

RUNNING HEAD: Children's transitions

Children's Transitions to New Programs: A Collaborative Approach

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Abstract

The transition to Kindergarten is a milestone step for children and their families. Kindergarten today is so formal and demanding, with many standards to follow and high expectations of children. Families might experience stress and anxiety when engaging in transition activities and children might feel nervous when transitioning into Kindergarten. A collaborative approach is imperative for a smooth and effective transition. This study examined three questions focusing on families and school personnel collaborating to create meaningful transitions to Kindergarten for children, as well as their families. Interviews with school personnel were conducted and questionnaires were sent to families of children in a private preschool in Staten Island, NY. Results showed they supported the three questions and indicated that families and their children benefited from collaborating and communicating with school personnel for Kindergarten transition.

CHAPTER 1

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Developmentally Appropriate Practices

The transition from preschool into kindergarten can often be challenging for children when a focus on non-developmentally appropriate approaches is in place. Play and a constructivist approach to learning has been documented as being essential to the academic, social, and emotional growth of young children, normally seen in preschool classrooms, but not often in kindergarten, where traditional classroom settings take place. Reynolds, Stagnitti and Kidd (2011) observed 26 Australian children from low socioeconomic status' (SES) between two schools and aimed to explore if a play based curriculum was an appropriate learning environment versus a traditionally structured classroom setting. In a play based setting, a child takes control over their learning, with guidance from their teacher and decides their own activities throughout the day. A traditional classroom setting includes the teacher directing from the front of the class while the students are seated at their desks, with scheduled times for as literacy, math, science and physical education. The average age of the children was 5.5 years old and all had delays in literacy, social skills and language upon entering school because their low SES. Children were observed in both schools for their different forms of play, specifically focused on development of language, cognitive skills and social skills and how these improved their learning once entering the primary grades. Results indicated that the children participating in a play based curriculum showed a significant development on the delays of their language, social skills and learning skills than children in the traditional classroom setting. Children in the play based curriculum improved on their interactions with other peers and teachers and cognitive development when

utilizing different toys and learning materials as they played and interacted with others. Teachers in the traditional classroom setting reported they introduced unstructured materials such as boxes to observe the cognitive skills in their children as they observed object substitution abilities, which means that they explored different ways to use a box. This activity helped the children improve language and interaction, but unstructured objects were always present in the play curriculum classroom. While mainly focusing on children with low SES, a play based environment is vital for the preparation of the transition to kindergarten for all children and play is a prime factor of a developmentally appropriate practice (DAP). These are the building blocks for preparing for formal instruction and transition into kindergarten. Play allows young children to freely explore and exercise their cognitive, language and learning development and skills and make connections to learning and their environment naturally.

DAPs in early learning need to be tailored to children's stages of development in all domains of physical, socio-emotional and cognitive areas. The Early Literacy and Learning Model (ELLM) curriculum was implemented and designed to improve the language and literacy skills of 20 children between the ages of 3 and 5 years old using DAPs (Elliot & Olliff, 2008). Many children enter preschool knowing the letters of the alphabet, which is later enhanced by elements of phonics and literacy dynamics once they enter kindergarten. ELLM activities focused on read alouds, independent reading, oral language, phonological awareness, letter and sound knowledge and development of print concepts. Home activities included children taking books home and reading with their families and teachers communicating with families the progress of their children's literacy and language development. Teachers implemented word walls, print-rich activities and concepts, writing and listening activities and resource packets to take home for ongoing learning (p. 552). In order for the implementation of the ELLM to be

successful, teachers needed to be aware of literacy instruction, emerging literacy of their students and the and how to adapt the activities for each student, taking into account their level of learning, developmental age and stage and learning styles. Adapting instruction and activities for preschool children included thematic units, real-life situations, pictorial references, manipulatives and target letter words. These activities also were used to help prompt children as they retold stories, connecting them with their recalling skills. The read alouds were conducted using classical children's literature, including Eric Carle's "The Very Hungry Caterpillar". Letters and words on the word walls were used to mirror everyday objects and people, connecting these words with actions and visual representations. Home packets were also sent home with the children for ongoing learning and family participation to help track the progress of the children. Results indicated that it is vital for teachers and families to create developmentally appropriate practices for learning concepts such as literacy and language for preschool children (Elliot & Olliff, 2008). Language and literacy skills learned in preschool are imperative for improvement and enhancement once children transition into kindergarten and teachers can incorporate state learning standards, focusing on DAPs for all areas of instruction. DAPs are important for success of children transitioning into kindergarten because of the developmental stage and age as well as learning styles of all children.

Social-emotional behaviors of Preschoolers

Social and emotional aspects of preschoolers' school readiness are critical for learning and school success. During early years of school, young children begin to understand the emotions of themselves and others, and learn to regulate their emotions, make healthy decisions about social problems, conflicts, and express their emotions appropriately and healthfully. Social-emotional learning skills (SEL) and development of them is essential for a successful

school experience. SEL includes self-regulation, social awareness, and responsible decision making and social problem solving and relationship skills (Denham et. al, 2012). These skills are related to the transition to school and adjustment to a new academic and formal school setting, as well as academic achievement. Children who display positive emotions and regulate their behavior are more likely to achieve in school, whereas children who show negative behavior often struggle with their academic success and experience trouble adjusting to school (p. 180).

Denham et. al (2012) conducted a study where the goals were to 1) take a person-centered approach to create SEL profiles of preschoolers, 2) determine demographic differences among the profiles to determine whether SEL profiles are important in one gender or one socioeconomic status (SES) group over another and 3) examine how these profiles relate to teacher reports of their school-related success. A total of 275 children were recruited from Head Start and private childcare centers in Northern Virginia participated in the study. The children were broken up into three groups according to their SEL skills. A series of tests were used to measure the SEL levels in children before entering kindergarten using puppets to act out emotions that the children had to correctly identify, as well as observation of how the children reacted when the puppet performed a positive or negative manner. Children were also shown a series of pictures of situations and asked how they would feel if they were in the situations depicted and emotions were shown through drawings. Denham et. al (2012) found that children at SEL risk showed lower levels of emotional knowledge and self-regulation compared to the groups of children, where there were high levels of emotional knowledge and self-regulation. SEL at risk children showed less motivation to learn and had more trouble controlling their behavior. Kindergarten teachers noticed these children showing less language, math, literacy and general knowledge acquisition, less positive relationships with teachers and more aggressive behavior than children

in the SEL groups who showed emotional and social awareness and behavior regulations, motivation to learn and positive relationships with their teachers and peers. There is a strong relation between SEL and school success in young children as they transition and adjust to kindergarten settings. Children learn to become aware of, control and manage their behavior and emotions of themselves and others. When they are aware of their social behavior, they show more motivation to learn and succeed in school as they transition to Kindergarten.

Young children step into kindergarten with an array of social-emotional profiles, ranging from polite manners and positive outlooks on their school success to negative behavior and attitudes about school and can help or harm their transition into Kindergarten. 10% of Kindergarten students show behavioral problems that disrupt their class, increasing for at risk children in Kindergarten. This poses a challenge for teachers having students who lack the skills to participate in school, as social and emotional skills underlie students' ability to succeed in school (Blimes, 2006). Kindergarten can be an overwhelming place for young children, as they have now faced transitioning and adjusting from a previous early childhood program or entering school for the first time. Teachers also face challenges as they greet new students and one common problem is their children's socio-behavioral skills. Teachers forming positive relationships with students help foster positive behavior skills. Children need a supportive environment and practice to develop their socio-behavior and emotional skills and develop relationships with their teachers and peers in school (p. 32). Teachers can implement several activities for their students in school that foster and shape positive behavior and emotional actions to school and relationships with teachers and classmates. These activities can help children adapt from their home behaviors to school behaviors, conforming to new expectations from new adults and can be minimized by having students participate in creating classroom rules (p.35). Students often act out when their teacher does not show interest in them and the teacher's goal is to build relationships with

those students and to help them see their teachers as positive and valuable resources (p. 33). This helps children develop trust in their teachers and show that they have a sense of belonging and identify themselves as members of the classroom community. Children evaluating and managing their social-emotional behaviors are imperative to the transition into Kindergarten because of the development of social-emotional and behavior skills and positive relationships with other classmates and teachers in a new environment. There are key variables that may impact effective transition to Kindergarten. These variables include school readiness and partnerships between families and schools that create effective transitions. School readiness includes the emotional, physical and social development and well-being of the child. These factors are essential for an effective transition into Kindergarten. Family and school partnerships are essential in producing a collaborative approach for Kindergarten transitions, as families must seek schools that best are fit for their child and their family.

School Readiness

Readiness skills for school include physical well-being and motor skill development, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language development and cognition and general knowledge (Docket and Perry, 2009). The focus is on the child and whether or not they have reached the particular point that defines the “right age” of school readiness. Docket and Perry (2009) write that children are members of many groups, including family, schools, community organizations, friendship circles and different cultures, and they all have their own definitions, expectations and criteria of what constitutes readiness for children.

Family, community, and school experiences factor into the concept of the “right age” of beginning school, as well as views and thoughts from children. Children expressing their feelings about school and how they interact with others form their social and emotional readiness for school, including how they will form relationships with their teachers and peers (Docket and

Perry, 2009). In the first years of school, children's abilities to understand emotions of themselves and others is fostered and created. Regulation of emotion, attention and behavior, making good decisions during social problems and express healthy emotions is part of a child's social emotional learning (SEL) (Dedham et. al, 2012).

Children begin school at a variety of ages, as there is no "right" age at which a child should be enrolled in school because all children develop and grow differently. Age alone is not a predictor of whether a child is ready for school or not because all children are different when transitioning into school and age is not the only factor of school readiness and a positive transition, as well as successful academic experiences (Dockett and Perry, 2009). It is possible that a young child beginning school makes rapid progress within the first year than an older child moving more slowly. Social success, where children demonstrate positive attitudes and share experiences, is also a factor of a successful transition to school and school readiness.

