Spring 5-2016

Kindergarten Teachers' Perceptions of the Effect of Preschool on Academic and Social Skills

Amy L. Larcinese

KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFECT OF PRESCHOOL ON ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL SKILLS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Amy L. Larcinese

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

May 2016

Indiana University of Pennsylvania
School of Graduate Studies and Research
Department of Professional Studies in Education

We hereby approve the dissertation of

Amy L. Larcinese

Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education

_____ _____
Robert E. Millward, D.Ed.
Professor of Professional Studies in Education, Advisor

_____ _____
DeAnna M. Laverick, D.Ed.
Professor of Professional Studies in Education

_____ _____
Kelli Reefer Paquette, Ed.D.
Professor of Professional Studies in Education

ACCEPTED

_____ _____
Randy L. Martin, Ph.D.
Dean
School of Graduate Studies and Research

Title: Kindergarten Teachers' Perceptions of the Effect of Preschool on Academic and Social Skills

Author: Amy L. Larcinese

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Robert E. Millward

Dissertation Committee Members: Dr. DeAnna M. Laverick
Dr. Kelli Reefer Paquette

The purpose of this study was to determine teacher perceptions of the impact of four-year preschool programs on a child's academic and social skills. The population included 800 kindergarten teachers within various districts across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. One hundred sixty-seven kindergarten teachers from various districts responded to the study. This study focused on kindergarten teacher perceptions of preschool on skills related to general readiness, reading, language, writing, math, and social development. The researcher also examined teacher location, number of years teaching, number of years teaching kindergarten, and level of education to determine if any of these variables were significant factors in determining their perceptions.

Results from this study were analyzed quantitatively using a Chi Square analysis. Results indicated a significant difference across the response foils showing that teachers significantly favored preschool and reported that it gives students an academic and social advantage over their peers with no preschool experience. There was no significant difference in perceptions based on teacher location, number of years teaching, number of years teaching kindergarten, and level of education. Teachers were also asked if they believed that preschool should be made mandatory. Eighty-three percent were in favor of making it mandatory, 12% felt it should not be made mandatory, and 5% were not sure. Overall, surveyed teachers reported that with the implementation of common core

standards and the academic rigorous curriculum in kindergarten, teachers felt that preschool levels the playing field and gives students an academic and social advantage over their peers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The past three years have been an exciting part of my life. I am grateful for all the relationships that I have built throughout the dissertation process. I would especially like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Robert Millward. I cannot thank you enough for your support, guidance, and dedication to my study. The time you spent helping me accomplish my goals will never be forgotten. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Laverick and Dr. Paquette, for their expertise in the early childhood field and direction throughout the process. I must also thank Gail McCauley for her guidance with editing and formatting.

Cohort 13 was a group of unique individuals that bonded together very quickly. I have learned so much from each and every one of you and will miss our class discussions, presentations, and time together. Special thanks to all the wonderful faculty members at Indiana University of Pennsylvania for designing engaging and applicable classes that have increased my educational knowledge. I must thank my good friend, cohort member, and colleague Jen Pappasergi for jumping in the trenches and completing the program with me. I cannot thank you enough for our daily conversations and your motivational speeches. I am glad that we had the opportunity to complete the program together. I also want to thank Dr. Janet Sardon and my colleagues at the Yough School District for their support and encouragement over the past three years.

Finally, I must thank all my friends and family members for their support and patience throughout this process. I want to especially thank my parents, Ron and Kathy Dolinar, for always believing in me and pushing me to be the best I can be. You have instilled the concepts of working hard, helping others, and never giving up, and I am truly

grateful for everything you do for me on a daily basis. I would not be where I am today without you. I also want to thank my husband, Phil, for supporting me and putting up with all the time I spent conducting my research.

I dedicate this dissertation to my daughters, Kailey and Addison. I hope that you have learned that it takes time, dedication, and hard work to accomplish your goals. You have the potential to do anything you want in your life if you set a goal and never quit. I am looking forward to having more time to spend with both of you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter Page

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

Table Page

Table Page

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This study surveyed kindergarten teachers' perceptions on the effect that a preschool experience has on children's social and academic skills. In kindergarten, children are expected to master a variety of reading, writing, math, and social development concepts. This study focused on kindergarten teacher perceptions of preschool on skills related to general readiness, reading, language, writing, math, and social development skills. General readiness includes the ability of the child to recognize basic colors, color words, first and last name, and demonstrate appropriate fine motor skills. Reading proficiency comprises the ability to recognize capital and lower case letters, sounds, rhyming words, sight words, and the ability to blend sounds and begin reading words. Concepts in writing include the ability to print first and last names, as well as letters and numerals. Math skills encompass counting orally in sequence, identifying numerals, and counting/sorting objects. Social development includes the capacity to follow one- and two-step directions, listen attentively to the teacher or peers, display turn-taking skills, show courtesy/respect to others, and follow school and classroom rules. The skills mentioned above are considered kindergarten general readiness skills and are essential for students to be successful (Johnson, Martin, & Brooks-Gunn, 2013).

In Pennsylvania, preschool is not mandatory for all children (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2012). According to the National Kids Count in 2012, 54% of eligible children are not attending preschool. Kindergarten teachers find it easier to teach children if they have pre-academic skills, such as recognizing colors, letters and numbers, and social skills such as sitting still, following directions, and paying attention (Isaac,

2012). Children who are aggressive, have tantrums, or exhibit other problem behaviors pose challenges to kindergarten teachers struggling to impart basic skills in a classroom setting (Isaacs, 2012). Having a lack of academic and social skills can be challenging for kindergarten teachers, especially if the majority of their students are coming to school not prepared. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2015):

> Advances in neuroscience and research have helped to demonstrate the benefits of quality early education for young children and that the early years are a critical period in children's learning and development, providing the necessary foundation for more advanced skills. (p. 2)

High-quality preschools are designed to give children a jumpstart to learning. A preschool study conducted in San Francisco, California, reported that preschool gave children a three to four month advantage over their peers who had not attended preschool (Tucker, 2013). This study confirmed the significant impact of preschool for all. Children who were enrolled in preschool showed a three-month advantage in early literacy and mathematical skills and a six-month advantage over their peers in self-regulation skills (Tucker, 2013). Self-regulation skills include the ability to listen, follow instructions, and control impulses. Administrators stated that children who participate in public preschool programs seem to surpass children who do not participate in basic learning programs before they enter kindergarten (Dessoff, 2010). Most preschools have standards in place to prepare children for kindergarten, so that on the first day of school, they are ready to learn. Quality preschool programs not only help a child's brain develop, they also contribute to physical, emotional, and social development (Good Parenting, 2013). The effects of early learning environments, including preschool programs such as Head Start, have been shown to improve school readiness and pre-

literacy skills in preschool-aged children, providing for increased academic success in later years (Schweinhart, 2001; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1999). President Barack Obama stated:

> If we make high-quality preschool available to every child, not only will we give our kids a safe place to learn and grow while their parents go to work; we'll give them the start that they need to succeed in school, and earn higher wages, and form more stable families of their own. (United States Department of Education, 2015)

Obama's education budget for 2016 shows a dramatic increase in funding for Head Start programs with a focus on providing full day programs for all Head Start children (US Department of Education, 2015). Preschool programs aim to help prepare students for kindergarten and kindergarten teachers across the country can determine if preschool programs have a positive impact. Since kindergarten teachers have the first opportunity to work with the children coming into school, obtaining information on their perceptions is practical because they are the first school-aged teachers to instruct and evaluate a child's social, academic, and behavior skills. This quantitative study will examine whether kindergarten teachers perceive that attendance in a preschool program is related to an increase of academic and social achievement.

Purpose of the Study

This study surveyed the perceptions of kindergarten teachers regarding the impact of preschool programs on a child's academic and social development skill set.

Statement of the Problem

While many educators and parents believe that academic and social advancements are evident in students who attend preschool (Carolan, 2013; D'Onise, Lynch &

McDermott, 2010; Duncan & Magnuson, 2013; Lasser & Fite, 2011; Lewis, 2005), a few still argue that preschool has a diminutive effect on academic achievement (Barnett, 2004; Whitehurst, 2013). Because the majority of research seems to support preschool education, various states are budgeting increased funds for early education programs (United States Department of Education, 2015).

Economists believe that this universal preschool idea will generate long-term benefits with an estimated return of $11.00 for every $1.00 spent on educational preschool (Heckman, 2011; White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2013). Educators and policy makers need to know if preschool programs make significant differences in the long-term effects on students. Some researchers believe that preschools will enhance the future economy (Brooks-Gunn, Burchinal, Espinosa, Gormley, Ludwig, Magnuson, & Zaslow, 2013). According to the Center for American Progress in 2013, without a high-quality early childhood intervention, a child is 25% more likely to drop out of school, 40% more likely to become a teen parent, 50% more likely to be placed in special education, 60% more likely never to attend college, and 70% more likely to be arrested for a violent crime.

Research Questions

This study surveyed the perceptions of kindergarten teachers in regard to academic and social performance of students who have participated in a preschool program compared to children who have not had prior preschool experience. This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1a. Do kindergarten teachers perceive differences in the academic performance of students who have participated in four-year-old preschool programs as compared to those students who did not participate in four-year-old preschool programs?

1b. Do kindergarten teachers perceive differences in the social performance of students who have participated in four-year-old preschool programs as compared to those students who did not participate in four-year-old preschool programs?

2a. Does a teacher's school location (urban, suburban, rural) and the teacher's demographic variables (overall number of years of teaching experience, years of teaching kindergarten, and highest degree earned) affect the perceived differences in the academic performance of students who have participated in four-year-old preschool programs as compared to those students who did not participate in four-year-old preschool programs?

2b. Does a teacher's school location (urban, suburban, rural) and the teacher's demographic variables (overall number of years of teaching experience, years of teaching kindergarten, and highest degree earned) affect the perceived differences in the social performance of students who have participated in four-year-old preschool programs as compared to those students who did not participate in four-year-old preschool programs?

3. How do kindergarten teachers feel about making preschool mandatory?

Definitions of Terms

The following terms are used in the study to clarify important statements that are used throughout the study.

Academic Growth - A way of measuring student learning gains that help to understand how much progress individual students have made from one year to the next. Academic growth compares a student's performance to his or her expected performance, giving a sense of the growth made in addition to expected learning gains in a given year (Anderman, Gimbert, O'Connell, & Riegel, 2014).

Social Growth - Refers to the maturity and development of social skills. Social growth can be identified through individual behavior and attitude when interacting with others (California Department of Education, 2014).

Preschool - Preschool is an early childhood program in which children combine learning with play in a program operated by professionally trained adults. Children are most commonly enrolled in preschool between the ages of three and five, though those as young as two can attend some schools (Simmons, 2010).

Research Design

This quantitative study surveyed kindergarten teachers to determine their perceptions of the effects of a preschool program on academic and social growth of students. The sample population for this study is drawn from kindergarten teachers who are employed within 250 school districts in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Limitations

Teachers in 100 school districts across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania were invited to participate in the study. Another important factor that could have affected the results was the type of preschool program that the children attended. Questions did not specially focus on the type of preschool programs that are available to students. Questions that focused on general readiness, reading, writing, math, and social development skills were focused on the performance of students who attended a four-year-old preschool program.

Delimitations

This study only focused on the perceptions of kindergarten teachers. There are other preschool and grade level teachers who have contact with these students whose perceptions may be different.

Summary

Students come to school with the ability to learn at a young age (Edie & Schmid, 2007). Preschool programs can help children to acquire early academic and social skills needed to be successful. Young children come to school with various levels of needs, experiences, and abilities; therefore, preschools must be designed to adhere to their needs and make learning meaningful. The study examined whether kindergarten teachers perceive that participation in a preschool program is related to an increase in a child's academic and social achievement. The results from this study indicate that preschool gives students an academic and social advantage over their peers. Results give school districts data needed to determine if it is beneficial for them to house their own preschool program and also provides information for policy makers. If significant benefits are determined, policy makers may consider providing legislation to mandate preschool for all students. They will also be able to determine the cost effectiveness of funding programs, such as Head Start and other early childhood programs that are funded by state and federal funds.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The effects of early learning environments, including preschool programs such as Head Start, have been shown to improve school readiness and pre-literacy skills in preschool-aged children and provide for increased academic success in later years (Chazan, Cohen, & Kisker, 2013; Schweinhart, 2001; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1999; Weikart, 2014). This study surveyed kindergarten teachers' perceptions of preschool education regarding academics and socialization.

According to President Barack Obama in the 2013 State of the Union address, this is "our generation's Sputnik moment," the time when we realize the urgent need to accelerate the performance of our education system. Many educators believe that the acceleration must begin with a new push for early childhood education. Most of the current research seems to show that appropriate early childhood programs help prepare the child for school, contribute to a child's brain development, and add to physical, emotional, and social development (Cartwright, 2012; Good Parenting, 2013; Heo, Cheatham, Hemmeter, & Noh, 2014).

The purpose of this chapter was to explore research related to the effects that a preschool program has on four-year-old children as they progress into elementary school. The review begins with the history of preschool education including information as to when and why early childhood education started in the United States. This historical data proved foundational in developing an understanding of current preschool programs and practices. Following the historical perspective is an overview of theorists who provided the big ideas about early childhood education and social development such as John Dewey, Maria Montessori, Lev Vygotsky, Loris Malaguzzi (Reggio Emilia), and Jean

Piaget. The review concludes with a description of preschool programs that are common in today's society and the impact these programs have on academic and social achievement, as well as the types of funding that are currently available for preschool education.

Historical Perspective of Preschool Education

The value of early childhood education has been documented over the past century (Hinitz, 2009; Konrad, 2009). Unfortunately, early childhood education was not recognized as an essential part of schooling in the United States from the 17th century throughout the mid-part of the 19th century (Schwartz, 1997). The majority of the early 19th century one-room schools included children ranging from ages 6-16 in one large room, and instructional strategies focused on memory and recall (Schwartz, 1997). The primary purpose of school was to teach children to read so they could study the Bible and thus be able to live proper religious lives (Spodek & Saracho, 1991). However, by the middle of the 20th century, the structure and design of schools began to improve and a preschool experience began to be recognized as an essential part of a child's education.

In the early 1800s, organized childcare began as a charitable function. Most of these day-care charitable centers were housed in churches and community centers, thus permitting women who needed to work to earn a living for the family the ability to place their children in these preschool centers (Schwartz, 1997). In the mid-1800s, governing power over schools was beginning to switch from church to state (Chadwick, 1997). In 1867, the Municipal Reform Act was enacted to ensure that states would now be responsible for promoting the education of children. States having control of education enabled them to determine how schools would operate and key stakeholders in various states began designing and implementing strategies to enhance education reform.

James Kay Shuttleworth is credited with the transformation through founding our early training colleges for teachers and starting boarding schools that expanded the curriculum beyond reading, writing, and arithmetic (Hayes, 2013). Shuttleworth, in partnership with Charles Dickens opened, "ragged" schools that all children, regardless of financial status, could attend, even the poorest children (Negus, 2014). They were referred to as "ragged schools" since most children who attended these schools were very poor and excluded from other schools (Negus, 2014). Their focus shifted to extensive training for elementary teachers, which had an impact on early childhood education since it required teachers to be adequately trained (Negus, 2014). It was becoming evident that government interventions would be needed if education was going to become universal. As the 1800s came to a close, early childhood education began to slowly emerge but on a very limited basis.

In 1916 a group of faculty wives at the University of Chicago provided socialization and play activities for their preschool children in a more formal setting (Mitchell & Modigliani, 1989). Under the leadership of Mrs. Frank R. Lillie, a small group of women established what later became the University of Chicago Nursery School (University of Chicago, 2015). The preschool concept came into existence since it enabled mothers to volunteer to help run canteens, sock drives, scrap collections, etc. during World War I. The mothers took turns supervising each other's children thus allowing them time to participate in a variety of volunteer activities (University of Chicago, 2015). Throughout the years, the school became famous for various milestones in education, including housing the first kindergarten class (University of Chicago, 2015).

The 1920s saw the beginning of the nursery school movement and the focus was also on social skills, rather than just the academics such as reading, writing, and

arithmetic. Families now had a limited opportunity to choose the kind of preschool program that would benefit their child the most. However, most of preschools during this era were designed to help middle and upper class children develop their cognitive and social abilities (Condry, 1983; McGill & Franzen, 1993). Children attended these nursery school programs because parents believed that this experience would promote their social and emotional development (Condry, 1983; McGill & Franzen, 1993). By 1931, 203 nursery schools were implemented in the United States and most of them were housed within universities or operated by local government agencies (Spodek & Saracho, 1994). During the Great Depression, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Emergency Nursery School Program established about 1,900 nursery schools enrolling 75,000 children across the nation (McGill & Franzen, 1993). One of the goals of the WPA nursery schools was to educate mothers in the social development of children. Children were taught academic and social skills, as well as providing meals and medical attention (Burlbaw, 2009). WPA schools created jobs and allowed parents the opportunity to try and seek employment (Burlbaw, 2009). This initiative continued into the early 1940s and was proven effective (Taylor, 2008).

At the start of World War II, the government recognized the importance of early childhood education programs (Yarrow, 2009), and with government support, local childcare centers were able to operate (Stoltzfus, 2015). During the war, the government supported the development of preschool programs and allocated $6 million in July 1942 to implement preschool programs for children of working mothers (Preschool Education, 2014). The popularity of preschool spread like wildfire and many states and local communities benefited from the $6 million allocation to develop additional programs. By 1945, there were more than 100,000 children being educated in preschool centers

(Preschool Education, 2014). There were a variety of preschool centers that used various teaching strategies, which focused on building relationships, promoting constructive play and providing environmental based instruction (Yarrow, 2009). Some centers focused on developing the mind of the child while others focused on social and academic programs (Michel, 2011; Preschool Education, 2014).

These early preschool programs were developed for young children and were designed to incorporate play experiences to help young children develop both behaviorally and socially (Duncan, 2003). Play experiences became popular and were viewed as a critical part of the child's social development (Henricks, 2014). A typical day of "play" included such routines as using real life objects such as small hammers, dishes, towels, and clothes to re-enact real life encounters and developing social skills by having children communicating with each other (Hennricks, 2014). One major advocate of play was the Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, who wrote: "It seems to me that from the point of view of development, play is not the predominant form of activity, but is, in a certain sense, the leading source of development in preschool years" (Armstrong, 2006). Although positive results were coming from the preschool programs, funding became scarce after the war and a majority of centers had to close their doors and were unable to operate until the federal government began to to offer assistance.

During the mid-1960s, the federal government promoted preschool education in order to help children from low-income families succeed in school (Spodek & Saracho,1994). For example, President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty sparked the move for legislation to provide programs for disadvantaged families and began offering Head Start, a preschool program for young children (Office of Head Start, 2015; Snyder,

2004). Head Start has a successful beginning and within 13 years there were various bilingual programs in 21 states (Snyder, 2004).

