

1993

## Public preschools: Are they an answer?

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## Public preschools: Are they an answer?

### Abstract

In recent years, our nation has become extremely interested in early childhood education (Jorde, 1988). Education of preschoolers has been singled out by President Bush and the State Governors' Commission during their Education Summit in 1989. This is evident by the declaration that was made during this summit that stated "by the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn" (Copple, 1990 p. 5). Youngster's readiness to learn can be harmed because they do not have accessibility to high quality and developmentally appropriate preschool programs. Changes in our society have caused the supply of preschools to be inadequate (Shanker, 1987).

PUBLIC PRESCHOOLS: ARE THEY AN ANSWER?

A Graduate Project  
Submitted to the  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in Education  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by

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May 11, 1993

This Research Paper by: Robyn Leigh Swisher

Entitled:

Public Preschools: Are They An Answer?

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

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

In recent years, our nation has become extremely interested in early childhood education (Jorde, 1988). Education of preschoolers has been singled out by President Bush and the State Governors' Commission during their Education Summit in 1989. This is evident by the declaration that was made during this summit that stated "by the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn" (Copple, 1990 p. 5). Youngster's readiness to learn can be harmed because they do not have accessibility to high quality and developmentally appropriate preschool programs. Changes in our society have caused the supply of preschools to be inadequate (Shanker, 1987).

The expanding need for early childhood education is based on two sources: (1) our changing demographics and (2) the mission of education. Changes in our demographics include the increase of mothers who work outside the household. Percentages have increased from 14% in 1950 to approximately 60% today (United States Census Bureau, 1992). Trends toward welfare reform will also affect the need for additional early child education. Welfare reform favors moving parents

off welfare roles and into employment. Mothers who enter the work force will need a low cost care program for their preschool age children (Copple, 1990). These changes in society have required an increase in the need for services to our young, but the mission of education must also be examined.

Mission statements of education often include the words life long learners; however, the American educational system has in recent years excluded very young children from school. Young children should not be denied the opportunity to take the first few steps towards life long learning, as long as their experiences are developmentally appropriate (Futrell, 1987). Elkind (1986b) stated that "we should educate young children in ways that are appropriate to their unique modes of thinking and learning" (p. 6). Leading researchers including Elkind (1986b), Katz (1988), and Weikart (1988) are supporters of developmentally appropriate early childhood programs today.

Early childhood programs have been developing for a long time. According to Morrison (1991), preschool education's history began at least 500 years ago.

## History

The history of early childhood education, particularly preschools, is not a smooth continuous flow. As the pendulum of societal thought swings, new ideas and philosophies tend to develop (Woodill, 1986). Education of young children can be traced to the 16th century. Martin Luther had a major impact on religion as many of his beliefs were applicable in secular areas. Luther translated the Bible into German, a language of the people; also, he believed that the family was the major educational institution in the lives of children. Luther supported parents in educating their children at home with his layman's Bible (Morrison, 1991). Religion became more prominent in education when Luther's teachings were applied in family worship.

Johann Amos Comenius in Orbis Pictus: (The World in Pictures), gave early childhood education its first picture book in the 17th century. Religious beliefs formed the basis of Comenius' educational teachings. "Humans are born in the image of God..." (Morrison, 1991 p. 44), and so Comenius believed humans are obligated to learn to their fullest potential. He felt humans' fullest potential could be reached by



beginning education during the early years. Comenius also supported the life-long learner concept and the concept of positive learning experiences (Morrison, 1991).

Comenius' positive approach to teaching contrasted with the approach used in teaching children in America. Young children of English immigrants in the 17th century were given training in religion by elders in the villages or by dames, hence the name Dame Schools (Bloch, Seward, & Seidlinger, 1989). The Dame Schools were responsible for educating children in the basics of religion, morals, culture, and behavior (Woodill, 1986). Children as young as 3 or 4 attended school, along with their siblings because there was no minimum age for school attendance (Spodek, Saracho, & Davis, 1991). Dame Schools continued to exist into the middle of the 19th century (Bloch et al., 1989).

