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The advantages and disadvantages of school- and center-based preschool programs : implications for early childhood policy

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The advantages and disadvantages of school- and center-based preschool programs : implications for early childhood policy

Abstract

Currently, preschool programs in Iowa are found in a variety of locations and environments. This paper reports the advantages and disadvantages of school based, center based, and a blended program model with classrooms both in a center and school buildings. The purpose of this research is to provide information to school districts and preschool programs. Preschool professionals in Iowa were surveyed and interviewed about the physical locations of their programs. Methods in this study include a survey of 33 participants and 3 interviews. Research and implications for early childhood policy regarding physical locations of preschool programs are discussed. This research study provides more information to help administrators make an informed decision regarding locating programs.

The Advantages and Disadvantages of School-
and Center-Based Preschool Programs:
Implications for Early Childhood Policy

A Graduate Research Paper

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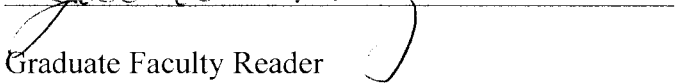
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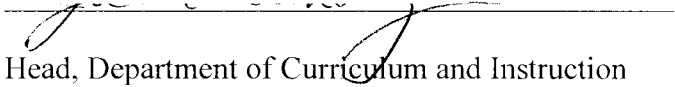
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ABSTRACT

Currently, preschool programs in Iowa are found in a variety of locations and environments. This paper reports the advantages and disadvantages of school based, center based and a blended program model with classrooms both in a center and school buildings. The purpose of this research is to provide information to school districts and preschool programs. Preschool professionals in Iowa were surveyed and interviewed about the physical locations of their programs. Methods in this study include a survey of 33 participants and 3 interviews. Research and implications for early childhood policy regarding physical locations of preschool programs are discussed. This research study provides more information to help administrators make an informed decision regarding locating programs.

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Introduction

This literature review and research study will focus on the effects of developmentally appropriate environments and locations of preschool programs. Over the years, an increase in the growth in preschool programs has led to an increased need for space. Dessoiff (2010) pointed out, "According to the Institute of Education Sciences in the U.S. Department of Education, 19,000 public schools had prekindergarten in 2000-2001. However by the 2007-2008 school year this number grew to 27,658" (p. 73). There is also a history in the movement of program locations and classrooms, especially within school districts, because of the need for space. School districts and agencies are left with the decisions of how to handle this growth. According to Clifford et al. (2005), "States have accumulated considerable experience in operating publicly sponsored pre-kindergarten programs. In spite of this extensive experience, only fragmentary accounts exist of how these pre-kindergarten (pre-k) programs handle issues such as program intensity, location, staffing, and population served" (p. 126). Currently, preschool programs in Iowa are found in a variety of locations and environments. My research will study the advantages and disadvantages of school- and center-based preschool programs. The purpose of this research is to provide information to school districts and preschool programs. My two research questions are:

1. What do preschool educators report about the advantages and disadvantages of their varying locations?
2. How have school districts and preschool programs handled the growth of programs and deciding on location of classrooms?

The influence of location on programs and young children has implications for policy decisions in regard to preschool programs and young children. Curran (2015) reported the

history of states adopting the universal preschool policy and reviewed a variety of studies on the effects of universal preschool programs. Curran also discussed that over the last couple of decades, public education and preschool education have been merging. I teach in a school district preschool program where our classrooms are located within elementary school buildings. Currently the district is in the process of deciding on whether to keep our classrooms within these buildings or placing us in a preschool center off campus. With my research I will be providing more information in order to help administrators make an informed decision.

Literature Review

I reviewed literature articles and studies from the last 10 years that are focused on the location of a variety of preschool programs. In Iowa and in the United States, the topic of preschool and where these programs are located is very relevant. However, as stated by Sachs and Weiland (2010), “But across the country, debate continues on whether to establish preschool programs in public schools rather than to strengthen existing community-based programs” (p. 74). In the Clifford et al. (2005) study this same question was mentioned as, “One basic question surrounding pre-k policy is whether programs operated under the auspices of public schools differ from other programs” (p. 127). This raises the question of what physical location (school based, center based, or a blend of both school- and center-based) is best for a preschool program, and the advantages and disadvantages of these locations.

Across the nation preschool programs have grown at a rapid rate as “Enrollment for both public and private prekindergarten programs has increased substantially over the last three decades” (Andrews & Slate, 2002, p. 60). Many preschool programs have been added to school districts and their buildings. According to Andrews and Slate (2002), “Attendance for public school prekindergarten programs increased, as well” (p. 61). In the Clifford et al. study (2005),

results indicated that 47% of preschool programs were located in public school buildings. Given this growth many questions are raised in order to handle this growth in a developmentally appropriate way. The main concern of many preschool professionals is how to best support children in these programs.

At a time when much emphasis is being placed on early childhood education and readiness for kindergarten, new prekindergarten programs, as well as prekindergarten programs already in existence, should be carefully examined to determine the effects such programs have on the students they serve (Andrews & Slate, 2002, p. 65).

One of the factors is location and the effects that the physical location of a preschool program has on children. The location of preschool programs should be studied in order to conclude the effects of this factor. Current research studies have reported mixed results about whether the actual location of the program affects student outcomes. In the Clifford et al. study (2005), results suggested that the location of the program was not correlated to any other characteristics. However, Goldstein, Warde, and Peluso (2013) indicated that the location of preschool programs may have had an effect on children's development, concluding, and "Findings suggest differences in the structural variables of the two programs may have contributed to the outcomes" (p. 1).

Even though the review of current literature is inconclusive about the location of preschool programs and the effects on student outcomes, there are many implications of location on school districts and programs. According to Clifford et al. (2005), "Understanding the implications of policy decisions regarding the population of children served, classroom location, program length, and teacher characteristics is critical as states continue to implement and expand pre-k programs" (p. 139). School districts and decision stakeholders play a vital role in the

future of our preschool programs. It is important that they have the information at hand in order to make informed decisions and understand the effects that may occur in response to these decisions. Clifford et al. (2005) warned, "Moreover, the findings that structural features of programs related to classroom, teacher, and child characteristics suggest that there may be unintended consequences of seemingly straightforward policy decisions" (p. 141).

However, there is limited research on the location of preschool programs and the implications. Research has focused on a variety of characteristics of preschool programs, not only location. Further research is recommended in the future in regard to the location of preschool programs to provide information about best practices in preschool education. According to Clifford et al. (2005), "Despite the growth in state-sponsored early childhood programs, little is known about features of program design or program quality" (p. 128). More studies and research are needed in the area of preschool education in order for programs to make informed decisions. According to LaParo, Thomason, Lower, Kintner-Duffy, and Cassidy (2012), "Results and information from such studies can then provide additional tools for programs and policy makers working toward continuous quality improvement of early education programs" (p. 6). Goldstein et al. (2013) also supported this call for research, "Public policymakers and taxpayers need research on child outcomes to support the economic investment and to facilitate program improvement." (p. 508).

