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Teachers' perceptions of skills needed for children's entry into kindergarten

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Abstract

Kindergarten readiness is an ever-increasing topic in the field of early education among educators. Research has indicated that children learn better if parents, preschool and kindergarten teachers' expectations are aligned. The purpose of this project is to understand local preschool and kindergarten teachers' perceptions of skills needed for children's entry into kindergarten. Teachers from two school districts and local preschools and daycares will be surveyed using the local Head Start Kindergarten Readiness Goals. Information gained will potentially lead to modifications in curriculum and learning goals for children, aid in professional development practices for teachers, and better prepare children in the Iowa communities of Cedar Falls and Waterloo for kindergarten.

Teachers' Perceptions of Skills Needed for

Children's Entry into Kindergarten

Submitted to the

Division of Early Childhood Education

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By

Jessica Blohm

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Degree of Master of Arts in Education.

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ABSTRACT

Kindergarten readiness is an ever-increasing topic in the field of early education among educators. Research has indicated that children learn better if parents, preschool and kindergarten teachers' expectations are aligned. The purpose of this project is to understand local preschool and kindergarten teachers' perceptions of skills needed for children's entry into kindergarten. Teachers from two school districts and local preschools and daycares will be surveyed using the local Head Start Kindergarten Readiness Goals. Information gained will potentially lead to modifications in curriculum and learning goals for children, aid in professional development practices for teachers, and better prepare children in the Iowa communities of Cedar Falls and Waterloo for kindergarten.

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Chapter I

Introduction

In 2001, Firlik (2001) described the progress that one community made in order to form a stronger alliance between the preschool and elementary school teachers and administrators. In New Canaan, Connecticut, several meetings were held between kindergarten teachers, principals, directors, and preschool teachers of the 14 preschools that feed into the city's three elementary schools. Preschool staff was under the impression that the public kindergartens were using a skill and drill approach to teaching phonemic awareness, mathematics, and writing. The original purpose of scheduled meetings was to increase communication about kindergarten readiness; however, opportunities developed to engage in discussions about transitional practices. Discussion leaders prepared a questionnaire to identify the expectations for kindergarten readiness as seen by the kindergarten teachers. Results were then shared with the preschool directors and staff. Four categories were deemed most important for kindergarten entry and were rank ordered from most important to least important as follows: social competencies, communication/language, independent skills, and fine and gross motor experiences.

Several other important aspects arose as a result of the collaboration between the preschool and kindergarten teachers of New Canaan, Connecticut. They were able to articulate the importance of continuing to communicate on a regular basis, sharing any changes made to the kindergarten curriculum with the preschool directors, and also inviting preschool teachers to relevant in-services or workshops. The partnership also developed a transitional guide outlining the roles of the public school teachers and administration, as well as continuing roles for the preschools and public school districts in

planning for successful transitions of preschool students into kindergarten classrooms (Firlik, 2001).

Description of Topic

Although New Canaan, Connecticut, has succeeded in overcoming the problem of defining kindergarten readiness, Pavelski-Pyle (2002) suggested that for most communities, a "consistent definition of school readiness remains elusive" (p. 65). With the increasing evidence suggesting the benefits of early education and increased numbers of children attending preschool programs and daycares, it seems logical that all children would enter kindergarten ready to learn. However, for many preschool and kindergarten teachers, questions remain. Once children are enrolled in preschool, what do teachers teach? Is there a specific set of skills that all children should know or be able to do in order to make a smooth transition to kindergarten? What characteristics of beginning kindergarten students are seen as most valuable to the kindergarten teachers?

Rationale

With the introduction of early childhood initiatives by our nation's government, various people, some with little or no experience in the education of young children, now have the power to decide who is ready for kindergarten and who is not. They do this by limiting funding for preschool once a child has met the eligible age for kindergarten or by attaching funding to and imposing standards that are not developmentally appropriate for all children (Pianta, Barnett, Burchinal, & Thornburg, 2009).

Most policy makers will not argue that preschool education is vitally important to children, especially those from low socio-economic families and communities; however, few policy makers will actually support initiatives to increase funding for early childhood

programs. In a review of the literature, Pianta, et al. (2009), found that "positive long-term effects of preschool education include increased achievement test scores, decreased grade repetition and special education rates, increased educational attainment, higher adult earnings, and improvements in social and emotional development and behavior, including delinquency and crime" (p. 65).

The No Child Left Behind Act brought increased pressure for states to adopt standards in reading, and mathematics. It also required schools to use more standardized testing to measure and ensure student progress. Failure of schools to make academic yearly progress would result in the requirement to increase services to students, allow students to transfer to other schools, or force changes in the curriculum (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, No Child Left Behind Act Executive Summary, 2012). This added pressure on school districts and teachers to ensure that students perform well on standardized tests has taken a toll on teaching styles and may influence kindergarten or preschool teachers to modify their former ideas of kindergarten readiness in preschoolers (Graue, 2010). With the introduction of early childhood initiatives, such as state funded preschool programs, we have seen an increased focus on early childhood educational experiences with more children attending preschool; however, with this increase, economic and social forces have changed the expectations of academics. Society believes that because preschools are receiving government funding, there should be higher expectations of preschool children. What was once taught in 1st grade is now being pushed down to include younger students who may not be capable or ready to learn (NAEYC, 1995).

After receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in Economic Sciences in 2000, author and economist James J. Heckman (2002) said:

> To be most successful in school, young children must master a variety of complicated, inter-related concepts. For instance, a child must have a sense of confidence-a belief that she is more likely than not, to succeed at what she undertakes. She must also have a sense of curiosity, persistence and self-control. At the same time, the child must be able to communicate clearly and must be able to engage with others while balancing her own needs with those of others in a group. (p. 4)

Heckman further advocated for increased funding for early childhood education, in hopes that, along with academic knowledge, children will gain positive social skills to make them productive members of society. The value that Heckman placed on social skills in early childhood education could be seen as atypical in this era of increasing assessments, which focus narrowly only on academic content.

The lack of continuity in the importance of preschool and kindergarten readiness between policy makers, early childhood advocates, and a few stray theorists in the economic sector, can lead preschool teachers to feel bewildered regarding how to proceed. Sancho Passe (2010) stated that, in private conversations or anonymous surveys, teachers were more likely to stress the importance of social and physical development in kindergarten readiness, while research simultaneously shows that children with poor language and/or literacy skills are at a large disadvantage when beginning school.

Is it more important to provide developmentally appropriate activities, such as water or sand play, beginning literacy activities, and conflict-resolution strategies, or to

prepare children to be most successful in the kindergarten classroom of the 21st century with computer-aided instruction and a strong focus on letter recognition? Kindergarten readiness expert, Elizabeth Graue believes that kindergarten readiness is defined by each local community and can vary in larger school districts (Graue, 1993; Graue, 2010). Beginning with a survey measuring kindergarten and preschool teachers' perceptions on skill readiness will help determine where each group stands and will provide a starting point for increased communication and transition practices that best suit a community or school district.

Purpose of Project

The purpose of this project is to develop and conduct a survey examining the differences between preschool and kindergarten teachers' ideas of kindergarten readiness in the Iowa communities of Cedar Falls and Waterloo. Local Kindergarten School Readiness Goals as determined by the Tri-County Child and Family Development Council will be the basis for the survey. Using national Head Start standards, Tri-County Child and Family Development Council provides Head Start programming to local children. Specific research questions are:

- What skills do preschool and kindergarten teachers perceive as valuable prior to entry of kindergarten?
- How do the two groups compare or contrast in their expectations of children? Consequently, how do these values align with the Tri-County Child and Family Development Council's kindergarten school readiness goals?
- How does current literature recommend preschool and kindergarten teachers work together to adequately prepare children for kindergarten?

Importance of Project

Kindergarten readiness researcher, Elizabeth Graue conducted a Google search on kindergarten readiness, finding more than 117,000 hits (Graue, 2006). A recent Google search on the topic of kindergarten readiness yielded 1,050,000 results, proving that kindergarten readiness is an ever-increasing topic in the field of early education among educators and parents alike. To nervous parents, trying to decide if their child is ready to take on the challenges of formal education, this could be overwhelming. Local educators can help parents make informed decisions regarding their child's education.

