

A Bridge Between Settings



A well-coordinated kindergarten transition eases challenges for children and families as they move from the familiarity of a Head Start program to a new kindergarten classroom. For a smooth partnership and planning process, leaders and educators at Head Start programs and receiving elementary schools may find it helpful to understand the common terms used to describe the different but similar roles and components in each setting. Use the following language crosswalk and glossary to build a bridge of understanding between Head Start programs and receiving elementary schools. Head Start and elementary school leaders and educators, families, and community members can use this resource to understand and navigate each setting in the kindergarten transition. Please note that while the language crosswalk points out comparable Head Start and elementary

school roles, the exact duties of the individuals in each setting may differ. The language crosswalk is intended to help identify individuals in Head Start and elementary school settings whose job responsibilities overlap, and whose role with children and families will likely be passed on from one to the other in the transition to kindergarten.

Language Crosswalk

Head Start	Elementary School	Meaning
Program	School	The setting in which learning takes place.
Children	Students	The children who attend a program or school.
Dual Language Learner (DLL)	English as a Second Language (ESL)	Terms used to describe children and adults who can speak or are learning more than one language, which may include English, and whose home language is their first language.
Education Staff	Teacher	The program and school staff members qualified to work directly with children. In Head Start settings, this includes educators, teachers, home visitors, and family child care providers.
Assistant Educator	Paraprofessional	The program and school staff members qualified to work directly with children in support of the lead educator or primary classroom teacher. In Head Start this includes assistant teachers or aides. In public schools this includes educational aides and any other supplemental staff who provide educational services.
Family Service Worker	School Social Worker	Staff who provide services for children and families that are not directly related to education or learning activities but support them to successfully access learning opportunities and a variety of other support services.
Program Director	Principal	The program and school leaders responsible for overseeing operations and ensuring successful performance of standards or curricula.
Disabilities Services Coordinator	Special Education Teacher	The person responsible for identifying and ensuring appropriate support for children with disabilities. In a Head Start setting, this role identifies and oversees the appropriate direct service providers, while an elementary school special education teacher directly provides services.
Family Services Coordinator, Family Engagement Manager, or other Family Services Staff	School Counselor or School Social Worker	The person who coordinates services available for children and their families, including mental health services, support specialists, and available community programs. A school counselor may also be the direct provider of some of these services.

Head Start	Elementary School	Meaning
Health Manager	School Nurse	The person who monitors, screens, and documents the health of children enrolled in a program or school. In a Head Start setting, the Health Manager oversees the child health status tracking, health screenings, program-wide health and safety, and reports to the Health Advisory Committee. In an elementary school setting, the school nurse provides direct care for children in need of medical attention and, if needed, provides further care recommendations.
Education Program Manager	Curriculum Specialist	A person who oversees educational content and supports effective teaching practices within a program or school.
Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS)	Curriculum Standards	The standards of quality to which a program or school is bound. While school curricula focus on learning standards, the HSPPS encompass not only learning standards, but overall program operations, quality, and services including health management and family and community engagement.
Parent Committee/Policy Council	Parent Teacher Association (PTA)	The organization for parents and families to become involved and contribute to decision-making in the program or school environment. In Head Start settings, the voice of the Policy Council is required and very influential in the direction, design, and operations of the program. In elementary school settings, the PTA is not typically involved in policy decisions.
Family Engagement	Family Engagement	In the Head Start setting, this term references family involvement in program planning and activities, as well as efforts to partner with families to form family goals. In K-12 schools this refers to including families in school activities, information nights, and extra-curricular events.
Governing Body	School Board	The group that oversees regional operations of several programs or schools.
Head Start Area Manager	Superintendent	The person responsible for overseeing operations and ensuring that program or curriculum standards are met at each of a number of sites.
Grantee	School District	The program(s) or school(s) within a region that serve children and operate under the same funding and governing bodies.

Head Start	Elementary School	Meaning
Enrollment	Registration	The process through which children may enter into and receive services from a program or school.
Family Style Mealtime	Lunchroom or Cafeteria	The approach that a program or school takes to serving meals. In Head Start programs, meals are typically served family style in the same space where learning occurs (such as in the classroom or home child care setting). In school settings, meals take place in a designated communal space, and are offered through counter service, with some children bringing meals from home.
Outdoor Play	Recess/Physical Education	Children in Head Start programs participate in regularly scheduled outdoor playtime. Children in school have free-choice outdoor play during daily recess, as well as structured Physical Education (PE) classes.

Glossary of Terms and Common Acronyms

Term	Definition
LEA	Local Education Agency
ELOF	The Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF): Ages Birth to Five presents five broad areas of early learning, referred to as central domains. The framework is designed to show the continuum of learning for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. It is grounded in comprehensive research about what young children should know and be able to do during their early years.
ESSA	The Every Student Succeeds Act is the national policy which holds K-12 public schools accountable for providing quality education for all children.
HSPPS	Head Start Program Performance Standards
CLASS™	The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), is a tool designed to help programs build and measure the effectiveness of teacher–child interactions and environments. The CLASS is designed to help programs achieve relationships and interactions between teachers and children in their learning environments.
HOVRS-A+v2	The Home Visit Rating Scales-Adapted + Extended Version 2 (HOVRS-A+v2), measures home visit practices and family engagement, using a coding system for observations in the home. The HOVRS-A+ v2 is designed to gauge home visitor quality and effectiveness with families in programs that serve infants and children up to age 5.
ECERS	Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale
IEP	An Individual Education Program (IEP) maps out the program of special education instruction, supports, and services children and young adults, ages 3 to 21, need to make progress and succeed in school. Each IEP is designed and routinely revisited to meet the individual’s exact needs. The IEP is described and required by law in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
IFSP	An Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) is a plan that guides and supports your efforts to boost your child’s development up to age 3. At age 3, qualifying children and their families make the transition to and Individualized Education Plan (IEP).