European industrialist Robert Owen also contributed to the field of Early Childhood Education. Owen began his movement in 1816 when he emphasized humane education for young children. Infant schools were opened to allow poor children to attend while their mothers worked in Owen's factories. Owen

provided for social reform through education (Spodek et al., 1991). As infant schools declined in popularity, European Frederick Froebel, the father of kindergarten, developed a system of educating young children during the 1830s. Education of young children, according to Froebel, should be planned and systematic, yet learning should transpire through play. The basis of Froebel's curriculum were gifts and occupations. The gifts were objects children could handle and use under a teacher's direction to learn concepts. Occupations were materials designed to assist in the development of various skills. Froebel believed education was essential to children early in life (Bloch et al., 1989; Morrison, 1991; Spodek et al., 1991). These European transformations soon found their way to America with the influx of German immigrants.

American kindergarten began in 1856 with Margarethe Schurz of Watertown, Wisconsin. This kindergarten program was taught in German and adhered to the teaching of Frederick Froebel. The private kindergarten included instruction to 2-thru 6-year-olds in multiage groups. The first English speaking kindergarten was introduced by Elizabeth Peabody in

Boston in 1860. Public kindergarten followed in 1873 with teacher Susan Blow. St. Louis superintendent, William Harris, was the sponsor of this first public kindergarten. He became an advocate of public kindergartens later as United States Commissioner of Education (Harris, 1890). Dewey's progressive education principles began to influence kindergarten in the early 1920s. Patty Smith Hill was instrumental in developing progressive kindergartens with interest centers. Hill transformed Froebel's occupations to art and craft activities, and gifts became building blocks and dramatic play centers (Spodek et al., 1991). Hill's kindergarten included 4-year-olds, but their eviction from kindergarten began gradually with the birth of the nursery school program (Hill, 1926/1987).

Rachel and Margaret McMillian of London, England were advocates for meeting the needs of poor children in schools. These nurses were convinced that medical and social problems of children could be corrected with proper care prior to school entrance. The sisters opened a medical clinic for children and soon realized they needed to develop a well rounded program rather than just meeting the physical needs of young

children. An open-air nursery was founded in Great Britain in 1911 by the McMillans and soon a college to train nursery school personnel joined alongside (Morrison, 1991; Spodek et al., 1991). Abigail Eliot, an American, studied at the Great Britain college in the early 1920s (Morrison, 1991).

Eliot returned to the United States and established Ruggles Street Nursery School in 1922. This was established as a private nursery school. The depression of the 1930s soon came and the effect was the closing of kindergartens (Spodek et al., 1991). Many teachers were also released from employment. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal policies opened public nursery schools to employ displaced teachers. Nursery schools, then, received a boost not to help children, but support adults (Morrison, 1991). Federal programs for preschool age children began with this Federal Works Progress Administration of Roosevelt's and federal intervention continued into the future (Morrison, 1991; Spodek et al., 1991).

Federal involvement in early childhood education continued into the 1940s with the Lantham Act. This act established child care centers in war industry areas so mothers could join the war effort by working

in the war industries. These centers provided both education and child care 24 hours a day. Funds for child care were withdrawn shortly after the end of World War II. Federal involvement again was seen in the mid 1960s with the advent of the Head Start program. This program was established out of concern for poor preschoolers. The Head Start effort continues today; it will be discussed during the review of literature (Morrison, 1991; Spodek et al., 1991).

#### Purpose Of The Study

The purpose of this study is to give an overview of the recent literature concerning preschools for 4-year-olds in the public school setting. The literature review will also describe the type of preschool program that should be utilized in a public school setting. When examining public preschools, governmental and societal issues must also be addressed in the review of literature.

The purposes of this study will be answered with the following five questions:

1. Why are preschools being considered for inclusion in the public school setting?
2. What are the disadvantages to having preschools

in the public school setting?

3. What are the advantages to having preschools in the public school setting?

4. What principles will be used to determine curriculum, staff requirements, and child eligibility requirements?

5. How will support of society be gained for public preschools and what will be the financial costs?

#### Need For The Study

Extensive and convincing research exists relating to the benefits of developmentally appropriate preschool programs (Berrueta-Clement, J., Schweinhart, L., Barnett, W., Epstein, A., & Weikart, D., 1984; Lazar & Darlington, 1982). These studies support the need for 4-year-old children to attend preschool. The benefits from preschool attendance stretch long into life.