Families experience transition and school readiness with their children differently. Families might be excited for the transition to Kindergarten, while other families might experience levels of anxiety, stress and nervousness. All families have different views on what constitutes school readiness for their children, including views on what specifically constitutes school readiness and how they provide readiness activities for their children at home. Diamond, Regan, & Bandyk (2000) conducted a study that sought to examine the beliefs about Kindergarten readiness and the relationships between the readiness beliefs of parents and home activities. The three areas of belief included 1) general important readiness skills for all children, 2) parents' own concerns about their own children's readiness and 3) decisions to delay children's entry into Kindergarten. The decisions to delay a child's entry into school were a common view of parents that influenced their understandings of what constitutes school

readiness. Families with children between the ages of 3 to 5 years old participated in the study. Parents were asked questions about their beliefs on school readiness, developmental abilities of their children and the frequency of home activities. Parents were asked to rate the beliefs of school readiness on a 5 point Likert scale, with 1 being “not important and 5 being very important”, additionally 7 belief readiness questions such as “ How important do you think that a child takes turns, shares with others and knows the letters of the alphabet before entering Kindergarten.” Parents also answered questions about their child’s developmental abilities and responses to each skill the child performed.

Lastly, the home activities section asked parents to indicate the frequency with which 9 specific activities their child engaged in at home (p. 95). Additional questions included participation in early childhood programs, concerns about Kindergarten, annual household income, the highest level of parental education, the planned age of Kindergarten entry and race-ethnicity. Results indicate that most parents believe a variety of academic and behavioral skills are important for their children’s Kindergarten success. Parents reported they provide their children with home activities several times a week. These activities include watching television and reading books together. However, there was no significant relationship between the frequency of parents reporting of reading to their children or watching educational television and concerns about their children’s Kindergarten readiness. Findings suggest that parents have an overall global view on Kindergarten readiness when applied to children generally, but stress most emphasis on their own children and their academic abilities.

In terms of delays, parents who are more highly educated delayed sending their children to Kindergarten because of greater access to educational materials and experiences for their children. This shows the more education parents achieve and access to educational resources, the

more parents can prepare their children to meet the demands of Kindergarten if they believe the children do not exhibit academic readiness. When making decisions about Kindergarten, parents emphasized academic skills more than child behaviors and the consequence is that expectations and demands are increased for the children and their teachers. Children will enter Kindergarten at an older age and this result leads to the view that younger children are less ready for kindergarten, increasing parents' concerns about the demands of expectations and work load (p. 99). This is a factor of transition into Kindergarten because of family views of school readiness, the right time to send children to Kindergarten and if they demonstrate Kindergarten readiness.

Early childhood education is committed to starting with the child as the primary focus, as standards and curriculum are secondary. Kagan, Carroll, Corner, & Scott-Little (2006) aimed to examine the alignment of early childhood education and come to a better understanding with 1) the status of the alignment of standards, curriculum and assessments within Prekindergarten (Pre-K) and within kindergartens, 2) the alignment of the status with standards, curriculum and assessments between Pre-K and kindergartens and 3) what is being done under transition efforts. Four different Pre-K programs participated, including Head Start, a public school program, a community based non-profit program and a for-child community based program. Three documents of standards, curriculum and assessments were collected from the Pre-K programs and three other documents holding the Kindergarten standards, curriculum and assessments were collected. The five domains of early learning included 1) physical and motor development, 2) socioemotional development, 3) approaches to learning, 4) language and communication development and 5) cognition and general knowledge and were used for a coding scheme developed on children's school readiness. The research question that applies most to the topic of transition to school is the extent at these school sites where transition practices aligned with Pre-

K and Kindergarten standards, curriculum and assessments (p. 29). Kagan, Carroll, Corner, & Scott-Little (2006) found that the school sites did not align with Pre-K and kindergarten standards, curriculum and assessment. However, there appears the question of how these settings are able to provide smooth transitions into school, thus the missing link in early childhood. One reason is that individuals at the school sites indicated that they focused on conferences, school visits and school record exchanges and their concept of transition focused less on the classroom. This shows that transitions practices need to focus transitioning into the Kindergarten classroom. Transition practices in school must align with standards, curriculum and assessment because of the developmental domains of children, approaches to learning and where they fall in school readiness.

Children have been taught that they need to show a mastery of specific skills in order to be considered ready for Kindergarten. These skills include academic readiness, awareness of social-emotional behaviors and are expected to be at the height of their developmental stages, where they must demonstrate their academic and social emotional abilities according to the standards of the developmental age to be considered ready for kindergarten. Children from rural communities often experience a difficult time demonstrating readiness for Kindergarten because of limited parental level of education and limited access to educational resources for mastering skills for the transition to school (Schull & Anderson, 2008). Schull & Anderson (2008) teamed up with Healthy Families Garret County (HFHG), an organization in Northern Virginia to conduct a study that aims to follow the development of children from infancy to age 5, when they enter kindergarten and observe them as they acquire mastery of skills, social development, and how the families developed through services received during home visits. Family support workers, such as qualified trained nurses and paraprofessional staff visit the homes of families to

discuss health goals, child development information and strategies to enhance the home and family environment for the young child. Participants included 164 children, all of whom were followed from birth until the age of 5 and their families. The Work Sampling System (WSS) Preschool Developmental Checklist was used to assess children's school readiness in 7 domains observing children, 1) Personal and social development, 2) Language and literacy 3) Mathematical thinking 4) Scientific thinking 5) Social studies 6) The arts and 7) Physical development and health (p.317). Scores were given if the activities of the domain indicated the child was developmentally ready, approaching readiness or fully ready for school. The duration and frequency of home visits had a direct effect on home safety and the parental knowledge.

Schull & Anderson (2008) found that parental involvement and school readiness are linked and makes a difference in school readiness over time. All families benefited from long-term involvement in the program because it created opportunities to help families at different ages of children's development scaffold learning that promotes school (p. 320). A key factor of the success was collaboration with community resources to help promote school readiness because it increases the benefits and accessibility of resources for families. This is essential to the topic of transition to kindergarten because families partnering with community resources help in school readiness skills for the children developmentally, physically and cognitively. Home visits by professionals have a significant amount of effect on the families and children getting ready to transition into kindergarten. It creates a home intervention system to prepare families and their children for a major milestone in their lives. Developing a strong partnership between families and schools can often strengthened opportunities for collaboration that will impact student learning and transitions.

Family and School Partnerships for Effective Transitions

Stress Reduction

Stress in the family related to the lack of knowledge about the transition from preschool to Kindergarten can place many children at risk for academic failure, since stress can often impact motivation and academic performance in school. Families collaborating and forming positive relationships with teachers can ease the stresses of the transitions of their children into Kindergarten and heighten the involvement of school success and experience. Petrakos & Lehrer (2011) conducted a study where families and teachers of 95 Kindergarten students from eight different schools in Montreal participated in answering questionnaires on how their children were making the transition into Kindergarten. Teachers were individually interviewed and parents were invited to small group discussions at the schools to respond to questions and discussions. The interview questions consisted of themes related to transition practices of the school year, perceptions of families and school collaboration, parenting and teaching roles and values of education and learning (p.65). Four schools participated in transition activities and held meetings with families and children prior to the school year and incorporated gradual entries to kindergarten during the first week of school. Teachers individually had implemented their own transition practices to help children and their families ease into Kindergarten by making phone calls home, writing letters to their students and families, and holding orientation meetings with registration and hosting open house nights prior to the first day (p. 67). Parents reported that they enjoyed feeling a part of the school community, meeting other families and teachers and learning how they can be active participants of their child's Kindergarten transition and school experiences. Families who participated in the transition activities benefited the most and their

children experienced less anxiety and stress. Families who also had older children appeared less nervous about transition into kindergarten, since they had already experienced the transition previously. Communication between families and teachers on a constant basis form less stress on families, as they always knew what was occurring in their child's school and about their progress. Successful transitions to Kindergarten occur when families work together with their child's new teacher, creating a more comfortable and approachable environment for the children entering a new program and families given opportunities to help in the transition. This minimizes stress for families when undergoing a change and connecting with the child's school can create a comforting environment and encourage involvement in the child's school.

Successful transitions create positive outlooks toward school and motivation to learn. Two activities for improving successful transitions are improving connections between early childhood programs and elementary schools, and reaching out to families before their children enter Kindergarten (McGann & Clark, 2007). Preschool programs and elementary schools must be communicating with each other to find out aspects of their programs as children make the transition from preschool to Kindergarten programs. Kindergarten teachers need to know what early childhood programs their incoming students have attended, if attended at all, and preschool teachers need to know what expectations as told by the kindergarten teachers are for their children upon entering kindergarten (p. 77). Ready Schools Initiative in Indiana worked with 12 communities across the state to help elementary schools support children's transition into Kindergarten. Common methods for communication between teachers and the community included Kindergarten teachers visiting early childhood programs to learn about the curriculum and children in attendance, preschool teachers visiting Kindergarten classrooms with children entering Kindergarten and Kindergarten and preschool teachers meeting individually to discuss

issues that are important to both sets of teachers (p. 78). Community outreach included providing families with pamphlets at fairs, libraries, and at Kindergarten registrations for communication and information about themselves and received by the teachers. Elementary schools obtained records about the children in the preschool programs, with parental permission to release their records. Communication between schools and families aimed to establish connections before the first day of school. These events included special events held prior to the first day of kindergarten for families, such as classroom visits to meet the kindergarten teachers, tour the new school and interact with the principal, elementary schools inviting families with their children to "Family Night" at school prior to entry and teachers making home visits (p.78). The transition to kindergarten is a partnered process of events between families, teachers and the community and does not stop once the child transitions to school. Transition to Kindergarten is not a one-stop process, but a partnered ongoing series of events between families and schools. Relationships between children and their families and teachers are the most important factor for a successful transition. Families are better able to connect with their child's school when they feel welcome, invited and involved in their child's transition events.

