Use
and
Share

MEASURING WHAT MATTERS: EXERCISES IN DATA MANAGEMENT

**EXERCISE 4:
USE AND SHARE**

Revised

Acknowledgments

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ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

NATIONAL CENTER ON
Parent, Family and Community Engagement

Early Childhood
National Centers

Measuring What Matters Exercise 4: Use and Share

Exercise 4 is about **using and sharing data.** Using and sharing data means relying on information—rather than hunches or anecdotes—to guide program decision-making and improvements. It also means using data to understand and convey the progress your program is making.

This exercise introduces the Four As of sharing data: 1) accurate, 2) appealing, 3) accessible, and 4) audience-specific. It also shows how to use data to make decisions and drive program improvement.

In this exercise, you will follow a scenario about a fictional Head Start program that uses and shares data related to the experiences that families have when their children transition to kindergarten.

You can use this exercise to:

- Help you take steps to understand what data show about your program.
- Inform your thinking about how you might present and share data.
- Choose the audiences with whom to share your work.
- Consider how to use data to make programmatic decisions.

How to Use Exercise 4

On Your Own
- Read the story, **Using and Sharing Data to Improve the Transition to Kindergarten**.
- Reflect on similarities with your program's PFCE work.
- Review the instructions for completing the tables and worksheets.
- Complete the tables and worksheets using information from your program.

With a Group
- Follow the first two steps in On Your Own (above).
- Write any remaining questions you have about the data concepts in the exercise.
- Create a plan for applying the data concepts from the exercise to your own work.

The Four Data Activities to Support Family Progress Toward Positive Family Outcomes
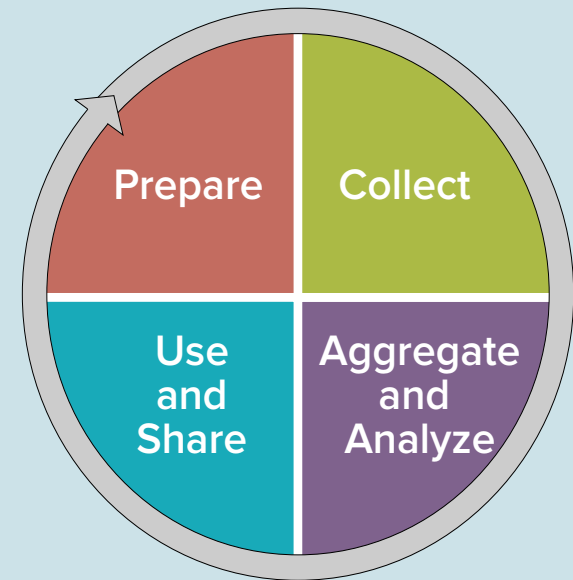
The exercises in this series are organized to follow the Four Data Activities. Each of these exercises focuses on a specific activity:

- **Prepare**: Get ready for data collection by thinking about the program goals, objectives, services, and expected outcomes that you need in order to show the reach and impact of your work.
- **Collect:** Identify how to gather data that are useful and easy to interpret.
- **Aggregate and Analyze:** Learn ways to look at data to examine progress for families and your program.
- **Use and Share:** Understand the importance of sharing data in accurate, appealing, and accessible ways and how data can inform various aspects of programming.