While there have been numerous descriptive studies about public supported preschools (Lubeck & Garrett, 1989; Schweinhart & Mazur, 1987; Quadrini, 1990; Hoot, Bartkowiak, & Goupil, 1989; Copple, 1990) few articles have been written examining the advantages and disadvantages of having public

preschools. This paper will examine both the advantages and disadvantages. Implications of preschool inclusion in public schools will be discussed for parents, teachers, school boards, and society to consider.

#### Limitations Of The Study

The following limitations were found to be present in this study:

1. Access to one university library.
2. Access to some articles limited.
3. Limited research in some areas of the study.

#### Definitions

Developmentally appropriate refers to learning environments and experiences which are planned with the developmental level of each individual child in mind. An essential component, play, is child-centered and child-initiated along with the support of the teacher (Bredekamp, 1987).

Preschool age child is one who's age is 1 year shy of meeting the eligibility requirements for attendance in kindergarten.

## Chapter II

### Disadvantages and Advantages to Public Preschools

The demand for preschool programs far exceeds the supply of these programs. The need for programs for young children is continuing to grow (McCormick, 1986). Care for preschool age children has become a necessity as nearly 60% of United States mothers work outside the home (United States Census Bureau, 1992). Add to these factors the growing number of preschool age children who are poor and a national concern has erupted (McCormick, 1986). Early childhood education has become a major concern of our government and society.

#### Why Should We Consider Public Preschools?

Public preschools are currently being supported in some form by a majority of the states. Most of these programs are pilot studies and not state-wide. Differing entrance requirements are also being considered with limits being placed on family income, at-risk labels, handicapping conditions, or non-English speaking children (Coppie, 1990). The motive for implementing these programs varies.

Consideration of public preschools began during the 1960s when social, political, and economic reform



began in our country (Kagan, 1987). Elementary and secondary education programs were being scrutinized with the launching of Sputnik I in 1957 and the publication of Why Johnny Can't Read. Criticism of the educational system focused on the cause of poorly prepared children for entrance into school. Civil rights movements of the 1960's also claimed unequal schooling for minorities. Claims were made that black children were poorly prepared for school. Head Start legislation was introduced to combat the argument of poorly prepared children entering school (Elkind, 1986a). Many parents turned to private preschools to assure proper preparation for their youngsters. Those parents without resources to send their children to preschool settled for unprepared children until Head Start (Kagan, 1987). According to 1987 figures, Head Start serves only 18.51% of those eligible for the program (Children's Defence Fund, 1989). The birth of Head Start was due to political reform, but social and economic reform also affected our society so consideration of public preschools became prevalent (Elkind, 1986a).

The women's movement changed society's views about the woman's role. The middle class value system

changed to allow women to enter the work force. Technological changes allowed for more female employees because the muscles of men were no longer required to complete jobs (Lubeck, 1989). In addition, according to Elkind (1986a), divorce has become socially acceptable and divorce rates have soared. The mother retains custody of minor children in 90% of these cases, but she is also required to work outside the home for an adequate income. These factors have produced the fact that approximately 60% of mothers work outside the home (United States Census Bureau, 1992). Elkind (1986a) estimates that by the year 2000 women in the work force will increase to between 80% and 90%. These high figures mean many children need out-of-home care and public preschool is being considered an answer for preschool age children.

A third rationalization for public schools to institute a preschool is the belief that children are wiser today (Morrison, 1991). Technological inventions, such as television and computers, have provided for brighter and more sophisticated children (Elkind, 1986a). *This change in human potential* supports formal instruction for young children; however, it is a fallacy that human potential can be

altered by technology. Technology only enhances human potential and no research supports the notion that human potential is altered by technology (Elkind, 1986a; Morrison, 1991). Three factors have influenced our society to address the issue of public preschool. The first factor is unpreparedness of children entering kindergarten (Elkind, 1986a). Second is the change in our families. A growing number of mothers are working outside the home and additional out-of-home care is needed (Copple, 1990). The third factor of society is preschool children of today are more sophisticated because of technological advances and therefore, are ready to enter school at an earlier age. Some of these factors have no research base and are not true. They are general opinions of society without support (Elkind, 1986a). Based upon research by Moore and Phillips (1989) and Zigler (1986), maybe preschools should not be a part of the public school system.

