

GLR Learning Tuesdays Webinar

The "Sturdy Bridge": Ensuring a Seamless Transition Into Kindergarten

June 4, 2024

Moderator and Presenter Bios

MODERATOR

Paula Grubbs

Technical Assistance Specialist

**Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute,
UNC Chapel Hill**



Paula Grubbs, PhD, is a Technical Assistance Specialist at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute (FPG) at the University of North Carolina. Her current projects include the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA), Kindergarten Sturdy Bridge, and the North Carolina Data Governance Project. Paula has more than thirty years of experience serving young children with and without disabilities and their families, administering publicly funded Pre-K programs, and preparing personnel to serve children with disabilities and their families. Her current work is aimed to support states' and communities' efforts to strengthen existing infrastructure and implement evidence-based, effective kindergarten instructional and assessment practices; state early Intervention/Part C and preschool special education/ Section 619 B program coordinators as they work to build high-quality systems and implement the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) early childhood requirements; and state agencies as they create and strengthen existing data governance systems and processes.

PRESENTERS

Olivia Christensen, Ph.D.

Early Childhood Specialist

Minnesota Department of Education



Olivia Christensen, Ph.D., is an Early Childhood Specialist at the Minnesota Department of Education and has worked in education since she was 12 years old. Her roles in the field have included (but are not limited to) babysitter, nanny, summer camp art teacher, Montessori preschool guide, graduate researcher, teacher educator, and early childhood specialist for the MN Department of Education. Olivia supports kindergarten and early elementary related initiatives across the agency. She

is passionate about the value of early childhood education and is committed to supporting the field in ways that promote equity and justice.

Jessie Cuadra, Psy.D.

Chief of Staff

Families in Schools



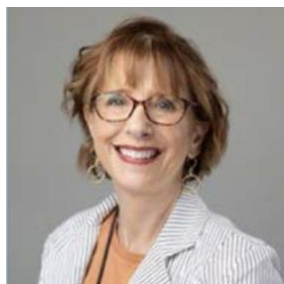
Born in El Salvador, Jessie began her public education journey in kindergarten and had to learn to navigate the school system as an English language learner. Over the past 17 years, Jessie has been tenacious in engaging families, early childhood educators, and communities in co-designing programs and services for children birth to five and their families. Jessie served as the Family Engagement Manager for a Head Start Birth to Five grantee in Southern California, where she led the development and implementation of a comprehensive transition services system, engaging parents, local school leaders, and community-based organizations in its ongoing iterations. Jessie was a member of LACOE's transition Workgroup and contributed to the development and rollout of the 1st edition of the Birth to Kindergarten Transition Systems Alignment Framework, now in its 3rd edition. In her current role as FIS' Chief of Staff, Jessie supports the organization in engaging partners beyond theoretical family engagement conversations to real conversations that center and explore unconscious biases around race and poverty.

Sharonda Johnson **Learning Engagement Coach** **South Carolina Department of Education**



Sharonda Johnson has been in education for over twenty years, beginning as a first-grade teacher at the same elementary school she attended as a child. After 12 years in the classroom, she embarked on a journey to share her passion for literacy and learning as a school-based literacy coach. During her career, she has also mentored new teachers, presented at numerous conferences, and has been honored as District Teacher of the Year. She currently works as a learning engagement coach with the SC Department of Education, partnering with districts and schools to support families with early literacy development. Sharonda's work is rooted in the belief that to whom much is given, much is required.

Janice Kilburn, Ph.D. **School Transitions Coordinator** **South Carolina First Steps**



Dr. Janice Kilburn is currently the School Transitions Team Lead at South Carolina First Steps. She earned a master's degree in school psychology, PhD in developmental psychology, and public-school certifications in Georgia, New York, Ohio, and Texas. She has worked in several settings that focus on education and child development, including school psychologist, school administrator, visiting professor, and education consultant. She thoroughly enjoys taking great programs – like

the Countdown to Kindergarten Program – and figuring out ways to make them even more awesome and accessible.

Stacy Ehrlich Loewe
Principal Research Scientist
NORC at the University of Chicago



Stacy B. Ehrlich Loewe is a trained developmental psychologist with more than 15 years’ experience supporting improvements in early childhood education policy and practice through the use of high-quality research and data analytics. She takes a collaborative approach to her research, focusing on research-practice partnerships to ensure the work is directly relevant to practice and policy decisions. Loewe has substantive expertise in the areas of early attendance, the measurement of early education program/school climate, and kindergarten transitions. Relevant for today’s discussion, she as the Principal Investigator and Project Director for the OPRE-funded project *Understanding Children’s Transitions from Head Start to Kindergarten (HS2K)*.