Few public school districts work with preschools in the private sector to communicate kindergarten readiness skills to preschool directors or teachers. This survey could potentially serve as a bridge to the gap between local daycares, preschool programs, and kindergartens in the school districts. It would aid in the transition for many children from pre-k to kindergarten and would help staff in daycare and preschool programs without developmentally appropriate curriculums understand what skills kindergarten teachers value in children entering kindergarten. This could potentially lead to modifications in their curriculum and learning goals for children in their care, and better prepare children in the Cedar Falls and Waterloo communities for kindergarten.

Terminology

For the purpose of this project I am defining the following terms:

Cedar Valley- The Cedar Falls and Waterloo communities are nestled right next to each other in the state of Iowa and are often viewed as one larger community, termed the Cedar Valley.

Preschool Teachers-Lead teachers in childcare center classrooms with children aged 3-5 as well as lead teachers in publicly and/or privately funded half-day preschool programs with children aged 3-5. This definition does not include in-home childcare providers.

Kindergarten Teachers-Lead teachers in publicly and/or privately funded kindergarten classrooms with children aged five as of September 15th. This definition does not include teacher associates.

Kindergarten Readiness-To be prepared mentally and physically for the experience or action of kindergarten. Kindergarten readiness can be interpreted in many different ways; therefore this basic definition derived from the Merriam Webster Dictionary (2012) will be used.

Developmentally appropriate practice-As the National Association for the Education of Young Children defines it,

> "*developmentally appropriate practice* (DAP) is a framework of principles and guidelines for best practice in the care and education of young children, birth through age eight. It is grounded both in the research on how young children develop and learn and in what is known about education effectiveness. The principles and guidelines outline practice that promotes young children's *optimal* learning and development" (NAEYC, 2009).

Transition program-A program designed to help young children make a shift from their home environment, daycare, or preschool into formal education with confidence.

The following chapters will describe a project to measure Cedar Valley teachers' perceptions of kindergarten readiness in relation to the current Tri-County Child and Family Development Council's kindergarten readiness goals. Results will be used to reveal

the correlation between preschool and kindergarten teachers' perceptions and to

determine the need for a transition committee to aid in communication between daycare

and preschool programs and the local elementary schools.

Chapter II

Methodology

Procedure to Develop Project

There are numerous checklists of kindergarten readiness that could be used to compare the importance of skills for children, according to preschool and kindergarten teachers. However, because the objective of this project is to measure local teachers' perceptions of kindergarten readiness, it seemed logical to use goals as determined by the local Tri-County Child and Family Development Council, which serves Head Start programs in the local school districts. Head Start provides support for educating approximately 350 four year olds in the Cedar Valley every year (D. Jelinek, personal communication, March 14, 2012). Using enrollment data obtained from the Cedar Falls and Waterloo Community School District websites, it is estimated that Head Start serves approximately 1/3 of pre-kindergarten students in these school districts every year (Cedar Falls Community School District, 2010; Waterloo Community School District, 2010).

Because Iowa does not collect data on readiness (Saluja, Scott-Little, & Clifford, 2000) and does not have a standard curriculum for preschool programs, preschool teachers in the area are assumed to be using many different curriculum guides and models. Therefore, since Head Start requires teachers to use Creative Curriculum (Heroman, Trister Dodge, Berke, Bickart, Colker, Jones, Copley, & Dighe, 2010) model for curriculum development, and has Kindergarten Readiness Goals in place, a large portion of preschool teachers in the community can be expected to have adhered to those goals.

Through email communication with a local program manager, I learned that Tri-County Child and Family Development Council informally asked parents and school

districts what they expect "...children to know and be able to do when entering kindergarten in order to be successful" (T.Dane, personal communication, February 8, 2012). In developing the Kindergarten Readiness Goals, Tri-County Child and Family Development Council Kindergarten School Readiness Goal Committee also used the following resources: Dike-New Hartford School District, Waterloo School District, East Buchanan School District, Head Start Framework (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start 2010), Creative Curriculum Gold (Heroman et al., 2010), Iowa Early Learning Standards (Iowa Department of Education, 2006), AEA 267 Communication Skills Checklist (Area Education Agency 267, n. d.), Work Sampling (Meisels, Jablon, Marsden, Dichtelmiller, Dorfman, & Steele, 1994), and Getting School Ready in Iowa (Early Childhood Iowa, n. d.).

The Tri-County Child and Family Development Council Kindergarten School Readiness Goal Committee submitted the goals to the area Executive Director and eventually, the Tri-County Child and Family Development policy council for approval. The Kindergarten School Readiness Goals were officially implemented in July of 2011. Table 1 contains the Kindergarten Readiness Goals as defined by Tri-County Child and Family Council, Inc.

Table 1: Kindergarten School Readiness Goals for Tri-County Child and Family Development

Social and Emotional Development	Physical Development and Health	Language Development	Cognitive (Approaches to Learning & Logic & Reasoning)	Literacy Knowledge and Skills
Able to calm self down when upset	Shows control of small muscles for such purposes as using scissors, pencils, art tools, building, exploring, eating and serving utensils, and self-care	Follows 2 step directions	Attends and engages in an activity or group for 10 – 12 minutes	Recognizes 10 – 20 letters
Identifies and manages emotions appropriately	Moves purposefully from place to place with control, which includes hopping, skipping, jumping, climbing and pedaling	Expresses ideas through speech and listens attentively in conversation with peers and caregivers	Maintains interest and persists in a project or activity until completed	Joins in nursery rhymes and songs
Builds positive relationships with peers and adults, including showing empathy toward others	Shows ability to coordinate movement with balls which includes: throwing, kicking, bouncing and hitting	Asks and responds to questions appropriately	Recognizes and solves problems through active exploration	Produces rhyming words and able to decide when 2 words rhyme
Accepts another choice when his/her first choice is unavailable		Uses complete 4 – 6 word sentences	Uses past knowledge to build new knowledge	Recognizes first and last name in print
Joins in cooperative play with others and able to share materials and experiences		Speaks with a clear voice using appropriate rate, volume and pitch	Shows curiosity and takes initiative to learn about a variety of topics and ideas	Copies or begins to write own name
		Able to say first and last name	Able to represent people, places or things using drawings, symbols and 3-D objects	Identifies that letters make sounds
				Demonstrates concepts about print: front, back, page turning, directionality
				Able to retell a familiar story

Table 1 continued: Kindergarten School Readiness Goals for Tri-County Child and Family Development

Mathematics Knowledge and Skills	Science Knowledge and Skills	Social Studies Knowledge and Skills	Creative Arts Expression	Literacy Knowledge and Skills: **Continued**
Identifies basic shapes and their attributes	Able to observe and use information to ask questions, predict, explain and draw conclusions	Demonstrates knowledge about self	Participates in music activities, such as listening, singing or performing	Experiments with writing tools and materials
Identifies numerals to 10 by name	Discriminates between living and non-living, and identifies basic needs of plants and animals	Shows basic knowledge of differences and similarities of people and how they live	Moves to different types of beat and rhythm in music	Uses a three finger grip when writing or drawing
Sorts and classifies objects by a single attribute	Names basic body parts and their function	Describes the location of things in his/her environment in context of the classroom, home and community	Uses a variety of art materials for tactile expression and exploration	
Completes or creates an A/B pattern	Demonstrates the use of good health habits: hand washing, toileting, brushing teeth	Follows a daily routine/schedule with increasing knowledge of yesterday, today and tomorrow	Engages in dramatic play	
Responds appropriately to directionality, order and position of objects, such as up, down, in-front, and behind				
Verbally counts to 20 or more				
Able to use 1:1 correspondence for 5-7 objects				
Compares objects using attributes of length, weight and size: bigger, longer, taller, heavier				

Development of Survey

For the purpose of this project, it was determined that an on-line, Likert-Type scaled questionnaire would be most beneficial in assessing the Cedar Valley teachers' perceptions of kindergarten readiness (Ritter & Sue, 2007). This will allow participants to express their level of agreement or disagreement with the Kindergarten Readiness Goals as determined by the Tri-County Child and Family Development Council. Additional space will be provided so that participants may offer opinions and suggestions for modifications of future kindergarten readiness goals. Participants will also be asked to rank the order of importance of the nine domains of Kindergarten Readiness Goals. Basic demographic information will also be collected for research purposes, but will not be included in the sharing of data. The internet application Google Docs was used to create the 14 page on-line survey.

