

2006

The role of the kindergarten : history, concerns, and guidelines for developing an effective kindergarten program

Amanda N. Herber
University of Northern Iowa

Let us know how access to this document benefits you

Copyright ©2006 Amy N. Herber

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp>



Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), and the [Early Childhood Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Herber, Amanda N., "The role of the kindergarten : history, concerns, and guidelines for developing an effective kindergarten program" (2006). *Graduate Research Papers*. 850.
<https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp/850>

This Open Access Graduate Research Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Work at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Research Papers by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uni.edu.

The role of the kindergarten : history, concerns, and guidelines for developing an effective kindergarten program

Abstract

This literature review examined the recent literature on the subject of the role of today's kindergarten program. The age of the children, maturity level, attitude, and stress, and confidence were discussed. Guidelines were also presented for developing an effective kindergarten program. Conclusions were drawn from the current literature and recommendations were made for future kindergarten programs.

The Role of the Kindergarten: History, Concerns, and
Guidelines for Developing an Effective Kindergarten
Program

A Graduate Research Paper
Submitted to the
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Education
with a Major in Early Childhood Education
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

By
Amy N. Herber
July 3, 2006

This research paper by: Amy Herber

Titled: The Role of the Kindergarten: History, Concerns, and Guidelines for Developing
an Effective Kindergarten Program

Has been approved in meeting the research requirements for the
Degree of Mater of Arts in Education.

July 7, 2006
Date Approved

Charles R. May

Director of Research Paper

July 12, 2006
Date Approved

Rebecca Edmiaston

Graduate Faculty Reader

July 14, 2006
Date Approved

Greg P. Stefanich

Head, Department of curriculum and Instruction

Abstract

This literature review examined the recent literature on the subject of the role of today's kindergarten program. The age of the children, maturity level, attitude and stress, and confidence were discussed. Guidelines were also presented for developing an effective kindergarten program. Conclusions were drawn from the current literature and recommendations were made for future kindergarten programs.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Charles May, advisor, educator, and mentor. Thank you for the guidance, encouragement, and many drives to Dubuque these past two years to help assist me in my paper.

A big thank you to my friends and fellow classmates- Leigh, Nicole, Kara, and Michelle for their moral support throughout the program.

A special thank you to my husband, Dan, son, Jarrett, step-daughter, Marissa, and dad, Bruce who were a source of encouragement, support and understanding throughout my Master's program.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background of the Study.....	1
Purpose of the Study.....	3
Need for the Study.....	3
Limitations.....	4
Definitions.....	4
CHAPTER 2	5
Age of the Kindergarten Child and Needed Skills.....	5
Immaturity Level.....	6
Instructional Approach in Kindergarten.....	7
Attitude and Stress.....	8
Confidence Level of Kindergarteners.....	8
CHAPTER 3.....	10
Age of the Children.....	10
Classroom Characteristics.....	10
Half-Day Kindergarten Programs vs. Full-Day Kindergarten Programs..	11
Curriculum Needs.....	12
CHAPTER 4.....	14
Guidelines for an Effective Kindergarten Program.....	14
CHAPTER 5.....	18
Summary.....	18
Conclusions.....	22
Recommendations.....	22
REFERENCES.....	24

CHAPTER 1

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Background

Today in the United States, the kindergarten is a program for five year olds. This was not the case in the past. *Colliers Encyclopedia* (1996) defined the kindergarten of the past as a classroom program that consisted of children three to seven years of age. The kindergarten was founded by Friedrich Froebel, who was known as the *Father of Kindergarten* for his development of the first program in Germany in 1837. Before that time, it was thought that children under the age of seven did not have the ability to focus on academic subjects or to develop cognitive and emotional skills (Scholastic, 2000). Friedrich Froebel designed the kindergarten to teach young children about art, design, mathematics, and natural history (Watson, 1997). He believed that children needed to have play time to learn. He also believed that the kindergarten should be a place for children to grow and learn through social interaction with peers (Richie-Sharp, 1999). His philosophy of education was based on free self-activity, creativity, social participation, and motor expression (Watson, 1997).

The kindergarten was brought to the United States by Marguerite Schurz in 1856, but instruction was in the German language, and it was a private, not a public school program (Watson, 1997). Elizabeth Peabody founded the first English speaking kindergarten in Boston in 1860. This kindergarten was also a private school program. The first successful public school kindergarten was opened by Susan Elizabeth Blow at St. Louis, Missouri in 1873. She taught children in the morning and teachers in the afternoon. By

1883, every St. Louis public school had a kindergarten. This made St. Louis a model for the nation (Watson, 1997).

