TRANSITIONING TO KINDERGARTEN: A MULTI-PERSPECTIVE

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN EDUCATION

BY

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BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

MUNCIE, INDIANA

DECEMBER 2008
Abstract

Children enter kindergarten with many experiences and thoughts. The primary purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of preschool children concerning their entrance into kindergarten. A comparison of what children perceived and what parents and teachers have done to facilitate the children’s perception of kindergarten was completed. A treatment group of 31 students from a Head Start which provided a visit to the kindergarten classroom that their preschool children would be attending was compared to 29 students from a Title 1 early education program, the control group. The parents and teachers of these students were compared to determine what they had done to prepare these students for kindergarten.

The quantitative aspect of the study compared the treatment student pre- and post- responses on the ‘What I Think about Kindergarten –R’ questionnaire to the control group, a Title 1 early education program. This questionnaire was adapted from the ‘What I Think about School’ (1998) used by Ramey, Lanzi, Phillips, & Ramey for the Head Start Public School Early Transition Demonstration Project in 1998. This study was not able to determine any difference in what the students perceived about kindergarten between and within groups.
While there was no significant difference in what teachers had done to prepare their students for kindergarten, three individual questions had some difference in what the teachers from Head Start had done when compared to the Title 1 early education program. There was no significant difference in what parents did to prepare their children but differences within three questions on the parent surveys were found.

A qualitative methodology was used to investigate what the students’ perceptions of kindergarten were. These perceptions included findings that most children were excited about attending kindergarten but a few anticipated kindergarten with negative feelings. Children also anticipated needing a backpack or lunchbox to attend kindergarten and looked forward to playing in the new school. Because this study was only done between Head Start and a Title 1 early education program, future research is needed to further understand what children think about going to kindergarten.
Dedication

I have lived much of my life with the following quote from the American Association of University Women materials in the 1980s in mind: “Only she who attempts the absurd can achieve the impossible” (anonymous).

I dedicate this dissertation to my family, all of the students I have had the privilege of teaching, and women who strive to achieve the impossible. I especially thank my children, Stephanie, Stacia, Robert, and Jennifer who told me often how smart I was and encouraged me to just finish this project. I am grateful to my husband, Bill, for believing that I could complete this degree and for motivating me to prove to myself that I could do it. I am especially grateful to my parents, Joanna and William Stetson, and my brother, Timothy, who died while I was pursuing this degree. Without their motivation and understanding I would have never believed I could earn my doctorate and complete this goal. I also thank all my students. They have inspired me to strive for knowledge and achieve the impossible no matter what obstacles came my way. I also dedicate this study to the American Association of University Women and women everywhere for inspiring me to achieve the impossible.
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Acknowledgements

No duty is more urgent than that of returning thanks.
Saint Ambrose

I do not consider it a duty but a privilege to thank all those who helped me accomplish what seemed like the absurd and achieve the impossible. Family, friends, and colleagues were part of this process. They, along with my undying faith and prayers offered on my behalf by the Daughters of the King, have been the source of support, strength, and encouragement.

First, my parents, William C. and Joanna Stetson (Bill and Billie) encouraged me as a young child to strive to do my best and then better. They were with me as I struggled to become a cheerleader and then as I moved to a new state and school, overcoming obstacles and disappointments along the way. They celebrated when I gave birth to my children but I think both were most excited and proud when I announced I was applying to the doctorate program. Even though they died before seeing the culmination of this process, they had taught me the patience needed to go through the steps and succeed.

To Dr. James Stroud, chairperson of my committee, mentor, and friend, who greeted me during a class in my quest for a second masters degree with the statement ‘Why are you stopping at a masters, you need to get your doctorate’ I give my
undying gratitude. His continued encouragement and support helped sustain me through all of the ups and downs of this process. Without his understanding of what it takes to complete this project and faith that it could be done, I would have given up.

I wish to thank Dr. Eva Zygmunt-Fillwalk for her patience in helping me weed through pages of comments from committee members and my own questions and concerns. I greatly admire her knowledge and insight into areas I had not considered and will always consider her a mentor and a friend.

To Dr. Kathryn Fletcher and Dr. Dale Umbach, members of my committee, who helped with my understanding of statistics, I am indebted and grateful. Both helped guide me through the statistical analysis and offered insight into what was happening.

To Dr. Kourtland Koch, who challenged me to write in a more scholarly manor and grew to understand the field of early childhood in the process, thank you. His persistence and support helped me achieve a better document.

My friends and colleagues throughout the doctoral program, Jeni, Jeanne, Robin, Sue, and Pat gave me moral support and many laughs as we all struggled to complete this program. Our motto was ‘no doc student left behind’ and I am proud to say none of us were left behind. To Adam and Penny,
doctoral students, colleagues, and friends completing their research, thank you for your support and help with computer issues, technology questions, and in statistics classes.

And to my brother, who called me Doctor Pam long before I accomplished this and died before my realization of this dream, thank you. To my sister Heidi and brother Pete, thank you. Thank you to all who helped in any way to accomplish the impossible.
Chapter One: The Problem

Introduction

Child one gets up for school and is dressed before the morning light has broken. This child is going to kindergarten for the first time and has already been to school to meet the teacher, has a new T-shirt to wear on this special day, and knows that the backpack and lunch box are ready for the walk down the driveway to get on the bus. This child is excited about this day.

Child two gets up and cries. Mom says that it is time to get dressed for school. This child has been to day care at his Auntie Pam’s and watched many of his favorite shows and played outside when the weather was nice. This is the first day of elementary school and the child will be going to kindergarten but this child has never been to the new school, met the teacher, or ridden the school bus. This child is full of apprehension and worry about going to school.

The process of transitioning to kindergarten occurred every year for millions of children. The above two examples were just possible scenarios for the millions of children who go through the process of transitioning to kindergarten every year. Kagan (1992, 1998) defines transition as “a process of movement or change from one environment to another” (p. 3). This change occurred many times every day for each of us when
we moved from home to school, play center to play center, class to class, home to work, or work to home, or any time we change from one idea to another (Fabian, 2000). The extent to which there were shared understandings and consistency across these settings maximized the potential for individuals’ success in the multiple worlds they live (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

In the cases above, the transition for children was the act of going from a preschool, home, or daycare to kindergarten. What happened in the months before these children entered kindergarten? Had the teachers done anything special to help children transition positively? Did parents encourage the children’s transition to kindergarten or was nothing done to help this transition? It has been interesting to note that “less than twenty percent of U.S. schools have transition practices” (Love, Logue, Trudeau, & Thayer, 1992).

The purpose of this study was to investigate children’s perceptions concerning their entrance into kindergarten. In addition, a comparison of what children perceive and what parents and teachers have done to facilitate children’s perception of kindergarten was completed.
Background Information

Beginning with the release of the report by the National Education Goals (Nelson, 1993; Shore, 1998), researchers (Pianta & Cox, 1999; Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003; and Rous & Hallam, 2006) have been investigating and continue to investigate the process of transitioning to kindergarten. Some researchers (Harradine & Clifford, 1996; Katz, 1999) approached children’s entry into kindergarten from the standpoint of examining if the children were ready to do certain academic skills such as knowing the alphabet or counting to 50 while others (Pianta & Walsh, 1996) investigated the concept of children at-risk for failure to succeed.

The definition of a transition procedure in terms of kindergarten has been defined as “the process used to provide continuity between a preschool or home and a kindergarten program” (Nelson, 2004, p. 187.) Pianta and Kraft-Sayre (2003) explained that the entrance into kindergarten and the manner in which the transition occurred will set the tone for the child’s future success or failure in school. The interactions that preschool children have had with adults and other preschool children have built a basis for success in school (Pianta & Walsh, 1996; Rimm-Kaufmann & Pianta, 2001). During kindergarten, children began to develop into the type of
learner that they will become as they move through school (Belsky & Mackinnon, 1994; Entwisle & Alexander, 1999). Pianta and Cox (1999) stated “it is essential that the transition to school occurs in such a way that children and families have a positive view of the school and that children have a feeling of perceived competence as learners…” (p. XV).

Entwisle and Alexander (1999) and Pianta and Kraft-Sayre (2003) emphasized the importance of making the transition to kindergarten smooth and ensuring success thus paving the way for children’s success in kindergarten and later in school. Although the children’s success during the kindergarten year has been found to be predictive of later school success and school adjustment (Belsky & Mackinnon, 1994; Entwisle & Alexander, 1999; Pianta and Kraft-Sayre, 2003; Clark & Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2006), Entwisle and Alexander (1993) wrote that the “beginning school transition generally has been neglected by sociologists interested in issues of schooling…” (p. 401).

Parents anticipated this day; it was the day their children entered kindergarten: the beginning of public school instruction (Horowitz, 2004; Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 1999). Kindergarten was considered by many parents to be the beginning of the formal education process; a rite of passage into the world of public school. This entrance into formal
schooling was an important time for children and has been described as “one of the major challenges children have to face in their early childhood years” (Dockett & Perry, 2001, p. 2). Ramey and Ramey (1999) stated kindergarten was a common experience for 98% of children (Sadowski, 2006).

Prior to the entrance into formal schooling, children may have attended a childcare facility or a preschool program. When parents chose a childcare facility or a preschool, they may have chosen one based on whether the curriculum was academic or play-based. However, as parents approached this first day of kindergarten, they became more interested in how their children were achieving and what skills needed to be learned before they attended kindergarten (Diamond, Reagan, & Bandyk, 2000). As children’s achievements and needs were discussed at parent conferences, parents often asked preschool teachers and day care providers, ‘Will my child be ‘ready’ to meet the demands of kindergarten?’ many parents, they were simply asking if their children would succeed academically and go on to have a successful educational experience. The question of children’s readiness was often addressed again when parents tried to formally register their children in kindergarten.

Registration day usually came with the enrollment of their child in kindergarten in the spring of the year. The
enrollment process may have been through a kindergarten round up or sign-up meeting held at the school or may just have involved calling the school to register children for kindergarten. Kindergarten roundup referred to informational meetings for parents to meet school staff, learn about programs available at the school; it also provided an opportunity for children to get a "small taste" of kindergarten and their new school (Kent School District, April 2006). Parents may have attended this roundup day with their children and received information concerning what would happen, what was expected of parents and their children, and what opportunities were there for parent involvement. During round-up, the children may have had a hearing test, eye test, be read a story and been asked questions about the story, or be asked to draw a picture or write their name. These activities were informal evaluations of children’s readiness for kindergarten and were chosen by the individual school districts. No systematic process has been established to enroll children in kindergarten (Diamond, Reagan, and Bandyk, 2000; Rous & Hallam, 2006). Other schools administered tests (i.e. the Kindergarten Readiness Test (KRT)) designed by Anderhalter and Perney (2008) to measure a child’s readiness to enter kindergarten during this round-up. These tests were designed to evaluate a child’s ability in vocabulary,
identifying letters, visual discrimination, phonemic awareness, comprehension and interpretation, and mathematical awareness. These were all academic skills that children should have developed in order to be deemed ready for kindergarten according to school districts but often were used to place children in groups based on their skills on these tests rather than just testing to see if a child was ready for kindergarten (Conn-Powers & Peters, 2006).

Readiness for kindergarten has been generally described as academic skills, which determine if children will succeed in kindergarten (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003). These skills were often not universally defined but defined by individual school districts (the geographic area which operate the schools within the area). In some cases, readiness was the acquisition of skills to help with the child’s ability to read (Katz, 1991). In other instances, the term readiness was used to refer to social competence and basic pre-academic skills (Squires, 1999). Diamond, Reagan, and Bandyk (2000) addressed this confusion and concluded that families look for schools that focus on the academic areas. Parents often were not aware of the importance of the social aspects of attending school; rather more concerned about whether their child was academically ready (Harradine & Clifford, 1996; Katz, 1999; LaPara, Pianta, & Cox, 2000). Researchers (Lindauer, Wright, &
McEuen, 2006; Parker & Neuhrath-Prichett, 2006) indicated that parents tend to focus on their children’s academic readiness for school while kindergarten teachers focused on social and emotional readiness.

Researchers (Conn-Powers & Peters, 2006; Dockett & Perry, 2006) have established that kindergarten teachers did not have the same set of expectations of the academic skills a child needs to enter kindergarten as other kindergarten teachers and as parents. Lin, Lawrence, and Gorrell (2003) Harradine & Clifford, 1996; Katz, 1999) determined that “kindergarten teachers tended to view preparing children to satisfy social demands of schooling as a higher priority than academic skills development” (p. 233). These researchers indicated that kindergarten teachers placed greater emphasis on whether children can tell what they want or think, follow directions, or take turns and share. However, many parents were more interested in the learning of ABCs, making sure their children could count, or perhaps even read, rather than if children could play with other children or sat for story time (Lin et al, 1996; Welch & White, 1999).

Children were entering kindergarten today with a wide variety of experiences (Conn-Powers & Peters, 2006). The differences between kindergarten teachers’ expectations and parents of these children regarding what children should know
before entering kindergarten contributed to this variety (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, & Cox, 2000). In some states these experiences may have included attending a family childcare home, a registered ministry, a Head Start, a Title 1 early education program, a special education preschool or a preschool classroom as well as staying home with one of the parents or other relatives. Preschool classrooms occurred in private and public arenas. Other pre-kindergarten experiences including universal pre-kindergarten or preschool programs, offered in some states such as California and Georgia, have been designed to offer preschool classrooms for all children of a certain age such as for all four year olds (Smith, 2004).

Statement of Problem

Children entered kindergarten with a variety of experiences (Conn-Powers, 2005). Parents placed expectations on what kindergarten would be and on what children should know to attend kindergarten. Preschool teachers have had thoughts about what children should be doing to attend kindergarten. Kindergarten teachers had expectations of what children would come to school knowing and being able to do. With all of these different expectations and experiences, children’s perceptions of going to kindergarten have been left out. The prevalent philosophies of school districts concerning the transition to
Kindergarten varied from doing nothing to elaborate transition practices (Diamond, Reagan, and Bandyk 2000). These practices may have involved a spectrum of activities, requiring the parent to only call the school and enroll the child over the telephone, to events in which parents receive information pertaining to what the expectations will be in kindergarten. Many of the activities gave parents information that schools perceived as necessary for enrolling children in kindergarten. Other activities involved the classroom kindergarten teacher planning assessments or family nights in order to meet with children and parents. Current research (National Governors Association Task Force on School Readiness (NGA), 2007; Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), 2006) investigated what practices help children with this transition. However, no research has been published indicating if these activities make a difference to children. The researcher interviewed children concerning their perceptions about transitioning to kindergarten. The researcher investigated what children perceived about going to kindergarten and compared these perceptions to what parents and teachers have done to prepare them for this new experience.
Research Questions

A questionnaire/interview with and observations of children was conducted to address the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of prekindergarten children toward going to kindergarten?
2. Are these perceptions different for children attending Head Start than for children who do not attend Head Start?

A survey/interview with the preschool teachers was conducted to address the following research questions:

1. What are the teachers doing to prepare their prekindergarten children for kindergarten?
2. Is there a difference in what prekindergarten teachers at Head Start and those of the control group do with the children before kindergarten?

A survey was given to the parents to address the following research questions:

1. What do prekindergarten children’s parents do to help their children prepare for kindergarten?
2. Is there a difference between the Head Start parents and the parents of children that do not attend Head Start?
Research Null Hypothesis

The primary hypothesis for the quantitative portion of this study was as follows:

\( \text{H}_01: \) There will be no difference in the children’s perception of going to kindergarten between a Head Start sample and a Title 1 early education program sample as measured by the *What I Think of School-R* questionnaire (Appendix E).

\( \text{H}_02: \) There will be no difference in Head Start children’s perception of going to kindergarten before a visit to the kindergarten classroom and after a visit to kindergarten.

\( \text{H}_03: \) There will be no difference in Title 1 early education program children’s perception of going to kindergarten between a pre- (January) and post- (May) questionnaires and interviews.

\( \text{H}_04: \) There will be no difference between Head Start teachers’ preparation of the children going to kindergarten and Title 1 early education program teachers’ preparation of children going to kindergarten.
H_{05}: There will be no difference in Head Start parents’ preparation and Title 1 early education program parents’ preparation of the children going to kindergarten.

In addition to these primary null hypotheses, the following secondary null hypotheses will be addressed:

H_{06}: There will be no difference in the percentages of Head Start teachers’ preparation of the children going to kindergarten and the percentages of Title 1 early education program teachers’ in the preparation of children going to kindergarten for each individual question on the teachers’ surveys.

H_{05}: There will be no difference in percentages for Head Start parents’ preparation and Title 1 early education program parents’ preparation of the children going to kindergarten in the individual questions on the parents’ surveys.

Definition of terms

The following definitions are intended to clarify the meanings of terms used in this study.

At-risk – “Any event, condition, or characteristic that increases the probability of the occurrence of an identified
target outcome (e.g. school failure)” (Pianta & Walsh, 1996, p. 17)

Child Care Center – a place providing care for children in a non-residential facility by people who meet the requirements in the state in which they are providing the services (National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center (NCCIC), 2007)

Child Care Ministry – a child care operated by a church or religious ministry that is a religious organization exempt from federal income taxation under Section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code (IC 12-7-2-28.8, P.L.1-1993, SEC. 141)

Child Development Associate (CDA) – An individual who has successfully completed the assessment process that includes course work designed “to meet the specific needs of children and work with parents and other adults to nurture children’s physical, social, emotional, and intellectual growth in a child development framework” (Council for Professional Recognition, 2008)

Chronological Age – “The number of years, months, and days a person has lived; the ‘real age’” (Snow, 2006, p. 1)
Developmentally Appropriate Practice - “teaching young children in ways that meet children where they are, as individuals and as a group, and help each child reach challenging and achievable goals that contribute to his or her ongoing development and learning” (Copple & Bredenkamp, 2006, p. 3)

Entrance Age - The age at which a child is eligible to go to school (Ferguson, 2006)

Family Child Care Home - Child care that serves any combination of full-time and part-time children offered in the family home. The requirements for family child care are different for each state (NCCIC, 2007)

Head Start - A comprehensive Federal program providing services for children (three to five years-of-age) and families in poverty; a national program that promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social and other services to enrolled children and families (Office of Head Start, 2006)
Individualized Education Plan (IEP) - an educational plan to discuss the type of services the child receives, strategies for helping the child succeed, the setting in which the child will be placed, goals necessary to facilitate the transition between service systems, and priorities and recommendations for the IEP goals (National Early Childhood Transition Center, 2006)

Kindergarten - the class preceding first grade; a transition year between early childhood programs and first grade (NAEYC, 2006)

Kindergarten Roundup - Informational meetings for parents to meet school staff, and learn about programs available at the school, which provides an opportunity for children to get a "small taste" of kindergarten and their new school (Kent School District, April 2006)

Preschool - A part-time program for children ages three-five years-old who are not yet enrolled in kindergarten focusing on play experiences and/or academic concepts such as colors, shapes, letters, numbers, and various basic educational fundamentals that will lay the groundwork for what the children will learn in kindergarten; sometimes referred to as
a Nursery School where children are cared for in a group in a variety of settings: public and private schools, churches, community centers, and home residences (Washington State Legislature 392-164-165, 2003)

Quality Programs - Programs that are child-centered, foster creativity and individuality, and protect children from harm as measured by the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS) or a quality rating system designated by the state; “assessed by identifying selected characteristics of the program, the setting, the equipment, and other features, as seen by the adults in charge of the program” (Katz, 1993, p. 1)

Readiness - a set of skills, generally academic, the acquisition of which determines how successful a child is expected to be in kindergarten; the extent to which development and learning are determined by the biological processes involved in growth versus the experiences children have with parents, peers, and their environments, commonly used to mean readiness to learn to read but can also be social readiness or intellectual readiness (Kagan, 1990; Katz, 1991)
Risk – The relation between one outcome and the probability of attaining that outcome (Hess, Wells, Prindle, Lippman, & Kaplan, 1987)

Title 1 – Federally funded assistance for programs designed to help students at-risk for school failure meet the high standards serving children by funding professional development, instructional materials and resources to schools have around 40% or more of its students from low income (ESEA, P.L. 89-10, 79 Stat. 27, 20 U.S.C. ch.70)

Title 1 Preschools – Preschool programs designed to serve children ages three to four at-risk for school failure that are not already served by Head Start programs (Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) 1965, P.L. 89-10)

Transition – Moving from one thing to another, often involving a change from one idea or place to another for children and families (Head Start, 2002; Kagan, 1990)

Assumptions

1. It is assumed that the children responded to the interview questions about their attitudes and beliefs in a truthful manner and to the best of their knowledge.
2. It is assumed that the *What I Think of School* revised questionnaire is a valid and reliable instrument.

3. It is assumed that the teachers responded to the survey questions about what they do and say in a truthful manner and to the best of their knowledge.

4. It is assumed that the parents will respond to the survey questions about what they do and say in a truthful manner and to the best of their knowledge.

Limitations

Interviews provide one method to allow children to share their attitudes about attending kindergarten, but interviews of young children may have the tendency to be influenced by the interviewer’s bias. Interviewing children is a limitation of this study. “Historically, there have been no readily available, psychometrically sound methods to permit children to share their perceptions about their early childhood experiences” (Hermann, 1997, p. 1). Interviewer error may also occur if the interviewer was not careful to word the questions exactly the same way with each interview.

