

1988

## An investigation of the influence of early school intervention on later school experiences

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## **An investigation of the influence of early school intervention on later school experiences**

### **Abstract**

Early childhood education has been poorly understood by the general public for many years. Parents expect their children to be successful in formal schooling as a result of enrollment in preschool programs, but early childhood education has not been able to guarantee this success. Prior to the advent of early education programs in the 1870's, children between birth and six were seen as miniature adults.

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE INFLUENCE OF EARLY  
SCHOOL INTERVENTION ON LATER SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

A Research Paper

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of the University of Northern Iowa

By

Terri Lynn Muehlenthaler

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts / Educational Psychology

August 1988

This Research Paper by: Terri Muehlenthaler-Holmes

Entitled: AN INVESTIGATION OF THE INFLUENCE OF EARLY SCHOOL INTERVENTION  
ON LATER SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

has been approved as meeting the research paper requirement for the  
Degree of Master of Arts in Education: General Educational Psychology.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CHAPTER 1 - THE PROBLEM .....	1
Introduction .....	1
Problem Statement .....	2
Research Questions .....	3
Definition of Terms .....	3
Significance of the Study .....	4
Procedures in Obtaining Literature .....	5
CHAPTER 2 - REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .....	6
Introduction .....	6
Importance of Early Education .....	7
Historical Perspective .....	11
Early Education Programs to Meet Specific Needs of Young Children .....	21
What are Early Childhood Programs Like in the 1980's .....	24
The Effects of Early School Intervention On Later Academic Experiences .....	33
CHAPTER 3 - SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY .....	38
Summary .....	44

Implications for Research .....	46
Conclusions .....	48
REFERENCES .....	50
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	54
APPENDICES .....	59
Appendix A - Sponsors of Early Education	
Programs.....	59
Appendix B - Types of Early Education	
Programs.....	61

## CHAPTER ONE

The ProblemIntroduction

Early childhood education has been poorly understood by the general public for many years. Parents expect their children to be successful in formal schooling as a result of enrollment in preschool programs, but early childhood education has not been able to guarantee this success. Prior to the advent of early education programs in the 1870's, children between birth and six were seen as miniature adults.

Today, parents take the main responsibility for children who are not five-years-old by September 15. However, the world is changing and so is the educational system. Mothers often must work to help support the family. Large numbers of safe care, health and social services have become available for very young children.

Evidence has been shown that the early years of a child's life represent the time when informal education is most beneficial. Early childhood education is an effort to help the young child become a more

well-rounded person, whether it be through safe care, health and social services and/or academic education (Leeper, 1979).

### Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to review literature on early education programs and to determine whether early education influences a child in later schooling years. Early education refers to programs offered to children prior to kindergarten (e.g., Head Start, Montessori).

Later academic performance will be documented through longitudinal studies discussed in Chapter two. These research studies compare children who have been in an early childhood program to those who have not. These two sets of children are observed academically and socially throughout their lower elementary school years for observed differences.

School readiness will also be discussed. In this study, readiness refers to the child's ability to handle kindergarten work and to be socially, emotionally and physically mature for the program that he/she is attending.



### Research Questions

This study is designed specifically to answer the following questions:

- 1) Why is early childhood education important?
- 2) How has the philosophy of early childhood education changed in an historical sense?
- 3) What types of early school intervention programs are available for children?
- 4) What changes have been made to accommodate today's child in early education?
- 5) What are the influences of early childhood education on later education?

### Definition of Terms

For clarification, the terms in this study were defined as follows:

Readiness: readiness is used to refer to the ability to handle classroom work and being socially, emotionally and physically mature (Elkind, 1986).

Developmentally Young: developmentally young refers to those children who are socially, emotionally or physically immature for their age (Elkind, 1986).

Early School Intervention: early school intervention refers to any program prior to kindergarten that may benefit the child socially, physically or academically upon entering the public school system.

Early Education: Early education refers to any program prior to kindergarten. This term is synonymous with early childhood education.

Academics: Academics include reading, writing, and arithmetic, that can be enhanced in early education programs through strengthening language, motor, listening and interaction skills.

### Significance of the Study

There is much confusion about the nature of early childhood education. Specialists and parents often find themselves in disagreement about the effectiveness and purpose of early childhood education programs. Some parents seem obligated to enroll their child in early education programs to enable them to compete academically with other students. Parents, educators, and administrators have expressed concern about the means by which preschool programs help the child meet with successful experiences in later

schooling. Results of this study will provide school administrators with additional information to assist parents and teachers in making decisions regarding early school intervention.

### Procedures in Obtaining Literature

An ERIC search through the Fort Dodge AEA was done by using several descriptor words. When the material was received and read, it was decided to do another ERIC search for more material. The descriptor words include: pre-kindergarten, option kindergarten, day care programs, kindergarten, junior kindergarten, early entrance, early education, child care, readiness, developmentally young, early school intervention, nursery school, preschool and Project Head Start. Trips to the UNI and ISU library were made to go through the Educational Index and find numerous journal articles, which were used for resources and bibliography. The card catalog in the library was used to find other resource materials. A thorough exploration and review of information and literature has been performed.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Review of the Literature

The review of literature will focus on studies related to the influences of early school intervention on later academic experiences. The research includes the importance of early education, an historical perspective, programs available for students with differing needs, and a discussion of current programs and facilities. Finally, the question of whether early school intervention impacts favorably or unfavorably on later academic experiences will be explored in depth.