Kindergarten was not accepted by the middle class parents because it stressed the importance of the child being educated by the teacher and not trained by the mother. It was an accepted program for immigrant children and children from the slums; it was the belief that proper training in kindergarten would lead to the elimination of urban poverty. This result would occur from teaching children how to be clean and disciplined. Also, it would teach mothers how to nurture their children. The outcome would be a child and an educated mother who would know the ideals of family life (Watson, 1997).

Over time the kindergarten grew in numbers and influence. In 2002, approximately three million students were enrolled in kindergarten programs in the United States (Laidig, 2002). Kindergarten programs can be either half-day or full-day depending on the school district. In 2001, 60 percent of the nation's kindergarteners were attending a full-day program (Children's Action Alliance, 2004). In Gullo's study (as cited in *Project Accelerate Consortium*, 1996), when children enter kindergarten today, teachers are faced with children who have a wide range of home backgrounds and prior educational experiences that include the following: babysitting, the daycare, and some preschool education (*Project Accelerate Consortium*, 1996). The kindergarten today, with its focus on academic skills, instead of social skills, is different from the kindergarten two to three generations ago (Plevyak, 2002). In earlier generations, the kindergarten was primarily a time for outdoor fun, indoor coloring, and tracing the letters of the alphabet (Schor, 1995). Is this type of program still needed today, or does the current academic emphasis meet the needs of society better than the social focus of the

past? The following discussion will examine the concerns and the type of kindergarten that is needed in today's society.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine concerns about and the role of the kindergarten today in American education. To accomplish this purpose, this paper will address the following questions:

1. What is the historical development of the kindergarten?
2. What are the four major concerns today regarding the role of the kindergarten?
3. How do we meet the concerns, experiences, and maturity level of children in kindergarten?
4. What are the guidelines that educators should follow in developing an effective kindergarten program?

Need for the Study

Kindergarten is an important program for early learning. In the kindergarten, children will like school and love learning; or they will find difficulty in learning and be discouraged. There are many debates and much research over when to send children to school, and what they need to know to be successful in the kindergarten. Therefore, determining guidelines for developing an effective kindergarten is necessary for teachers to help children to be successful in their first formal year of schooling.

Limitations

The limitations of this study dealt with finding resources. It was hard to locate appropriate resources for this topic, and when they could be found, some resources were not available.

Definitions

For the purposes of clarity, the following terms will be identified accordingly:

Readiness- prepared mentally or physically for some experience or action

Developmentally Appropriate Practice- Curriculum that is age and individual appropriate. Knowledge of typical development of children within the age span served by the program provides a framework from which teachers prepare the learning environment and plan appropriate experiences. Each child is a unique person with an individual pattern and timing of growth, as well as individual personality, learning style, and family background. Both the curriculum and adults' interactions with children should be responsive to individual differences. National Association of the Education of Young Children believe the academic pressures put on kindergarteners are inappropriate and they should not delay their entrance into the kindergarten.

Curriculum- the courses offered by an educational institution.

Kindergarten Educators- Teachers, administrators and support personnel who have a vested interest in the kindergarten program.

Full-day Kindergarten-a school grade program for five and six year olds taught by an educator that lasts the whole span of the school day.

Half-day Kindergarten-a school grade program for five and six year olds taught by an educator that last for half of the day.

CHAPTER 2

FOUR MAJOR CONCERNS ABOUT TODAY'S KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

Being ready for kindergarten can involve preschool participation, smooth transitions from home to school, waiting an additional year, or just the sheer excitement of attending school. Attending preschool is one way families get their children ready for school and kindergarten. Laidig (2002) stated that children who attend preschool programs tend to perform better in kindergarten, both academically and socially. Also, children who are familiar with the learning routines of preschool can adapt better than children who have not attended these programs (Rimm, 1997). Besides attending preschool, another way to be ready for kindergarten is to wait a year. Wade (1992) stated that 81 percent of boys and 100 percent of girls who waited to attend kindergarten earned above-average grades. Another way to be ready for school is to have a seamless transition into kindergarten, for this will have a positive effect on achievement in the kindergarten (Nelson, 2004; Early, Pianta, Taylor, & Cox, 2001). As educators, motivation towards school is a key to being ready for learning. Kranyik (1982) stated that incoming kindergarten students are excited to go to school because older children attend school.