Selection of Sample

The list of subjects included in this study will be obtained through contact of Cedar Falls and Waterloo Community School Districts, Child Care Resource and Referral, and Area Education Agency 267. Kindergarten teachers from the school districts will be surveyed, as well as lead preschool teachers of preschool programs and four year old child-care providers referred by Childcare Resource and Referral and Area Education Agency 267.

Analysis of Data

Analysis of data will be completed by tallying the number of responses on a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) for each goal and then calculating to reach the mean score. Data will be organized according to preschool teachers' responses and kindergarten teachers' responses, so that comparisons can be made between the two

groups. Results will also be compared to the current Tri-County Kindergarten Readiness Goals so that all teachers' perceptions of the level of importance can be identified.

Pilot Study

Prior to carrying out the project, a pilot study will be conducted in two rural school districts 30 miles from the communities of Cedar Falls and Waterloo. Kindergarten and preschool teachers from the Reinbeck and Grundy Center School Districts will be asked to complete the on-line survey. This will allow researchers to discover any flaws that may exist in the survey and to observe participants' ability to follow the directions and understand questions with little difficulty. It is estimated that the survey will take less than 10 minutes to complete. I will ask the pilot group teachers to confirm that time estimate in order to communicate the expected survey completion time to the study group teachers.

Examining prior literature regarding teachers' perceptions of skills needed for children's entry into kindergarten will help guide the study and provide information into expectations. Previous research regarding the perceptions of kindergarten readiness has been minimal.

Literature Review

Higgins-Hains, Fowler, Schwartz, Kottwitz, and Rosenkoetter (1989) had one specific research question in mind: whether the perspectives of preschool teachers and kindergarten teachers matched in terms of skills necessary for a successful transition to kindergarten. Researchers hypothesized that if preschool and kindergarten teachers had matching perspectives, then those specific skills could be used to increase positive transitions into kindergarten for preschool children. Twenty-one preschool teachers were randomly selected from two counties in Kansas. They ranged in teaching experience from

1 to 20 years with an average of seven years of experience. Twenty-eight kindergarten teachers from two school districts also participated in the study. They ranged in experience from 1 to 25 years with an average of nine years of experience. Using the Skill Expectation Survey for Kindergarten Readiness (SESKR), four graduate students interviewed the teachers for one hour each in their classrooms. Teachers were asked to provide demographic information about themselves and their classrooms before being asked to rate the importance of children being able to accomplish 151 specific skills from 9 categories, using a 3-point rating scale. The nine categories measured included: 1) academic, 2) independent work, 3) instruction-following, 4) activity transitions, 5) communications, 6) social interaction, 7) self-care, 8) large group, and 9) conduct. Preschool teachers were asked to rate the importance of children being able to accomplish these skills at the end of their preschool year, while kindergarten teachers were asked to rate the importance of accomplishment by the entrance to kindergarten. Teachers were then asked to rank the nine categories in order of importance. Basic analysis was completed by totaling the number of responses for each skill set and then calculating to reach the mean score. Results were calculated for preschool teachers one time, at the end of the preschool year, and for kindergarten teachers three times, at the entrance, mid-way, and end of the kindergarten year. Overall, preschool teachers had higher expectations for their students at the exit of preschool than kindergarten teachers did for their students at the entrance of kindergarten. Preschool teachers reported that 78 out of 151 items were very important for preschool exit, while kindergarten teachers rated only 6 items as very important at kindergarten entry. They also rated 58 items as very important during the middle of the kindergarten year and 122 items as very important at the culmination of

kindergarten. Both groups of teachers rated the same 5 categories as most important; social interaction, communication, instruction-following, conduct, and self-care, however, preschool and kindergarten teachers placed them in a different order of importance. The same four categories were rated as least important to preschool and kindergarten teachers; those were academic, independent work, large group, and transitions.

Higgins-Hains et al. (1989) concluded that preschool teachers' expectations most closely resembled the expectations of kindergarten teachers at the end of the kindergarten year. Researchers believed that the results may be due to misperceptions of increasing academic pressure in kindergarten, or because children were spending more and more time in early childhood programs before kindergarten entrance and that curriculum must be changed to continually challenge students. The researchers believed that the tool could be used to create a framework for school districts to develop area guidelines for kindergarten readiness.

I believe that this is a straightforward and simple study that gets to the heart of the matter, which is determining whether there are discrepancies in perceptions by preschool and kindergarten teachers and how wide those discrepancies are. Conducting this research at the local level will increase awareness between preschool programs and school districts and will initiate conversations regarding kindergarten readiness skills within our community.

Differing expectations are not only present between preschool and kindergarten teachers, but also between educators and parents. Research has shown that children learn better when expectations between parents and teachers are closely aligned (Welch & White, 1999). Lynne-Lane, Stanton-Chapman, Roorbach Jamison, and Phillips (2007)

examined the differences between parents' and preschool teachers' perceptions of the importance of social skills in school success. Participants were 35 teachers and 124 parents from three private preschools in Charlottesville, Virginia. The schools were ethnically diverse, however the percentage of Caucasian students in each school was approximately 50%. Two of the preschools were located in at-risk neighborhoods and fed into an elementary school with a free lunch rate of nearly 63%. The third preschool was located in a rural farming community that fed into an elementary school with a free lunch rate of 37%. Teachers and parents completed a preschool version of the Social Skills Rating System. Teachers were asked to rate how important 30 items were for students to be successful in the preschool classroom using a scale of *not important (0), important (1), and critical (2)*. Parents were asked to rate how important 39 items were for students to be successful in the preschool classroom using the same scale (Lynne-Lane et al., 2007).

According to Lynne-Lane et al. (2007), results indicated that over 50% of preschool teachers rated three skills as critical for success in the classroom: "*follows your directions, controls temper in conflict situations with adults,* and *controls temper in conflict situations with peers*" (p. 90). Parents indicated the same three skills as critical for success, as well as the following five items; "*attends to instructions, puts away toys or other house-hold property, follows household rules, ends disagreements with you calmly*, and *speaks in an appropriate tone of voice at home*" (p. 90).

Researchers suggested that it is not necessary for parents and teachers to have the same expectations, but rather, that classroom expectations need to be clear, taught, and reinforced. In a 2003 study of teacher expectation of student behaviors, Lynne-Lane, Pierson, and Givner found that elementary teachers viewed skills in the area of cooperation

and self control as being critical of success. Specifically they addressed the skills of: attends to teacher instruction, controls temper in conflict situation with peers, controls conflict situation with adults, follows directions, and responds appropriately to physical aggression from peers (Lynne-Lane et al., 2003). Communicating expectations with students and families is imperative in helping to create positive educational experiences for young children with at-risk behaviors and to create a strong home-school partnership (Lynne-Lane et al., 2007).