#### Disadvantages Of Public School Preschools

Scholars in early childhood education base much of their theory of preschool education on classical studies. Longitudinal studies have been completed on the Ypsilanti Perry Preschool Project (Berrueta-

Clement et al., 1984) and a Consortium for Longitudinal Studies (Lazar & Darlington, 1982) also developed. These classical studies use a majority of subjects who were black and disadvantaged. Sample characteristics included children who were poor, mentally retarded, and typically had mothers who were not high school graduates (Berrueta-Clement et al., 1984; Lazar & Darlington, 1982).

These projects had other qualities one must consider before looking into their validity. The Ypsilanti Perry Project is well known for its exemplary intervention effort with a high quality child development program which allowed for remarkable results (Weikart, 1988). Teachers were well trained and time was also allotted for home teaching visits to children and parents. These projects also provided social services and health services to the children they served (Weikart, Deloria, Lawser, and Wiegerink, 1970). These qualities differ from current private preschools practice and public elementary school theory (Zigler, 1986).

While both studies are valid to the population from which the sample was selected, Zigler (1987) wrote that society is in error when results are

generalized to all preschool children. The benefits from these programs were realized only for disadvantaged background and small amounts of growth may be realized for the middle-class and more affluent child (Zigler, 1986). The costs to society when including all preschool children may be more than the benefits received (Kagan, 1987; Zigler, 1986).

Costs of including preschools in the public schools will be phenomenal if they are supported solely with public funds (Kagan, 1987; Zigler, 1986). The classical studies used professional services in their projects to meet the medical and social needs of subjects and their families ( Berrueta-Clement et al., 1984; Lazar & Darlington, 1982). Duplication of these professional service programs for all preschoolers would send costs much higher (Kagan, 1987; Zigler, 1986).

Kagan (1987) asserts that services of those already serving the preschool age child will be in less demand. Those currently serving the preschool child are not required to have the educational background of the public school teacher. They would not be permitted to enter the public educational system as teachers when children make the switch from

private to public preschools. Unemployment of these former teachers must be considered an economic cost to society (Kagan, 1987; Lubeck & Garrett, 1989).

Those currently serving as teachers for preschool programs are meeting the needs of children in a developmentally appropriate manner according to Moore and Phillips (1989) and Kagan (1987), but the bureaucracy of public schools may not meet the needs of preschool children. It is feared that once preschools enter public school domain a public school curriculum will be favored forcing formal education on youngsters (Kagan, 1987; Moore and Phillips, 1989). Elkind (1986a) warned of risks of formal education at an early age. These risks include increased stress and symptoms such as "...fatigue, loss of appetite, and decreased efficiency" (p. 635). Elkind (1986a) also warned of the long term danger of lack of motivation to learn if formal education is introduced to early in a child's life. Moore & Phillips (1989) go even further in questioning the quality of public schools.

Black children are at a disadvantage in our public system as it is today. According to Moore & Phillips (1989), black children represent a

disproportionately higher percentage of those children suspended from school, placed in special education classes, or who are functionally illiterate. Blacks also represent a smaller percentage than the norm of seniors who enroll in college. Moore & Phillips (1989) question giving the public schools more black students which may be harmed due to stereotypes.

Moore & Phillips (1989) are quick to face reality that many black children need public services or the choice may be no preschool or care for young blacks. Black parents often look to public schools as the equality melting pot in close proximity to their home. Convenience and cost of public facilities seem to meet the needs of black families (Moore & Phillips, 1989). These advantages to public preschools are seen by other cultures also.

Zigler (1987) stated that when the home is appropriate, the best place for the child may be to remain at home. However, facing the reality of lack of competent caregivers in the home, Zigler (1987) supports school based care. Care of preschoolers in school, however, requires a developmentally appropriate educational component. Preschool children should be allowed large blocks of time for recreation

and socialization. "Our four-year-olds do have a place in school, but it is not at a school desk" (Zigler, 1987 p. 259).