### Introduction

The hurried society of today is not always aware that they are also hurrying their children (Elkind, 1982). Parents hurry to work, hurry to play, and worst of all hurry their children. In the 1980's, more women are entering the working world, not necessarily because they want to, but because they need the extra income. This presents a serious question, "Where do the children go when their parent(s) is at work or cannot care for them?" Many parents want to get their child into a preschool as soon as possible.

Some parents believe some type of early educational experience prior to public schooling will be beneficial to their children in later years. Other parents just want a baby-sitter. In an ideal sense, parents need to find a program that will benefit their child's needs the most.

A child's emotional, social and physical needs should be adequately met before a child exits kindergarten in order for that child to have a successful education in the primary and secondary grades. Early education helps children get that good start. Society needs to be more aware of the problems that children of pre-kindergarten age have and all the options available to them.

### Importance of Early Childhood Education

Why is early childhood education important?

According to Butler (1974), four and five-year-old children are significantly influenced by environmental stimuli since this particular age constitutes a period of rapid growth. Early childhood educators are speaking out on the need for early childhood education programs to supplement the home experience of a child between three and six years. A child's later

school experiences can be enhanced through the formative years of a child's development. As previously stated, parents are looking for a place that will care for their child while they are at work. The major parental concerns for children have been in the area of safe care, health and social services, with much less emphasis being placed on academic education (Leeper, 1979). The early years of a child's life may well be the most crucial as far as opportunities for effective educational experiences later in life.

Early childhood education, if properly administered, will give children time to grow developmentally without feeling rushed or threatened. According to Elkind (1982), society is pressuring children to grow up too rapidly. Adults in our society are constantly on the go. Possibly without knowing it, parents are pushing their children to maintain the same brisk pace. Elkind stated that early acceleration gives the child little time to develop imagination and ideas of their own.

It is important to note that early childhood education programs vary considerably and meet children's needs in different ways. Some of the objectives of these programs are to: (a) help children develop bet-

ter self-concepts, (b) help with motor coordination, (c) help with social and emotional development, (d) help children with language acquisition, listening and basic academic skills, (e) help develop a child's cognitive abilities, (f) increase the child's ability to read, (g) enrich the child with many experience which would generally serve as a basis for later learning, (h) have the child explore new learning environments, (i) help the child become better able to deal successfully with a standard elementary program (Rosenberg, 1979). By providing a better match between childrens' needs and their early learning experiences, a firm foundation can be built for successful future learning. If placed correctly in an early education program, children have time to develop socially, emotionally and intellectually.

Hazen-Swann (1983), asserted that it is important that adults realize that formal education may be helped through informal early childhood education. Parents need to do activities with their children and model the premise that learning through exploration is fun. Children also need to interact with their peers in order to exchange and experience new ideas and feelings. For example, taking a child to an area

outside of his own immediate environment, like a museum, helps a child develop his schema of the world around him; through exploring a new environment, the child assimilates new ideas. Though parents are usually capable of handling these situations, they often have little time to interact with their children. Early education programs can function as surrogate parents with regard to these important tasks. Early childhood educators are aware of the importance of environment, parents, peers and experiences in developing a child's learning.

According to Schweinhart (1986), early childhood programs teach children the "correct" way of participating when entering formal schooling years. Children are aware that listening and participation is important, they are aware that school can be fun, so are more willing to join in. The most important outcome of a good early education program is a positive outlook on learning. Cheever (1986) stated as Schweinhart (1986) did previously, that early childhood programs can help a child to be better prepared for formal education and in so doing, reduce needs for special education or constant remediation.



## Summary

Why is early childhood education important?

Early childhood education is of importance because it offers opportunities for young children to grow physically, socially and emotionally in a safe and caring situation. These opportunities include: interacting with peers, strengthening language skills, listening and academics. Early childhood programs can impact on social and emotional development, improve motor coordination, and possibly facilitate reading ability. Early education can also help the child feel better about himself/herself and provides time young children need to develop essential learning skills. Early childhood education can also provide positive experiences that can serve as a foundation for later school experiences. Despite the traditional notion that children younger than three years of age should be kept at home, it has been found that some children may be better off in a supplementary educational program.

## Historical Perspective

How has the philosophy of early childhood education changed in an historical sense? Early childhood

education changes as economic, social and political climates in society change. Currently, child care services have been modified to accommodate dual-career and single-parent families.

It is important to note that prior to the mid 1800's, children were viewed as being able to perform adult duties (Maxim, 1980). Though the majority of adults at this time thought of children as miniature adults, there were several educators who believed children should not participate in adult tasks, rather that they should be with other children doing children-type activities. Comenius, in 1657, was one of these educators who believed in letting children be children. Comenius wanted Mother's Schools in every home for every child for the first six years of life. Comenius published simple lessons for mothers to use in the home (Leeper, 1979).

