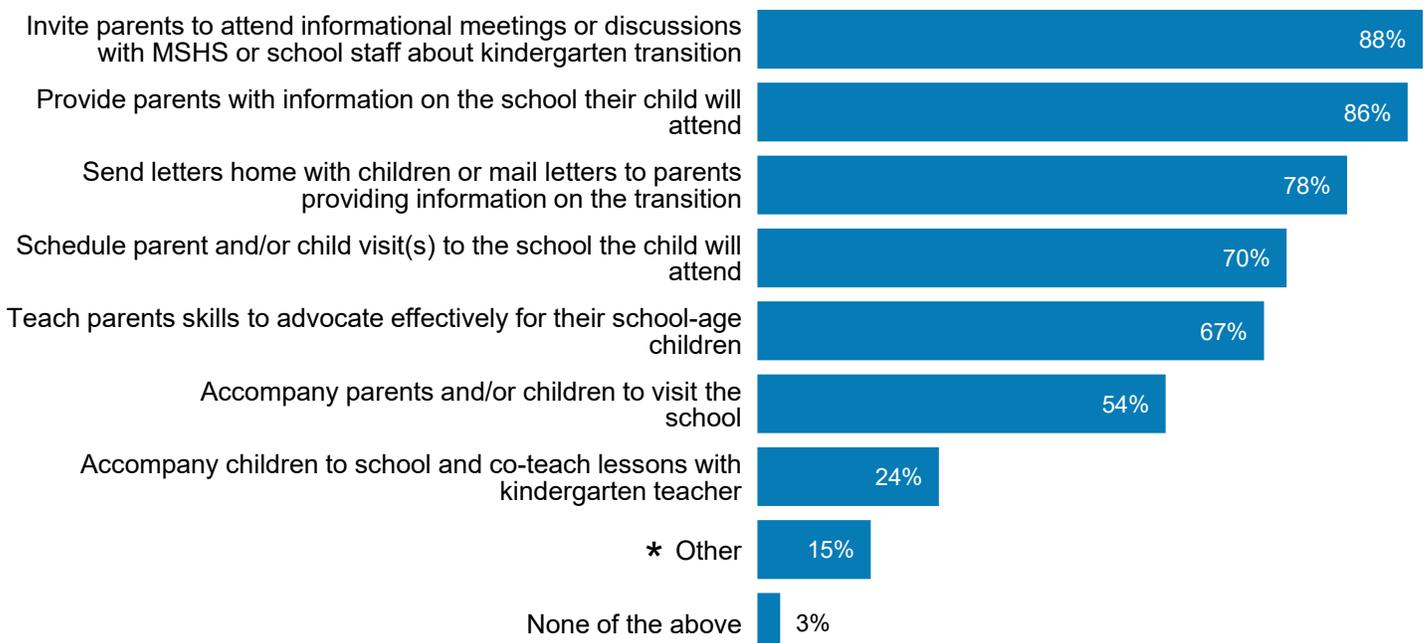
Center-to-family/child kindergarten transition practices: Center directors responded to the question, “Does your center do any of the following regarding transition to kindergarten?” and reported the types of practices offered to families and children. Because center directors reported transition practices provided to either the child or the family, the research team included them in the same set of practices rather than having separate “center-to-family” and “center-to-child” groups of practices.

Center-to-school coordination practices: Center directors responded to the question, “Does your MSHS center work in any of the following ways with the elementary schools your children will attend?” and reported the types of practices that exist between their MSHS center and local elementary schools. These practices are focused on how MSHS centers and local elementary schools coordinate and include but are not limited to kindergarten transitions.

Migration/moving transition practices: Center directors responded to the question, “In what ways does your center facilitate MSHS families’ transitions out of the area if they migrate or move?” and reported the types of practices that they offer. These include but are not limited to the kindergarten transition or to any other particular early education sites where the families would go next.

Most center directors reported implementing kindergarten transition practices that occurred within their center and that engaged families directly (Figure 1). A lower proportion of center directors reported an activity that involved visiting the schools children will attend with parents or children.