Since the participants may come from a variety of ethnic and the socio-economic backgrounds, language differences may play a role in the interpretation of the questions by the children and in their responses. The final limitation was that
this study was not generalizable to the bigger population because of the small sample size.

Summary and Organization of Study

Transitioning to kindergarten is the current focus of many states and school districts throughout the country (LaPara, Pianta, & Cox, 2000; Lin, Lawrence, & Gorrell, 2003; Pianta & Cox, 1999; Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003; Rous & Hallam, 2006). It is widely accepted by early childhood educators that children at this age will enter kindergarten with a wide variety of experiences. In a report to the Ready Schools committee in a local Midwestern town, Clark & Zigmunt-Fillwalk (2006) stated that “Easing the transition into kindergarten to ensure the maximum success in this pivotal year merits much attention and careful planning” (p. 3). Pianta and Kraft-Sayre (2003), Belsky & Mackinnon, (1994) Entwisle and Alexander (1999), also stated that these early experiences assist children with school adjustment in kindergarten and in later years.

Transition experiences currently being used in some school districts include the inclusion of parents in the transitioning process, the visitation to elementary schools and kindergarten classrooms, and the communication occurring between early childhood educators and the K-2 teachers (Conn-
Powers, 2006). Other school districts are not using any of these transition experiences. This research investigated how these ideas affect the preschool child as he/she transitions to kindergarten when both school districts have a kindergarten roundup.

In this study chapter I included an introduction, the purpose of the study, and a background of current trends to transitioning to kindergarten, the research questions to be answered, hypotheses, assumptions, and limitations of the study. Related literature is reviewed in Chapter II. The topics addressed are: (a) the historical background of readiness for kindergarten, Head Start, and Title 1 preschools, (b) an overview of current activities for transitioning to kindergarten, (c) parent and teacher expectations toward readiness for kindergarten, (d) and a chapter summary. The methodology for this study is described in Chapter III. The hypothesis, population sample, participants, instruments, permission, procedures, analysis of data, and a chapter summary are discussed. Chapter IV reports the results of both the quantitative and qualitative investigations and Chapter V presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations for this study.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction
The purpose of this study was to investigate children’s perceptions concerning their entrance into kindergarten. In addition, a comparison of what children perceive and what parents and teachers have done to facilitate the children’s perception of kindergarten was completed. This chapter reviews the related literature by examining the historical background of early education, preschool education, kindergarten practices and children’s readiness and how these concepts influence the transition from preschool to kindergarten.

Historical Background

The concept of early childhood education did not begin long ago but within the last century. In the early centuries, children were considered to be miniature adults. During these centuries, children were depicted in art as “man on a smaller scale” (Aries, 1962, p.10). It is not that children were not present in the society but that society did not have an understanding that there was a childhood. While it was
understood that there was a need for utensils and toys that were smaller for children, the knowledge that children were different than adults did not exist.

It was not until about the twelfth century that artist began to portray young people with childish features (Aries, 1962). Philosophers and educators began writing about young children and the need for these children to be children and not little adults. By the fourteenth century manuals on how to raise children were being written (Alexandre-Bidon & Lett, 1999). In the seventeenth century, children as portrayed by the artists really evolved and became more numerous and popular (Aries, 1962). Continuing throughout the centuries, childhood gradually included the field of early childhood and the education of children became important.

However, the knowledge that children need to be educated dates back at least to the early Greek civilization (Morgan, 1999; Wolfe, 2002). One of the earliest philosophers who believed that education was needed for a healthy society was Plato. Before Plato, children were kept at home until they were six. At the age of six, the sons of affluent families received an education. Plato first introduced formal education when he began the Academy in northwest Athens in 387 B.C.E. to educate the scholars and teachers. Plato believed that “boys and girls should be in the same classes until they were six”
(Wolfe, 2002, p. 9) when they would be separated so that they could study using gender appropriate materials but that both sexes should be educated.

In the medieval ages, education was seen as primary for religious purposes. If children were educated it was done in the home to teach children how to read and write. Children as young as six or seven were sent away to become apprentices (Aries, 1962). This depiction has been argued (Orme, 2001) but it is known that very few children had the opportunity to get an education as we know it today.

Throughout the decades other philosophers, educators, and doctors have tried to start an early childhood movement. Comenius (1592 - 1670) believed that education should start very young (Comenius, 1967). He added picture books to education and regarded a loving, nurturing atmosphere important in early education experiences (Morgan, 1999; Morrison, 2009). He wrote that the early years were the key for future learning.

Another person in the historical picture was Rousseau (1712 -1778) who wrote an outline depicting education that would allow children to be children and develop their potential in his novel, Émile. Rousseau (1962) stated “Nature requires children to be children before they are men” (Wolfe, 2002, p. 40). He also believed that education was used to
develop the child’s potential.

Influenced by Rousseau, Pestalozzi (1746 – 1827) opened schools in response to poverty believing that ‘natural education’ would teach children the methods needed to bring them out of poverty. His focus for young children was to develop the whole child and allow them to create their own learning within that education (Morgan, 1999). Pestalozzi wrote the best way to learn was by using manipulatives and that mothers could best teach their child (Pestalozzi, 1977).

Froebel (1782 – 1852), the father of kindergarten, opened the first ‘kindergarten’ in Germany. He had studied under Pestalozzi and expanded Pestalozzi’s ideas further by incorporating them with Rousseau’s ideas and his own. Froebel (1887) intended the school to be more like a family where pupils would not be asked to do things that the teachers could not do. He stated that "these things are to be developed in each individual, growing forth in each one in the vigor and might of youth, as newly created self productions." (Froebel, 1885, p. 233). Using toys designed for the education of young children, Froebel developed methods for educating the children and the teachers who would be teaching them.

Kindergarten was brought to the United States in the early 1850s with the opening of a classroom by Margarethe Schurz (1832 – 1876) in a German speaking community in

During the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876, kindergarten materials were highlighted and the kindergarten movement had begun. Some of these women had studied with Froebel in Germany and others would attend Teachers College of Columbia University to study how to be a kindergarten teacher. In the following years, other schools would open in order to instruct teachers in the proper methods of working with kindergarten children. Kindergarten in the 1860s was considered “an educational remedy for urban poverty and a source of positive family changes through parent education” (Wolfe, 2003, p. 253).

One of the proponents of kindergarten in the United States was Patty Smith Hill (1868 – 1946) who studied at Columbia Teachers College and learned to question Froebel’s ideas. She would come to believe that parents and teachers cannot educate children without the help of physicians, social workers, and other professionals, the beginning of the community being involved in the education of children in the United States. Hill saw the benefits of Froebel’s kindergarten but wanted to bring the movement into the twentieth century.
Hill (1942) felt that standardized test would harm kindergarten practices; parent education would be lost; and “readiness push for early reading, writing and computation would compromise the kindergarten programs” (Wolfe, 2003, p. 267). In Hill’s kindergarten there were goals that were measurable and dealt with behaviors that she felt were desirable. Hill felt that children should have projects that were initiated by the children with little teacher suggestions. These projects should work toward socialization, thinking, and independence of the children (Wolfe, 2003). However, other kindergarten teachers such as Susan Blow were working toward more specific academic goals, the basics or fundamentals. In a series of debates in 1904 between Blow and Hill, the questions of Froebel’s kindergarten versus Hill’s kindergarten brought to light the differences in teacher training and in expectations of children. Hill determined that teachers needed specific training in teaching kindergarten at the same time they were receiving training as elementary school teachers in order to allow for continuity across the curriculum. Throughout the years, Hill continued to advocate that kindergarten was the beginning of all school. Interested in other methods for teaching kindergarten children, Hill visited Maria Montessori to study her program in 1929-1930. It was while visiting Montessori that Hill realized that there
were aspects that she agreed with such as relating materials to life and emphasis on child development. However, she did not agree with the lack of play in the Montessori schools (Hill, 1942).

Montessori (1870 – 1952) had been looking for a new way to work with the children in Italy as she believed strict methods used during this period were not appropriate. Lobbying to the Italian society, she found the funds by telling investors that this would “make children less of a financial drain” (Wolfe, 2002, p. 227). By this Montessori was indicating that if we develop an understanding of the children who are having the most difficulty and are able to help them before they enter school, then they can become productive citizens (Kramer, 1970). Montessori, like her predecessors, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel believed that children needed a place to be educated. She opened her first center, Casa de Bambini in 1907 to work with children ages three to seven. Her work with children who were labeled as ‘idiot children’ or ‘mentally retarded’ helped her develop materials and methods for all children (Montessori, 1964). In the Montessori schools, curriculum materials had been developed to allow children the opportunity to learn cleanliness and how to write but these materials did not support play and social learning. These methods came to the United States in 1911 when
the Montessori schools came to Tarrytown, New York (Kramer, 1975; Montessori, 1964; Morgan, 1999). Over the next few decades the movement would grow and then decline in numbers. In 1960 the American Montessori Society was formed and the movement continued into the 21st century.

The 1960 Presidential elections brought about Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy campaigns. As part of their campaigning, the republicans and the democrats held several debates and raised the issue of education. The democrats focused on the need for better teacher salaries in the public sector and federal aid to these schools but did not include any mention of preschool or nursery school education. Richard Nixon and the Republican Party rejected this direction stating that if the federal government could regulate the salaries it would be soon telling the teachers what to teach (Vinovskis, 2005). Another issue that was raised during the campaign by Kennedy was that there were children and families’ living in poverty but it was more on the international front and not on the domestic level (Vinovskis, 2005).

Kennedy was elected president and he recommended the creation of task forces to look into the proposals. The task force proposed to earmark public funds to teacher’s salaries and classroom construction. This recommendation was defeated in both 1961 and 1962. As an attempt to try a new approach in
1963, they began to focus a bill aimed at social welfare. It was this bill that wanted the funds for all areas of schooling, preschool through adulthood. President Kennedy, in support of this concept, spoke of this commitment to education in his State of the Union speech. This proposal was blocked by the House and eventually failed. President Kennedy would propose bills for educational improvement that included preschools. During 1963, preschool education was being "targeted as the starting point of schooling" (Vinovskis, 2005, p.23) by agencies within the Kennedy administration.

The issue of poverty was not the focus of this administration until two years into his presidency. It was after he began to focus on stimulating the economy with tax cuts in 1962 that poverty was a focus. The general public felt that he was overlooking the poorer class and the tax cuts were aimed more at the wealthy and middle-income families. President Kennedy sought help by asking for a clarification from Walter Heller, the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers. Kennedy was informed that while progress had been made during the 1940s and 1950s, they were losing ground on this issue. It was the general belief of society that if we educated children in poverty, then they could break the cycle of poverty (Zigler & Styfco, 1993). Thus, this was the start of Kennedy’s push for education and the beginning of a
movement in the direction of eliminating poverty.

As his pending re-election campaign committee was investigating topics to focus on, poverty issues in the slums and in depressed rural and urban areas came to the forefront. It was during the later part of the first term of the Kennedy administration that poverty was starting to become the focus of many bills to the Congress. Kennedy stated that there was a “need to more effectively help disadvantaged students by initiating pilot, experimental, or demonstration projects to meet special education problems, particularly in slums and depressed rural and urban areas’” (Congressional Quarterly Service, 1963, p.978). Yet, Kennedy’s push for educational reform did not influence the congressional members and early education programs did not go any further.

Without financial support from the Congress, other organizations such as the Ford Foundation began to look at approaches that might help disadvantaged students (Vinovskis, 2008). It was here that the push for preschool education became the focus especially in working with disadvantaged students.

With the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963, things changed. Lyndon Johnson was sworn into the presidency on November 22, 1963. The world mourned Kennedy’s death and Johnson was faced with many challenges, beginning with the
formation of his agenda (Vinovskis, 2005). The day after being sworn into the Presidency, Johnson asked Haller to brief him on the state of the economy and Kennedy’s plans to fight poverty. Johnson, having grown up watching people living in poverty, was sympathetic and supported this poverty initiative. Another concern was the upcoming election in 1964. The democratic committee decided to focus on eradicating poverty as part of the next campaign by providing youth with better education and training opportunities. In a draft of a memo by Capron and Weisbrod, Council of Economic Advisors, “pointed out that many Americans experienced difficulty earning a living owing to scanty education and training opportunities, poor health and physical disabilities, and limited employment options (Vinovskis, 2005, p. 36).

After Johnson was re-elected he established the War on Poverty, announcing his plan in the State of the Union address. It was his thinking that the public would support a ‘war’ on poverty because this implied that it was a war and we could win. On March 16, 1964, Johnson proposed a package to eradicate poverty by developing skills, education, and help finding work. This began the debate on the education portion of the bill. The Republicans called upon Urie Bronfenbrenner to testify whose testimony cited new research that indicated the need for early childhood education. Bronfenbrenner
advocated that day care facilities needed to be developed in the deprived areas. Other testimony came from Jack Conway, a member of the Poverty Task Force, who stated, “improving education is essential in helping them to break out of the cycle of poverty” (Vinovskis, 2005, p.47). Congress supported his plan and passed the legislation in 1964 but did not appropriate enough funding for the total length of time for which the bill was written.

In 1964 Lyndon Johnson sent to Congress a bill entitled the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (Pub.L. 89-10, 79 Stat. 27). It was hoped that by dealing with improving education for disadvantaged children in poor areas (Kosters & Mast, 2003; Using Federal Resources to Support Reform, Section 1, para. 1), we (society) would “break the cycle of poverty” (Zigler & Styfco, 1993). The bill was passed and in 1965 President Johnson signed into law the ESEA, which authorized more than a billion dollars to public and private schools to provide funds to improve and expand the educational programs. While this bill did not initially include money for preschools, only providing funding for K-12 schools, it did provide money for schools with a high percentage of children living in poverty. The funding was not initially defined as to exactly where the monies were to be used. Since it was the first time that the federal government was infusing money into
schools with high levels of children living in poverty, this was the center point of Johnson’s Great Society and the War on Poverty.

Under the commission of education, ESEA of 1965 contained five sections of the bill, each addressing a different issue now called titles. Title 1 was originally funding and guidelines providing for the ‘educationally disadvantaged’ children and school districts. Title II provided money to libraries so that they could purchase new audio/visual equipment and materials. Title III worked to help students ‘at risk’ of school failure by creating centers and services as supplements. Title IV gave money to colleges and universities for research and Title V provided funding to the individual state departments of education. Title VI were the laws related to ESEA (Vinovskis, 2005).

At the same time that ESEA was moving through Congress, President Johnson was waiting for Congressional approval and with many believing that government should take an active role in removing the negative effects of poverty; President Johnson on January 4, 1965 announced that he was proposing a new federal educational initiative that would include preschool. It was a summer program designed to give low-income children a head start before they entered kindergarten (Vinokskis, 2005). Lady Bird Johnson wrote that this program would include “a
medical examination, one good free meal, manners and vocabulary improvement” (Johnson, 1970, p. 219). With this announcement, Johnson formed a committee to plan and steer Head Start. This group would oversee the implementation of the project and advertised for applicants to administer Head Start. That summer twenty-five hundred Head Start projects would operate centers serving five hundred and thirty thousand poor children (Vinoskis, 2005).

After the first summer program, President Johnson announced funding for a year-round Head Start program. This was in response to criticism concerning the effectiveness of a summer only program. Other concerns included the lack of qualified teachers, the inability of the summer only program to help disadvantaged children, and the expense of the year round program.

With so many concepts included in this bill, expectations were high. However, expectations were not met (Kosters & Mast, 2003). Criticisms and controversy occurred. Johnson did not run for reelection and President Nixon was elected. He vetoed the ESEA but this veto was overridden by Congress. After reauthorization, Title 1 (P. L. 89-750) now was able reach more than 90 percent of the nation’s school districts with children in poverty (Zigler & Styfco, 1993). Concerns were that there was not curricular program that was universal for
the Title 1 programs and that school systems qualifying for Title 1 funds could elect to spend the money in any fashion they felt appropriate.

Over the years, Head Start has been reauthorized. It continues to serve only about 20 percent of the families who were eligible and another 10 percent of children with special needs. The federal government has continued to try to make Head Start stronger by changing the methods of delivery or requiring assessments of the students. It still does not reach the vast majority of poor children. Laws such as the School Readiness Act, S. 911, were supposed to provide more money to increase the number of children served by Head Start but numbers did not increase. In 1994 with the reauthorization, the number of children to be served was shifted to help all disadvantaged children met the academic standards (NAEYC, Title 1, 2008). Yet, the cycle of poverty still continued.

No Child Left Behind Mandates

The No Child Left behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) (Pub. L 107-110, Stat. 1425) was in part a reauthorization of the ESEA. This act caused a stir in education, requiring the identification of schools not meeting adequate performance or ways to improve school wide performance. For Title 1 schools there was an expectation that the new features would improve performances of their students. For Head Start schools there
has been an increase in assessment and quality of teachers driven by NCLB. Many educators and researchers are seeking ways to help children with this transition so that the child arrives in kindergarten less stressed and more ready to learn. The No Child Left Behind Act has forced concerns regarding what children need to know and when.

Readiness

Many school corporations now expect children to know more when they enter kindergarten than ever before. Kindergarten no longer is the beginning of school. Children are entering kindergarten having been to day care and/or preschool. Parents want to make sure their children are ‘ready’ for school thinking this means an academic approach. Teachers want these children to be able to socialize and follow rules (Conn-Powers, 2006; Diamond, Reagan, and Bandyk, 2000). David Elkind (2008) states that “despite all the evidence to the contrary that education is a race and that the earlier you start the better” (p. 49) there is a misunderstanding about what being ready for school means. All in all children are expected to come to school with a set of pre-determined skills and knowledge and be ‘ready’. However, being ‘ready’ still means different things to individual people depending on which movement is prevalent in today’s society (Di Santo, 2006).
Since the release of the National Goals Panel report in 1990, there has been much turmoil over the statement, ‘All children will be ready to learn by the year 2000’ (Kagan, 1990; Shore, 1998; Willer & Bredekamp, 1990) Yet, what does ‘ready to learn’ really mean? Does this mean ready for school? Or is there some other definition that is currently viewed as more appropriate? When did the ready for schools movement first begin? Is this movement the same as the readiness trend that we find occurring in our classrooms today?

While researchers (Kagan, 1990) suggest that readiness first occurred in the writings of Johann Pestalozzi as early as 1898 (Pestalozzi, 1977), it was not until the 1930s that much attention was given to the term readiness. The International Kindergarten Union named a “reading readiness” committee to promote a better understanding of the concept (Kagan, 1990). Readiness has been considered to either be maturational, related to a date when the child is old enough to enter kindergarten, or the attainment of certain skills. Maturational Readiness

Maturational readiness, developed by Arnold Gesell, defined as when a child was expected to achieve certain developmental standards before he/she entered kindergarten and often related to age, is the child behaving in a manner that
indicated the child can endure kindergarten. These standards included aspects such as gross motor development, communication skills, fine motor skills, and personal and social skills as measured by a developmental screening. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Gesell Institute, founded by Gesell, advocated the use of readiness screening practices to assess the developmental age (DA) sometimes referred to as the behavioral age of a child as a better indicator to determine “readiness” to start kindergarten than chronological age (CA) (du Toit, 1992). This form of readiness allowed for teachers and parents to keep their child out of kindergarten if the child had not achieved these standards. Many teachers and schools used this construct of readiness to suggest that the child was not developmentally ready, meaning that the child had not matured and that children should enter school at a developmental age as the Gesell Institute advocated in the 1960s. Prior to the idea of developmental age from the Gesell Institute, the CA was used to determine that a child was ready for school. Although this practice is still common today, the theory of maturational readiness is being reconsidered. State-level movements to assess children’s readiness by using a standardized measurement were being eliminated and as late as 2003, only limited readiness testing was being used (Conn-Powers, 2006). Yet, as the theme of readiness continues,
school districts are looking for something that determines a child is ready for school.

**Entrance Age Concept of Readiness**

By the 1980s, a new construct was being proposed. Children could enter kindergarten when they had reached the age determined to be the entrance age. This entrance date is determined by a cut-off date such as September 1 that is mandated by state legislatures. If the child is five before September 1, then he/she can go to kindergarten. In some states kindergarten is not required but parents assume their child must attend kindergarten (P. Sebura, personal communication, 2007). Parents of children might decide to hold a child out of school so that their children would be older when in high school. This decision, the practice of academic red-shirting or holding children out of school before kindergarten, was especially popular for athletes (Katz, 2000; Noel & Newman, 1998).

In other cases, children would start kindergarten and the teacher would decide the child was not ready to go onto first grade. In the 1980s when a child was determined to not be ready for first grade, the child re-entered kindergarten and was expected to attend an extra program offered between the kindergarten year and being admitted into the first grade, often called a transitional first grade (Graue, 1993). This
was determined to not be effective (Mossburg, 1987) because the effects were determined to fade out after the first year. 