In the late 1700's, Rousseau felt that beginning education early was important. Rousseau believed education should continue from birth until twenty-five years of age. Natural development and sensory perception were stressed more than preparation for later life or academics (Leeper, 1979).

Froebel in the early 19th century introduced the idea of kindergarten and asserted that play had educational value. Kindergarten has fluctuated in importance due to priorities in society. Today, due to the rapid changes in technology, schools are put in the position of covering a great deal of material. Many educators de-emphasize the importance of kindergarten and nursery school because they are perceived as play-oriented (Leeper, 1979).

In 1816, Owen built an Infant School for children seeking early employment so they could receive an education appropriate to their age. There were no professional journals to spread the news of his new educational practices and school, so it never achieved popularity (Maxim, 1980).

According to Maxim (1980), the first nursery school in England was developed by Margaret McMillan in the 1900's. Her concern for the widespread health problems of the children in the city's slum area, convinced her to establish "day nurseries" for children two to seven. These nurseries would contain a basic educational program and would make up for the neglect in health and hygiene care in the home.

Gezell's interest in early childhood education generated knowledge about the uniqueness of children and how to arrange environmental conditions to help them grow. During this time, Patty Smith Hill was developing the progressive kindergarten in which a child uses his/her personal experiences as a basis for learning (Maxim, 1980).

In the early 1900's, Montessori schools became very popular. The emphasis was on learning through the environment (Leeper, 1979). At the same time, nursery schools appeared for the three and four-year-olds. These schools were established for children of poor families to teach them about health care and nutrition (Maxim, 1980).

In 1922, Abigail Eliot was hired to run a nursery school in a low-income neighborhood. The school's main purpose was that of providing group day care. Eliot changed the school to reflect a more educational program using play and addressing health concerns (Maxim, 1980).

Merrill-Palmer became concerned about the quality of motherhood in our society and founded the Merrill-Palmer Motherhood and Home Training School. A nursery school was organized so that young women could

see first hand through observation how to care for children (Maxim, 1980).

According to Maxim (1980), during the 1920's the nursery school movement in America grew slowly. During the 1930's, the nursery school movement accelerated as Work Projects Administration (WPA) appropriated money to create jobs for the unemployed during the Great Depression. Prior to the depression nursery schools were only offered on a half-day basis. Because mothers needed employment to help support their families, nursery schools opened their doors to full-day custodial care.

Wars and crises contributed to the growth of child care facilities. During World War II, mothers entered the work force while the fathers were at war. In the 1940's, the Lanham Act provided funds to establish and staff more day care facilities. These wartime care centers were to provide a temporary mother substitute. Little or no emphasis was placed on educational programs. James Hymes in the 1940's went beyond custodial care. He provided attractive facilities, trained teachers and developed innovative programs. Federal support for the child care services stopped shortly after the war. Between 1940 and

1950, nursery schools grew steadily financed primarily from private funds by churches or parent groups (Maxim, 1980).

According to Farnum (1987), the child care centers in the depression did not provide meals, play or parent education. Government came into the business of child care during World War II, providing services which included child supervision, health care and nutrition. Because these centers cared for the children as mothers temporarily worked and fathers were overseas, they were seen as charitable institutions. After the war, many of the centers stayed open and were used by widows who became the main income supporters of the family or mothers who did not want to give up their career.

Until the late 1950's, care centers were primarily for the benefit of working mothers, they were used as a babysitting facility. In 1957, the United States became concerned about falling behind the Russians in space technology. Americans decided to reduce this gap by providing a more substantial education for young children. In 1959, science and math programs were pushed into education to help fill the gap between the United States and Russia. With ref-

erence to early education, Bruner in the late 1950's, stated that any subject can be taught to any child at any stage of development. Bruner's statement was distorted, and some in turn tried to push science and math on children who were not yet capable of understanding this level of academics. This stimulated interest in child development learning in the early childhood education years (Maxim, 1980).

According to Maxim (1980), the philosophy of early education prior to 1960 was that intellectual growth was hereditary and occurred in sequential stages. It was believed that a child could learn only when he was ready to. Social-emotional development was the major concern in this period. After the 1960's, it was believed that both hereditary and environment developed the intellect. Through biological maturation, experience and practice growth occurs. Environment can change so the developmental stages are accelerated. Social-emotional development was seen as less important than intellectual development.

According to Farnum (1987), research was taking place in the 1960's to find a way of improving lower socio-economic families children's later education.

Federally-funded programs like Head Start became popular. Through the growing efforts of working parents and interested educators, early education and child care has become less of a drop-off baby-sitter for parents that work and more of an educational facility.

Leeper (1979) stated that due to economic conditions, slums developed producing serious social problems. Children of slum environments often lacked self-esteem, due to a dearth of experience in early cognitive manipulation. Children from better homes did not seem to have as many problems in language, listening, misbehavior or lack of interest in school as lower income children. Middle and upper-class parents wanted early education for their children to maintain family status in the community and some believed it was essential to later school success.