Currently, many preschool programs and school districts are in positions where decisions need to be made about the location and future of their programs. Many of these decisions are overdue and are made under pressure with limited time and money. Dessoff (2010) discussed that public preschool programs have opened some challenges to school districts. Preschool funding was a major concern as the cost of developmentally appropriate environments is very

expensive in order to create and remodel school structures to be appropriate for young children. Many preschool programs are faced with these challenges and deciding the best way to proceed. According to Sachs and Weiland (2010), "Providing high-quality early childhood education is achievable in a large public school district in a short period of time" (p. 76). If school districts are provided with research and information, then making informed decisions in a short period of time can be successful for all involved.

Methodology

Across the state of Iowa, preschool programs are located within a variety of settings. Some programs are in school buildings, some in centers off school campuses and some in a blended program model with classrooms both in a center and school buildings. I designed my study to discover what information and insights we can gain from other district experiences across the state of Iowa. In the literature that I have reviewed, a mix of methods have been used. Andrews and Slate (2002) collected data through classroom observations, phone interviews, surveys, and staff interviews. I too used survey and interview methods in my study to get information from preschool professionals in Iowa about the physical locations of their programs, as well as their perceptions of whether and how the location affected program quality.

Participants

Preschool professionals and educators in Iowa were the participants, including principals, program directors, superintendents, teachers, or other staff. Andrews and Slate (2002) used a purposive sampling method, which served as a model for my study. I selected school districts and areas that were similar in size and area to my school district in order to have a common and relevant comparison. My district is an urban school district with a total enrollment of

approximately 10,000 students that is experiencing rapid growth. Our preschool program has a total of 10 classrooms and is experiencing increasing growth.

Survey

The survey included questions about current locations of preschool programs and advantages and disadvantages to these locations. The survey, created through Qualtrics, was sent to 50 preschool educators from a variety of program locations, using email with an online link. The main focus of this survey was the advantages and disadvantages to both school- and center-based program locations. Along with this information I believe that additional information would be relevant. The first questions of my survey asked for background information, including the size, growth, and funding for the school district and program. Other program questions covered number of days a week students attend, whether attendance was half day or full day and the adult-to-student ratio. Participants answered whether their program was located in a school building, preschool center, or a combination of both school and centers. The two main opinion questions of the survey were about the advantages and disadvantages of their program locations, choosing from a list of possible responses. A follow-up question about advantages and disadvantages asked whether they would change the current physical location of their programs. Also included was a question about any past relocation of their programs and classrooms (see Appendix B).

Interviews

Along with the surveys I conducted three in-person interviews with administrators and teachers who have preschool programs in various locations. These three participants were chosen from the survey respondents to represent one center based program, one school based program, and one blended program model with classrooms in both a center and school buildings. A teacher was interviewed about their center based location, a program director was interviewed

about school based locations, and an administrator was interviewed about the blended program model locations. In these interviews I asked participants about the history and all the past locations of their specific programs. I inquired about how their districts made decisions about the location of their programs, and invited them to share other considerations. In addition, I asked for clarification on any of their survey information during these interviews (see Appendix C).

Data Analysis

Upon receiving the surveys, I used the Qualtrics program to analyze the results and compile all of the survey responses. I created figures to divide the responses for the advantages and disadvantages to center based, school based, and a blend of both center and school based preschool locations. I also created figures to display the responses to whether participants would change the physical location of their programs. Along with the figures I analyzed responses to identify trends and common points across the responses, including in this review the interview information. Across all of the information I collected through each of these data sources, I looked for themes, using the method described by Hatcher, Nuner, and Paulsel (2012).