Begin with the **Prepare** exercise and follow with **Collect**, **Aggregate and Analyze**, and **Use and Share**. There may be times when it is useful to revisit one of the Four Data Activities as you learn more about your program's data and progress.
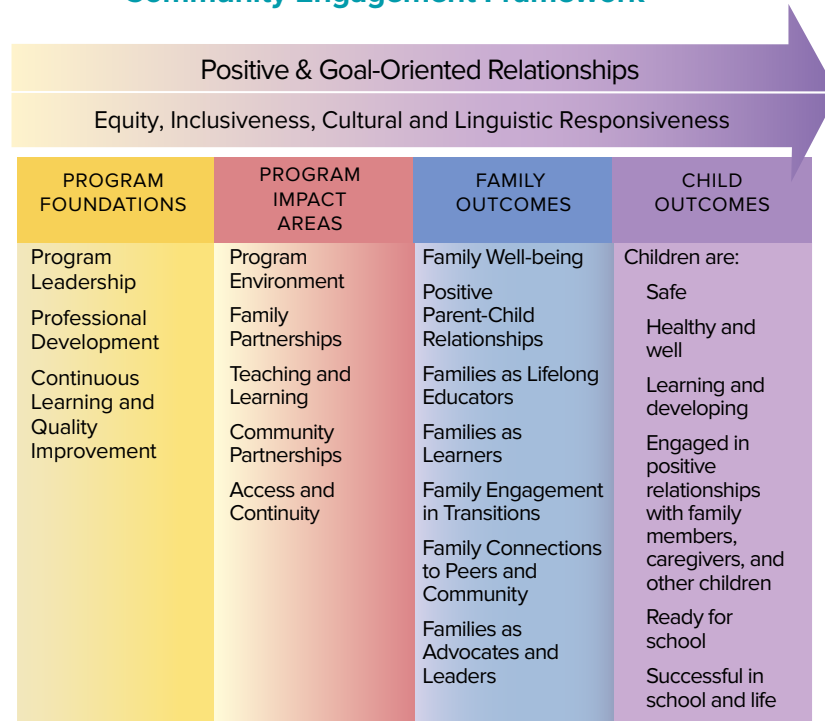
Introduction

The Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework is an organizational guide for collaboration among families and Head Start and Early Head Start programs, staff, and community service providers to promote positive, enduring outcomes for children and families. The PFCE Framework identifies equity, inclusiveness, cultural and linguistic responsiveness, and positive goal-oriented relationships as important drivers for these outcomes.

The PFCE Framework shows how family engagement strategies can be systemic, integrated, and comprehensive across services and systems in line with the Head Start Program Performance Standards.

Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework

Positive & Goal-Oriented Relationships

Equity, Inclusiveness, Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness

PROGRAM FOUNDATIONS	PROGRAM IMPACT AREAS	FAMILY OUTCOMES	CHILD OUTCOMES
Program Leadership	Program Environment	Family Well-being	Children are:
Professional Development	Family Partnerships	Positive Parent-Child Relationships	Safe
Continuous Learning and Quality Improvement	Teaching and Learning	Families as Lifelong Educators	Healthy and well
	Community Partnerships	Families as Learners	Learning and developing
	Access and Continuity	Family Engagement in Transitions	Engaged in positive relationships with family members, caregivers, and other children
		Family Connections to Peers and Community	Ready for school
		Families as Advocates and Leaders	Successful in school and life

You can use data to engage families and support progress toward one or more of the seven Family Outcomes of the PFCE Framework. You can also use data to track progress as your program sets goals and develops and implements plans within the five-year project period.

Parent and Family

In this resource, "parent" and "family" refer to all adults who interact with early childhood systems in support of their child, including biological, adoptive and foster parents, pregnant women and expectant families, grandparents, legal and informal guardians, and adult siblings.

Kid Achievers Head Start Program Scenario:
Using and Sharing Data to Improve the Transition to Kindergarten

Andy is the Family Engagement Coordinator at Kid Achievers Head Start. Kid Achievers serves nearly 300 children across four different locations. Each year, Kid Achievers graduates approximately 145 four- and five-year-olds. These children enter kindergarten at one of five local elementary schools.

In the previous program year, Andy offered a series of workshops for families and children focused on the transition to kindergarten. The workshops supported a broad program goal to get children and families ready for kindergarten. The workshops explored a number of topics.

For example, one workshop focused on how to complete kindergarten registration forms. Another featured how to advocate for children in elementary school. The series also offered a visit to a kindergarten and a community fun day. Review of attendance logs showed that the events were well attended. Satisfaction surveys showed that parents liked the workshops.

In the spring of the following year, Andy talked with the mother of a current kindergartener who was a graduate of Kid Achievers. The mother shared that her son had a wonderful transition to kindergarten. She thanked Andy for the workshops he provided. She believed that she and her son felt confident in the elementary school setting because of the workshops.