Head Start, as previously stated, was designed for three to six-year-old children from deprived homes to insure that these children would receive appropriate preschool experiences. Unfortunately, programs like Follow Through and Home Start have failed to accomplish this goal. Meyerhoff (1986), stated that these programs helped children achieve



success with special conditions and highly trained personnel. Head Start demonstrated that the sooner a deprived child is in a new learning environment, the more apt they are to keep up with their middle-class peers. Also, Head Start research determined that remedial work was not likely to correct early problems (Meyerhoff, 1986).

According to Maxim (1980), Hunt in the early 1960's, explained that along with play, learning experiences and academic stimulation helped to build intellectual growth. Hunt pointed out that there needs to be a "match" between a child's level of understanding and the new experience. Young children can acquire academics and gain information at a younger age previously thought possible.

During the late 1960's and early 1970's, cognitive and intellectual development seemed important to society. In the late 1970's, most early childhood educators believed that both social-emotional and intellectual development were important. Today pre-schools are designed for the "whole" child, that is activities that are a balance between creativity, social-emotional growth, intellectual and physical growth (Maxim, 1980).

According to Maxim (1980), the 1970's produced more discussions on higher quality day-long child care facilities. Federal, state and local agencies began requiring licenses for child care facilities. There are a variety of child care needs and different types of day care programs that are available (See Appendixes A and B for sponsors and type of programs offered).

### Summary

How has the philosophy of early childhood education changed? The philosophy of early childhood education has changed to accommodate changes in social, political, and economic climates. Child care practices have had to adapt to changing social values, beliefs, needs, and concerns. Child care was primarily used as babysitting facilities during wartime. In later years, early education became more concerned with the child's learning due to a variety of factors, one being to keep pace with the technological achievement of other cultures.

## Early Education Programs to Meet Specific Needs of Young Children

What types of early school intervention programs are available for children? What a child learns prior to starting public school is what many parents feel constitutes early childhood education. A "real" education begins when the child enters the public school system. Jorde (1986) asserted that early childhood education needs to make parents aware that "real" learning begins when the child is very young. Pre-kindergarten experiences help build the child's self-concept and prepare the way for later cognitive achievement. Child care options will always be a need in the continuing decades. (See Appendix A for a brief overview of the caregiving models that exist today).

According to Cheever (1986), early education programs are available to all who are interested in using these facilities. There are a wide variety of structured and non-structured programs available for children of all ages and needs. "The issue is not so much the age or parent-age of the child as it is the needs of the family and quality of the care" (Cheever, 1986 p. 19). Early education programs need

to address the needs of the parents. Therefore, teachers should be articulate in how their particular program can benefit children. Quality programs need to address the needs of children of varying ages. Cheever (1986), delineated characteristics of a quality early education program. These characteristics include: (1) stimulation from a caring person who holds and speaks quietly to infants, and (2) an interesting room which enhances the toddler and pre-schoolers' social and play activities.

Many programs are designed to meet the varied needs of children in today's family. Definitions are helpful in differentiating the types of available programs (See Appendix B for types of programs offered).

George Maxim (1980), agreed that there are many types of programs offered for children of the pre-elementary age (under 6-years-old). The most common programs offered for these children are nursery school and day care. Both programs are geared toward facilitating the child's total development and sense of well-being. Day care is different than nursery school in that the child was originally put in day care program because both parents worked and there-

fore needed a caretaker for their child while they were at their job site. On the other hand, nursery schools were primarily implemented to help train and develop children who are enrolled for formal schooling.

According to Leeper (1979), Public Law 94-142 (which was put into effect in 1978) has continued to impact on early childhood education programs. Mainstreaming handicapped children at an early age can help these children get a good start in school. Non-handicapped children are made aware earlier of physical differences and learn not to be scared of these differences.

Meeting the physical, social, emotional and cognitive needs of the children are what make a quality early education program. Helping children to eventually become a contributing member of society is a goal of early childhood programs (Cheever, 1986).

### Summary

What types of early school intervention programs are available for children? As previously stated, there are a variety of early school intervention programs available for children. Quality early

childhood education takes on many forms, and quality programs have different philosophies, goals, structures and settings. For example, some parents believe play is important to their children and enroll them in a school with a play environment. Other parents believe academics are important to their child and enroll them in a formal type setting. There is no set formula.

What are Early Childhood Programs like in the 1980's?

What changes have been made to accommodate today's child in early education? According to Farnum (1987), in earlier years, people who helped with the care of children were volunteers in churches or communities. Today interested persons in early childhood education receive degrees from universities or colleges in their profession. Many educators are pursuing their masters' degree or possess administrative credentials which allow them to be appropriately licensed. It is more important than ever to have public schools (especially kindergarten), keep in contact with preschools and pre-kindergartens, so that the development of the child has continuity. In addition, care for after school hours is needed for

"latchkey" children. Many children need care while parents are at work or are not available to care for them due to other circumstances. Preschools are also needed for lower income families as well as teen-age parents.