FIGURE 1. CENTER-TO-FAMILY/CHILD KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION PRACTICES

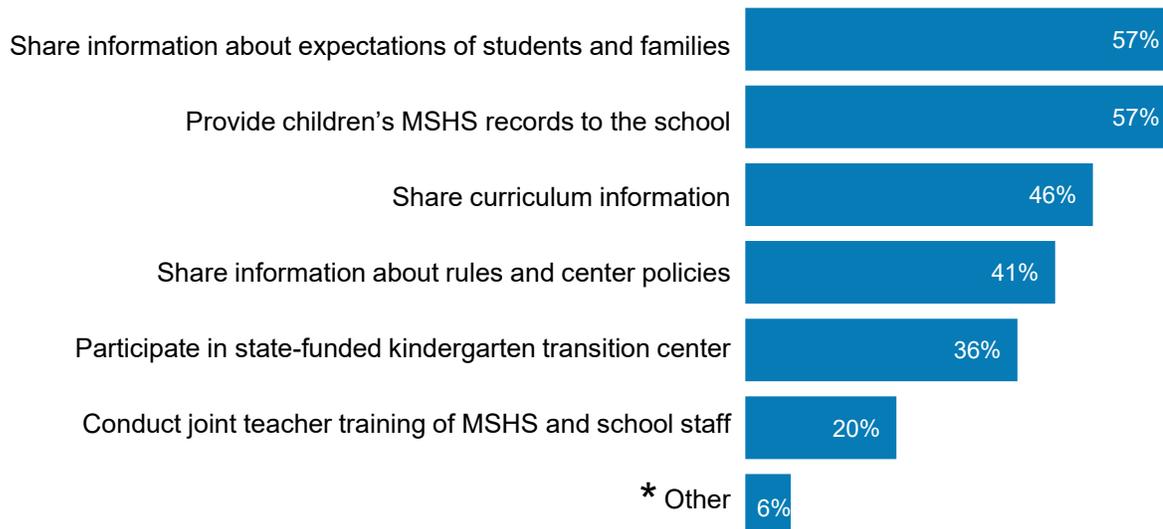


Note: N=191. *Four center directors noted inviting kindergarten teachers to meet students in the MSHS center, three offered cafeteria-style meals for children prior to school entry, three noted coordinating with the school by sharing records, curriculum, or establishing agreements, two noted providing school supplies for children, two noted assisting parents to complete enrollment/registration paperwork, two attended school-level meetings, and one noted creating child portfolios for parents to give to their next school. Three center directors noted that transitions are completely embedded in their regular program activities and thus there were not individualized kindergarten transition activities offered.

TRANSITION PRACTICES

The most common types of center-to-school coordination practices involved sharing information with the schools children will attend (Figure 2). Compared to Figure 1, fewer MSHS centers reported implementing activities that involved coordination with local elementary schools compared to center-to-family/child kindergarten transition practices.

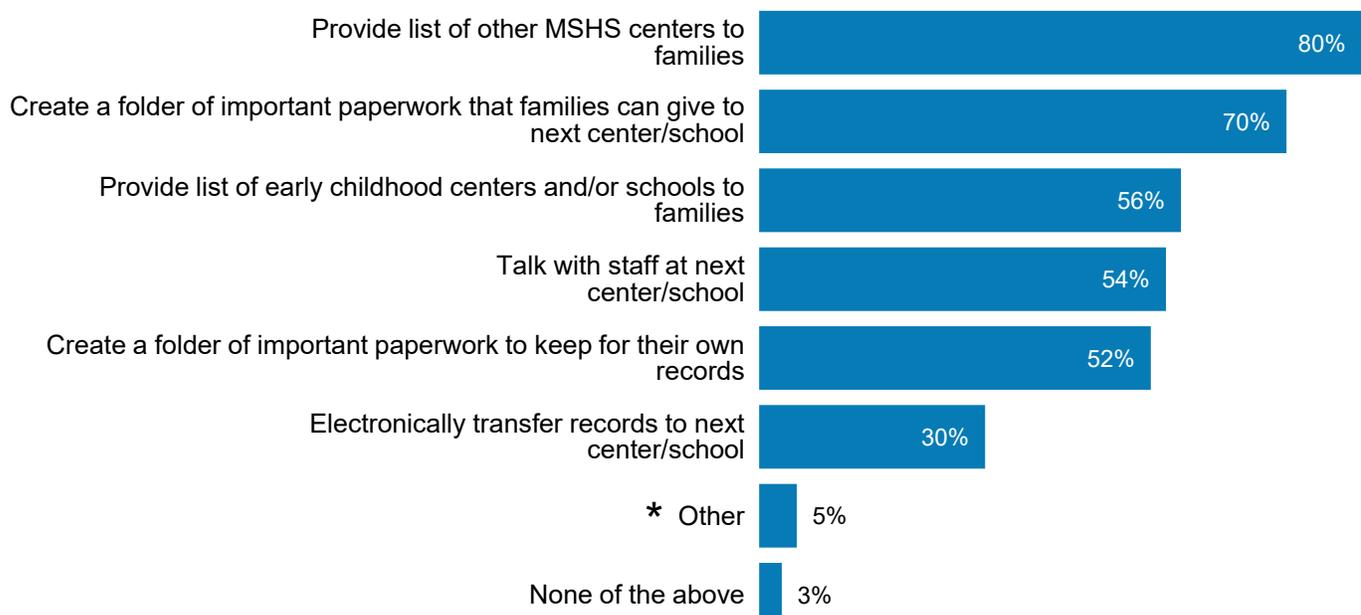
FIGURE 2. CENTER-TO-SCHOOL COORDINATION PRACTICES



Note: N=191. * Four center directors noted conducting joint kindergarten transition meetings for families with the elementary school, four noted coordinating visits to the school for families transitioning into kindergarten, and one center director noted that they create school-center agreements.

Many centers provided families with information about other MSHS centers or paperwork to give to their next school (Figure 3). On the other hand, less than one-third of centers electronically shared records with the next school for transitions.