Head Start began as an experiment to change the way preschool education was done in the past by providing a structured academic program along with parent involvement (Ludwig & Phillips, 2008). This new approach included such offerings as health services, nutrition, education, and mental health awareness and identification (Hinitz 2014; Office of Head Start, 2015). These programs focused on human intelligence and much of the research confirmed that early intervention could have a positive impact on a child's cognitive development (Rose, 2009). These programs focused on making parents a part of the education process and Head Start programs hired parents to work in the classrooms to ensure that they were active with their child's education (Hintz, 2014). Unfortunately, most of the preschool teachers did not have college degrees or teaching certificates (Rose, 2009) and over the years, Head Start's hiring process changed (Welshman, 2010). Head Start partnered with the Child Development Associate (CDA) to offer professional development and credentials to all Head Start teachers and care givers (Hinitz, 2014). Other early childhood agencies began to follow the guidelines of CDA and use qualified staff members within their preschool programs (Hinitz, 2014; Rose, 2009).

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, The National Head Start Association continued to lobby to protect and expand Head Start Programs (Rose, 2009). Head Start is often credited with beginning the movement to formally educate young children. Since its inception, other locally operated preschool programs have evolved over the years. Today 46% of young children attend some type of preschool program (National Kids Count, 2015).

Early Childhood Theorists

Throughout the past century, there have been many researchers who have contributed to the development of early childhood theories, strategies, and procedures. Five of the early advocates of early childhood education are: John Dewey, Maria Montessori, Jean Piaget, Loris Malaguzzi (Reggio Emilia), and Lev Vygotsky. Dewey, Montessori, Piaget, and Vygotsky are recognized leaders of early childhood education (Early Childhood Today, 2014) because of their contributions to current preschool programs. Reggio Emilia is credited with introducing a modernized approach to preschool education that focused on exploration and discovery through a self-guided curriculum (Vodopivec, 2012).

John Dewey

John Dewey was one of the early advocates of early childhood education during the late 1800s and early1900s. He wrote over 40 books and 700 articles relating to educational concepts and is credited for being one of the most significant theorists to contribute to the development of early education thinking (Early Childhood Today, 2000; Hsin, 2014). Dewey conducted research that showed how education and life are interrelated, not separate, and that children can learn best by doing, and that continuity of experience is essential to growth (Dewey, 1970; Early Childhood Today, 2000). Dewey organized and opened the first experimental school in 1896 called University Elementary that emphasized a practical approach to solving problems. The school focused on making connections with learning between the home and school setting. Dewey (1897) stated:

> The teacher is not in the school to impose certain ideas or to form certain habits in the child, but is there as a member of the community to select the influences

which shall affect the child and to assist him in properly responding to these influences. (p. 78)

Dewey advocated for schools and the community to work together (Hsin, 2014; Kretschmer, Wang, & Hartman, 2010). He believed that societal issues heavily impact learning (Popp, 2015). Society can impact young children, as they have an impulse and desire to tell and represent, especially through art (Dewey, 1902). Dewey claimed that the interest in conversation, communication, inquiry, discovery, creation, construction, and artistic expression are the natural resources which affect active growth of the child (Dewey, 1902).

Active growth of the child also means capitalizing on their imagination. Dewey stated, "imagination is the medium in which the child lives" (p. 61). Educators can employ his theory and offer many opportunities for children to use make believe and activities to strengthen their creativity. Imagination can become symbolic because it is a world in which a child lives (Dewey, 1902). Dewey found "when nature and society are present in the classroom, and learning is subordinated to experience, the culture shall be the democratic password" (p. 62).

Dewey (1915) believed that democracy has to be redeveloped during every generation, and education is most important. It is a psychological necessity for schools to represent life that is familiar to the child outside of the school setting (Dewey, 1940). School should be full of activities that are vital and important to the learner now. According to Dewey (1915), it should "be a miniature community, an embryonic society" (p. 15). Dewey believes (1940) that "much of present education has failed because it neglects the fundamental principle of the school as a form of community life"

(pp. 7-8) so he began to share his theories with others to change the way education was designed.

Dewey is known as the founder in the movement of progressive education, which is part of preschool programs today. Thinking about progressive education, one must consider what is education really about? Education is preparation for life, a way to learn how to live, a means to give the child what he needs or will need to know, to develop good citizens, and to develop well rounded happy individuals (Dewey, 1940). According to Dewey (1940):

> The progressive education movement is the outgrowth of the realization by educators of the fact that our highly complex, rapid, crowded civilization demands and has been met by changes in the school subjects and practices; that to make these changes effective something more is needed than simply the addition of one subject after another. (p. 274)

His theory emphasized many key points that are utilized in several preschool classrooms, aimed at giving greater attention to individual needs and characteristics. A preschool classroom today based on the views of John Dewey would have the teacher act as a facilitator for learning. Children would be engaged in conversations, working in groups, and exploring various aspects of the curriculum. Assessments would not just be written tests; students would be completing portfolios, journaling, and projects. Because of Dewey's contributions to early childhood research, preschools have transformed and are offering an environment that fosters independence, cooperative learning, differentiation, and self-guided discovery (Hsin, 2014).

Maria Montessori

Maria Montessori's method for educating preschool students focused on a child's level of development and his/her physical and emotional needs (Thayer-Bacon, 2012). Montessori started her career as the first female to graduate in Italy with a medical degree (Montessori, 1966; Ross, 2012). She worked for many years in hospitals helping physically and mentally handicapped students (Montessori, 1966; Thayer-Bacon, 2012). When other people had given up hope that these children could learn academic subjects such as reading, writing, and arithmetic, Montessori fought harder to discover ways to prove them wrong (Ross, 2012). In the early 1900s, she began to use her scientific knowledge to study children and their behavior (Thayer-Bacon, 2012).

Although the beginning of her research was spent with students who were mentally challenged, Montessori began to wonder what was happening in the educational system across Italy (Ross, 2012). She opened her first school for children ages three to six in January 1907, known as The Children's House (Jokanovic, 2013; Montessori, 1965). Because of her medical background, Montessori spent a lot of time studying children and quickly realized that many of their problems were educational and not medical, sparking her desire to research educational pedagogy and study how very young children learn (Jokanovic, 2013; Montessori, 1965). By 1908, she became world famous for describing and writing about the world within the child (Ross, 2012). Montessori discovered that preschool aged children have a strong desire to learn, and they can learn on their own if placed in an environment that allows them the opportunity to do so (Thayer-Bacon, 2012). Montessori (1965) stated that "the school should become the place where the child may live in freedom, and this freedom must not be solely the intimate, spiritual liberty of internal growth" (p. 142). Children are eager observers and

they like to imitate what they observe. They develop self-realization skills when presented with significant opportunities that provide personal experiences and engagement (Montessori, 1966). Since Montessori believed that the environment should be the center of instruction, she developed a classroom atmosphere that promoted self-realization encompassing four general areas: a practical life area, a sensorial area, a language area, and a math area (Montessori, 1966). Practical life opportunities help to build a child's ability to concentrate, promote coordination, establish order, and encourage independence (Lillard, 2013). Giving children the foundation to believe in themselves will help promote self-confidence (Montessori, 1966). Sensory areas within the classroom help the children develop and enhance their five senses by permitting them to explore their environment and develop their mind (Montessori, 1965). Language activities strengthen the child's ability to decode words, to utilize phonemic awareness skills, and to enhance sight word identification (Lillard, 2013; Montessori, 1966). This station is the foundation for becoming an avid reader (Lillard, 2013; Montessori 1965). Montessori also observed that all children have a mathematical mindset and when given the opportunity to use hands on manipulatives they will become comfortable with math concepts throughout life (Montessori, 1965). Throughout the next several years schools opened that embraced Montessori's teaching and learning concepts (Lillard, 2013).

Within a short time, Montessori began writing books regarding her beliefs about child development and she encouraged teachers to experiment with her methods. She believed that one of her most interesting and unexpected discoveries in the school setting was viewing the child as a discoverer; observing the way they acted freely and how they carried out their actions (Montessori, 1966). By 1915, Montessori's child-centered educational philosophy, with strong ties to the environment, spread internationally.

Today, Montessori preschools promote motor development, which leads to an increase in cognitive development (Lillard, 2013). A preschool that uses Montessori's methods provides instruction that focuses on key developmental stages, encourages cooperative play, has child centered learning that teaches self discipline, has a classroom environment that teaches order, includes lessons that are hands on and inspire creativity, and has a system that is individualized to meet each student's needs (Lillard, 2013; Montessori, 1966). Although there are many Montessori schools operating successfully in the United States, there are other preschools that emphasize family engagement and problem solving activities due to the research of Lev Vygotsky.

Lev Vygotsky

Lev Vygotsky, like Montessori, became noted for his work with preschool children in Russia in the 1920s (Moll, 2014). Vygotsky's research showed that he believed that children learn best from their interactions with their family, significant objects, their favorite toys, and practices that engaged them in the classroom problem solving activities (Bodrova & Leong, 2005; Vygotsky, 1978). His beliefs centered on designing activities that are developmentally appropriate for preschool children. In reference to child development, Vygotsky (1935) stated, "The environment is the source of development and not its setting" (p. 338). The environment in which a child is placed should be realistic according to the child's interaction with life itself. Vygotsky (1926) believed that "education is just meaningless outside the real world as is a fire without oxygen, or as is breathing without a vacuum" (p. 345). After the environment is established, Vygotsky focused on language and development.

Vygotsky and his colleagues focused on a child's developmental stages (Vygotsky, 1978). They discovered that children have two developmental levels: the

actual developmental level, (what they can accomplish on their own) and the proximal level (what can be done with assistance) (Moll, 2014; Vygotsky, 1978). Another characteristic of Vygotsky's theory was the zone of proximal development. The zone of proximal development is the distance between the actual development level and level of potential development (Vygotsky, 1978). This level of development is needed for children to develop cognitively and is attained when children engage in social interaction. Although Vygotsky's main focus was on cognition, he recognized the importance that social interaction had on instruction and the learning cycle. Vygotsky suggested that instruction must be geared at the proximal level so maturation can occur (Vygotsky, 1978). When thinking about instruction, one must remember that learning and development are inseparably blended (Vygotsky, 1978). A child begins to learn after birth, long before they attend school. With that knowledge, it is important to remember that any learning that occurs in school always has a previous history (Vygotsky, 1978). This history will need to be matched in some way with the child's developmental levels.

This point of view called for a different approach to education, one that would focus on the competencies that are still developing, not on the ones that currently exist (Bodrova & Leong, 2005). Preschool design should focus around dramatic play and that play will scaffold a child into developing a wide variety of skills (Vygotsky, 1967). Vygotsky (1978) stated that "play is not the predominant feature of childhood but it is a leading factor in development" (p. 101). Preschools that follow the beliefs of Vygotsky concentrate on the scope of play that is dramatical or make-believe with opportunities for children to create imaginary situations, take on and act out roles, and follow a set of rules determined by these specific roles (Bodrova, Germeroth, & Leong 2013). Many aspects of the teaching curriculum today embrace some of Vygotsky's cognitive and social

development perspectives which will contribute to the information that will be gathered from this study.

Jean Piaget

Piaget is credited for fundamentally altering conceptions of how a child learns (Dulberg, 2005; Early Childhood Today, 2000). He worked for many years in the early 1920s within Europe to conduct observations and research how a student learns and why so many students at the same age make similar mistakes (Pallini, Collins, & Barcaccia, 2014). Piaget observed them playing, listened to them talk to one another, asked them questions about the world, studied their games, and focused in on what they believed was right and wrong (Beatty, 2009; Piaget, 1950; Piaget, 1955).

Piaget spent time listening to conversations between children. He concluded that collective monologue develops between the ages of three-five (Piaget, 1955). Piaget spent time focusing on the reason children around the age of three focused their questions around the different types of "whys." He concluded that there are three "why" principles; causal explanation, motivation, and justification (Piaget, 1955). Dialogue can be an indicator of learning, so this skill can be important for teachers to recognize this type of development in young children. With his focus on language and the thought of the child, he discovered that children are wired in a process. This process consists of developmental stages, similar to the research conducted by Vygotsky (Pallini & Barcaccia, 2014). He concluded that children develop in four stages: the sensorimotor stage**,** preoperational stage*,* concrete operations stage, and formal operations stage (Ojose, 2008; Piaget, 1950). Examining sensorimotor intelligence, Piaget discovered that children rely heavily on symbols and signs, dictating why symbolic and imaginative play is essential during this development period (Piaget, 1950). Piaget advocated that

preschool education should be limited to a sensorimotor design and the focus on reading, writing, and mathematics should be held until elementary school (Piaget, 1971).

Since the inception of Piaget's four developmental stages, preschools began changing the curriculum to align with Piaget's process of development. A typical preschool classroom that is based on Piaget's stages would have discussions that focus on how the answer was discovered, discovery through the environment, and differentiated activities that focus on each child's level of development (Diachenko, 2011). Preschool classrooms today that are aligned to Piaget's theory would be much more interactive, full of manipulatives and imaginative play and the majority of the educational curriculum would be devoted to self-discovery and play time (Diachenko, 2011). The teacher is a facilitator; he/she arranges the environment and prepares activities and experiences appropriate to the developmental level of the children (Houde, Pineau, Leroux, Poirel, Perchey, Lanoe, & Mazoyer, 2011). Although Piaget felt that reading, writing, and mathematics should not be the focus of preschools, most states require that preschools introduce these basic skills as part of their curriculum to help prepare children for kindergarten.

Piaget is one of the four theorists mentioned that contributed to the nursery school movement that has formed many of todays' preschools. Because of his research related to a child's developmental stages, some preschools have centered the design of their classroom environment, instruction, and interactions with children on his findings for growth and development. Although his research was conducted in the past, preschools currently use this learning approach. Piaget's approach focused heavily on social interactions and development as related to this study. The researcher also reviewed a more modernized approach to the design of preschool, and found Reggio Emilia.

Loris Malaguzzi (Reggio Emilia)

Although Piaget had a strong influence on the preschool movement, his influence diminished for some and was replaced by Loris Malaguzzi's creation of the Reggio Emilia approach. In fact, Reggio Emilia is often referred to as one of the best preschools in the world (Bond, 2013; Vodopivec, 2012). The first Reggio inspired preschool opened in 1963 in the small Italian village of Reggio Emilia (Kelemen, 2013; McCann, 2014). Although the Reggio Emilia approach does not have a specific curriculum, the focus is on how children are taught and how they learn (Papatheodorou, 2010). This model focused on academic and social development and is based on the concept of locality, keeping a sense of local identity, and maintaining community traditions (Giamminuti, 2011).

Malaguzzi's philosophy was that all children are curious and creative, which should inspire educators to capitalize on those principles (Kelemen, 2013). Children should be given opportunities to notice the beauty, diversity, and detail of the environment surrounding them (Cadwell, 1997). Educators need to assist the child with their cognitive development, not cultivate cognition for them. Children should not be taught information that they would not be able to discover on their own (Vodopivec, 2012). The key to success is to guide the child through the process and ask the right questions (Vodopivec, 2012).

Malaguzzi (1992) stated:

> There are a few essential elements of a good project. The first is to find an initial motivation, which warms up the children. Then we help the children expand their intentions and at the same time, we expand ours. The adults should set up situations in advance that facilitate the work of the children. The adults have to

revisit what has happened, to listen a great deal and to know how to enter and how much. Teachers must know how to keep the motivation high. (p. 2-3)

The orientations of the Emilia Reggio approach include having a child centered approach, preparing children for a free democratic life, emphasizing the importance of the triple relation (family, school, and community), and stimulating communication, conversations, and interrelations (Cadwell, 1997; Kelemen, 2013). The Reggio Emilia approach has inspired a change in the design of preschools. Preschools that embrace this perspective of learning allow the children to design the curriculum, whereas teachers are seen as co-learners and observers, and the environment is known as the third teacher (Cadwell, 1997; Ruland, 2012). The researcher has provided an overview of five theorists and their program designs that have contributed to the types of preschool programs that can be seen in today's society. Although, most of the theorists focus on child development that leads to academics, some research has also been conducted on the development of social skills.

Social Development

When born, the child is immediately immersed into a social environment that affects his/her cognitive and social development, just as much as the physical environment (Piaget, 1950). Society is a system of ready-made signs that children are compelled to recognize, which impact their thoughts and ways of life (Piaget, 1970). According to Dewey (1940) "the only true education comes through the stimulation of the child's powers by the demand of the social situations in which he finds himself" (p. 3). A positive social orientation can affect intelligence through language, signs, intellectual values, and collective logical or pre-logical norms (Piaget, 1950). The

knowledge and rules that come from language are passed down from one generation to the next (Piaget, 1970). Dewey (1940) believed that:

> The school is primarily a social institution. Since education is a social process, the school is simply that form of community life in which all agencies are concentrated on bringing the child to use their own powers for social ends. (p. 6)

In order for teachers to educate effectively, children must have had the opportunity to adapt to their various environments (Piaget, 1970). Children with enhanced social skills easily adapt to their school environment and have better relationships with their peers (Sindik, Sarac, & Sindik, 2014). Research suggests that social development fosters learning and affects social behavior in the classroom (Nix, Bierman, Domitrovich, & Gill, 2013). One of the most important aspects for the teacher regarding the social development of the child is to utilize constant and careful observations to discover how the child responds to social and cognitive issues (Dewey, 1940).

Social skills can have a tremendous impact on the classroom environment, especially when there are multiple disruptive behaviors present. Disruptive behavior can drastically impact all students in the classroom and thus instruction is less effective. conducted by the teacher. A 2013 Head Start study on social skills development found that preschool readiness exposure promotes stronger social and academic adjustment in kindergarten and over time (Sindik et al., 2014). This present study shows that kindergarten teachers perceive social skills as very important ingredients in promoting cognitive development.

Basic Elements of Preschool Programs

Effective preschool programs should focus on general readiness skills such as reading, writing, and math, as well as teaching children how to socialize and make friends (Stockall, Dennis, & Miller, 2012). A great preschool program helps children learn independence, aids them in making choices, assists them to fit in, helps them to work cooperatively in a group, and also helps them to have fun (Stockall et al., 2012). In most cases, preschool is a child's first time away from home and the idea of school should have a positive impact. Children should want to go to school simply because preschool makes them feel important and is a place where learning is fun (Kayili & Ari, 2011). Preschools need to make sure that the children love school and want to continue to learn. In our fast paced society, preschools need to be designed to enhance specific skills during their preschool years (Kayili & Ari, 2011).

The design of an effective preschool is very different from the past. According to Stockall et. al (2012), a high quality preschool maximizes teacher and child interaction. Additionally, the preschool curriculum should emphasize both academic and social skills. Furthermore, the preschool promotes active engagement with children, space for children to have nurturing and emotionally supportive relationships with early childhood staff, and integrates early literacy and math skills that are responsive to cultural diversity and high standards of safety.