In a 2001 study, Pianta, Kraft-Sayre, Rimm-Kaufman, Gercke, and Higgins examined whether strong home-school partnerships and transition activities were effective in diminishing the differences between parental and teacher expectations and perceptions of relationships. They compared data on teachers' perceptions and range of transition activities; teacher, mother, and family worker perceptions of relationships with one another; and maternal views of support given by preschool teachers. Data was collected for two years (fall of 1998 until the spring of 2000) from parents and school personnel affiliated with groups of children entering preschool in two different school divisions. Participants consisted of 110 children of differing ethnic backgrounds with 91% qualifying for free or reduced lunch. Ten female preschool teachers (8 Caucasian and 2 African American) also participated, ranging in experience from 1 to 26 years. Seven of the teachers held bachelor degrees and three of the teachers had received master's degrees. Thirty-one female kindergarten teachers participated, although no contextual information was provided. Seven female family workers also participated (6 Caucasian and 1 African American), ranging in experience from three and a half months to three and a half years. All family workers had obtained bachelor's degrees and five held master's degrees. All

participants were offered the same intervention; therefore, no control group was used. Researchers used three sources of information for data collection: the Transition to Kindergarten Activities Questionnaire (Kraft-Sayre & Pianta, 1999), the Home-School Relationship Questionnaire (Adams & Christenson, 2000), and maternal interviews regarding social supports. Logistic regression and chi-squared analyses were used to detect differences in responses between participants. Results showed that the most frequent form of transition activity involved preschool children visiting a kindergarten classroom, more often, their own future kindergarten classroom. Results also indicated that if teachers reported this as a transition practice, they also viewed it as effective. In general, mothers and teachers reported that the other was *doing a good job* with transitioning a child to kindergarten. Mothers also reported that preschool staff were helpful in transitioning their children to kindergarten, even more so than other caregivers in the child's life, such as father, grandparents, other relatives, co-workers, and child care providers (Pianta et al., 2001).

Researchers did find supporting evidence for continued and increased partnership between parents and preschool and kindergarten teachers for transitioning children to kindergarten. Pianta et al. (2001) also indicated that transition activities should be modified to suit the needs and interests of the families and communities. However, because so much focus was put on creating positive home-school relationships, and because the preschool programs were located within school districts, the authors didn't regard the study to be very generalizable. I believe that this research provides evidence that it is important for collaboration between preschool and kindergarten teachers in order to ensure smooth transitions into kindergarten for children.

Fails-Nelson (2004) acknowledged the importance of a smooth transition from preschool to kindergarten and suggested that previous research supported the idea that kindergarten should pick up where preschool left off and continue to provide curriculum in a child-centered manner. Research also supported the notion that parental expectations are more academic than kindergarten teachers' expectations for kindergarten readiness (Welch & White, 1999).

Fails-Nelson stated that kindergarten transition practices could be categorized into three basic types: teacher-focused, parent-focused, and child-focused. She wanted to examine the frequency and types of transition practices offered by kindergarten teachers in relation to their experience and training. Using data obtained from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Cohort, a stratified random sampling was used to include over 3000 teachers from all demographic areas of the United States. Of the 3053 teachers participating in the analyses on training, 1658 had been certified in early childhood education and 1395 had not. The authors did not define *certification*. Of the 3101 teachers participating in the analyses on experience, 1345 had five or more years of experience, while 1835 had less than five years of experience in teaching. Further examination of research should be done to determine if certification was based on a two year degree, four year degree, or teaching licensure as well as further identification of experience in teaching. Authors do not make these specifications, resulting in less generalizability to the local area.

Teachers answered *yes* or *no* to seven questions related to transition activities or the start of the school year. Researchers used a logistic regression analysis to compare the transition practices of early childhood certified teachers to non-early childhood certified teachers, as well as the transition practices of teachers with more than five years

experience to those with less than five years experience. Results indicated that regardless of experience or training, over 80% of teachers sent information home regarding kindergarten readiness. Veteran kindergarten teachers were also more likely than novice teachers to invite parents and children into the classroom prior to entry to kindergarten. In regard to training, early childhood certified teachers were more likely than those teachers without the early childhood certification to invite the parents into the classroom, shorten the school days at the beginning of the school year, and conduct an orientation for parents. It is unclear if school policies influenced a teacher's decisions in kindergarten transition practices.

Fails-Nelson (2004) concluded that teachers were often unable to make home visits due to the fact that they are not given student information far enough in advance, or that they are not given leave time from the beginning of the year planning periods; therefore, home visits were seldom used for transition activities by kindergarten teachers. She suggested that an early childhood education coordinator be appointed within a school district to coordinate transition activities and assist teachers with home visits and classroom visits. She also suggested that a community transition council, consisting of administrators from early childhood programs and school districts be formed to exchange information about children and to aid in the transition to kindergarten.

In 1995, Maxwell, Bryant, Keyes, and Bernier (1997) collected data from 858 teachers in 43 counties participating in the Smart Start program in North Carolina. "Smart Start is designed to ensure that all children are healthy and prepared to succeed as they enter school" (Maxwell et al., 1997, p. 1). Information collected as part of the baseline measurement included: information about the pre-academic and social skills of

kindergartners, the percent of children not ready to participate successfully in school, the characteristics that teachers deemed necessary for successful participation in school, the SES of kindergarten children, information regarding previous child care experiences, and beginning year of participation of a county in Smart Start.

Kindergarten teachers rated 3,782 kindergarteners on pre-academic and social skills using the Kindergarten Teacher Checklist, based on the Maryland Systematic Teacher Observation Instrument (Maxwell et al., 1997). This scale measured basic tasks using a Likert-scale of *always*, *often*, *sometimes*, *seldom*, and *never*. Examples of tasks included, "can copy a circle, square, and triangle so that it is recognizable," "gets along with other children in various situations," and "can tell about a picture while looking at it" (Maxwell et al., 1997) (see Appendix A). A general school readiness questionnaire consisting of four questions was also given to kindergarten teachers. Information gathered included the number of children in the teacher's class that year, the number of children in the teacher's class who appeared unready to participate successfully in formal school settings, and the number of years the teacher had taught children of any age. The participating teacher could add a list of any additional characteristics that were necessary for a child to be ready for kindergarten. A child's SES paralleled eligibility requirements for free or reduced price lunch guidelines. Since Smart Start is designed to help children from lower SES backgrounds, researchers also asked teachers to indicate whether a child had previously attended organized childcare. Researchers hypothesized that children who had participated in high quality childcare would have significantly higher skills than children who did not participate in childcare.

Baseline findings across the 43 Smart Start counties indicated that, according to teachers, "18% of the kindergarteners in 1995 were not ready at the beginning of the year to participate successfully in school" (Maxwell et al., p. 4). County averages of children not ready to participate successfully in school ranged from 9% to 36%, which translated into almost 1 in 5 children. "Poor children scored significantly lower than non-poor children on the Kindergarten Teacher Checklist, suggesting that children from low-income families may not be as prepared for school as classmates from higher income families" (Maxwell et al., p. 4). Teachers indicated that 54% of children had attended some form of organized care and rated these children higher on the Kindergarten Teacher Checklist, suggesting that attendance in childcare may help prepare young children for successful participation in school (Maxwell et al., 1997). These results attest to the need for increased communication between childcare centers and school districts within a community.

Teachers sampled in the Smart Start counties indicated that the top five characteristics that they felt were most necessary for a child to possess to be considered ready for kindergarten were: listens and pays attention (46%), good social skills (e.g., shares, takes turns)(44%), follows directions and instructions (37%), basic knowledge (e.g., knows colors, address, phone number)(36%), and good language and communication skills (33%). Researchers indicated that since no characteristic was listed by more than 50% of the teachers "...that teachers, overall, do not share a common view of the skills necessary for kindergarten." (Maxwell et al., 1997, p. 4).

Further examination of the data by researchers would be beneficial. How did the Kindergarten Teacher Checklist score compare to average population of the school district or county? Did teachers from rural districts indicate the same characteristics for

kindergarten readiness as those from larger districts? What was the difference between number of years teaching and characteristics important for kindergarten readiness? Although many questions still remain, this research is indicative of the struggle to define kindergarten readiness, even by the kindergarten teachers themselves.

In the fall of 1991, funding was provided by the Department of Health and Human Services to 31 sites around the country to ease the transition for participating children from Head Start to public school (Mantzicopoulos, 2003). The theory behind these *transitional programs* was to provide coordinated and continuous programming of services for low-income children and their families beginning with Head Start enrollment and continuing through the elementary school years.

