

Using Administrative Data to STEP Forward with Data

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Introduction

The [System Transformation for Equitable Preschools \(STEP\) Forward with Data Framework](#) is a tool to help preschool system leaders understand the experiences of preschool-aged children, their families, and early childhood workforce members. The Framework includes 20 essential questions and is flexible so that users can focus on one or more questions with one or more metrics, depending on their unique goals and context.

The Framework identifies six types of data sources to answer the 20 questions and associated metrics: administrative data, administrator documentation, community family surveys, preschool family surveys, program documentation and surveys, or workforce member surveys. One data source may be used to answer multiple questions, and one question may be answered with more than one data source. **In this resource series, we focus on how preschool system leaders, or those who oversee or can influence system-level decisions about preschool programs, can use individual data sources to answer multiple questions from the Framework**, which offers valuable insights into various aspects of their preschool system.

This resource highlights how different types of administrative data, or information about individual children, families, and/or workforce members that are collected and maintained as part of the operation of preschool programs, can be used to understand what is happening in their preschool system. We describe administrative data and then outline which Framework questions can be answered.

Overview of Administrative Data

Preschool systems collect a wealth of information through administrative data that can be used to answer Framework essential questions (see Box A). All but six of the 20 essential questions in the Framework could be answered with administrative data, which means preschool system leaders can leverage data already collected to understand more about their system.

Often, administrative data are collected to adhere to reporting requirements at the local, state, and/or federal levels. These data may be collected on paper or electronically. They can be stored with the preschool program or at the system level (e.g., within a shared district or state level data system). Administrative data can include enrollment and attendance records, information on staff working in programs, information on children's development,

Box A. State Preschool Data Capacity

In 2023, the Early Childhood Data Collaborative documented through national surveys of public pre-K and Head Start administrators what data about children, families, and workforce are accessible to preschool leaders. To learn more, link to the full reports:

- [2023 Data Capacity of State-funded Pre-K Programs Across the United States](#)
- [State-Level Accessibility of Head Start Data Across the United States](#)

classroom observations meant to improve learning environments, and other program specific information, such as funding sources, operating hours, and licensing and program quality information.

Further, administrative data can be collected at different levels.

- **Child level:** Data collected about individual children. These data can be used to understand the experiences of groups of children with similar characteristics (e.g., all children attending preschool, three-year-olds, or children in rural areas).
- **Family level:** Data collected about the family/household. These data can be used to understand the experiences of groups of families or households with similar characteristics (e.g., households with incomes below the federal poverty level, households who primarily speak a language other than English).
- **Program site level:** Data collected about individual preschool locations. These data can be used to understand what may be happening for learning environments with similar characteristics (e.g., by setting or environments with preschool providers who share demographic characteristics with children they serve).
- **Program level:** Data collected about a preschool program. These data can be used to understand what happens in programs across the system (e.g., operating hours and services offered by programs).
- **Workforce level:** Data collected about preschool workforce members. These data can be used to understand the experiences of groups of workforce members with similar characteristics (e.g., by shared role, education level, or years of experience).
- **System Level:** Data collected across the preschool system or about how the system is operated. These data can be used to understand what may be happening across preschool programs within the same system (e.g., number of children in the system, number of programs in the system).

When looking to answer key questions from the Framework using administrative data, preschool system leaders may want to understand what administrative data are available, where they're stored, and whether and how they could access these data. The following section provides a list of Framework questions and associated metrics organized by the Framework's steps that can be answered using administrative data. It should be noted that every system may collect a variety of data, some that vary from what is provided below. These examples represent suggested data that could be used when applying the Framework but is not an exhaustive list.

Essential Questions Answered by Administrative Data

The following section offers details about the types of administrative data that can be used to answer various questions from the Framework. This section is organized by the different steps in the Framework where administrative data can be used to answer the essential questions within those steps. The administrative data are further organized by the level by which they can be collected within each question (for a list of resources by the level of collection, see [Appendix A](#)). Preschool system leaders can identify which question they are most interested in answering and see the type of administrative data that can be used to answer this question



Supply

Q1. Does the existing supply meet the needs of families from focal populations?