Preschool teachers must understand that children come to school with a wide variety of needs with different physical, social, emotional, and cognitive abilities (Tomlinson, 2014). A well-designed preschool tries to meet the academic and social needs of all students, regardless of their abilities (Li-Grining & Durlak, 2014). An effective preschool program should promote a healthy and enriching environment that

nurtures the growth and development of all children (West, 2011). Effective preschools develop a curriculum that engages students and creates opportunities for their growth and development through art, hands-on activities, interactive play, and kinesthetic movement (Li-Grining et al., 2014). Curriculum design should be based on benchmarks and standards that reflect the knowledge and skills that children need to acquire, and preschool teachers should offer opportunities with multiple pathways to meet them (Hitchcock, Meyer, Rose, & Jackson, 2002).

Keeping standards and benchmarks in mind, teachers must create a universal design for their classroom. The preschool classroom needs to have appropriate materials and technology for students to be successful including items that adhere to the child's visual, tactile, and auditory needs (Stockhall et al., 2012). When children enter a preschool classroom that allows for multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression, they are able to enhance and develop their cognitive skills (Stockall et al., 2012). A child's education should continue into their elementary schooling and better prepare them to be competitive with peers (D'Onise, Lynch & McDermott, 2010; Lasser & Fite, 2011). There are many different preschool programs for young children that are designed using different philosophical methods, so families need to dedicate time to researching the advantages of a variety of programs.

Early Childhood Studies

High/Scope Perry Study

The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study was conducted in Michigan from 1962-1967 to identify the short and long term effects of high quality preschool education for young children living in poverty (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1999) with the goal of helping disadvantaged children avoid school failure (Izadpanah & Gunce, 2014). The sample

population included 123 low-income African-American students who were assessed as having a high risk for failure (Schweinhart, 2003). They were divided into two groups: Group 1 consisted of 58 students between the ages of three and four and who received a high quality preschool program. Subgroup 2 consisted of 65 students between the ages of three and four who did not receive a preschool program. Data on these students were collected over a span of almost 40 years and focused on such variables as economic performance, crime prevention, family relationships, and health.

Analysis of data indicated that the group that the children who had the preschool experience outperformed the other groups in graduation rates, fewer grade repetitions, and better test scores (Schweinhart, Montie, Xiang, Barnett, Belfield, & Nores, 2005). The preschool group also scored better academically at ages 9, 10, 14, 19, and 27. It was also noted that children in the preschool control group had better attitudes toward school at ages 15 and 19 (Schweinhart et al., 2005).

This study also followed students into their adult years and looked at data related to crime, health, and family. Results showed that children who were in the preschool program outweighed the others who did not participate in a preschool program (Schweinhart, 2003). Adults who had participated in the preschool program had fewer arrests for various crimes. Data also showed that males who participated in the preschool program raised their own children, had stable families, and reported having a good relationship with their families (Schweinhart, 2003).

It was concluded that high quality preschool programs for young children living in poverty contribute to their intellectual development, their social development, their success in school, and their success economically (Schweinhart et al., 2005). The results showed the positive impact of preschool education through their adult life and provides

evidence of the potential benefits that all preschool programs can have on children (Schweinhart et. al, 2005).

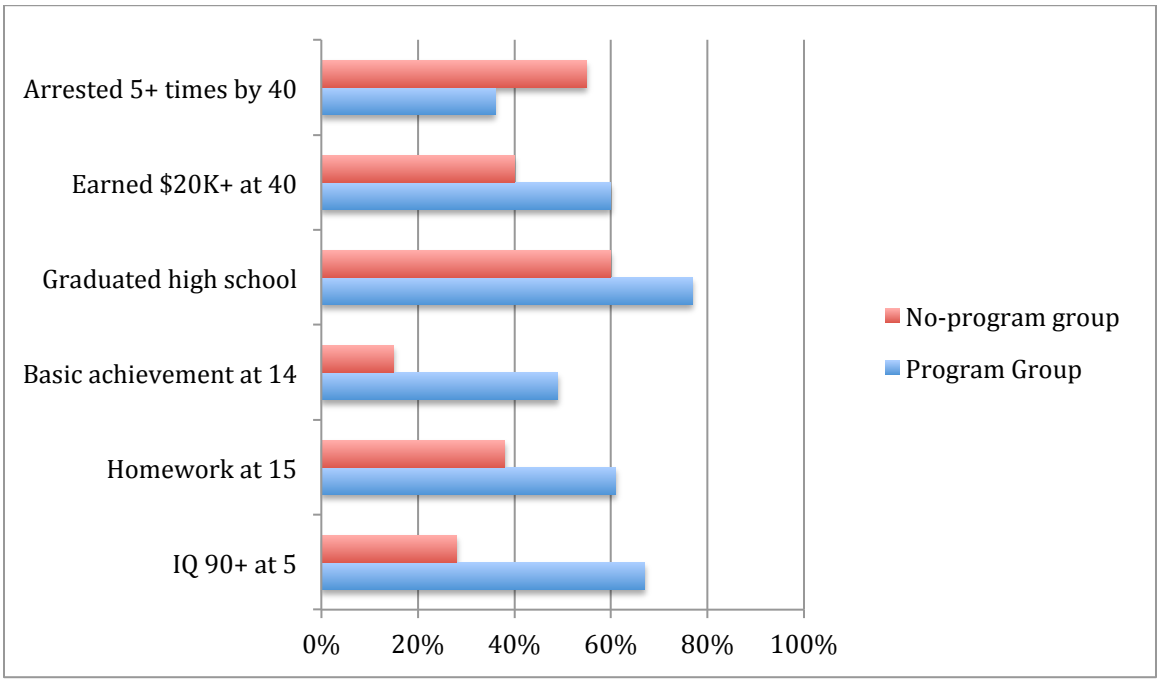


Figure 1. High/Scope chart.

Marcon Study

Rebecca Marcon (1992) conducted a preschool study in the District of Columbia Public Schools to determine the impact of preschool programs on children. Marcon sorted the district's preschool programs into three categories: (1) the child-initiated model, in which teachers encourage children to choose and develop their own learning by picking their own methods for learning and topics for discussion. This preschool program considers a child's social and emotional needs are considered more important than academic learning; (2) programs that focused on academics and learning readiness for kindergarten (3) the "middle-of-the-road" model, which focused on social as well as academic development. She found that educators could not assume that just any

preschool curriculum will achieve positive results (Marcon, 1992). Marcon's data showed that children in the child-initiated preschools benefited from their early experience in school. The children in the child-initiated socialization model continued to master basic skills and to excel in upper grades. Children from the academically directed preschools did not score as high as the other socialization model in first grade reading and math. In addition, children in the academic preschools seemed to lack skills in social development, and boys, especially, fell behind in their overall academic experiences. The preschool that emphasized both the academics and socialization reported no discernible benefits: children in these programs were found to have significantly lower mastery of basic skills, especially language skills, and they were slower to develop their social and motor skills (Marcon, 1992). Marcon found by age nine the effects of a child's preschool experience were clearly apparent. For instance, by fourth grade, children in the academic programs were earning lower grades and passing fewer reading and math objectives. By fourth and fifth grades, these same children were behind their peers developmentally, and they displayed more maladaptive behavior, such as hyperactivity, depression, anxiety, and defiance. According to Marcon's research, these children had more difficulties adjusting and learning than children whose first school experience was in a supportive social-emotional setting. Marcon concluded that preschool does make a difference for students, however the structure needs to be set allowing the students to guide their own learning and a high emphasis should be placed on their social and emotional needs (Marcon, 1992).

Abbott Preschool Study

The Abbott Preschool Study was conducted in 2005 by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) to determine the effects of the Abbott Preschool

program, which was a universal preschool program offered to 31 New Jersey communities with high levels of poverty. This preschool program was developed as a result of a New Jersey court ruling from the case Abbott v. Burke in 1999 (Whitebook, Ryan, Kipnis, Sakai, & University of California, 2008). The case argued that New Jersey's method of funding education was unconstitutional because it caused significant expenditure disparities between poor urban and wealthy suburban school districts, and that poorer urban districts were unable to adequately meet the educational needs of their students (Whitebook et al., 2008). As part of the court ruling, New Jersey was required to develop programs to enhance the educational system for disadvantaged children and that led to inception of the Abbott Preschool Program.

From 1999-2005 enrollment in this preschool increased dramatically and here are some of the early findings: students who attended a preschool made higher gains in literacy, language, and math and outperformed their peers who did not attend a preschool program. It showed strong evidence that the Abbott preschool program produces academic gains at the end of the kindergarten year. Results also showed that children's language, vocabulary, math, and print awareness skills were higher than their peers (Early Learning, 2013). Previous research also indicated that the Abbott preschool program had beneficial effects on children's skills at the kindergarten level and that they outperformed children who did not participate in a preschool program (Barnett, Jung, Lamy, Wang, & Cook, 2007; Frede, 2004; Lamy, Frede, & ELIC, 2005). Early data indicated that participation in this program led to long-term academic success (Campbell, 2002; Reynolds, Temple, Robertson, & Mann, 2002; Schweinhart, 2005).

Abecedarian Project

The Abecedarian Project, which took place almost a half century ago was created to see if there were any potential benefits of early childhood education for children from lower socioeconomic families (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2012). One hundred eleven infants were selected to be part of an intensive preschool education program that monitored progress in health and academics through the child's 21st year (Conner, 2008). Results from the study showed that the preschool group improved in their cognition and educational attainment by displaying an increase in grade level reading and math achievement and increased IQ scores (Burton, 2011). A few conclusions were made as a result of this study. First, preschoolers attending this program scored higher on intellectual and academic measures by the time they reached 21 years of age (Campbell, Ramey, Pungello, Sparling, & Miller-Johnson, 2002). Second, those attending preschool attained more years of schooling and were more likely to attend a four year college program (Campbell et al, 2002). Early childhood education programs, like the Abecedarian Project seemed to improve health and reduce risky health behaviors in adulthood (Muenning, Robertson, Johnson, Campbell, Pungello, & Neidell, 2011).

As mentioned, research on preschool experiences reveals positive benefits for children and with the push for preschool attendance, there has been a large increase in preschool enrollment. According to the National Kids Count in 2012, preschool enrollment has increased from 16% to 54% since 1965. America no longer reflects the traditional family as in the past. For example, the father is no longer the primary supporter and the stay-at-home mother is not typical in most homes (Hayden, 2002). An increase in single-family homes has also caused the need for childcare to increase

(Hayden, 2002). Technology awareness and the push for "the critical learning period" has caused some parents to be concerned that their child will fall behind the others academically if they do not attend preschool (Johnson, 2014). Although most are pushing for universal preschool until states get on board and help with funding, some families are unable to take on the financial burden.

State Funding for Early Childhood Education

There are millions of dollars dedicated each year to state funded preschool programs (Hustedt & Barnett, 2011). It is important for policy makers to see the potential benefits of early childhood education programs and the impact they have on child's future. Researchers have suggested that the cost savings in the future can be highly beneficial. Using a cost-benefit analysis of the Abecedarian Project, the National Institute for Early Education Research estimated that every dollar paid for the preschool program generates a four-dollar return to the children, their families, and all taxpayers (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2012). Since participants are less likely to receive special education services, the increased earnings of the participants, their families, future generations, and school districts will outweigh the initial costs (Schumacher, Irish, & Lombardi, 2003). The report on state preschool initiatives showed that state-funded programs had increased enrollment by more than 100,000 four year olds from 2002-2005. Thirty-eight states were funding preschool programs and enrolling 700,000 three- and four-year-old children. By 2005, those states served more than 800,000 (Slass & Riordan, 2006).

In 2013, House Bill 1356 was sponsored by Representative Jessica Haak, which allowed the Department of Public Instruction to allocate $2.6 million in $100,000 grants for early childhood programs. All states welcomed this incentive and the North Dakota

State Superintendant of Schools, Kirsten Baesler, argued that early childhood programs address at-risk children early and help remediate learning disabilities before students go to middle and high school, which, in turn, saves money in the long run. Many states have been increasing their own budgets to promote early childhood education programs. The state of Michigan provided a 65 million dollar expansion for early childhood programs in 2013 (French, 2013). In 2013, Pennsylvania provided $348.4 million for preschool education and an additional $5 million in funds to support early intervention for pre-k programs (Chute, 2013). During President Obama's administration, preschool funding has shown a $10 million increase over the past eight years (United States Department of Education, 2015). The president, in a State of the Union address, said one dollar spent on high-quality early childhood education saves more than seven dollars later by reducing some negative outcomes, such as violent crime and teen pregnancy (Chute, 2013). In 2015, the budget allotted 1.3 billion dollars for preschool education and a commitment for 10 years to dedicate an additional 75 million dollars (United States Department of Education, 2015). President Obama intended to work with states to make high-quality preschool available to every single child in America (Chute, 2013). Obama (2015) stated, "By the end of this decade, let's enroll 6 million children in high-quality preschool. That is an achievable goal that we know will make our workforce stronger" (United States Department of Education, 2015). In 2015, the US Department of Education and Health and Human Services awarded $237 million dollars in early education funding across the United States to provide preschool for over 33,000 children (United States Department of Education, 2015).

Summary

The literature reviewed in this section supports the research and the history of early childhood education to provide the reader with data that shows an understanding of current preschool programs and practices. The researcher identified five key advocates in the early development of childhood theories and shared their views of how children learn best. Literature was also reviewed concerning the types of preschool programs that are common in today's society to allow the researcher to gain an understanding of current programs. The researcher next reviewed the literature concerning academic achievement related to preschool attendance to allow the researcher to explore achievement specifically in the areas of reading and mathematics. The review of literature concluded with data to show the types of funding that is available for preschool education. Chapter Three highlights the researcher's plan for conducting this study.

CHAPTER THREE

INTRODUCTION

This quantitative study surveyed kindergarten teachers' perceptions of the impact that preschool has on social and academic skills. The researcher chose to gather insights from kindergarten teachers since they are the first to see the impact or lack of impact preschool has on a child's academic and social skills. The study focused on general readiness, reading, language, writing, math, and social development skills.

Statement of the Problem

Preschool in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is not mandatory. School districts have no choice but to leave the decision about preschool up to parents. Parents may have a difficult decision choosing if preschool is the right option for their children and policy makers strive to determine if universal preschool is the best opportunity to enhance our educational system. Determining if there are academic and social benefits of attending preschool is extremely important since there are high demands put on young children to be successful in the school setting beginning in kindergarten. This study sought to address kindergarten teachers' perceptions of preschool attendance and determine if they feel it promotes academic and social advancements in kindergarten.

Research Questions

This study analyzed the perceptions of kindergarten teachers in regard to the academic and social performance of students who have participated in a preschool program versus those who have not participated in a preschool program. This study sought to answer the following questions:

1a. Do kindergarten teachers perceive differences in the academic performance of students who have participated in four-year-old preschool programs as compared to those students who did not participate in four-year-old preschool programs?

1b. Do kindergarten teachers perceive differences in the social performance of students who have participated in four-year-old preschool programs as compared to those students who did not participate in four-year-old preschool programs?

2a. Does a teacher's school location (urban, suburban, rural) and the teacher's demographic variables (overall number of years of teaching experience, years of teaching kindergarten, and highest degree earned) affect the perceived differences in the academic performance of students who have participated in four-year-old preschool programs as compared to those students who did not participate in four-year-old preschool programs?

2b. Does a teacher's school location (urban, suburban, rural) and the teacher's demographic variables (overall number of years of teaching experience, years of teaching kindergarten, and highest degree earned) affect the perceived differences in the social performance of students who have participated in four-year-old preschool programs as compared to those students who did not participate in four-year-old preschool programs?

3. How do kindergarten teachers feel about making preschool mandatory?

Sample Population

The population included 800 kindergarten teachers in urban, suburban, and rural school districts in Pennsylvania. An introduction email and a letter of informed consent (Appendix A and Appendix B) were sent to each kindergarten teacher from the randomly chosen school districts. School districts were numbered from 1-501 and separated by location as rural, urban, and suburban. Using an online random number generator, 53 districts from rural and suburban and 21 urban districts were selected for the study. Eight

hundred teachers were selected from the random sampling list that included 33% from urban schools, 34% from suburban schools, and 33% from rural schools. The researcher used publically available district websites to gather teacher email addresses and import them into the Qualtrics system. The Qualtrics panel reported that 783 emails were successfully sent. The first survey response netted 63 teachers with a rate of 8%. After two weeks passed another response netted 116 teachers with a rate of 15%. The third and final email was sent after four weeks and 167 responses were obtained. Total response rate for this survey was 21%.

Construction of the Survey Instrument

Several statements from the California preschool survey were used, with permission from the California preschool study and Peter D Hart Research Associates (Appendix C). The California preschool survey was created in 2005 by Peter D. Hart Research Associates and was administered throughout the state of California. The survey focused on teachers' perceptions on the effects of preschool attendance regarding general knowledge/cognition and social development of students in their classrooms.

Survey questions were developed that asked kindergarten teachers to indicate if students who attended preschool were much better prepared, somewhat better prepared, a little better prepared, or not better prepared for a variety of academic and social skills. An ordinal scale was used for most responses. Other questions were asked to determine if kindergarten teachers believe an academic gap exists between those who attended preschool and those who did not attend a preschool program. The researcher also asked for teacher perception on making preschool mandatory for all children across the state of Pennsylvania. All questions were created with intent to help the researcher analyze data to determine whether kindergarten teachers perceive that preschool gives students an

academic and social advantage. Table 1 is the item analysis for each survey question as it relates to each research question.

Table 1

Item Analysis for Each Survey Question

Survey Question Number	Corresponding Research Question/Questions
Question 1	1A, 1B, 2A, 2B
Question 2	1A, 2A
Question 3	1B, 2B
Question 4	1A, 2A
Question 5	1B, 2B
Question 6	1A, 2A
Question 7	1A, 2A
Question 8	1A, 2A
Question 9	1A, 2A
Question 10	1B, 2B
Question 11	1A, 2A
Question 12	1B, 2B
Question 13	1A, 2A
Question 14	1B, 2B
Question 15	1A, 2A, 1B, 2B
Question 16	3
Question 17	2A, 2B
Question 18	2A, 2B
Question 19	2A, 2B
Question 20	2A, 2B

Reliability and Validity

To determine reliability of the instrument used in this study, the researcher administered the survey to 11 kindergarten teachers as a pilot. A test/retest procedure was used and resulted in an overall reliability coefficient of .96. The first set of questions was administered to the teachers during the week of September 7, 2015. The second set of questions were given the week of October 19, 2015. To determine the reliability

coefficient, an online correlation coefficient calculator was used. Table 2 shows the data used to determine the overall reliability coefficient of .96.