Just as there are benefits for being ready for kindergarten, there are four major concerns with kindergarten. These concerns are the age of the children, the kindergarten becoming too academic, the immaturity level of the children, and the confidence of the children upon entering the kindergarten.

Age of the Kindergarten Child and Needed Skills

The age of the child is a factor for school readiness. According to Schor (1995), children vary in the ages at which they develop psychological and social aptitudes

necessary for school. Holloway (2003) wrote that younger children on average scored lower in reading and mathematics than did their older counterparts. These children also tend to lag behind their classmates; older kindergarteners are more likely to persist at tasks, are more eager to learn, and are better able to pay attention. Parents who send younger children to kindergarten benefit by being free a year earlier of the obligation of their children, or in some cases, the financial burden of day care. However, delaying a child's entry into kindergarten for one year is quite effective in ensuring that he or she will have a successful school experience (Ede, 2004). According to Schor, children who enter school too early and do not experience adequate success and gratification may grow to dislike school and their future education, and learning is more likely to suffer. Also, Holloway concluded that the extra year before starting kindergarten does not harm children and may help them in the long run.

National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) strongly objects to delaying entrance for children into kindergarten. NAEYC (2001) took the position that delaying entrance into kindergarten labels the children as failures. Delaying kindergarten is just a form of retention. NAEYC has found no evidence of any academic benefits, but has found that delaying entrance into kindergarten can threaten children's social-emotional development.

Immaturity Level

Some children are not ready for kindergarten because of their maturity and social level. School takes children away from the security of family members (Kranyik, 1982). Some children experience separation anxiety, especially if the child has not been out of the home for preschool or child care. A teacher's primary concern for children to be

ready for school is centered on social behaviors. Some kindergarten teachers even go so far as to view social behavior as a higher priority than academic skills development (Lin, 2003). Children need to be able to tell the teacher their wants and thoughts, follow directions, take turns, share, and not disrupt the class (Lin). They also need to work independently, and in groups. Kindergarten students must learn to distinguish between work and play to know when each is appropriate (Nurss, 1987). Kindergarten teachers have reported that more students are coming to school with the inability to play with others and work within a group (Educators for Parents, 2005).

Instructional Approach in Kindergarten

Since 1837, when the kindergarten was introduced, teachers and curriculum planners have been divided over an appropriate instructional approach (Wade, 1992). In earlier generations, kindergarten was a time for socialization, outdoor fun, coloring, and tracing alphabet letters. Today, there are more academic demands, which may not be appropriate to children's development. Kindergarten has made a shift from social to cognitive or academic (Nurss, 1987). Furthermore, Schubert (1997) observed that kindergarten teachers come from a strong child development background but are usually pushed by state standards, school boards, administrators, parents, and other forces to become more academic in the classroom. In the last two decades, one-third of children entering kindergarten were not ready for typical kindergarten-level work (Ramey, 2004). Children can be ready for kindergarten if the environment is engaging, age-appropriate, and child-centered, and includes a curriculum and assessment system that provides for individual differences, and provides teachers who are responsive and capable of facilitating learning. With experience in a high-quality, developmentally appropriate

classroom, children will be prepared better for the increasing rigor of school (Cassidy, 2003). In this regard, children should be exposed to books in the earliest years, and they should be read to often and see themselves as readers (Butler & Clay, 1979).

Attitude and Stress

According to Rimm (1997), the most important preparation of all is in the area of attitude. Children have more stress in a developmentally inappropriate classroom than a developmentally appropriate classroom. In addition, skills that were once taught in the first grade are being pushed down into the kindergarten, for there has been a shift from play-based curriculum to specific expectations in academics (Education Commission of States, 2006). Classrooms that are unreasonable in their academic demands may increase stress (Dodge & Bickart, 2002). The push for academics in a developmentally inappropriate kindergarten did not result in higher test scores (Colorado Department of Education, 1993). Such programs try to fit children to the curriculum, rather than fit the curriculum to the child. This results in young learners that fail (Walsh, 1989). Developmentally inappropriate classrooms can potentially damage the psychological well being of the young child (Colorado Department of Education, 1993).