Results

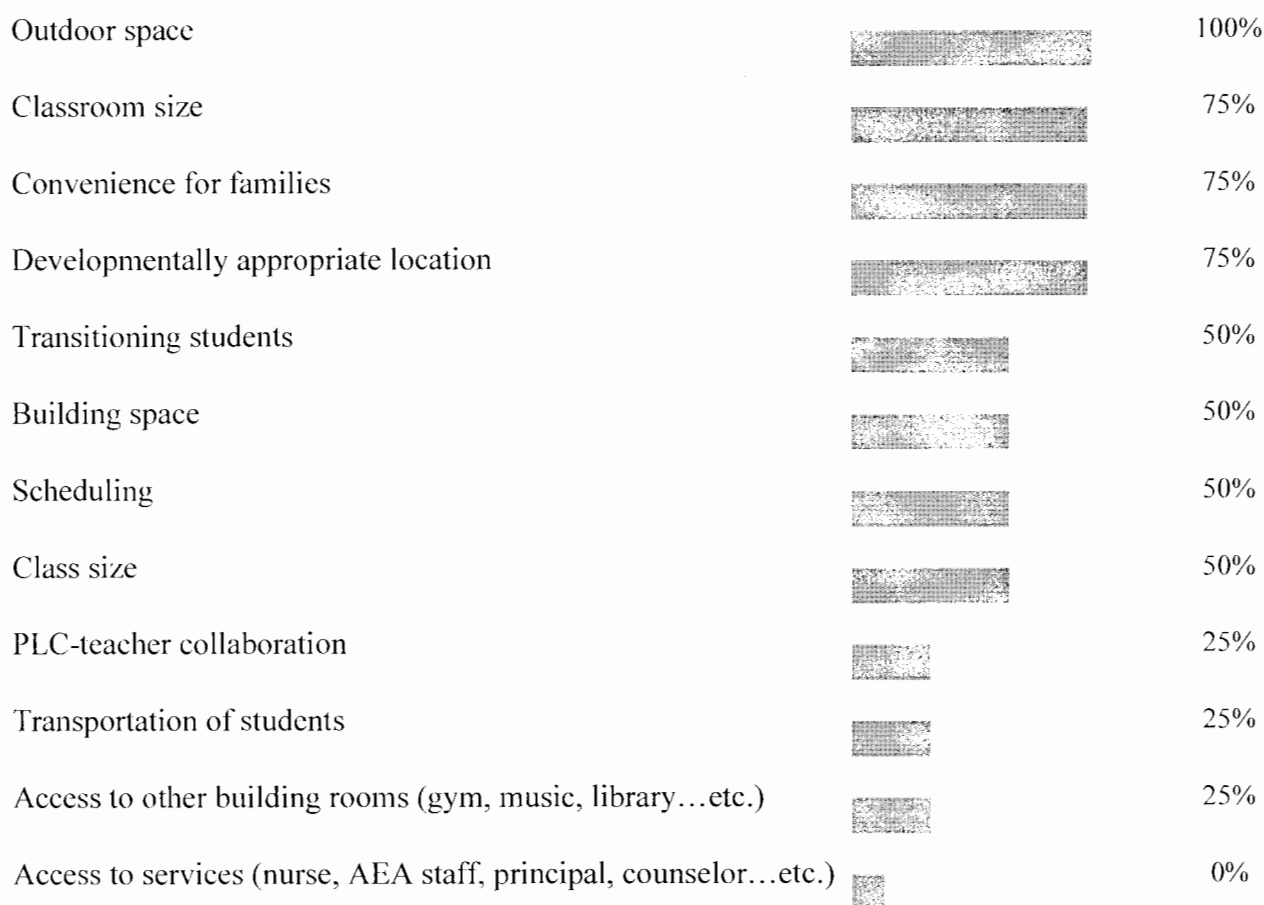
Survey Results

A total of 50 surveys were sent out with a result of 33 completed surveys. There were a total of 40 surveys that were started by participants, however, seven were not fully completed in order to submit. The responses from these seven surveys are not accounted for in the survey results as they were not complete. A variety of preschool professionals completed the survey. The majority were teachers with 60% of the surveys being completed by preschool teachers.

Program directors filled out 21% of the surveys and 3% were filled out by principals. The remaining 15% marked “other” on their response to the survey question in regard to their roles.

My first research question is about what educators report as the advantages and disadvantages of their varying preschool program locations. Figures 1-6 show the reported advantages and disadvantages of participants’ current locations. The figures and percentages discussed are only from the 33 completed surveys.













Figure 1 Advantages to Center Based



When considering the advantages to their center based location, 100% of participants reported outdoor space as an advantage. Classroom size, convenience for families, and developmentally appropriate location are advantages of their center based location according to

75% of participants. Transitioning students, building space, scheduling, and class size are advantages according to 50% of participants. None of the participants reported that access to services (nurse, AEA staff, principal, counselor...etc.) is an advantage of their center based location.

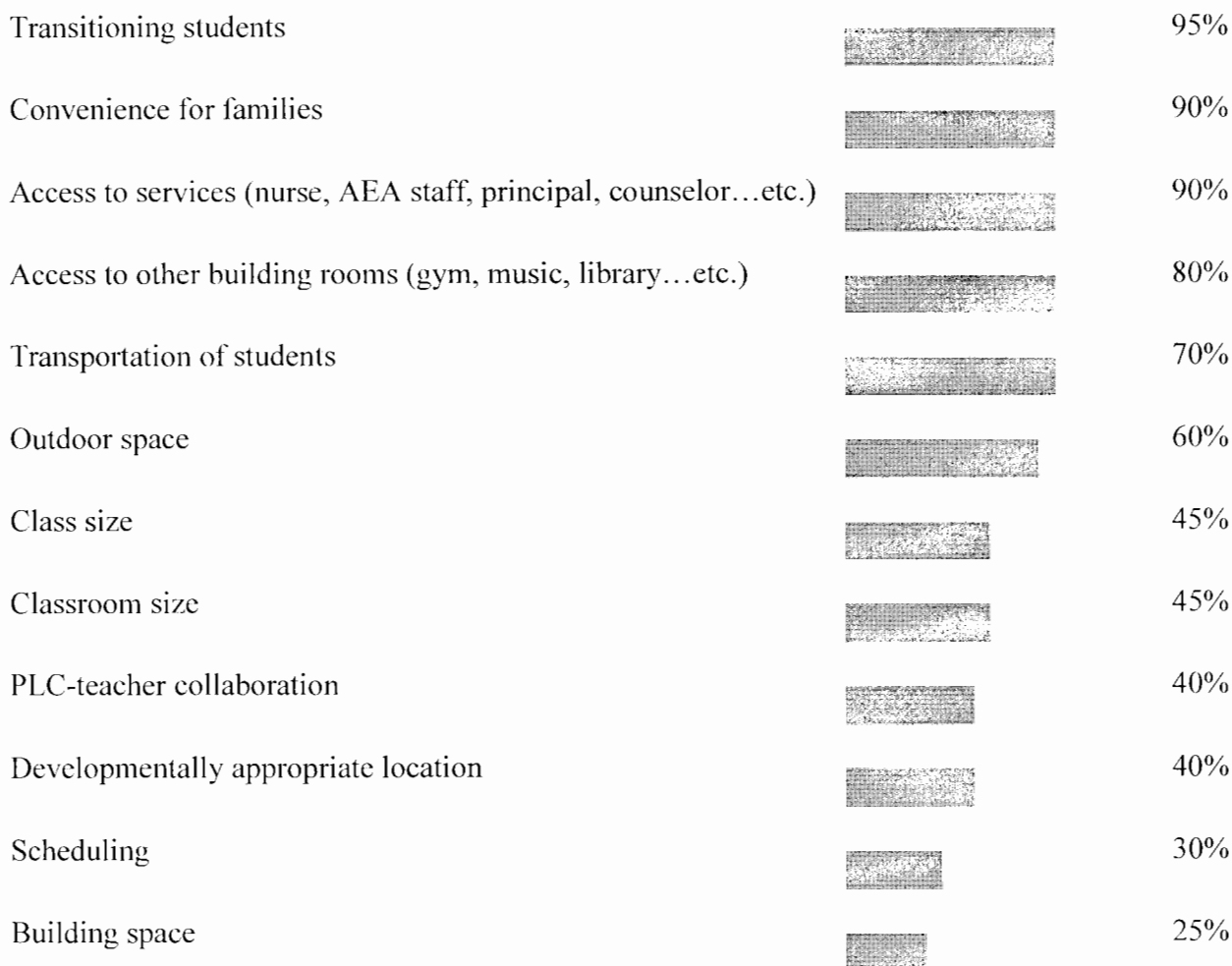
Figure 2 Disadvantages to Center Based

Access to services (nurse, AEA staff, principal, counselor...etc.)		100%
Transportation of students		50%
Access to other building rooms (gym, music, library...etc.)		50%
PLC-teacher collaboration		25%
Transitioning students		25%
Building space		25%
Developmentally appropriate location		0%
Convenience for families		0%
Scheduling		0%
Class size		0%
Classroom size		0%
Outdoor space		0%

When considering the disadvantages to their center based location; 50% of participants reported that transportation of students and access to other building rooms are disadvantages. PLC-teacher collaboration, transitioning students, and building space are disadvantages according to 25% of participants. None of the participants reported that developmentally

appropriate location, convenience for families, scheduling, class size, classroom size, and outdoor space are disadvantages of their center based location.