Table 2

Overall Reliability Coefficient

Question Number	Reliability Coefficient
Question 1	1.0
Question 2	1.0
Question 3	0.9
Question 4	0.9
Question 5	1.0
Question 6	A) 1.0
	B) 1.0
	C) 0.9
	D) 1.0
	Overall: 1.0
Question 7	A) 1.0
	B) 1.0
	C) 1.0
	D) 1.0
	Overall: 1.0
Question 8	A) 0.9
	B) 0.9
	C) 1.0
	Overall: 0.9
Question 9	A) 1.0
	B) 1.0
	C) 1.0
	Overall: 1.0
Question 10	A) 1.0
	B) 1.0
	C) 0.9
	D) 1.0
	E) 0.9
	F) 0.9
	G) 1.0
	Overall: 0.9

Table 2 (continued)

Overall Reliability Coefficient

Question Number	Reliability Coefficient
Question 11	1.0
Question 12	1.0
Question 13	0.6
Question 14	1.0
Question 15	A) 1.0
	B) 1.0
	C) 1.0
	D) 1.0
	E) 1.0
	Overall: 1.0
Question 16	1.0
Question 17	1.0
Question 18	1.0
Question 19	1.0
Question 20	1.0

Face validity was established by conducting an item analysis of each survey statement. After the survey was administered, the researcher met with the kindergarten teachers and asked them to carefully review the survey statements in order to establish face validity. Each question was discussed between the researcher and kindergarten teacher and recommendations were given to ensure alignment with the purpose and intent of this study. The panel of experts included current kindergarten teachers with a variety of experience in the field. The following questions were asked: What questions were unclear? What information was missing? Do you feel the survey questions match the researcher's intent? How can this survey be improved? The following results from the pilot survey include teacher responses to each question as well as any comments that were given to enhance the questions:

Question 1: In your experience, how important do you think it is for children to spend time in a preschool program before they start kindergarten?

Not at all important

Slightly important

Moderately important- 1

Very important- 7

Extremely important- 3

Not sure

Question 2: Without looking at students' records, are you generally able to tell during the early days of the kindergarten school year which of your students have attended preschool and which students have not based on their academic skills?

Yes, I am able to tell preschoolers from non-preschoolers.- 11

No, there is little difference between preschoolers and non-preschoolers.

Not sure.- 1

Question 3: Without looking at students' records, are you generally able to tell during the early days of the kindergarten school year which of your students have attended preschool and which students have not based on their social skills?

Yes, I am able to tell preschoolers from non-preschoolers.- 8

No, there is little difference between preschoolers and non-preschoolers.- 1

Not sure.- 2

Question 4: When you think about the children whom you teach who participated in a preschool program, would you say that, overall, these children are academically:

Much better prepared- 5

Somewhat better prepared- 5

Neither better or worse prepared- 1

Somewhat worse prepared

Much worse prepared

Not sure

Question 5: When you think about the children whom you teach who participated in a preschool program, would you say that, overall, these children are socially:

Much better prepared- 2

Somewhat better prepared- 8

Neither better or worse prepared

Somewhat worse prepared

Much worse prepared

Not sure- 1

Question 6: When you think about the children whom you teach who participated in a preschool program, would you say that these children are better or worse prepared for each of the types of skills in the following five tables:

Table 3

General Readiness of Those Who Attended Preschool Program

	Much Better Prepared	Somewhat Better Prepared	A Little Better Prepared	Not Really Better Prepared
Recognizes Basic Colors	7	2	2	
Recognizes Color Words	4	4	1	2
Recognizes First and Last Name	7	4		
Demonstrates Appropriate Fine Motor Skills	8	2		1

Table 4

Reading Skills of Those Who Attended Preschool Program

	Much Better Prepared	Somewhat Better Prepared	A Little Better Prepared	Not Really Better Prepared
Associates sounds with Letters Presented	7	4		
Recognizes Sight Words	3	4	2	2
Blends Sounds to Read Basic Words	4	3	3	1
Identifies Rhyming Words	7	2	2	

Table 5

Writing Skills of Those Who Attended Preschool Program

	Much Better Prepared	Somewhat Better Prepared	A Little Better Prepared	Not Really Better Prepared
Prints Numerals	7	3	1	
Prints Capital and Lower Case Letters	5	4	2	
Prints First and Last Name	5	5	1	

Table 6

Math Skills of Those Who Attended Preschool Program

	Much Better Prepared	Somewhat Better Prepared	A Little Better Prepared	Not Really Better Prepared
Identify Numerals	10	1		
Counts Objects	8	3		
Sorts Objects	5	6		

Table 7

Social Development Skills of Those Who Attended Preschool Program

	Much Better Prepared	Somewhat Better Prepared	A Little Better Prepared	Not Really Better Prepared
Listens Attentively to the teacher or Peers	4	7		
Follows Classroom and School Rules	7	4		
Displays Turn Taking Skills	5	6		
Shows Courtesy and Respect to Others	4	7		
Displays Good Communication Skills	5	5		1
Works/Plays Cooperatively With Others	6	4	1	
Have Stronger Ties to Family, School, and Community	5	5	1	

Question 11: In your experience, do you spend extra time throughout the day working with one group of children on basic academic skills:

Considerable more time with students who attended preschool.

Moderately more time with students who attended preschool.

No extra time with either group of students. 4

Moderately more time with students who did not attend preschool. 5

Considerable more time with students who did not attend preschool.

Question 13: At the end of the kindergarten school year, do you feel that there is an achievement gap between those who attended preschool compared to those who did not:

Yes, there is definitely a large gap. Preschoolers have the advantage. -1

Yes, there is a small gap. Preschoolers have the advantage. -8

No, there is usually no gap between preschoolers and non preschoolers. -1

No, often non-preschoolers have the advantage.

Question 14: At the end of the kindergarten school year, do you feel that there is a socialization gap between those who attend preschool compared to those who do not?

Yes, there is definitely a large gap. Preschoolers have the advantage.

Yes, there is a small gap. Preschoolers have the advantage. -7

No, there is usually no gap between preschoolers and non preschoolers. -4

No, often non preschoolers have the advantage.

Table 8

What if any Early Childhood Theory has Impacted Your Teaching

	Large Impact	Some Impact	No Impact
John Dewey		4	2
Reggio Emilia	1	4	2
Maria Montessori	2	5	2
Jean Piaget	2	7	
Lev Vygotsky	1	5	

Question 16: Do you feel that preschool should be mandatory across the Commonsealth of Pennsylvania?

_____ Yes 9

_____ Perhaps 1

_____ No 1

_____ Not sure

Please elaborate on why you feel that preschool should be or not be mandatory.

Comments from teachers:

Preschool provides a foundation for early academic and social skills that help children succeed in kindergarten and beyond. Preschool provides valuable experiences in a structured setting that help prepare kids for elementary school. Preschool also promotes social and emotional growth, along with language skills.

Children grow mentally, socially, and developmentally at different speeds. Placing children in a mandatory preschool may hinder academic progress if placed too early. The debate about taking parental control away also poses an issue. A parent should not feel like they are being deemed incompetent to teach their own children by forcing them to place their children in preschool.

No response

It gives the children an opportunity to learn socialization skills, early literacy, and math skills that are important for children to have prior to entering Kindergarten.

Sometimes preschool would help make the parent more aware of how education has changed since they were in school.

No response

I agree that absolutely, we should mandate preschool. However, KG isn't yet mandatory for attendance.

No response

Academic, social, and emotional growth

No response

All students would benefit from the experience and have great advantages to Success in the Kindergarten programs.

Demographic Questions;

Question 17: Is your school district:

_____ Urban

_____ Suburban 4

_____ Rural 7

Question 18: How many complete years have you been teaching?

___8, 1.5.5.18.6.8.8___10, 22___19___

Question 19: How many complete years have you been teaching Kindergarten?

5,0,5,5,17,4,8,8,9,17,19

Question 20: What is your highest level of education obtained?

Bachelor's degree – 8

Master's degree – 3

Advanced graduate degree

Data Analysis

After the results were collected in the Qualtrics system, they were transferred into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) system for data analysis. Each statement was analyzed using a Chi Square to determine whether kindergarten teachers

from rural, urban, and suburban school districts differed in their perception of the social and academic impact of preschool. Similar analyses were run to determine if years teaching, number of years teaching kindergarten, and level of education generated significant differences among the various survey statements. The results did not differ from the initial rural, urban, and suburban analysis. Chi Square tables included independent variable and data for each response foil.

Summary

Chapter Three focused on a review of the quantitative methodology that was used to conduct the study on the perceptions of kindergarten teachers regarding the academic and social benefits of preschool. A survey was created by the researcher and distributed to kindergarten teachers across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The survey was made up of questions that were answered using the Likert scale and one open-ended question. After the survey was distributed, results were analyzed using SPSS and Chi Sqaure.

Chapter Four highlights the results that were collected from the teacher surveys and reports the perceptions of kindergarten teachers regarding the social and academic benefits of preschool attendance.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA AND ANALYSIS

This quantitative study was conducted to determine the perceptions of kindergarten teachers across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Chapter Four presents an analysis of the data that were collected from the surveys obtained from 167 Pennsylvania kindergarten teachers.

Research Questions

1a. Do kindergarten teachers perceive differences in the academic performance of students who have participated in four-year-old preschool programs as compared to those students who did not participate in preschool programs?

1b. Do kindergarten teachers perceive differences in the social performance of students who have participated in four-year-old preschool programs as compared to those students who did not participate in preschool programs?

2a. Does a teacher's school location (urban, suburban, rural) and the teacher's demographic variables (overall number of years of teaching experience, years of teaching kindergarten, and highest degree earned) affect the perceived differences in the academic performance of students who have participated in four-year-old preschool programs as compared to those students who did not participate in preschool programs?

2b. Does a teacher's school location (urban, suburban, rural) and the teacher's demographic variables (overall number of years of teaching experience, years of teaching kindergarten, and highest degree earned) affect the perceived differences in the social performance of students who have participated in four-year-old preschool programs as compared to those students who did not participate in preschool programs?

3. How do kindergarten teachers feel about making preschool mandatory?

Results of the Study

Table 9

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Regarding the Importance of Preschool Before Kindergarten

	Importance of Preschool				
Location of District	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Very Important	Extremely Important	Total
Rural	2 (4%)	5 (10%)	11 (22%)	30 (62%)	48
Urban	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	6 (14%)	34 (80%)	42
Suburban	0	3 (7%)	10 (18%)	40 (75%)	53
Total	3 (2%)	9 (6%)	27 (19%)	104 (73%)	143

Note. P <.05 Significant.

Urban, suburban, and rural teachers had similar responses to the importance of preschool education. There was a significant difference across the response foils showing that teachers significantly favored preschool education. Over 90% of the teachers believed that preschool was very important to extremely important.

Table 10

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Regarding the Ability to Tell Preschoolers and Non-Preschoolers Apart Based on Their Academic Skills

	Academic			
Location of District	Yes, I am able to tell preschoolers from non-preschoolers	No, there is little difference between preschoolers and non-preschoolers	Not sure	Total
Rural	43 (91%)	4 (9%)	0 (0%)	47
Urban	41 (98%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	42
Suburban	51 (96%)	0 (0%)	2 (4%)	53
Total	135 (95%)	4 (3%)	3 (2%)	142

Note. P <.05 Significant.

Rural, urban, and suburban kindergarten teachers could tell the difference between preschoolers and non-preschoolers over 90% of the time. Ninety-one percent of teachers from rural schools, 98% of teachers from urban schools, and 96% of teachers from suburban schools reported being able to tell preschoolers from non-preschoolers, whereas only 9% of teachers from rural schools and 0% of teachers from urban and suburban schools reported seeing no difference when looking at academic skills. A Chi Square analysis shows that the response foils differed significantly.

Table 11

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Regarding the Ability to Tell Preschoolers and Non-Preschoolers Apart Based on Their Social Development Skills

	Academic			
Location of District	Yes, I am able to tell preschoolers from non-preschoolers	No, there is little difference between preschoolers and non-preschoolers	Not sure	Total
Rural	38 (81%)	6 (13%)	3 (6%)	47
Urban	36 (88%)	1 (2%)	4 (10%)	41
Suburban	48 (91%)	2 (4%)	3 (6%)	53
Total	122 (87%)	9 (6%)	10 (7%)	141

Note. P <.05 Significant.

Rural, urban, and suburban kindergarten teachers felt that they could tell the difference in social skills between preschoolers and non-preschoolers. Eighty-one percent of teachers from rural schools, 88% of teachers from urban schools, and 91% of teachers from suburban schools reported being able to tell preschoolers from non-preschoolers, whereas only 13% of teachers from rural schools and 1% of teachers from urban and 4% of teachers from suburban schools reported seeing no difference when looking at social development skills. The Chi Square analysis revealed a significant difference among the response foils.

Table 12

Perception of Kindergarten Teaches in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Regarding the Overall Academic Preparedness of Children Who Attended a Preschool Program

	Prepared Academically			
Location of District	Much better prepared	Somewhat better prepared	Neither better or worse prepared	Total
Rural	30 (63%)	14 (29%)	4 (8%)	48
Urban	18 (43%)	24 (57%)	0 (0%)	42
Suburban	23 (43%)	30 (57%)	0 (0%)	53
Total	71 (50%)	68 (48%)	4 (3%)	143

Note. P <.05 Significant.

Kindergarten teachers in rural, suburban, and urban school districts felt that preschoolers were much better prepared academically compared to students not attending preschool. Sixty-three percent of teachers from rural schools, 43% from urban schools, and 43% from suburban schools thought they were much better prepared. Twenty-nine percent from rural schools, 57% from urban schools, and 57% from suburban schools thought they were somewhat better prepared. Eight percent from rural schools, and 0% from urban and suburban thought they were neither better nor worse prepared. No one thought that children who attend preschool are unprepared for kindergarten. There is no difference in perceptions from rural, urban, and suburban schools. Overall, 98% thought that preschool helps better prepare children academically for kindergarten. The Chi Square analysis revealed a significant difference in the response foils.

Table 13

Perception of Kindergarten Teaches in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Regarding the Overall Social Development Preparedness of Children Who Attended a Preschool Program

	Prepared Socially			
Location of District	Much better prepared	Somewhat better prepared	Neither better or worse prepared	Total
Rural	28 (58%)	15 (31%)	5 (10%)	48
Urban	18 (43%)	22 (52%)	2 (5%)	42
Suburban	27 (51%)	25 (47%)	1 (2%)	53
Total	73 (51%)	62 (43%)	8 (6%)	143

Note. P <.05 Significant.

Kindergarten teachers in rural, suburban, and urban school districts felt that preschoolers were much better prepared socially compared to students not attending preschool. Fifty eight percent of teachers from rural schools, 43% from urban schools, and 51% from suburban schools thought they were much better prepared. Thirty-one percent from rural schools, 52% from urban schools, and 47% from suburban schools thought they were somewhat better prepared. Ten percent from rural schools, 5% from urban schools, and 2% from suburban schools thought they were neither better nor worse prepared. No one thought that children who attend preschool are unprepared. There is no difference in perceptions from rural, urban, and suburban schools. Overall, 84% thought that preschool helps better prepare children socially for kindergarten. The Chi Square analysis revealed a significant difference in the response foils.

Table 14

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Recognizing a Child Who Attended Preschool's Preparedness With Recognizing Basic Colors

	GR-Basic Colors				
Location of District	Much better prepared	Somewhat better prepared	A little better prepared	Not really better prepared	Total
Rural	29 (60%)	11 (23%)	5 (10%)	3 (6%)	48
Urban	30 (71%)	11 (26%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	42
Suburban	38 (72%)	11 (21%)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	53
Total	97 (68%)	33 (23%)	8 (6%)	5 (4%)	143

Note. P <.05 Significant.

Kindergarten teachers in rural, suburban, and urban school districts felt that preschoolers were much better prepared in their ability to recognize basic colors. Sixty percent of rural school teachers, 71% of urban school teachers, and 72% of suburban school teachers believe that children who attend a preschool program are much better prepared with their ability to recognize basic colors. Twenty-three percent from rural schools, 26% from urban schools, and 21% from suburban schools believe the children are somewhat better prepared. Ten percent from rural schools, 2% from urban schools, and 4% from suburban schools believe they are a little better prepared. Six percent from rural schools, 0% from urban schools, and 4% from suburban schools believe the children are not really better prepared. Overall, 91% of teachers believe that children who attend preschool are stronger in their ability to recognize basic colors. Based on the data

presented, the school's location is not a significant deciding factor as the majority of teachers feel preschool provides an advantage. The Chi Square analysis revealed a significant difference in the response foils.

Table 15

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Recognizing a Child Who Attended Preschool's Preparedness With Recognizing Basic Color Words

	GR-Color Words				
Location of District	Much better prepared	Somewhat better prepared	A little better prepared	Not really better prepared	Total
Rural	13 (27%)	14 (29%)	10 (21%)	11 (23%)	48
Urban	12 (29%)	16 (38%)	7 (17%)	7 (17%)	42
Suburban	18 (34%)	15 (28%)	13 (25%)	7 (13%)	53
Total	43 (30%)	45 (32%)	30 (21%)	25 (18%)	143

Note. P <.05 Significant.

When considering a child's preparedness in recognizing basic color words, it is evident that teachers in rural, urban, and suburban schools feel that preschool does give an advantage, but not as strong as an advantage in the other categories of general readiness. Only 62% of teachers felt that children who attend a preschool are much better prepared or somewhat better prepared in this area. Twenty-one percent feel they are a little better prepared and 18% feel they are not really better prepared. There is a 6% difference between the perceptions of rural teachers compared to suburban and urban teachers when looking at those who feel children are not really better prepared. The Chi

Square analysis revealed a significant difference in the response foils.

Table 16

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Recognizing a Child Who Attended Preschool's Preparedness With Recognizing First and Last Names

	GR-First and Last Names				
Location of District	Much better prepared	Somewhat better prepared	A little better prepared	Not really better prepared	Total
Rural	22 (46%)	18 (38%)	4 (8%)	4 (8%)	48
Urban	21 (50%)	18 (43%)	3 (7%)	0 (0%)	42
Suburban	34 (64%)	18 (34%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	53
Total	77 (54%)	54 (38%)	8 (6%)	4 (3%)	143

Note. P <.05 Significant.

There is strong evidence that teachers in rural, urban, and suburban districts believe that preschool makes a difference when looking at the skill of recognizing first and last name. Location of the district does not seem to matter. Forty-six percent of rural school teachers, 50% of urban teachers, and 64% of suburban teachers believe that students who attend preschool are much better prepared at recognizing their first and last name. Thirty-eight percent from rural schools, 43% from urban schools, and 34% from suburban schools felt they are somewhat better prepared. Only 16% from rural schools, 7% from urban schools, and 9% from suburban schools felt they are a little or not really better prepared. Ninety percent of teachers felt that students who attend preschool are better prepared in this general readiness category and only 9% felt that it makes little or

no difference. The Chi Square analysis revealed a significant difference in the response foils.

Table 17

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools in Regard to Recognizing Children's Fine Motor Skills

	GR-Fine Motor Skills				
Location of District	Much better prepared	Somewhat better prepared	A little better prepared	Not really better prepared	Total
Rural	22 (46%)	17 (35%)	7 (15%)	2 (4%)	48
Urban	21 (50%)	18 (43%)	3 (7%)	0 (0%)	42
Suburban	28 (53%)	24 (45%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	53
Total	71 (50%)	59 (41%)	11 (8%)	2 (1%)	143

Note. P <.05 Significant.