Confidence Level of Kindergarteners

The child's enthusiasm, curiosity, and persistence in learning will lead to a high confidence level (Education Commission of the States, 2006). A kindergarten educator uses the interests of children to design a good program. The teacher does not have the same expectation for all children and does not use valuable time for skills that have no immediate use. Children who attended a child-initiated program had less test anxiety than those who did not attend these programs. Kindergarteners who were in classrooms

that were developmentally inappropriate had more stress behaviors throughout the day than children in a developmentally appropriate classroom (Rimm, 1997). Young children in a developmentally appropriate classroom seem to have more confidence in their own cognitive skills (Dunn & Kontos, 1997). Learning to learn is the emphasis in these classrooms (Bloom, 1981). A high-quality program provides a strong foundation for children to build their skills, knowledge, and attitudes upon for life long learning (Association for Childhood Education International, 1999).

CHAPTER 3

MEETING THE CONCERNS, EXPERIENCE, AND MATURITY LEVEL OF CHILDREN

Age of the Children

According to Conant (2006), children who are age appropriate are ready to begin school in a developmentally appropriate classroom because it will meet the needs of all of the children, unlike academic kindergartens, for children need to be in an environment where they will be stimulated and challenged. If the child enters kindergarten too soon and does not experience adequate success and gratification, the child may grow to dislike school and the child's future education and learning will not develop as it should (Schor, 1995). However, Halloway (2003) reported that researchers concluded that waiting the extra year to enroll into kindergarten did not harm children and may have even helped those who had gained more maturity. Some parents chose to not question the program, but to go ahead and enroll their child in an academic preschool, or wait another year (Plevyak, 2002). Smith (1999) reported that the notion of children benefiting from waiting another year to enroll into kindergarten is unfounded. If you believe your child's skills are below average ability, you can have further evaluation (Rimm, 1997). When the birthday is near the kindergarten entrance deadline, the best thing to do is follow the school guidelines (Rimm). In the end, parents know their child best and ultimately make the best choice of whether or not to enroll the child into kindergarten (Schor).

Classroom Characteristics

Kindergarten is a time for children to get along with others and learn about themselves. Kindergarten does not mean substituting academics for play time, for the

kindergarten curriculum should include activities such as snack time, recess, individual and group activities, and some academics. Classrooms that are developmentally appropriate will encourage the growth of children's self-esteem and will tend to help them to develop control of their behavior (NAEYC, 1996), for they allow children to play and work together, where the child's personality, temperament, and academic and social development will influence the success of the child in school (Schor, 1995).

Half-Day Kindergarten Program vs. Full-Day Kindergarten Program

Although each school district decides the length of the school day; full-day or half-day programs, there is a debate over which one is best for educating kindergarteners. In Finkelstein's study (as cited in Rothenberg, 1984) proponents of the half-day approach believe that, given the 5-year-old's attention span, level of interest and home ties, a half-day offers ample time in school. Also, it allows more time for the young child to play and interact with adults and other children in less-structured home or child care settings. Consequently, half-day programs provide continuity and systematic experience with less probability of stress than full-day programs (Rothenberg, 1984).

However, researchers, such as Finkelstein, reveal more benefits for the full-day program. Many states fund full-day kindergarten programs on the assumption that five-year-olds can benefit from a longer school experience (Nurss, 1987). Herman (1984) wrote that a full-day program provided a relaxed, unhurried school day with more time for a variety of experiences, for screening and assessment opportunities, and for quality interaction between adults and students (Rothenberg, 1984). In a study by Elicker and Mathur (1997), they found that increased time in the classroom initiated *more learning activities* and received more one-to-one instruction instead of spending time in teacher-

directed groups. They also found that parents believed full-day kindergartens have a positive influence on children's social development and a positive impact on student's independence, confidence, involvement, and reflectiveness (Project Accelerate Consortium, 1996).

When comparing the half-day kindergarten program to the full day program, researchers were able to find some notable differences. Elicker and Mathur (1997) found that full-day kindergarten students displayed a consistent advantage in the areas of literacy, math, social skills, and general learning areas when compared to the half-day kindergarten students. Another benefit that increases student's academic achievement in the full-day program is that it allows for student enrichment and gives more time with creative arts than that provided by a half-day kindergarten schedule. Researchers also found that full-day kindergarten students participated in activities that required more active engagement, while the half-day kindergarten students more frequently were observed participating in activities that required listening engagement (Project Accelerate Consortium, 1996).