Ready to Learn

The historical development of the readiness movement has been investigated by Kagan (1990) and several other constructs of readiness have been identified. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) issued a position statement in July 1990 that stated that in promoting school readiness one should also be aware that not all children have the same experiences before entering school and to expect this is unfair to the child. NAEYC argued that the concept of readiness should include schools being ready to accept children at the level of development they are when they enter school and provide the foundation for future success in school. In essence, NAEYC stated that it was the school’s responsibility to be ready, not the child’s. For that reason, the child should not be penalized because he/she lacked the experiences necessary to succeed in school.

“To the National Education Goals Panel, ensuring that children start school ready to learn is vitally important” (Shore, 1998, p. 2). Shore (1998) reports that most children are able to be investigators and learners and with the appropriate practices can gain the skills and knowledge being taught in school. Ready to learn is described by this idea of
a child. However, kindergarten teachers are reporting as many as 10 to 30 percent of our children are coming to school without being able to be learners (Love, Logue, Trudeau, & Thayer, 1982). Ready to learn has been defined in terms of being able to learn to read (Kagan, 1990; Katz, 1991). In an article appearing in the Phi Delta Kappan (1990), Sharon Kagan posed the question about whether the readiness in the above quotation was the same readiness as the readiness for school or was it referring to a readiness to learn? She concluded that while they have often been used to mean the same thing, this was in fact not the same concept and that a readiness for learning is different from a readiness for school. Readiness to learn deals with the development of the child, while readiness for school looks at the acquisition of specific skills valued in school such as identifying colors, copying a circle, or knowing the difference between a circle and a square. The readiness to learn applies to all children, while the readiness for school is primarily seen at the time of entering kindergarten.

Ready Schools

In the Ready Schools: A report of the Goal 1 Ready Schools Resource Group (Shore, 1998), the panel defined ready to learn as needing to include children’s four developmental domains: health and physical development, social and emotional
development, cognitive development, and language development.

In the early 1990s, the definition of readiness was defined as the expectation of academic skills and abilities children should possess before going to kindergarten (Feeney, Grace & Brandt, 2001). Willer and Bredekamp (1990) stated that this definition did not allow for the differences in the children’s experiences prior to entering kindergarten. The definition, according to Willer and Bredekamp assumed that there were the following misconceptions about readiness:

- Learning only occurs in school;
- Readiness is a specific inherent condition within every child;
- Readiness is easily measured;
- Readiness is mostly a function of time and some children need more time;
- Children are ready to learn when they can sit quietly at a desk and listen to the teacher;
- Children who aren’t ready don’t belong in school (p. 23).

Transitions

Transitions occur many times in life beginning at birth when children first go home from the hospital with their
parents (Howard, Williams, Lepper, 2005; P.L. 105-17, 1997, IDEA 2004). These transitions continue throughout life occurring when the parents go back to work and the children move from home to day care or, as children begin school and go from home to day care or to school or to sports practice and events, or as children graduate and go on to post-secondary education.

History has provided us with a changing view of what transition from early educational experiences to public schooling should be; from an early questioning of “are children ready for school” staying at home with family during the early years, or attending school to having an experience that includes everyone; parents, teachers, children, and the community. Originally intended to be the transition experience from home to public schooling, kindergarten is the start of public school for many children. Started in the early 1800s by Friedrich Froebel kindergarten was designed to be a place where children would be ‘cultivated’ by doing and experiencing activities necessary to build the skills (i.e. thinking) to help them succeed in school (Wolfe, 2002).

In February of 1990, a proclamation was made at the National Governors’ Association and later passed in 1994 by the United States Congress stating that “all children in America will start school ready to learn” by the year 2000 (H.
Based on this goal, one current trend in education has become to examine the process of how children move from preschool/day care to kindergarten. Questions pertaining to transitional practices are being asked by researchers (Diamond, Reagan, and Bandyk 2000; Lindauer, Wright, & McEuen, 2006; Parker & Neuhrath-Prichett, 2006) concerning this transition period. As with most educational endeavors, schools’ (teachers) expectations about what skills a child should have mastered before entering and leaving kindergarten have changed significantly over time. The views of parents concerning both their children's personal skills and what they expect the schools to provide for their children in kindergarten has also undergone a dramatic change. The following section attempts to provide a brief history of the movements in America to determine if children are ready for kindergarten and the expectations this brings.

**Transition to Kindergarten**

What does it mean to transition to kindergarten? For the purposes of this study, transitioning will refer to the movement from early childhood environments (including preschool, pre-k classes, or home) to kindergarten. For some children, this occurs without apparent incidence but other children suddenly realizes that mom has left him/her at a
“strange place,” not at the day care facility or house down the street that they were accustomed to attending. Parents wonder, “Does my child have the skills necessary to do well in kindergarten? What skills does he/she need for kindergarten? How will he/she survive kindergarten?” But exactly what skills or experiences are found in a curriculum that prepares the child for kindergarten? No single curricula or pedagogical approach has been identified and considered as the best.

Successful Transitions

“Negotiating transitions well can add to a child's ability to do well throughout his or her school career. More often than not these transitions are rocky... Research shows that if you give children a strong foundation in pre-k and in kindergarten, it will increase their chances of success in the later grades” (LAEP, 2000).

What research is there that indicates that being able to ‘negotiate these transitions’ will help a child in his or her school career? Research has determined transitional practices can have a significant impact on the child’s future school success, the motivation and interest to be at school, and on the child’s view of him or herself (Dockett and Perry, 2002).

The transition process appears different in school
districts. Brostrom (2000) stated that children’s entry into school is associated with a heightened excitement, as well as a nervous anticipation about what this schooling will bring. This entry into ‘formal’ schooling has taken many forms. Teachers report that 16% of children entering formal schooling (kindergarten) have difficult entries into kindergarten. The difficulties such as a struggle with the new classroom, larger classroom size, or more academic standards occur, because kindergarten is more formalized in its approach to schooling and because of the diverse experiences in pre-kindergarten. Another reason often listed is that parents are very involved in the pre-kindergarten experiences but often feel left out once their child enters kindergarten (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, & Cox, 2000).

There have been several studies addressing what concepts work and do not work on the issue of transitioning (Follow Through and Head Start Planned Variation, Kennedy, 1978; the Head Start Transition Project, the National Transition Study, Ramey, Ramey, Phillips, Lanzi, Brezausek, Katholi, & Snyder, 2000). Researchers (La Paro, Pianta, & Cox, 2000; Pianta, Cox, Taylor, & Early, 1999) have questioned many kindergarten teachers throughout the country to discover that some do nothing and others have registrations; some send notes home after school starts and others send them home as soon as the
child is signed up for kindergarten; some wait for the parents to visit in an open house and others make home visits; and still some require no information from previous care settings and others have a system in place to gather information about the new child. The most popular transition practice is the scheduling of school wide open houses but these typically occur after school has already started (Conn-Powers, 2006; La Paro, Pianta, & Cox, 1999; Pianta, Cox, Taylor, & Early, 1999).

Pacheco, Tullis, Everest, Baker, and Sutherland (2004) have shown that successful transitions establish relationships between teachers and parents, preschool and kindergarten, and children and teachers. They also found that transitioning to kindergarten is not a onetime event but continues throughout the school year.

A book entitled, Successful Kindergarten Transition, (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003) outlines methods to be used by school corporations in planning for transitions. Beth Rous and Rena Hallam (2006) address the planning of transitions in their book, Tools for Transition in Early Childhood: A Step-by-Step Guide for Agencies, Teachers, & Families, which examines transitions as a community-based approach for children with special needs. Both of these books indicate the ecological approach described by Bronfenbrenner to design
their models. In his model, Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes how there are many influences on the child and these come from all parts of society, parents, teachers, friends, and community partners. It was his theory that all these systems (society, parents, teachers, friends, and community partners) must be addressed to fully support the developing child.

Rous and Hallam (2006) state in their book that their model was designed originally for children with special needs, however, it can be also be used for all children. Both models suggest that beginning with a team coordinator enhances the transition experiences. Both the Rous and Hallam model (2006) and the Rimm-Kauffman, Pianta and Cox model (1999) discuss collaboration, communication, coordination, and cooperation in terms of planning transition activities. Both of these books refer to Entwisle and Alexander (1993) who found that the transition from preschool to kindergarten is correlated to children’s future success, both academically and socially.

There are several reoccurring themes that emerge in the research on transitions that reference children’s success at later times in schooling. The main issue is “the early elementary years are important in establishing competencies critical to children’s school success and achievement” (Little, 2002, para.2). Entwisle and Alexander (1993) stated that this transition to kindergarten occurs in a ‘critical
period’. By this term the authors are referring to a period in which children are acquiring literacy and social skills. Children, who are able to successfully navigate this period, will have a better chance of succeeding in school. Research (Belsky & MacKinnon, 1994; Entwisle & Alexander, 1993) has indicated that how children adjust in this time frame, will be an indication of what will happen in future years. If children are able to transition successfully, their self-esteem grows and they are able to tackle the issues of schooling. However, if children enter kindergarten with overwhelming feelings of “I can’t do this”, they start at a disadvantage. Sometimes these children are aggressive toward other children in the class or do not cooperate with teachers and peers and thus are disliked by the members of the class. These children are playing catch-up the rest of the year and are often labeled in a manner that sticks with them throughout the rest of schooling. The children go through school with more behavior problems and not developing relationships that are secure or trusting (Elkind, 2008; Di Santo, 2006). Either way, this thinking has put the burden on the children to have the knowledge, skills, and successful transitions.

Entwisle and Alexander (1999) state that as children assume the new role of student they are met with a new set of rules and obligations that are different from those in
preschools and day care facilities. As children focus on these new sets of rules and obligations, they learn how to refine their concepts of themselves. Children starting out with this failure struggle to overcome this deficit, many times never achieving this new concept. Pacheco, Tullis, Everest, Baker, and Sutherland (2004) reported that this feeling of failure and difficulty continues to be experienced throughout the children’s academic career.

A failure to feel a member of the community is one of the transitional problems. There are other concerns when planning successful transitions to kindergarten, like including the family or community in the process. The NCEDL (National Center for Early Development & Learning) based the March 2002 Spotlight on the issue of transition to kindergarten. In this issue, reasons are listed as to why transitioning to kindergarten is important. It is also noted that the early learning environments are quite different and there are large amounts of public funds dedicated to boosting the chances for success for children in poverty through Head Start.

With the focus on transition and the research indicating that transition to kindergarten is so important, it should be noted that what is suggested for one school may not be appropriate for another. Concerned about the important issues of success in later years, learning environments that are
quite different for all children and the changing parental roles and their involvement schools find many transition activities to consider. By looking at these issues, school districts can select practices that will enhance children’s transition. School districts should consider all of the options when planning a transition activity. If the school districts understand the need for successful transitions, they can evaluate their needs and plan activities to facilitate smooth transitions and help all children.

Ramey and Ramey (1999) suggest that perhaps what is needed is a change in terminology from ‘ready schools’ or ‘readiness methods’ to transition to schools. By using this new term, transition to school they suggest that it is “an ongoing process that occurs during the first several years of life when children, families, and schools are making mutual adaptations to facilitate the eventual success of the child, family, and school in the early elementary school years” (p. 219). This implies that it is not something we need to do at the last minute to make sure children are ‘ready for school’ but it is an ongoing process that occurs throughout the first five years of life.

During those first five years, children have many different experiences. Some parents prefer programs that offer social interaction and opportunities for emotional growth.
Other parents want a more structured academic curriculum to prepare the child for kindergarten while still many children stay at home. The transition activities that children experience are the beginning of the process of making a successful transition to kindergarten.

Researchers (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003; Ramey & Ramey, 1999) have developed transition models to explain this process. In 1999 Ramey and Ramey proposed the Transition Conceptual Model. This model stipulated eight influential constructs that are evident in children’s lives. They are:

1) Survival resources such as housing and income;
2) Health and nutrition;
3) Safety such as physical safety, and security such as social-emotional security;
4) Self-concept such as culture;
5) Motivation and values of the family school, and community;
6) Social support such as peers and family;
7) Communication skills; and
8) Basic academic work skills such as life skills and school academics (p. 222).

The authors suggest that these are not separate issues but are continuously intertwined in the lives of young children. Children need to be in good health and feel safe and secure
when they come to school. They need to feel that they belong to the new group, kindergarten class, much as they did in their previous experiences. They need to have a good self-concept and have the basic literacy and numeracy skills. With these in place, the transition to kindergarten will be successful.

Pianta and Kraft-Sayre describe in 2003 that there are actually many models of transition to school experiences. One of these, the developmental model suggests that children take previous experiences with them as they transition to kindergarten but no one experience is more important. All of the support from the members of the community (parents, teachers, or support staff), skills learned, and environmental influences are important in helping children make this transition successful.

Children’s Attitudes Toward School

Children spend their early years playing and learning. Their curiosity forces them to experiment and create new experiences. If one were to enter their world, you would see that they unfold imaginations and the world of education on their terms. Then they enter kindergarten and their world in some instance becomes even more academically orientated. But what are these children thinking as their world changes? This
understanding could help us further our comprehension of the transition to kindergarten or our readiness efforts.

Little research on children’s attitudes or perceptions has been conducted. One of the problems has been that of the perception by researchers that this method of study lacked reliability and validity (Lewis, 1992). Young children are often distracted, respond in nonsensical manners, or have limited references for their memories. But recently, some researchers have begun to interview preschool children to examine their attitudes or perceptions. However, some research (Conn-Powers, 2006; Diamond, Reagan, and Bandyk, 2000; Love et al., 1992) only addressed the teacher’s perspective, the early educator’s perspective, or the families’ views. Other researchers (Averhart & Bilgler, 1997; Bigler, Jones, & Lobliner, 1997; Cuskelly & Detering, 2003; Pollard, Thiessen, & Filer, eds., 197; Potter & Briggs, 2003) investigated a child’s view concerning topics like gender identity or how children view play or their schooling. These studies have set the tone for future research on the children’s perspective about this transition process to kindergarten.

Dockett and Perry (2004) interviewed children in kindergarten about their experiences and understanding of what kindergarten was. This study indicated that friendship was important. It is interesting to note that these authors stated
that children focused on the rules when discussing school. Dockett and Perry (2003) also noted that children rarely discuss having to know anything such as colors, numbers, or the alphabet. In another study, Potter and Briggs (2003) found that 83% of the children in school did not like the work in school. This study defined ‘work’ as what the children had to do in school in which they had no choice in the work and it was “boring” (p. 48). Other issues cited by Dockett and Perry (2004) were that children reported being sad or scared about going to kindergarten. It should be noted that children rarely comment about needing to know colors or shapes or other academic skills (Dockett and Perry, 2004). However, asking children what they think or perceive about a topic can lead to important information regarding that topic.

Samuelsson (2004) stated that children communicate differently with peers than with adults. Their communication with peers differs because it is dependent on their relationship with others and to their self. “A child’s ability to tell stories or express his or her opinions or perspectives is dependent on whether the child has relationships with other children and the teacher” (Samuelsson, 2004, p.). One method to determine the children’s perspective on transitioning to kindergarten is to ask them. Yet, we have not done this. It is difficult to gain the
children’s perspective because some children lack the ability to express themselves about their feelings. Other children talk incessantly; not always about the questions being asked (Kvale, 1996). Children (Clark, McQuail, & Moss, 2003) have not always been regarded as having thoughts or being able to express them in ways that are understood by researchers. Some researchers prefer to interview several children at a time in order to obtain the best data. By doing this, the researchers have suggested that the children will help each other recall or respond to the interview questions in a richer manner because they support each other’s thoughts and responses (Save the Children Foundation, June, 2005).

It was not until recently that researchers (Clark et al, 2006; Samuelsson, 2004) have begun to listen to what children have to say and realize that language is not always the method that they use to tell us what they are thinking or feeling. Research methods (Clark et al, 2006) to understand children’s perceptions must include nonverbal tools such as allowing the child to draw a picture or play with dolls or puppets. These are not the traditional methods used to interview participants.

Summary

Education of children has been happening since the Greek
civilization. However, the concept of children as something other than a miniature adult did not begin until after medieval times. Since the medieval period ended, the education of young children has been the focus of many theorists. From Comenius to Froebel, theorists began to change the way we thought about these young children. Kindergarten was developed and education was changed forever. Now with the help of educators like Hill and Montessori, children learn through play and toys developed to enhance the skills necessary for future life. Yet, the theories change. With the development of Title 1 and Head Start the focus was on the education of young children in poverty. Both of these programs have been reauthorized with the latest Title 1 program doing so with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) laws.

Children and families await going to kindergarten, the beginning of formal education. They enter each year with many different experiences and skills. In some years, readiness for kindergarten has been the topic of research. Current philosophy and research has been advocating that the schools need to be ready for the children and their experiences. One way to do this is to provide transition experiences that help with this success.

However, what these transition experiences need to be has not lead to a consensus. Some educators and parents feel the
children need to be more academically educated and test for these. The conflict between academic or play has been occurring for centuries as theorist and educators address the issues of child development.

Starting with Plato and the early Greek philosophers and moving to 2008, the discussions have included how to educate young children, how to help children in poverty, and what needs to occur to help children move from the preschool experiences to formal education. Interestingly, these discussions rarely include asking the children what they think or how they feel. Limited research has been conducted on what children perceive about kindergarten. Limited research has been conducted on what children perceive about kindergarten.

This study sought to ask children what they think about going to kindergarten. It also looked at what teachers and parents had done to prepare the children for this big step. The next chapter will detail the methodology of this study.
Chapter Three: Methodology

Restatement of Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate children’s perceptions concerning their entrance into kindergarten. In addition, a comparison of what children perceive and what parents and teachers have done to facilitate the children’s perception of kindergarten was completed. The following topics will be presented in this chapter: (a) hypothesis, (b) participants, (c) instrument, (d) permission, (e) procedures, (f) analysis of data, and (h) chapter summary.

Overview Research Design

Research concerning the transition to kindergarten has been the focus of much research, (Pianta & Cox, 1999; Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003; Ramey & Ramey, 1999; Rous & Hallam, 2006; Seefeldt, Galper, & Denton, 1997). Much of this research has focused on how educators and parents are helping children get ready for kindergarten, on what the kindergarten teachers and/or parents feel is needed to make children ready, or how to facilitate children’s entry into kindergarten without regard to the children’s perceptions.

Research concerning the transition to kindergarten has been the focus of much research, (Pianta & Cox, 1999; Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003; Ramey & Ramey, 1999; Rous & Hallam, 2006; Seefeldt, Galper, & Denton, 1997). Much of this research has focused on how educators and parents are helping children get ready for kindergarten, on what the kindergarten teachers and/or parents feel is needed to make children ready, or how to facilitate children’s entry into kindergarten without regard to the children’s perceptions.
or attitudes (Harradine & Clifford, 1996; Katz, 1999; La Para, Pianta, & Cox, 2000). However, children and how they transition to kindergarten were stated as the reason the topic of transition was so important (Belsky & Mackinnon, 1994; Entwisle & Alexander, 1999; Pianta and Kraft-Sayre, 2003; Clark & Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2006). This study investigated what children’s perceptions about this process or transitioning to kindergarten are, and what is happening in the child’s world to facilitate this thinking?

This inquiry examined preschool children’s attitudes about going to kindergarten during the months prior to their kindergarten entrance. The questions investigated for this study through the use of the What I Think about School (R) (WITOS-R) questionnaire (Appendix E) and interviews were:

3. What are the perceptions of pre-kindergarten children toward going to kindergarten?

4. Are these perceptions different for children attending Head Start than for children at Title 1 early education programs?

5. Is there a difference in how pre-kindergarten teachers at Head Start and Title 1 early education programs prepare children for the
transition to kindergarten?

6. What do pre-kindergarten children’s parents do to help their children prepare for kindergarten?

7. Is there a difference in what is done by Head Start parents than by Title 1 early education program parents to prepare children for kindergarten?

8. If an intervention occurs such as a kindergarten visit, is there a change in the children’s attitude toward going to kindergarten?

The researcher used a mixed method approach involving the collection of data. In this method, the data was analyzed by using quantitative and qualitative methods (Creswell, 2003). Combining these two methods, “researchers felt that biases inherent in any single method could neutralize or cancel the biases of other methods” (Creswell, 2003, p. 16). Reichart and Cook (1979) stated that “the two method-types can build upon each other to offer insights that neither one alone could provide” (p. 21). Gay, Mills, and Airsaian (2006) agreed by stating that a mixed method approach allowed researchers to “build on the synergy and strength that exists between quantitative and qualitative research methods in order to understand a
phenomenon more fully than is possible using either method alone” (p. 490).

A quantitative analysis examined the results of pre- and post-questionnaires concerning what children think about going to kindergarten. This method was also used to determine if there was a difference between the parents and teachers of Head Start and those of Title 1 early education programs in the preparation of children for kindergarten.

Qualitative methodology was conducted to ascertain in more detail what fourteen children’s responses and perceptions toward going to kindergarten were. Observations of the treatment and interviews with children involved in the qualitative study were conducted. Gay, et al., (2006) stated that qualitative research is used to probe how the participants in the context perceive them; “to understand the participants’ own perspective” (p. 10).

Qualitative methodology was conducted to ascertain in more detail what fourteen children’s responses and perceptions toward going to kindergarten were. The methodology used in this research was to ask them directly, interviewing of the children. By interviewing the child, the researcher probed into the child’s thoughts, expectations, and fears. By listening carefully, Ingrid
Samuelsson reported, (2004) “It is amazing how much a child can tell when someone really listens!” (Early Research and Practice, ¶ 11).