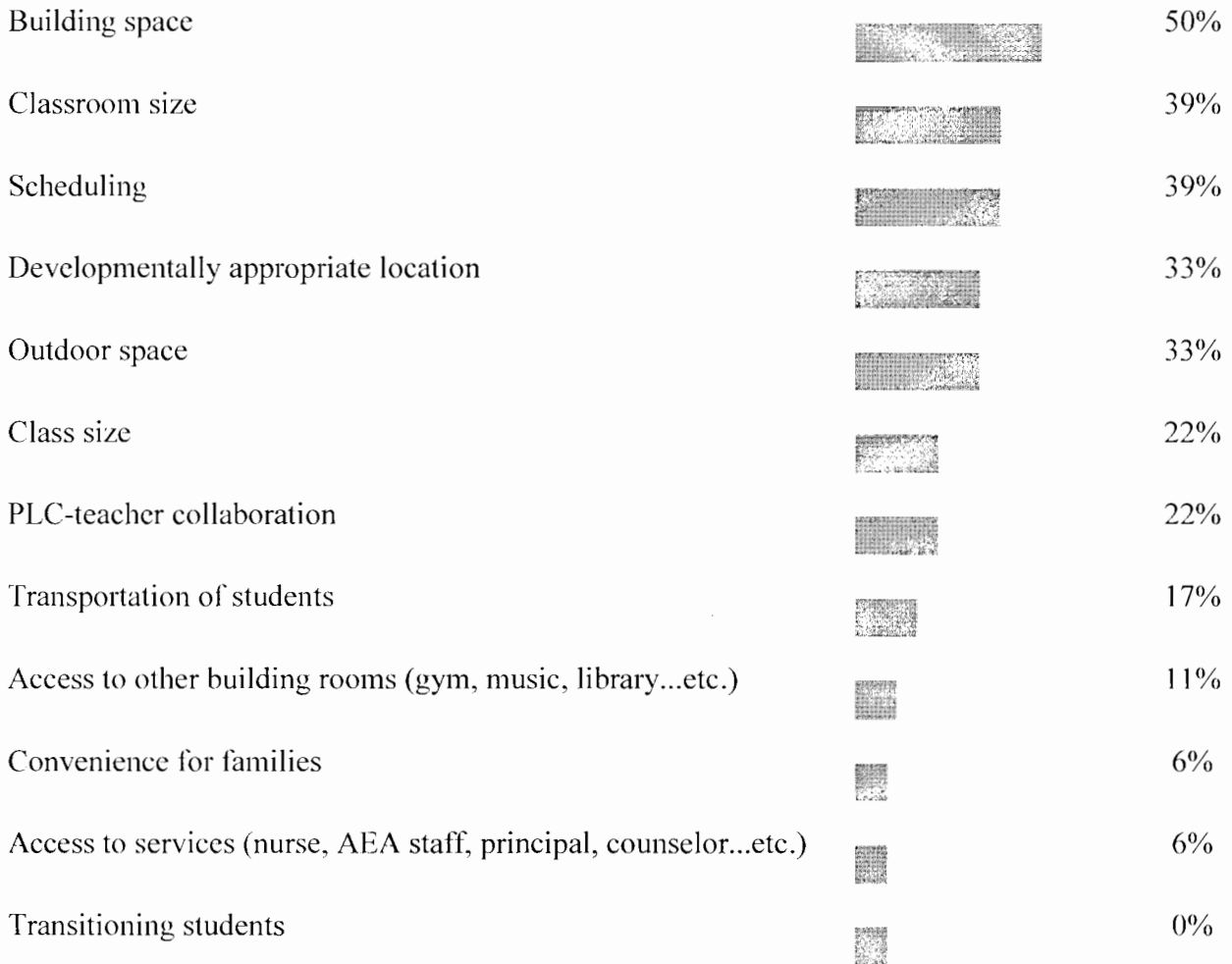
Figure 3 Advantages to School Based



When considering the advantages to their school based location, 95% of participants reported that transitioning students is an advantage. Convenience for families and access to services are advantages according to 90% of participants. Access to other building rooms is an advantage according to 80% of participants. Transportation of students is an advantage according to 70% of participants. Outdoor space is an advantage according to 60% of participants. Class size and classroom size are advantages according to 45% of participants.

PLC-teacher collaboration and developmentally appropriate location are advantages according to 40% of participants. Scheduling is an advantage according to 30% of participants. Building space is an advantage according to 25% of participants.