Curriculum Needs

Some kindergartens use structured, whole group, paper-and-pencil activities oriented to academic subjects, such as reading and mathematics. The curriculum in these programs shows a downward shift in the primary grades. Nurss (1997) observed that many early childhood professors have spoken out on the inappropriateness of this type of curriculum and have urged the use of the developmentally appropriate kindergarten curriculum. When the curriculum is developmentally appropriate, it is adapted for all

children. Children differ in experiences and background. Therefore, they do not learn the same things at the same times (NAEYC, 1996).

As pressures increase, children who do not meet the expectations in kindergarten will be retained or sent to a transition class (Nurss, 1987). On the other hand when kindergarten classrooms are developmentally appropriate, children and families look forward to school, and parents observe that their children are happy, don't cry, and regularly look at school in a positive way (NAEYC, 1996).

CHAPTER 4

GUIDELINES FOR AN EFFECTIVE KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

It is important for administrators, educators, and parents to think about the effects of a quality kindergarten program. They need to understand the historical background of the kindergarten. Administrators and educators need to know the forces and readiness factors that are influencing children who are enrolling in kindergarten programs. They need to lobby for a full-day program if the half-day program is not meeting the needs of the children. Finally, everyone involved needs to work together to make the children's experience more productive and beneficial.

1. Kindergarten educators need to know the historical development of the kindergarten in order to avoid past mistakes and benefit from proven practices.

The commitment to improving K-12 academic achievement must begin by providing children in the pre-kindergarten years with an ample amount of effective learning opportunities (Ramey, 2004). LaParo (2003) found that further investigation of the structure of elementary schools is needed in relation to possible transition and connections with preschools. Schools and communities need to learn from the past to work together in creating schools that are ready for young children, not only getting children ready for school by providing developmentally appropriate preschool programs, but also getting schools ready for children (Kagan, 1994).

2. Kindergarten educators need to know the forces that are influencing the kindergarten.

Parents and teachers of children enrolled in a full-day kindergarten program were generally satisfied with the program and believed their children were better prepared in kindergarten (Clark, 2003). Parents reported that teachers of full-day programs provided

more frequent suggestions for home activities. Also, teachers reported that the full-day program allowed for more individual instruction time. They also had more time to get to know their students and families (Clark). The government has an interest in kindergarten too. The Education Commission of the States (2004) reported that full-day kindergarten is a promising tool for improving schools and closing the academic achievement gaps.

3. Kindergarten educators need to know the readiness factors that influence children's success in the kindergarten and later grades.

Children entering kindergarten should be assessed. This assessment will determine the rate and degree of experiences they will encounter as a kindergartener. Educators take the information from the assessment and plan their curriculum. To provide the best possible experiences, educators need to be knowledgeable in child development and committed to children. They need to be able to plan a curriculum that will promote the full development of each child and will influence their lives (Association for Childhood Education International, 1999).

4. Kindergarten educators should lobby for full-day kindergarten if the half-day program is insufficient for the children.

In 2002, our nation only had 60% of schoolchildren attending a full-day kindergarten (Education Commission, 2004). However, the demand for full-day kindergarten is increasing; for there are a greater number of single-parent and dual-income families in the workforce who need full-day programming for their young children (Education Commission). It has been stated that full-day programs better prepare children for school. Clark (2003) reported that in the 1990's children who attended a full-day kindergarten program showed more consistent positive academic outcomes. Children in a full-day program show stronger academic gains over the course of the kindergarten year

than half-day programs (Education Commission). Children in a full-day program tend to engage in more child-to-child interactions and make significantly greater progress in learning social skills (Clark).

5. Kindergarten educators need to work with parents to enhance the relationship between home and school.

According to Rimm (1997), the most important preparation of all for educators is to develop a positive attitude in working with parents. Parents can help by reading to their children. From the earliest days, parents should introduce their children to the world of books (Butler & Clay, 1979). Rimm (1997) stated that increasing the reading time prior to the entrance of kindergarten may encourage children's increase their span of attention.