Mantzicopoulos (2003) conducted research at a midwestern public school district that contained a Head Start-public school transition demonstration program as well as an in-house Head Start center serving 130 children. The transition program focused on areas emphasized by Head Start, including providing developmentally appropriate instruction for children, cooperation between Head Start, kindergarten, and first-grade teachers, and collaboration between teachers and families through familiarizing parents with public kindergarten classrooms, routines, and goals. Expectations "...that the risk of nonpromotion would be lower for those Head Start children attending kindergarten in a transition school was thus based on evidence from nonpromotion research" (Mantzicopoulos, 2003). The school district had a no-retention policy for kindergarten students; that is, those children who were evaluated as not ready for first grade by their kindergarten teachers at the end of the academic year were placed in a pre-first grade classroom. Head Start children who attended the three schools with the transitional

program were less likely to be placed in the pre-first grade program (15%) than those Head Start children in the comparison schools (25%). Furthermore, 52% of parents in the schools containing transitional programs reported weekly participation in school activities as compared to 35% of those parents in the comparison group.

Mantzicopoulos (2003) believed that increased attention should be placed on public school interventions that stress the importance of supportive relationships with families and emphasize flexible instructional practices to aid children's learning and development. Head Start children's success in kindergarten is related to both family and school contextual factors and the more united these groups are, the more likely a child will achieve success in kindergarten.

Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, and Cox (2000) found that in a national sample of kindergarten teachers, one sixth of children entering kindergarten were viewed as having serious adjustment problems, while an additional one third had minor adjustment problems. Specific problems were related to "difficulty following directions and lack of academic skills" (p. 160). Rimm-Kaufman et al. (2000) also examined the differences between minority and nonminority teachers' perspectives of reported problems. Researchers found that, "compared to minority teachers, nonminority teachers perceive higher rates of difficulty following directions, disorganized home environments, lack of formal preschool experience, and immaturity in high minority composition schools" (p. 162). The researchers also found that schools that strived for cultural congruence with children and families were more likely to experience success in improving children's learning (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2000).

Current research has indicated that transitional programs and increased communication between parents, preschools, and kindergartens will make the transition to kindergarten less difficult for children (Fails-Nelson, 2004; Mantzicopoulos, 2003; Pianta et al., 2001; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2000; Welch & White, 1999). A smooth transition into formal education will allow children to experience less fear and uncertainty and more excitement for learning. Examining preschool and kindergarten teachers' perceptions of kindergarten readiness at the local level will begin the process of defining a uniform kindergarten transition plan for the community.

Chapter III

The Project

Although there are many factors that play into a child's kindergarten readiness, including family SES, prior child-care experiences, child's age at entry, and preschool attendance, perhaps the most easily controlled is that of communication between preschool and kindergarten teachers. It appears that the lack of communication between preschool and kindergarten teachers has led to many misunderstandings in kindergarten readiness for children. What one teacher deems as most important may not be seen as important to another teacher. In order to delineate the perceptions of kindergarten readiness by teachers, I will examine the following research questions:

- What skills do preschool and kindergarten teachers perceive as valuable prior to entry of kindergarten?

- How do the two groups compare or contrast in their expectations of children? Consequently, how do these values align with the Tri-County Child and Family Development Council's kindergarten school readiness goals?

- How does current literature recommend preschool and kindergarten teachers work together to adequately prepare children for kindergarten?

Subjects to be included in this project are kindergarten and preschool teachers in the Iowa communities of Cedar Falls and Waterloo. Teachers must meet the following criteria to be included in this project.

Preschool Teachers-Lead teachers in childcare center classrooms with children aged 3-5 as well as lead teachers in publicly and/or privately funded half-day preschool

programs with children aged 3-5. This definition does not include in-home childcare providers.

Kindergarten Teachers-Lead teachers in publicly and/or privately funded kindergarten classrooms with children aged five as of September 15th. This definition does not include teacher associates.

Kindergarten and Preschool teachers from the Cedar Valley will complete an on-line survey (Blohm, 2012) ranking their level of agreement or disagreement with specific skills from the Tri-County Child and Family Development's Kindergarten School Readiness Goals (see Table 1 for complete goals). Participants will also be asked to share any other goals or skills that they perceive as valuable for kindergarten readiness.

Step 1

Before dissemination of the survey can take place, the researcher is required to complete human subjects review and certification of the research project through the Institutional Review Board. Approval must also be obtained from the school districts prior to submission to kindergarten teachers.

For the Cedar Falls Community School District, the researcher will complete the steps listed in the research request form provided by the school district. This involves providing a copy of the questionnaire, an outline of the procedures to be followed, and copies of all contact letters. Detailed information regarding this process can be found in Appendix A.

For the Waterloo Community School District, the researcher will complete the required research request form, a one page summary of the proposed project and the

complete summary proposal, including permissions and the questionnaire. Detailed information regarding this process can be found in Appendix B.

Step 2

Once permission is obtained from the required sources, the questionnaire will be disseminated electronically via email to preschool and kindergarten teachers in Cedar Falls and Waterloo. Email addresses will be obtained for kindergarten teachers by contacting their represented school district, while preschool teachers' email addresses will need to be obtained via contact with Area Education Agency 267 and Child Care Resource and Referral, a non-profit organization that aids families in finding adequate childcare in the Cedar Valley. Contact has not been made with Area Education Agency 267 or Child Care Resource and Referral, however, because the outcomes of this study could potentially benefit all children in the Cedar Valley, as well as preschool and kindergarten teachers, it is not believed that there will be objections.

Based on the pilot study, it is estimated that the survey will take less than 10 minutes to complete. A formal letter will be provided stating that teachers are not required to complete the survey and informing participants of any risks involved; however, submission will indicate consent. Appendix C contains the email that will be sent to participants.

Teachers will have two weeks to complete the questionnaire. Submission of the questionnaire will happen as participants select the submit button on the last page of the survey. Participants will be provided with an email reminder at end of week one (Ritter & Sue, 2007). Appendix D contains the reminder email.

Appendix E contains the actual questionnaire that participants would see when following the links within the email. A response rate of at least 50% must be obtained in order for research to go forward and for data to be analyzed and shared with the Area Education Agency for public use. A response rate of 50% or higher indicates that over half of the preschool and kindergarten teachers in Cedar Falls and Waterloo have had an opportunity to share their beliefs about Kindergarten Readiness and the Kindergarten School Readiness Goals as set by Tri-County Child and Family Development. Results will be shared with all local teachers by way of professional development activities conducted through Tri-County Child and Family Development Council, Area Education Agency 267, and Child Care Resource and Referral. If a response rate of at least 50% is not obtained, then data will be analyzed and shared with Tri-County Child and Family Development, Area Education Agency 267, and Child Care Resource and Referral for private use, but will not be shared for public use.

Step 3

Two weeks after the survey deadline, to allow for trailing participants, data will be analyzed for mean scores on each skill within the nine domains. Analysis of data will be completed by tallying the number of responses on a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) for each goal and then calculating to reach the mean score. Data will be organized according to preschool teachers' responses and kindergarten teachers' responses, so that comparisons can be made between the two groups. Results will also be compared to the current Tri-County Kindergarten Readiness Goals so that all teachers' perceptions of the level of importance can be identified.

Step 4

Results will be shared with Tri-County Child and Family Development so that they may further evaluate their Kindergarten School Readiness Goals to reflect information acquired in the project. If more than a 50% response rate was obtained, then information will also be shared with Area Education Agency 267 and Child Care Resource and Referral for use in professional development activities for preschool and kindergarten teachers in the Cedar Falls and Waterloo Communities and for dissemination to school districts, preschools and childcare centers in the Cedar Valley. It is estimated that the entire length of the project, from submission for research to the school districts to compilation and dissemination of the data, will be six months.

Chapter IV

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Research has undoubtedly shown that the congruence in expectations of kindergarten readiness between families, school, and communities leads to an effortless transition from childcare and preschool into the academic world of public education (Firlik, 2001; Lynne Lane et al., 2007; Pianta et al., 2000; Welch & White, 1999). Researching kindergarten and preschool teachers' perceptions of kindergarten readiness will raise an awareness of currently held misunderstandings and will lead to efforts in transitioning all children to kindergarten successfully.

Increasing communication between the private sectors of in-home daycares, childcare centers, and preschools with elementary schools will lead to an increased awareness of necessary skills for children's successful kindergarten transitions. This survey, regarding Tri-County Child and Family Development Council's Kindergarten School Readiness Goals, should be distributed to all kindergarten and preschool teachers in Cedar Falls, Waterloo, and surrounding areas to determine if goals set forth are viewed as appropriate for kindergarten readiness.