Transition from preschool to kindergarten for the current study

Many families today have enrolled their children in early childhood programs to gradually introduce their children to school at a young age, commonly through preschool program enrollment. While families enroll their children in early childhood programs prior to beginning kindergarten, many might not be prepared for the transition of their children into kindergarten, where the school day is longer and more structured, there is less time for playing, more demands made to learning and state standards to meet. Families have different points of

view on what constitutes school readiness for kindergarten and enter their children right away or delay their entry. Families can often struggle with not having the proper resources and plan for finding the right kindergarten program for their children and taking the necessary steps for preparing for this sensitive milestone. Additionally, families and their children can be left clueless of where to turn for support of the transition to kindergarten. Children can experience difficult times leaving their peers at preschool and their environment they are unfamiliar with and experiencing a dramatic change in their schooling, change in daily routines and unprepared and overwhelmed about the workload. It is argued that children with their families are often left unprepared or not as prepared as they wish for the transition to kindergarten. With this in mind, the current study proposes three questions for exploration:

- 1) How do preschool programs, teachers and administrative staff prepare their students and families for kindergarten transitions and what methods are used to prepare and how can they be improved?
- 2) How do families and their children prepare for the transition? Every family experiences the transition to kindergarten in their own unique ways.
- 3) What do children experience socially, emotionally and academically when they transition to kindergarten? This will be different for every child attending kindergarten as all children experience different transitions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Healthy Transitions to Kindergarten

The transition into kindergarten is a daunting time for children and their families, as new routines and responsibilities come into the daily lives of the families. Families may notice changes in the children's attitudes and feeling about their new school environment, where academic expectations that are laid out can create stress not only for the child but the families to help meet the expectations of learning how to read, master mathematics and develop writing skills (Steen, 2011). While kindergarten serves as an introduction to formal school, early childhood educators need to be aware of the stresses that run through the families as they enter a more formal approach toward school. Teachers can maintain the level of excitement and positive attitudes about school by implementing the same enthusiasm that was experienced during preschool years, as well as reflect on how their teaching practices foster child development and investigate on strategies that actively involved families in their child's transition to kindergarten (Steen, 2011, p. 91).

Acknowledging the children's talents, learning styles, strengths and weaknesses during the first weeks of kindergarten can help teachers create connections with students and their families.

Teachers receive an insight on what their students bring to the classroom, individualizing expectations and goals for each child. First week kindergarten activities show students they have value and are well respected in the classroom community, an important factor of transition into kindergarten (p.92). In promoting a successful transition, teachers need to take the time to listen and be patient with children, as not all children learn the same way, need individualized attention and are expected to be independent and meet standards and requirements. Careful planning in a

child's education helps the transition become effective and meaningful for the child and their family. Teachers can involve families actively in transition by developing partnerships, fostering ongoing communication and keeping an open door policy. These strategies for families can also include completing a questionnaire about the child and family life, inviting families to visit the classroom, volunteer and providing resources about kindergarten activities and how the learning can continue at home (p. 94). Most importantly, a teacher working with families to create individualized transition activities for their children promotes a successful school year and meaningful and exciting transition period.

Many children experience difficulty transitioning from preschool to kindergarten. Children previously enrolled in preschool programs show better academic and social outcomes once they enter kindergarten. Wildenger & McIntyre (2012) aimed to examine the relationship between Kindergarten preparation including preschool programs and family involvement in transition practices and socio-behavioral outcomes focusing on typically developing children entering kindergarten. They hypothesized that more preparation for kindergarten transition would predict positive socio-behavioral outcomes, specifically higher levels of social skills, lower levels of problem behavior and positive student-teacher relationships in children. 86 general education students with their primary caregiver and teachers participated in this study, with students receiving no special education services, no repetition of Kindergarten, no sensory impairments and must have been living with the primary caregiver for a minimum of one year. Children were chosen from 14 classrooms in two Northeastern United States counties from five elementary schools of rural, suburban and urban school districts. The average years of teaching of the 14 Kindergarten teachers was 13.50 years, but only 7.1% had specific training in Kindergarten transition activities. Within the first two weeks of school, parents were sent two

questionnaires about Kindergarten transition preparation and their child's behavior. 72 items in five domains included child educational history, family concerns, family needs, family involvement, and family demographic information. Additionally, families completed the Problem Behavior Scale of the Social Skills Rating System, a 17 item scale that measured the frequency of child internalizing problems, externalizing problems and hyperactivity. Teachers also completed a questionnaire about assessing students' socio-behavioral adjustments at the end of the first quarter of the school year. They also completed the Social Skills Rating System, measuring social skills in three domains including 1) cooperation, 2) assertion and 3) self-control. Results suggested that children who attended a preschool program or other early childhood program showed fewer behavioral problems and had more positive student-teacher relationships than children who did not previously attend preschool or early childhood programs. This shows that attending a preschool or early childhood program prior to Kindergarten is a prime indicator of a smoother transition into Kindergarten. Preschool programs have many opportunities to practice social and behavioral skills with teachers and peers, which are required in kindergarten. High quality early childhood experiences predict more positive outcomes as the children transition into Kindergarten, as well as family involvement in aiding in the preparation. When teachers are also trained in transition activities, they are able to provide more support and activities to help the students and their families transition effectively and smoothly into Kindergarten, both at the child transition level and the family level of transition to connect them with resources from school and the community.

LoCasale-Crouch et. al (2008) studied Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) teachers' use of Kindergarten transition practices in their classrooms with their students. The three research questions addressed were 1) to what extent Pre-K teachers use kindergarten transition practices?

2) Is the use of transition practices during Pre-K associated with kindergarten teachers perceptions of children socio-emotional academic expectations at the start of kindergarten? and

3) Does Pre-K teachers' use of transition practices moderate the associations between child risk factors and kindergarten teachers' perceptions of children's academic and social competencies?

722 children enrolled in 214 Pre-K classrooms participated in the study from six states and were followed into kindergarten the following school year, as an ongoing data collection. The majority of classrooms operated out of public schools and 30% were part of federally funded Head Start programs. Teachers responded yes or no to activities they practiced in the transition to

kindergarten, including Pre-K visits to Kindergarten classrooms, Kindergarten teachers visiting Pre-K classrooms, orientations for Pre-K families and children transitioning into kindergarten, sharing written records about children's preschool experiences, individual meetings with parents about kindergarten and contacting teachers about curriculum implements and specific children .

The most frequently reported practice teachers used was sharing written records about children entering kindergarten. LoCasale-Crouch et. al (2008) found the least reported practice was Pre-K and kindergarten teachers visiting each other's classrooms. The most frequent action in the transition practices and children's adjustment to kindergarten was a Pre-K teacher connecting with a kindergarten teacher about curriculum and specific children. This shows that

individualized transition activities can be planned for each child and encourages collaboration between teachers of different programs. Children at risk can benefit from a well-connected

experience from preschool to kindergarten and transition activities that directly involved the at risk children and their families was more positively associated with children's adjustment to

school in terms of social competence. Behavior problems for economically disadvantaged

children held negative ratings from teachers about adjustment to kindergarten. These children are

more likely to benefit the most from transition activities to kindergarten. All children from different socio-economic backgrounds and their families can benefit from transition activities from preschool to kindergarten and teachers need have a balance of activities implemented during the transition. This supports the view that transition activities can benefit children and their families significantly as they make the adjustment from preschool to Kindergarten.

Family Concerns in Transition to Kindergarten

The transition from preschool to kindergarten is an important milestone and life even that children and their families experience together. Wildenger, & McIntyre (2011) aims of study included to investigate family concerns during the transition, various needs during the transition and involvement in school activities. 86 families participated from urban, suburban and rural areas and children were defined as typically developing children. The children were from 16 classrooms from a total of five schools of rural, suburban and urban school districts. More than half of the families participating lived in the rural school district. More than half of the children were males and the majority of the children were White/Caucasian and half had attended an early education program, such as preschool prior to entering Kindergarten. Most families consisted of White/Caucasian biological mothers married or living with a partner. One quarter of the families were low income, receiving government assistance. Kindergarten teachers distributed study materials to the families within two weeks of the children being in school. Out of 324 packets, 110 were completed and returned. Families continuing were asked to complete a questionnaire about the concerns of Kindergarten, involvement in Kindergarten transition activities and demographic information. Next, families completed the Family Experiences and Involvement in Transition (FEIT) survey consisting of 72 items in five domains focusing on 1) child educational

history, 2) family concerns, 3) family needs i.e. more information about kindergarten program or teacher, 4) family involvement, i.e. meetings with teacher, transition planning meetings, visits to school and 5) family sociodemographic information. Results indicated that families reported few concerns about kindergarten transition, but a small number reported concerns such as behavior problems and separation. This shows that a smaller percentage of children experienced a difficult transition entering Kindergarten. Parents and teachers also shared many of the same concerns when children enter kindergarten, reflecting the importance of social and behavioral skills in children. Families also showed that they experienced several needs during the transition, with more information about academic expectations and information regarding their children's current skills. This shows that families may not understand the nature of a Kindergarten curriculum and activities or how their child's skills meet and align with school expectations. Many families also reported the desire for more information about their child's Kindergarten teacher and program prior to entry, necessary steps and strategies taken to prepare for the transition by the teachers and how they, as families, could help prepare their children. Parent transition involvement was also related significantly to several indicators of socioeconomic status (SES) levels and Wildenger & McIntyre (2011) found that families in lower SES levels were less involved in transition preparation than families in higher SES levels. This study shows that schools need to connect with families of children transitioning into Kindergarten to adequately prepare their children for new programs and their families for new expectations and opportunities for involvement.

Children's and families attitudes on learning and school depend on success in the transition to school. Children's reports and views about school can hold valuable meaning on the topic of transition to kindergarten. Ramey et. al (1998) conducted a study with Head Start

children, who participate in Head Start programs. Many Head Start families consider the transition to school a major event for which they feel unprepared. 28 Head Start sites participated in this study addressing two major transition concerns: 1) documenting the local transition demonstration programs to which children, families, schools and communities benefit from these programs and 2) gathering information about children's transition experiences from teachers and family members to better understand the factors that contribute to school success. Interviews were conducted in the native language of the families and 4,284 kindergarten children who previously attended Head Start participated in the study, with the mean age being 5.5 years old. Family demographics included the majority of children living with both a mother and father and mostly White participants. Three measures of 1) family ecology, 2) child characteristics, and 3) child and parent perceptions of school adjustment and attitudes toward school were provided throughout the study as interviews were administered (p. 315). Children provided information about school through conversations on what they liked about school, how much they liked school, how well they get along with their teachers and peers and how much their teacher helped with their learning. Families and teachers also provided information about their children inside and outside school with characteristics about their academic success and transition experience. Results showed that a majority of the children reported liking school "a lot", with only a small portion saying they did not like school. While children's perceptions about school were generally positive, most expressing doing well in school was "very important" to them and tried hard, children's less positive reports show that they really did not try to enjoy or do well in school, as well as not getting along with others (p.316). Families of less positive children reported more anticipated problems with adjusting to school during the transition to kindergarten, including shyness, not respecting authority (i.e. their teachers), anger management problems and difficulty making

friends. 10% of children also showed problems related to a disability when transitioning to kindergarten. The less positive children reported that their teachers were not skilled in teaching them new things in school and had difficulties getting along with their teachers. Families in the less positive group rated their children's adjustment and school attitudes significantly lower than families of children in the more positive group because of the anticipated difficulties in adjusting to school, even noticing that they would have a difficult time prior to the transition. Families reported using strategies to help their children ease into the transition, such as engaging in learning activities at home, talking about the school setting by playing school, and helping acquire new social and behavior skills (p.325). Children's attitudes about school help foster the transition into Kindergarten because positive attitudes help shape positive, successful experiences and negative views shape difficult experiences during the transition to Kindergarten.