Parents can also begin talking about the first day of school to get their students ready for kindergarten. Kranyik (1982) suggested talking to future kindergarteners in the spring or summer before school starts. Visiting the kindergarten and meeting the teacher is needed. With five months between kindergarten round-up and the start of the school year, parents can be given practical suggestions and materials to help their children (Smith, 1999). If the child has weak areas, parents can get extra help before the child enters kindergarten, or parents can work with their children themselves (Rimm, 1997). Parents can help their children acquire skills such as recognizing and remembering letters, numbers and colors. Parents can expose their children to learning experiences by going to the museum or library. Also, the parent can promote the child's social skills by encouraging him or her to play with other children in the neighborhood, or to participate in community activities (Schor, 1995).

Rimm (1997) suggested these additional tips that parents and families can use for their children to get ready for kindergarten. Parents should participate in any activities

the school offers and visit the school prior to children attending kindergarten. Parents should look at class lists to see if there are any friends in the class, or the possibility to make friends before school begins. Parents can teach children the teacher's behavior expectations and social skills of how to meet new people.

6. A developmentally appropriate kindergarten curriculum needs to be congruent with a developmentally appropriate assessment system that documents the progress of children in kindergarten (Cassidy, 2003).

Moyer (1999) emphasized assessment procedures that were appropriate. She suggested using observation and portfolios as a way to measure learning by kindergarteners. Teachers in a developmentally appropriate classroom should assess children's interests, needs, and skill levels regularly. This will enable them to plan activities for the children that are continuous, flexible, and realistic.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this review was to read and analyze the current literature about the concerns and examine the role of kindergarten in American education. This study also shared guidelines designed to help educators develop an effective kindergarten program. Four questions were addressed in this review of the literature.

1. What is the historical development of the kindergarten?

The kindergarten was founded by Friedrich Froebel in Germany in the year of 1837. The kindergarten was originally designed to teach young children about art, design, mathematics, and natural history (Watson, 1997). Froebel believed that children needed time to play, so they could learn. Kindergarten was to be a place where children could grow and learn through social interactions with peers (Richie-Sharp, 1999). Kindergarten was introduced later in the public schools in the United States (Watson, 1997). In 2002, over three million students were enrolled in kindergarten programs in the United States (Laidig, 2002). The kindergarten today, with its focus on academic skills instead of social skills, is very different from the kindergarten in the first half of the twentieth century (Plevyak, 2002).

2. What are the concerns today regarding the role of the kindergarten?

Many factors are involved in helping children to be ready for kindergarten, such as attending preschool, smooth transitions into school, waiting a year to attend kindergarten, and the excitement of going to school. However there are four major concerns with the kindergarten program today. One, there have been debates over the proper age to enroll

children into kindergarten. Children vary when they are ready for school in regards to their social and cognitive development. Children range from four years of age to six years of age when first enrolling in the kindergarten program. Two, some children are not ready for kindergarten because of their maturity level. They are not ready to leave home or may not have appropriate social behaviors. Children need to be able to express their wants and thoughts, follow directions, take turns, share and not disrupt the class (Lin, 2003). Three, the kindergarten has also made a shift in the program from social skills to more academic skills. Even though most kindergarten teachers come from a strong child development program, they are being pushed by administrators for more academics (Schubert, 1997). Some kindergarten curriculum is equivalent to the first grade curriculum (Schor, 1995). Four, children who were in a teacher-directed classroom had more stress than children who attended a child-centered classroom (Dunn & Kontos, 1997).

3. How do we meet the concerns, experiences and maturity level of children in kindergarten?

When children begin the kindergarten program, a classroom that is developmentally appropriate and meets the needs of all children is the best environment to promote learning, for if the experience is not a success for the children, it could lead to a dislike for school and the children's future learning could be negatively influenced (Schor, 1995). Kindergarten should consist of play time, snack time, recess, individual and group activities, and some academics. Play time should not be given up for academics.

The length of the school day is a decision made by each school district. More than half of the kindergarten programs in the United States have gone to full-days. This allows for more time for the children to be involved in activities and have more

experiences and opportunities. However, school districts which have half-day programs believe it allows better for the attention span and level of interest for young children. There are many factors to consider, so educators and parents need to decide what fits their children best in their school.

4. What are the guidelines that educators should follow in developing an effective kindergarten program?

This study determined that administrators, teachers, and parents need a set of guidelines to follow to achieve the best possible kindergarten program for the children.

1. Kindergarten educators need to understand the historical development of the kindergarten.

Schools and communities need to work together so that educators can provide enough learning opportunities for kindergarteners by getting the children ready and the schools.