Teachers in rural, urban, and suburban schools felt that students who attend preschool have the advantage when it comes to fine motor skills. Forty-six percent from rural schools, 53% from urban schools, and 50% from suburban schools felt that students are much better prepared. Thirty-five percent from rural schools, 43% from urban schools, and 45% from suburban schools felt they are somewhat better prepared. Fifteen percent from rural schools, 7% from urban schools, and 2% from suburban schools said they are a little better prepared, and 4% from rural and 0% from urban and suburban felt they are not really better prepared. There is no difference in perceptions of teachers from urban, suburban, and rural school districts.

Table 18

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Recognizing a Child Who Attended Preschool's Preparedness With Associating Sounds With Letters Presented

	Reading-Sounds With Letters				
Location of District	Much better prepared	Somewhat better prepared	A little better prepared	Not really better prepared	Total
Rural	27 (56%)	10 (21%)	6 (13%)	5 (10%)	48
Urban	18 (43%)	20 (48%)	3 (7%)	1 (2%)	42
Suburban	26 (49%)	21 (40%)	5 (9%)	1 (2%)	53
Total	71 (50%)	51 (36%)	14 (10%)	7 (5%)	143

Note. P <.05 Significant.

Kindergarten teachers in rural, urban, and suburban schools felt strongly that preschool gives students the advantage in regard to associating sounds with letters. Fifty-six percent from rural schools, 43% from urban schools, and 49% from suburban schools felt that students are much better prepared. Twenty-one percent from rural schools, 48% from urban schools, and 40% from suburban schools felt they are somewhat better prepared. Thirteen percent from rural schools, 7% from urban schools, and 9% from suburban schools said they are a little better prepared and 10% from rural, and 2% from urban and suburban felt they are not really better prepared. Overall, 86% felt that students who attend preschool are better prepared compared to 15% who do not see a strong advantage. The Chi Square analysis revealed a significant difference in the response foils.

Table 19

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Recognizing a Child Who Attended Preschool's Preparedness in Recognizing Sight Words

	Reading-Sight Words				
Location of District	Much better prepared	Somewhat better prepared	A little better prepared	Not really better prepared	Total
Rural	16 (33%)	10 (21%)	9 (19%)	13 (27%)	48
Urban	9 (21%)	10 (24%)	14 (33%)	9 (21%)	42
Suburban	17 (32%)	14 (26%)	13 (25%)	9 (17%)	53
Total	42 (29%)	34 (24%)	36 (25%)	31 (22%)	143

Note. P <.05 Significant.

When kindergarten teachers in rural, urban, and suburban schools considered the skill of recognizing sight words, there is an even split between the categories. Thirty-three percent from rural schools, 21% from urban, and 32% from suburban schools felt students who attend preschool are much better prepared. Twenty-one percent from rural, 24% from urban, and 26% from suburban schools felt they are somewhat better prepared. Nineteen percent from rural, 33% from urban, and 25% from suburban felt they are a little better prepared. Twenty-seven percent from rural, 21% from urban, and 17% from suburban felt they are not really better prepared. The Chi Square analysis revealed a significant difference in the response foils and also revealed a significant difference in the

perceptions of teachers. Urban teachers did not seem to feel that preschoolers were better prepared in recognizing sight words.

Table 20

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Recognizing a Child Who Attended Preschool's Preparedness in Their Ability to Blend Sounds and Read Basic Words

	Reading-Blends Sounds to Read				
Location of District	Much better prepared	Somewhat better prepared	A little better prepared	Not really better prepared	Total
Rural	15 (31%)	13 (27%)	6 (13%)	14 (29%)	48
Urban	7 (17%)	9 (21%)	12 (29%)	14 (33%)	42
Suburban	15 (28%)	14 (26%)	14 (26%)	10 (19%)	53
Total	37 (26%)	36 (25%)	32 (22%)	38 (27%)	143

Note. P <.05 Significant.

Perceptions of kindergarten teachers in rural, urban, and suburban schools resulted in an even split between the categories in reference to blending sounds to read words. Thirty-one percent from rural schools, 17% from urban, and 28% from suburban schools felt students who attend preschool are much better prepared. Twenty-seven percent from rural, 21% from urban, and 26% from suburban schools felt they are somewhat better prepared. Thirteen percent from rural, 29% from urban, and 26% from suburban felt they are a little better prepared. Twenty-nine percent from rural, 33% from urban, and 19% from suburban feel they are not really better prepared. The Chi Square

analysis did not reveal a significant difference in the response foils, however it did reveal a significant difference in the perceptions of teachers.

Table 21

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Recognizing a Child Who Attended Preschool's Preparedness When Identifying Rhyming Words

	Reading-Rhyming Words				
Location of District	Much better prepared	Somewhat better prepared	A little better prepared	Not really better prepared	Total
Rural	20 (42%)	15 (31%)	6 (13%)	7 (15%)	48
Urban	14 (33%)	18 (43%)	9 (21%)	1 (2%)	42
Suburban	21 (40%)	22 (42%)	9 (17%)	1 (2%)	53
Total	55 (39%)	55 (39%)	24 (17%)	9 (6%)	143

Note. P <.05 Significant.

Kindergarten teachers in rural, urban, and suburban schools felt strongly that preschool gives students the advantage with regard to identifying rhyming words. Forty-two percent from rural schools, 33% from urban schools, and 40% from suburban schools felt that students are much better prepared. Thirty-one percent from rural schools, 43% from urban schools, and 42% from suburban schools felt they are somewhat better prepared. Thirteen percent from rural schools, 21% from urban schools, and 17% from suburban schools said they are a little better prepared and 15% from rural, and 2% from urban and suburban felt they are not really better prepared. Overall, 78% felt that students who attend preschool are better prepared compared to 23% who do not see a

strong advantage. The Chi Square analysis revealed a significant difference in the response foils.

Table 22

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Recognizing a Child Who Attended Preschool's Preparedness in Their Ability to Print Numbers

	Writing-Prints Numerals				
Location of District	Much better prepared	Somewhat better prepared	A little better prepared	Not really better prepared	Total
Rural	19 (40%)	18 (38%)	6 (13%)	4 (9%)	47
Urban	12 (29%)	17 (41%)	12 (29%)	1 (2%)	42
Suburban	22 (42%)	24 (45%)	6 (11%)	1 (2%)	53
Total	53 (37%)	59 (42%)	24 (17%)	6 (4%)	142

Note. P <.05 Significant.

Surveyed teachers in rural, urban, and suburban schools felt that students who attend preschool have the advantage when it comes to printing numerals. Forty percent from rural schools, 29% from urban schools, and 42% from suburban schools felt that students are much better prepared. Thirty-eight percent from rural schools, 41% from urban schools, and 45% from suburban schools felt they are somewhat better prepared. Thirteen percent from rural schools, 29% from urban schools, and 11% from suburban schools said they are a little better prepared and 9% from rural and 2% from urban and suburban felt they are not really better prepared. Although the majority (79%) of

teachers felt that preschool makes a difference in writing numbers, urban teachers did not feel as strongly.

Table 23

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Recognizing a Child Who Attended Preschool's Preparedness in Their Ability to Print Upper and Lower Case Letters

	Writing-Prints Upper/Lower Case Letters				
Location of District	Much better prepared	Somewhat better prepared	A little better prepared	Not really better prepared	Total
Rural	18 (38%)	18 (38%)	9 (19%)	2 (4%)	47
Urban	13 (31%)	18 (42%)	9 (21%)	2 (5%)	42
Suburban	19 (36%)	26 (49%)	5 (9%)	3 (6%)	53
Total	50 (35%)	62 (44%)	23 (16%)	7 (5%)	142

Note. P <.05 Significant.

Kindergarten teachers in rural, urban, and suburban schools felt strongly that preschool gives students the advantage in regards to printing upper and lowercase letters. Thirty-eight percent from rural schools, 31% from urban schools, and 36% from suburban schools felt that students are much better prepared. Thirty-eight percent from rural schools, 42% from urban schools, and 49% from suburban schools felt they are somewhat better prepared. Nineteen percent from rural schools, 21% from urban schools, and 9% from suburban schools said they are a little better prepared and 4% from rural, 5% from urban, and 6% from suburban felt they are not really better prepared.

Overall, 79% felt that students who attend preschool are better prepared to recognize upper and lowercase letters. The Chi Square analysis revealed a significant difference in the response foils.

Table 24

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Recognizing a Child Who Attended Preschool's Preparedness in Their Ability to Print Their First and Last Name

	Writing-Prints First and Last Name				
Location of District	Much better prepared	Somewhat better prepared	A little better prepared	Not really better prepared	Total
Rural	21 (45%)	14 (30%)	8 (17%)	4 (9%)	47
Urban	14 (33%)	17 (41%)	9 (21%)	2 (5%)	42
Suburban	22 (42%)	22 (42%)	7 (13%)	2 (4%)	53
Total	55 (40%)	53 (37%)	24 (17%)	8 (6%)	142

Note. P <.05 Significant.

Surveyed teachers in rural, urban, and suburban schools felt that students who attend preschool have the advantage when it comes to printing their name. Forty-five percent from rural schools, 33% from urban schools, and 42% from suburban schools felt that students are much better prepared. Thirty percent from rural schools, 41% from urban schools, and 42% from suburban schools felt they are somewhat better prepared. Seventeen percent from rural schools, 21% from urban schools, and 13% from suburban schools said they are a little better prepared and 9% from rural, 5% from urban and 4% from suburban schools felt they are not really better prepared. Overall, 77% felt that

preschool better prepares students in regard to printing their first and last name. The Chi Square analysis revealed a significant difference in the response foils.

Table 25

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Recognizing a Child Who Attended Preschool's Preparedness to Identifying Numerals

	Math-Identify Numerals				
Location of District	Much better prepared	Somewhat better prepared	A little better prepared	Not really better prepared	Total
Rural	28 (60%)	12 (26%)	5 (11%)	2 (4%)	47
Urban	20 (48%)	18 (43%)	4 (10%)	0 (0%)	42
Suburban	27 (51%)	24 (45%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	53
Total	75 (53%)	54 (38%)	10 (7%)	3 (2%)	142

Note. P <.05 Significant.

Kindergarten teachers in rural, urban, and suburban districts felt strongly that preschool gives students the advantage in identifying numerals. Sixty percent from rural schools, 48% from urban schools, and 51% from suburban schools felt they are much better prepared. Twenty-six percent from rural schools, 43% from urban schools, and 45% from suburban schools felt they are somewhat better prepared. Eleven percent from rural, 10% from urban, and 2% from suburban felt they are a little better prepared and 4% from rural, 0% from urban, and 2% from suburban felt they are not really better prepared. Overall, 91% of surveyed teachers felt children who attend preschool are better prepared

than their classmates who do not attend preschool. The Chi Square analysis revealed a significant difference in the response foils.

Table 26

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Recognizing a Child Who Attended Preschool's Preparedness When Counting Objects

	Math-Counts Objects				
Location of District	Much better prepared	Somewhat better prepared	A little better prepared	Not really better prepared	Total
Rural	28 (60%)	12 (26%)	4 (9%)	3 (6%)	47
Urban	24 (57%)	15 (36%)	3 (7%)	0 (0%)	42
Suburban	31 (59%)	20 (38%)	2 (4%)	0 (0%)	53
Total	83 (59%)	47 (33%)	9 (6%)	3 (2%)	142

Note. P <.05 Significant.

Kindergarten teachers in rural, suburban, and urban school districts felt that preschoolers were much better prepared in their ability to count objects. Sixty percent of rural school teachers, 57% of urban school teachers, and 59% of suburban school teachers believe that children who attend a preschool program are much better prepared with their ability to count objects. Twenty-six from rural schools, 36% from urban schools, and 38% from suburban schools believe the children are somewhat better prepared. Nine percent from rural schools, 7% from urban schools, and 4% from suburban schools believe they are a little better prepared. Six percent from rural schools, 0% from urban and suburban schools believe the children are not really better prepared.

Overall, 92% of teachers believe that children who attend preschool are stronger in their ability to count objects. Based on the data presented, a teacher's location is not a significant deciding factor as the majority feels preschool gives the advantage. The Chi Square analysis revealed a significant difference in the response foils.

Table 27

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Recognizing a Child Who Attended Preschool's Preparedness When Sorting Objects

	Math-Sorts Objects				
Location of District	Much better prepared	Somewhat better prepared	A little better prepared	Not really better prepared	Total
Rural	29 (62%)	9 (19%)	5 (11%)	4 (9%)	47
Urban	18 (43%)	18 (43%)	6 (14%)	0 (0%)	42
Suburban	26 (49%)	21 (40%)	5 (9%)	1 (2%)	53
Total	73 (51%)	48 (34%)	16 (11%)	5 (4%)	142

Note. P <.05 Significant.

Kindergarten teachers in rural, suburban, and urban school districts felt that preschoolers were much better prepared in their ability to sort objects. Sixty-two percent of rural school teachers, 43% of urban school teachers, and 49% of suburban school teachers believe that children who attend a preschool program are much better prepared with their ability to sort objects. Nineteen percent from rural schools, 43% from urban schools, and 40% from suburban schools believe the children are somewhat better prepared. Eleven percent from rural schools, 14% from urban schools, and 9% from

suburban schools believe they are a little better prepared. Nine percent from rural schools, 0% from urban, and 2% from suburban schools believe the children are not really better prepared. Overall, 85% of teachers believe that children who attend preschool are stronger in their ability to sort objects. Based on the data presented, a teacher's location is not a significant deciding factor as the majority feels preschool gives the advantage. The Chi Square analysis revealed a significant difference in the response foils.

Table 28

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Recognizing a Child Who Attended Preschool's Preparedness and Ability to Listen Attentively to The Teacher and Peers

	SDS-Listens Attentively				
Location of District	Much better prepared	Somewhat better prepared	A little better prepared	Not really better prepared	Total
Rural	28 (58%)	8 (17%)	8 (17%)	4 (8%)	48
Urban	20 (48%)	17 (41%)	4 (10%)	1 (2%)	42
Suburban	23 (43%)	26 (49%)	4 (8%)	0 (0%)	53
Total	71 (50%)	51 (36%)	16 (11%)	5 (4%)	143

Note. P <.05 Significant.

When considering a child's preparedness in their ability to listen attentively to the teacher and their peers, it is evident that teachers in rural, urban, and suburban schools feel that preschool does give an advantage. Fifty-eight percent of rural teachers, 48% of

urban teachers, and 43% of suburban teachers felt students who attend preschool are much better prepared. Seventeen percent of rural teachers, 41% of urban teachers, and 49% of suburban teachers felt they are somewhat better prepared. There is a 24%-32% difference between the perceptions of rural teachers compared to suburban and urban teachers when looking at those who feel children are somewhat better prepared. Seventeen percent of rural teachers, 10% of urban teachers, and 8% of suburban teachers felt they are a little better prepared. Only 8% of rural teachers, 2% of urban teachers, and 0% of suburban teachers felt children who attend preschool are not better prepared. The Chi Square analysis revealed a significant difference in the response foils.

Table 29

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Recognizing a Child Who Attended Preschool's Preparedness and Ability to Follow Classroom and School Rules

	SDS-Follows Classroom/School Rules				
Location of District	Much better prepared	Somewhat better prepared	A little better prepared	Not really better prepared	Total
Rural	28 (58%)	9 (19%)	5 (10%)	6 (13%)	48
Urban	23 (55%)	14 (33%)	5 (12%)	0 (0%)	42
Suburban	29 (55%)	22 (42%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	53
Total	80 (56%)	45 (32%)	11 (8%)	7 (5%)	143

Note. P <.05 Significant.

Surveyed teachers in rural, urban, and suburban schools felt that students who attend preschool have the advantage when it comes to following classroom and school

rules. Fifty-eight percent from rural schools, 55% from urban schools, and 55% from suburban schools felt that students are much better prepared. Nineteen percent from rural schools, 33% from urban schools, and 42% from suburban schools felt they are somewhat better prepared. Ten percent from rural schools, 12% from urban schools, and 2% from suburban schools said they are a little better prepared and 13% from rural, 0% from urban, and 2% from suburban schools felt they are not really better prepared. Eighty-eight percent of teachers felt that preschool makes a difference in the behavior of students when it comes to following classroom and school rules. The Chi Square analysis revealed a significant difference in the response foils.

Table 30

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Recognizing a Child Who Attended Preschool's Preparedness and Ability to Display Turn Taking Skills

	SDS-Displays Turn Taking Skills				
Location of District	Much better prepared	Somewhat better prepared	A little better prepared	Not really better prepared	Total
Rural	23 (48%)	18 (38%)	2 (4%)	5 (10%)	48
Urban	19 (45%)	18 (43%)	5 (12%)	0 (0%)	42
Suburban	30 (57%)	20 (38%)	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	53
Total	72 (50%)	56 (39%)	9 (6%)	6 (4%)	143

Note. P <.05 Significant.

Kindergarten teachers in rural, suburban, and urban school districts felt that preschoolers were much better prepared in their ability to display turn taking skills.

Forty- eight percent of rural school teachers, 45% of urban school teachers, and 57% of suburban school teachers believe that children who attend a preschool program are much better prepared with their ability to take turns. Thirty-eight percent from rural schools, 43% from urban schools, and 38% from suburban schools believe the children are somewhat better prepared. Four percent from rural schools, 12% from urban schools, and 4% from suburban schools believe they are a little better prepared. Ten percent from rural schools, 0% from urban schools, and 2% from suburban schools believe the children are not really better prepared. Overall, 89% of teachers believe that children who attend preschool are stronger in their ability to display turn taking skills. Based on the data presented, the school's location is not a significant deciding factor as the majority of teachers felt preschool provides an advantage. The Chi Square analysis revealed a significant difference in the response foils.

Table 31

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Recognizing a Child Who Attended Preschool's Preparedness and Ability to Show Courtesy and Respect to Others

	SDS-Courtesy and Respect to Others				
Location of District	Much better prepared	Somewhat better prepared	A little better prepared	Not really better prepared	Total
Rural	21 (44%)	17 (35%)	3 (6%)	7 (15%)	48
Urban	18 (43%)	16 (38%)	8 (19%)	0 (0%)	42
Suburban	19 (36%)	29 (55%)	3 (6%)	2 (4%)	53
Total	58 (41%)	62 (43%)	14 (10%)	9 (6%)	143

Note. P <.05 Significant.

Surveyed teachers in rural, urban, and suburban schools felt that students who attend preschool have the advantage when it comes to showing courtesy and respect to others. Forty-four percent from rural schools, 43% from urban schools, and 36% from suburban schools felt that students are much better prepared. Thirty-five percent from rural schools, 38% from urban schools, and 55% from suburban schools felt they are somewhat better prepared. Six percent from rural schools, 19% from urban schools, and 6% from suburban schools said they are a little better prepared and 15% from rural, 0% from urban, and 2% from suburban districts felt they are not really better prepared. Although the majority (84%) of teachers felt that preschool makes a difference in showing courtesy and respect, rural and suburban teachers did not feel as strongly. The Chi Square analysis revealed a significant difference in the response foils.