Andy began thinking about this family's experience. He wondered if other families were having similar transition experiences. He decided to conduct a survey of families who recently transitioned from Head Start to kindergarten.
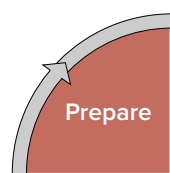
Prepare

Prepare

Andy reviewed his five-year plan to see how Kid Achievers was tracking progress toward the goal of getting children and families ready for kindergarten. He realized that the team was collecting a lot of measures of effort for the workshop series on the transition to kindergarten.

For example, they recorded the number of transition events offered. They counted the number of families who attended each event. Parents also completed satisfaction surveys showing that they enjoyed the events. But this was their only measure of effect. Andy had a hunch that the events were having a positive effect on the transition to kindergarten. But he had no real data to support it.

Andy had several questions about his program. Was the program's investment in transition activities influencing children's transition experiences? Should he continue to put resources into this work? Might there be different strategies he should consider to support transitions?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Consider the steps needed to understand the data you have collected.
- Understand the importance of presenting data in accurate, appealing, and accessible ways.
- Identify what data to share, and how to use and share that data with specific audiences.


Remember:
Measures of effort count what and how many activities your program offers to families.
Measures of effect track changes in knowledge or behaviors as a result of the activities your program offers.

To understand more, Andy created a working group with interested staff and families. Their task was to identify at least one measure of effort and one measure of effect for the transition series. Table 1 shows the measures of effort and effect the group members developed as the measures relate to their goal, objectives, services, and expected outcomes.

Table 1.
Kid Achievers' Revised Goals, Objectives, Services, Expected Outcomes, and Measures

Goal	Objectives	Services (Actions)	Expected Outcome	Measures
What program goal do we want to accomplish to support family outcomes?	What are we planning to do to reach our program goal?	What actions are we going to take?	Which expected outcomes relate to our goals, objectives, and services (actions)? Which PFCE Framework Family Outcome does this represent?	**Measures of Effort:** How much programming are we offering? Are we carrying out services as planned? **Measures of Effect:** What difference is our program making? What are the changes in knowledge and behavior?
Kid Achievers Head Start will ensure that children and families are prepared for a smooth transition to kindergarten.	Kid Achievers Head Start will increase families' and children's knowledge and skills related to kindergarten and their comfort in the transition process by encouraging child and family participation in at least 5 of the 10 transition-to-kindergarten activities held during the program year.	Design and implement up to 10 transition-to-kindergarten activities, or approximately 1 activity per month over the course of the program year.	Families and children have the information, skills, and confidence to have smooth transitions to kindergarten. (Family Engagement in Transitions)	**Effort:** Number of transition activities offered; number of families attending each transition event. **Effect:** Parents report that they and their children have smooth transitions to kindergarten. Smooth transitions to kindergarten are determined through a variety of factors; for example, children and families like the elementary school setting, are comfortable in the setting, and make positive social connections.
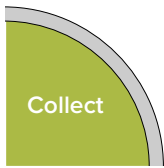
Collect

Andy and the team thought about the best way to track the measure of effect they identified. They invited interested parents to join them in the working group to create and refine a survey to give to families. The survey asked families questions about their experiences transitioning to kindergarten. The survey also included a qualitative—or open-ended—question to get parents' opinions about what was most helpful in getting their family ready for kindergarten. The parents in the group felt strongly that the survey should be completed anonymously. This would make parents feel more comfortable completing the survey honestly. (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. Kid Achievers Follow-up Survey

KID ACHIEVERS FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

1. What Head Start program did your child attend? _____

2. What elementary school does your child currently attend?_____

3. Last year when you were in Head Start, did you participate in any of the following Head Start activities?

September orientation	o Yes	o No
Parent meeting: Choosing the right kindergarten for you	o Yes	o No
Parent workshop: Reading with children at home Parent workshop: Registering for kindergarten	o Yes	o No
Family visit to nearby kindergartens	o Yes	o No
Parent workshop: Completing kindergarten forms	o Yes	o No
Kindergarten community fun day	o Yes	o No
Getting ready for kindergarten pajama night	o Yes	o No
Head Start/kindergarten library reading marathon	o Yes	o No
End-of-the-year kindergarten celebration	o Yes	o No

4. We're interested in hearing how your child's first year of kindergarten went and what the transition to kindergarten was like. Circle the number that best completes the statement below.