2. Kindergarten educators need to know the factors that are influencing the kindergarten program.

Parents, schools, and the government all have an interest in the kindergarten program. Parents want what is best for their children. Schools want to start learning as early as possible to help prevent them from going academic probation. This means taking the social part of kindergarten and replacing it with academics. The government is interested in the kindergarten because they too want their state or nation's test scores to improve.

3. Kindergarten educators need to know the readiness factors that influence children's success in kindergarten and later grades.

Children need to be assessed prior to starting kindergarten to understand each child's ability to learn and to determine the experiences he or she has already had outside of school. If there are deficiencies, parents can be given suggestions and materials to help

their child before officially attending kindergarten. Parents can also use this time to acquire more educational and social experiences (Schor, 1995).

4. Kindergarten educators should lobby for full day kindergarten if the half-day program is insufficient for the children.

The demand for full day kindergartens is increasing. Full day programs help parents with schedules and they help schools by providing more time with the children. Full day programs have shown to better prepare students for future school experiences. Children attending a full day program also show stronger academic gains (Education Commission, 2004).

5. Kindergarten educators need to work with parents to enhance the relationship between home and school.

Educators need to inform parents that they need to read with their children at home. Parents need to start talking about school prior to attending to help with any anxiety. Parents should also attend any school activities that may be offered (Rimm, 1997). Kindergartens need to see their parents and teachers working together in a positive climate of mutual respect.

6. A developmentally appropriate kindergarten curriculum needs to be congruent with a developmentally appropriate assessment system that documents the progress of kindergarten children.

Educators in a developmentally appropriate classroom should be flexible in their planning. The interests, skills, and ability of the students should be taken into consideration when choosing appropriate curriculum. Educators should assess their students by classroom observations and portfolios of students work.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were determined from this study:

1. There needs to be state wide standards and benchmarks for kindergarten that are developmentally appropriate and are closely monitored by the state.
2. There needs to be state-wide expectations for kindergarten entrance skills.
3. There needs to be open communication to parents of incoming kindergartners from schools and educators on the expectations of kindergarteners, so parents can prepare the children.
4. Kindergarten programs should be allowed to extend to a full-day if educators find that a half-day is insufficient.
5. Kindergarten educators need to know the history of the kindergarten to understand better the reasoning for the program.

Recommendations

Based on the review of the literature, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. There needs to be a state-wide assessment or performance guidelines for kindergarten.
2. Schools need to Balance No Child Left Behind and meet the individual needs of all students. Schools need to take into account today's society to meet the children's educational needs, regardless of backgrounds and life experiences.
3. Administrative and teacher education programs are needed to provide educators with better strategies for how to incorporate

and implement developmentally appropriate practices into the curriculum and teaching.

4. There needs to be a study of state wide standards and benchmarks for kindergarten programs that are developmentally appropriate which are closely monitored by the state.

References

- Accelerate. (1996). *Benefits of full-day kindergarten*. Retrieved June 22, 2005.
- Association for Childhood Education International. (1999). *ACEI Position Paper: The Child-Centered Kindergarten*. Retrieved February, 28, 2006.
- Bloom, B. (1981). *All our children learning*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Butler, D. & M. Clay. (1979) *Reading Begins at Home*. Exeter, New Hampshire: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Cassidy, D.J., Mims, S., Rucker, L., & Boone, S. (2003). *Emergent curriculum and kindergarten readiness*. *Childhood Education*, 79, 194. Retrieved June 21, 2005.
- Children's Action Alliance. (2004). *Benefits of full-day kindergarten*. Retrieved June 21, 2005.
- Clark, Patricia. (2003). *Recent Research on All-Day Kindergarten*. ERIC Digest. Retrieved February 28, 2006.
- Colliers Encyclopedia. (1996) vol. 14.
- Colorado Department of Education. (1993). *Recent research supports developmentally appropriate practice in the primary grade*. Retrieved February 28, 2006.
- Conant, Beth. (2006). *Answers to commonly asked questions concerning Developmentally Appropriate Practice*. Retrieved February 28, 2006.
- Dodge, Diane Trister & Toni Bickart. (2002). *Preschool for parents*. Retrieved February 28, 2006.
- Dunn, Loraine & Kontos, Susan. (1997). *Developmentally Appropriate Practice: What Does Research Tell Us?* ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education. Retrieved February 28, 2006.
- Ede, A. (2004). *Is my child really too young for Kindergarten? (For Parents Particularly)*. *Childhood Education*, 80, 207. Retrieved June 21, 2005.
- Education Commission of the States. (2006). *Kindergarten*. Retrieved February 28, 2006.
- Education Commission of the States. (2006). *Readiness*. Retrieved February 28, 2006.