Level Collected	Recommended Metric	Suggested Administrative Data
Child	Percentage of children from focal populations who are on a waitlist for at least one preschool program	Waitlist data that could be drawn from child care resource and referral (CCR&R) data, enrollment data or intake data
	Percentage of children from focal populations enrolled in a program whose care is subsidized	Data on whether a child's care is paid for through a subsidy; Head Start program lists; Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) subsidy data; or public pre-K lists
	Percentage of children from focal populations who did not experience a change in teacher/provider during the program, school, or calendar year	Lead teacher or provider data and the length of time they were in their learning environment
Family	Percentage of families from focal populations who do not pay above a system-defined threshold of affordability.	Average household income within the geographic area of the preschool; families' payment data
Program	Percentage of programs that provide before- and after-school programming (meets families' needs)	State licensing data, child care resource and referral (CCR&R) data
	Percentage of programs where classrooms demonstrate equitable sociocultural interactions (meets families' needs)	Observational assessment data on sociocultural interactions (e.g., Assessing Classroom Sociocultural Equity Scale [ACES])
Program site	Percentage of program sites that support a language other than English (supports child's development)	Language supports offered by programs in languages other than English (e.g., child care resource and referral (CCR&R) data)
	Percentage of program sites where children with a disability or developmental delay are enrolled in which workforce members have early childhood special education training or experience working with children with special needs (supports child's development)	Workforce registry data on education, experience, or training; enrollment data with children's status of disability or developmental delay
	Percentage of program sites that meet Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) state benchmarks of quality (supports child's development)	QRIS data
	Percentage of program sites that offer transportation services between child's home and preschool site (meets families' needs)	Licensing data, program transportation permission forms; child care resource and referral data on transportation offered

Level Collected	Recommended Metric	Suggested Administrative Data
Workforce	Percentage of workforce members who have early childhood education endorsements, certification or training, or experience working with preschool-age children (supports child's development)	Workforce registry data, licensing data, Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) data, human resources data for each program
System	Preschool system has enough preschool openings for the number of children who want to attend preschool, especially those from focal populations (reasonable effort)	Data on preschool program capacity (e.g., licensing data); data on the number of eligible 3- and 4-year-old children in the community (e.g., Census data)



Enrollment

Q5. Are children from focal populations enrolled proportionate to or higher than their representation in the community?

Level Collected	Recommended Metric	Suggested Administrative Data
Child	Percentage of eligible 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in public preschool from focal populations	Enrollment data and community-level data for the general population by age of child (e.g., Census data)

Q6. Are children from focal populations enrolled in programs rated as high-quality proportionate to their representation in the system?

Level Collected	Recommended Metric	Suggested Administrative Data
Child	Percentage of preschool-aged children from focal populations enrolled in high-quality preschool	Enrollment data, licensing, accreditation, or quality standard data (e.g., QRIS rating data)
Program site	Percentage of program sites where children from focal populations are exposed to staff in their program who reflect their own identities	Enrollment data with demographic data; workforce registry data with staff demographics
	Percentage of program sites that use materials, projects, activities, curricula, and resources that reflect or celebrate the identities of children from focal populations and their communities	Licensing or monitoring data about the types of materials, projects, activities, curricula, or resources available in programs in the past year

Q7. Do children from focal populations have consistent attendance?

Level Collected	Recommended Metric	Suggested Administrative Data
Child	Average length of enrollment for children from focal populations	Length of enrollment for children in enrollment data

Level Collected	Recommended Metric	Suggested Administrative Data
	Average number of days children from focal populations were present in preschool	Number of days present in attendance data
	Percentage of enrolled preschool children from focal populations who are present for more than 90 percent of their enrolled days, excluding children enrolled for less than three months	Number of days present in attendance data with length of enrollment for children in enrollment data



Learning experiences

Q9. Do workforce members receive training in supporting the needs of children from focal populations and families?

Level Collected	Recommended Metric	Suggested Administrative Data
Workforce	Percentage of workforce members who receive training in culturally responsive instruction, especially to understand a child's developmental progress to inform instruction	Workforce member participation in system-wide training opportunities on culturally responsive instruction (e.g., training and/workforce registry data)
	Percentage of workforce members who receive training on trauma-informed care or responsiveness	Workforce member participation in system-wide training opportunities on trauma-informed care or responsiveness (e.g., training and/workforce registry data)
	Percentage of workforce members who receive training on reducing or eliminating bias in their work	Workforce member participation in system-wide training opportunities on reducing or eliminating bias in their work (e.g., training and/workforce registry data)

Q10. Do children from focal populations receive positive behavior supports?