	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Often	Always
My child likes going to kindergarten.	1	2	3	4	5
I am confident talking with my child's kindergarten teacher about my child's progress.	1	2	3	4	5
I have met many new parents.	1	2	3	4	5
I get positive feedback from the kindergarten teacher about my child's progress.	1	2	3	4	5
My child made a lot of new friends this year.	1	2	3	4	5
I make sure my child gets homework done.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel welcomed when visiting my child's new school.	1	2	3	4	5
I know what my child is learning.	1	2	3	4	5

5. What, in your opinion, was most helpful in getting you and your child ready for kindergarten?

Qualitative data are gathered by getting rich descriptions of what people do and say. These data are often shared in an explanation or description.

Quantitative data are gathered through numbers and counts. These data are often shared through graphs and charts.

A **response rate** is the percentage of people who respond to a survey. In this case, 83 of the 144 families (of students who had graduated from Head Start) completed the survey [**(83/144)*100 = 58%**].

Aggregate and Analyze

Aggregate and Analyze

To start to make sense of the data from the follow-up survey, Andy created a data analysis plan. A data analysis plan is a roadmap for how to organize and analyze data. Andy identified the following three steps:

Step 1. Aggregate (summarize) the data about transition experiences.

- What Head Start program did the children attend whose families completed the survey?
- What elementary school do the children attend whose families completed the survey?
- On average, how many Head Start workshops did parents attend? What were the workshops with the highest and lowest levels of attendance?
- How did parents rate their child's transition experience?

Step 2. Disaggregate (separate) the transition data by the characteristics of the Head Start sites, elementary schools, and number of transition events in which parents participated.

- How did transition experiences vary by Head Start site?
- How did transition experiences vary by elementary school site?
- Does transition experience vary by how many transition activities parents and children participate in?

Step 3. Reflect on Qualitative Themes

- What are the themes in parents' responses to the open-ended question?

Use and Share: The 4 As of Data Tell Your Program Story

Use and Share

Andy was pleased with the results of the analysis and was excited to share it with the team. He scheduled a time to share the information with Angela, the Executive Director, and the working group.

Everyone was confused by the data analysis table that Andy created. It took him a long time to explain each finding and answer questions. Andy realized he needed help organizing and presenting the data clearly. He asked Angela if they could meet to talk more about how to share the data. Angela told Andy that the data analysis table was not an ideal way to present his work and share the information. She asked Andy to think about ways to share the data so that families, staff, and community partners would be able to make sense of them quickly. She explained that he needed to tell a story with the data. To do this, Angela suggested that he organize his results using the 4 As of sharing data: make them accurate, appealing, accessible, and audience specific.

- **Accurate**: Andy and a few of the team members went back to his office. First they checked the accuracy of the data. They did this by randomly selecting hard-copy surveys and ensuring that the responses were entered correctly in the data system. As another test, Andy repeated a few calculations. After several checks, the team members felt confident that their results were accurate.

- **Appealing**: Andy and the team members searched websites for examples of visually appealing data. They realized they could present the findings using pictures, tables, and graphs. They didn't need to use a lot of words and numbers.

- **Accessible**: Andy and the team realized that they had to make the data easy to understand. They thought about the key results of the analysis that were most important to share. They also knew they needed to share these data findings in simple, clear, and logical ways by creating a story about the data. Andy and the small group reviewed the data and chose six themes. They created six PowerPoint slides to reflect the themes. The title of each slide contained the message they wanted to convey. The picture or graph helped illustrate the key point.

- **Audience specific**: Andy and the team knew they would be sharing their PowerPoint slides with the working group. Because the working group had been a part of the data process from the beginning, they wanted to share as much of an overall story as possible. They realized that when it came time to share the data outside of the working group, they would need to choose different dissemination strategies.

Let's take a look at how the team communicated the story about Kid Achievers' PFCE data.

