

# Preschool Development Grant-Renewal

## Transitions from Early Learning Programs to Kindergarten

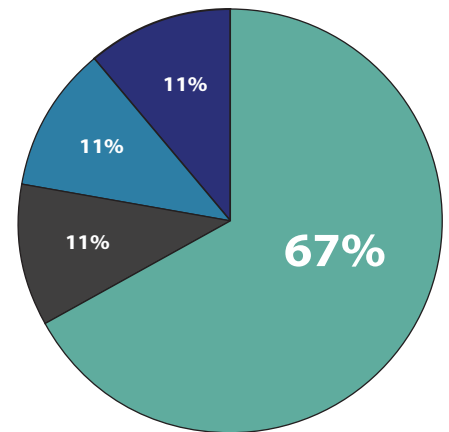
### INTRODUCTION

The Preschool Development Grant-Renewal (PDG-R) helps states assess and streamline the early learning and care (ELC) mixed delivery system to improve quality. The Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) leads California’s efforts to engage families in feedback sessions that inform policymakers on ways to improve the ELC system.

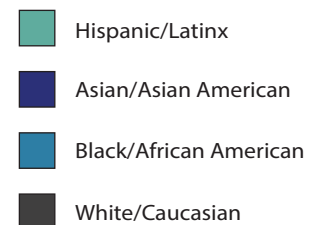
CCRC hosted a feedback session in May to discuss families’ experiences in transitioning from early learning programs to kindergarten. Parents spoke to their unique and challenging experiences transitioning from preschool to Transitional Kindergarten (TK) and from preschool and TK into kindergarten. Nine parents, representing Los Angeles, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Francisco, San Joaquin, Sonoma, and Ventura counties, participated.

### TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN STRESSED MANY PARENTS

Overall, parents found the kindergarten transition process challenging. They discussed feeling overwhelmed by the amount of paperwork and documentation (health records, proof of vaccinations, birth certificates, etc.) required to enroll their child in kindergarten and stated that school districts weren’t helpful or supportive throughout the transition process. One parent who moved her two children across districts had to again collect and submit her children’s records to her children’s new district, which she expected the school district would have been able to access through the previous school. This speaks to the broader frustration families have with the lack of connection and communication between early learning programs and elementary schools.



**A majority of parents were Hispanic/Latinx**



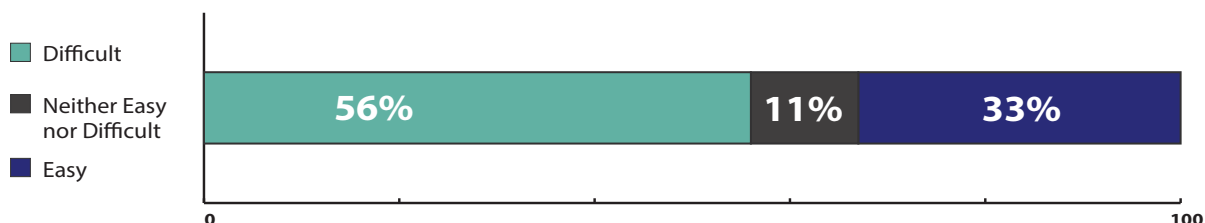
*“We went online to see what we needed to fill out - it was a lot of paperwork. It was challenging... We were relieved when we enrolled him. I didn’t want to miss the deadline.”*

– Parent, San Bernardino

Families who found the process more seamless shared components that simplified their transition. Two parents noted that, due to COVID-19 precautions, their school district allowed them to complete paperwork and upload records online using step-by-step instructions. A virtual submission process

enabled families to keep track of their paperwork and made the process clearer and more convenient. Families also appreciated being able to meet with their kindergarten teacher before starting school. One mother praised a summer program where her child was able to meet her teacher, see her classroom, and socialize with peers before starting kindergarten. This introduction calmed both the mother and child, easing the transition process.