Table 32

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Recognizing a Child Who Attended Preschool's Preparedness in Having Good Communication Skills

	SDS-Having Good Communication Skills				
Location of District	Much better prepared	Somewhat better prepared	A little better prepared	Not really better prepared	Total
Rural	24 (50%)	16 (33%)	3 (6%)	5 (10%)	48
Urban	13 (32%)	20 (49%)	8 (20%)	0 (0%)	41
Suburban	18 (34%)	31 (59%)	4 (8%)	0 (0%)	53
Total	55 (39%)	67 (47%)	15 (11%)	5 (4%)	142

Note. P <.05 Significant.

Teachers in rural, urban, and suburban schools felt that students who attend preschool have the advantage when it comes to having good communication skills. Fifty percent from rural schools, 32% from urban schools, and 34% from suburban schools felt that students are much better prepared. Thirty-three percent from rural schools, 49% from urban schools, and 59% from suburban schools felt they are somewhat better prepared. Six percent from rural schools, 20% from urban schools, and 8% from suburban schools said they are a little better prepared and 10% from rural and 0% from urban and suburban districts felt they are not really better prepared. There is no difference in perceptions of teachers from urban, suburban, and rural school districts. The Chi Square analysis revealed a significant difference in the response foils.

Table 33

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Recognizing a Child Who Attended Preschool's Preparedness to Work and Play Cooperatively With Others

	SDS-Works/Plays Cooperatively with Others				
Location of District	Much better prepared	Somewhat better prepared	A little better prepared	Not really better prepared	Total
Rural	26 (54%)	13 (27%)	6 (13%)	3 (6%)	48
Urban	19 (45%)	18 (43%)	4 (10%)	1 (2%)	42
Suburban	23 (43%)	29 (55%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	53
Total	68 (48%)	60 (42%)	11 (8%)	4 (3%)	143

Note. P <.05 Significant.

Perceptions of kindergarten teachers in rural, urban, and suburban schools resulted in teachers feeling strongly about preschool helping children to learn how to work and play cooperatively with others. Fifty-four percent from rural schools, 45% from urban, and 43% from suburban schools felt students who attend preschool are much better prepared. Twenty-seven percent from rural, 43% from urban, and 55% from suburban schools felt they are somewhat better prepared. Thirteen percent from rural, 10% from urban, and 2% from suburban felt they are a little better prepared. Six percent from rural, 2% from urban, and 0% from suburban felt they are not really better prepared. The Chi Square analysis revealed a significant difference in the response foils.

Table 34

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Recognizing a Child Who Attended Preschool's Connection With Family, School, and The Community

	SDS-Having Stronger Ties to Family/School/Community				
Location of District	Much better prepared	Somewhat better prepared	A little better prepared	Not really better prepared	Total
Rural	15 (31%)	18 (38%)	4 (8%)	11 (23%)	48
Urban	7 (17%)	20 (48%)	11 (26%)	4 (10%)	42
Suburban	15 (28%)	23 (43%)	9 (17%)	6 (11%)	53
Total	37 (26%)	61 (43%)	24 (17%)	21 (15%)	143

Note. P <.05 Significant.

Kindergarten teachers in rural, urban, and suburban districts were asked if they thought that students who attended preschool have stronger ties with family, school, and the community. Thirty-one percent of rural schools, 17% of urban schools, 28% of suburban schools felt that children who attend preschool are much better prepared. Thirty-eight percent from rural schools, 48% from urban schools, and 43% from suburban schools felt they are somewhat better prepared. Four percent from rural, 26% from urban, and 17% from suburban felt they are a little better prepared and 23% from rural, 10% from urban, and 11% from suburban felt they are not really better prepared. Although the results were in favor of preschool children having an advantage, the majority (69%) of teachers felt that students are somewhat better prepared, while 15%

felt they are not really better prepared. The Chi Square analysis revealed a significant difference in the response foils.

Table 35

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Recognizing the Amount of Time Spent With a Group of Children on Basic Academic Skills

	Extra Time on Basic Academic Skills					
Location of District	Considerable more time with students who attended preschool	Moderately more time with students who attended preschool	No extra time with either group of students	Moderately more time with students who did not attended preschool	Considerable more time with students who did not attended preschool	Total
Rural	1 (2%)	3 (6%)	10 (21%)	16 (33%)	18 (38%)	48
Urban	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	9 (21%)	16 (38%)	15 (36%)	42
Suburban	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	4 (8%)	28 (53%)	20 (38%)	53
Total	2 (1%)	5 (4%)	23 (16%)	60 (42%)	53 (37%)	143

Note. P <.05 Significant.

Urban, suburban, and rural teachers had similar responses to the amount of time that they spend on academic skills with one group of students. There was a significant difference across the response foils showing that teachers significantly spend more time with students who did not attend preschool. Seventy-nine percent of the teachers reported spending extra time with students who did not attend a preschool program, 16% reported no difference between the two groups, and 5% reported spending more time with

students who attended a preschool program. The Chi Square analysis revealed a significant difference in the response foils.

Table 36

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Recognizing the Amount of Time Spent With a Group of Children on Social Development Skills

	Extra Time on Social Skills					
Location of District	Considerable more time with students who attended preschool	Moderately more time with students who attended preschool	No extra time with either group of students	Moderately more time with students who did not attended preschool	Considerable more time with students who did not attended preschool	Total
Rural	1 (2%)	3 (7%)	15 (33%)	17 (37%)	10 (22%)	46
Urban	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	13 (31%)	18 (43%)	10 (24%)	42
Suburban	0 (0%)	2 (4%)	9 (17%)	32 (60%)	10 (19%)	53
Total	1 (1%)	6 (4%)	37 (26%)	67 (48%)	30 (21%)	141

Note. P <.05 Significant.

Urban, suburban, and rural teachers had similar responses to the amount of time that they spend on social development skills with one group of students. There was a significant difference across the response foils showing that teachers significantly spend more time on social skills development with students who did not attend preschool. Sixty-nine percent of the teachers reported spending extra time with students who did not attend a preschool program, 26% reported no difference between the two groups, and 5%

reported spending more time with students who attended a preschool program. Suburban teachers felt very strongly (79%) about spending extra time on social skills development with students who do not attend a preschool program. The Chi Square analysis revealed a significant difference in the response foils.

Table 37

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Recognizing if There is an Achievement Gap at The End of The Kindergarten Year

	Achievement Gap			
Location of District	Yes, there is definitely a large gap. Preschoolers have the advantage.	Yes, there is a small gap. Preschoolers have the advantage.	No, there is usually no gap between preschoolers and non-preschoolers.	Total
Rural	8 (17%)	28 (60%)	11 (23%)	47
Urban	6 (15%)	28 (68%)	7 (17%)	41
Suburban	7 (14%)	39 (75%)	6 (12%)	52
Total	21 (15%)	95 (68%)	24 (17%)	140

Note. P <.05 Significant.

Kindergarten teachers in rural, urban, and suburban schools felt strongly that at the end of the kindergarten year there is an achievement gap that exists between preschoolers and non-preschoolers. Seventeen percent from rural schools, 15% from urban schools, and 14% from suburban schools felt there is a large gap that exists between children who attended preschool and those who did not attend preschool. Sixty percent from rural schools, 68% from urban schools, and 75% from suburban schools felt there is a small gap and preschoolers have the advantage. Twenty-three percent from

rural, 17% from urban, and 12% from suburban schools felt there is not a gap between the two groups of students. The Chi Square analysis revealed a significant difference in the response foils.

Table 38

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Recognizing if There is a Socialization Gap at The End of The Kindergarten Year

	Socialization Gap			
Location of District	Yes, there is definitely a large gap. Preschoolers have the advantage.	Yes, there is a small gap. Preschoolers have the advantage.	No, there is usually no gap between preschoolers and non-preschoolers.	Total
Rural	4 (8%)	22 (46%)	22 (46%)	48
Urban	4 (10%)	21 (51%)	16 (39%)	41
Suburban	3 (6%)	29 (56%)	20 (39%)	52
Total	11 (6%)	72 (51%)	58 (41%)	141

Note. P <.05 Significant.

Although there was only a 19% difference, kindergarten teachers in rural, urban, and suburban schools felt that at the end of the kindergarten year there is a socialization gap that exists between preschoolers and non-preschoolers. Eight percent from rural schools, 10% from urban schools, and 6% from suburban schools felt there is a large gap that exists between children who attended preschool and those who did not attend preschool. Forty-six percent from rural schools, 51% from urban schools, and 56% from suburban schools felt there is a small gap and preschoolers have the advantage. Forty-six percent from rural, 39% from urban, and 39% from suburban schools felt there is not a

gap between the two groups of students. The Chi Square analysis revealed a significant difference in the response foils.

Table 39

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers in Rural, Urban, and Suburban Schools Recognizing if Preschool Should be Made Mandatory

Location of District	Should Preschool be Made Mandatory				
	Yes	Perhaps	No	Not Sure	Total
Rural	30 (63%)	8 (17%)	8 (17%)	2 (4%)	48
Urban	23 (55%)	13 (31%)	5 (12%)	1 (2%)	42
Suburban	30 (57%)	15 (28%)	4 (8%)	4 (8%)	53
Total	83 (58%)	36 (25%)	17 (12%)	7 (5%)	143

Note. P <.05 Significant.

It is evident that kindergarten teachers in rural, urban, and suburban schools felt strongly that preschool should me made mandatory. Eighty-three percent are in favor of making preschool mandatory, while 12% felt it should not be made mandatory, and 5% are not sure. The Chi Square analysis revealed a significant difference in the response foils.

Table 40

Main Categories from Open Ended Responses as to Why or Why Not Preschool Should be Made Mandatory

Preschool Should be Mandatory
Kindergarten standards and expectations are higher than ever especially with Common Core Standards
Mandatory preschool would allow all students equal playing fields when entering kindergarten
All children should have access to a preschool program
Students need a solid foundation before entering school
Academic rigor of kindergarten requires the need for preschool to be mandatory
Preschool closes the gap that exists between students entering kindergarten
Preschool gives children the opportunity to be exposed to a school setting, socialize with other students, and receive the basic skills needed to enter kindergarten
Preschool helps with transitions
Preschool Should not be Made Mandatory
If the family is providing instruction and socializing experiences then the child would not need preschool
Preschool should be a parental choice
If preschool is mandatory then it will turn into kindergarten and the time for play will be taken away
Funding will be an issue
Not all preschools are effective, there would need to be accountability
Not all children are ready for a formal education at age four

Although there is a difference in opinion about whether preschool should be mandatory, the majority of teachers surveyed felt that the benefits are greater than the detriments. Eighty-three percent of surveyed teachers report being in favor of making preschool mandatory.

Table 41

Perception of Kindergarten Teachers Recognizing Early Childhood Theorists That Have Impacted Their Teaching

Early Childhood Theorist	Number of Responses	Percent
Dewey	124	74.3
Malaguzzi (Reggio Emilia)	122	73.1
Montessori	131	78.4
Piaget	136	81.4
Vygotsky	130	77.8

Note. The researcher ran similar tables for the other variables including total years of teaching, number of years teaching kindergarten, and level of education. Results from those tables had similar results to teacher location.

Perceptions of kindergarten teachers regarding early childhood theorists that impacted their teaching resulted in an even split. John Dewey impacted 74%, Loris Malaguzzi with Reggio Emilia impacted 73%, Maria Montessori impacted 78%, Jean Piaget impacted 81%, and Lev Vygotsky impacted 78% of the surveyed teachers.

Summary

Results of the statistical analysis used to determine if kindergarten teachers perceive that there is an academic and social advantage for those students who attended a four-year-old preschool program compared to those students who did not attend a four-year-old preschool program indicate that overall, teachers believe students who attend preschool have an academic and social advantage over their peers. Academic advancements are noted in general readiness, reading, writing, and math skills.

The statistical analysis conducted to determine if perceptions vary based on a teacher's location, number of years teaching, number of years teaching kindergarten, and level of education proved no statistically significant relationship in regard to academic and social skills development. Teachers across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania felt that preschool gives students academic and social advantages. The majority of surveyed teachers also reported that they felt very strongly about making preschool mandatory for all students. With the implementation of common core standards and the academic rigorous curriculum in kindergarten, teachers felt that preschool equals out the playing field and gives students an academic and social advantage over their peers.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the perceptions of kindergarten teachers across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to survey their perceptions of the impact of preschool on promoting the academic and social preschool skills of young children. A recent study of students who attended a publicly funded preschool program in Miami, Florida was released in September, 2015. The children who were studied who attended the city's preschool program showed positive results in relation to having academic and social skills advantages over their peers (Ansari & Lopez, 2015). Those children who attended preschool scored above national averages on academic and social assessments as well as their continued success on third grade assessments (Ansari & Lopez, 2015).

Summary of the Findings

Research Question 1

1a. Do kindergarten teachers perceive differences in the academic performance of students who have participated in four-year-old preschool programs as compared to those students who did not participate in four-year-old preschool programs?

Over 90% of the kindergarten teachers reported that preschool enhances academic and social skills. Ninety-five percent of surveyed teachers felt that they could see academic and social skill differences between preschoolers and non-preschoolers. Ninety-eight percent of kindergarten teachers felt that students who attend a preschool program are better prepared academically.

Kindergarten teachers were asked whether their own students who attended preschool were better prepared socially and academically at the end of the kindergarten school year. Over 80% of the teachers perceived an achievement gap with preschoolers

compared to non-preschoolers. The survey also focused on general readiness, reading, writing, and math and discovered similar results.

For general readiness, teachers were asked to think about the children who they teach who participated in a four-year old preschool program and rate whether these children are much better prepared, somewhat better prepared, a little better prepared, or not really better prepared when compared to children who did not attend a four year old preschool program. Teachers were asked to rate the following skills: recognizes basic colors, recognizes color words, recognizes first and last name, and demonstrates appropriate fine motor skills. Eighty-three percent of kindergarten teachers felt that preschool gives students an academic advantage in relation to general readiness skills. The researcher concluded that teachers significantly favored preschool education and thought that it gave students an advantage in regard to general readiness skills.

Kindergarten teachers were asked to rate the following four reading skills: associates sounds with letters presented, recognizes sight words, blends sounds to read basic words, and identifies rhyming words. Sixty-six percent of the kindergarten teachers felt that preschool gives students an academic advantage with reading skills. The teachers also reported that preschool gives children a strong advantage when looking at the skills of associating sounds with letters and identifying rhyming words. Preschoolers had a small advantage with blending sounds to read basic words and a slight advantage in recognizing sight words. The researcher concluded that teachers felt that preschool gave students an advantage in regard to overall reading skills.

Teachers were asked to rate the following three writing skills: prints numerals, prints capital and lower case letters, and prints first and last name. Seventy-eight percent of teachers surveyed reported that they perceive a writing advantage among students who

attended a preschool program which lead to the conclusion that teacher believe that preschool education gives students an advantage in regard to overall writing skills.

Kindergarten teachers were also asked to compare preschoolers to non-preschoolers regarding the following three skills: identifies numerals, counts objects, and sorts objects. Eighty-nine percent of teachers reported that they felt that a preschool program gave students an academic advantage in the area of math. Current research indicates that student ability to learn new math concepts in the upper grades, may be the result of a preschool experience (Dougherty, 2015).

Research Question 1B

Do kindergarten teachers perceive differences in the social performance of students who have participated in four-year-old preschool programs as compared to those students who did not participate in preschool programs?

Eighty-seven percent of surveyed teachers felt that they could see skill differences between preschool students and non-preschool students. Ninety-five percent of kindergarten teachers felt that students who attend a preschool program were better prepared socially. Kindergarten teachers also felt there was a socialization gap between those students who attended a preschool program compared to students who did not. Over 59% of the teachers perceived a socialization gap with preschoolers over non-preschoolers. The researcher surveyed seven different types of social skills development.

For social development skills, the kindergarten teachers were asked to think about the children who they teach who participated in a preschool program and rate whether these children were better prepared socially than children who did not attend a preschool program. Teachers ratef the following seven skills: listens attentively to the teacher or peers, follows classroom and school rules, displays turn taking skills, shows courtesy and

respect to others, displays good communication skills, works/plays cooperatively with others, and have stronger ties to family, school, and community. Eighty-four percent of the kindergarten teachers felt that preschoolers' social development was more advanced compared to children who did not attend preschool. Based on the data, one might conclude that preschool programs do promote social skills. A study conducted in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania found that children who attended a Head Start preschool program for two years were shown to have higher social competencies over their peers who did not attend the preschool program (Moore, Cooper, Domitrovich, Morgan, Cleveland, Shah, & Greenberg, 2015). The developmental trajectory for the control group also measured gains into later elementary years showing that preschool programs give students advantages even after kindergarten (Moore et al., 2015). Another study that was conducted from Pennsylvania and Duke Universities from 1991-2015 followed students for 20 years and found a link between their early social skills and how it affected them as adults. Students who had higher social skills in preschool and kindergarten were more likely to hold full-time jobs and have higher education degrees (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2015).

Research Question 2: The Impact of Other Independent Variables

The researcher found that independent variables such as school location (urban, suburban, rural), the teacher's years of experience, and college degree yielded similar results. In short, preschool students were perceived as having the edge academically and socially over non-preschoolers.

Research Question 3

3. How do kindergarten teachers feel about making preschool mandatory?

Currently, preschool is not mandatory across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The decision to send children to preschool rests entirely with the child's parent or guardian. Although, the federal government is trying to promote early childhood education with a new initiative that has not yet passed Congress (United States Department of Education, 2015). Over 83% percent of the teachers favored making preschool mandatory.

The data collected in this study aligns with early childhood education research. Preschool has become a prominent topic with local legislatures and policy makers (Barnett, 2015) and quality preschool programs is becoming a national priority. It seems that most of the research studies continue to showcase the benefits of a preschool education on a child's academic and social skills (Nishioka, 2015). According to the National Conference for State Legislatures (2014), children who enter kindergarten ready to meet its academic, social and emotional demands are more likely to achieve later academic and life success. Likewise, children who enter kindergarten without a preschool experience tend to remain academically behind their school peers. Evidence suggests that more than half the achievement gap found in later school years already is present at kindergarten entry (National Conference for State Legislatures, 2014).

Recommendations

There is limited current research on early childhood programs, especially when looking at perceptions of preschool teachers regarding the impact that preschools have on academic and social skills. A survey of preschool teachers regarding social and academic skill development might confirm the perceptions of kindergarten teachers. It would also

be interesting to interview preschool teachers to get a more in-depth look at how preschool teachers and kindergarten teachers develop strategies to enhance social and academic skills. The researcher surveyed kindergarten teachers in school districts across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to get their perceptions of kindergarten students who had attended preschool. The researcher recommends replicating this study in other states to see if the perceptions of kindergarten teachers are similar to kindergarten teachers in Pennsylvania. An observational study in either preschool or kindergarten might provide valuable insights into how preschool and kindergarten strategies promote the development of academic and social skills. Observational research studies in kindergarten or preschool classes could be done to compare preschoolers with non-preschoolers to systematically code differences in academic and social behavior. Interviewing parents to determine their reasoning for choosing whether to send their child to preschool could also be beneficial. It would also help to look at the parent involvement level of those students who do not attend a preschool program to see if there is a difference in skill level. Finally, researchers need to analyze preschool education programs at the college level and determine if the courses and field experience promote academic and social skills among children aged four through eight.