#### Advantages Of Preschool Inclusion In Public Schools

Positive short-term and long-term effects are evidenced in research of high quality early childhood education. This is especially true of disadvantaged children (Berrueta-Clement et al., 1984; Lazar & Darlington, 1982). To answer continuing controversy over the lasting effects of preschool programs, the Consortium for Longitudinal Studies was formed in 1975 (Royce, Darlington, & Murray, 1983). Results from the consortium focused on early education and achievement orientation in 1976. School competence and educational attainment were also examined. Later, occupational attainment and achievement orientation in 1980 were examined and positive results were found in all areas (Royce et al., 1983).

IQ gains were noted in children after participating in a preschool program studied by the consortium. The effect was not permanent, however. After 4 years of time elapsed the differences between control- and program-children IQs were not significant. Related to the IQ gains, are the



feelings of self-worth. Children in a program were found to have more pride in their accomplishments at school or work (Lazar & Darlington, 1982). The early boost children received from preschool education allowed them to start school with an intellectual advantage over control children. This scholastic advantage allowed for higher levels of self-esteem, greater academic expectations from teachers, and stronger commitment for further schooling (McCormick, 1986).

Competence in elementary and secondary school and educational attainment was analyzed through special education placement, grade retention, and high school graduation rates. During the school years, 13% of the program children were placed in special education versus 31% of the control children. The consortium also found that 32% of the program children were retained at some point in their educational career versus 47% of the control children (Lazar & Darlington, 1982). Reported graduation figures for program children are 65% graduation rate versus control graduation rate of 52% (Royce et al., 1983). These competence and educational attainment figures all support the need for preschool programs.

Analysis of occupational attainment and later achievement were also performed by the consortium. Preschool programs were found to help children do better in school and better school careers helped children fare better in the job market. Higher occupational aspirations were also found for program children versus control children. Preschool graduates expected to be employed in a white-collar rather than a blue collar occupation (Royce et al., 1983). The benefit from these higher aspirations and higher employment rates is more people working and paying taxes to support our economic system (Schweinhart & Mazur, 1986). Other benefits were found upon examination of the Ypsilanti Perry Preschool Project.

Social problems of today can be reduced with a utilization of a preschool programs, such as the Perry Preschool Project. Results suggest that girls who had attended the Perry Preschool had a lower incidence of teenage pregnancy. Crime rates were also lower with 31% of the attendees having been arrested or detained by age 19, as compared to 51% of control children. Fewer public services were used by the Perry graduates as teenagers (Berrueta-Clement et al., 1984). All these results support the implementation

of a preschool program such as the Perry Preschool Program for our disadvantaged children.

Disadvantaged children can benefit from involvement in a preschool program. Public schools need to consider involvement in a preschool program to take up the slack of Head Start. This federal program only serves 17% of those eligible for services (Decker & Decker, 1992). The alternate for qualifying children is no preschool services (Children's Defense Fund, 1989). Public schools could assist Head Start in meeting the need of the unserved qualifiers, however, public schools must also consider serving all preschool children. Economic segregation, and typically race segregation, of children is unavoidable if Head Start and similar programs are utilized as they are today. Equity for all children will be realized with universal preschool programs (Zigler, 1986). Middle class and more affluent children will benefit from involvement in a program serving all preschool children as their environments are cocoon-like now. Middle- and upper-class children typically come from smaller families and live in the suburbs where houses are separated by larger areas. Television has caused more isolation between preschool

children (Moore, 1987; Zimiles, 1987). Preschool attendance offers children a chance to practice socialization skills which are important in preschool years (Zimiles, 1987). Public preschool involving all preschoolers will resolve the isolationism and inequality issue (Moore, 1987; Zimiles, 1987).

"The best programs provide children with early, noncompetitive, and nonthreatening experiences in an integrated setting with children of other racial and class backgrounds, rather than segregating 'at-risk' children from others in special classes" (Grubb, 1987 p. 22). Johnson and Johnson (1985), leading authorities in cooperative grouping, support mixed socioeconomic grouping since children learn much from one another. Pierson, Walker, and Tivnan (1984) also support programs with a diverse group of children. Brookline Early Education Project (BEEP) began in 1974 serving children of differing race,, socioeconomic status, family structures, maternal educational attainments, language used in the home, and maternal ages. This project worked with children from birth until their entrance into kindergarten. Children were served in schools in prekindergarten classes after they turned 3 years of age. Benefits were realized in

reading, classroom behaviors, and academic performance for children in all project groups. Specially noted was the middle class project group. This project group scored significantly better on ratings of classroom behaviors than the control group of middle class children (Pierson et al., 1984).