Yet to do so at this young age was often difficult. Some children did not express their feelings and others were talkative, sometimes about things that were not necessarily about the question being asked. Children however, are not well versed in communicating with peers or adults and are therefore not usually interviewed (Samuelsson, 2004). The quality of information relies on the research design and on how the interview was conducted. Because of this concern it was important for the interviewer to gain the children’s trust. One way to do this was for the interviewer to make multiple visits to the classroom. Once this trust was gained, the interviews began. The pre-interview occurred in February and early March. Then a post-interview was conducted in late April and May. T-tests were run for the quantitative portion of the study to analyze each hypothesis. The qualitative analysis consisted of constant comparison and triangulation to determine the themes expressed by the children.
Hypothesis

Null hypothesis:

$H_01$: There will be no difference in Head Start teacher’s preparation of children going to kindergarten and Title 1 teacher’s preparation of the children.

$H_02$: There will be no difference in Head Start children’s perception of going to kindergarten before the visit to the kindergarten classroom and after the visit to kindergarten.

$H_03$: There will be no difference in Title 1 children’s perception of going to kindergarten between the pre- (February) and post- (May) questionnaires and interviews.

$H_04$: There will be no difference in Head Start parent’s preparation of children going to kindergarten and Title 1 parent’s preparation of the children.

$H_05$: There will be no difference in the children’s perception of going to kindergarten between Head Start sample and Title 1 early education programs sample as measured by the What I Think of School - R questionnaire and the interview questions.
Participants

Students

A Head Start program (treatment group) and a Title 1 early education program (control group) were approached to seek permission to complete this study by using the WITOS-R questionnaire (Appendix F) and interviewing some of their students. After permission from these early education facilities was granted, each of these groups distributed seventy-five permission slips. 32 (42.7%) were returned to the Head Start program and 30 (41%) were returned to the Title 1 early education program. All of the participants from each group were selected to be included in this study with the exception of one student from the Title 1 early education program. His mother gave permission for the study but explained on the back page of her survey that he had a diagnosis pending. She stated the problem was that when asked a question, he would repeat the last word stated. The researcher included him in the first observations and agreed with the assessment that he could not sit at the table to answer or talk with the primary investigator for more than a question at a time and did only repeat the last word spoken. He also would get up and wander around the classroom and had to be redirected constantly to return to
the table. The researcher decided to omit this child from the study.

Head Start had nineteen boys and thirteen girls for a total of thirty-two students participating in the first round. There were fourteen four-year old children and seventeen five-year old children and one six-year old child. The average age for these children at the beginning of the investigation was 4.47 years. After the second round of questioning in May, two children had withdrawn from Head Start and were excluded from this part of the investigation.

Seventeen boys and twelve girls made up the Title 1 early education program group with an average age of 4.39 years. Initially there were eighteen children who were four-years old and twelve children who were five-years old in February. One child had withdrawn from the Title 1 early education program and was not included in the final evaluation.
Table 1

*Gender of Students at Beginning of Study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head Start</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>61</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

*Age of Students at the Beginning of Study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Four-year old</th>
<th>Five-year old</th>
<th>Six-year old</th>
<th>Average Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head Start</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>32</strong></td>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.435</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Parents or Guardians_

For this study, selected prekindergarten classroom parents or guardians at Head Start were sent the permission letters (Appendix A). Five prekindergarten classrooms were selected from Head Start by the transition coordinator. The transition coordinator chose classrooms that often have the greatest amount of parent participation but excluded one classroom because these parents are often selected for
these activities and were overburdened. When the researcher asked to include this classroom, permission was denied. From the permission forms returned, the researcher interviewed a group of 30 children with returned permission slips who were eligible to attend kindergarten in the fall of 2008. In order to attend kindergarten in the fall of 2008, children need to have been born before August 1, 2003. Two of the children had decided not to continue attending Head Start and they were removed from the final round of the research study.

A second group of thirty parents or guardians responded to the permission forms and their children were selected from a Title 1 early education program. The Title 1 early education program serves children whose parents have a similar income level as the Head Start parents. This program did not offer the intervention (treatment) of taking their children to visit the kindergarten classrooms in the spring. One child had withdrawn from the program.
Table 3

Parents/Guardians in Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Number of Parents Responding</th>
<th>Number of Parents Completing Survey</th>
<th>Number of Parents Not Completing Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head Start</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title 1 early education program</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers and Teaching Assistants

Ten teachers and teaching assistants from Head Start and ten teachers and teaching assistants from the Title 1 early education program responded to the surveys. The teachers from Head Start included all female teachers with at least an associate’s degree. The assistants were all female with at least a Child Development Associates certificate (CDA). This certificate was earned after the completion of four classes and an evaluation by a reviewer from the Council of Professional Recognition, and must be renewed after the first three years and then again after five years.

At the Title 1 early education program, the teachers are part of the school district and all have at least a bachelor’s degree. There were one male and nine female teachers or teaching assistants. Two of the teaching
assistants who responded to the surveys were working on their bachelor’s degree in education.

Table 4

*Teachers and Teaching Assistants in Programs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Number of Female Teachers</th>
<th>Number of Male Teachers</th>
<th>Total Number of Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head Start</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title 1 early education program</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quantitative Procedures

Instrument and Measurement Procedures

*Students*

The researcher began visits to the centers in order to establish a rapport with all students in each classroom with prekindergarten children. This established rapport with students as part of the interview process to gain the trust of the children, which is crucial to successful interviewing (Save the Children Foundation, June, 2005; Samuelsson, 2004; Vasquez, 2000). The researcher made several visits to the classroom to facilitate this. After making these visits, the researcher administered the WITOS-R questionnaire (Appendix E) with the children for this
study. Each of the students from the Head Start group and the Title 1 early education program who were selected to participate in this study was asked if he/she would like to answer some questions and talk to the researcher about going to kindergarten.

In March, 2008 the children from Head Start visited the school and kindergarten classroom that each child would be attending in the fall of 2008. This included nine local elementary schools and one school that are located outside the community but within the Head Start region. The researcher accompanied children on four of these visits to observe exactly what was taking place during this visit.

A post-interview of both groups was conducted in late April and early May 2008 after the Head Start children had made a visit to their future classroom. This used the same questionnaire and interview questions to determine if there was a change in the child’s perceptions or expectations.

Parents/Guardians

Information concerning students’ transition to kindergarten was gathered from parents or guardians because it was important to understand where children learn about kindergarten, what they thought was going to happen when they get there, and why they perceived things as they do.
The parents/guardians of the Head Start program and the Title 1 early education were asked if they would answer a short survey (Appendix B) to determine what they have done to prepare their children for kindergarten. These parent surveys were included with their permission letters. Thirty parents/guardians responded to the parent survey from Head Start and twenty-four parents/guardians from the Title 1 early education program returned their surveys. Not all parents completed the survey (See Table 3). One absence was noted by one grandparent who did not complete the survey because she indicated that she did not know what the parent had done to prepare the child for kindergarten.

Teachers and Teaching Assistants

Each teacher was asked to complete the survey (see Teacher questionnaire, Appendix C) and only teachers with participants in this study were invited to respond. The teacher surveys were handed to the teachers when the primary investigator was in each classroom and the teacher surveys were collected at the next visit to the classroom, a week later.
Instrument

This research study focused on what prekindergarten children perceive about attending kindergarten in the next year. Children at the age of four and five have not often been interviewed. Many of the researchers (Conn-Powers & Peters, 2006; Dockett & Perry, 2006; Harradine & Clifford, 1996; Katz, 1999 Lin, Lawrence, and Gorrell (2003) have been focusing on what was happening with the parents or teachers and the school systems and not what the children perceive. A survey asking the children about their perceptions of school was found (National Institute of Child Health and Development (NICHD) Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development, 2001; Ramey, Lanzi, Phillips, & Ramey, 1998). Another survey was obtained by contacting Sharon Ramey (Landesman) (Reid & Landesman, 1988) and inquiring about the What I Think of School (WITOS) (Appendix D) survey used in the Head Start Public School Early Transition Demonstration project.

The survey, 'What I think of School?' was used at the Civitan Institute as part of the Head Start Public School Early Transition Demonstration Project (Ramey, Lanzi, Phillips, & Ramey, 1998) to question kindergarten children about the entrance into first grade. This instrument was
originally designed to investigate what children thought about going to school in the spring of their kindergarten year. At this age the kindergarten children are beginning to read so the original WITOS format included the children reading the questions and having them indicate what their response was. This format was appropriate for that study.

Another questionnaire used by the National Institute of Child Health and Development was incorporated in creating the WITOS-R. There were twenty questions in the original questionnaire WITAS (Appendix E) answered by children using a 4-point Likert scale. The original scale asked children to rate a statement as to whether they agree or do not agree using the responses was; not at all true, not very true, sort of true and very true responses. This original questionnaire was not acceptable for the participants in this study so an adaptation was made. There were twenty statements that included asking the children how true they felt about ‘liking school, finishing homework, getting along well with their teachers, and getting stuck on a school assignment’ (NICHD, Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development, 2001). In evaluating these original questions some of the questions were related to topics that were not applicable for the
participants in this study. These questions included the homework question, doing other interesting things, organizing and planning of schoolwork, and knowing how to study and paying attention in class. These questions were eliminated to make a ten-question instrument.

The ‘What I Think of School-R’ form asked children to answer the questions posed by using ‘happy’, ‘okay’, and ‘sad’ ratings in place of the 4-point Likert scale. After this new survey was developed in 2005, a pilot study was conducted.

The qualitative question results from this pilot study indicated that the children did not understand ‘What do you think about going to kindergarten’. This question was changed to ‘How do you feel about going to kindergarten?’ Another question that appeared to be confusing for the pilot study children was the question ‘Do you need anything to go to kindergarten?’ The children answered this question by responding ‘backpacks’ and not knowing the ABCs or writing their name. This question was changed to ‘Do you need to do anything to go to kindergarten?’

The new questionnaire was checked for content by experts from local early childhood facilities for face validity and tested on five students not included in the
sample groups before being used in this research. Face validity, defined as a review of the items by individuals to see if the questions are relevant, occurred because it was a way to check if the questions would measure the child’s perception about going to kindergarten (Burns, 1996; Roberts, 2000). The individuals, professors, instructors, and early childhood educators who reviewed the questions, were from early education programs and deemed the questions were relevant to the topic.

One issue that occurred was that the questionnaire would not be understood by the children. Most pre-kindergarten children were not able to read the interview questions; so the investigator asked questions and recorded the child’s answers. At first the researcher used cards with faces on them depicting happy, sad, and I don’t know but the children did not use for the cards for their responses. For the post-interview, the cards were not used by the participants.

In this study, prior knowledge of what had occurred or had been discussed in the classroom or at home was an important factor in the outcome of the research. What had been done to prepare the child for this important move may affect the child’s attitude, so it was important to
ascertain whether books have been read, a discussion of what happens had occurred, or if other visitors from the school had been in to talk with the class or by the family.

Surveying the pre-k classroom teachers and aides addressed what had been done in the classroom. Questions determining previous knowledge about going to kindergarten and the attitudes the children exhibited were given to the teacher after the first interview with the children (see Teacher questionnaire, Appendix C). They were collected at the researcher’s next visit to the programs.

Procedure

Procedures for the quantitative study of children’s perceptions of going to kindergarten were as follows:

1. Permission was secured from the Institutional Review Board to conduct the proposed study.

2. Study participants for the treatment group were recruited in February 2008 by sending parent letters to five classrooms Head Start. A description of the study was provided including the potential risks and benefits of the
participants. Students and families electing to participate signed a ‘consent to participate’ form (Appendix D).

3. Study participants for the control group were recruited during February 2008 by sending informational letters to seventy-five parents of children eligible to attend kindergarten at a Title 1 early education program with similar demographics and low-income clientele. The researcher visited the school. Students and families electing to participate signed a ‘consent to participate’ form (Appendix A).

4. In February and March, both groups were administered the “What I Think of School-R” questionnaire as a pretest.

5. In April and May, both groups were administered the “What I Think of School-R” questionnaire as a posttest.

6. The “What I Think of School-R” survey was scored according to the author’s specifications. A score of 2 was assigned the good, happy, or excited, a score of 1 was assigned the ‘I don’t know’ category, and a score of 0 was assigned no or sad category.
7. A mean of the questions was calculated and t-tests run for the teacher, parent, and children’s responses. To calculate the mean, each question was coded by using the following:

Children’s – 0 for ‘no’ or ‘sad’, 1 for ‘I don’t know’, and 2 for ‘yes’, ‘happy’, ‘good’, or ‘excited’. This total number was divided by 11 (total number of questions with question 9 being divided into two questions). This number was used to calculate the t-test.

Teachers – 0 for ‘no’ and 1 for ‘yes’. This number was divided by 16, the number of questions to determine a mean for each teacher.

Parents – 0 for ‘never’, 1 for ‘1-2 times’, 2 for ‘3 or more times’. This number was divided by 26 (number of questions) to determine a mean for each parent.

A 2-proportions test was done to determine whether to accept or reject the hypothesis \((H_{03})\), \((H_{04})\), and \((H_{05})\). This investigated whether or not there was a difference in the Head Start children’s responses, versus the Title 1 early education program responses between the pre- and post-questionnaires for \((H_{03})\). This test calculated a Fisher’s Exact Test, which is used for small sample sizes. To
calculate if there was a difference in the individual responses on the teachers' and the parents' surveys, the 2-proportions test was used and the Fisher's Exact Test run. In order to calculate a 2-proportions test for the parents, only two categories could be used. To do this, the categories '1-2 times' and '3 or more times' were combined to make one category. This allowed for the 2 x 2 table to be constructed for the parents.

Quantitative Validity

The original questionnaire was part of the National Head Start/Public School Transition demonstration Project begun in 1991 and conducted at the Civitan International Research Center, University of Alabama at Birmingham (Ramey, Lanzi, Phillips, & Ramey, 1998). The questionnaire and interview questions selected in this study were based on the original 'What I Think About School' (WITOS) questionnaire (Appendix D) and new validity needed to be established. To establish the validity of this questionnaire and interview questions, several experts from the early childhood profession were consulted. These experts compared the new questionnaire content to the WITOS
questionnaire. These experts judged the new questionnaire to be valid in the area of content.

Quantitative Reliability

Reliability was established by comparing the new test with an existing test. The Pennsylvania Transition Project (1997) was interested in establishing the reliability of the 'What I Think of School' questionnaire. This study did not find the WITOS to be reliable for the sample over time. It was the conclusion of this report from the Pennsylvania Transition Project that the WITOS was a reliable reflection of the children’s attitudes at that time but not over time. The current study is interested in investigating the children’s perceptions at the time of the pre-transition to kindergarten. Therefore, the question of its internal consistency reliability of this new format was considered by determining the Cronbach’s alpha for the questions. In the PA study, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient score indicated that the 8 WITOS items as a scale suggested a low internal consistency (.52 - .62) (PA Transition Project, 1997). In this study, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient score indicated an acceptable consistency (.70 - .892) for all questions except question nine, which stated that ‘I will meet other
children in kindergarten and get along with them.’ The score for this was in the low range (.60 - .68).

Quantitative Analysis

The computer program, Minitab 15, was used to conduct a t-test on the parent and teacher surveys and on the Likert-style pre- and post-questionnaires. This allowed the researcher to identify if there was a change in the children’s perceptions from February/March to April/May.

The 2-proportions test was used to determine differences with each of the questions on the parent and teacher surveys. This test calculated a Fisher’s Exact Test. This test was used in place of a chi-square test because of the sample size. Fisher’s Exact Test is used with small sample sizes (Ostle, 1963).

The 2-proportions test was used to determine if there was a difference between the Head Start children’s perceptions about going to kindergarten and the Title 1 early education program children’s perceptions. Alpha was set at .05. An assumption was made that there will be a difference in the pre- and post-questionnaire of children in Head Start based on the visitations to kindergarten of
the children in Head Start, and those in Title 1 early education programs, which do not make these visits.

To answer the hypothesis dealing with the differences in parents and teachers, the 2-proportions test was conducted to check for the differences in the means of each of the questions on the surveys (Gay, et al., 2006). The Fisher’s Exact Test, a form of the t-test was selected to investigate if the differences between the means of the Head Start parents or teachers for each statement on the surveys were significantly different from the means of the Title 1 parents or teachers. Alpha was set at .05. Each test had a Levene’s test to determine if the null hypothesis could be rejected. The effect of the significance was also calculated by using Cohen’s D.

Qualitative Design

Qualitative Procedures

Alderson (2000) states that children have the right to be consulted about “the care and services” (p. 17) provided to them. The rights of children are listed by Alderson as “the freedom to enjoy and move around the area where they live, to meet their friends and be members of their local community, to enjoy nature, to play actively and creatively
rather than be passive consumers” (p. 12). Communication with children is vital in determining what they think about the activities that are occurring with the child in mind. One way to obtain information concerning the child’s attitude toward going to kindergarten is to ask him or her about their perceptions or thoughts.

In order to really understand what the children perceive about going to kindergarten, this researcher employed a qualitative research design. In this manner, the investigator was better able to delve deeper into the child’s answers and seek more information concerning what the child was saying. Tashakkori and Teddlie, (1998) stated that researchers add ‘depth’ by identifying the characteristics or aspects of the research question that are the most relevant to the question being pursued. In qualitative research, the researcher would try to understand the phenomenon from the participants view point. Called *emic perspective* (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 1999), researchers gathered this perspective through the use of conversations.

The use of conversations was accomplished through the use of semi-structured interviews. The interviews used a questionnaire to begin the interview but the researcher was
able to ask further questions because of the semi-structured format. Semi-structured interviews or the interview guide approach used a series of open-ended questions. Using open-ended questions allowed the researcher to “define the topic under discussion but provides opportunities for both interviewer and interviewee to discuss some topics in more detail” (Mathers, Fox, and Nunn, 1998, p. 2). The interview guide approach was one in which the interviewer allowed for the same general areas of information to be collected but the researcher was able to be adaptable in getting the information.

Because it was important to become a familiar face in the preschool classroom before trying to gather the information, the investigator first visited the classrooms to make introductions to the children in the both the Head Start and Title 1 early education program’s classrooms. According to Samuelsson, (2004), “A child’s ability to express his or her opinions or perspectives is dependent on whether the child has relationships with other children and the teacher” (Conclusions, ¶1). After the researcher had completed the initial questionnaire, seven children from each of the groups, Head Start and Title 1 early education programs, were selected to complete another interview to
delve deeper into these children’s attitudes toward kindergarten. These children were selected by choosing two children who had responded they were happy or excited about going to kindergarten, two children who did not know how they felt, and two children who were sad about going to kindergarten. These children were also asked to draw a picture of what kindergarten would be like. After the initial questionnaires were administered three children were randomly selected from the happy group by just drawing their response sheets from the group of happy responses.

By using written recordings of the children’s responses to the questionnaire and interviews of the Head Start children and the Title 1 children, the researcher was able to observe what these children were doing and to ask about what was happening adding to the depth of comments. After the WITOS-R questionnaire used for the quantitative study was completed, the researcher used interview questions based on the child’s responses on the questionnaire.

These questions had been tested in the pilot study and the order was changed in order to have a better flow of the questions. This allowed the questions to be from the broader topic of how does the child feel about going to kindergarten to a more specific area asking what the child
needs to do to go to kindergarten. This method was called the ‘grand tour question’ because it started with a question that was considered to be central to the topic of the interview (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1996). The rest of the questions were related to the topic. The child was then able to respond to questions of similar ideas before moving on to another issue or topic.

Demographics for the selected children were obtained from the participating teacher or agency and included information on age and gender. In addition to these demographics, the children reported their age and birth date.

In February and March 2008, interviews were completed for both samples using the interview prior to the Head Start children visitation of the kindergarten classrooms or prospective elementary schools. This allowed the investigator to gain the responses before this visit, which happened in March and April.

During March, the Head Start program provided field trips to visit the kindergarten classrooms that the children would be attending in the fall. During these trips, the researcher accompanied the groups of children and took field notes. The field notes in the form of
running records, a form of observation used to document what is observed to be happening (Creswell, 2003), were added to the information about the transition treatment for these children. During the observation, the researcher noted who conducted the tour, what rooms they visited, questions asked and by whom, and what the children did or saw.

Both samples were interviewed again in April and May using the same questions. Since both groups were to be interviewed during the same time period (February/March and April/May) and the spring breaks of the two school districts were different, these interviews could not be conducted earlier than the late April dates. This gave the researcher pre- and post-interviews to compare and time for the treatment of the kindergarten visit.

Procedure

Procedures for the qualitative study of the children’s perceptions of going to kindergarten were as follows:

1. Permission was secured from the Institutional Review Board to conduct the proposed study.
2. Study participants for the control group were recruited during March 2008 by selecting two student participants who were happy or excited to attend kindergarten, two student participants who did not care or know how they felt, and two student participants who were sad or not excited to attend kindergarten.

3. Student participants from Head Start and Title 1 early education programs were interviewed in late February and early March based on their responses from the initial questionnaire.