Conclusion

As Robert Ehrlich stated, "Experts tell us that 90% of all brain development occurs by the age of five. If we don't begin thinking about education in the early years, our children are at risk of falling behind before they start kindergarten." Working in the elementary setting, the researcher has had experience with children who have opportunities for preschool education and those who do not. Finding preschools in many school districts, especially those in rural areas, is a real problem for parents, which might

explain why only half of kindergarten students attend preschool (Department of Education, 2015). Trying to determine how to help bridge this gap is a dilemma for many school districts. This researcher was glad to see the strong support for preschool by an overwhelming number of kindergarten teachers across all areas of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Preschoolers are viewed as having an academic and social advantage over non-preschoolers and most kindergarten teachers believe that preschool should become mandatory for all students. State policy makers and school superintendents should take a hard look at the long-term benefits of preschool education.

References

Adler, E., & Clark, R. (2003). *How it's done: An invitation to social research* (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Thompson Learning. doi:10.1111/bjep.12053

Anderman, E. M., Gimbert, B., O'Connell, A. A., & Riegel, L. (2014). Approaches to academic growth assessment. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*.

Andrews, S. P., & Slate, J. R. (2001). Prekindergarten programs: A review of the literature. *Current Issues in Education, 4*(5) 1-43.

Ansari, A., & Lopez, M. (2015). Preparing low income Latino children for kindergarten and beyond: How children in Miami's publicly funded preschool programs fare. *National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families, 2015*(40), 1-11.

Armstrong, T., & Elkind, D. (2006). *The best schools: How human development research should inform educational practice*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Barnett, W. S. (2004). Better teachers, better preschools: Student achievement linked to teacher qualifications. *NIEER Preschool Policy Matters*.

Barnett, W. S. (2015). *Review of do we already have universal preschool?* National Education Policy Center.

Barnett, W. S., Jung, K., Wong, V., Cook, T., & Lamy, C. (2007). *Effects of five state prekindergarten programs on early learning*. Retrieved from http://nieer.org/docs/?DocID=129

Beatty, B. (2009). Transitory connections: The reception and rejection of Jean Piaget's psychology in the nursery school movement in the 1920s and 1930s. *History of Education Quarterly, 49*, 442–464. doi:10.1111/j.1748-5959.2009.00225.x

Bodrova, E., Germeroth, C., & Leong, D. J. (2013). Play and self-regulation: Lessons from Vygotsky. *American Journal of Play*, *6(*1), 111-123.

Bodrova, E., & Leong, D. J. (2005). High quality preschool programs: What would Vygotsky say? *Early Education & Development*, *16*(4), 435-444.

Bond, V. L. (2013). Follow and facilitate: What music educators can learn from the Reggio Emilia approach. *General Music Today*, *27*(1), 24-28.

Brooks-Gunn, J., Burchinal, M. R., Espinosa, L. M., Gormley, W. T., Ludwig, J., Magnuson, K. A., . . . Zaslow, M. J. (2013). *Investing in our future: The evidence base on preschool education* (Vol. 9). Society for Research in Child Development and Foundation for Child Development.

Burlbaw, L. M. (2009). An early start: WPA emergency nursery schools in Texas, 1934-1943. *American Educational History Journal, 36*(2), 269-298.

Burton, K. L. (2011). *A comparative analysis of preschool attendance and reading achievement among second-grade students.* (Doctoral dissertation, Walden University). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3468502) Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/888045306?accountid=11652 (prod.academic_MSTAR_888045306)

Cadwell, L. B. (1997). *Bringing Reggio Emilia home.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Cadwell, L. B. (2003). *Bringing learning to life*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Campbell, F. A., Ramey, C. T., Pungello, E., Sparling, J., & Miller-Johnson, S. (2002). Early childhood education: Young adult outcomes from the Abecedarian Project. *Applied Developmental Sciences, 6*(1), 42-45. doi:10.1207/S1532480XADS0601_05

Carolan, M. (2013). Highly qualified teachers: The workforce early education needs and deserves. *Preschool Matters*. Retrieved from http://preschoolmatters.org/2013/06/03/highly-qualified-teachers-the-workforce-early-educations-needs-and-deserves/

Cartwright, K. K. (2012). Insights from cognitive neuroscience: The importance of executive function for early reading development and education. *Early Education & Development*, *23*(1), 24-36. doi:10.1080/10409289.2011.615025

Chazan‐Cohen, R., & Kisker, E. E. (2013). What makes a difference: Early Head Start evaluation findings in a developmental context: VI. Links between early care and education experiences birth to age 5 and prekindergarten outcomes. *Monographs of The Society for Research in Child Development*, *78(1),* 110-129. doi:10.1111/j.1540-5834.2012.00705.x

Chute, E. (2013). Pennsylvania Sen. Bob Casey seeks more funds for early childhood education. *Pittsburgh Post Gazette.* Retrieved from http://www.post-gazette.com/stories/local/state/pennsylvania-sen-bob-casey-seeks-more-funds-for-early-childhood-education-678270/

Condry, S. (1983). *History and background of preschool intervention programs and the consortium for longitudinal studies. As the twig is bent: Lasting effects of preschools programs*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Conner, A. M. (2008). *Investigation of the association between attendance in preschool programs and achievement of elementary school students in Greeneville, Tennessee* (Doctoral dissertation, East Tennessee State University. Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3308021) Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/304656101?accountid=11652

Courchesne, E., & Chisum, H. (2000). Normal brain development and aging: Quantitative analysis at in vivo MR imaging in healthy volunteers. *Radiology, 216*(3), 672-682.

Corbetta, P. (2003). *Social research: Theories, methods and practices*. Thousand Oak, CA: Sage.

D'Onise, K., Lynch, J. W., & McDermott, R. A. (2010). Lifelong effects of attendance at kindergarten union preschools in South Australia. *Australian Journal of Education*, *54*(3), 307-324.

Dessoff, A. (2010). The push for public preschool: More districts are seeing the advantages of school readiness and preparing youngsters for their K12 careers. *District Administration*, *46*(7), 72-76.

Devendorf, S. (2014). *A pioneer in educational philosophy*. Retrieved from http://www.oswego.edu/~waite/JohnDeweyV2ByDevendorf.doc

Dewey, J. (1915). *School and society and the child and the curriculum.* Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York, NY: Kappa Delta, Pi.

Dewey, J. (1940). *Education today*. New York, NY: Greenwood.

Dewey, J. (1970). *John Dewey*. London, England: Collier-Macmillan Limited.

Diachenko, O. M. (2011). On major developments in preschoolers' imagination. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, *19*(1), 19-25. doi:10.1080/09669760.2011.570996

Dougherty, C. (2015). Starting off strong: The Importance of early learning. *Education Digest, 6*, 12.

Driscoll, A., & Nagel, N.G. (1999). *Childhood education, birth-8*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Dulberg, N. (2005). The theory behind how students learn: Applying developmental theory to research on children's historical thinking. *Theory & Research In Social Education*, *33*(4), 508-531.

Duncan, G. J. (2003). Modeling the impacts of child care quality on children's preschool cognitive development. *Child Development, 74*(5), 1454-1475. doi:10.1111/1467-8624.00617

Duncan, G. J., & Magnuson, K. (2013). Investing in preschool programs. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, *27*(2), 109-132.

Early Childhood Today. (2000). *Roots of early childhood education*. Retrieved from http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/ect/roots.htm

Early Learning. (2013). Abbott preschool program longitudinal effects study. *Education Week*, *1*(27). 2-28.

Elkind, D. (2010). *History of early childhood education*. Retrieved from http://www. Communityplaythings.com/resurces/articles/approaches/historyofEDE.html

Ellor, J. W. (2003). Separation of church and state impact of faith-based services. *Journal of Religious Gerontology, 16*(1/2), 1. doi:10.1300/J078v16n0101

Fowler, F. (2002). *Survey research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Frank, B. (2008). *Preschool is not necessary.* Retrieved from http://barbarafrankonline. com/2008/10/20/preschool-is-not-necessary/

Frede, E., Lamy, C.E., Seplocha, H., Strasser, J., Jambunathan, S., Juncker, J., & Wolock, E. (2004). *A rising tide: Classroom quality and language skills in the Abbott Preschool Program; year two preliminary update of the early learning improvement consortium*. Trenton, NY: New Jersey Department of Education. Retrieved from www.nj.gov/njded/ece

French, R. (2013, May 30). State adopts "nation's largest" expansion of early childhood funding. *Bridge*. Retrieved from http://bridgemi.com/2013/05/state-adopts-nations-largest-expansion-of-early-childhood-funding/

Gay, L., Mills, G., & Airasian, P. (2009). *Educational research competencies for analysis and application*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Pearson.

Genovese, J. E. (2003). Piaget, pedagogy, and evolutionary psychology. *Evolutionary Psychology*, *1*, 127-137.

Giamminuti, S. (2011). The 'value of locality' in early childhood settings: Pedagogical documentation in the reggio emilia educational project. *Canadian Children*, *36*(2), 4-10.

Gilder, S. S. (2012). Hands as companions of the mind essential practical life for the 5-year-old. *Montessori Life*, *24*(3), 24-29.

Good Parenting. (2013). Importance of preschool education. Retrieved from http://www.goodparenting.in/importance-of-pre-school-education.html/

Good, R., & Kaminski, R. (2009). *What are DIBELS?* Retrieved from http://dibels.org/dibels.html

Hayes, D. (2013). Schools and classrooms. *Education Studies: An Issue Based Approach*, *36*.

Hayden, D. (2002). *Redesigning the American dream: The future of housing, work, and family life*. WW Norton & Company.

Heckman, J. J. (2011). The economics of inequality: The value of early childhood education. *American Educator*, *35*(1), 31.

Henricks, T. S. (2014). Play as self-realization: Toward a general theory of play. *American Journal of Play, 6*(2), 190-213.

Heo, K. H., Cheatham, G. A., Hemmeter, M. L., & Noh, J. (2014). Korean early childhood educators' perceptions of importance and implementation of strategies to address young children's social-emotional competence. *Journal of Early Intervention*, *36*(1), 49-66. doi:10.1177/1053815114557280

Hinitz, B. F. (2009). The United States and the world: A history of connections in early childhood education. *History of Education Quarterly*, *49*(2), 235-237. doi:10.1111/j.1748-5959.2009.00199.x

Hinitz, B. F. (2014). Head Start. *Young Children*, *69*(2), 94-97.

Hitchcock, C., Meyer, A. Rose, D., & Jackson, R. (2002). Providing new access to the general curriculum: Universal design for learning. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, *35*(2), 8-17.

Houde, O., Pineau, A., Leroux, G., Poirel, N., Perchey, G., Lanoe, C., & Mazoyer, B. (2011). Functional magnetic resonance imaging study of Piaget's conservation-of-number task in preschool and school-age children: A neo-Piagetian approach. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, *110*(3), 332-346.

Hsin, J. (2014). Laws, demands, and dispositions: John Dewey and his concept pragmatism. *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society: A Quarterly Journal in American Philosophy*, (2), 286. doi:10.2979/trancharpeirsoc.50.2.286

Hustedt, J. T., & Barnett, W. S. (2011). Financing early childhood education programs: State, federal, and local issues. *Educational Policy*, *25*(1), 167-192.

Isaacs, J. B. (2012). Starting school at a disadvantage: The school readiness of poor children. *Center on Children and Families at Brookings*, *1*(1), 1-20.

Iwasaki, N., & Hamano, K. (1997) Volumetric quantification of brain development using MRI. *Neuroradiology, 39,* 841-846.

Izadpanah, S. S., & Günçe, K. K. (2014). Integration of educational methods and physical settings: Design guidelines for High/Scope methodology in pre-schools. *South African Journal of Education*, *34*(2), 1-17.

Johnson, A. D., Martin, A., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2013). Child-care subsidies and school readiness in kindergarten. *Child Development*, *84*(5), 1806-1822.

Johnson, S. A. (2014). "Maternal devices", social media and the self-management of pregnancy, mothering and child health. *Societies*, *4*(*2),* 330-350.

Jokanovic, L. S. (2013). Where do I fit In? *Montessori Life*, *25*(1), 20-23.

Kayili, G., & Ari, R. (2011). Examination of the effects of the Montessori method on preschool children's readiness to primary education. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, *11*(4), 2104-2109.

Kelemen, G. (2013). The Reggio Emilia method, a modern approach of preschool education. *Journal Plus Education/Education Plus, 9*(1), 87-92.

Kennedy, H., & Dehay, C. (2001). Gradients and boundaries: Limits of modularity and its influence on the isocortex. [Commentary]. *Developmental Science, 4*(2), 147-148.

Klein, A. (2013). Obama pressing boost for pre-k. *Education Week*, 32(21), 1.

Konrad, F. (2009). Early childhood education. *History of Education Quarterly, 49*(2), 238-240.

Kretschmer, R. E., Wang, Y., & Hartman, M. C. (2010). Did the preservice teacher-generated studies constitute actual instances of teacher-researcher studies, and were they consistent with notions of Dewey? *American Annals of the Deaf*, *155*(2), 144-149.

Lamy, C., Frede, E., & ELIC. (2005) Giant steps for the littlest children: Progress in the sixth year of the Abbott preschool program. Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Department of Education. Retrieved from www.nj.gov/njded/ece

Lasser, J., & Fite, K. (2011). Universal preschool's promise: Success in early childhood and beyond. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *39*(3), 169-173. doi:10.1007/s10643-011-0449-x

Lee, R., Zhai, F., Brooks-Gunn, J., Han, W., & Waldfogel, J. (2014). Head start participation and school readiness: Evidence from the early childhood longitudinal study–birth cohort. *Developmental Psychology*, *50*(1), 202-215. doi:10.1037/a0032280

Lenroot, R. K., & Giedd, J. N. (2006). Brain development in children and adolescents: Insights from anatomical magnetic resonance imaging. *Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews, 30*(6), 718-729.

Lewis, A. C. (2005). More than just cute kids. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *87(*3), 179-180.

Lifetime Effects: The High/Scope Perry preschool study through age 40. (2006). *Childhood Education*, *83*(2), 121.

Li-Grining, C. P., & Durlak, J. A. (2014). The design and implementation of early childhood intervention programs: Informing efforts to address risk and promote resilience. *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community*, *42*(4), 243-247.

Lillard, A. S. (2011). Mindfulness practices in education: Montessori's approach. *Mindfulness*, *2*(2), 78-85.

Lillard, A. S. (2013). Playful learning and Montessori education. *American Journal of Play*, *5*(2), 157-186.

Ludwig, J., & Phillips, D. A. (2008). *Long-term effects of Head Start on low-income children*. Retrieved 1-18-15 from http://home.uchicago.edu.ludwigi/papers/NYAS-LudwigPhillips-HeadStart-2008.pdf

McCann, L. M. (2014). Mapping the school: A Reggio Emilia-inspired activity helps children learn about their community. *Young Children*, *69*(1),16-20.

McGill-Franzen, A. (1993). *Shaping the preschool Agenda: Early literacy, public policy, and professional beliefs.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Marcon, R. A. (1992). Differential effects of three preschool models on inner-city 4-year-olds. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 7*(4), 517-530.

Michel, S. (2007). The birth of Head Start. *American Historical Review, 112*(3), 893-894.

Michel, S. (2011). *The history of child care in the U.S.* Retrieved from http://www.socialwelfarehistory.com/programs/child-care-the-american-history/

Mitchell, A., & Modigliani, K. (1989). Young children in public schools? The "only ifs" reconsidered. *Young Children, 44,* 56-61.

Moll, L. C. (2014). *L. S. Vygotsky and education*. New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.

Monson, M. (2006). Reconstructing Montessori: On being an authentic Montessori school. *Montessori Life*, *18*(2), 36-43.

Montessori, M. (1914). *Dr. Montessori's own handbook*. New York, NY: Schocken Books.

Montessori, M. (1965). *Spontaneous activity in education*. New York, NY: Schocken Books, Inc.

Montessori, M. (1966). *The secret of childhood*. New York, NY: Fides.

Moore, J. M., Cooper, B. R., Domitrovich, C. E., Morgan, N. R., Cleveland, M. J., Shah, H., & . . . Greenberg, M. T. (2015). The effects of exposure to an enhanced preschool program on the social-emotional functioning of at-risk children. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 32*, 127-138. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2015.03.004

Muennig, P., Robertson, D., Johnson, G., Campbell, F., Pungello, E., & Neidell, M. (2011). The effect of an early education program on adult health: The Carolina Abecedarian Project randomized controlled trial. *American Journal of Public Health, 101*(3*),* 512-516. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2010.200063

National Conference for State Legislatures. (2014). NCSL technical report: State approaches to school readiness assessment. Retrieved from http://www. ncs;/prg/research/education/ncsl-technical-report-state-approaches-to-school-aspx

Negus, E. (2014). Lessons for the 21st century from the Victorian Utilitarian Education: A case for arts and sciences in 21st century education. *Education Today* (00131547), *64*(3), 18-24.

Nichols, J. R. (2009). *The effects of four-year-old preschool attendance on reading and math achievement of third and fourth grade students* (Doctoral dissertation, Trevecca Nazarene University). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3366125)Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/1370975197?accountid=11652 (prod.academic MSTAR 1370975197)

Nishioka, V. (2015). Closing the discipline gap where it starts – in preschool programs. *Northwest Education*. Retrieved from http://educationnorthwest.org/Northwest-matters/closing-discipline-gap-where-it-starts-preschool-programs

Nix, R. L., Bierman, K. L., Domitrovich, C. E., & Gill, S. (2013). Promoting children's social-emotional skills in preschool can enhance academic and behavioral functioning in kindergarten: Findings from Head Start REDI. *Early Education & Development, 24*(7), 1000-1019. doi:10.1080/10409289.2013.825565

Nordlund, C. N. (2013). Waldorf education: Breathing creativity. *Art Education*, *66*(2), 13-19.

Nuhoglu, H. H. (2013). Evaluation of alternative preschool education programs regarding their perspectives on teaching science and nature. *Mevlana International Journal of Education*, *3*(4), 236-249. doi:10.13054/mije.13.50.3.4

Odle, T. (2013). *Emotional development*. Retrieved from http://www.education.com/reference/article/emotional-development

Office of Head Start (2004). *History of Head Start*. Retrieved from http://www.neoperspectives.com/welfare.htm

Office of the Press Secretary. (2013). *Fact sheet President Obama's plan for early education for all Americans*. Retrieved from http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-%09press-office/2013/02/13/fact-sheet-president-obama-s-plan-early-education-all-%09americanspress-office/2013/02/13/fact-sheet-president-obama-s-plan-early-education-all-americans

Ojose, B. (2008). Applying Piaget's theory of cognitive development to mathematics instruction. *Mathematics Educator*, *18*(1), 26-30.