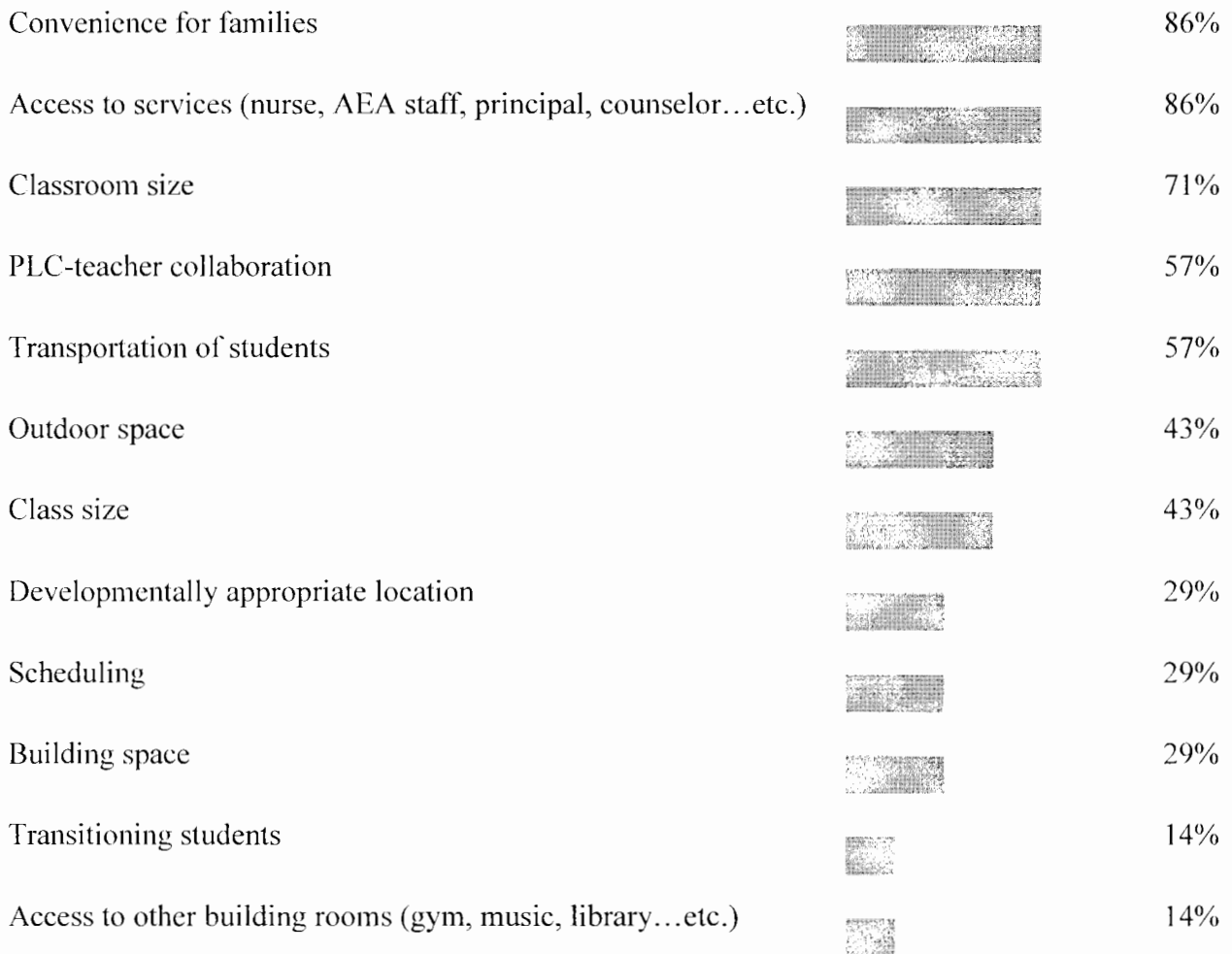
Figure 4 Disadvantages to School Based



When considering the disadvantages to their school based location, 50% of participants reported that building space is a disadvantage. Classroom size and scheduling are disadvantages according to 39% of participants. Developmentally appropriate location and outdoor space are disadvantages according to 33% of participants. Class size and PLC-teacher collaboration are disadvantages according to 22% of participants. Transportation of students is a disadvantage

according to 17% of participants. Access to other building rooms is a disadvantage according to 11% of participants. Convenience for families and access to services are disadvantages according to 6% of participants. None of the participants reported that transitioning students is a disadvantage of their school based location.

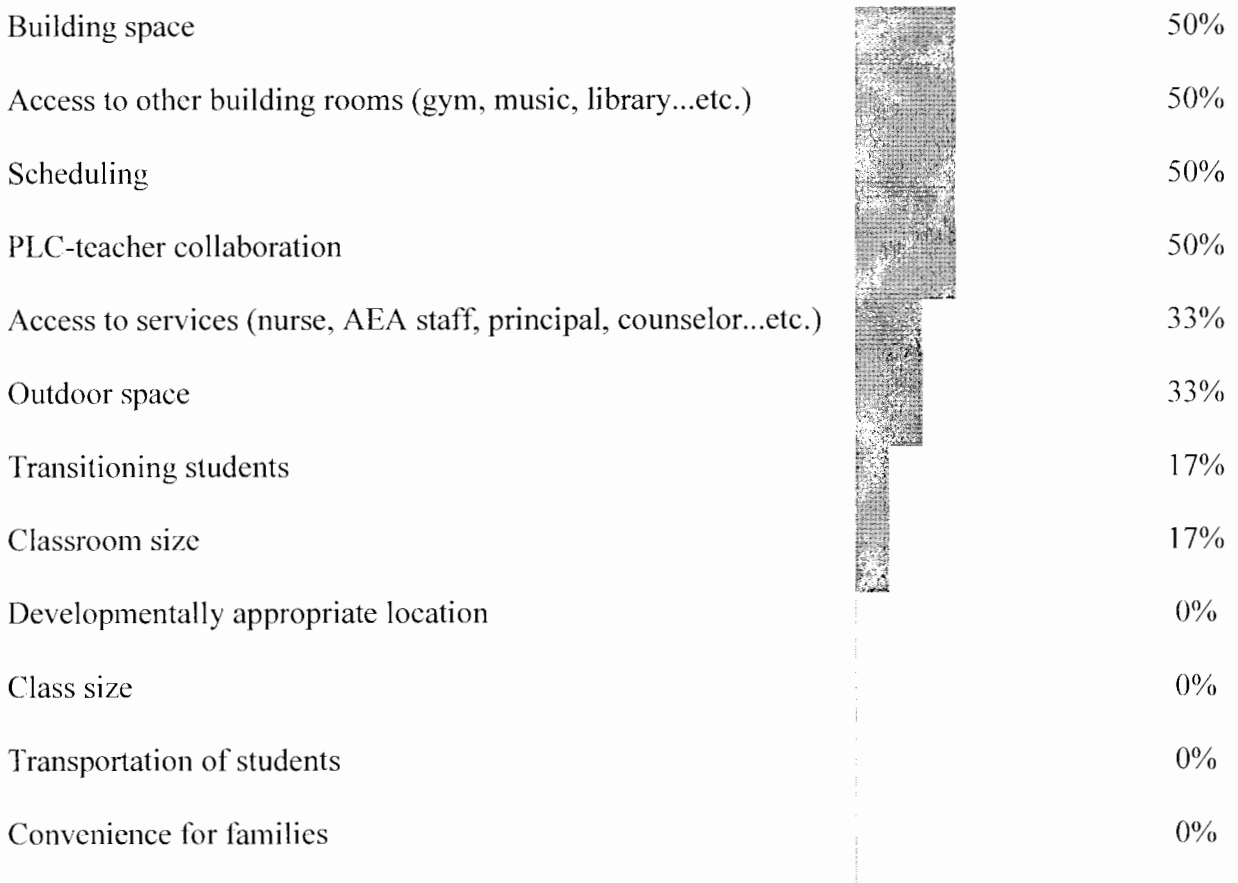
Figure 5 Advantages to Blended School- and Center-Based



When considering the advantages to their blended school- and center-based location, 86% of participants reported that convenience for families and access to services are advantages. Classroom size is an advantage according to 71% of participants. PLC-collaboration and transportation of students are advantages according to 57% of participants. Outdoor space and

class size are advantages according to 43% of participants. Scheduling and building space are advantages according to 29% of participants. Transitioning students and access to other building rooms are advantages according to 14% of participants.