Educational advantages can also be realized when extending the elementary-secondary school continuum downward to include preschools (Elkind, 1988; Futrell, 1987). Collegial exchanges of information between preschool teachers and elementary school teachers would allow for insights into beneficial techniques for use with specific children. "The beneficiaries would be the children" ( Futrell, 1987 p. 253). Public schooling should be available for all preschool children (Elkind, 1988).

The demand for public schools to formulate programs in already existing elementary buildings stems from many sources. Public schools have the ability, facilities, knowledge base, and experience to develop high-quality programs (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Early Childhood Education Panel, 1988). If the district is experiencing declining enrollment, instituting a

preschool program will help enrollment figures. Also, competent employees of school districts will be retained for employment in the new program (Tostle & Merrill, 1986). Elementary schools are generally in close proximity to homes of preschoolers and offer a safe environment for children. Parents look favorably upon these benefits of public preschools (Lubeck & Garrett, 1989; Moore & Phillips, 1989). Parents also appreciate the lower costs in comparison to private facilities (Moore, 1987).

Parents can provide environments which are favorable to preschool children, however, because of changing family dynamics, time may not be available to provide appropriate experiences. Dual-career families and single-parent families are unable to provide learning experiences which will assist preschoolers in realizing their abilities (Elkind, 1988). Public preschools can be used to fill the void left from working parents and also can supplement the child care problems of these parents (Lubeck & Garrett, 1989).

### Chapter III

#### Formulation of a Public Preschool Program

Shaping an effective early childhood program requires the public to recognize the vast amount of knowledge and experience with preschool children that is available. The philosophy between early childhood and school professionals differs greatly (Bradekamp, 1987; Copple, 1990). Enhancing the development of preschool age children requires an understanding of the developmental level of these children (Elkind, 1988). The key to a good program is recognizing the need for trained specialists working with preschool children (Hymes, 1987).

#### What Public Schools Need To Consider

Teacher certification differs among states that currently have a prekindergarten program; however, early childhood certification is required in a majority of these states (Copple, 1990; Morado, 1986). The National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) guidelines for preschools encourage college-level specialization in early childhood education or child development and practical teaching of preschoolers (Bradekamp, 1987). This training and experience will be wasted without support from

principals and superintendents. Administrators need to gain understanding of developmentally appropriate practices and respect the knowledge of the early childhood professionals (Copple, 1990; Hymes, 1987).

Administrative support can allow for other necessary components to become part of the public preschool. A majority of the programs examined in the Report from the Consortium for Longitudinal Studies used a center based system, rather than home based, and small group instruction was used exclusively (Lazar & Darlington, 1982). Bradekamp (1987) suggests ratios of 10 students to 1 teacher as the maximum in a preschool setting. Administrators need to stick to these ratios to assure optimum results from their preschool programs (Morado, 1986).

Administrators also need to consider early childhood teachers as equals to their other teaching staff. Salaries of preschool teachers must match those of other teachers to allow for viable careers (Hymes, 1987; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1986). Staff turnover rates in preschool programs are very high. Reasons for high rates include low salaries and few benefits. Including preschool teachers on salary schedules with other teachers will lower the turnover



rate (Copple, 1990). With administrative support and understanding, excellent public preschool programs can be developed using the previous staffing requirements.

Administrative concerns also include eligibility requirements of children. The classical studies, Ypsilanti Perry Preschool Project and Consortium for Longitudinal Studies, focused on economically disadvantaged minority children. Extreme benefits were noted for these children, so disadvantaged children definitely need to be included on eligibility requirements (Berrueta-Clement, 1984; Lazar & Darlington, 1982).

As noted earlier, authorities support universal access to public preschool programs. (Grubb, 1987; Johnson & Johnson, 1985; Pierson et al., 1984). Universal access would break the two tier, economically segregated system of today (Moore & Phillips, 1989). Administrators will need to consider the most viable alternative for their community, however, more favorable public support will be gained by adopting a universal program with enrollment in the program being optional (Zimiles, 1987).