Leeper (1979) stated that the variety of early childhood education programs have made a substantial contribution to the development of young children (See Appendix B for types of programs available). It is suggested by Leeper (1979, p. 135-36) that the current trends and issues in preschool programs include:

1. Extending public schools downward to include kindergarten, nursery school, child development centers, and programs for infants.
2. Changing patterns of school organization and adapting programs for specific purposes, such as those for the culturally different or for exceptional children.
3. Changing emphasis in day care programs to educational programs as well as day care.
4. Changing curriculum for preschool children by differentiating goals, activities, and mate-

rials to provide for individual differences within the group.

5. Changing role of the teacher to that of a guide of child development as opposed to a director of activities.
6. Continuing need for church-related schools for preschool children.
7. Expanding cooperative programs for preschool children.
8. Changing parent participation to parent involvement and replacing formal parent education with a cooperative teacher-parent team approach, which utilities parents in the instructional programs of their children in both home and center.
9. Replacing nursery schools and kindergartens with child development centers that provide the comprehensive programs made possible by available funds from the Federal government and various foundations.
10. Defining types of programs for parents.
11. Assessing the impact of Head Start.

(Leeper, 1979 p.135-36).



Beginning in 1978, Public Law 94-142 mandated that handicapped children be treated in an equal manner as non-handicapped children. Mainstreaming is occurring on a more frequent basis in preschool programs and teachers need to be aware of how to provide care for the mainstreamed child as well as the non-handicapped child.

Since the divorce rate is high, teachers of today need to be aware of single parent children and children of divorce. In addition, "latchkey" children, gifted children, and culturally different children need attention (Leeper, 1979).

Attitudes have changed throughout history regarding the time when children should begin formal schooling. Today there is no readily-agreed answer. According to Roberts (1984), there is disagreement among professionals about when a child should begin his/her formal education. Some like Dr. John Goodlad at UCLA believe all children should begin as early as four-years-old. Dr. David Elkind is on the opposite side of the coin. Elkind advocates starting children in school at age seven, so they are not pushed into something they are not ready for.

Children entering kindergarten today must go through a pre-kindergarten screening program to see if they are "ready" for school. The Gesell School Readiness Assessment Test was developed to determine whether or not a child is developmentally ready to begin kindergarten. Parents find it difficult to delay their child's entrance into kindergarten in the achievement-oriented society of today (Roberts, 1984).

Another change in today's programs is the push for full-day kindergartens. The lack of teaching jobs in the area of early childhood have teachers looking at full-day kindergartens in order to make more jobs available. "What is best for children does not seem to get much discussion" (Roberts, 1984 p. 126).

Kindergarten programs need to be rewritten to better coordinate with each child's developmental needs. Kindergarten teachers must be aware that many children have pre-kindergarten experiences (Roberts, 1984).

Parents pushing for academics early, are usually those parents who are concerned that their children might fall behind academically in formal schooling.

According to Walmsley (1983), parents need to be educated on the importance of play for children in kindergarten.

Currently, public schools have started a preparatory program for kindergarten students in the public school. There are various names for these programs, but for the purpose of this paper, K-prep will be used. To enter K-prep, children must be five-years-old by September 15, just as in a regular kindergarten. K-prep is a program in the public school prior to kindergarten. K-prep gives children an opportunity to enrich their language experience, practice fine motor skills, gain confidence in a school setting and socialize with students of the same age. Students are introduced to school in a positive way, learn to relate to adults in a school setting and experience social and emotional growth. Although emphasis is not placed on academic skills, students do increase their auditory skills, visual skills, start to learn the letters of the alphabet, and work in number recognition. K-prep offers a more socially-interacting atmosphere than kindergarten, because currently, kindergartens are forced to do

more paperwork activities. Developmentally young children may find K-prep a better option for them than kindergarten.

Several of these new programs are found in Iowa. Among them, Waverly has a K-PREP, Humboldt has a Prep Room, Strawberry Point has a Junior Kindergarten, Urbandale has a O.K. Program, Fort Dodge has a Pre-kindergarten, Huxley has an Early Kindergarten, Ankeny has a Developmental Kindergarten, and there are many more.

According to Jorde (1986), early childhood education in past years included experiences for children between the ages of three and five in a group setting. Currently, children from birth to kindergarten are included. Educational experiences include a wide range of experiences. This expansion is due to a great amount of emerging research documenting the importance of early childhood programs. Educators are being forced to accept more responsibility for today's children due to the changing family structure. Early education constitutes preschool programs, parent stimulation of children at home and other preschool care facilities used in the community.

Kult (1987) stated that by 1992, public schools should include pre-kindergartens for four-year-olds. Martin (1987) contended that another current need is for preschool developmental centers for children three to six years of age who have a disability of one kind or another.

Due to dual-career families, children will be put in school younger and for longer periods of time. Doremus (1986) cautioned that new changes in early childhood education may not be as good for the child, as they are for the parent.