Level Collected	Recommended Metric	Suggested Administrative Data
Child	Percentage of children who do not experience any of the following: in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, disciplinary use of restraint and seclusion, or expulsions	Administrative data on in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, disciplinary use of restraint and seclusion, or expulsions; US Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection (Discipline, Restraints/Seclusion) by public school or district
Workforce	Percentage of workforce members who demonstrate high-quality instructional practices and interactions with children	Observation data on workforce members and/or program report on classes utilizing positive discipline models (e.g., Classroom Assessment Scoring System [CLASS], the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale [ECERS] Interactions subscale, Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool [TPOT]), or the Assessing Classroom Sociocultural Equity Scale [ACES])

Q11. Do children from focal populations have the learning accommodations they need?

Level Collected	Recommended Metric	Suggested Administrative Data
Child	Percentage of children from focal populations who are screened for learning accommodations	Developmental screening data, early intervention data, pediatric screening data
	Percentage of children from focal populations who have an identified need for a learning accommodation	Data collected on developmental screening tool (e.g., Teaching Strategies GOLD, Battelle Developmental Inventory, Developmental Indicators for Assessment of Learning [DIAL], Brigance Early Childhood Screens, Ages and Stages Questionnaire [ASQ]) that suggest a need for a learning accommodation; Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP); or Individual Education Plans (IEP) or 504 plans
	Percentage of children from focal populations who have a learning accommodation provided to them in an inclusive setting	Service provision data for those who require a learning accommodation; Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP); or Individual Education Plans (IEP) or 504 plans and whether the service was provided in an inclusive setting
	Percentage of children from focal populations with identified health or developmental concerns as identified by a developmental screening tool	Data collected on developmental screening tool (e.g., Teaching Strategies GOLD, Battelle Developmental Inventory, Developmental Indicators for Assessment of Learning [DIAL], Brigance Early Childhood Screens, Ages and Stages Questionnaire [ASQ])
	Percentage of children from focal populations with identified concerns who are connected to services	Resource and referral data; service receipt data for preschool programs that provide services in-house
	Percentage of children from focal populations who can fully participate in learning activities	Data on the setting in which a learning accommodation was provided (e.g., in regular classroom, in another room within the school, or in another setting outside of the school during school hours); data on least restrictive accommodations provided (e.g., Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA] data)
Family	Percentage of families from focal populations who are satisfied with the learning accommodations provided to their children	Information collected from families about services provided to them (e.g., Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA] data on family involvement)

Q12. Does the program offer or connect families from focal populations with whole family services?

Level Collected	Recommended Metric	Suggested Administrative Data
Family	Percentage of families from focal populations that use whole family services	Service receipt of whole family services

Level Collected	Recommended Metric	Suggested Administrative Data
Program	Percentage of programs that offer whole family services in their programs	Child care resource and referral (CCR&R) data on program offerings; policies on what services must be offered by preschool programs (e.g., preschools within a community school that must offer whole family services)
	Percentage of programs offering health, mental health, and social services in-house, including staff or consultants providing infant and early childhood mental health consultation (IECMHC) services	Child care resource and referral (CCR&R) data on program offerings

Q14. Are facilities structured and maintained to support the well-being of children from focal populations?

Level Collected	Recommended Metric	Suggested Administrative Data
Program site	Percentage of program sites that have the infrastructure necessary to support student learning, in systems where focal populations make up at least half of the student population	Demographic data on children in each facility; data on the types of infrastructure present within each facility; data tracking facility needs and improvements
	Percentage of program sites that ensure the safety and security of children and workforce members, in programs where focal populations make up at least half of the student population	Citations or reports of safety and security incidents
	Percentage of program sites that meet children and workforce members' health and hygienic needs, in programs where focal populations make up at least half of the student population	Citations or reports of health incidents in each program



Transitions

Q15. Do transition activities meet the needs of families from focal populations?

Level Collected	Recommended Metric	Suggested Administrative Data
Program	Percentage of programs that minimize the number of transitions when supporting children with learning accommodations	Data on the number of transitions experienced by children who have learning accommodations, including transitions that happen within a day or total transitions that occurred for a child in a year

Q16. Are children from focal populations reaching developmental and learning milestones when transitioning to kindergarten?