Kindergarten transition is described as a sensitive milestone for children and their families, especially when families have children with special needs. McIntyre et. al (2010) aimed to investigate the concerns families of general education children and children with special needs through administering the FEIT survey to 132 caregivers participating in the study. The FEIT contained 57 items in five domains that included 1) child educational history, 2) family concerns about transition, 3) family needs during transition, 4) family involvement in transition related activities, and 5) family demographics. Many families of children with special needs indicated that their children attended special needs preschool programs, had an Individualized Education Program (IEP), and participated in family focus programs. They were more likely to attend early childhood programs prior to beginning kindergarten. All families expressed concerns about their children's transition to kindergarten, however families with children with special needs reported significantly more concerns. Worries also included general readiness for kindergarten and

behavior and academic readiness. There was also a trend reported that families of special needs children were less educated, had lower income and the primary caregiver was less likely to be a mother or a father. Similar views of transitions that families of general education and special needs children shared were the children attending a new school, separation from the family and getting along with their peers new teachers (p. 262). This supports the view that all families express concerns about their children transitioning, but special needs children and their families experience more difficulty in the transition to kindergarten.

Children with special needs face various obstacles in their schooling and families undergo stress and anxiety trying to find the right programs for their children with special needs, including the transition to kindergarten. Janus, Lefort,, Cameron, & Kopechanski, (2007) presented major issues in transition to kindergarten for children with special needs and their families in two parts 1) addressing issues in kindergarten transition for children with special needs, and 2) the perception on Canadian parents and professionals on transition. The perceptions of parents and education professionals on transition to kindergarten apply most to investigating family concerns on transition. To investigate previous school experiences of children with special needs, Janus, Lefort,, Cameron, & Kopechanski, (2007) implemented the Kindergarten Parent Survey (KPS) and used as parent-based data. The 8 areas of the survey included 1) child health, 2) child-care attendance, 3) injury and safety, 4) Pre-K activities, 5) parent-child interaction, 6) neighborhood quality,7) transition to kindergarten, and 8) family socio-economic status. 2,624 children responded to the survey with their families and 132 children were classified as having special needs with an additional 597 children classified as having access to intervention services addressing needs of speech/language, occupational therapy, visual impairments, developmental delays and behavioral problems (p.659) . Results

showed that parents of children with special needs were more likely not satisfied with the routine of their children's transition into Kindergarten than parents of children without special needs.

Interviews were conducted with five educational professionals involved in a child's transition to school, including a special education teacher, a kindergarten teacher with a student with special needs, a social worker, an early identification coordinator and a therapeutic program coordinator (p.641). The findings revealed that lack of case management, lack of funding for services, lack of flexibility in switching from one set of supports to the other and lack of communication between the parent and school were common reports in all interviews. A positive finding was that families were active participants in their children's transition activities whether they had special needs or not and found them all helpful, increasing roles as advocates for their children. Families are the key supporters of their children's transitions to Kindergarten, especially if they have special needs.

Families cannot do the transition to kindergarten with their children alone. An abundance of resources must be available to them from the community. Mangione & Speth (1998) found that a framework implemented that links families with the community can be of great help during the process of transition to Kindergarten. This framework was developed in in a small community in northern California, where a community of African Americans got together for their 5- year- old children's' "stepping up program", meaning that they were leaving their previous early childhood settings and entering Kindergarten (p. 382). The children and their families were leaving a nurturing and caring environment and entering an entire new program in different schools where many felt unwelcomed and unprepared for the new step in their child's education. However, one year at the children's' "stepping up program", teachers, administrators and supervisors of the new schools the children would be attending greeted the children as they

walked across the stage with their families. This sparked the idea of creating a framework that linked families with community resources to adequately prepare for the big move to kindergarten. The families worked collaboratively with the researchers to create this framework of continuity in early childhood, with continuity supporting the development of children, connections of the home, school and community creating easy transitions and home, school and community partnerships that support continuity (p. 384). These three areas show that continuity is important for early childhood families and an ongoing continuous process. Eight elements were created of the framework are that create connections with the community to ease transitions to kindergarten to promote continuity are 1) families as partners, 2) shared leadership, 3) culture and home language, 5) communication, 6) knowledge and skill development, 7) appropriate care and education, and 8) evaluation of partnership success (p.384). These elements promote that families and the community work together to establish smooth transitions into kindergarten for the children and families. Mangione & Speth (1998) implemented the framework in early childhood program settings and interviews were conducted with 75 participants that included families and teachers of early childhood programs. Focus groups were created for participants holding discussions about new ideas gained from using the framework, use of the framework, format and users guides and special areas of concerns. Results indicated that the framework covered all important elements of transitioning to kindergarten and how it was extremely family focused connecting with the community, as well as the framework being an important and useful document and emphasizing how families can work with the community to have a successful transition to Kindergarten. Families reported the framework was well organized and outlined a clear vision of guidance for the children's and family transition to kindergarten. Many participants also reported the flexibility of the framework to encourage new ideas for adaptation

to contexts of different communities, so each community would receive a framework tailored and adapted for their own needs. Families and school personnel forming partnerships with the community show how a transition cannot be done only by the family and school, but how a community framework implemented can guide individuals how to transition into Kindergarten.

Teachers' Views on Transition to Kindergarten

Jewett et. al (1998) collected journals kept by four early childhood teachers about helping young children and their families make the transition to kindergarten throughout the years of working in early childhood settings. This shows how recording views and practices of transition to kindergarten is powerful and aids in the professional development of teachers. The four teachers in this study held an average of 15 years of experience working in an early childhood setting, all holding teaching certificates and Masters degrees. Three teachers were preschool and kindergarten special and general education teachers in public schools and preschools and one teacher held the position of parent coordinator/after school director in a public special education preschool. Transition experiences included sending and receiving children between the ages of 3-6 years old with disabilities. Seven open ended questions were provided for the teachers to reflect on and included 1) What makes a transition work well? 2) What problems are in transitions 3) When you think of transitioning children in your class, what things do you need to think about? How do you feel throughout the process 4) What skills have you developed in order to have smooth transitions? Talk about the relationship skills you need. 5) Describe activities you are engaged in now and will be engaged this fall in regard to transition. 6) Describe the unique qualities of each child and each family and how they play a role in transition process. 7) How do you individualize for children and families in this process (p. 331). Teachers first recorded negative experiences but were contacted afterward to write about positive

experiences and strategies. Results indicated that categories of the teachers' writing included 1) the overwhelming sense of responsibility experienced by teacher involving the process, 2) understanding and implementing laws and regulations that protect students with disabilities 3) developing knowledge of the child and family, including all of their special needs 4) preparing students and families for smooth transitions and 5) serving as a liaison with the collaborative process of transition (p. 332). The theme emerging from these categories of journal entries was stressfulness. Journal entries of stressfulness identified a variety of barriers including the overwhelming nature of the needs of students and their families. Overwhelming sense of responsibility views included one teacher reporting how she had to review a stack of IEPs two weeks before school began and discusses the value of meeting with families to meet their needs. Another teacher reported that transitioning her preschoolers into Kindergarten is difficult because she felt she was sending them to school with a label, therefore their expectations became lowered because of that label. This shows stereotyping among educators and peers during this period of transition because children and their families are leaving the support they already have and entering new support systems in kindergarten. Preparing the students and their families for transition was recorded as the skills needed for families to become familiar with the new environment and helping their children with special needs adjust to the new program. Finally, constant communication between preschoolers and Kindergarten teachers is critical and key in making a transition successful for a child and their family. Teachers are advised to visit the classrooms with families prior to the first day of school and establish connections with the other teachers and families. Views and perspectives from teachers on transition into kindergarten are primary resources to utilize because they are the experts in their fields on working to establish a

smooth and effective transition for all children and their families as well as vouch for support for families and themselves as teachers.

Chapter 3

METHOD

Participants

Recruitment of participants was conducted at an Early Childhood Center (ECC) located on the campus of a private liberal arts college in Staten Island, New York. The selection of a private ECC as a place of recruitment was done due to the position of the investigator as a Graduate Assistant and a Masters candidate at Wagner College. The Wagner College Early Childhood Center operates out of Wagner College serving families of children from two years and three months through age five. The majority of the families reside in Staten Island; however, many families commute from the outer boroughs and New Jersey. Families consisted of current families with their children enrolled in the oldest class in the ECC and past families whose children transitioned to Kindergarten from the ECC within the last two years. Approximately ten of the current families who enrolled their children at the ECC in previous years had additional children continuing attending school. Wagner's ECC follows a curriculum in which play is the focus of learning and implementing developmentally appropriate practices in a small setting. Children learn through sensory-oriented activity, building upon social skills, physical and cognitive development fine motor skills, creativity and imagination. Math, science, language arts, social studies and the arts are incorporated and approached in a play-based method, following New York State Common Core Standards and Pre-Kindergarten Standards.

Three teachers in the full day program and the one director of the ECC, who had been in her 2nd year of the director's position, expressed interest in participating in the study. The initial number of participants for the current study was twenty eight total participants including teachers, director and families. Families to contact for recruitment were recommended by the

director and teachers based on the quality of information provided for answers to questions. The demographics of the participants were predominately White/Caucasian and all teachers and the director were females, all held Masters degrees in Education and the ages ranged from the youngest being 38 years old to the oldest being 65 years old. The director of the ECC had been working at the ECC as a teacher for the 2.3 year olds, the youngest class, and worked her way to the administration level for 26 years. The teacher for the oldest class at the ECC had been working there also for 26 years. The remaining two teachers each teach in the class for the children who are three years old going on four years old and rotated working on a part-time basis. One teacher had been working at the ECC for 15 years and the last teacher was the newest addition, working three years. All classroom settings were inclusive classroom settings.

Design

A mixed method approach was utilized for this study. Validity of interview questions utilized was done through the use of experts in early childhood during a peer editing session. Adaptations and changes to interview questions and survey item revisions were conducted using three early childhood experts. A flyer of entering into a raffle to win five children's books if participating in the study was designed by the investigator to give to families.