FIGURE 3. MIGRATION AND MOVING TRANSITION PRACTICES

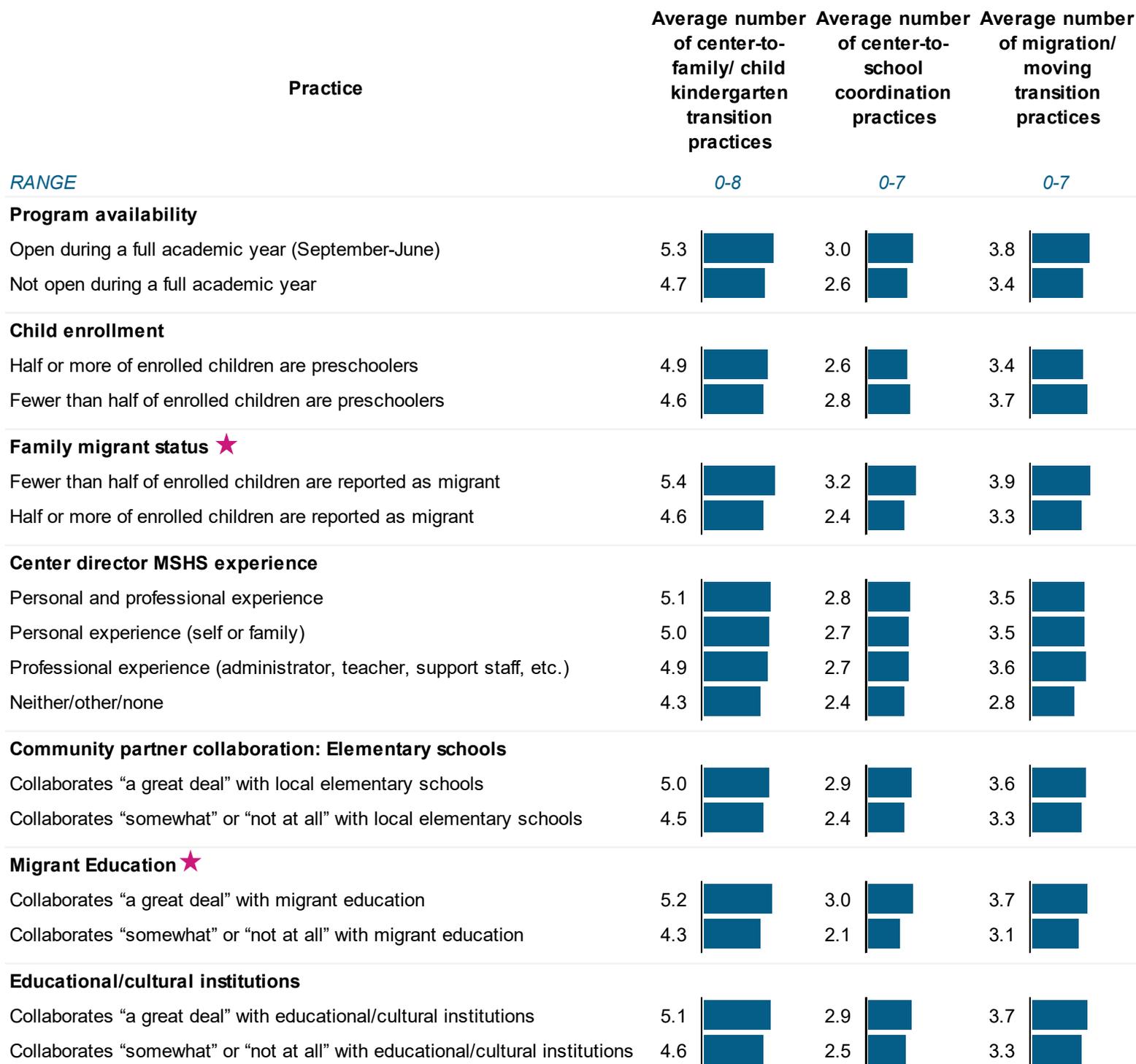


Note: N=191. *Three center directors noted that while they would provide transition supports as necessary, families did not frequently move or migrate from their MSHS program.

TRANSITION PRACTICES

MSHS centers that collaborated with Migrant Education “a great deal” reported a greater number of transition practices across each set of transition practices than other MSHS centers (Figure 4). Findings also suggest that centers with lower proportions of migrant children (and thus higher proportions of seasonal children) also implement a greater number of transition practices than other centers. More research is needed to understand these findings.

FIGURE 4. WHICH PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS ARE ASSOCIATED WITH MORE TRANSITION PRACTICES?



★ For all three sets of transition practices, the 95% confidence intervals for each group either lay directly on top of each other or do not overlap at all, suggesting meaningful differences in the numbers of transition practices per group.

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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

CONTRACT NUMBER: HHSP2332015000481

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Suggested citation: Lin, V., Alvira-Hammond, M., Cook, K. D., Ehrlich Loewe, S. B., Halle, T. Barrows, M. R., du Toit, N. (2022). *Supporting Transitions in Migrant and Seasonal Head Start*, OPRE Report # 2022-229, Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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