### A majority of parents found the transition from early learning programs to kindergarten to be difficult



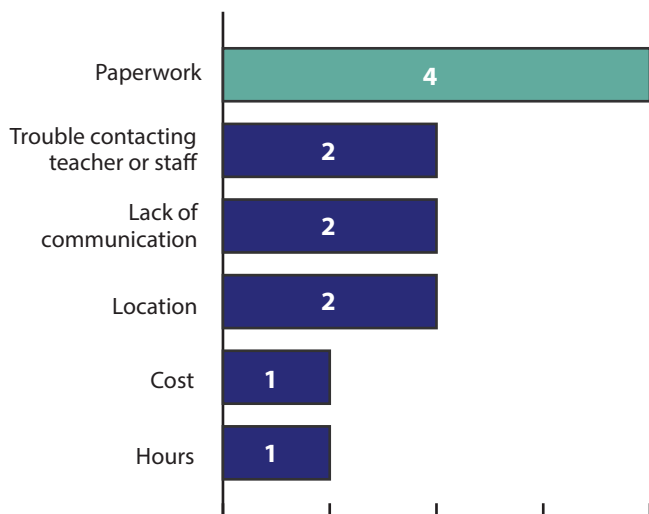
### FAMILIES HAD TO RELY ON WORD-OF-MOUTH FOR IMPORTANT ENROLLMENT INFORMATION

When asked about what resources they used to facilitate the transition process, parents shared that school districts were largely unresponsive and unhelpful- causing families to rely on other parents and word-of-mouth to get information. According to a first-time parent with a son entering kindergarten in the fall, “It feels like you have to know from previous experience, so I hear a lot from friends and other parents. The school doesn’t provide much information about programs, important meetings, or what you can do as a parent to be involved.” In order to help families during the transition process, parents wanted more resources and guidance from school districts. For example, families felt that a webinar offered by schools on what to expect when starting kindergarten and an online resource listing the paperwork required and enrollment deadlines for kindergarten and TK would be very beneficial.

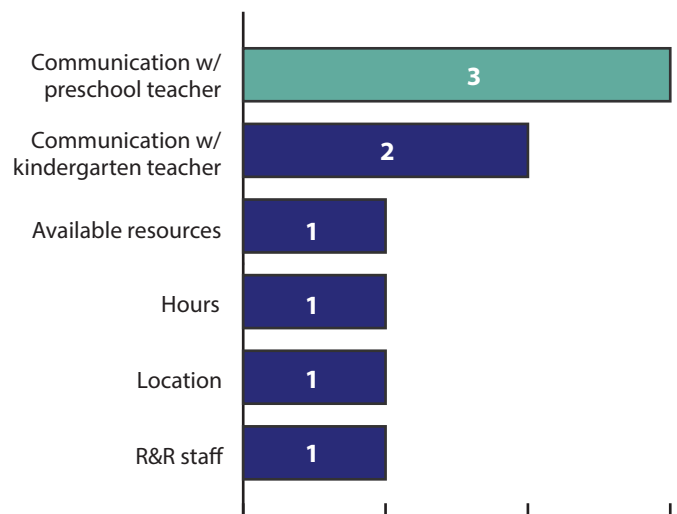
## FAMILIES ARE CONFUSED ABOUT TRANSITIONAL KINDERGARTEN

Of the nine families who participated in the feedback session, five had children previously or currently enrolled in TK. Whether or not they had experience with TK, parents expressed general confusion about TK and how it differs from traditional preschool settings. While some parents appreciated the more academic structure and felt it better prepared their child for kindergarten, a majority felt they were forced into it because of their child's age and didn't see the benefits of the program. However, many parents and their children experienced TK virtually during the pandemic, which may have negatively impacted their views of the program. One mother felt that Zoom was not conducive to learning for her 4-year-old and that it did not allow the teacher to properly interact with and instruct multiple children at once. Overall, most families were confused about TK and were unfamiliar with eligibility requirements, the higher child-to-teacher ratios, and how the programmatic goals differ from those of preschool settings.

### What was **difficult about the transition** from your early learning program to kindergarten?



### What made the **transition from your early learning program to kindergarten easy?**



## RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PARENTS

- **Increase parental knowledge about TK.** Parents are generally confused and unaware of TK, so more needs to be done at state and local levels to increase awareness of the program, its availability, and the potential benefits of participation through in-person and online resources.
- **More resources and guidance from schools.** Parents found schools unhelpful throughout the transition process and had difficulty finding information. School districts could better support families and simplify the transition process by creating resources like a guide for completing paperwork and hosting webinars for parents of children starting kindergarten.
- **Allow documents to be submitted virtually.** Parents found tracking and uploading enrollment documents online to be easier and more straightforward.
- **Improved communication within the system.** Many parents expressed frustration at having to collect and resubmit paperwork and health records when changing schools or districts. Creating integrated systems across programs (ELC and kindergarten), schools, and districts would help ease the burden on families.

For questions about this study, please contact:

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