Slide 1

The Kid Achievers Survey on transitions to kindergarten was a success!

- Families from all 4 sites participated
- A total of 83 out of a possible 144 surveys were completed
- Families from Kennedy Head Start had the highest participation rates

| Head Start Site	Transition to	Elementary School Site	Percent of total surveys completed
Washington Head Start		Newside Elementary	17
		Oldside Elementary	14
Kennedy Head Start		**Westside Elementary**	**34**
Roosevelt Head Start		Southside Elementary	17
Lincoln Head Start		NorthSide Elementary	15

Slide 2

About Kid Achievers transition events:

- On average families attended five events
- K Orientation, K Pajama Reading Night, and the End-of-the-Year Celebration had the highest attendances
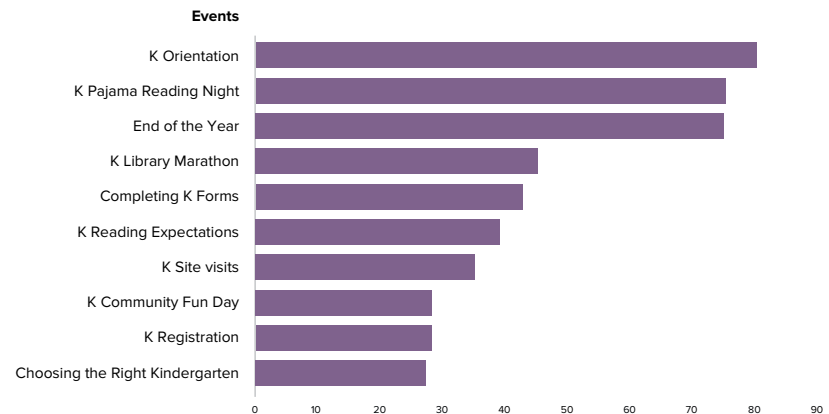
Events

Slide 3

Families who attend **five or more** transiton events report smoother transition experiences than families who attend **four events or fewer**.

Transition Experience

40	
35	
30	
25	
20	
15	
10	
5	
0	

5 or more events attended   4 events or fewer attended
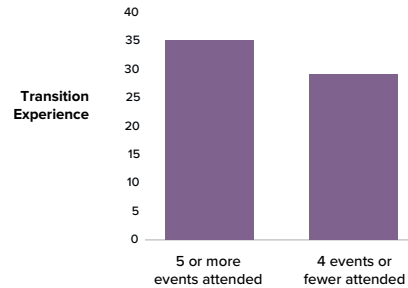
Slide 4

Parents want more opportunities to come back to Head Start once their children have graduated.

60% of families liked keeping in touch with Head Start after their children graduated!

All families had positive things to say about the Head Start experience.

Your Turn

Using Worksheet 1, consider the questions about the four visuals the team used to present the data. How you interpret the data might be influenced by your roles and responsibilities.

Worksheet 1: Understanding the Data by Telling a Data Story

1. What do the data suggest? (Use sentences such as, "I believe the data suggest . . . because . . ." or "Here are some tentative conclusions we've reached . . .")	2. What additional data would you need in order to get a more complete story?
3. Why do you think these are the results? What questions would you want answered now?	4. What programmatic decisions might you make now, based on the data?

Sharing the Data With Different Audiences

Andy was excited about the progress he and the team members had made to communicate their data. Andy wrote an email to Angela summarizing the information (see Figure 3).

Figure 3.
Andy's email to Angela, Executive Director of Kid Achievers Head Start

To: Angela
Subject: The Transition to Kindergarten Data Story!

Hi Angela!

Thanks for your advice at our meeting the other day. I went through the data with a few of the team members again. I think we have a compelling story to tell.

In terms of background:
- We surveyed 83 families from 4 of our sites with a 58 percent response rate. I think this is pretty encouraging. The response rate suggests that we can continue to do follow-up work successfully.
- Very few Lincoln Head Start parents completed the survey. I wonder if this is a reflection of parents' experiences at that program? They may be reluctant to return for a visit.
- Overall, the information we got from the survey about participation in transition events matches with information entered into our data management system (e.g., orientation, end-of-the-year celebration, and pajama night get the biggest turnout).