- Education Commission of the States. (2004). *Full-day Kindergarten Programs Improve Chances of Academic Success*. The Progress of Education Reform 2004: Kindergarten 5, 4. Retrieved February 28, 2006.
- Educators for Parents. (2005). *Kindergarten Readiness*. Retrieved June 21, 2005.
- Elicker, J. & Mathur, S. (1997). *What do they do all day? Comprehensive evaluation of a full-day kindergarten*. Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 12, 459-480. Retrieved June 21, 2005.
- Freeman, G.D. & King, J.L. (2003). *A partnership for school readiness*. Educational Leadership, 60, 76-79. Retrieved June 21, 2005.
- Herman, Barry E. (1984). *The case for the all-day kindergarten*. Phi Delta Educational Foundation. Retrieved June 22, 2005.
- Holloway, J.H. (2003). *When children aren't ready for kindergarten*. Educational Leadership, 60, 89-90. Retrieved June 21, 2005.
- Kranyik, M.A. (1982) *Starting School: How to Help Your Three-to-Eight Year Old Make the Most of School*. New York: Continuum.
- Laidig, Paula. (2002). *When to start kindergarten? Parenting Perspectives*. Retrieved June 22, 2005.
- LaParo, K.M., Kraft-Sayre, M., & Pianta, R.C. (2003). *Preschool to kindergarten transition activities: involvement and satisfaction of families and teachers*. Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 17, 147. Retrieved June 21, 2005.
- Lin, H-L., Lawrence, F.P. & Gorrell, J. (2003). *Kindergarten teachers' views of children's readiness for school*. Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 18, 225-237. Retrieved June 21, 2005.
- Moyer, Jean. (1999). *ACEI Position Paper: The Child-Centered Kindergarten*. Association for Childhood Education International Retrieved February, 28, 2006.
- National Association of the Education of Young Children. (1996). *Top 10 Signs of a good kindergarten classroom*. Retrieved February 28, 2006.
- National Association of the Education of Young Children. (2001). *STILL unacceptable trends in kindergarten entry and placement*. Retrieved June 16, 2006.
- Nelson, R.F. (2004). *The transition to kindergarten*. Early Childhood Education Journal, 32, 187-190. Retrieved June 21, 2005.

- Nurss, Joanne R. (1987). *Readiness for Kindergarten*. ERIC/EECE Digest. Retrieved February 28, 2006.
- Plevyak, L.H. & Morris, K. (2002). *Why is kindergarten an endangered species?* The Education Digest, 67, 23-26. Retrieved June 21, 2005.
- Project Accelerate Consortium. (2005). *Benefits of full-day kindergarten*. Retrieved June 22, 2005.
- Ramey, C.T. & Ramey, S.L. (2004). *Early learning and school readiness: Can early intervention make a difference?* Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 50, 471-491. Retrieved June 21, 2005.
- Richie-Sharp, S.A. (1999). *The history of kindergarten*. Retrieved June 27, 2005.
- Rimm, Dr. S. (1997) *Raising Preschoolers: Parenting for Today*. New York: Three Rivers Press.
- Rothenberg, D. (1984). *Full-Day or Half-Day Kindergarten?* Retrieved June 22, 2005.
- Scholastic Early Childhood Today. (2000). *Friedrich Froebel: Founder, First Kindergarten*. Retrieved February 21, 2006.
- Schor, E.L. (1995) *The American Academy of Pediatrics: Caring for Your School-Age Child Ages 5 to 12*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Schubert, Ellen. (1997). *Half-day kindergarten perspective*. Early Childhood Quarterly, 12, 481-483. Retrieved June 22, 2005.
- Smith, S.S. (1999). *Reforming the kindergarten round-up*. Educational Leadership, 56, 39-44. Retrieved June 21, 2005.
- Wade Jr., T.E. (1992) *Early Years at Home: When Life Patterns Are Set*. Auburn, CA: Gazelle Publications.
- Walsh, D. (1989). *Changes in kindergarten: Why here? Why now?* Early Childhood Quarterly, 4, 377-391.
- Watson, Bruce. (1997). *Kindergarten*. Retrieved February 28, 2006.