Figure 6 Disadvantages to Blended School- and Center-Based

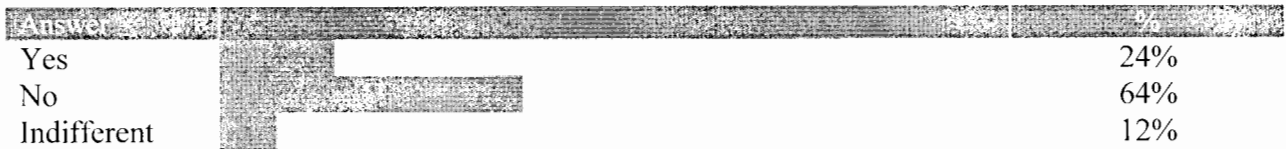


When considering the disadvantages of their blended school- and center-based location, 50% of participants reported that building space, access to other building rooms, scheduling, and PLC-teacher collaboration as disadvantages. Access to services and outdoor space are disadvantages according to 33% of participants. Transitioning students and classroom size are disadvantages according to 17% of participants. None of participants reported that

developmentally appropriate location, class size, transportation of students, or convenience for families are disadvantages of their blend of center and school based location.

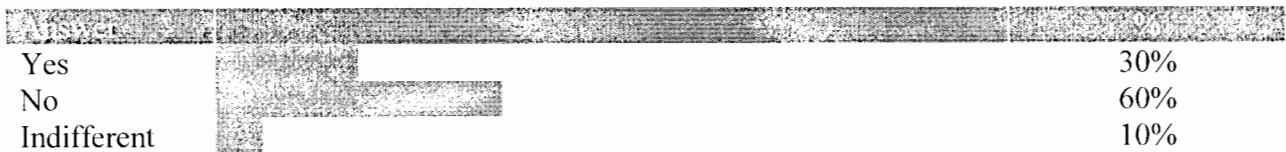
The results of the survey reported that 61% of programs were located in elementary school buildings, 21% in a blend of schools and preschool centers, 12% in preschool centers, and 6% in other locations. One of the survey questions was whether participants would change the physical location of their program. In Figures 7 through 10 the findings of this question are displayed.

Figure 7 All Location Responses



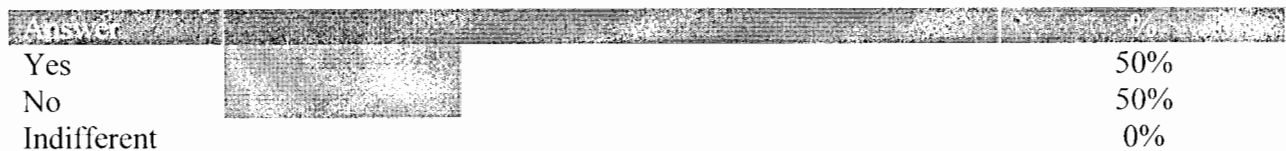
Overall on the survey when asked if you would change the location of your program; 24% reported yes, 64% reported no and 12% stated they were indifferent.

Figure 8 School Based Responses



Out of the participants in a school based location: 30% reported yes they would change, 60% reported no they would not change, and 10% were indifferent.

Figure 9 Center Based Responses



Out of the participants in a center based location: 50% reported yes they would change and 50% reported no they would not change. **Figure 10 Blended School- and Center-Based**

Responses

ANSWER		
Yes		0%
No		71%
Indifferent		29%

Out of the participants in a blend of school- and center-based locations: 0% reported yes they would change, 71% reported no they would not change and 29% were indifferent.

In the survey participants were also asked about the reasons they would change or not change the location of their programs. Overall a mix of answers were reported in regard to this question. The participants that are located in a center reported they wouldn't change their center location because a preschool center promotes collaboration. Other participants located in a center reported they would change their locations, with one participant stating he or she did not feel included in K-5 programming and part of the elementary school environment.

The participants whose classrooms are located within elementary schools and who reported they would change their locations said they preferred moving to a center due to a central location and having all early learning staff in one location. However, many participants reported that they would not change their school based location. Access to services and facilities, kindergarten readiness/transitions, and being part of the school community were all answers given. Many participants whose programs are located in a blend of school- and center-based locations also reported they would not change their location.

One participant responded, "The mixture of school- and center-based locations provide parents with greater access and services for the needs of their individual families. By offering

programs in a variety of settings, transportation, before and after school care, and other barriers that some families face can be eliminated.”

There was one survey that reported their preschool program is moving from a center into elementary schools. This participant noted, “We feel this is a positive change because our children will not be in the same room all day and have better access to other parts of the school.”

My second research question is about how school districts and preschool programs have handled the growth of programs and deciding on location of classrooms. Survey results showed that 70% of programs and classrooms had been moved and relocated in their past. The other 30% reported not moving or relocating.

Survey results also showed that 43% of surveys reported lack of space as the reason for these moves and relocations. Many reported that there was a need for classroom space at the elementary level so preschool programs and classrooms were shifted to other buildings to allow for space. This was the major theme in responses to questions about why movement occurred within preschool programs. Answers on the surveys included: “Our programs are housed in elementary buildings but each year there is potential for being shuffled around due to space constraints in the elementary buildings.” Another comment by a participant was: “Due to the need for the classrooms to be used for K-5 programming, preschool classrooms are shifted to other elementary buildings with available space.” One survey reported that because of this movement: “We have buildings where there are just 1-2 teachers and other buildings with 5 classrooms in them.”

Interviews

Three interviews were conducted as part of this study and participants were chosen from the survey pool. Interview participants were chosen in order to interview a participant to

represent each location type, and both of the roles of preschool teachers and preschool program directors. One interview participant was from a center based program, one was from a school based program and the last was from a blended program model with classrooms in a center and other school buildings. One program was located in a smaller district, one was in a medium district and one in a larger district and community. Two participants were from programs with approximately 10 classrooms and one program of an interviewed participant consisted of more than 20 classrooms. All three of these programs are experiencing growth. Two of the programs reported long waiting lists, as the capacity is limited in the program.

I identified the following trends and themes within the interviews. One theme was Professional Learning Communities. The two programs with centers reported their strong sense of collaboration. This was the main advantage they discussed regarding the location of their programs. The program participant reported this aspect more challenging as their classrooms are spread across the district. This interviewee reported this as a disadvantage to their current location.

A second theme was the constant movement of classrooms and programs. Two of the districts reported multiple moves. The blended location program reported less movement since they have moved into two different center based locations. All of the districts reported that every year there is movement occurring and they are uncertain where all of their classrooms will be. When discussing the reason for the movement, two of the interviewees noted overcrowding in the elementary buildings is the main problem within these programs. Directors and teachers expressed feeling uncomfortable with the unknown every year. Multiple comments were made regarding the staff feeling as if their preschool program and classrooms are the first classrooms to be moved.