In terms of outcomes:
- On average, children are having positive transitions to kindergarten. Experiences vary, however, based on the Head Start program and elementary school that children attend. Children from Lincoln Head Start have the most negative transition experience. Children transitioning to Old Side Elementary also have a negative experience.
- Here's the most important part: families who attended more transition events have children with better transition experiences than families who attended fewer events. This suggests that our programming is really making a difference.
- The results of the open-ended questions were also interesting. Parents want more opportunities to come back and reconnect with their Head Start "family." What if we set up an "alumni mentoring" kindergarten program?

Let's add this discussion to our agenda for our supervision meeting on Friday and talk about next steps for sharing this work.

Thanks,
Andy

Use and Share: Andy Presents His Data Again

Andy and the team brought Angela and the working group together again. Andy presented the findings from the survey using the new visuals. The group had a lively and productive conversation. They asked interesting and helpful questions. They offered feedback on how to present the data even more clearly.

The group also generated ideas for why there were certain results. For example, a few parents had remembered the workshop on choosing the right kindergarten. It was held on a very stormy evening. This might have made it difficult for parents to attend. The group began to create a list of some next steps the program might take to improve transition events and activities for children and families.

At this point the team was excited but also a little overwhelmed. Who should they share the data with? What should they share? How and in what format should they share it? The team decided that their next step was to brainstorm a list of their potential audiences. Then they would start thinking about how to organize the data for each audience, the best times to share the information, and which format might work best (see Table 3).

Table 3. Making Kid Achievers' Data Audience Specific

Who is the audience?	What data might be shared? What are the core messages and questions for this group?	When might the data be shared?	How might you share data in a way that is accessible and appealing?
1. Families in each program	**Share all data, using it to start a discussion about how to improve the transition experience** • Ask questions such as, "How could we have gotten more completed surveys back from family members?" • Brainstorm ideas for new programming (e.g., create a parent mentoring group).	• Monthly classroom meetings • Morning or evening workshops	• Create a one-page data summary with tips on how to be successful in kindergarten (translated into languages spoken by families) and send a summary home in children's backpacks/post it on the program's website. • Hold workshops for parents to ask questions. • Encourage families to co-present findings.
2. Staff in each program (e.g., program managers, teachers, family services workers)	**Share all data** • Highlight the amazing work being done, both in the transition workshops as well as in the efforts to find former Head Start children and parents for follow-up. • Use data to start discussions about improving the transition experience. • Discuss outreach strategies to get higher survey-response rates in the future.	• Professional development day	• Before sharing data, begin with an icebreaker activity (e.g., ask staff what children need to know to be successful in kindergarten, etc.). • Create a handout and deliver a presentation that is accessible, visually pleasing, and easy to understand.
3. Head Start Board and Policy Council	**Share all data** • Underscore the finding that when families participate in 5 or more transition activities, children have better transition experiences. • Focus on strategies to improve parent participation in events, develop new events, and secure additional funding.	• Board meeting • Policy Council meeting	• Create a PowerPoint presentation and executive summary of findings.
4. Community and Local Education Agencies (LEA)/ School Districts	**Share data tailored to specific communities and partners** • Provide background information about the importance of the transition to kindergarten and the services that Head Start programs offer. • Emphasize that when families participate in 5 or more transition activities, children have better transition experiences. • Brainstorm how to improve the way records are shared and curriculum and standards are aligned across programs and schools.	• Community partnership meetings and meetings with LEAs	• Include findings in the Annual Report, and post findings on the program's website. • Develop a simple, one-page memo tailored to each individual school and/or district.
5. Head Start Regional Office	**Share relevant data** • Explain how data show progress toward goals and objectives. • Provide a plan to build on transition planning already in place and to continue to track measures of effort and measures of effect.	• Calls and meetings with the Regional Office	• Write and send a memo to the Regional Program Specialist.

Your Turn

Using Worksheet 2, help Andy and the working group reach out to one of the audiences listed in Table 3, and select a story or 3–4 key outcomes to share.