In the next few years, the schools' role will become even more critical as dramatic changes in family life force schools to take specific action. Consider these demographics:

- 1) By 1990, almost half the American labor force will be women.
- 2) 60 percent of the mothers of children aged three to five are currently employed.
- 3) In 1983, almost one in four American children were poor, and that percentage is increasing.
- 4) 45 percent of the children born in the 1980s will live in a single-parent household by age 18.

- 5) 33 percent of all marriages are now remarriages, and one child in four is growing up in blended family.  
(Cheever, 1986 p.19).

High quality early childhood programs have shown growing evidence that early childhood programs are beneficial and in the near future, a new support system may be needed for the American family (Cheever, 1986).

An important change that has been made for children in early education, is that more people have an interest in speaking up about early education for their children's benefit. Riley (1986), is among those who have ideas for improving early childhood education programs for at-risk preschool children. Riley would like states to take a greater interest in helping young children get ready to enter school, since this would better enhance opportunities for at-risk children to meet with academic success.

### Summary

What changes have been made for today's children in early education? Early childhood education is now

addressing the needs of children from single-parent families, dual-career families, and families in crisis. Another change is that public schools are offering more programs for preschool children. Additionally, early educators are aware of the need to mainstream handicapped children into their programs.

### The Effects of Early School Intervention on Later Academic Experiences

What are the influences of early childhood education on later education? According to Friesen (1984), early childhood education can help children from deprived homes. Early childhood education is of less benefit to parents who take an especial interest in their child's well-being and devote time to their child to expose new experiences. A caring parent can help their child best by making sure he is sufficiently mature for kindergarten entrance. Ideally every child should have a pleasant and happy start in informal and formal education.

Kaercher (1982) agreed that a middle-class child from a good home will not be worse from not having a preschool experience. These children will academically catch-up with their peers. However, disadvan-

tagged children do benefit from early childhood education. Results from the HIGH/SCOPE Educational Research Foundation in 1962 showed that in all elementary grade levels deprived children had higher scores on language, arithmetic and reading tests as a result of attending a preschool.

Along with this, HIGH/SCOPE Educational Research Foundation found that disadvantaged children who were previous preschoolers were more likely to do well throughout their formal school years and beyond. A high percent of children who have attended preschool completed high school, found work or went to college, and were less likely to become pregnant as a teenager or get in trouble with the law (Lacayo, 1984).

Similar evidence from Brandt (1986) stated that disadvantaged children who were enrolled in preschool were more likely to participate in extracurricular activities and sports in formal schooling. Deprived children who had preschool had fewer problems with the law, committed fewer acts of vandalism and were less likely to abuse drugs.

According to Schweinhart and Weikart (1986), early education programs reduce the future need for children to be placed in resource rooms or to



retained in grade. Early childhood experiences help a child take interest in trying new ideas and give him a willingness to learn. Good early experiences can also help curve misbehavior and school phobia.

According to Featherstone (1986), the formation of appropriate attitudes and behaviors are the benefits of attending preschool, not test scores. Preschool participants have been able to avoid being labeled failures by meeting teachers expectations. Preschool may help kindergarteners and first graders to score well on IQ tests and even though these scores may decline in following years, their previous records will protect some borderline children from being labeled as failures. In the push for more problem-solving and thinking skill strategies today, it is interesting to note that preschoolers have been found to do much better than non-preschoolers on completion of tasks and of skills concentrating on the use of problem-solving strategies. Featherstone (1986) stated that children who had participated in preschool used their time wisely and worked well with the other classmates.

However, Miller and Biezell (1983) pointed out that early education is not always a good indicator

of later academic success. Some studies show that what is learned in preschools can be maintained only if intervention is continued throughout formal schooling. But there is evidence that some types of intervention may not require continuation in order for the effects to last. Educational strategies may also be effected by the different sexes. Girls may be more advanced developmentally and academically than boys in the early years.

Research from the Perry Preschool Project demonstrated that teachers rate preschool participants high in school motivation, but not on school potential. Prior preschool children were more social and curious. Parents of these children were satisfied with their child's school performance and would like to see them continue with more schooling (Stevens, 1981).

Schweinhart and Weikart (1986) reported that in relating preschool education to life success, children must have had success throughout the school years. These children must maintain a positive attitude about themselves and school.

Summary

What are the influences of early childhood education on later education? Deprived children receive more benefits from early childhood education because of the enriched environment and educational role models. Appropriate attitudes and behaviors are seen as benefits of a preschool experience more than raising intelligence test scores. A good preschool program will produce a child more interested in learning. Other educators believe that early education can help a child in later academics if continuous help is applied throughout formal schooling, but if the child does not get help, preschool will not necessarily be a benefit.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### Summary, Conclusions and Implications for Further Study

The intent of this study was to determine the effect that early childhood education had on children socially and academically as they continued through the public school system. A sequential discussion of the results of each of the major questions follows. Summary and implications of this study will be discussed in conjunction with the findings of related research.

#### Question 1

Why is early childhood education important? In general, the research endorses the benefits of early childhood education. The greatest challenge facing educators in general, is to maintain children's positive attitudes toward school.