Another theme was that decisions regarding their program's location are made by administration and mainly at the district level. All three reported that even though their input was sought out to some extent, in the end it was district administration that made the decision. Representatives of these districts also reported that in the past these decisions were made quickly and without adequate information. This reason was stated as a main challenge in these policy decisions for all three districts. One district has created a committee to help provide the school board and administration with as much information as possible to aid in the decision making process. All of the districts felt that space and funding were the main concerns in the decision making process.

Discussion

In my survey population I was targeting school districts and programs that were similar in size to my current district and preschool program. Overall this was successful as my district has a total enrollment of 7,140 and 72% of the surveys were completed for districts with enrollment up to 10,000. My district would be described as a district experiencing rapid growth. In the survey results only six percent considered their district to have this strong growth rate. However, 27% reported increasing growth and 45% reported remaining stable. My program has a total of 10 preschool classrooms and 70% of the surveys completed were of programs made up of 10 classrooms. I would describe the growth of my program as increasing to almost rapid growth. Overall, 36% of the surveys were from other programs that are increasing, 6% reported rapid growth and 52% of programs reported remaining stable.

Research Question 1

My first research question was about the advantages and disadvantages preschool educators report about their varying locations. Some of the results for the advantages and

disadvantages of locations were what I would have expected and others were not what I expected. The figures for center based locations showed the results for disadvantages and advantages matched as they represented the opposite of each other. Of the participants, 100% reported that outdoor space was an advantage to their center based location and 0% of participants reported outdoor space as a disadvantage. Also, 100% of participants reported that access to services was a disadvantage of their center based location and 0% reported access to services as an advantage. Participants didn't report as many disadvantages to the center based location. This result didn't surprise me as I expected the center based participants to report more advantages.

The figures for school based locations had lower percentages across the board regarding disadvantages. However, the advantages for school based locations included many high percentages. Transitioning students, convenience for families, access to services, access to other building rooms and transportation of students were all areas that 60% to 95% of participants reported as an advantage. I was surprised to see this high percentage for advantages to school based locations, however these ratings make sense given the school location.

The one percentage that stood out to me was building space, and this wasn't a surprise given the theme of building space throughout the survey and interviews. Building space was a disadvantage for 50% of the participants, and only 25% of participants reporting building space as an advantage.

The figures for the blended center and school based locations show more of a variety of answers regarding the disadvantages and advantages to their location. I believe these results

make sense and are what should be expected given that both school and center based locations are included in these results.

Along with participants reporting on the advantages and disadvantages, participants also commented on if they would change their current location. In Figures 7 through 10 the findings of whether participants would change the physical location of their program question were displayed. Overall on the survey when asked if you would change the location of your program, 24% reported yes, 64% reported no, and 12% stated they were indifferent. This was very thought-provoking to me as more participants stated they would not change the location of their programs. When examining the desire to change location by the type of site, the numbers by location type became even more interesting. The majority of participants in a school based or blended program site reported that they would not change their current location of their program or they were indifferent. The center based participants were split as 50% reported yes and 50% reported no, in regards to changing the current location of their programs. Participants reported a variety of answers to why they would or would not change their location. These results show that it tends to depend on each individual location and participants.

With the majority of programs having a history of movement, the significance of this study is supported. Survey results showed that 70% of programs and classrooms had been moved and relocated in their past. The other 30% reported not moving or relocating. The movement and relocation of programs was also a common theme in the interviews. Lack of space was a major theme in responses to questions about why movement occurred within preschool programs.

Research Question 2

My second research question was about how school districts and preschool programs have handled the growth of programs and deciding on location of classrooms. Another theme noted in both the survey and interview matches this research question. Results showed that many decisions about these preschool programs were made in a short amount of time and by district level administrators. Even though many participants reported they would not change their current location, the majority of participants reported their location moving. The problem seems to be in the number of times programs have moved and the reason why the movement occurred.

Limitations

There are some limitations as part of this study. This study was of a small sample size as it only included 33 preschool programs in the state of Iowa. This is a small sample size considering the number of programs in the state. According to the Iowa Department of Education (2011), there are 326 districts that have preschool programs as part of the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children. Also this study mainly focused on the advantages and disadvantages of the different program locations, creating a narrow focus. In the survey the question regarding advantages and disadvantages listed choices for participants to mark. By doing so, their choices of answers were somewhat limited. However, participants could select as many of the answers that applied to them. This was done on purpose for this survey, however there may be other advantages and disadvantages that participants would report.

In the interview process, participants could be more open to discussing other advantages and disadvantages, however, there were only three interviews total. Another limitation is that participants were of many different job positions and roles. Results may have been different if

participants were only teachers or administrators. This study also focused on preschool programs that are part of school districts. Results may have been different if all preschool programs were included.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has addressed the research questions and provided some answers and information regarding the current limited research on this topic. The findings of this research might not be representative of all preschool programs; however, I feel it will provide some foundational information. I believe that this information can be beneficial to help preschool educators and administrators make an informed decision regarding locating preschool programs.

Recommendations would include encouraging school districts and programs to investigate and spend time evaluating the movement of preschool programs. Results from the survey in this study showed a high percentage of programs being moved. Along with this survey trend, matching interview information and seeing movement as a major theme, this area is of high need and importance. Along with this the common theme was overcrowding in elementary school buildings and the effects of this on preschool programs.

Another recommendation would be to continue research in this area on how location affects other aspects of young children's learning and development, and the preschool programs which they attend. Further studies are needed in order to gain more information and to make comparisons of other aspects of programs and developmentally appropriate practice at the preschool level. A study on how location of preschool programs affects student outcomes would be an example of such a study.

This study only looked at 33 preschool programs in the state of Iowa, out of a total of 326 districts that have programs in the state. Future studies should look at the state of Iowa in a

larger sample size. Also recommended would be to look at other states nationally in regard to locations of preschool programs.

Given the information and feedback from preschool directors and teachers, the question is raised about whether principals, school board members, and superintendents have adequate knowledge in regard to developmentally appropriate practice in preschool education to make these major policy decisions. Many districts in Iowa are in situations where decisions regarding locations of preschool programs have to be made quickly. This is a very relevant topic in preschool education today, as it is a problem that has been occurring for years.