Level Collected	Recommended Metric	Suggested Administrative Data
Child	Percentage of children from focal populations meeting benchmarks across all developmental domains (language/literacy; cognition; social emotional development; approaches to learning; and physical development)	<p>Data on children’s development across and by each developmental domain that take into account a host of evidences and sources to inform whether a child is or is not meeting benchmarks (accounting for various approaches to defining benchmarks), such as workforce member, family, or child input, kindergarten readiness assessment, formative assessment, or direct child assessment data that include all developmental domains</p> <p>Example direct child assessments that include all developmental domains: Woodcock-Johnson IV Tests of Early Cognition and Academic Development (ECAD) Letter Word and Writing subtests, the Individual Growth and Development Indicators (IGDIs) Early Literacy assessment or guidebook on how a child’s development is understood and what may be meaningful benchmarks that align with children and families’ expectations</p> <p>Example teacher-reported assessments that include all development domains include Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) Language and Literacy Development domain; Ready 4 Kindergarten Early Learning Assessment (R4K ELA) Language and Literacy domain; or Teaching Strategies GOLD (TS GOLD) Language and Literacy subscales</p>



Administration

Q18. Are there funding mechanisms to support equitable experiences for children, families, and workforce members?

Level Collected	Recommended Metric	Suggested Administrative Data
Program	Percentage of programs that have a funding mechanism for allocating funds to be spent on identified needs for children, families, and workforce members from focal populations	Budget records across preschool programs with a line item or earmark for identified needs

Level Collected	Recommended Metric	Suggested Administrative Data
System	Percentage of system-level funding that is allocated to equity-focused activities targeted for children, families, and/or workforce members from focal populations	Budget records across preschool programs with a line item or earmark for equity-focused activities as defined by the system

Q19. Is there system-level guidance for how to support equitable experiences for children, families, and workforce members?

Level Collected	Recommended Metric	Suggested Administrative Data
System	Preschool system leaders regularly evaluate the number of programs that implement early learning standards, curricula, assessments/screenings, professional development activities, and quality monitoring tools for classroom environment and/or child-adult interactions that meet stated guidelines.	Licensing data where programs report program activities; quality improvement observations (e.g., observations to meet QRIS qualifications)

Q20. Are there mechanisms to support equitable experiences for workforce members from focal populations?

Level Collected	Recommended Metric	Suggested Administrative Data
Workforce	Workforce members from focal populations earn wages comparable to the overall population of preschool workforce members	Workforce wage data, workforce registry data, human resources records from each program, program budgets with line items for workforce salaries by role, Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) with workforce wage information
	Workforce members from focal populations have retention rates comparable to the overall population of preschool workforce members	Workforce member tenure and retention rates, human resources records from each program, workforce registry data, publicly available data or reports (e.g., Early Childhood Workforce Index)
	Percentage of workforce members from focal populations who receive benefits comparable to that of the overall preschool workforce population	Benefits received by workforce members, human resource records from each program, or publicly available data or reports (e.g., Early Childhood Workforce Index)
System	Number of professional development opportunities the preschool system offers that are intentionally tailored to workforce members from focal populations to support their unique needs	A list of system-wide professional development opportunities with information on workforce members who participated or received these opportunities (e.g., workforce and training registry data)

Level Collected	Recommended Metric	Suggested Administrative Data
	Number of career pathway supports the preschool system offers that are intentionally tailored to workforce members from focal populations to support their unique needs	A list of system-wide career pathway supports with information on the workforce members who participated or received these opportunities (e.g., workforce and training registry data)

Final Thoughts

Administrative data, or data that are collected as a part of regular operations, are a rich data source for preschool system leaders to answer questions about their preschool system. Preschool system leaders should consider the availability and accessibility of preschool data in their system, whether the available data can be disaggregated, and whether additional data collection might be needed to fully answer the Framework questions of interest.

Appendix A. Administrative Data Inventory

Preschool system leaders can use this inventory to determine whether they have access to the recommended administrative data by the level at which data are collected. Additionally, the inventory organizes potential administrative data sources by high-level data elements.