Materials

Materials for the current study consisted of a flyer (Appendix A) indicating the purpose of this study and opportunities for participants to be entered in a raffle for a chance to win five children's books by participating in the study, as well as an introduction letter (Appendix B) and consent forms (Appendix C) that were sent by U.S. Mail to past families, who previously enrolled their children at the ECC. Families who had children currently enrolled at the ECC

received their packet from the investigator at the time of pick-up from school. Additional materials included one questionnaire of fourteen items (Appendix D) created for families, eleven interview questions for teachers (Appendix E) and ten interview questions (Appendix F) for the ECC Director.

Survey items and interview questions were created and developed by the investigator after an extensive literature related to information regarding transitions from preschool to Kindergarten. A total of fourteen questionnaire items were created and of those fourteen, eleven of them asked participants to rate their experiences on a Lickert type scale with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest. Three items on the questionnaire were open ended questions in order to elicit a variety of responses for each participant in the study. The questionnaire for families of the ECC focused on how they prepared for Kindergarten transition, how they currently are preparing for Kindergarten if they have children enrolled in the ECC, children's preparation levels prior and after entering Kindergarten, effectiveness of the Wagner College Early Childhood Center curriculum and teachers contributing to the children's and family preparation for Kindergarten transition, resources utilized when preparing for the transition, how many children families had enrolled in the ECC and where they attended school after leaving the ECC. Families responded according to their views and experiences from the family perspective.

A series of eleven interview questions were created for all three teachers asking how many years they have worked in the field of education, how long they have worked at the ECC specifically and in the field of early childhood, their teaching philosophy and teaching style and how they impact their teaching, how they offer support and resources as children and their families prepare for the Kindergarten transition, the value of a preschool education with a play curriculum and how they select their instructional activities and assessment of Kindergarten

readiness. Ten interview questions were created for the ECC director asking the role of the director in comparison to the teachers during preparations for transition to Kindergarten, early childhood development and attending school, describing their own experience as a parent sending their children off to kindergarten, previous experience as a teacher preparing children and their families for kindergarten, demographics of the ECC, and how often past families keep in contact with the ECC to share their child's experiences in Kindergarten. All interview questions were open ended responses to elicit a variety of responses and reactions. School personnel were able to respond based on their own experiences and views as teachers and administrators on the transition from preschool to Kindergarten.

Procedure

This study examined the impact of the children and their families preparing and experiencing the transition from preschool programs to Kindergarten. The first step of the procedure was during a one to one meeting with the director of the Wagner College Early Childhood Center in the middle of January. The investigator outlined the study topic, purpose and the intended procedure to collect data and information valuable to support the study topic and permission was secured to the investigator to begin the study. The director expressed full interest in the study topic and course of action, as well as being more than willing to participate in an interview.

Secondly during this time period, the investigator developed the questionnaire, interview questions, consent form, introduction and flyer for participants. The investigator, director and the teacher of the oldest class in the ECC then collaborated in an additional meeting during the last week of February to compose a list with names and addresses of past and current families of the

ECC who they felt would be a benefit to the study providing valuable information about their families and children preparing for Kindergarten transition from preschool. The oldest class in the ECC consisted of the children ages four to five, many of them entering Kindergarten in the upcoming 2014-2015 school year.

Thirdly, after creating a family contact list, the investigator met with each of the three teachers during the first week in March to inform them about the dynamics of the study and if they would be willing to participate in a series of individual interviews. All expressed interest in participating in the interviews. Early childhood experts during a peer review editing session carefully reviewed the questionnaire and interview questions and copies of the recruitment flyer, letter of intent, survey items, interview questions and consent forms were made by the investigator upon the completion of the review. The recruitment flyer, letter of introduction, questionnaire, with the consent form illustrating their rights and the purpose of the study with a specific deadline for response and return was packaged and sent to families of the ECC, either with their child during dismissal time at school if they were current families enrolled or via U.S. Mail to past families. All returns were addressed to the investigator's attention at the ECC at Wagner College and returned directly to the investigator. All participants were given until March 31, 2014 to submit their responses for participating in the study and interviews completed. All participants who were not interested in participating in the study were dismissed and their records were eliminated.

The next plan of action was spearheading individual interviews. Interview questions were given to the ECC Director and three teachers to read and study prior to the interviews and conducted during the week of March 17, 2014. At the time of the interviews with teachers and director, a consent form was given at the start of the interview to review and sign. A tape

recorder on an iPhone was utilized for recording, as well as a laptop for typing important key points and information helpful to the investigator. At the completion of the interviews, the investigator thanked them for their time and valuable information and debriefed the director and teachers of research and past findings of transitions from preschool to Kindergarten. The investigator reviewed and analyzed the responses of interview questions and listened to the discussions on the tape recorder at the completion of the interviews. Letters of thanks were sent to the interviewees upon completion of interviews.

Finally at the finishing point of collection of the questionnaire, letters of thanks and debriefing of their contribution to the study, past research and literature were sent to the families as responses and returns were collected by the investigator on March 31st throughout the month of April 2014. The result of the number of participants was 15 total, including families of children and school personal of the ECC. The winner of the raffle was drawn during that time period, contacted by the investigator to inform them they have won and five children's books were sent directly to the winner with an additional letter thanking them for participating in the study.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine variables impacting the way a preschool program helped families and children prepare for the transition to Kindergarten. Through the use of a questionnaire and in person interviews, the opinion and experiences of families, a director of a preschool setting and an experienced and seasoned preschool educators, provided an in depth look into the impact having a strong support system and a variety of resources can have in the readiness skills of families for a new school experience. The three questions the study sought to seek were

- 1) How do preschool programs, teachers and administrative staff prepare students and families for the transition from pre-school to kindergarten? How do families and their children prepare for the transition from preschool to Kindergarten?
- 2) How do families and preschools collaborate to ensure a successful Kindergarten transition?
- 3) How are students' social, emotional, academic, and physical needs prepared for the transition to Kindergarten?

A questionnaire consisting of fifteen items provided specific information on preparations before and during Kindergarten transition related to families' views on essential strategies and skills valued for the transition, resources that were sought and experiences at the Early Childhood Center and demographic information.

Families generally had a positive experience with their children at the Wagner ECC and were happy with their children's preparation for Kindergarten. Families indicated children having positive experiences about being excited to go to school, developing independence, learning to take responsibility on classroom duties and their learning and development of social-emotional skills showed that the children exhibited readiness to experience a significant transition in their schooling. Learning through play exhibited developmentally appropriate practices (DAPs) and families expressed how they and their children were happy with this common factor in their questionnaire. Families and teachers speaking to the children about new changes showed that children were preparing for a whole new experience and milestone in their lives, with new friends, a new teacher and going to a new school. Families reflected on how they were taking steps to preparation through conferences with their children's teachers, visiting prospective schools with their children and consulting family and friends. Strategies common among families such as development of social and emotional skills, literacy skills, math and fine motor skills, gaining and developing independence showed that they felt their children were well prepared to succeed in the transition to Kindergarten because of demonstration of mastery of these strategies. The important strategies also showed common views and values of what families felt was important prior to the transition to Kindergarten.

Interview questions related to how early childhood professionals prepare families and their children for Kindergarten transitions, what they look for in the children if they exhibit Kindergarten readiness, steps taken for recommendations for families, aspects and values of early childhood education and their own experiences as teachers and administrators. Completed interviews were analyzed to seek common themes on how preschool programs, teachers and administrative staff prepare their students and families for Kindergarten transitions (Table 1).

Table 1 Family and children's views on Kindergarten preparation and school experiences

| | Early Childhood Center Experiences | Important Strategies for Preparation | Resources utilized for Preparation |
|----------|--|---|--|
| Families | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive experiences • Nurturing and caring environment • Interactive and good relationships with teachers and director • Positive and meaningful learning experiences • Open-door policy with teachers and director | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social skills development • Developing independence • Establishing routine • Reading and literacy readiness • Speech and communication skills • Encouraging their children to strive • Involvement in school activities and academics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with teachers about prospective schools • Consulting other families and friends for school recommendation • Visiting prospective schools |
| Children | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loved going to school • Learning social and emotional skills • Learning taught through play | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to be away from their families for a whole school day • Interacting with other children and adults | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visiting prospective new schools with their families • Talking about going to a new school with new friends and new teachers |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children come home excited and happy about their day at school | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning responsibility through having a job and take on control of their learning | |
|--|--|--|--|

Closely examining the patterns between the teacher and director revealed common themes and views on their roles and values on preparing families and their children for Kindergarten. These common findings among teachers and the director show how the students and families are prepared for the transition by two different professional levels of administrators and teachers, as well as factors that they both look for and to prepare both families and students. The ECC director encourages families to begin the process of searching for the new schools early in the school year and to attend open houses and visit the schools with their children. Families are also encouraged and directed to take responsibility and be proactive about scheduling any special tests, paying attention to deadlines for registration and visit days. Notices about special tests, open houses and registration information are sent to the families by mail and with the students at dismissal time. The director has also recommended families talk with their children about the transition from preschool to Kindergarten to prepare them for a significant change in their school experiences, but in an appropriate manner to not make them feel anxious or nervous. Teachers interviewed said that on Professional Development days, they often go to visit different schools on Staten Island and observe the Kindergarten programs in public, private and Catholic School settings. They share with families their findings and observations on the different schools and information on open houses and visiting days to visit with their children. Teachers have an open-door policy with families for ongoing conferencing and like the director, they encourage families to begin the preparation for Kindergarten early in the school year. When searching for school,

teachers remind families to find the school that matches and compliments the children's learning styles, as all children are different and fit in with different programs. The director prepares the children for Kindergarten by looking at their levels of maturity, how well they have adjusted from being at home to attending school, their social and emotional development, if they are challenged by academics, their attention span and how well they can follow directions and listen, understanding of language and having a solid foundation of school. At the administrative level, the director considers these to be important factors of Kindergarten preparation for the children because Kindergarten is an introduction to formal schooling, with more structure and more demands on the child. Teachers help their children prepare by helping them learn to set realistic goals, learning how to be away from home for an entire day, learn and improve on their manners and interaction with other students and adults, pay attention to fine motor skills, and participating in the Kindergarten enrichment program at the ECC. The director and teacher share common views on how they help prepare children and their families at two different professional levels and within those, the importance of mastery of the fine motor skills, encouraging families to being looking at schools early, visiting new schools, establishing a solid foundation of school and social-emotional development are the most common views.