Curriculum of the public preschools which are of high quality always include a home intervention

component (Berrueta-Clement et al., 1984; Lazar & Darlington, 1982). Teachers communicate regularly with parents. Teacher and parents work as a team in the development of each child (Bradekamp, 1987). To experience optimum results, public schools must duplicate the successful programs of Perry Preschool. Academic aptitudes were favorably impacted for disadvantaged children when experiencing cognitive-oriented, language training, or unit based (child centered) curriculum. Results from the Ypsilanti Perry Preschool Curriculum Demonstration Project suggest the principle issue in early childhood education is not which curriculum is chosen, but how it is implemented; it must achieve positive academic results (Weikart, Epstein, Schweinhart, & Bond, 1978).

Academic achievement later in life is one of many components to consider when adopting public preschool curriculum. Elkind (1986) warns against the use of a formal curriculum as positive academic results may be seen, but later learning may prove to be difficult due to loss of learning motivation. Katz (1988) supports a curriculum that allows children to learn things that have meaning to their world outside the school, rather than one which focuses on preparing children for

kindergarten. Developmentally appropriate curriculum needs to be used. Components of developmentally appropriate curriculum include activities which meet the children's needs in physical, social, emotional, and intellectual areas; children's self-worth and positive feelings toward learning are constantly being considered; and each child is considered special and allowed to develop on that special time table (Bradekamp, 1987).

When developing a public preschool curriculum, consideration needs to focus on staff, child eligibility, and curriculum. Only when developmentally appropriate practices are used will the program be of high quality and beneficial to children (Bradekamp, 1987). Only high quality programs make a good investment for the public (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1986).

#### Public Support Of School Based Preschools

Providing high quality programs in the preschools initiated in the public school system will help gain support of the public. Middle class parents need to see the benefits of the high quality program before they will make a switch from present private programs (Zigler & Gilman, 1991). Benefits of a public

preschool program will depend on the type of program selected by the district.

Preschool programs offered in the public school environment provide a stable, secure environment. The turn over rate of staff is dramatically reduced offering more security to children (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1986; Zigler & Gilman, 1991). Preschool within the public school will provide low cost child care for those parents who have child care expenses.

Public preschools may cause transportation problems for some working parents. Suggestions have been made that public schools investigate the option of a day care center also in the public school to meet the need of caring for children at times other than when preschool is in session. Working parents will look more favorably upon a public preschool program which incorporates a day care also. Transportation of youngsters should not become an issue (Zigler, 1987).

Hobbs et al. (1984) also express the view that child care should be available to all families through the public school system. The school would have the responsibility of implementing a program that would mix school, community, and private programs already available in the community. Once again, public

support will be gained by enhancing programs already in existence rather than competing against them (Hobbs et al., 1984).

There are many variables which favor having a preschool in the public school system. Teachers, administrators, school boards, parents, and current early childhood professionals need to work together to find the best program for each individual community. People working together to create a favorable program within the community will provide the allies needed to promote the public preschool concept to society (Copple, 1990). Zigler and Gilman (1991) suggest public support may be gained by using a sliding scale fee schedule until enough women are working so that the nation will not be opposed to a tax for child care. This tax can be used to fully fund the preschool as well as a day care in the public school.

#### Funding Public Preschool

Costs of a public program will vary across the country because of wage and program differences across states (Copple, 1990). Costs will also vary in relation to the operating hours of the preschool. Preschool costs tend to be the major component keeping them out of the public school system (Copple, 1990).

It is unrealistic to consider the cost of a public preschool from one source. Funds may need to be sought from public monies, Head Start funds, public and private employers, and local nonprofit organizations. Zigler's (1987) suggestion of a sliding fee scale based on ability to pay will hold parents accountable for their children and not relieve them of child rearing responsibilities (ASCD Early Childhood Education Policy Panel).

Estimates of per pupil expenditures for a preschool program range from \$1000 to \$5000 (Morado, 1986; Weikart, 1987). Suggestions by many experts puts the median figure at \$3000 per pupil per year (Coppie, 1990; Day & Thomas, 1988; Lubeck & Garrett, 1989). Prior to considering the cost, taxpayers must realize the benefit of the \$3000 per child expenditure. Berrueta-Clement et al. (1984) wrote that investment in a quality, early childhood one year program saved money years later. Participants in the Perry Preschool Project used fewer tax supported services later in life. Money invested in the preschool program returned seven times the cost of the one year program (Berrueta-Clement et al., 1984). The expense of providing a preschool opportunity in the

public school system may be high, but the expense of not doing so may be unaffordable to society in later life (Futrell, 1987).