Level Collected	Recommended Data Elements and Suggested Sources
Child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of children in or interested in preschool <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CCR&R data ○ Enrollment data ○ Waitlist data ○ Head Start PIR data ○ Child care subsidy data • Whether preschool is subsidized <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Head Start program list ○ CCDF subsidy lists ○ Public pre-K lists • General population demographics of a community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Census ○ Community-level data for the general population by age of child • Children’s attendance, such as length of enrollment, number of days present <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Attendance data ○ Enrollment data • A child’s preschool teachers’ or providers’ length of time in their learning environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Workforce registry data ○ Licensing data ○ Accreditation data ○ Standards data (e.g., QRIS) • Quality of the child’s learning environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Enrollment data ○ Licensing data ○ Accreditation data ○ Quality standard data (e.g., quality rating and improvement system data) • Disciplinary actions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Data on in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, disciplinary use of restraint and seclusion, or expulsions ○ US Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection (Discipline, Restraints/Seclusion) by public school or district • Child’s development and the type of evidence used to inform their development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Developmental or pediatric screening data (e.g., Teaching Strategies GOLD, DIAL, Brigance Early Childhood Screens, or ASQ) ○ Early intervention data • Kindergarten readiness assessment data that include all child domains <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Formative or summative assessment data that include all child domains ○ Direct child assessment data that include all child domains • Services and settings provided to children with a learning accommodation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Service provision data ○ IFSP, IEP, or 504 plans

Level Collected	Recommended Data Elements and Suggested Sources
Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average household income within the geographic area of the preschool <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Families' payment data ○ Services provided to families, especially those that focus on the whole family ○ IDEA data on family involvement
Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program quality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ State licensing data ○ CCR&R data ○ Observational assessment data on sociocultural interactions (e.g., ACSES) • Program offerings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CCR&R data • Services to support children with learning accommodations offered by programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Data on the number of transitions experienced by children with learning accommodations, including transitions that happen within a day or total transitions that occurred for a child in a year ○ Budget records with a line item or earmark for identified needs
Program site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services offered by program sites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Languages offered at a program site: CCR&R data ○ Transportation: licensing data or CCR&R data ○ Supporting children with disabilities/developmental delays: workforce registry • Quality information for a program site <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quality standard data: quality rating and improvement system data ○ Staff demographics and credentials: workforce registry data ○ Materials used in learning environments: licensing or monitoring data ○ Facilities: Maintenance or infrastructure update data ○ Safety: Citations or reports of safety, security, or health incidents at each program
Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training participation, specifically for culturally responsive, trauma-informed, or reducing bias in instruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Training data ○ Workforce registry data • Workforce member demographics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Workforce registry data ○ Licensing data ○ QRIS data ○ Human resources data • Workforce benefits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wages: wage data, human resources data, program budgets with workforce salaries, Head Start PIR data ○ Recruitment and retention: workforce registry, Early Childhood Workforce Index, human resources data ○ Benefits: human resources data or Early Childhood Workforce Index • Quality of care provided <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assessments like CLASS, ECERS Interactions subscale, TPOT, or ACSES

About the Data Source Series to Support the STEP Forward with Data Framework

This resource is part of a series to support preschool system leaders with implementing the STEP Forward with Data Framework. The Framework outlines six types of data sources that can be used to answer 20 essential questions. Each resource in this series focuses on how to use one of the data sources to answer the questions in the Framework. To learn more about the other data sources and access the entire series, go to our [Tools](#) page.

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Key Terms

Preschool: Early learning programs offered to 3- and 4-year-olds. In the Framework, we focus on those that are local, state, Tribal, or federally funded, including through state-funded, locally funded, and Tribal preschool and Head Start programs.

Preschool program: A type of preschool with a shared approach or curriculum, set of standards or regulations, funding stream, and/or administration (e.g., Head Start).

Preschool site: The location at which a child receives preschool, including center-, school-, home-, or faith-based settings.

Preschool system: The set of preschool programs that are overseen by a common set of leaders. The preschool programs in the system could be one type of program (e.g., state public pre-K) or multiple programs (e.g., Head Start, subsidized family child care, and state-funded pre-K).

Preschool systems leaders: Those who oversee preschool programs and who can influence systems-level decisions about how to improve preschool programs. Leaders may include state public pre-K administrators, Head Start State Collaboration Office directors, federal Head Start administrators, Head Start grantees overseeing large or multi-site preschool programs, Tribal early childhood administrators, state officers or administrators managing systems-wide early childhood initiatives, and city- or county-wide public preschool administrators.