If there is an alignment between kindergarten and preschool teachers' perceptions of kindergarten readiness in regard to the Tri-County Child and Family Development Council's Kindergarten School Readiness Goals, then it will be recommended that those readiness goals be shared with and adopted by all preschool programs in the Cedar Valley for preparation of children for kindergarten. Further communication of results should be shared with the Area Education Agency and the local Child Care Resource and Referral

office so that all in-home and childcare center providers may use the same goals to prepare all children, regardless of participation in Head Start, for kindergarten. This will lead to a reduction in the gap of abilities between children entering formal schooling for the first time.

Recommendations

If data reveals that kindergarten and preschool teachers' perceptions of kindergarten readiness is imbalanced, I have presented four recommendations to examine in order to strengthen the congruence between preschool and kindergarten teacher expectations. It would also be recommended that results be shared with Tri-County Child and Family Development so that they may reflect on data results and adjust kindergarten school readiness goals as needed. Data could also be shared with Area Education Agency 267 so that they may use it for future professional development opportunities or kindergarten transition research at the local level.

Community-wide committee of professionals.

Additionally, it is recommended that a community-wide committee of early childhood professionals, including 2-3 preschool teachers, 2-3 kindergarten teachers, and 3-4 professionals, such as school curriculum directors, professional development coordinators, and building principals meet semi-annually. Sancho Passe (2010) recommended that a committee consist of 8-10 professionals in the community. The purpose of this committee would be to improve alignment of expectations and determine effectiveness of increased communication of kindergarten readiness goals in the community. Committee members should also discuss new challenges in student learning,

and brainstorm possible efforts in implementing smooth transitions from preschool to kindergarten.

Joint-staff workshop between school districts and preschools.

A second recommendation is that Area Education Agency 267 team each elementary school district in the Cedar Valley with preschools and daycares within their boundaries for a joint-staff workshop. Staff included in the workshop would consist of all kindergarten and preschool teachers within the boundaries, as well as curriculum directors or childcare center directors within the perimeter. The workshop agenda should include sharing of expectations of students at the end of the preschool year and at the beginning of the kindergarten year, daily classroom routines, and how the schools communicate with families (Sancho Passe, 2010). This would provide preschool teachers with concrete evidence of kindergarten teacher expectations and would allow kindergarten teachers to learn about the daily activities of the preschool classrooms so that they may structure the beginning of their school year in a familiar routine for children.

Preschool teachers observe kindergarten classrooms.

Preschool teachers should be encouraged to observe a kindergarten classroom in action so that they may view expectations for themselves. This will help to dispel any misunderstandings that the preschool teachers may hold regarding kindergarten. It will also give them knowledge and information that they can pass on to children and families regarding their future kindergarten classroom.

Transition tips for families.

Once kindergarten readiness goals are established at the local level, preschool teachers should share these goals periodically with families in the form of *transition tips*.

For instance, if it is determined that a goal of identifying 10 letters of the alphabet is developmentally appropriate and recommended, preschool teachers could create a list of 2-3 letter recognition activities that parents could do with their children to help prepare them for kindergarten. *Transition tips* should be given during the winter, spring, and summer before a child enters kindergarten so that parents may play an active role in their child's education from the beginning. Additionally, a community-wide transition plan should be distributed to families with activities that they can use to engage their children over the summer in preparation for kindergarten.

In the end it comes down to one ultimate goal for kindergarten readiness: "children need to be ready for school and schools need to be ready for children and families" (Sancho Passe, 2010, p. 11). Researching teachers' perceptions of kindergarten readiness at the local level will help to achieve that goal.

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Appendix A

Cedar Falls Community School District Research Request Form

CEDAR FALLS COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
1002 W. First Street
Cedar Falls, IA

INSTRUCTIONS FOR REQUESTING APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE
CEDAR FALLS COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Definition:

External research that is locally or regionally sponsored, involving students and/or school personnel in at least one school requires prior written approval by either the Director of Elementary Education or the Director of Secondary Education.

General Considerations:

The Cedar Falls Community Schools receive many requests to provide administrative assistance, instructional time, and school records for external research. In order that we may quickly review and determine if the research will enhance the goals of education, these procedures have been established.

Consideration will be given to all research proposals that meet all criteria. The primary responsibility of the school system is education of the students; any cooperation in research is in that context.

All research proposals should do the following:

1. Indicate careful planning.
2. Enhance education in the Cedar Falls Community Schools.
3. Respect prevailing value systems and standards of the school and community.
4. Require no serious interruption of the regular school program. Advance planning with involved building principals is required.
5. Avoid unreasonable demands on students and/or school personnel.
6. Treat information concerning pupils and staff personnel in strictest confidence.
7. Require no expense to the Cedar Falls Community Schools beyond discretionary use of staff or pupil time.

Procedures for Submitting Proposals:

Forms for submitting proposed studies may be secured from either the:

Director of Elementary Education (K-6)

or

Director of Secondary Education (7-12)
Cedar Falls Community Schools
1002 W. First Street
Cedar Falls, IA 50613

Proposals should be submitted using the standard application form of the Cedar Falls Community Schools.

The following items must be included:

1. A copy of all instruments to be used in the study.
2. An outline of procedures that will be followed in distribution, administration, and return of any materials, such as a student questionnaire. This is the sole responsibility of the researcher.
3. Copies of all contact letters.
4. The signature of the researcher indicates agreement with and understanding of the established conditions.

Procedures for Review, Notification, and Implementation:

The Superintendent has delegated the responsibility of research control in the Cedar Falls Community Schools to the Directors of Elementary and Secondary Education. The procedures for reviewing requests to conduct research, method of notification, and procedures for implementation are as follows:

1. The appropriate Director of Elementary or Secondary Education approves or disapproves all research requests.
2. The Director sends written notification to the research applicant of approval or disapproval, and copies to involved administrators.
3. The researcher is responsible for contacting the staff personnel to schedule time with involved participants.

For Proposals Not Approved, These are Alternative Courses of Action:

1. Changes in design or procedures as specified.
2. Personal interview with the Director of Elementary or Secondary Education.
3. Approval of the request, subject to specified conditions and limitations.

Written authorization to pursue a research project in the Cedar Falls Community Schools must be received before the project is initiated.

> Pam Zeigler
> Director of Elementary Education (K-6)
>
> Dan Conrad
> Director of Secondary Education (7-12)

APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH
IN THE CEDAR FALLS COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Complete this form in duplicate and return to either the Director of Elementary Education or the Director of Secondary Education, Cedar Falls Community Schools, 1002 W. First Street, Cedar Falls, IA 50613.

1. General Information

    Applicant's Name_____ Phone _____

    Address_____ Zip Code _____

    Resident of Cedar Falls?   Yes __   No __   Resident of Iowa?   Yes __   No __

    Cedar Falls Contract Teacher? Yes __   No __   Student Teacher?   Yes __   No __

    Sponsoring Institution/Agency _____

2. Your proposed research project must include the following details:
    — Title of Study
    — Purpose for pursuing research (thesis, advance degree work, personal information, etc.)
    — Description of problem, including hypotheses and statistical treatment
    — Specific data required
    — Schools to be surveyed (if known)
    — Number of pupils to be surveyed
    — Number of teachers and other staff members to be surveyed
    — Dates research will be conducted (if known)
    — Estimated amount of staff and student time required
    — An outline of procedures you will follow in distribution, administration, and collection of instruments requiring staff or student response

PLEASE NOTE:

    a. Contact individual buildings when approval is granted by the appropriate director.
    b. This application must be accompanied by one copy of all instruments used in the research.
    c. Allow five weeks for review and evaluation of your request. Please understand that the Cedar Falls Community Schools have a responsibility for the education of approximately 5,000 students. With several colleges and universities in the region, it may not be possible to honor all requests because of the many applications.
    d. To avoid conflicts in opening and closing school activities, research must be scheduled between October 1 and April 1.
    e. An interview with the applicant may be necessary.
    f. Any news release or story must be cleared through the appropriate director.