The purpose of this study was to provide information to school districts and preschool programs. In Iowa, preschool programs are found in a variety of locations. The results from this study showed the advantages and disadvantages of school based, center based and a blend of school- and center-based locations for preschool programs, as reported by preschool personnel. Overall the findings and conclusions of the survey were a good match and comparison to my district. I believe this was an accurate look at preschool programs in the state of Iowa in smaller school districts. The outcomes showed the advantages and disadvantages to both school- and center-based programs. I believe there are different factors in each district and program that determine the location of their preschool programs. It seems that each district and preschool program have made decisions for what is the best fit and relevant or attainable at that time.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

A.1 Survey Email Script

A.2 Interview Email Script

A.3 Interview Consent

APPENDIX B

Survey

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions

A.1**EMAIL SCRIPT (survey)**

Dear Potential Participant:

My name is Christy Martin, and I am in the Early Childhood Education Master's Program at the University of Northern Iowa. I am also a preschool teacher in the Little Lions early childhood program in the Linn-Mar Community School District. I am part of an advisory group for my district to provide information and to make a recommendation to the school board regarding our current situation. I am currently in the process of researching location sites of early childhood programs. Research will consist of the advantages and disadvantages of school based and center based preschool programs. The purpose of this study is to understand the actions of school districts in regards to early childhood education. It is to provide information about the factors that school districts confront when making decisions in regards to placement of programs. Data for this study is being collected through a survey and interviews. You are being contacted because of your role in your school district. I would appreciate your time in filling out the survey via the link listed below.

https://uni.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_1KSJxfv54rmkPUF

The survey will take between 5 and 15 minutes to fill out. Upon receiving your survey you may be contacted in the near future to schedule a phone interview.

If you have any questions, please contact me by telephone at (319) 310-1453 or by e-mail at christym@uni.edu. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Thank you,

Christy Martin

A.2**EMAIL SCRIPT (selected for interview)**

Dear Potential Participant:

My name is Christy Martin, and I am in the Early Childhood Education Master's Program at the University of Northern Iowa. I am also a preschool teacher in the Little Lions early childhood program in the Linn-Mar Community School District. I am part of an advisory group for my district to provide information and to make a recommendation to the school board regarding our current situation. I am currently in the process of researching location sites of early childhood programs. Research will consist of the advantages and disadvantages of school based and center based preschool programs. The purpose of this study is to understand the actions of school districts in regards to early childhood education. It is to provide information about the factors that school districts confront when making decisions in regards to placement of programs.

Thank you so much for your time in completing the online survey. You are being contacted because of your role in your school district and survey responses. Your survey answers are of interest and I am contacting you to schedule a phone interview. If you agree to the interview, our session will last less than one hour. Please let me know a good day and time in the near future that a phone interview can be arranged.

If you have any questions, please contact me by telephone at (319) 310-1453 or by e-mail at christym@uni.edu. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Thank you,

Christy Martin

A.3

INTERVIEW CONSENT LETTER

Project Title: Location of Early Childhood Programs

Name of Investigator: Christy Martin

Invitation to Participate: You are invited to participate in a research project conducted through the University of Northern Iowa. The University requires that you give your signed agreement to participate in this project. The following information is provided to help you made an informed decision about whether or not to participate.

Nature and Purpose: Research will consist of the advantages and disadvantages of school based and center based preschool programs. The purpose of this research is to provide information to school districts and early childhood programs.

Explanation of Procedures: This study will include an interview that will last an hour or less. I will be conducting interviews with administrators and teachers that have various locations of their early childhood programs. In these interviews I will be gathering information on their specific programs in regards to the history and movement of their programs. I will also be inquiring about how their districts made decisions about the location of their programs as well as any considerations they would like to share.

Discomfort and Risks: Discomfort and risks should not be greater than the ones that teachers experience daily in conversations about their work. Some teachers might feel pressure from the short turnaround requested for the interview.

Benefits and Compensation: Other districts will benefit from receiving information from other districts that can be relevant to their position and experiences. Participants might also feel good in helping to provide beneficial information to others. You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this survey.

Confidentiality: During the data analysis process, the data will be coded with a number. I will be the only one able to link the code and I will destroy the link and other identifying information when the study is completed. This way all identifiers will be confidential. All notes and information will be stored in a safe place.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw: Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from participation at any time or to choose not to participate at all, without any fear of effects.

Questions:

If you have questions about the study or desire information in the future regarding your participation, you can contact Christy Martin by email at christym@uni.edu or by phone at 319-310-1453. You may also contact the faculty advisor for this project, Linda Fitzgerald, at linda.fitzgerald@uni.edu or 319-273-2214. For answers to questions about rights of research

participants and the participant review process, please contact the office of the IRB Administrator, University of Northern Iowa, at 319-273-6148.

Agreement:

I am fully aware of the nature and extent of my participation in this project as stated above and the possible risks arising from it. I hereby agree to participate in this project. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent statement. I am 18 years of age or older.

Date

Signature

B**SURVEY****1. What is your role?**

- Teacher
- Program Director/Assistant Program Director
- Principal/Vice Principal
- Superintendent
- Para-educator
- Volunteer
- Other:

2. What is the size of your district? (total enrollment)

- Less than 5,000
- 5,000-10,000
- 10,000-15,000
- 15,000-20,000
- 20,000+

3. How would you describe the growth of your district?

- Declining
- Stable
- Increasing
- Rapid Growth

4. How many classrooms are in your program?

- 0-5
- 5-10
- 10-15
- 15-20
- 20+
-

5. How would you describe the growth of your program?

- Declining
- Stable
- Increasing
- Rapid Growth

6. Are your programs full day or half day programs?

- Full
- Half
- Both

Explanation if needed:

7. How many days do your students attend?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- Varies:

8. What is the adult/student ratio in your classrooms?

-

9. Where are your classrooms located?

- Elementary School
- Early Childhood Center
- Mix of both
- If other please state:

10. Would you change the location of your program?

- Yes
- No
- Why:

11. Check the advantages of your current location.

- Classroom size
- Class size
- PLC-teacher collaboration
- Access to services (nurse, AEA staff, principal, counselor...etc)
- Access to other building rooms (gym, music, library...etc)
- Scheduling
- Outdoor space
- Building space
- Transportation of students
- Convenience for families
- Developmentally appropriate location
- Transitioning students

List any other:

12. Check the disadvantages of your current location.

- Classroom size
- Class size
- PLC-teacher collaboration
- Access to services (nurse, AEA staff, principal, counselor...etc)
- Access to other building rooms (gym, music, library...etc)
- Scheduling
- Outdoor space
- Building space
- Transportation of students
- Convenience for families
- Developmentally appropriate location
- Transitioning students

List any other:

13. Have your programs and classrooms moved/relocated locations in the past?

- Yes
- No

State the reason(s) why the move occurred:

14. How is your program funded?

If you would be interested in being contacted for an interview (lasting less than 1 hour) please enter your name and contact information below:

C**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Tell me about the background and history on your program.
2. Explain your programs size and current location.
3. Describe the pros to your current situation.
4. Describe and cons to your current situation.
5. How did your district decide on your location?
6. What factors led to this decision?
7. Describe the plan and process to decisions about your program/location?
8. What advice would you give another district undertaking this decision?
9. Describe the community and family support?
10. What are the greatest challenges to your location or policy decisions?