Worksheet 2. Sharing Data with a Specific Audience

To:
Subject:

Using Data and Taking Action: Kid Achievers Uses Data to Improve Transition Programming

By the fall of the following year, Andy and members of the working group had met with all of the audiences on the list. Each of the audiences was excited about the findings. The conversations also led to improvements in transition-to-kindergarten programming. Program leaders and staff decided to carry out certain program improvements as part of their five-year project period. Based on the data collected in surveys, and subsequent conversations, program improvements included:

- **Hiring a part-time transition support staff.** Kid Achievers hired a part-time transition support staff member. Her role would be to work across all sites with families, children, and the local public schools to develop strong family engagement strategies for the transition to kindergarten.

- **Building strong relationships with the local elementary schools.** Andy and the Education Manager began meeting with principals of receiving elementary schools to share information, develop relationships, and align family engagement activities. They partnered to strengthen partnerships between the program and schools around the transition to kindergarten.

- **Developing a parent alumni group.** The new transition support staff member was asked to develop an "alumni parent mentoring program." Her role was to invite families of Head Start graduates back to the program. Each month, the group members would talk about their experiences, answer questions, and offer advice and encouragement to other families.

- **Using data longitudinally (across time).** The working group decided to use the parent survey every year to collect data on family satisfaction with the transition from Head Start to kindergarten. They planned to include this data in the annual report and host a luncheon with families, governing body members, elementary schools, and community partners to share their transition story.

How Can You Share Data with Families Effectively?

The Four R Approach provides guiding principles for how to share data with families.

- **Use Data Responsibly.** Using data responsibly means making sure that families have access to information. This information can be about their child or the program itself. Parent-teacher conferences and curriculum nights are great ways for parents and teachers to talk about student progress. Staff can identify additional ways to share data, such as setting up a program website or holding monthly parent meetings.

- **Share Data in Respectful Ways.** Families need to understand what data mean. For example, teachers can help families understand children's development by sharing samples of children's work. Families also need to understand program-level data. For example, programs can help families understand their child's classroom scores on different quality measures. Programs can also help families understand how these scores compare to national averages.

- **Make Data Relevant.** Data must be relevant to the lives of children and families. For example, data might suggest a child is struggling with fine-motor skills. Teachers can work with parents to find activities that can support development of this skill in the home. Programs can also use data to guide decision-making. If data suggest that programs are not at full enrollment, program staff and families can work together to improve recruitment methods.

- **Use Data to Promote Relationships.** Data-sharing represents an opportunity to create and enhance meaningful relationships between families and teachers. Data can be used to explore children's strengths and program successes, and to find ways to expand learning opportunities.

Review the **Measuring What Matters Overview** for more information about the Four R Approach.

Your Turn

Reflect on your program. What audiences do you share data with? What data do you share with them? When do you share your data? In what formats do you share the information you collect? Take some time to complete Worksheet 3 while thinking about the family data you have in your own program.

Worksheet 3. Making Your Program's Data Audience Specific

Who is the audience?	What data might be shared? What are the core messages and questions for this group?	When might the data be shared?	How might data be shared so that it is accessible and appealing?
1. Families in each program			
2. Staff in each program (e.g., program managers, teachers, family services workers)			
3. Head Start Board and Policy Council			
4. Community and Local Education Agencies (LEA)/School Districts			
5. Head Start Regional Office			
6. Other (e.g., university partners, funders, etc.)			

Closing Thoughts

The fourth activity in data management is **using and sharing data**. This activity includes sharing data in ways that are accurate, appealing, accessible, and audience-specific. You can also think about ways to use data to make program improvements.

You can use all Four Data Activities to support family progress. You can use these activities to guide your work to prepare, collect, and aggregate and analyze data.

Are You Interested in Learning More About Using Data to Support Family Progress?

Explore other Measuring What Matters Resources on the Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC) website:

- Overview
- Exercises in Data Management Series
- Resource Guide

Related Resources

- Foundations for Excellence: A Guide for Five-Year Planning and Continuous Improvement, 2nd Edition
- Integrating Strategies for Program Progress
- Strategies for Implementing the Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework

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