## Chapter IV

### Summary

The purpose of this study was to give an overview of the recent literature concerning preschools for four-year-olds in the public school setting. The literature review described the type of preschool program that should be offered in a public school setting. The literature review also addressed governmental and societal issues concerning public preschool.

The purpose of this study was answered with the following five questions:

1. Why are preschools being considered for inclusion in the public school setting?

Preschools are being considered for inclusion in the public school for many reasons. Some include the change in family structure, unavailability of child care, inequalities in our current preschool structures, close proximity of elementary schools to family homes, and the false belief of society that preschool age children are more intelligent today. Because some of these beliefs are not supported by research, disadvantages to including preschools in the public schools were examined.



2. What are the disadvantages to having preschools in the public schools?

The disadvantages to placing preschools in the public schools include: initial costs of implementing programs are high, displacement of current child care providers in the work force, the increased chance of curriculum becoming academically centered rather than child centered, and the disservice that public schools already perform on disadvantaged youth. The experts who do not support public preschool programs do agree that the reality of our current society requires the public schools to answer the needs of families. Researchers support only high quality programs that imitate programs found to be supportive of developmental activities.

3. What are the advantages to having preschools in the public schools?

The advantages found in public preschool programs were that children were able to learn from one another without socioeconomic status separating children. Public programs allowed for attendance of all children; no child will be left out. Research has found many advantages to preschool attendance including a decrease in social services later in life,

higher graduation rates, and higher levels of self esteem. Not only will children benefit from a public preschool program, but parents also can benefit by having child care needs met.

4. What principles will be used to determine curriculum, staff requirements, and child eligibility requirements?

Research supports curriculum in preschools to be highly child centered and teachers need to feel at ease with the curriculum for optimum results. Teachers need to be treated as professionals and paid accordingly. The ratio that research supports in a preschool classroom is 10 students to 1 teacher. These classrooms should include children from all socioeconomic levels and races. Integrated settings provide the best learning atmospheres for children.

5. How will support of society be gained for public preschools and what will be the financial costs?

Public support of these programs will come from the success of the programs. Parents need to see the benefits in the development of their children. Offering high quality programs will enable parents to see the benefits. Public schools must also use public

funds to make the cost affordable for parents. The low cost will also gain support from working parents. Educating the public on the benefits of public preschool is the best way to gain support for a public preschool system.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

Children have developmental needs that are not always met through their families. Attendance in a high quality preschool will assist all children in developing. Placing preschools in the public school setting will allow for attendance of all children. It will also allow a system already in place to gain continuity in the education of children. Public preschools will also be more able to be monitored to assure the quality of the education received by children.

More research needs to be done on the advantages to including all children in the public preschool setting. Benefits can be realized by middle and upper class children, but there is little research to support the benefits. Investigators should also examine the effectiveness of differing curriculum on middle and upper class children. Socialization is a benefit that will be realized by all children

attending public preschool.

The Early Childhood Education professionals need greater respect from the public. Low wages, poor work conditions, and low self esteem of teachers are all related to the lack of respect from the general public. As professionals, we need to educate the public about the necessity of care for the young. We also need society to understand the importance of high quality care for the young. Respect will be gained when we educate the public about our profession.

Once the public has gained respect for our profession, changes in the educational system for young children will be more easily achieved. Public schools will be able to address the needs of families in a cost effective manner. Child care needs, as well as preschool needs, should be met at the school. Only then will families see the school as being supportive of their needs.

I recommend that public schools begin serving all 4-year-olds in a preschool. Cooperation between agencies already serving these children is a necessity. The programs instituted must be of high quality using only a developmentally appropriate curriculum. Instructors must be trained to deal with

the developmental needs of 4-year-olds. High quality programs are possible if we (a) use developmentally appropriate curriculum, (b) use trained professionals, and (c) involve parents in the program. All 4-year-olds will benefit from this type of program.

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