ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION/THESIS/RESEARCH PAPER/CREATIVE PROJECT: Quality Early Childhood Education: A Cost-Effective Intervention to Student Achievement

STUDENT: Barbara J. Flory

DEGREE: Doctor of Education

COLLEGE: Teachers College

DATE: July, 2012

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This research study focused on early childhood education programs that were implemented by public school districts in Indiana. The research questions addressed in this study were as follows:

1. What benefits related to student achievement does an investment of financial and human resources in preschool and/or full-day kindergarten programs show for students and for a school district?

2. What means of funding do school districts utilize to implement an early childhood education program?

3. What characteristics do successful early childhood programs possess, as determined by school district administrators?

The online survey, which was utilized to collect this data, was developed by the researcher. This survey was distributed to public school superintendents of 164 small and mid-sized school corporations in Indiana, of which 43 were small school corporations (0 to 1,000 students) and
121 were mid-sized school corporations (1,001 to 5,000 students). Of the total sample of 164 school districts, 48 surveys were returned, which resulted in a 29.3% response rate.

The data collected in this study showed the following results:

1. Students in the preschool programs showed increased acquisition of socialization skills and improved motivation in school.

2. School districts utilized a combination of federal funds, state funds, and federal grants to support their preschool programs.

3. The preschool programs were designed to incorporate the best practice characteristics of a curriculum based on the state early learning standards. The programs also were staffed with teachers who have four-year college degrees and have small class sizes of 20 students, with a staff-to-child ratio of ten students per adult (10:1).

These school districts could serve as a model for other school districts that are planning to implement a preschool program through a review of their experiences in designing the program, staffing the program, funding the program, and supporting the academics in the program.