4. In the spring semester of 2008, children from Head Start were observed visiting kindergarten classrooms.

5. Interviews were conducted with children during late April and May 2008.

5. Data was analyzed according to the description provided in the analysis section of this chapter.
Reliability and Validity

Researchers who collect qualitative data are concerned if the data is reliable and valid but do not typically use these terms (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 1999; Golafshani, 2003; Mac Naughton, Rolfe, & Siraj-Blatchford, 2004). Some of the terminology for this form of research included terms such as trustworthiness, dependability, credibility, and transferability to evaluate the study (Golafshani, 2003). When using these terms, researchers evaluated the studies based on three categories: “criteria reflecting sensitivity to readers’ needs, criteria reflecting use of sound research methods, and criteria reflecting thoroughness of data collection and analysis” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 1999, pp. 303-308).

Trustworthiness

The accuracy of the findings was important in doing this qualitative research. Seale (1999) stated “trustworthiness of a research report lies at the heart of the issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability” (p. 266). In order to determine how accurate the children’s responses were, the field notes from the observations and the interviews were used to analyze the data for validity. This procedure has been referred to as
triangulation, the examination of the information gathered from multiple sources to define themes (Creswell, 2003, p. 196; Gall, Gall & Borg, 1999, p.305)

An additional way to determine if the research was trustworthy was to use peer debriefing in order to make sure that the researcher has interpreted what the child said and has reported this information accurately. Peer debriefing occurred when a person reviewed the study and question what was written so that others would be able to interpret the account in the same manner as the researcher (Creswell, 2003, p. 196; Gall, Gall & Borg, 1999, p.305). When the data was gathered, the report was given to an early childhood colleague to review and peer debriefing used. This allowed for the information to be reviewed for accuracy.

Credibility

Credibility was taken into account so all the complexities of the study being conducted and addressing problems that are not easily explained were addressed. It justified that the information was based on the data from the study. In qualitative research it was the researcher’s responsibility to make sure that one can view the overall question from the participant’s perspective (Denzin &
Lincoln, 2005; Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006). This was accomplished as each question was asked by the researcher repeating what the child said to make sure it was recorded correctly. When the child was responding, the researcher would ask for more information in order to better record the child’s responses if the response was not understood.

Transferability or Applicability

Another concern of researchers was whether or not the study’s findings could be transferred or generalized to other settings. In qualitative research this would be referred to as the applicability of the findings. There are two ways to determine if a study was transferable; one would be to consider the sampling strategy that was used in the study and the other was to place that determination on the reader (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 1999). In this research the sampling strategy for the qualitative investigation was criterion sampling using the answers the children gave to the question ‘how do you feel about going to kindergarten?’ Using this method two children were selected who were excited about going to kindergarten, two children who suggested that they had mixed feelings and two children who had negative feelings about going to kindergarten and interviewed them further. In this way, the study would be
applicable to children in other settings that were either in Head Start or the Title 1 early education programs. When allowing the reader to determine if the study was applicable to another group, the researcher put the responsibility on the reader who must “determine the similarity of the cases that were studied to the situation of interest to them” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 1999, p. 308). Since this study included a small sample size of two programs, it is not generalizable to other programs.

Data Analysis

Qualitative Analysis

When analyzing qualitative data, the goal was “to come up with reasonable conclusions and generalizations based on a preponderance of the data” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, 9. 139). In order to make these conclusions, the researcher transcribed the responses from the interviews and grouped them in themes. According to Dey (1993), “by summarizing data… we strip away unnecessary detail and delineate more clearly the more central characteristics through a reasoned account that description acquires its unity and force” (p. 39).
A constant comparison was used to analyze this grouped data collected from the observation of the field trip to the kindergarten classroom and field notes, and the written interviews with each of these children to determine how they feel and what they think about this transition. Glaser and Strauss (1967) described constant comparison as involving four steps: “1) comparing incidents applicable to each category, 2) integrating categories and their properties, 3) delimiting the theory, and 4) writing the theory” (p. 339). This grouped information provided multiple data sources that were triangulated and analyzed for possible themes and trends in the children’s perceptions.

Summary

The perception of pre-kindergarten children about going to kindergarten was the focus of this research study. The study utilized a mixed method approach to gather data. The What I Think of School questionnaire (Appendix D) used by Ramey and Ramey (1994) at the Civitan Institute was adapted to be used by this population. Interviews of the children were conducted in February or March and April or May to ask the children about this issue.
Two groups of children were selected for this study. The control group (Title 1 early education program) was children that were not involved in any transition activities conducted by the teachers and program during the school year. The treatment group was Head Start children that were taken on a tour of the kindergarten and schools they would attend in the fall of 2008. The control group of children from a Title 1 early education program and the treatment group of Head Start children allowed this issue to be viewed from the different points of the children. Triangulation of the field notes from the observations and the children interviews occurred to determine the qualitative aspect. A t-test was conducted on the WITOS-R data to determine if there was a difference between the two groups of children after this treatment. Using both of these methods allowed the investigator to understand the children’s perception about going to kindergarten in more depth. The interpretation and analyses of this data resulted in understanding what children perceived kindergarten would be like.

The 2-proportions test was used to analyze if there was a difference in individual questions on the parents’ surveys and teachers’ surveys of the two groups. This data
resulted in an understanding of the differences in what the two groups had done in preparing the children for kindergarten in the fall. The results of the quantitative analysis and the qualitative response are reported in the next chapter.
Chapter Four: Analysis, Results, and Discussion

Restatement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate children’s perceptions concerning their entrance into kindergarten. In addition, an inquiry of what parents and teachers have done to facilitate their children’s perception of kindergarten was completed.

Hypothesis

The following null hypotheses were tested with the level of confidence at the .05:

H₀₁: There will be no difference in children’s perception of going to kindergarten between a Head Start sample and a Title 1 early education program sample as measured by the What I Think of School – R questionnaire (Appendix E).

H₀₂: There will be no difference in Head Start children’s perception of going to kindergarten before a visit to the kindergarten classroom and after the visit to kindergarten.

H₀₃: There will be no difference in Title 1 early education program children’s perception of going to kindergarten
between the pre- (February) and post- (May) questionnaires and interviews.

H₀₄: There will be no difference in Head Start teachers’ preparation of children going to kindergarten and Title 1 early education program teachers’ preparation of the children.

H₀₅: There will be no difference in Head Start parents’ preparation of children going to kindergarten and Title 1 early education program parents’ preparation of the children.

Participants

Participants from this study included 32 children from a Midwestern Head Start program and 30 children from a Midwestern Title 1 early education program. Of these children there were 40 boys and 22 girls.

Additionally, 55 parents and 20 teachers completed surveys on their activities to prepare the children to attend kindergarten in the fall. The participants in the teachers’ focus group included 1 male and 19 female. The male was part of the Title 1 early education program’s group of teachers. The Title 1 early education program was
located in an early learning center building as part of a school district. Because of its relationship with the public school, the Title 1 early education program teachers all had at least a bachelor’s degree in education as well as a teaching license. The Head Start teachers were required to have or be working on an associate’s degree. The teaching assistants in the Head Start program needed to have a Child Development Associates certificate (CDA) but are encouraged to obtain their associate’s degree in the near future. The Head Start teachers and teaching assistants were all female.

Of the 62 parents who responded to the letter requiring permission to include their child in this study, only 55 filled out the parent survey. One respondent from the parent group stated that she was the grandmother of the child and did not know what the child’s parent had done so could not answer the questions. Seven other parents did not complete the parent survey and gave no reason why.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Both groups Head Start and Title 1 early education program children completed the ‘What I Think About School – R’ (Appendix E) questionnaire in February/March and in April/May. This allowed the researcher to conduct a pre-
and post-test analysis using the questionnaire. The Head Start children were surveyed before and after a visit to the kindergarten classroom it was anticipated that they would attend in the fall. These visits occurred in March and early April. The post-interviews occurred in April and May. After completing the interviews, the researcher conducted analyses using a t-test to determine if there was a change in perceptions of attending kindergarten between the two groups.

The teachers’ results were determined by calculating the total number of responses to the questions using 1 for ‘yes’, 0 for ‘no’. A t-test was conducted to determine if there was a difference between Head Start teachers and Title 1 teachers in what they had done to prepare their children for kindergarten to answer the hypothesis. To further understand the teachers’ responses and where the differences might have occurred, a 2-proportions test was conducted on individual questions in the teacher surveys and if any were found significant, the effect of the significance was calculated by using Cohen’s D.

The parents’ surveys were tested by calculating the total number of responses to the questions using 1 for ‘1 - 2 times’, 2 for ‘3 or more’, and 0 for ‘never’. A t-test was conducted to determine if there was a difference
between Head Start parents and Title 1 early education program parents. Then a 2-proportions test was completed to determine if there were any differences in the parent responses within the individual questions. Because this calculated information in a 2 X 2 format, the answers for ‘1 - 2 times’ and ‘3 or more times’ were combined to form the yes category.

Results

Quantitative Study

Statistical analyses were performed using the 6-Month Edition of Minitab Release 15. Differences were significant in this study at the .05 level of confidence.

H₀₁: There will be no difference in children’s perception of going to kindergarten between a Head Start sample and a Title 1 early education program sample as measured by the What I Think of School - R questionnaire.

The children’s responses were added together to a gain a total number. This total number was divided by 11, the number of questions, in order to obtain a mean for each student. In calculating a t-test for round one, before the visit, there was no difference (p = 0.625) between the students in Head Start (M = 1.190, SD = 0.326) and Title 1
When completing the t-test for the second round of student’s responses, there was no significant difference, $p = 0.635$, (Head Start: $M = 1.190$, SD = 0.326; Title 1: $M = 1.150$, SD = 0.325).

$H_{02}$: There will be no difference in Head Start children’s perception of going to kindergarten before the visit to the kindergarten classroom and after the visit to kindergarten as measured by the What I Think of School-R questionnaire.

The score (Table 5) for each student was calculated by adding their responses (1 for ‘yes, excited or happy’, 2 for ‘I don’t know or I don’t care’, and 3 for ‘sad, scared or no’). There was no significant difference, $p = 0.319$ in the Head Start students’ responses between the pre- ($M = 1.1903$, SD = 0.326) and post-test ($M = 1.0938$, SD = 0.434).

In order to investigate if there was any difference between the groups not significant enough to be detected by the t-test a 2-proportions test was conducted. Question 6 was the only individual question approaching significance with a $p$-value of 0.087. This question asked the children if they will try harder in kindergarten. More Head Start students stated that they would try harder in kindergarten during the pre- ($M = 1.313$, SD = 0.738) than the post-interviews ($M = 1.031$, SD = 0.538). There was not a great
deal of variability in the children’s responses between the pre- and post- interviews indicating that the children did not change their perceptions about going to kindergarten after the visit to kindergarten.

Table 5

Head Start Student’s Responses for Each Question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 How do you feel about going to kindergarten?</td>
<td>Pre- 1.188</td>
<td>0.535</td>
<td>0.733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post- 1.250</td>
<td>0.880</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 What kind of student will you kindergarten teacher think you are?</td>
<td>Pre- 1.063</td>
<td>0.354</td>
<td>0.325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post- 0.969</td>
<td>0.400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Will you like going to kindergarten?</td>
<td>Pre- 1.188</td>
<td>0.592</td>
<td>0.562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post- 1.094</td>
<td>0.689</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Will kindergarten be a lot of work?</td>
<td>Pre- 1.156</td>
<td>0.515</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post- 1.156</td>
<td>0.723</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Will you get along with your kindergarten teachers?</td>
<td>Pre- 1.219</td>
<td>0.608</td>
<td>0.445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post- 1.094</td>
<td>0.689</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Will you try hard in kindergarten?</td>
<td>Pre- 1.313</td>
<td>0.738</td>
<td>0.087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post- 1.031</td>
<td>0.538</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 How do your parents feel about you going to kindergarten?</td>
<td>Pre- 1.138</td>
<td>0.516</td>
<td>0.710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post- 1.083</td>
<td>0.408</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Will your kindergarten teacher help you learn new things?</td>
<td>Pre- 1.063</td>
<td>0.354</td>
<td>0.374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post- 0.969</td>
<td>0.474</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9a Will you meet other children in kindergarten?</td>
<td>Pre- 0.156</td>
<td>0.515</td>
<td>0.346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post- 1.031</td>
<td>0.538</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9b Will you get along with these children?</td>
<td>Pre- 1.188</td>
<td>0.592</td>
<td>0.691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post- 1.125</td>
<td>0.660</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Is learning school subjects easy for you?</td>
<td>Pre- 1.344</td>
<td>0.745</td>
<td>0.325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post- 1.156</td>
<td>0.767</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alpha = .05

H₀₃: There will be no difference in Title 1 early education program children’s perception of going to kindergarten between the pre- (February) and post- (May) questionnaires as measured by the What I Think of School-R questionnaire.
After calculating the mean for each student pre- and post-, a 2-sample t-test was calculated. There was no significant difference (p = 0.452) in the responses by the Title 1 early education program children in the pre- (M = 1.044, SD = 0.229) and post-questionnaires (M = 1.009, SD = 0.089). There was a lack of variability between the children’s responses in the pre- and post-interviews (Table 6). This would imply that the children’s perceptions about going to kindergarten did not change within the two months between the pre- and the post- interviews.
Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mean Pre-</th>
<th>Standard Deviation Pre-</th>
<th>Mean Post-</th>
<th>Standard Deviation Post-</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 How do you feel about going kindergarten?</td>
<td>1.138</td>
<td>0.693</td>
<td>0.931</td>
<td>0.258</td>
<td>0.236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 What kind of student will you kindergarten teacher think you are?</td>
<td>1.034</td>
<td>0.626</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Will you like going to kindergarten?</td>
<td>1.035</td>
<td>0.421</td>
<td>0.966</td>
<td>0.186</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Will kindergarten be a lot of work?</td>
<td>1.035</td>
<td>0.421</td>
<td>1.138</td>
<td>0.516</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Will you get along with your kindergarten teachers?</td>
<td>0.862</td>
<td>0.581</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Will you try hard in kindergarten?</td>
<td>1.035</td>
<td>0.421</td>
<td>1.207</td>
<td>0.620</td>
<td>0.611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 How do your parents feel about you going to kindergarten?</td>
<td>1.138</td>
<td>0.516</td>
<td>0.897</td>
<td>0.408</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Will your kindergarten teacher help you learn new things?</td>
<td>1.138</td>
<td>0.516</td>
<td>0.931</td>
<td>0.258</td>
<td>0.492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9a Will you meet other children in kindergarten?</td>
<td>1.034</td>
<td>0.421</td>
<td>0.966</td>
<td>0.186</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9b Will you get along with these children?</td>
<td>1.035</td>
<td>0.421</td>
<td>1.138</td>
<td>0.516</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Is learning school subjects easy for you?</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.463</td>
<td>0.931</td>
<td>0.258</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alpha = .05

\[H_{04}:\] There will be no difference in Head Start teachers’ preparation of the children in their classroom going to kindergarten and Title 1 early education program teachers’ preparation of the children going to kindergarten.

The mean score (Table 7) for the each teacher was computed by adding each response and dividing by the number of questions, 16. After completing the t-test, no significant difference (\(p = 0.078\)) was obtained between the
Head Start (M = 0.387, SD = 0.147) and Title 1 early education program teachers (M = 0.531, SD = 0.194). This indicated that overall Head Start teachers and Title 1 early education program teachers had similar overall responses.

Using a 2-proportions test, an item analysis was used to investigate the actual differences if any for each of the questions on the survey. According to Fishers Exact Test, significant differences were found in questions 1, 2, and 16. These questions were directly related to the differences between program specific variables, dealing with kindergarten visitations and the use of a transition coordinator.

Question 1 stated ‘Preschool children visited a kindergarten classroom’. More Head Start teachers indicated that their children would ‘visit a kindergarten classroom’ (M = 0.900, SD = 0.316, 90% yes) than the Title 1 early education program teachers (M = 0.300, SD = 0.483, 30% yes). It was assumed that there was independence of variables and Levene’s test indicated that significance was .288, which is greater than .05 so we can assume equal variances. Normality was indicated. This question was found to have a significant difference between the Head Start teachers and the Title 1 early education program teachers. The
difference indicated that the p-value was 0.020. However, this difference was found to be small using Cohen’s measurement for effect size with a score of 0.418.

Question two addressed what the teacher’s did to help the children prepare for kindergarten was significant. This question stated that ‘Preschool children visited the specific kindergarten class they were expected to attend next year’. Head Start teachers (M = 0.800, SD = 0.422, 80% yes) indicated that more of them had ‘visited the specific kindergarten class’ than did the Title 1 early education teachers (M = 0.100, SD = 0.316, 10% yes). A 2-proportions test was completed. The assumptions needed for this test were all met. This test indicated the p-value was .005. When completing Cohen’s test for effect size, a score of .287 was obtained indicating the difference was small.

The final question, which indicated significance, was question sixteen. This question asked if the ‘teachers had met with a transition coordinator about getting the children ready for kindergarten. Head Start teachers stated that they had ‘met with a transition coordinator’ (M = 0.800, SD = 0.422, 80% yes) than did the Title 1 early education teachers (M = 0.100, SD = 0.316, 10% yes). With alpha at .05, the Fisher’s exact test indicated this was significant. All assumptions were met and Cohen’s test for
effect size indicated that this had small effect with a 0.33.

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Preschool children visited a kindergarten classroom</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>0.900</td>
<td>0.316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>0.300</td>
<td>0.483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Preschool children visited the specific kindergarten class they were expected to attend next year</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>0.800</td>
<td>0.422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>0.100</td>
<td>0.316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I visited the kindergarten classroom</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>0.200</td>
<td>0.422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>A kindergarten teacher visited my preschool classroom</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>0.300</td>
<td>0.483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Elementary school children visited my preschool classroom</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>0.200</td>
<td>0.422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Preschool children attended kindergarten roundup</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>0.900</td>
<td>0.316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>0.800</td>
<td>0.422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Parents of preschool children attended kindergarten roundup</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>0.900</td>
<td>0.316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>0.800</td>
<td>0.422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Preschool children participated in a family night with the kindergarten classes of the school they anticipate they will attend</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>0.300</td>
<td>0.483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>0.100</td>
<td>0.316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I had an individual meeting with parent(s) of a preschool child about kindergarten issues</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>0.700</td>
<td>0.483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>0.500</td>
<td>0.527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I shared written records of children’s preschool experience and</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>0.400</td>
<td>0.516</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
status with elementary school personnel

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11 I met with kindergarten teachers about the curriculum</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>0.200</td>
<td>0.422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>0.200</td>
<td>0.422</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 I contacted kindergarten teachers about specific children</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>0.100</td>
<td>0.316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13 I read books about going to kindergarten to my class</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>0.900</td>
<td>0.316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>0.900</td>
<td>0.316</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14 I know about the Foundations for Young Children</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>0.900</td>
<td>0.483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>0.900</td>
<td>0.316</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 I talked with my class about going to kindergarten</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>0.700</td>
<td>0.316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>0.900</td>
<td>0.316</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16 Teachers had met with a transition coordinator about getting the children ready for kindergarten</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>0.800</td>
<td>0.422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>0.100</td>
<td>0.316</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Alpha = .005

H₀₅: There will be no difference in Head Start parent’s preparation of children going to kindergarten and Title 1 early education program parent’s preparation of the children.

A total score for what the parents did in order to prepare children for kindergarten was calculated by adding the scores for ‘1 – 2 times’ (1); ‘3 or more times’ (2); and no responses (0). This score was divided by 26 (the number of questions) to determine a mean for each parent. Using a t-test, it was concluded that there was no significant difference (p = 0.750) between what Head Start
parents \((M = 0.946, \ SD = 0.298)\) and Title 1 early education program parents \((M = 0.917, \ SD = 0.350)\) did to prepare their children for kindergarten. The means were almost identical indicating that parents from Head Start and Title 1 early education programs had prepared their children in similar methods.

Even though there was no difference between the parent groups, an item analysis was completed to determine if there were questions that were different. In order to calculate a 2-proportions test this used a 2 X 2 table, the groups of '1 - 2 times' and '3 or more times' were combined to form the 'yes' group. It was discovered that there was a significant difference in question 6 (Table 8). This question dealt with talking to the preschool teacher or transition coordinator, talking with other parents about school, and volunteering at school.