Children experience a combination of social, emotional, academic and physical factors when preparing for their transition from preschool to Kindergarten. Through the questionnaires filled out by families and interviews with the teacher and director, these factors provided common factors and insights of the families and teacher and director about the readiness of the children for Kindergarten (Table 2).

Table 2: Common Findings among Early Childhood Center Director and Teachers

| | Families | Students |
|----------|---|---|
| Director | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin process of looking for schools as early as October • Ongoing interaction and conferencing with families • Guiding families to establish responsibility and be proactive in taking action early on seeking the right school, any special services and evaluations • Attend open houses and visit schools with their children • Talking to children about the new change in school, but make it appropriate and in terms they understand to minimize anxiety • Send notices home about any registration deadlines, special testing open houses and visit days for schools. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maturity • Social Development • Adjustment from home to school • Understanding of language • Attention span • Emotional Maturity • Meeting criteria for a good, solid foundation • Following directions • Challenged by academics |
| Teachers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers go to visit schools and relay to families on their findings • Ongoing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing social/emotional development • Setting realistic goals |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | <p>communication and conferencing with families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance for taking responsibility on finding the right school • Talking about how every child is different and needs learning activities and programs that best suit their needs and learning style | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning how to be independent and be away from home for a whole day • Learning on improvement of manners and interaction with other students and adults • Looking at fine motor skills • Kindergarten enrichment program for a portion of the school day (solely for the children who are attending Kindergarten the following year) |
|--|---|--|

Note: These are a select group of findings, as these reflect common views and factors shared by both the teacher and director.

Social, emotional, academic and physical factors (Table 3) are essential to children's readiness for Kindergarten, as observed by both families and school personal. Social factors are the most important because the children interact with other children and adults all day with sharing and taking turns. They learn to gain responsibility of classroom duties, their learning and develop awareness of following new rules, new procedures and new routines of the school and classroom. Emotional readiness is essential for Kindergarten preparation because children need to learn how to control their emotions and how they will act in situations. These can include developing awareness of a new change with a new school, new teachers and new friends, setting goals for learning in a fun way, of keeping to a routine and the reinforcement and encouragement of accomplishment by other children and adults. The academic readiness is probably the most important factor of Kindergarten, as children learn letter and number recognition with sequence

of the alphabet and numbers, exhibit reading readiness, recognize and write their name and being in an environment with structure with more academic and demanding learning activities and receiving homework. Lastly, physical factors of readiness are imperative to attending Kindergarten and common findings among the ECC director, teachers and families included fine motor skills with cutting with scissors, holding a pencil and coloring because they need to learn to use their fingers for a variety of tasks. The director reported that all children should have a physical check-up by their family pediatrician before enrolling in Kindergarten to see the stages of development and rule out any abnormalities, as well as children having a full eye and ear examination. With an eye exam, children might develop problems with vision and need glasses and with an ear exam, their hearing can be checked and it is recommended to go to a specialist for further examination, should an abnormality be detected.

Table 3: Children's Readiness

| Social | Emotional | Academic | Physical |
|---|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to interact with other children and adults through sharing, taking turns • Learn and gain responsibility and independence such as having a class job, getting their lunch ready, packing up and taking all belongings and important notices home from school • Interacting in a variety of settings within the new | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being away from their families • Developing and keeping to routine • Setting goals and learn take control of learning in a fun way • Developing awareness of change of new school, new teachers and new friends | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter and number recognition • Reading readiness • Knowing the ABC's and number sequences • Learning how to recognize and write their name • Being in a more | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fine motor skills assessed for if they can properly use their fingers with cutting, holding a pencil or coloring • Physical checkup by family pediatrician • Eyes and ears fully examined and to see an eye doctor or audiologist if there is a |

| | | | |
|---|--|--|--------------------------|
| <p>school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness of following rules, directions and procedures of the school and classroom | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinforcement and encouragement of accomplishments | <p>structured environment with schoolwork and homework</p> | <p>problem suspected</p> |
|---|--|--|--------------------------|

Families rated levels of academic preparation, effectiveness of administration according to Kindergarten readiness and the effectiveness of learning activities at the ECC on a Lickert-type scale of 1-5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest ratings. Eight out of eleven families rated the effectiveness of the administration for Kindergarten readiness a 5, the highest level, showing that families valued the administration's factors for Kindergarten readiness. The other three families rated the effectiveness as a 3 or a 4. The majority of the families rated the effectiveness of the learning activities at the ECC high ratings of 5, showing that they valued and believed the learning activities were preparing their children for Kindergarten, implementing DAPs into the school day and curriculum. This shows also the families believed that learning activities should be appropriate for the ages and levels of all children, as many commented in their responses that learning through play was essential to their children's learning. Finally, families rated the academic preparation of their children prior to entering Kindergarten. Eight out of eleven families rated academic preparation as a 5, the highest rating. The remaining three families rated their children's academic preparation as a 3 or a 4. This might show that they believe the ECC should provide more formal academic practices for their children prior to entering Kindergarten. These ratings show that families were generally happy with the level of preparation their children had before entering Kindergarten.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

The three questions that sought to answer how children's transitions to Kindergarten are part of a collaborative approach were supported by the findings presented by the families answering the questionnaire and the interview answers by the ECC director and teachers. A total of 28 participants were sent questionnaires and interview questions, with 12 families sending back questionnaires to the investigator by the deadline of March 31st, 2014. Three teachers and one director of the ECC participated in interviews with the investigator and after careful evaluation of answers, only one teacher was able to provide answers that matched closely to the topic of research. This teacher was the ECC teacher that teaches the eldest children in the ECC and leads the Kindergarten enrichment program for the children attending Kindergarten the following Fall. The director's answers also matched the target questions of research, providing information from an administrative level of the preparation of families and children as they transitioned to Kindergarten. During interviews, the teachers and director appeared calm, collected and excited to be interviewed and provide information on such an important topic of Early Childhood Education.

During her interview, the ECC director spoke about her role as an administrator and how she is responsible for all 105 children enrolled at the ECC, concerned with all age levels and classes. She is responsible for the whole population of the Wagner ECC . The ways on preparing the children and their families for Kindergarten included holding ongoing conferences with families, sending home notices about school open houses, registration deadlines and resources such as *Staten Island Parent* magazine listing different schools on Staten Island. A physical exam was also a major key point because of rapid child growth and development, as well as a

full eye and ear exam for catching any abnormalities early in vision and hearing. She also reflected on her own experiences as a mother preparing her own children for Kindergarten, taking advice from their preschool teachers and other family and friends on where to look for the best schools, taking her children to visit their new school and having a gradual change into school. The director also believed that interacting with the environment can also help make the transition to Kindergarten easier for children by visiting places in their community, such as a museum, zoo or playground where natural learning occurs. This creates life experiences with building relationships with the community, connecting their experiences to learning in school, interacting with and socializing with other children and making friends and trying new activities to build hobbies and interests.

The teacher during her interview reflected on her own teaching practices and experiences, having taught preschool through first grade in early childhood education. She started a preschool program at a local Staten Island Catholic School before taking off to start her own family. After returning to work part-time, an opening for a teacher at the Wagner ECC and she has been teaching the eldest class ever since. Reflecting on preparing children and their families for Kindergarten as a classroom teacher, her values are that learning should be fun, positive and rewarding and she tries to create and implement that philosophy in her own classroom. Conferences with families are held to relay these values and teaching philosophy, so they can reinforce the learning at home and make it natural. Similar to the director's views, the teacher suggests families and their children explore and interact with their community, where natural learning is fostered. Another approach is to allow the children to play, as play develops fine motor skills, social-emotional development and learning concepts through Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAPs). The key plan of action to prepare families for their children's

transition to Kindergarten is to begin the search early in the school year for the right school for the children, attend open houses and take the children on a tour of the school and to even try and sit in on a Kindergarten class. The steps to Kindergarten transition are for all children, including those with special needs, making it an inclusive approach and if children require special evaluations, the teacher commented that the ECC school personal work with the families to arrange the testing with finding an evaluator and testing center, as well as the best school for their children. Children should be gradually exposed to the next new step in their school career by visiting the new school and talking about the new change with their families and teachers. The most important point when talking with the children, the teacher and director both noted, is not to create extra anxiety or nervousness about the transition to a new school and talking at a level that is appropriate and not introducing the change too early. These interviews conducted and values of school personnel are similar to the findings of Petrakos & Lehrer (2011), where teachers and school personal talked about how they collaborate with families and their children to prepare for and ensure a smooth the transition to Kindergarten. The teacher and administrator also noted that they heard back from past families on how prepared their family and children were during the transition to Kindergarten, but many noted that there were no transition practices of holding an Orientation Week, registration events, or meeting new teachers prior to the first day of school other than open house events.

Many families completing the questionnaires expressed how they enjoyed helping contribute to research and participating in the study. The majority of the families all reflected on similar views, beliefs and strategies on preparing for Kindergarten transition for their children and as a family. The continuing themes found in the families emphasized on the importance of social development, learning to interact with other children and adults, learning and gaining

responsibility with classroom jobs and following directions and gaining independence. The reflections of children gaining social-emotional independence and skills, as well as family preparation reflect the reports of families in Wildenger & McIntyre (2011), where the majority of families expressed social-emotional skills as being important for their children's preparation and transition to Kindergarten because of interacting with others and learning how to be independent. Overall, families and their children were extremely happy with their preparation methods and transitions to Kindergarten and expressed a high level of involvement in their children's education, as also shown in Wildenger & McIntyre (2011).

Academically, families reflected on their children being ready for reading in Kindergarten, described as "Reading readiness" with knowing the letters and sounds of the alphabet, writing and spelling, as well as reading simple books. Math readiness included knowing the sequence of counting numbers, adding and subtracting. Reading and math are the two essential academic factors of being Kindergarten ready, and families felt that these were crucial in their children's readiness levels. Many families commented that they engage in reading and math activities at home daily, including reading bedtime stories together, purchasing workbooks for extra reinforcement, counting objects in their environment, performing simple math and engaging in writing activities and tracing. Academic preparation at the ECC for Kindergarten transition was ranked by families on a Likert scale of 1-5, with one being the lowest and five being the highest as number 4, although one family commented that the ECC curriculum needs to be more academic focused to expand and heighten academic readiness in math and reading according to what New York City Public Schools are currently teaching. Families also indicated that they, as a whole family, felt prepared for their children's transition to Kindergarten with learning how to expect changes in the school day, and how to help with

homework, as well as their children's behavior as the most common and important factor of preparation families valued was the social-emotional development of their children, with interacting with others, learning responsibility and taking control of their own learning and challenges.