According to Warger (1988), upon entering school, economically-disadvantaged children are likely to perform less successfully than their middle-class peers because disadvantaged children have not developed, to the same extent, the skills, habits, and attitudes necessary to succeed in kindergarten and

first grade. This lack of prerequisite skills and attitudes often manifests itself in low scores on tests of intellectual and scholastic ability. This condition often results in situations that lead to academic failure such as ; (a) placement in special education, (b) retention in grade, (c) low scholastic achievement, and, eventually, (d) dropping out of high school.

Early childhood education is important because of its ability to help minority and under-privileged children acquire the necessary background knowledges and attitudes to perform successfully in school. Additionally, the purpose of early childhood education is to provide comprehensive assistance with childrens' medical, nutritional, and psychological needs. Early childhood education should meet each child's ability and developmental level, learning style, and interest in order to lay the foundation for a good start in school. Motivation and skills for success in school are established through developmentally appropriate activities.

## Question 2

How has the philosophy of early childhood education changed in an historical sense? The research demonstrates how society has continually altered the philosophy of early education. The field of early childhood education has always been closely tied to trends in society with regard to social and economic change.

According to Leeper (1979), early childhood programs respond to changes in social, political, and economic climates. Child care practices have had to adapt to changing social values, belief systems, and economic concerns. Over the past decade, child care services have been dramatically altered to meet the needs of single parents, as well as dual career families, and have provided many more options for working parents with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

Whether early education should emphasize academic work or social-emotional development has been a continuous debate. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, cognitive growth became more important than social-emotional growth. During the 1970s, however, most early childhood educators began to feel that a good balance among all areas of the child's develop-

ment -- both the intellectual and the social-emotional -- would be desirable. That feeling, popular today, identifies the preschool as an experience designed to address the needs of the "whole" child; i.e., programs that reflect a balance of activities that lead to physical growth and development, intellectual stimulation, healthy social-emotional growth, and the encouragement of creative potential.

### Question 3

What types of early school intervention programs are available for children? Research indicated that many, varied types of early school intervention programs are available. Programs for young children come in as many shapes and sizes as the children they serve, and are designed to meet varied needs of today's families. Programs offered include: child care, day care, infant and toddler care, preschools, nursery schools, school-age child care, junior kindergarten, optional kindergarten, project head start, Montessori and kindergarten to name a few (See Appendix B for definitions of types of programs available).

Although there are many types of early childhood programs, most high quality programs share common characteristics. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) defines a high-quality program as one which meets the needs of and promotes the physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of the children and adults...the parents, staff, administrators...who are involved in the program (Cheever, 1986).

#### Question 4

What changes have been made to accommodate today's child in early education? Jorde (1986) stated that the next decade will continue to be characterized by an increased need for child care options. Some of the care giving models that exist today are: employer-sponsored programs, family day care, public-sponsored programs, church-sponsored programs, programs sponsored by social service agencies, programs sponsored by institutions of higher education, private proprietary and corporate programs, information and referral programs.

The increases in the number of working mothers, the number of poor children, the number of single



parent families and the number of remarriages, clearly points out the fact that there is a definite need for an entirely new type of family support system in the near future.

Several issues under consideration for early childhood education today are programs for young children in public schools and the length of time (full-day, half-day, or alternate days) that should constitute a kindergarten experience.

#### Question 5

What are the influences of early childhood education on later education? The research findings indicated that school readiness does have an effect on later learning, but it is not necessarily brought about by an early education program.

More important for later schooling than anything is the child's maturity level regarding kindergarten or first grade (Friesen, 1984). For example, studies have shown that most middle-class children who have not had preschool soon catch-up with their peers academically.

Research shows that early childhood education influences the minority child in their later educa-

tion. Early education programs provide a better learning climate or atmosphere than some minority children receive at home. Caring teachers with a variety of activities are able to stimulate the child's learning and teach them that school is fun.

#### Summary and Implications for Further Study

Early childhood education facilitates the development of deprived children by providing them with a stimulating environment in which to learn and a caring place in which to grow. Teachers, administrators, parents and society all play a large role in making certain that children get off to a good start academically. The results of this study suggest that parents, educators, and society should become more aware of the effects of early childhood education.

Since research appears to indicate that early education can make a difference in the subsequent education of minority or under-privileged children, it would be especially beneficial for these parents to be aware of their child's social/academic needs. Early education for minority children can help them develop a more positive attitude about self and society. It is fair to say, that if the early educa-

tional experience is a good one for the child, the child will look to subsequent involvement in school as a positive experience.

Research shows that early education influences attitudes and social behavior more than academics. Teachers and parents need to be aware of this factor. Instead of pushing academics, teachers should focus attention on ensuring that all students have positive attitudes about learning and about themselves.