I understand that the granting of permission to pursue this research project in the Cedar Falls Community Schools obligates me to provide three copies of an abstract of findings to the Director of Elementary or Secondary Education or designated representative, and one copy to each principal of the building where the project was carried out. At the request of school officials, I agree to provide them with one complete copy of all findings directly resulting from the study. I further agree to comply with all conditions described in "Instructions for Requesting Approval to Conduct Research in the Cedar Falls Community Schools."

Signature of Applicant_____ Date _____

Signature of Sponsoring Professor_____   Date _____

_____   _____
Director of Elementary Education   Director of Secondary Education

Date _____

Waterloo Community School District Research Request Form

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

The Waterloo Schools, because of the District's size, location and unique characteristics, are often asked to participate in research studies at the local, state and national levels. We try to accommodate requests whenever possible because we value the opportunity to participate in research activities which will enhance educational programming for Waterloo students.

In order to have your request approved, please follow the directions contained in this form and complete all applicable sections. In addition, please include a one-page summary of the research project. Your request will stand on its merits as presented in the summary, this form, and in your proposal. Please take the time to be as thorough as possible since only complete requests will be considered.

Some general rules:

A.   Each research study will be considered regarding the total benefit to the Waterloo Schools.

B.   Written approval from the Executive Director of Learning and Results is needed before you begin any contacts with students or staff in the District.

C.   If you intend to collect data for a research paper, thesis or dissertation, your instructor (in the case of a research paper) or your committee chair must also sign your request. Undergraduate level requests to fulfill course requirements will not be allowed. Action research projects by student teachers are conducted under the supervision of the Coordinator of Student Teaching.

D.   If District staff time is needed to assist you in revising your plan or gathering data, you will be charged for the employee's time at the prevailing hourly rate. You will also be charged for the cost of any services or materials used. These fees must be paid in full before the data will be released to you.

E.   Please comply with all applicable local, state and/or federal statutes, rules and regulations relating to data privacy. The school district does not assume liability for any violations by you of the above referenced statues, rules, and regulations.

My signature indicates that I have read and understand the above rules, that I have had ample opportunity to ask questions about them, and that I assume liability for any

alleged or actual violation of local, state and/or federal statutes, rules or regulations relating to data privacy.

Name: _____   Date: _____

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA
WATERLOO COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Please type your request.

1.   Today's Date: _____

2.   Purpose of the proposed research: _____

3.   Check the reason for your request.   ☐ Dissertation
☐ Thesis
☐ Research Paper
☐ Data for a funded application or grant
☐ Other [Please specify] _____

4..   Population to be included:
☐ Students   How many?   _____
☐ Teachers   How many?   _____
☐ Administrator   How many?   _____
☐ Other Personnel How many?   _____

5.   Schools Involved [If any]

☐ All schools
☐ All elementary schools
☐ All middle schools
☐ All high schools
☐ Selected schools
[Please specify] _____

IF STUDENT DATA IS REQUIRED, COMPLETE QUESTION SIX. IF NO STUDENT DATA IS REQUIRED, SKIP TO QUESTION SEVEN.

6.   How do you propose to obtain parents' permission for children to participate?

_____
[Note: Copies of all permission slips must be on file before the study is initiated.]

A.   Where will student data be collected?
☐ Student's homes
☐ At school
☐ Other [Please specify] _____

B.   When will data be collected?
☐ During the school day
☐ After hours
☐ Other [Please specify] _____

C.   Which grade levels involved [Check all that apply]
☐ PK   ☐ Grade 7
☐ Grade 1   ☐ Grade 8
☐ Grade 2   ☐ Grade 9
☐ Grade 3   ☐ Grade 10
☐ Grade 4   ☐ Grade 11
☐ Grade 5   ☐ Grade 12
☐ Grade 6

D.   Who will be asked to give information about the students?
☐ The students themselves
☐ Teachers
☐ Administration
☐ Counselors
☐ Central office personnel
☐ Other [Please specify] _____

E.   What demographic information will be requested? [Check all that apply]
☐ Birthdate/Age
☐ Address
☐ Race
☐ Sex
☐ Test Scores [Please specify]
    ☐ IQ   ☐ ITBS/ITED   ☐ Other _____
☐ Other [Please specify] _____

7.   When will the data be collected? [Approximate dates] _____

8.   Will you guarantee participant anonymity?
        ☐ Yes   [Explain] _____
        ☐ No   [Comments?] _____

9.   Who will receive the results of the research, and how will the results be disseminated?

     _____

10. Your Information:
     Name: _____
     Mailing address:
     Telephone   Daytime _____   Evening _____

11. Is there any other information we should know about your request?

     _____

12. Required signature for dissertation/thesis or research paper

     I certify that the proposal herein presented is being conducted in conjunction with the requirements for completion of _____ degree/course.

            Institution: _____
            Committee Chair: _____
            Position   _____

Send this completed form **along with a one-page summary of the project and a copy of your complete research proposal**, including permission forms and questionnaires, if used, to:

Director of Learning and Results
Waterloo Community Schools
1516 Washington Street
Waterloo, Iowa 50702

■■
Office Use:

Date Received _____   ☐ Approved   ☐ Denied
Date of Notification: _____

ADOPTED
9/92
7/23/99
9/7/01
11/9/06

Reviewed: 9/92, 7/23/99, 9/7/01, 10/7/04, 11/9/06

Appendix C

Dear Teacher,

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

We are researching Teachers' Perceptions of Kindergarten Readiness at the local level, specifically teachers' agreement or disagreement with Tri-County Child and Family Developments Kindergarten School Readiness Goals.

Below, you will find a link to a short ten minute survey regarding Kindergarten School Readiness Goals. We would like to know your level of agreement or disagreement with the specific skills of nine domains and if you feel they are important for a child to obtain before entering kindergarten. Data will be compiled to create community wide kindergarten readiness goals that will be distributed to local preschool and daycare facilities.

There are no foreseeable risks to participation.

Benefits include increased communication of kindergarten readiness goals for teachers and children in the Cedar Valley, particularly for those children entering kindergarten and for those teachers teaching children participating in the preschool and kindergarten years.

Information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept confidential. The summarized findings with no identifying information may be published in an academic journal or presented at a scholarly conference.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from participation at any time by closing out of the survey or to choose not to participate at all, and by doing so, you will not be penalized.

If you have questions about the study or desire information in the future regarding your participation in the study, you can contact Jessica Blohm at 641-751-8558 or faculty advisor, Dr. Jill Uhlenberg, at the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Northern Iowa 319-273-7671. You can also contact the office of the IRB Administrator, University of Northern Iowa, at 319-273-6148, for answers to questions about rights of research participants and the participant review process."

Agreement: *By entering and completing the survey, you are indicating your consent of participation in the survey and the following statement:*

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.

<u>Teachers' Perception of Kindergarten Readiness Survey</u>

Please submit this questionnaire prior to (date) for inclusion in the study.

Sincerely,

Jessica Blohm

Appendix D

Dear Teacher,

Last week you were asked to complete a survey regarding Teachers' Perceptions of Kindergarten Readiness. There is still time for you to participate. Please follow the link below to take a 10-minute survey regarding kindergarten readiness in our community.

<u>Teachers' Perception of Kindergarten Readiness Survey</u>

Please complete the survey by (date) for inclusion in the study.

Sincerely,

Jessica Blohm

Teachers' Perceptions of Kindergarten Readiness

This survey is designed to measure Cedar Valley teachers' perception of kindergarten readiness. Questions are based on Tri-County Child and Family Development's recently established Kindergarten School Readiness Goals. All responses will be kept confidential. Information may be shared with Tri-County Child and Family Development and Area Education Agency 267 to increase communication of kindergarten readiness skills between kindergartens, preschool programs and daycare providers in the Cedar Valley. Your time and effort are greatly appreciated in this effort. Tri-County Child and Family Development has established 9 domains of child development, therefore, the survey will be broken down into 9 domains and will take a little less than 10 minutes to complete. Please rate your agreement with the readiness goals on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being Strongly Disagree and 5 being Strongly Agree. Items within a category may or may not be rated at the same level as other items. You will also be asked to rate the domains in order of importance for kindergarten readiness. Please give careful thought to all items. Thank you.