Orey, M. (2001). *Emerging perspectives on learning, teaching, and technology*. *Retrieved* From http://www.etzacorp.co.za/akademia/Biblioteek/Emerging%20 Perspectives%20on%20Learning,%20Teaching,%20and%20Technology.pdf

Pallini, S., & Barcaccia, B. (2014). A meeting of the minds: John Bowlby encounters Jean Piaget. *Review of General Psychology*, *18*(4), 287-292. doi:10.1037/gpr0000016

Papatheodorou, T. (2010). Being, belonging and becoming: Some worldviews of early childhood in contemporary curricula. *Forum on Public Policy Online*, *2010*(2).

Paus, T., & Collins, D. L. (2001). Maturation of white matter in the human brain: A review of magnetic resonance studies. *Brain Research Bulletin, 54*(3), 255-266.

Piaget, J. (1950). *The psychology of intelligence*. Great Britain: Lowe and Brydone.

Piaget, J. (1955). *The language and thought of the child*. New York, NY: Meridian Books.

Piaget, J. (1969). *Science of education and the psychology of the child*. New York, NY: The Viking Press.

Piaget, J., & Inhelder, B. (1973). *Memory and intelligence*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Pennsylvania Department of Education. (2012). Retrieved from http://www.education.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/pennsylvania_department_of_education/7237

Popp, J. A. (2015). John Dewey's theory of growth and the ontological view of society. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, *34*(1), 45.

Preschool. (2015). *Encyclopedia of children's health.* Retrieved from http://www.healthofchildren.com/P/Preschool.htmal

Preschool Education. (2014). *Funk & Wagnalls new world encyclopedia*, 1p. 1.

Preschool NSW. (2012). Retrieved from http://www.preschoolsnsw.org.au/about-preschools/quality-preschools

Reiss, A. L., & Abrams, M. (1996). Brain development, gender and IQ in children: A volumetric imaging study. *Brain, 119*(5), 1763-1774.

Reynolds, A. J., Temple, J. A., Robertson, D. L., & Mann, E. A. (2002). Age 21 cost-benefit analysis of the Title I Chicago child-parent centers. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *24*(4), 267-303.

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2015). *New research: Children with strong social Skills in kindergarten move likely to thrive as adults*. Retrieved from: http://www.rwjf.org/en/library/articles-and-news/2015/07/new-research--children-with-strong-social-skills-in-kindergarten.html

Robledo, S. J. (2011). *The top preschool programs and how they differ*. Retrieved from http://www.babycenter.com/0_the-top-preschool-programs-and-how-they-differ_64635.bc

Rose, E. (2009). Poverty and parenting: Transforming early education's legacy in the 1960s. *History of Education Quarterly, 49*(2), 222-234.

Ross, S. (2012). The Montessori method: The development of a healthy pattern of desire in early childhood. *Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture*, (1), 87.

Ruland, T (2012). Reggio Emilia approach gives students a voice in the curriculum. *NEA Today*. Retrieved from http://neatoday.org/2012/02/24/reggio-emilia-approach-gives-students-a-voice-in-the-curriculum-2/

Schiffman, J. (2013). Preschool not best for every child. *Marin Independent Journal.* Retrieved from http://www.marinij.com/opinion/ci_22943555/marin-voice-preschool-not-best-every-kid

Schmid, D. E. (2007). Brain development and early learning. *Wisconsin Council on Children & Families, 1*, 1-4.

Schumacher, R., Irish, K., & Lombardi, J. (2003). Meeting great expectations: Integrating early education program standards in child care. *Foundation for Child Development.* Retrieved from ERIC database.

Schwartz, J. I. (1997). Early childhood education: Past, present, and future. *Educational Forum*, 6(1), 343-353.

Schweinhart, L. J. (2001). *Recent evidence on preschool programs*. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED458046)

Schweinhart, L. J. (2003). *Benefits, costs, and explanation of the high/scope Perry preschool program*. Tampa, FL: High/Scope Educational Research Foundation.

Schweinhart, L. J, Montie, J., Xiang, Z., Barnett, W. S., Belfield, C. R., & Nores, M. (2005). The High/Scope Perry preschool study through age 40. *High/Scope Press* (1), 194-215.

Schweinhart, L. J., & Weikart, D. P. (1999). The advantages of High/Scope: Helping children lead successful lives. *Educational Leadership*, 57(1), 77-78.

Simmons, M. (2010). *Preschool*. Retrieved from: http://www.professional-articles.com/tag/preschool/?

Sindik, J., Sarac, J., & Sindik, Z. (2014). Construction of the scales for estimation of undesirable behaviors and social skills in preschool children. *Methodological Horizons, 9*(2), 26-34.

Slass, L., & Riordan, J. (2006). State-funded preschool programs serving more children, but spending less per child: Growth in quality programs lags. *National Institute for Early Education Research*, *1(1),*1-3.

Snyder, T. (2004). Welfare; history, results and reform. Retrieved from http://www.neoperspectives.com/welfare.htm

Spodek, B., & Saracho, O. (1991). *Issues in early childhood curriculum, yearbook in early-childhood education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Stiles, J., & Jernigan, T. (2010). The basics of brain development. *Neuropsychology Review*, 20(4), 327-348. doi:10.1007/s11065-010-9148-4

Stockall, N. S., Dennis, L., & Miller, M. (2012). Right from the start: Universal design for preschool. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, *45*(1), 10-17.

Stoltzfus, E. (2009). *CRS report for congress child care: The federal role during World War II*. Retrieved from http://congressionalresearch.com/RS20615/document.php

Taylor, N. (2008). *American-made: The enduring legacy of the WPA, when FDR put the nation to work*. New York, NY: Bantam Books.

Thayer-Bacon, B. J. (2012). Maria Montessori, John Dewey, and William H. Kilpatrick. *Education and Culture*, *28*(1), 3-20.

Tomlinson, C. A. (2014). *Differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Trochim, W. M. (2006). *The research methods knowledge base* (2nd ed.). Retrieved from http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/

Tucker, J. (2013, September 28). Preschool for all gives your edge inkindergarten. *SF Gate*. Retrieved from http://www.sfgate.com/education/article/Preschool-for-all-gives-youths-edge-in-4853148.php

Tucker-Drob, M. (2012). Preschools reduce early academic-achievement gaps: A longitudinal twin approach. *Psychological Science*, *23*(3), 310- 319.

United States Department of Education. (2015). *A matter of equity: Preschool in America*.

United States Department of Education. (2015). *Early learning: America's middle class promise begins early*. Retrieved from http://www.ed.gov/early-learning

University of Chicago. (2015). *History of the nursery school*. Retrieved from http://www.ucls.uchicago.edu/about-ucls/history/historical-notes/history-of-the-nursery-school/index.aspx

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, F.I. (2012). The Abecedarian Project: High-quality early child care has long-lasting effects. *FPG Child Development Institute*, FPG Snapshot #66.

Vodopivec, L. I. (2012). The Reggio Emilia concept or different perspective on preschool education in kindergartners. *Euromentor*, *3*(2), 1-14.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1926). *Educational psychology*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1935). *The problem of the environment*. Oxford, MS: Blackwell.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1967). Play and its role in the mental development of the child. *Soviet Psychology*, *5*(3), 6-18 (original work published in 1966).

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Walsh, B. B., & Petty, K. (2007). Frequency of six early childhood education approaches: A 10-year content analysis of early childhood education journal. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *34*(5), 301-305. doi:10.1007/s10643-006-0080-4

Weikart, D. P. (2014). High/Scope educational research foundation Ypsilanti, Michigan. *The National Mental Health Association: Eighty Years of Involvement in the Field of Prevention*, 285.

Welshman, J. (2010). From Head Start to sure start: Reflections on policy transfer. *Children & Society*, *24*(2), 89-99.

West, T. L. (2011). *Environments For young children: A qualitative study and design of healthy and nurturing preschool environments*. Retrieved from http://diginole.lib.fsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5156&context=etd

Whitebook, M., Ryan, S., Kipnis, F., Sakai, L., & University of California, B. E. (2008). Partnering for preschool: A study of center directors in New Jersey's mixed-delivery Abbott Program. *Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California at Berkeley, 1*(1), 1-59.

Whitehurst, G. J. (2013). Can we be hard-headed about preschool? A look at universal and targeted Pre-K. *The Brown Center Chalkboard*. Retrieved from http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/qi_brief_508_compliant.pdf

Yarrow, A. (2009). History of U.S. children's policy, 1900-present. Retrieved from http://firstfocus.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Childrens-Policy-History.pdf

Ydesen, C., & Andreasen, K. E. (2014). Accountability practices in the history of Danish primary public education from the 1660s to the present. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 22*(120).

Zhai, F., Brooks-Gunn, J., & Waldfogel, J. (2014). Head Start's impact is contingent on alternative type of care in comparison group. *Developmental Psychology*, *50*(12), 2572-2586. doi:10.1037/a0038205

Appendix A

Cover Letter for Participants

* On IUP Letterhead*

To Kindergarten Teachers:

I am a student in the Doctoral Program in Administration and Leadership in the Department of Professional Studies in Education at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. I am inviting you to participate in a study to examine the perceptions of teachers concerning preschool programs. The focus of my research deals with teacher perception and beliefs with regard to academic and social differences between children who attend preschool programs and those who do not attend preschool programs.

Many child development experts are advocates of preschool education and many school administrators support the push for universal preschool. But, what do kindergarten teachers think? For example, what is your perception of the impact of preschool on early developmental experiences in academic and social areas? What are your perceptions of kindergarten teachers toward preschool programs? Should preschool be required? Please take time to respond to the 18 survey questions that are included in this email.

The following information is provided to help you make an informed decision as to whether or not you'd like to participate. You will be asked to respond to a short 18 question survey, which should only take 15 minutes of your time. Because no names will be used, your anonymity will be assured. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to decide to participate or not. If you choose to participate, all information will be held in the strictest of confidence. You will not be identified in this study. No individual information will be used in this study, as the importance of the data collected will focus on group responses.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please completed the electronic survey within the next few days. Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

Amy L Larcinese
Principal
H.W. Good Elementary
Yough School District
724-446-5503

Dr. Robert Millward
Dissertation Advisor
136 Stouffer Hall
Indiana, PA 15701
Millward@iup.edu
larcinesea@youghsd.net

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

RESEARCHER'S NAME

Amy L Larcinese, Doctoral Student in the Administrative and Leadership Studies at Indiana University of Pennsylvania

STUDY TITLE

KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFECT OF PRESCHOOL ON ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL SKILLS.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study will survey kindergarten teachers' perceptions of preschool programs regarding academic achievement and social development.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

You are being asked to be a participant in this study because as a kindergarten teacher, you are considered an expert in the field. A large sample of kindergarten teachers in the state of Pennsylvania are being asked to participate. As a participant in the study, you will be asked about your perceptions of preschool education. The survey itself is made up of 18 questions. Most of the questions are Likert scale questions measuring your perception in your current position.

The amount of time to complete the survey is about 15 minutes.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no known risks associated with this research study. Your answers in this study will remain confidential. Furthermore, your submitted survey cannot be linked to you because the responses are kept anonymous.

BENEFITS

There are no immediate benefits to being a participant in the study. However information from this study may benefit teachers, administrators, parents, and policy makers now or in the future as to the value of attending a preschool program.

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES

Not participating in the study would be the only alternative procedure.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All documents and information pertaining to this research study will be kept confidential in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations. Data generated by the study may be reviewed by Indiana University's Institutional Review Board, which is the committee responsible for ensuring your welfare and rights as a research participant, to assure proper conduct of the study and compliance with university regulations. All data will be kept secure in a locked cabinet outside of the school setting. Data will be kept for a period of at least 3 years, as required by federal regulations.

TERMINATION OF PARTICIPATION

As a voluntary participant in this study you may refuse to participate before the study begins, discontinue at any time, or skip any questions that may make you feel uncomfortable, with no penalty or loss of benefit.

COMPENSATION

Participants will not receive payment for being a participant in this study. Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. There will be no cost to you for participating in this research.

QUESTIONS

If you have any further questions about this study, please contact me at your convenience.

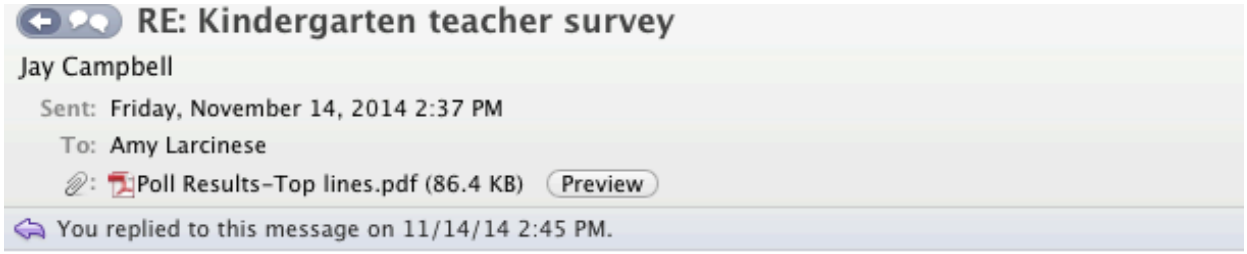
Amy L Larcinese, Principal
H.W. Good Elementary School
1464 Herminie West Newton Rd, Herminie PA 15637
Phone 724-446-5503 ext. 5001 / Email – larcinesea@youghsd.net

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and that refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits. You may discontinue participation in the study at any time without penalty. Your completion and submission of the on-line survey constitutes your consent to participate in the study. If you would like a copy of this consent form, please email me at larcinesea@youghsd.net.

Appendix C

Email from Hart Research Associates



Hello, Amy. Your e-mail below was forwarded to me, since I worked on that survey for Preschool CA in 2005. You are more than welcome to replicate as many of the questions as you like in the Pennsylvania survey. Good luck in your project—as someone who grew up in Pittsburgh and now lives in Philadelphia I am hopeful that the state does more with pre-k in the future!

Thanks,
Jay

--*-*-*-*-*-*

Jay Campbell
Senior Vice President
Hart Research Associates
484-380-3398 (o)

Appendix D

Kindergarten Teacher Survey

Throughout the survey, I am using the term preschool program to mean an organized early-learning program designed to prepare young children for school and help them develop the social and educational skills that they need for kindergarten

1: In your experience, how important do you think it is for children to spend time in a preschool program before they start kindergarten?

Not at all important
Slightly important
Moderately important
Very important
Extremely important
Not sure

2: Without looking at students' records, are you generally able to tell during the early days of the kindergarten school year which of your students have attended preschool and which students have not based on their academic skills?

Yes, I am able to tell preschoolers from non-preschoolers.
No, there is little difference between preschoolers and non-preschoolers.
Not sure.

3: Without looking at students' records, are you generally able to tell during the early days of the kindergarten school year which of your students have attended preschool and which students have not based on their social skills?

Yes, I am able to tell preschoolers from non-preschoolers.
No, there is little difference between preschoolers and non-preschoolers.
Not sure.

4: When you think about the children whom you teach who participated in a preschool program, would you say that, overall, these children are academically:

Much better prepared
Somewhat better prepared
Neither better or worse prepared
Somewhat worse prepared
Much worse prepared
Not sure

5: When you think about the children whom you teach who participated in a preschool program, would you say that, overall, these children are socially:

Much better prepared
Somewhat better prepared
Neither better or worse prepared
Somewhat worse prepared
Much worse prepared
Not sure

6: When you think about the children whom you teach who participated in a preschool program, would you say that these children are better or worse prepared for each of the types of skills in the following five tables:

General Readiness of those who attended preschool program

	Much better prepared	Somewhat better prepared	A little better prepared	Not really better prepared
Recognizes basic colors				
Recognizes color words				
Recognizes first and last name				
Demonstrates appropriate fine motor skills				

7: Reading Skills of those who attended a preschool program

	Much better prepared	Somewhat better prepared	A little better prepared	Not really better prepared
Associates sounds with letters presented				
Recognizes sight words				
Blends sounds to read basic words				
Identifies rhyming words				

8: Writing Skills of those who attended preschool program

	Much better prepared	Somewhat better prepared	A little better prepared	Not really better prepared
Prints numerals				
Prints capital and lower case letters				
Prints first and last name				

9: Math Skills of those who attended preschool program

	Much better prepared	Somewhat better prepared	A little better prepared	Not really better prepared
Identify numerals				
Counts objects				
Sorts objects				

10: Social Development Skills of those who attended preschool program

	Much better prepared	Somewhat better prepared	A little better prepared	Not really better prepared
Listens attentively to the teacher or peers				
Follows classroom and school rules				
Displays turn taking skills				
Shows courtesy and respect to others				
Displays good communication skills				
Works/plays cooperatively with others				
Have stronger ties to family, school, and community				

11: In your experience, do you spend extra time through-out the day working with one group of children on basic academic skills?

Considerable more time with students who attended preschool.
Moderately more time with students who attended preschool.
No extra time with either group of students
Moderately more time with students who did not attend preschool.
Considerable more time with students who did not attend preschool.

12: In your experience, do you spend extra time throughout the day working with one group of children on basic social skills?

Considerable more time with students who attended preschool.
Moderately more time with students who attended preschool.
No extra time with either group of students
Moderately more time with students who did not attend preschool.
Considerable more time with students who did not attend preschool.

13: At the end of the kindergarten school year, do you feel that there is an achievement gap between those who attended preschool compared to those who did not?

Yes, there is definitely a large gap. Preschoolers have the advantage.
Yes, there is a small gap. Preschoolers have the advantage.
No, there is usually no gap between preschoolers and non preschoolers.
No, often non-preschoolers have the advantage.

14: At the end of the kindergarten school year, do you feel that there is a socialization gap between those who attend preschool compared to those who do not?

Yes, there is definitely a large gap. Preschoolers have the advantage.
Yes, there is a small gap. Preschoolers have the advantage.
No, there is usually no gap between preschoolers and non preschoolers.
No, often non preschoolers have the advantage.

15: What if any early childhood theory has impacted your teaching?

	Large Impact	Some Impact	No Impact
John Dewey			
Reggio Emilia			
Maria Montessori			
Jean Piaget			
Lev Vygotsky			

16: Do you feel that preschool should be mandatory across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania?

_____ Yes
_____ Perhaps
_____ No
_____ Not sure

Please elaborate on why you feel that preschool should be or not be mandatory.

Demographic Questions:

17: Is your school district?

_____ Urban
_____ Suburban
_____ Rural

18: How many complete years have you been teaching? _____

19: How many complete years have you been teaching kindergarten? _____

20: What is your highest level of education obtained?

Bachelor's degree
Master's degree
Advanced graduate degree