Early childhood education is important to the child as well as society. It provides an opportunity for children to become interested in school and allows teachers to identify learning problems early, so that they can be corrected (Schweinhart, 1987). Early childhood education can also provide children with a comfortable, safe and stable environment every day, year round, for the hours that parents are at work. It can also provide consistency, nurturing care, informal or formal education and the opportunity to be physically active. Opportunities for the child to explore the world around him/her is possible in these environments. Early childhood education can also offer opportunities to interact with, learn

from, and be appreciated by other children. Early childhood education programs provide the stimulation and support necessary for the child to develop cognitively, socially, emotionally, and physically in his/her own time frame.

### Implications for Research

The results of this review of literature suggest areas for future research. This study was limited to a review of early childhood education programs prior to entry into public school. More and more public schools are opening their doors to three and four-year-olds. There are theories that support the position that three and four-year-old children entering the public school will benefit educationally in continuing years (Bartusek, 1988). It is recommended that research compare three and four-year-olds in the public school system with three and four-year-olds enrolled in private preschool programs and those not enrolled at all. An emphasis should be placed on how the three groups perform academically and socially on a longitudinal basis.

Another area of study could be devoted to children who are five-years-old before September 15th.

These children are school age, but considered "developmentally young". They may be developmentally young socially, emotionally, cognitively, and/or physically. Most will possibly have summer birthdays. There are public schools that presently have classes for these children. Humboldt, Iowa Community Schools have what is called a "Prep Room". A study could be conducted to determine whether this program or others like it benefit the continuing education of the children enrolled. Furthermore, attitudes and behaviors could be monitored as these children continue their school experience.

Studies of early childhood programs could be compared, such as an academic program to a developmental program and the effects of these programs on children's subsequent schooling could be documented. Warger (1988) stated that the appropriateness of the child's program is most important whether it be academic or developmental. For example, a child who is physically uncoordinated or handicapped needs to be in a program that will help muscle development. A child who has a speech impediment or a language problem needs a program to enhance their speech.

## Conclusions

Overall, early childhood education has some positive effects on later schooling, though not at a significant level. Some studies show that what is learned in early education may be forgotten as children continue through the formal schooling years. However, the research indicates that early education may benefit the minority or under-privileged child by giving him/her a "head start" and/or a positive outlook on life, in general.

The literature indicates that parents may be using early education for their convenience rather than for the child's benefit. Many parents work outside the home and need a baby-sitter. Additionally, parents are not always knowledgeable about the types of programs that are offered to their children. For example, parents need to be more aware of whether their child should be in an academic or a developmental program.

This study highlights research that can be used to evaluate the effects of early childhood education on continued schooling. These findings can help par-

ents, teachers, administrators and society become more aware of what children specifically need as a foundation for their continuing education.

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**APPENDIX A**

**Sponsors of Early Education Programs**

## APPENDIX A

### Sponsors of Early Education Programs

Employer-sponsored programs. A program sponsored by a business or company to care for the employees children while they work (Jorde, 1986).

Family day care. An arrangement made in a private home to care for children. Very few private facilities are licensed and only eight children can be cared for per home (Jorde, 1986).

Public-sponsored programs. Different types of programs for at-risk groups such as physically handicapped or lower income families, that many school districts provide (Jorde, 1986).

Church-sponsored programs. A program offered in a local church to provide care for children (Jorde, 1986).

Programs sponsored by social service agencies. A non-profit social agency offering enrichment programs or full day care (Jorde, 1986).

Programs sponsored by institutions of higher education. A program for children, run by a college or university to help teachers train or do research. UNI's Lab School is an example (Jorde, 1986).

Private proprietary and corporate programs.

Programs offered by individual enterprises, such as home nursery schools or Kinder Care (Jorde, 1986).

**APPENDIX B**

**Types of Early Education Programs**

## APPENDIX B

### Types of Early Education Programs

Child Care is care available for children of differing ages in a variety of part-day and full-day programs (Cheever, 1986).

Day Care is available to children with working parents or parents not able to care for them full-time. Children may be there all day or part of the day (Butler, 1974).

Infant and Toddler Care is a provision of caring for children between birth and three-years-old (Cheever, 1986).

Preschool is a program for children previous to kindergarten. Children are usually between three to five-years-old (Cheever, 1986).

Nursery School is a program for children previous to kindergarten. Children range from three to four-years-old (Cheever, 1986).

Junior Kindergarten is a program in the public school offered to three and four-year-old children (Galloway, 1986).

Optional Kindergarten is a program in the public school. This program is offered to kindergarten students who are developmentally young. Their placement is determined by testing (Galloway, 1986).

Project Head Start is a program that meets the needs of a family and is federally funded for children of lower income families. The children usually range in age from three to five-years-old (Maxim, 1980).

Montessori is a program for lower income families to meet the needs of the child's physical development. The children usually range in age from three to five-years-old (Leeper, 1979).

Kindergarten is a program in the public school for children who are five-years-old on or before September 15th in Iowa. This is the class prior to first grade (Butler, 1974).

Prep Program is a program in the Humboldt public school for children who are five-years-old on or before September 15th. It was designed for children who are developmentally young. This means that they are not ready for kindergarten socially, emotionally, and/or physically. Prep gives the child time to grow.