The impact of this study has a positive outlook on transition events to Kindergarten for young children and the collaboration between schools and families to work together to create an effective and smooth transition. Based on this study and similar studies conducted about preschoolers transitioning to Kindergarten, having a strong partnership between families, teachers, and director of an early childhood setting is essential. The ability of preschool settings to structure experiences related to effective transitions appears to be key in the way classroom practices are established and explained as essential for effective learning and growth. Another important aspect was the strong connections made with community resources and schools to identify the best placement according to a child's learning style and need. The director made several comments in her interview about how visiting new schools with the child is crucial to the transition to Kindergarten, as children will begin to recognize a new change in their school. Families paying close attention to the interests and hobbies of their children help to choose the best school for Kindergarten. She recommended that families get their children to explore their environment; playing outside, visiting new places and creating life experiences to aid in their formal schooling. This is also beneficial to the families so they see what their children like to engage in, as well as utilizing community resources to shape their children's school experiences.

The director created essential connections and provided teachers with the time to connect and visit schools prior to meetings with families about Kindergarten. There were several ongoing meetings and opportunities for families to begin their search for the best schools for their

children. Teachers would hold conferences with families throughout the school year about schools visited by both the family and the teachers. Teachers visiting schools is similar to LoCasale-Crouch et. al (2008), where Pre-K and Kindergarten teachers visited each other's classrooms to see the children who would be making the transition to Kindergarten from Pre-K programs. However, the teachers in this study shared records of the children entering Kindergarten and the teachers in this study reported they did not share records with the children's prospective new teachers, but if a child needed special services, a representative from the prospective school was sent to spend the morning observing the child. The director and teachers also connected with families during these conferences to emphasize how important a positive preschool experience is essential for a smooth transition, as told in Wildenger & McIntyre (2012). All families in this study were actively involved in their children's education and maintained connections and communication with the teachers and director. The director mentioned in her interview, as well as relaying to families how important it is for children to learn to develop social skills, positive behavior strategies and forming relationships with other children and adults like their teachers. A preschool experience is essential to a smooth and effective transition to Kindergarten for both the family and children because of the family gradually learning the foundation of sending their children to school and engages in learning activities to prepare for higher levels of schooling together with their children. Families also learn to create open-door policies with their children's teachers and teachers can reach out to families to connect them with preparation opportunities within the school and community.

The study can be improved and expanded in a multitude of ways. Limitations include the amount of participants gathered, as there are many other past and current families at the Wagner ECC as well as only examining the topic of transition to Kindergarten from preschool. Relying

on questionnaires solely from families was another limitation of the study, as interviews with families would allow further explanation and expansion on answers. Further research on this topic can include studying the transition from home to starting school for the first time and transition from Kindergarten to upper early childhood and elementary school grades. Including interviews directly from families would also be a valuable aspect, hearing first-hand experiences and reflection on the topic of transition to school and collaboration between families and schools. A framework created and implemented for families to utilize before, during, and after the transition could also be included in further research, modeled after Mangione & Speth (1998). A framework would be a tremendous tool for families to outline the steps for preparing for the transition to Kindergarten, the roles of all individuals involved, information on open houses and school registration events and resources to help their children prepare for a major transition in their schooling. This study can help educators see the value in collaborating with families and their children to form a joint approach to helping prepare for school and bridge the connection between families and teachers, forming relationships in a smooth and professional manner. Finally, a formal workshop for families preparing for the transition to Kindergarten can be implemented, complete with the framework created, outlines of steps of preparation, resources of schools and programs and information packets. A workshop for children can also be held by the teachers talking about the new change of transition to Kindergarten, implementing a DAP toward introducing the milestone change in school. This workshop for children can include reading a story about going to a new school, inviting an older sibling who has been through Kindergarten and talking about their own Kindergarten experiences and even inviting a Kindergarten teacher and doing a craft about the new change. Educators can see how the individuals participating in interviews outline and express their values, views and approaches for working with families and

children before and during the transition to Kindergarten. Families can benefit from this study by looking at how the families participating in completing the questionnaires and reflecting on their methods of preparation for transition to Kindergarten. Strategies valued on preparation for Kindergarten are also key points how families can benefit, as the strategies are comparable, common and useful as a foundation for all levels of children's schooling and transitions between grade levels.

A collaborative approach to children's transitions is essential for an effective transition for families and children. School administrators and teachers constantly collaborating and maintaining a positive relationship with families and their children before, during and after the transition creates positive and meaningful experiences and encourages families to become active participants in the schooling of their children.

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Appendix A

WHO: WAGNER COLLEGE
EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER
FAMILIES

TOPIC: EARLY CHILDHOOD
TRANSITIONS FROM
PRESCHOOL INTO
KINDERGARTEN

PARTICIPATI

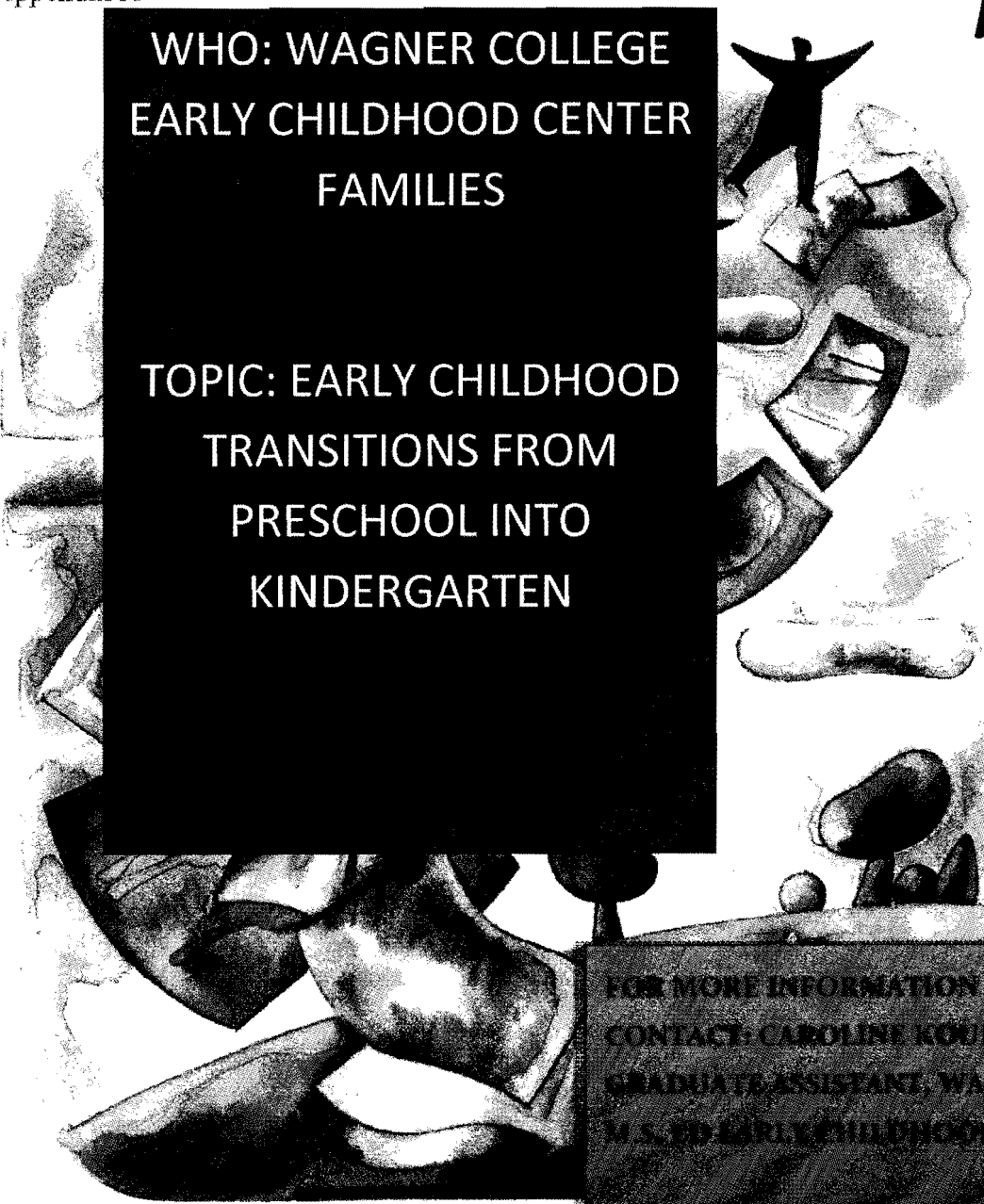
DO YOU LOVE R
YOUR CHILDREN

PARTCIPATE IN A
ABOUT TRANSIT
KINDERGARTEN
ENTERED INTO A
WIN 5 CHILDREN
YOUR AND YOU

*Letter of consent
provided *

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR QUESTIONS
CONTACT: CAROLINE KOURETOS, INVESTIGATOR
GRADUATE ASSISTANT, WAGNER COLLEGE EARLY
M.S., ED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION, SPECIAL

caroline



Appendix B

Dear Wagner College ECC Families,

2/23/14

My name is Caroline Kouretsos ("Miss Caroline") and I am a Graduate Assistant in the Early Childhood Center, Full Day Program. I am completing my Masters of Science in Early Childhood Education/Special Education and currently writing my thesis. My thesis topic focuses on Children's Transitions into Kindergarten, specifically on collaboration with schools, teachers and community. I am interested in how families and teachers collaborate together to ensure a smooth and meaningful transition into Kindergarten and would love to hear your views, thoughts and perspectives, on how you and your family prepared for the transition into Kindergarten or are currently preparing if you still have children enrolled in the Early Childhood Center.