Parents of Head Start \((M = 0.667, \ SD = 0.734, \ 47\% \ '1 - 2 \ times' \ and \ 17\% \ '3 \ or \ more \ times')\) children (participants) reported that they had 'talked with child’s preschool teacher or a transition coordinator' (question 6), while the Title 1 early education program \((M = 1.00, \ SD = 1.00, \ 5\% \ yes \ '1 - 2 \ times' \ and \ 47\% \ '3 \ or \ more \ times')\) parents had not. This was significantly different using the 2-proportions test \((p = .036)\). All assumptions were met and
Cohen’s was conducted. Cohen’s test indicated that the effect size was large. This indicated that although there was no transition coordinator at the Title 1 early education program, 52% of the parents had ‘talked with child’s preschool teacher’ compared to the 60% of Head Start parents.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>Question Description</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Visited kindergarten classroom</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>0.357</td>
<td>0.621</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>0.238</td>
<td>0.436</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Attended kindergarten roundup</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>0.296</td>
<td>0.542</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>1.609</td>
<td>0.783</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Met kindergarten teacher</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>0.357</td>
<td>0.559</td>
<td>0.561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>0.826</td>
<td>0.078</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Met school principal</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>0.517</td>
<td>0.738</td>
<td>0.162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>0.609</td>
<td>0.656</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Toured school</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>0.538</td>
<td>0.761</td>
<td>0.396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>0.565</td>
<td>0.590</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Talked with preschool teacher/transition coordinator</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>0.800</td>
<td>0.714</td>
<td>0.574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>0.200</td>
<td>0.410</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Met transition coordinator</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>0.667</td>
<td>0.734</td>
<td>0.036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Received letter from school</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>0.462</td>
<td>0.761</td>
<td>0.218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>0.957</td>
<td>0.878</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Read to child about starting kindergarten</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>1.172</td>
<td>0.711</td>
<td>0.116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>1.609</td>
<td>0.583</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Worked with child to learn address</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>1.400</td>
<td>0.724</td>
<td>0.374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>1.417</td>
<td>0.654</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Worked with child to learn telephone number</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>1.533</td>
<td>0.730</td>
<td>0.682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.905</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Taken child to play on playground</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>0.643</td>
<td>0.731</td>
<td>0.573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>0.783</td>
<td>0.795</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Read books or magazines about starting kindergarten</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>0.964</td>
<td>0.881</td>
<td>0.783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>1.417</td>
<td>0.776</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Talked with other parents about school</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>1.138</td>
<td>0.833</td>
<td>0.512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>1.130</td>
<td>0.815</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Taught child to tie shoes</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>0.967</td>
<td>0.765</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>1.261</td>
<td>0.752</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Talked with child about what kinds of things will do in kindergarten</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>1.467</td>
<td>0.681</td>
<td>0.451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title 1</td>
<td>1.318</td>
<td>0.894</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
17 Discussed how to behave in kindergarten
HS 1.567 0.626 0.058
Title 1 1.304 0.926

18 Practiced getting ready for kindergarten
HS 1.467 0.776 0.324
Title 1 0.667 0.702

19 Contacted your child’s teacher by notes
HS 0.571 0.742 0.578
Title 1 0.773 0.612

20 Volunteered in your child’s classroom
HS 0.966 0.906 0.566
Title 1 1.522 0.593

21 Talked with child’s teacher by telephone or in person
HS 1.286 0.854 0.059
Title 1 0.818 0.795

22 Helped with field trips or other special events
HS 1.103 0.860 0.559
Title 1 1.292 0.624

23 Attended parent-teacher conferences
HS 1.464 0.576 0.590
Title 1 1.182 0.907

24 Discussed with your child work they will do in kindergarten
HS 1.367 0.765 0.318
Title 1 0.696 0.822

25 Attended family night
HS 0.633 0.765 1.000
Title 1 1.583 0.654

26 Talked with family members or friend who have school-age children
HS 1.567 0.728 0.682
Title 1 1.585 0.654

*Alpha = .05

As indicated in Table 8, two questions approached significant results. These questions were question 17 (0.058), discussed how to behave in kindergarten with children and question #21 (0.059), talked to teacher on phone or in person. Because of the small sample size, we cannot conclude that these results are of any concern. It would be interesting to note these areas.

Overall, these results indicated that there was no significant difference between Head Start and Title 1 early education program in terms of children’s perceptions, teacher’s preparing of the children, and what the parent’s had done to prepare their children. Some individual
questions indicated small differences between the two groups.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative questions this study sought to answer were 1. What are the perceptions of prekindergarten children toward going to kindergarten?

2. Are these perceptions different for children attending Head Start than for children who do not attend Head Start?

To answer these questions interviews of fourteen children occurred. Seven children from each group, Head Start and Title 1 early education program, were selected from the responses to the question ‘What do you think about going to kindergarten?’ Of these fourteen children, two from each group stated they were not excited or sad about going to kindergarten. Two from each group indicated they did not know how they felt about going to kindergarten and eight indicated they were happy or excited about attending kindergarten. In addition to these interviews, observations of the children visiting kindergarten classrooms were conducted. Once these interviews and observations were completed, the researcher typed the notes and answers to investigate common themes.
Table 9

Children’s Responses to ‘How do you feel about going to kindergarten?’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Happy, Excited</th>
<th>I don’t know</th>
<th>Sad, Scared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head Start</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title 1 early education</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Qualitative Results

Question: What do you think you will do in kindergarten?

Response: No idea, I go tomorrow.

Boy, Title 1, Pre-interview

The children’s responses during the interviews indicated that they had some thoughts about going to kindergarten. Twenty one times during the pre-interview period, the children responded ‘I don’t know’ about the questions asked. However, children also thought they would be playing (13) in kindergarten or that it would be nice, good, or happy (12). These responses changed in the post-interview period (after the planned visit to the kindergarten classroom by the Head Start children) to only eleven stating that they did not know about the topic being asked and playing went down to twelve. After the kindergarten visit by the Head Start children, nineteen
responded that it would be nice, good, or they were happy about going to kindergarten.

Table 10

Total Children’s Responses Tallied

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grouped Responses</th>
<th>Pre-visit</th>
<th>Post-visit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing (includes recess, with toys, games)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nice, good, happy</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhappy, hated it, or boring</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the pre-interviews, some of the responses to the questions ‘what do you think kindergarten will be like’ and ‘what do you think you will do in kindergarten’ were:

‘I hate kindergarten. You have to do homework. It is boring.’
Child 1, Head Start

‘Nice. You play in the gym.’
Child 3, Head Start

‘It is not going to be boring. I will learn new things. We will have fun.’
Child 34, Title 1

‘You have to be 5. We play games and dance.’
Child 47, Title 1

However, when asked these same questions in April and May as part of the post-interviews, these children answered:

‘I don’t want to go to kindergarten. It is boring. You have to do homework and read a book.’
Child 1, Head Start

‘We will play. I will play.’
Child 3, Head Start
‘It will be good. I will play with my friends.’

Child 34, Title 1

‘I have to clean up and be nice to my brother. Play with
toys and sing.’

Child 47, Title 1

During the interviews conducted as part of the post-
questionnaire research from the same children indicated
that ‘I don’t know’ had fourteen responses. Nice, good, or
happy had nineteen responses. Playing had twelve responses
and fun had five. Unhappy or hate kindergarten had three.

Table 11

*Children’s Responses Grouped by Head Start or Title 1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Head Start Pre/post</th>
<th>Title 1 Pre/post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>6/6</td>
<td>15/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing (includes recess, with toys, games)</td>
<td>9/5</td>
<td>4/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>2/2</td>
<td>3/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nice, good, happy</td>
<td>5/7</td>
<td>7/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhappy, boring or hated it</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>1/0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘How did the children find out about kindergarten’ was

a question that was asked during the qualitative

interviews. Four children did not know. A parent, siblings,
or grandparents was the response given during the both

interviews by six children. No children responded that a

kindergarten visit had influenced their knowledge of what

kindergarten will be like during the first round. When the
researcher went back in April and May, the six children responded that the kindergarten visit influenced them.

Table 12

Responses for 'How do you know what kindergarten will be like?'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Head Start Pre-/Post</th>
<th>Title 1 Pre-/Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>2/1</td>
<td>2/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents, siblings, grandparents</td>
<td>3/2</td>
<td>3/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten visit</td>
<td>0/4</td>
<td>0/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>2/0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another question asked of the children was “What will your teacher be like?” For this question seven did not know after the first round of questioning and three thought their teacher would be like the Head Start or Title 1 early education program teachers. When asked in April or May, four did not know and two thought the teacher would be like the teacher they had in the past year.

Table 13

‘What will your teacher be like?’ Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Head Start Pre-/Post</th>
<th>Title 1 Pre-/Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>3/2</td>
<td>4/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like my teacher</td>
<td>3/1</td>
<td>0/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy, good, fun, nice</td>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>3/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2/2</td>
<td>0/1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When talking with the children about what they needed to do to go to kindergarten, their responses indicated that six of them thought they needed a backpack. Four needed a lunch box or lunch. One child needed to learn to write the name. Two children stated that they needed scissors, paper, and crayons. One child knew he had to be a certain age but had the age wrong. Ten said they did not know.

Table 14

‘Do you need to do anything to go to kindergarten?’ Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Head Start Pre/post</th>
<th>Title 1 Pre/Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Backpack or book bag</td>
<td>1/0</td>
<td>2*/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch or lunch box</td>
<td>2/1</td>
<td>1/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn to write name</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>0/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scissors, paper, or crayons</td>
<td>0/1</td>
<td>0/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>2/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2/1</td>
<td>4*/3**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Child responded backpack and other
** One child responded that she ‘didn’t know’ and other

Both groups of children indicated that they had not thought about going to kindergarten during the pre-interviews. After the visit to kindergarten, the Head Start children had a perception of what kindergarten would be or how they felt about going to kindergarten.
Summary

The quantitative results indicated that there was no difference in the children’s responses between the pre- and post- WITOS-R questionnaires for Head Start and Title 1 early education program. The Head Start children had no significant difference between the pre- and the post-answers. The Title 1 early education program children had no significant difference between the pre- and the post-answers.

The Head Start teachers had a no difference in their responses to what they had done to prepare the children for kindergarten when compared to the Title 1 early education program teachers. Knowing that there were indeed differences in what these teachers had done to prepare their children for kindergarten, each question was then tested to see if there was in fact a difference. This difference occurred in questions dealing with visiting the kindergarten classroom, visiting the exact kindergarten classroom, and meeting with the transition coordinator. A significant difference was found between the Head Start teachers and the Title 1 early education teachers when using a 2 proportions test. To investigate where this difference occurred a Fisher’s Exact Test was conducted and the questions 1, 2, and 16 were found to be significant
with this test. These questions dealt with the teacher taking the children to visit a kindergarten classroom or the classroom the children expected to attend during kindergarten and the teacher meeting with the transition coordinator.

The parent’s survey had no significant difference when addressing hypothesis five but when looking at each item to see if there was a difference in what the parent’s had done, a significant difference was found in question 6. This question dealt with talking with the preschool teacher or coordinator.

In the qualitative analysis, five themes appeared after transcription of the all of the responses from the pre-interviews. ‘Play’ occurred in thirteen responses during the first round of questioning. ‘I don’t know’ was the response to questions 21 times. ‘Fun’ was the response five times during the pre-interview. Children of both groups replied ‘nice, good, or happy’ twelve times. ‘Hate’ or negative responses of ‘boring’ and ‘unhappy’ occurred three times.

The qualitative results of the post-interviews indicated that the children responded ‘I don’t know’ went down to eleven times during these interviews. ‘Play’ occurred twelve times and ‘fun’ was the response the same
amount of times, five. ‘Nice’, ‘good’, or ‘happy’ went up to nineteen times and ‘unhappy’, ‘boring’, or ‘hate’ stayed the same with three responses.

Children indicated that they learned about kindergarten from their parents, siblings, or relatives six times. No children replied that a kindergarten visit helped them learn about kindergarten during the first pre-interviews. During the post-interviews seven children responded that they learned about kindergarten by visiting a kindergarten. Four of these children were from Head Start and three were from the Title 1 early education program. Four children did not know how they learned about kindergarten during the pre-interviews and three responded they did not know during the post-interviews.

In asking the children what they think their teacher will be like in kindergarten, seven replied they did not know during the pre-interview period and three thought she/he would be like their present teacher. In the post-interviews, only four did not know what their teacher would be like and two thought she/he would be like their present teacher. Three of the children from Title 1 had indicated that he/she would be fun during both interviews. After meeting kindergarten teachers, five children (two from Head
Start and the original three from Title 1) indicated that she/he would be fun, nice, or happy.

Children replied that they needed a book bag or back pack to go to kindergarten and a lunch box three times each during the pre-interviews. One child responded that he needed a back pack and they needed to bring it to school every day. Another child replied that he needed a bottle of water, a snack, and a lunch box. Five children did not know what they needed for kindergarten during the pre-interview and five answered they did not know during post-interviews. Only one child answered that they needed to write their name in the post-round of interviews. However, several knew that they needed crayons, scissors, and paper for kindergarten. Implications of these findings will be discussed in the following chapter.
Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations for Future Research

Chapter 5 presents a summary of the study, conclusions, limitations, and recommendations for future research. The summary of the study includes a restatement of the purpose of the study, research hypotheses, the participants involved in the study, and procedures used to conduct the research project. The conclusions encompass both a summary of the research results as well as the limitations set forth in the study. In discussion of the implications for practice, the researcher will share recommendations for future research and a concluding summary will present the final thoughts for this study.

Summary of Study

Purpose

Children and families anticipate going to kindergarten, which is thought by many to be the beginning of formal education and a “crucial time in the child’s life” (Potter & Briggs, 2003, p. 44). They, children and their families, enter this year with many different experiences and skills. Current philosophy advocates that
schools need to be ready for the children and their experiences (Dockett & Perry, 2001; Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003; Potter & Briggs, 2003; Rous & Hallam, 2006). One way to do this is to provide transition experiences that help with this success. Some of the recommended transition experiences include visits to the kindergarten, the employment of a transition coordinator, and family night activities (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003).

However, while some educators and parents believe children need to possess critical academic skills before they enter kindergarten. Not everyone concurs with this idea. This conflict has been occurring for centuries as theorists and educators address issues of child development. Starting with Plato and early Greek philosophers and moving to 2008, discussions have included how to educate young children, how to help children in poverty, and what needs to occur to help children move from preschool experiences to formal education. Interestingly, these discussions rarely include asking the children what they think or how they feel (Evans & Fuller, 1998; Selleck, 1996).

This study sought to ask children what they think about going to kindergarten. It also examined what teachers
and parents had done to prepare children for this beginning step. In addition to the comparison of what children perceive, what parents and teachers have done to facilitate the children’s perception of kindergarten was examined.

Research Questions

What children perceive about going to kindergarten is a question that has received little attention from researchers. In order to investigate this perception and the factors that may have influenced it, this study sought to examine the following null hypotheses at the .05 level of confidence:

$H_{01}$: There will be no difference in children’s perception of going to kindergarten between a Head Start sample and a Title 1 early education program sample as measured by the What I Think of School – R questionnaire (Appendix F).

$H_{02}$: There will be no difference in Head Start children’s perception of going to kindergarten before the visit to the kindergarten classroom and after the visit to kindergarten.
H₀³: There will be no difference in Title 1 early education program children’s perception of going to kindergarten between the pre- (February) and post- (May) questionnaires and interviews.

H₀⁴: There will be no difference in Head Start teachers’ preparation of children going to kindergarten and Title 1 early education program teachers’ preparation of children.

H₀⁵: There will be no difference in Head Start parents’ preparation of children going to kindergarten and Title 1 early education program parents’ preparation of children.

Participants

Two groups of children were selected for this study. The control group (Title 1 early education program) consisted of children that were not involved in any transition activities conducted by teachers or the program during the school year. The treatment group consisted of Head Start children that were taken on a tour in March and April of the kindergarten classrooms and elementary schools they would attend in the fall of 2008. Parents from a Head Start program and a Title 1 early education program were
solicited to partake in this mixed-methods study and completed a survey. Teachers from both groups were selected because they taught the children whose parents’ had given permission to be participate of this study.

**Procedures**

**Quantitative Procedures**

A mixed-method approach was used to gather data for the quantitative section of this study. The *What I Think of School – R* questionnaire (Appendix F) was used. Interviews of the children were conducted in February and March 2008 and again April and May 2008 to gather information from the children concerning their perceptions about going to kindergarten. These children were also asked to draw a picture about what kindergarten would be like. Running notes were taken of the kindergarten visits.

**Quantitative Analysis and Results**

Quantitative results were analyzed using a t-test. These results showed that there was no significant difference in Head Start and Title 1 early education children’s perceptions about going to kindergarten. One explanation of this would be that children had other
opportunities to visit kindergarten classrooms so the
scheduled visit by Head Start did not change children’s
perceptions about going to kindergarten. Because of these
other opportunities the Title 1 early education program
children did not change.

Teachers from a Head Start and a Title 1 early
education program had no difference between them. Upon
further examination using a 2-proportions test to
investigate if there were any differences between the
teacher groups several items were found to be significant
but the significance was limited. A Fisher’s exact test was
used because of the small sample size to determine
differences. These differences will be discussed in the
next section.

No significant differences were found between the
parent’s of Head Start children and Title 1 early education
children in terms of what the parents had done to prepare
their children for kindergarten. Individual questions were
analyzed using a 2-proportions test which calculated a
Fisher’s exact test. This test determined there was a
difference in the question dealing with talking with the
preschool teacher and the parents talking to their child
about behaving in kindergarten but these differences were
not significant. The implications of this will be discussed in the quantitative results section.

Both groups of children had other opportunities to visit or learn about going to kindergarten. Family nights were one of these opportunities that occurred in both settings. Head Start parents indicated that 92% of the parents had participated in at least one family night. Forty-seven percent of the Title 1 early education parents responded that they had participated in at least one family night. As part of a Ready Schools project, family nights occurred several times a year in the local elementary schools. The Head Start program was part of the Ready Schools pilot in the city it was located. Ready Schools pilot was an initiative which assessed preschools and kindergarten - first grade elementary programs designed to “ensure that children entered kindergarten ready to learn and that schools were prepared to receive children, support their learning, and ease their transition to the public school setting” (Clark & Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2006). Some of the children who had visited the kindergarten classroom were also part of these family nights.

It is possible for some of these children to have visited kindergarten classrooms in other elementary schools.
when they went to pick up brothers, sisters, or other family members. The Title 1 early education program had recently been relocated to a former elementary school. Prior to locating it in this building, the Title 1 early education program had been situated in various elementary building throughout the city. Title 1 early education program children can start when they are three.

Another possibility to learn about going to kindergarten was through the use of books. Both teachers and parents indicated that they had read books to their children (38% of parents and 90% of teachers). It is possible that one of these books was about going to school and a discussion about going to kindergarten occurred. There are many opportunities for example through the media for preschool children to learn about going to kindergarten. There have been movies such as “Kindergarten Cop” and episodes on television that depicted what kindergarten would be like. As part of the Ready Schools project, there have been radio and television advertisements in the area of the Head Start program discussing the transition to kindergarten.

There was no difference between the Head Start teachers’ preparation of the children in their classroom
going to kindergarten and the Title 1 early education program teachers’ preparation of the children going to kindergarten. It was unexpected but not surprising that there were no differences in what the teachers had done to prepare the children for kindergarten. This outcome was unexpected because society (Hart & Schumacher, 2005) believes that the Head Start teachers are not prepared as well for teaching since they are not typically licensed teachers. As part of this concern, Congress sought to increase Head Start teacher’s qualifications from an associate degree to a bachelor’s degree (Head Start Act, Pub. L. 110 – 134, 2007).

Part of the Head Start program has been to involve family members in the educational aspect of the program and encourage parents and family members to become lead teachers. Traditionally these teachers have had less education (Hart & Schumacher, 2005) than the Title 1 early education program teachers, who because they are in a public school must hold a teaching license. The lack of a difference was not surprising because this result indicates that both groups were doing many of the same activities to prepare their students for the transition to kindergarten.
However, in analyzing individual questions to be investigated if there were any specific differences between the two groups, three questions were found to be significant. Two of the questions asked teachers if the preschool children had visited a kindergarten classroom and if children had visited the specific classroom the children would be attending. More Head Start teachers (90%) responded that their children had visited a kindergarten and it was the specific kindergarten classroom (80%) children would attend. The Title 1 early education program teachers (30%) indicated that their children would have the option to visit a kindergarten classroom but this visit was not part of a planned visit by Title 1 early education program. Ten percent thought that children would visit the specific kindergarten classroom. However, these children would tour the kindergarten classrooms when they went for roundup. Both schools had the opportunity for roundup but the preschool teachers were not associated with the planning of activities for roundup.

The final question involved the use of a transition coordinator to plan activities for the children and their families. The Head Start teachers had a transition coordinator who planned trips to visit the kindergarten
classrooms that the children at Head Start would be attending in the fall. Eighty percent of the Head Start teachers indicated they had spoken with a transition coordinator. The transition coordinator was in contact with the individual schools and could speak with the principals concerning topics to be discussed or places to visit within the schools. The Title 1 early education program did not have a transition coordinator but did have person in charge of the family resource center. Only ten percent (1) indicated they had spoken with a transition coordinator even though the program did not have a transition coordinator. While the transition coordinator has been identified by Pianta and Kraft-Sayre (2003) as someone who could be a principal, the Title 1 early education program did not label this person as that and thus was not responsible for organizing programs concerning children’s transition to kindergarten.

It was also interesting to note that more Head Start teachers (100%) indicated that they had shared written records about their children’s preschool experience than did the Title 1 early education teachers (40%) but that this question only approached significance. It was not unexpected to see these results to these questions have a
significant difference since they were part of the Head
Start program and not of the Title 1 early education
program. Therefore, it would be expected that more of the
Head Start teachers would share records with kindergarten
teachers but the percentage of difference was unexpected.