Teachers' Perceptions of Kindergarten Readiness

Social and Emotional Development

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Able to calm self down when upset	○	○	○	○	○
Identifies and manages emotions appropriately	○	○	○	○	○
Builds positive relationships with peers and adults, including showing empathy toward others	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Accepts another choice when his/her first choice is unavailable	◌	◌	◌	◌	◌
Joins in cooperative play with others and able to share materials and experiences	◌	◌	◌	◌	◌

Please share any comments or about these social development goals or make suggestions.

Teachers' Perceptions of Kindergarten Readiness

Physical Development and Health

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Shows control of small muscles for such purposes as using scissors, pencils, art tools, building, exploring, eating and serving utensils, and self-care	○	○	○	○	○
Moves purposefully from place to place with control, which includes hopping, skipping, jumping, climbing and pedaling	○	○	○	○	○
Shows ability to coordinate movement with balls which includes: throwing, kicking, bouncing and hitting	○	○	○	○	○

Please share any comments or about these physical development and health goals or

suggest additional goals.

Teachers' Perceptions of Kindergarten Readiness

Language Development

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Follows 2 step directions	○	○	○	○	○
Expresses ideas through speech and listens attentively in conversation with peers and caregivers	○	○	○	○	○
Asks and responds to questions appropriately	○	○	○	○	○
Uses complete 4-6 word sentences	○	○	○	○	○
Speaks with a clear voice using appropriate rate, volume, and pitch	○	○	○	○	○
Able to say first and last name	○	○	○	○	○

Please share any comments or about these language development goals or make

suggestions.

Teachers' Perceptions of Kindergarten Readiness

Cognitive (Approaches to Learning & Logic & Reasoning)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Attends and engages in an activity or group for 10-12 minutes	○	○	○	○	○
Maintains interest and persists in a project or activity until completed	○	○	○	○	○
Recognizes and solves problems through active exploration	○	○	○	○	○
Uses past knowledge to build new knowledge	○	○	○	○	○
Shows curiosity and takes initiative to learn about a variety of topics and ideas	○	○	○	○	○
Able to represent people, places, or things using drawings, symbols and 3-D objects	○	○	○	○	○

Please share any comments or about these cognitive goals or make suggestions.

Teachers' Perceptions of Kindergarten Readiness

Literacy Knowledge and Skills

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Recognizes 10-20 letters	○	○	○	○	○
Joins in nursery rhymes and songs	○	○	○	○	○
Produces rhyming words and able to decide when two words rhyme	○	○	○	○	○
Recognizes first and last name in print	○	○	○	○	○
Copies and begins to write own name	○	○	○	○	○
Identifies that letters make sounds	○	○	○	○	○
Demonstrates concepts about print: front, back, page turning, directionality	○	○	○	○	○
Able to retell a familiar story	○	○	○	○	○
Experiments with writing tools and materials	○	○	○	○	○
Uses a three finger grip when writing or drawing	○	○	○	○	○

Please share any comments or about these literacy goals or make suggestions.

Teachers' Perceptions of Kindergarten Readiness

Mathematics Knowledge and Skills

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Identifies basic shapes and their attributes	○	○	○	○	○
Identifies numerals to 10 by name	○	○	○	○	○
Sorts and classifies objects by a single attribute	○	○	○	○	○
Completes or creates an A/B pattern	○	○	○	○	○
Responds appropriately to directionality, order, and position of objects, such as up, down, in-front, and behind	○	○	○	○	○
Verbally counts to 20 or more	○	○	○	○	○
Able to use 1:1 correspondence for 5-7 objects	○	○	○	○	○
Compares objects using attributes of length, weight, and size: bigger, longer, taller, heavier	○	○	○	○	○

Please share any comments or about these mathematics goals or make suggestions.

Teachers' Perceptions of Kindergarten Readiness

Science Knowledge and Skills

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Able to observe and use information to ask questions, predict, explain and draw conclusions	○	○	○	○	○
Discriminates between living and non-living, identifies basic needs of plants and animals	○	○	○	○	○
Names basic body parts and their function	○	○	○	○	○
Demonstrates the use of good health habits: hand washing, toileting, brushing teeth	○	○	○	○	○

Please share any comments or about these science goals or make suggestions.

Teachers' Perceptions of Kindergarten Readiness

Social Studies Knowledge and Skills

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Demonstrates knowledge about self	○	○	○	○	○
Shows basic knowledge of differences and similarities of people and how they live	○	○	○	○	○
Describes the location of things in his/her environment in context of the classroom, home, and community	○	○	○	○	○
Follows a daily routine/schedule with increasing knowledge of yesterday, today and tomorrow	○	○	○	○	○

Please share any comments or about these social studies goals or make suggestions.

Teachers' Perceptions of Kindergarten Readiness

Creative Arts Expression

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Participates in music activities, such as listening, singing or performing	○	○	○	○	○
Moves to different types of beat and rhythm in music	○	○	○	○	○
Uses a variety of art materials for tactile expression and exploration	○	○	○	○	○
Engages in dramatic play	○	○	○	○	○

Please share any comments or about these creative arts goals or make suggestions.

Teachers' Perceptions of Kindergarten Readiness

Please rate the following domains of Kindergarten readiness in order from most important to least important, with 1 being most important and 9 being least important. Note: Please make sure that categories are not given the same level of importance.

Social and Emotional Development

Physical Development and Health

Language Development

Cognitive (Approaches to Learning & Logic & Reasoning)

Literacy Knowledge and Skills

Mathematics Knowledge and Skills

Science Knowledge and Skills

Social Studies Knowledge and Skills

Creative Arts Expression

Teachers' Perceptions of Kindergarten Readiness

Voice your opinion

Please offer any other valuable information or ideas you may have contributing to the preparation of children in the Cedar Valley for beginning kindergarten.

Teachers' Perceptions of Kindergarten Readiness

* Required

Teacher Demographics

The following questions are for research purposes only and will not be used in the distribution of materials or information to preschool programs or daycare providers in the Cedar Valley.

What is your gender?

- ⬜ Male
- ⬜ Female

Check the category that best describes your race/ethnicity. Check only one response

- ⬜ Black/African American
- ⬜ Native American/Indian
- ⬜ White/Caucasian
- ⬜ Hispanic/Latino
- ⬜ Asian/Pacific Islander
- ⬜ Other: [____]

What is the highest level of education you have completed? Check only one response

- ⬜ BA/BS (Bachelor's Degree)
- ⬜ MA/MS (Master's Degree)
- ⬜ Ed.D (Doctorate Degree)
- ⬜ Ph.D (Doctorate Degree)
- ⬜ Other: [____]

What level do you teach? *

- ⭘ Preschool-Age 3/4
- ⭘ Preschool-Age 4/5

- ⌐ Kindergarten

In the last three years, how many clock hours of early childhood education training have you received? Check only one response

- ⌐ 1-5 hours
- ⌐ 6-10 hours
- ⌐ 11-15 hours
- ⌐ 16-20 hours
- ⌐ 21 hours or more
- ⌐ None

Counting this school year, how many years have you taught preschool? * Check only one response

- ⌐ 1-5
- ⌐ 6-10
- ⌐ 11-15
- ⌐ 16-20
- ⌐ 21-25
- ⌐ 26 or more
- ⌐ None

Counting this school year, how many years have you taught kindergarten? * Check only one response

- ⌐ 1-5
- ⌐ 6-10
- ⌐ 11-15
- ⌐ 16-20
- ⌐ 21-25
- ⌐ 26 or more
- ⌐ None

Counting this year, how long have you worked in a teaching position in this school district?
Check only one response

- ☐ 1-2
- ☐ 3-4
- ☐ 5-6
- ☐ 7-8
- ☐ 9-10
- ☐ 11 or more

Teachers' Perceptions of Kindergarten Readiness

Thank you!

Your time and effort in completing this survey is appreciated. If you have any questions or comments regarding this survey, you may contact the researcher at Jessica.Blohm@uni.edu. Thank you!