Questions will be provided via survey along with a consent form attached with your rights and additional information about participating in the study. Additionally, all families who participate will be entered in a raffle to win 5 children's books and will be contacted directly if you win! The flyer is attached, along with along with a consent form, survey, and self-addressed envelope directed at my attention. Your answers provided will benefit my thesis topic to a great extent and I thank you in advance, should you decide to participate. Participation is strictly voluntary. If you decide to participate, please fill out the survey and return using the self-addressed envelope provided to you. Should you decide to not participate, please send back the survey, all other papers and forms marked "Not Participating". Thank you and I look forward to hearing from you soon! The deadline for your participation is March 31st, 2014. If you have any questions, please feel free to email me at caroline.kouretsos@wagner.edu .

Regards,

Caroline Kourestos

"Miss Caroline"

Appendix C

Consent Form

Informed Consent Form for Participation in Research: Adults

Dear Parents,

As part of my master's degree requirements at Wagner College, I am conducting research on the transition period in which children from a preschool setting transition into a Kindergarten setting in order to learn about the readiness of children and their families transitioning and adjusting to new programs. You are invited to participate in this research project, and this document will provide you with information that will help you decide whether or not you wish to participate. Your participation is solicited, yet strictly voluntary.

For this study, I will be using an "action research" model, where participants are co-learners with me around an issue of practice. During the course of the project, I will be conducting interviews with Wagner College Early Childhood Center (ECC) teachers, ECC Director and ECC families about views on early childhood education, you and your family's experience at the ECC, your child's ECC experience, and the what you and your family experienced before, during and after the transition to Kindergarten. Additionally, I will be creating a survey to send to families of the ECC about their experiences as they made the transition with their children. Families have the option of also providing additional information at the end of the survey, should they wish to elaborate on any answers or comment on aspects of their child's transition to kindergarten. If you were to participate, a survey would be sent home with your child after school from myself directly. After taking the survey, you would send it back to me in the self-addressed envelope to the ECC at my attention with your child. All information you provide during the project will

remain confidential and will not be associated with your name. My final thesis will also be cleared of any possible identifying information in order to ensure your confidentiality.

The project does not carry any foreseeable risks though it is possible that some participants might feel uncomfortable discussing some of the topics related to sharing views and experience on the topic of transitioning from a preschool setting to Kindergarten. If for any reason you felt uncomfortable, you could withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty, and any information you may have provided would be destroyed.

If you have any questions concerning this study please feel free to contact me at caroline.kouretsos@wagner.edu, (646) 423-1067 or Dr. Karen DeMoss at karen.demoss@wagner.edu (718) 420-4070. Thank you for considering being part of a study related to my research for a master's degree in Education at Wagner College.

Please sign below to indicate your understanding of the project and your consent to participate.

I have provided two copies so that you may keep a duplicate for your records.

Signature of Participant

Date

Caroline Kouretsos, Investigator

Informed Consent Form for Participation in Research: Adults

Dear Early Childhood Center Teacher,

As part of my master's degree requirements at Wagner College, I am conducting research on the transition period in which children from a preschool setting transition into a Kindergarten setting in order to learn about the readiness of children and their families transitioning and adjusting to new programs. You are invited to participate in this research project, and this document will provide you with information that will help you decide whether or not you wish to participate. Your participation is solicited, yet strictly voluntary.

For this study, I will be using an "action research" model, where participants are co-learners with me around an issue of practice. During the course of the project, I will be conducting interviews with teachers and the Director of the Early Childhood Center about views on early childhood education, teaching strategies and practices, child readiness and your role on helping families and children transition from a preschool setting to Kindergarten. Additionally, I will be creating a survey to send to families of the ECC about their experiences as they made the transition with their children. If you were to participate, I would ask you to sit down with me for an interview about the transition period children go through with their families and your specific role as an Early Childhood Center teacher in preparing children and their families for transition to a new program. All information you provide during the project will remain confidential and will not be associated with your name. My final thesis will also be cleared of any possible identifying information in order to ensure your confidentiality.

The project does not carry any foreseeable risks though it is possible that some participants might feel uncomfortable discussing some of the topics related to sharing views and experience on the topic of transitioning from a preschool setting to Kindergarten. If for any reason you felt uncomfortable, you could leave study at any time with no penalty, and any information you may have provided would be destroyed.

If you have any questions concerning this study please feel free to contact me at caroline.kouretsos@wagner.edu, (646) 423-1067 or Dr. Karen DeMoss at karen.demoss@wagner.edu (718) 420-4070. Thank you for considering being part of a study related to my research for a master's degree in Education at Wagner College.

Please sign below to indicate your understanding of the project and your consent to participate.

I have provided two copies so that you may keep a duplicate for your records.

Signature of Participant

Date

Caroline Kouretsos, Investigator

Informed Consent Form for Participation in Research: Adults**Early Childhood Director Pam Dicke**

Dear Mrs. Dicke,

As part of my master's degree requirements at Wagner College, I am conducting research on the transition period in which children from a preschool setting transition into a Kindergarten setting in order to learn about the readiness of children and their families transitioning and adjusting to new programs. You are invited to participate in this research project, and this document will provide you with information that will help you decide whether or not you wish to participate. Your participation is solicited, yet strictly voluntary.

For this study, I will be using an "action research" model, where participants are co-learners with me around an issue of practice. During the course of the project, I will be conducting interviews with you and ECC teachers about views on early childhood education, teaching strategies and practices, child readiness and your roles on helping families and children transition from a preschool setting to Kindergarten. Additionally, I will be creating a survey to send to current and past families of the ECC about their experiences as they made the transition with their children.

If you were to participate, I would ask you to sit down with me for an interview about the transition period children go through with their families and your specific role as the Early Childhood Center Director in preparing families for their transition. All information you provide during the project will remain confidential and will not be associated with your name. My final thesis will also be cleared of any possible identifying information in order to ensure your confidentiality.

The project does not carry any foreseeable risks though it is possible that some participants might feel uncomfortable discussing some of the topics related to sharing views and experience on the topic of transitioning from a preschool setting to Kindergarten. If for any reason you felt uncomfortable, you could leave study at any time with no penalty, and any information you may have provided would be destroyed.

If you have any questions concerning this study please feel free to contact me at caroline.kouretsos@wagner.edu, (646) 423-1067 or Dr. Karen DeMoss at karen.demoss@wagner.edu (718) 420-4070. Thank you for considering being part of a study related to my research for a master's degree in Education at Wagner College.

Please sign below to indicate your understanding of the project and your consent to participate.

I have provided two copies so that you may keep a duplicate for your records.

Signature of Participant

Date

Caroline Kouretsos, Investigator

Appendix D

Questionnaire

Wagner College Early Childhood Center Family Survey Questions

1) Are you the primary caregiver to your child/children?

YES NO

2) Does your child/children attend an NYC DOE public school?

YES NO

3) How many children do you have?

1 CHILD 2 CHILDREN 3 OR MORE CHILDREN

4) How many of your children are/were enrolled at the Wagner College Early Childhood Center (ECC)?

1 CHILD 2 CHILDREN 3 OR MORE CHILDREN

5) Are any of your other children still enrolled at the ECC? If yes, please indicate how many

YES NO

HOW MANY CHILDREN _____

6) How long was/were your child/children enrolled at the ECC prior to entering Kindergarten?

1 YEAR 2 YEARS 3 OR MORE YEARS

7) On a scale of 1-5, (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest) what was your perception of the effectiveness of the administration according to Kindergarten readiness at the ECC?

1 2 3 4 5

8) On a scale of 1-5, (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest) what was the effectiveness of the learning activities your child participated in at the ECC

1 2 3 4 5

9) How would you describe your experience at the ECC as a parent? As a family experience? Please explain in the space below

10) How would you rate on a scale of 1-5 (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest) the amount of preparation in relation to academics your child received prior to entering Kindergarten

1 2 3 4 5

11) Please share three strategies that you considered important and useful when preparing your child for Kindergarten

12) What resources did you and your family seek when experiencing the transition into Kindergarten? (Circle all that apply)

MEETING WITH CHILD'S ECC TEACHER

MEETING WITH ECC DIRECTOR

VISITING PROSPECTIVE SCHOOLS WITH FAMILY

CONSULTING OTHER FAMILIES EXPERIENCING OR HAVE EXPERIENCED THE SAME EVENT

OTHER (Please specify)

13) Of the previous resources, which resources did you find the most helpful?

MEETING WITH ECC CHILD'S TEACHER

MEETING WITH ECC DIRECTOR

VISITING PROSPECTIVE SCHOOLS WITH FAMILY

CONSULTING OTHER FAMILIES EXPERIENCING OR HAVE EXPERIENCED THE SAME EVENT

OTHER- please specify

14) Would you like to elaborate further on any answers or provide any additional information? Please provide below.

Appendix E

Interview Questions- ECC Director

- 1) What are the demographics at the Early Childhood Center (ECC)?
- 2) Can you describe your experience working with young children and their families at the Director level versus a teacher level?
- 3) As a Director, what factors do you look for in readiness for Kindergarten as the children move up into the oldest class in the ECC?
- 4) When children reach the stage of transitioning to Kindergarten, what steps do you take to prepare them and their families for the big transition to Kindergarten?
- 5) Do you implement any type of timeframe or anything similar to families when they begin to prepare for the transition to Kindergarten?
- 6) What resources do you offer to families when they are searching for new schools and Kindergarten programs for their children?
- 7) When you were a teacher, how did you prepare your students and their families for a significant transition in their schooling?
- 8) How did you prepare your own children, as a parent, when transitioning from preschool to Kindergarten?
- 9) What aspect of the early childhood years do you find fascinating as a child grows and develops in school?
- 10) How often do you hear from families (ECC "Alumni") who have left the ECC and enrolled their children in Kindergarten?

Appendix F

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS***Wagner College Early Childhood Center Teachers***

- 1) What impacted you to teach preschool?
- 2) What do you find most fascinating about the preschool years?
- 3) As a preschool teacher, what do you value most?
- 4) What other grades, if any, have you taught prior to teaching preschool?
- 5) What is your teaching philosophy/ teaching style and how does it impact your teaching?
- 6) How do you select the material and curriculum for the school year, taking into consideration developmentally appropriate practices and types of children coming into your class, including those with any special needs?
- 7) How do you view the role of play in early childhood education and why is it such an important component?
- 8) How do you prepare your students and their families for the transition period from preschool to Kindergarten? What is the sequence you recommend for the families in order to have a smooth transition?
- 9) How do you assess Kindergarten readiness in your students as they progress in school?
- 10) What have you found while teaching that can be improved to help children and their families prepare for the transition to Kindergarten?

Wagner College
Graduate Thesis Copyright Release Form

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Department: Department of Education

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