It was determined that the hypothesis concerning the
parents’ preparation of children could not be rejected
because it was not found to be significant. Further
analysis of the parents’ responses indicated significant
differences within questions that dealt with talking to
either the preschool teacher or a transition coordinator
but these differences were limited. Parents of Head Start
(64%) children reported that they had talked with child’s
preschool teacher or a transition coordinator while the
Title 1 early education program parents (52%) had not.

Two questions, ‘talked to my child about how to behave
in kindergarten’ and ‘talked with child’s teacher by
telephone or in person’ approached significance. Head Start
parents indicated that 29% of the parents had ‘talked with
the child’s teacher by phone or in person’ and 55% had done
it ‘3 or more times.’ 37% of Thirty-seven percent of the
Title 1 early education program parents responded that they
had ‘talked to the teacher’ one or two times and 23% had done it ‘3 or more’ times.

Potter and Briggs (2003), Di Santo (2006), and Dockett and Perry (2003) reported that children were concerned about the rules and how they might change when they went to kindergarten. Yeo and Clarke (2005) reported children indicated that knowing the ‘rules’ enabled them not to break them and to stay out of trouble. This research study did not investigate these ‘rules’ and if the children were concerned about them. However, some parents (85%) have indicated that they have spoken to their children about how to behave in kindergarten. This would indicate that parents were concerned about the ‘rules’.

Qualitative Results

Children from both groups responded with ‘I don’t know’ more in the pre-interviews than in the post-interviews. They also indicated that play would be expected in kindergarten. In this researcher’s observations of the kindergarten visits with Head Start children, each of the elementary schools gave tours of the building and visited the kindergarten classrooms. When the children were taken into the classrooms, all of the kindergarten students were seated at their desks or a table working on academic
assignments being led by the teachers. Some classrooms had dramatic play areas set up (some of the Head Start children went to the kitchen or blocks in the kindergarten rooms) but no kindergarten students were ‘playing’ in them. The principal then led the tour to visit the gym and the playground. When the children from Head Start got to the playground, they were allowed to go outside and visit this area. The idea of ‘play’ may have been reinforced by these observations of the children because it would be in their frame of thinking. However, sitting at tables as a whole group for something other than eating was not something the Head Start children would have been used to observing.

‘How did the children find out about kindergarten’ was a question that was asked during the qualitative interviews. Children have many opportunities to learn about kindergarten via television, movies, accompanying parents or relatives to visit schools, or using the playgrounds. Books are read to students every day; these could contain information about kindergarten.

Knowing how they learn about something may not be important to children at the age of four or five; they just know they know it. Katz and Chard (1989) and Cadwell (1997), and others reported in their research that children
learn best when they are interested in the subject. Knowing where they learned about something was not a concept children were interested in doing at this age; so not knowing who told someone about kindergarten was not surprising. Many parents consistently emphasize the importance of the fact that a child is old enough to go to kindergarten. This would be a subject in which the child would be interested. Those parents may have influenced a child’s view about going to kindergarten in a positive or negative way. These children may have been able to respond that they learned about going to kindergarten from their parents. Brothers, sisters, or other relatives may have told stories about being in kindergarten. These stories may have influenced the children interviewed in one way or another. Thus children would say that they knew about kindergarten from these relatives. Other children would not have thought about who told them about kindergarten.

Another question asked of the children was “What will your teacher be like?” For this question seven did not know after the first round of questioning. Three children thought their teacher would be like the Head Start or Title 1 early education program teachers. It was interesting to note that some children thought their teacher would be like
the teacher they had. This was consistent with research by Potter and Briggs (2005) that reported children’s views were based on their experiences. Since they had not met their future kindergarten teacher, they could only report based on the teacher they had.

Children’s responses did change after the visit or with the second interview. The Head Start children had responded more before the visit that they thought their teacher would be like the one they currently had. After the visit these response became ‘good’ (21% pre- and 14% post-) or ‘kinda fun’ (pre - 14% and post - 0).

Since the Head Start children had visited the kindergarten classroom they expected to attend in the fall, this gave them a new experience to report. The Title I early education program responses remained almost identical between the two interviews with the same children answering ‘I don’t know’ both times.

When talking with children about what they needed to do to go to kindergarten, their responses indicated that six of them thought they needed a backpack. Piaget thought that ‘all children must be able to understand the world in concrete terms before they can begin to think in the abstract” (Singer & Revenson, 1996, p. 19). Core-knowledge
theorists (Siegler, DeLoache, & Eisenberg, 2003) have stated that preschool children organize information into category hierarchies: very general, general, medium, and specific. Concepts in this study included buying a backpack or a lunchbox that children grouped together with the concept of going to kindergarten, a general category. When children started preschool, they purchased a backpack. The concrete thought of this period allowed them to know that they needed a backpack and lunch box which children understood was needed to start kindergarten. The children’s responses that they needed a backpack to go to school or scissors and crayons were typical for these developing children and were consistent with research by Di Santo (2007).

Other responses from the children were that they needed crayons, pencils, and other supplies to start kindergarten. While it would appear that they were thinking about the type of work they might be doing in kindergarten, it could also be said that these children could also have brothers or sisters who have started school and these supplies were on the list each year. In preschool children need crayons or pencils to do the ‘work’ they need to do. They are not necessarily an indication that children are
Limitations

A mixed method approach was used to design this research study. In this method, both quantitative and qualitative information was gathered. The following limitations exist:

1. The ability of children to predict future events or describe future concepts was different for each child.

"Asking a young child to report an event that will occur ‘tomorrow’ may result in the child stating an anticipated event, but not necessarily one that falls within the conceptual boundaries of this term" (Atance & Meltzoff, 2006). Atance and Meltzoff found that children’s predictions were related to the present state of mind and individual differences of the children. Children in this study were interviewed in their preschool settings during class time. At this time in their schedule they were participating in free play. For some children when they were interviewed, what they were doing could affect their state of mind. The research asked the children to stop what they were doing.
It could have been asking them to leave doing something children really like and going with the researcher to answer some questions. This task could have frustrated them so that their answers were not accurate.

Children’s development would be another area that could affect their ability to describe how they feel or think about concepts. There are many aspects affecting children’s development including the age of the child, the genetics of children, and how they were raised. Because of individual differences in children’s cognitive development, children’s abilities to predict what kindergarten might be like differed according to their development. All children develop at their own rate based on experiences and genetic factors. Siegler, DeLoache, and Eisenberg (2005) reported that with age children’s understanding and abilities change. Children in this study reported they were between ages four (32) and six (1). Understanding that children develop differently due to many factors and the age of the children in this study were different, one understood that this limitation occurred.

2. Participates in this sample were limited to those who gave permission creating the small size (N = 61) of the sample.
To truly understand the perception of children about going to kindergarten a larger sample would be needed since each year there are thousands of children going to kindergarten. This would allow for more robust statistical analysis of the hypothesis questions. In order to obtain a larger sample size, more classrooms or more facilities would need to be recruited.

3. No standardized instrument exists to understand a child’s perception of going to kindergarten. A questionnaire was adapted from one used for children that were in kindergarten asking what they thought about going to school (first grade).

The study was designed using a questionnaire which was adapted from instruments used in the 1990s. Because these questionnaires were designed for kindergarten children transitioning to first grade, the questions had to be reworded to be used with preschool children. Even with a pilot study, the depth of the questions on the revised survey and in the interview questions may not really assess the completeness of what the children think about going to kindergarten. Interviewing children at this age has been shown to be problematic (Garbarino & Stott, 1989; Goodman, 1994; Priestly & Pipe, 1997; Steward & Steward, 1996).
The interviews of the children were completed in a pre- and post-design but occurred within three months of each other. This presented two problems for this study. With only two interviews, children were not able to become familiar with the researcher. When interviewing children it has been established that the researcher must become familiar with setting and to the child and to gain the child’s trust of the interviewer. Attempts were made to allow the children to become familiar with the researcher but not with the individual children participating in the study.

Concerns about how the children responded to the questions or what children would do also present a limitation to using interviews with children. Because there were only two interviews it is possible that the children did not trust the interview. By interviewing more than two times the researcher may have been able to get at the perceptions of the children. One way to do this would have been for the interviewer to make many visits to the classroom allowing the researcher at first to just observe and get to know the class. Each subsequent visit would have included reading of a story that fits into the theme or topic of discussion that week. Another way was to play
a game with children. These would allow the children to relax and loosen their defenses thus making communication easier. After making these visits, the researcher could proceed to the classroom and interview the children for this study. The second problem was that children are not familiar with the interview process. Basing the child’s perception on these questions may not indicate the actual level of perception by the children. The questions used were based on a previously designed questionnaire as a way to start investigating these perceptions. The research design included only two interviews.

Interviewing children has been done as part of an evaluation when child abuse has been a concern. However, it has not been done much with preschool children as a tool to understand what they are thinking. There has been a slow international movement (Di Santo, 2006; Dockett & Perry, 2003; Potter & Briggs, 2003) to consider children’s perceptions and their experiences. This is a change from conventional wisdom that children cannot report these things.

Another method suggested including something that prompts the children to recall the information and put them at ease such as a photograph, puppets, or dramatic play
props (Alderson, 2000; Garbarino & Stott, 1989; Save The Children Foundation, 2006; Samuelsson, 2004).

4. When interviewing children of this age, the interviewers need to be concerned that the children completely understand the questions being asked. Because many of the children answered quickly it cannot be certain that the children included in this study took the questions seriously or understood exactly what the researcher was asking. Preschool children typically have responded better to questions that are simple and direct rather than open-ended questions (Bierman & Welsh, 2000). Many what questions were used in this study however, Bierman and Welsh stated that some children will ignore or give an answer because they cannot understand the format or wording of the question. This has been shown to happen when children were under stress, conflict or have ‘immature social-emotional development’ (p. 226). Preschool children’s were able to understand questions that asked who, what, and where but had difficulty with when and why questions. Since the questions in this questionnaire were asking about when they go to kindergarten and how will they feel about items, some children in this study may have had difficulty providing information to help the researcher
understand how they felt. Some researchers prefer to interview several children at a time in order to obtain the best data. By doing this, the researchers have suggested that the children will help each other recall or respond to the interview questions in a richer manner because they support each other’s thoughts and responses (Garbarino & Stott, 1989; Goodman, 1994; Save The Children, June, 2005). In a study by Lewis (1992) it was conclude that the use of group interviews may allow for ‘richer responses’ to the questions because the children use the ideas of others to facilitate their responses. While this method has been used with primary-aged children, using a group to discuss what children think about going to kindergarten could have generated more and richer responses from the children as a group rather than just the yes/no, happy/sad responses that were given. It was suggested by Lewis that children are less intimidated when talking with a group than by themselves. Di Santo (2007) used focus groups in her research concerning children perceptions about going to kindergarten.

5. After completing this study, another limitation would be the generalizability of the study to other social-economic groups, other regions, or countries.
This research was limited to only two groups, both designed to work with children and families in poverty. Another factor was that both groups were from the same mid-west state. In order to determine if the results were applicable to other children, other states and facilities needed to be included.

6. All children in the study had many opportunities to visit kindergarten.

The children at the Title 1 early education program indicated, when asked if they had visited a kindergarten classroom, that they had also visited the kindergarten classroom. They replied that they had a sibling in kindergarten or other grades in elementary school. This gave them some insight into kindergarten and may have flawed their responses.

7. There was no way to control for experimental error because of 1) the number of questions (26) and 2) the independence.

Suppose $\text{Alpha}_{ew} = .05$ is desired. Then we need $\text{Alpha}_{pc}$ to be $.05/.26 = .002$ where $\text{alpha}_{ew}$ equals experimentwise error rate and $\text{alpha}_{pc}$ refers to question by question error rate. This makes inference from my data even more difficult as none of the tests were quite significant at the alpha=0.05.
level. When investigating the individual questions to see if there were any differences only three questions for the teachers and one for the parents were found to be significant. Using this calculation we would be unable to detect any differences in this type of data.

Another concern is that the questions are related to each other. For example, the first question for teachers concerned a kindergarten visit and the second question was about visiting the exact kindergarten the child would be attending.

Conclusions

Researchers (Belsky & MacKinnon, 1994) have indicated that how children begin kindergarten sets the stage for their future success in school. Current research (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003) has been on what procedures need be happening to help children transition to kindergarten as a means of setting this stage. But little research has been conducted on what the children think about going to kindergarten. This research study sought to investigate what children perceive about going to kindergarten as a means of beginning to understand what their opinions are. However, in the present study the quantitative results
indicated that there was no significant difference between a Head Start group and a Title 1 early education program in what children perceive about the transition to kindergarten. Most children in both groups indicated that they were excited about going to kindergarten which was consistent with research.

Because preschool children tend to base their views and perceptions on their own experiences, children were interviewed to gain insight other than quantitatively on what they think. These interviews indicated the majority of children were excited or happy to go to kindergarten. Fewer did not know how they felt, or were afraid or had negative feelings toward going. This is consistent with research by Atance and Meltzoff (2006), Dockett and Perry (2006), and Squires (1999).

Several concepts appeared during the interviews; one was that children thought play would occur in some fashion when they went to kindergarten. Squires (1999) indicated that children regarded kindergarten as a place where both learning and play would take place. Some children in this present study indicated that they would look forward to recess so they could play with their friends. Other children referred to playing of games such as a caterpillar
game or toys in kindergarten. The idea of recess and play was reinforced when the students from Head Start visited the kindergarten classrooms and schools they would attend in the fall of 2008. The Title 1 early education program students also commented that many of them had been to see a kindergarten or elementary school to pick up siblings or other relatives. These students would also have seen the playground areas. Since children of this age function in the realm of what they know, seeing the playground would have reinforced the idea of play in their minds.

The children in both groups replied that they thought that their kindergarten teacher would be like their preschool teacher before attending the kindergarten visit or at the post-interview. In a previous study by Squires (1999) this was also found to be true.

What was missing from the children’s responses was any of the academic skills many parents believe these children need to go to kindergarten. Only one child responded that he needed to know how to write his name to go to kindergarten. This was also found in research by Dockett and Perry (2004) and Di Santo (2006). However, several children did mention that they would have homework to do or read a book when they got to kindergarten in response to
the question concerning what children would do in kindergarten than what they needed to do to go to kindergarten.

Response from parents in the sample indicated no significant difference in what they did to prepare their children for kindergarten. Additionally, there was no difference in what the Head Start teachers did to prepare the children for kindergarten and the Title 1 early education program teachers did.

This study was only able to look briefly at children’s perceptions and was not able to investigate deeply what children are thinking. Children in this study indicated that they were excited about going to kindergarten and that play would be part of the kindergarten year. However, further research on children’s perceptions about going to kindergarten is needed to investigate if these conclusions can be supported by other children.

Head Start and Title 1 early education program teachers prepared their children for the transition to kindergarten in the same manner. The parents of both groups did the same things to prepare their children for kindergarten. What teachers and parents did to prepare these children for kindergarten did support other
researchers’ findings (Conn-Powers & Peters, 2006; Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003).

Implications for Practice

Teachers

Pianta and Kraft-Sayre (2003) suggest a transition coordinator is one of the ways teachers and schools can facilitate a child’s transition to kindergarten. Although this study did not find a correlation between the employment of the transition coordinator and children's perceptions of attending kindergarten, specific research has pointed to the transition coordinator as being a pivotal position in organizing and supporting children’s transitions to kindergarten (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003). It could be the responsibility of the transition coordinator to plan activities for both the parents and teachers to help the children with this transition.

Pianta and Cox (1999) state “it is essential that the transition to school occurs in such a way that children and families have a positive view of the school and that children have a feeling of perceived competence as learners...” (p.XV). As schools move to ready themselves for incoming children, one of the possibilities has been the
hiring of a transition coordinator (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003). A transition coordinator would work to plan activities that pave the way for children and families toward kindergarten. These activities could include the sharing of information from early childhood facilities concerning the child, which was indicated in this study as approaching a significant difference. In this way, the kindergarten teachers would have access to information from the previous facility.

The transition coordinator would also plan events that would link the preschool facilities and the elementary schools such as family nights. These have been shown to help preschool children feel a sense of belonging to the new classroom and meet the teachers and staff from kindergarten (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003). Pianta and Kraft-Sayre (2003) suggested a transition coordinator could help identify any problems that are unique to individual schools and act as a liaison to help address these problems.

These activities would help children in the transition process. Head Start had a transition coordinator but the Title 1 early education program did not. In this study, the Title 1 early education program had a resource center
facilitator which could have been assigned similar projects as the transition coordinator at Head Start.

Children at this age (Atance & Meltzoff, 2005) have trouble with thinking about the future. Teachers in both groups could help facilitate children’s abilities to predict by talking about what would happen in a story or conducting science experiments in which children have to predict what will happen. A chart could be made and then the children could observe what actually happens. This could help children who indicated that they did not know how they felt or answered that they did not know by giving these children experiences in predicting. Children need experiences to help develop the skills necessary to predict.

Parents

Joyce Epstein wrote in 1995 that there were many reasons for the creation of partnerships between the schools and families. A transition coordinator would begin to create a partnership between the early childhood facilities and the elementary schools. Even though the kindergarten visits by Head Start children made no difference in this study, this visit was an example of the work by the transition coordinator. During these visits,
the coordinator made sure that the principals giving the tours addressed how parents could become involved after their child start kindergarten. It has been found that children do best when parents are enabled to help in their children's learning: as teachers (helping children at home), as supporters (contributing their skills to the school), and as advocates (helping children receive fair treatment (Epstein, 1995; Henderson & Berla, 1994).

Volunteering at school has been identified as one of the six types of parental involvement (Brown, 1989; Epstein, 1995; Keyes, 2002). Both Head Start and Title 1 programs are mandated by the government to have a parent involvement component (Office of Head Start, 2006; ESEA, P.L. 89-10, 79 Stat. 27, 20 U.S.C. ch.70). By finding ways other than going on field trips or helping with classroom parties, the Title 1 early education program would contribute to their children’s success in school. Epstein (1995) stated that working as partners created better programs and supported students’ success in school. When parents are involved in their child’s school, children do better in school (National Education Association, 2008). A child doing better in school is a goal of successful transitions to kindergarten and would help children develop
a positive outlook on going to kindergarten. What the child thinks about this process including how they feel about going to kindergarten was a quest in this study as was what the parents had done to prepare the child for this step. This study found that some children were scared or unhappy about going to kindergarten. If their parents were involved with school, this involvement could help the child feel better about school and thus have a more successful transition.

Children

Children in research studies by Di Santo (2006) and Dockett and Perry (2003) reviewed indicated that they were excited or happy to go to kindergarten. Kindergarten has been perceived by many to be the first step in a child’s life in the ‘big school’. However, this study was not able to delve deeply into these children’s perceptions about this process because of several limitations. Using a different method of data collection could improve this understanding. Researchers (Evans & Fuller, 1998) have suggested role playing as a possible method to understand children’s perceptions. “Using play allows us to know and understand the child, and allows the child to feel comfortable” suggested Vasquez (2000). In this way the
child may reveal what they are thinking or feeling. This method has been used in clinical settings because most children have trouble communicating through strictly oral means is a challenge for many young children. Vivian Paley examined this construct in her work *a child’s work* (2004) when she stated “it is in the development of their themes and characters and plots that children explain their thinking” (p 8). These themes could be accomplished through the use doll houses or using the dramatic play center set up to be a kindergarten classroom and observing and recording how children act, react, or interact with the props provided or as Paley (2001) has suggested that children could write their stories and act them out. In this method, a child could dictate a story about a child going to kindergarten or the whole class could contribute to the story. Either way, we would have a better understanding of what children think about going to kindergarten.

Another method that has been suggested was asking children to draw pictures about what they think kindergarten will be like. This was a part of the present study but most of the drawings the children did were not about kindergarten classrooms. One child drew a dinosaur;
another pictures of his family. One child talked about going to Mexico to go to kindergarten as he drew a picture about a motor cycle going to Mexico. Two of the children in the qualitative study drew about school while two children did not want to draw a picture.

Recommendations for Future Research

Upon the completion of this study and after drawing the above conclusions, additional questions have come to light. The perceptions of the children were measured during the spring semester before they were to attend kindergarten. Would these perceptions change as the new school approached? Would these perceptions change for a larger population or for a different socio-economic group? Future studies could focus on the smaller qualitative questions but a longitudinal study could be done, which focused on the year before and the year of kindergarten to further understand what children are thinking. In this way, the children’s perceptions concerning going to kindergarten could better reflect their growth or development because they would investigate any changes that occur during the two year time frame.
Additionally, studies have been completed on this topic in Australia (Docket and Perry, 2002) and in Canada (Di Salvo, 2007). It would be interesting to replicate these studies and compare the results to consider cultural differences. Both of these studies were completed on a larger sample size and involved many other aspects (i.e. considering the environments of the facilities the children attended) who were interviewed not considered in this current study. By investigating aspects such as the quality of the facilities, perhaps a better understanding of the role teachers and parents play in preparing the children for kindergarten. The Di Santo study used the Early Childhood Rating Scale Revised (ECERS-R) to look at the environment and the role this played in the perceptions. The ECERS-R has been completed on some of the classrooms in the Title 1 early education program as part of research being conducted by the Indiana Department of Education of (INSIG, 2008) but this information did not include any of that data in the quest to understand children’s perceptions or what the teachers had done to prepare the children for kindergarten. This research study did not include this aspect but this could also be another possibility to focus
on in order to understand what children think about going to school.

Summary
Transitioning to kindergarten is the current focus of many states and school districts throughout the country (LaPara, Pianta, & Cox, 2000; Lin, Lawrence, & Gorrell, 2003; Pianta & Cox, 1999; Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003; Rous & Hallam, 2006). It is widely accepted by early childhood educators that children at this age will enter kindergarten with a wide variety of experiences. This research found that most children are excited or happy to be going to kindergarten in the spring semester before starting kindergarten. There was no difference found in the statistical analysis tests between the children attending a local Head Start program and those attending a Title 1 early education program. However, children anticipated being able to play or learn new things when they got to kindergarten often citing recess as one of the things they knew about the future class. A backpack or lunch box was something they needed to have to go to kindergarten and they knew these things because parents, siblings, or relatives had told them. Many children had visited
kindergarten, some because the program planned a trip to the future classroom and school and others because they accompanied their parents to the school to visit or pick up siblings.

The teachers of Head Start had the use of a transition coordinator to facilitate this visitation and make connections with the public school kindergarten teachers. As the researcher wandered the halls conducting the research, the Title 1 early education teachers asked about the transition coordinator. This coordinator, cited by researchers as one of the ideas the school districts can use to facilitate better transitions for the children. However, this did not seem to have an effect on the children’s perceptions about going to kindergarten.

Parents of both groups prepared their children in similar ways. However, because of the planned visitation by Head Start, these parents had done this or were planning to do this with their children and knew this when they were completing their surveys. The Title 1 early education program parents did not consider this as part of their preparation even knowing they would be attending the kindergarten round up. This visitation did not seem to change the Head Start children’s perceptions about going to
kindergarten, as there was no difference between the pre- and the post- interviews. The Title 1 early education program parents did not indicate that they volunteered at their school.

The importance of making the transition to kindergarten smooth and ensuring success and thus paving the way for children’s success in kindergarten and later in school is an important one. This topic warrants further investigation in order to facilitate children’s transition to kindergarten. Future research should be completed not only to ascertain children’s perceptions about this transition but also to facilitate the most appropriate methods to ensure all children’s success in school. With the slow, growing trend to ask children about their perceptions, this research adds to this discussion. It is the recommendation of this researcher that children be asked, either by interviewing or by using toy settings to observe what they think. Children have a voice and their perceptions need to be heard.
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Appendix A Permission Letters

February 7, 2008

Dear Parents:

My name is Mrs. Pamela Sebura and I am a student at Ball State University. I am doing a research project for my dissertation at Ball State to look at how children prepare for kindergarten. I am writing to ask you to consider helping me out with my research. If you have already returned a permission slip, thank you. If not please consider doing so.

I am interested in interviewing and observing children as they get ready to go to kindergarten in the fall. I will be doing an interview in January and in April. These interviews will last approximately 15 minutes and take place in your child’s Head Start classroom during which I will ask your child what he or she thinks about going to kindergarten. The interviews will be audio-taped so that I can go back and review the answers. These tapes will be transcribed to check the accuracy of my recording of responses. All data will be destroyed after two years.

Attached to this letter is a consent form which describes in more detail what I am doing as part of this research. If you would allow me to interview and observe your child, please sign the enclosed form.

When you return the consent form, please take a few minutes to complete the parent survey that is on the reverse side of the form. You can then return both the consent form and the parent survey in the enclosed envelope.

Please feel free to call me if you have any questions. This study will be for my dissertation but I am anticipating that it will help teachers understand what children are thinking as they enter kindergarten. I will be happy to forward to you by mail a summary of my findings. Please return by February 15, 2008.

Thank you for considering this request to interview your child.

Sincerely,

Pamela Sebura
Ball State University
Graduate Student

Enclosure (1)
nps
The purpose of this research project is to examine how children view the process of transitioning from preschool to kindergarten. For this project, children will be asked a series of questions concerning their feelings and thoughts about going to kindergarten. It will take about 15 minutes to do this interview. For the purposes of accuracy, with your permission, the interviews will be audio taped.

I am also interested in what the parents of these children do before their children transition to kindergarten. For this area, I have developed a survey for parents to complete. This survey is included in this letter. When you are giving permission for your child to be interviewed, please complete the survey and return it with the permission slip.

All data will be maintained as confidential and no identifying information such as your name will appear in any publication or presentation of the data. Data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher’s office. Data will be destroyed within two years of completing this project. The information from this study will be used to compare what parents and children say by calculating the means of each answer.

The foreseeable risks or ill effects from participating in this study are minimal. One benefit you may gain from your child’s participation in this study may be a better understanding of how your child feels about his move from Head Start to kindergarten.

Your child’s participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw him or her from the study at anytime for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the investigator. Your child’s name will not appear in any publications. He/she will be only indicated by Child A, Child B, Child C, etc. Please feel free to ask any questions of me before signing this consent form and beginning the study, and at any time during the study.

For one’s rights as a research subject, the following person may be contacted: Coordinator of Research Compliance, Office of Academic Research and Sponsored Programs, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5070.

**************

I, ____________________________, agree to allow my child, __________________________ to participate in this research project entitled, “Transitioning to Kindergarten: A Multi-Perspective.” I have had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read the description of this project and give my consent for my child to participate. I understand that I will receive a copy of this informed consent form to keep for future reference. My child has____________________ for a teacher.

Signature of Parent of child taking part in study

Principal Investigator
Pamela L. Sebura, Graduate Student
Early Childhood Education
Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47306
Email: plsebura@bsu.edu
Telephone: 765-286-5518

Faculty Supervisor
Dr. James Stroud
Dept. of Elementary Education
Teachers College
Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47306
Email: jstroud@bsu.edu
Telephone: 765-285-8563
January 28, 2008

Dear Teachers:

My name is Mrs. Pamela Sebura and I am a student at Ball State University. I am doing a research project at Ball State to look at how children prepare for kindergarten for my dissertation.

I am interested in interviewing and observing children as they get ready to go to kindergarten in the fall. These interviews will last approximately 15 minutes and take place in your Head Start classroom during which I ask children what he or she thinks about going to kindergarten. The interviews will be audio-taped so that I can go back and look at their answers.

I would appreciate it you would answer some questions about the issue of kindergarten prior to my first interview. These questions concern the children and what you have or have not done already in the classroom. Attached to this letter is a consent form which describes in more detail what I am doing as part of this research. If you would complete the survey and allow me to interview you, please sign the enclosed form.

Please feel free to call me if you have any questions. This study will be for a class I am taking but I am anticipating that it will help teachers understand what children are thinking as they enter kindergarten. I will be happy to forward to you by mail a summary of my findings.

Thank you for allowing me to interview.

Sincerely,

Pamela Sebura
Ball State University
Graduate Student

Enclosure (1)

pss
January 28, 2008

Dear Teachers:

My name is Mrs. Pamela Sebura and I am a student at Ball State University. I am doing a research project at Ball State to look at how children prepare for kindergarten for my dissertation.

I am interested in interviewing and observing children, as they get ready to go to kindergarten in the fall. This interview will last approximately 15 minutes and take place in your child’s classroom during which I ask children what he or she thinks about going to kindergarten. The interviews will be audio-taped so that I can go back and look at their answers.

I would appreciate it you would answer some questions about the issue of kindergarten prior to my first interview. These questions concern the children and what you have or have not done already in the classroom. Attached to this letter is a consent form, which describes in more detail what I am doing as part of this research. If you would complete the survey and allow me to interview you, please sign the enclosed form.

Please feel free to call me if you have any questions. This study will be for a class I am taking but I am anticipating that it will help teachers understand what children are thinking as they enter kindergarten. I will be happy to forward to you by mail a summary of my findings.

Thank you for allowing me to interview your students and talk with you about what you have done in your classroom.

Sincerely,

Pamela Sebura
Ball State University
Graduate Student

Enclosure (1)
pss
Dear Parents:

My name is Mrs. Pamela Sebura and I am a student at Ball State University. I am doing a research project for my dissertation at Ball State University to look at how children prepare for kindergarten.

I am interested in interviewing and observing children, as they get ready to go to kindergarten in the fall. I will be doing an interview in January and again in late April or early May. These interviews will last approximately 15 minutes and take place in your child’s classroom during which I ask your child what he or she thinks about going to kindergarten. The interviews will be audio-taped so that I can go back and review the answers. These tapes will be transcribed to check the accuracy of my recording of responses. All data will be destroyed after two years.

Attached to this letter is a consent form, which describes in more detail what I am doing as part of this research. If you would allow me to interview and observe your child, please sign the enclosed form. Also included is a parent survey. Please complete this survey and return it with the consent form.

Please feel free to call me if you have any questions. This study will be for my dissertation but I am anticipating that it will help teachers understand what children are thinking as they enter kindergarten. I will be happy to forward to you by mail a summary of my findings. Please return by January 31, 2008.

Thank you for considering this request to interview your child.

Sincerely,

Pamela Sebura
Ball State University
Graduate Student

Enclosure (1)
Appendix B

Parent Survey - Preschool

Parents help out at school in different ways, depending on their situations. Parents help their children with activities. What kinds of activities have you been involved with at your child’s school this year? Please indicate if you have done the following activities during this past year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Activity</th>
<th>1-2 times</th>
<th>3 or more times</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Visited kindergarten classroom in the spring</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Attended a kindergarten roundup</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Met the kindergarten teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Met the school principal</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Went on a tour of the school</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Talked with the child’s preschool teacher or transition coordinator about transition issues</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Met the transition coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Received a letter from the school</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Read to your child about starting kindergarten</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Worked with your child to learn his/her address</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Worked with your child to learn his/her telephone number</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Taken your child to play on the new school playground</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Read any books or magazines articles about starting kindergarten</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Talked with other parents about your child’s school</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Taught your child to tie his/her shoes</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Talked with your child about what kinds of things he/she will do in kindergarten</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. Discussed how to behave in kindergarten</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Practiced getting ready for school or any other daily routines that will occur when he/she goes to kindergarten</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19. Contacted your child’s teacher through notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. Volunteered or helped out in your child’s classroom</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>21. Talked with the child’s teacher by telephone or in person</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. Helped with field trips or other special events</td>
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<tr>
<td>23. Attended parent-teacher conferences</td>
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<tr>
<td>24. Discussed with your child the kinds of work they will do in kindergarten</td>
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<tr>
<td>25. Attended a family night at the school your child will attend next year</td>
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<tr>
<td>26. Talked with family members or friends who have school-age children</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

Teacher Survey

The following activities relate to helping children make the transition to kindergarten. For each activity, please indicate whether you participated in the activity or not during this past year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Preschool children visited a kindergarten classroom.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Preschool children visited the specific kindergarten class they are anticipated to attend next year.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I visited the kindergarten classroom.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Elementary school children visited my preschool classroom.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Parents of preschool children attended kindergarten roundup.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Preschool children participated in a family night with the kindergarten classes of the school the anticipate they will attend.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. I had an individual meeting with parent(s) of a preschool child about kindergarten issues.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. I shared written records of children’s preschool experience and status with elementary school personnel.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. I met with kindergarten teachers about the curriculum.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. I contacted kindergarten teachers about specific children.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. I read books about going to kindergarten to my class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. I know about the Foundations for Young Children.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. I talked with my class about going to kindergarten.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I have talked with the transition coordinator about getting my children ready for kindergarten.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

WHAT I THINK OF SCHOOL

Dialogue: "Right now, we would like to find out what you think about school. Of course, there are no right or wrong answers on these questions. You just need to answer them in a way that best describes how you feel." (Use the circle in this dialogue. Be sure to introduce this by practicing with the child first in how to use the rating scale.)

1. How much do you like school?
   - I like school a lot.
   - I sort of like school.
   - I don't like school very much.

2. How well ("good") do you do at your school work, compared to others in your class?
   - My school work is great.
   - My school work is sort of good.
   - My school work is not very good.

3. How important is it to you to do well ("good") in school?
   - It is very important.
   - It is sort of important.
   - It is not very important to me.

4. How hard do you try at school?
   - I try very hard.
   - I sort of try.
   - I don't really try very hard.

5. How important is it to your parents that you do well in school?
   - It is very important to my parents.
   - It is sort of important to my parents.
   - It is not very important to my parents.

6. How do you get along with your teacher?
   - I get along great with my teacher.
   - I sort of get along with my teacher.
   - I don't get along with my teacher.

7. How do you get along with the other children at school?
   - I get along great with the other children at school.
   - I sort of get along with the other children at school.
   - I don't get along with the other children at school.

8. How much does your teacher help you learn new things?
   - My teacher is really very good at helping me learn new things.
   - My teacher is sort of good.
   - My teacher is not too good.

EXAMINER'S RATING OF CHILD (OPTIONAL)

1. Child's interest during task:
   Comments:__________________________

2. Child's cooperation:
   Comments:__________________________

3. Child's comprehension of questions and activities:
   Comments:__________________________

4. Child's enjoyment of task:
   Comments:__________________________

Examiner's comments about child's interest, communication about traits, self, and/or task.
Appendix E Original What I Think About School Questionnaire

WHAT I THINK ABOUT SCHOOL

INSTRUCTIONS AND DATA RECORD FORM

Child ID________________ Date ______________RA ID _________

The following items ask the child about their perceptions of school. Say to the child: "Now I’m going to ask you some questions about school. For each sentence about school, tell me how true it is for you." Give the child the response card, then start with question 1, reading each question to the child while showing the response sheet to the child. Record the child’s responses on this form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. In general, I like school a lot.</td>
<td>Not at all true</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. School bores me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I don’t do well at school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I don’t feel like I really belong at school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Homework is a waste of time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I try hard at school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I usually finish my homework.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Grades are very important to me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I feel very close to at least one of my teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I get along well with my teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all true</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Other students think I am a good student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>I do most of my school work without help from others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>I do well in school, even in hard subjects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>My teachers think I am a good student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>I often get in trouble at school for arguing, fighting, or not following the rules.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>When I get stuck on a school assignment, I can always get help from someone like a teacher, friend, one of my parents, one of my brothers or sisters, or someone else.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Even when there are other interesting things to do, I keep up with my schoolwork.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>I am able to do a good job of organizing and planning my schoolwork.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Learning schools subjects is easy for me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>I know how to study and how to pay attention in class so that I do well in school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F What I Think About School – R Pre- and Post-Interviews

WHAT I THINK ABOUT SCHOOL – R

INSTRUCTIONS AND DATA RECORD FORM

Child ID

Date

RA ID

The following items ask the child about their perceptions of school. Say to the child: "Now I'm going to ask you some questions about going to kindergarten. For each sentence about school, tell me how true it is for you." You will respond by answering yes or are happy: answering no or are sad; and if you don't care or don't know. Show the child the response cards, and then start with question 1, reading each question to the child while showing the response sheet to the child. Record the child's responses on this form.

First, I want to ask you some questions to try out this system.

Sample questions:

1. In general, how do you feel at school?
2. I don't feel like I really belong at school.
3. How do you think you do at school?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Happy</th>
<th>I Don't Care/Know</th>
<th>Sad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>How do you feel about going to kindergarten?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Will your kindergarten teacher think you are good student?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Will you like going to kindergarten?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Will kindergarten be a lot of work?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Will your kindergarten teachers get along with you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Will you try hard in kindergarten?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>How do your parents feel about you going to kindergarten?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Will your kindergarten teacher help you learn new things?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Will you meet other children in kindergarten and get along with them?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Is learning school things easy for you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G
Qualitative questions for children’s interviews

Code: Date:
Child’s Name: Family Race:
Date of Birth: C. A.

(After establishing that the child is attending kindergarten in the fall,) start by saying “You will be going to kindergarten soon. You have some special thinking about kindergarten and I would like to learn from what it will be like.

1. What do you think kindergarten will be like?
2. How do you know what kindergarten will be like?
   - Siblings 
   - Kindergarten visit 
   - Parents 
   - Pre-k teachers 
   - Kindergarten teacher 
   - Friends
3. What do you think you will do in kindergarten?
4. What will your teacher be like?
5. Do you need to do anything to go to kindergarten?
6. Could you draw me a picture about what you think will happen in kindergarten?
7. I would like to write something about your picture, can you tell me about it?
8. How do you feel about going to kindergarten in the fall?
9. Do you have any questions about going to kindergarten?
Interview notes -

Style: Talkative  Reticent  Not very talkative
Appendix H – Qualitative Responses

1. What do you think kindergarten will be like?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID #</th>
<th>First interview - February/March</th>
<th>2nd Interview - April/May</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Playing</td>
<td>I don’t know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I hate kindergarten</td>
<td>Boring. I don’t like kindergarten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fun, play, get to make a hat</td>
<td>A good person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Nice</td>
<td>Play, play down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>Like this school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>I’ve never been to kindergarten</td>
<td>good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>fun, going to - they have monkey bars there</td>
<td>A lot of people will be happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>Have fun, play a boat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>Be good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>excited</td>
<td>Have games, a snail and a caterpillar game. I don’t know how to play it has twisty and curves on those twisty pipes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Have to be 5</td>
<td>Clean up and be nice to my brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Not going to be boring, I will learn new things</td>
<td>good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>A lot of fun</td>
<td>cool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>withdrawn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Response tallies – 1st 2nd

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play/fun (positive) - 9</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know - 5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative - 1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other - 1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. How do you know what kindergarten will be like?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID #</th>
<th>1st response</th>
<th>2nd response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>K visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>K visit/ an angel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sibling in kindergarten</td>
<td>I don’t want to go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gramma</td>
<td>Brother, kindergarten visit, grandma and grandpa, friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Just like kindergarten</td>
<td>No answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>No one</td>
<td>Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>When I get to go, I will know more probably</td>
<td>K visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Siblings</td>
<td>Kindergarten visit, just when my Mom went to sign me up I got to see the baby chickens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Me and mommy are going to kindergarten, parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>All the day we come here to play on the playground</td>
<td>Kindergarten visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>siblings</td>
<td>I told myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Siblings be in a different class than in preschool. Gramma helps me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>Siblings, pre-k teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>withdrawn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tally of responses 1st</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents, siblings, family</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K visit</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. What do you think you will do in kindergarten?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID #</th>
<th>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; response</th>
<th>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Listen to my teacher</td>
<td>Playing, lots of work,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>painting, cook, school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Play</td>
<td>Nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Homework, boring</td>
<td>Do homework, read a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>play in the areas</td>
<td>Do great</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Play in the gym</td>
<td>Play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Play</td>
<td>Play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Go play</td>
<td>Eat lunch at tables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>with my friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Write words</td>
<td>I will do different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>No idea – I go tomorrow</td>
<td>Be good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Cross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Play</td>
<td>Play- go outside and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>play at recess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Play games and be nice</td>
<td>Play toys, sing, my</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>grannie always give a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>whooping when I be bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Have fun</td>
<td>Play with my friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Learn to be an artist</td>
<td>Learn new things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>Play, read books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Painting and playing</td>
<td>withdrawn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Response tally 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup>

- Play (positive) - 9 7
- Don’t know - 3 0
- Negative (homework boring) - 1 2
- Other - 3 4
### 4. What will your teacher be like?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID #</th>
<th>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; response</th>
<th>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>I don’t know (shrugs shoulders)</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Like Head Start teacher</td>
<td>Like my Head Start teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Her going to go to another school</td>
<td>good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Just like my Head Start teacher</td>
<td>Kind of fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Like Head Start teacher</td>
<td>No answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>Fine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>don’t know</td>
<td>I don’t know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>Be happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Batell</td>
<td>Like Title 1 teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>Reading books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>different</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Nice</td>
<td>nice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>Good. I like going to kindergarten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>withdrawn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Response tally 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</strong></td>
<td><strong>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like my teacher - 3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know - 7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other - 6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Do you need to do anything to go to kindergarten?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID #</th>
<th>1st response</th>
<th>2nd response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>No lunch</td>
<td>Yes playing, pretend, eating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Play with this</td>
<td>Yes, I don’t know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Book bag</td>
<td>Scissors and crayons and paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Lunch, yes bottle of water, zip bag, pencils, fruit snack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Play in this classroom</td>
<td>No answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Title 1

| 58   | Food, my mom always packs a lunch for my sister | I have a backpack at home, you have to bring it to school everyday |
| 53   | Yes go to the store and get toys | Have fun and be good |
| 52   | Yes Mom | 4 |
| 48   | Book bag | Backpack |
| 47   | Yes, dance | Backpack |
| 34   | No backpack | Yes, writing. Practice my name |
| 33   | Yes, listen | A lunch box |
| 59   | Need something | Shakes head yes, I don’t know |
| 35   | No | withdrawn |

Response tally 1st

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2nd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book bag or back pack</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lunch</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. How do you feel about going to kindergarten in the fall?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID #</th>
<th>HS</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>When I cough I feel bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>I don’t know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Not sad anymore</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Still happy</td>
<td>No answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>Fine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Still feel sad</td>
<td>Really good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Scared because I have never been there. Been scared since I have been going to be hard work because I’ve never been there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>The kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>The kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Fine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Not sure how I feel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Excited about going to kindergarten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Good, excited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>I don’t know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>I don’t know what it’s like to go to a different school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response tally 1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good (positive)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sad (negative)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>