

2021

Perspectives of Transitioning Students with Disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten

Josette Joanne Farmer
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Josette Joanne Farmer

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2021

Abstract

Perspectives of Transitioning Students with Disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten

by

Josette Joanne Farmer

MA, Strayer University, 2012

BS, Cambridge College, 2005

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

Walden University

February 2021

Abstract

Students with disabilities (SWDs) and their parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers face problem in a southern state about the transition process from Pre-K to Kindergarten. During transition SWDs and the stakeholders experience challenges with the Individual Educational Program, the physical environment of the new classroom, and new relationships resulting in delays or gaps in required services. The purpose of this bounded qualitative case study was to explore the perspectives of parents, teachers, and service providers on transitioning SWDs from Pre-K to Kindergarten and factors that influence the transition process. This study was guided by Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of *process person context time*, and Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta's transition model. A purposeful sample of 12 participants: four parents, four teachers, and four service providers, who worked with SWDs for at least one year or within a 10-month calendar school year, participated in semistructured interviews. Data were analyzed through coding and theme development. Participants shared the need for (a) maintaining relationships and classroom involvement, (b) training and/or support services, and (c) preparation and consistency with transition practices and identified communication and collaboration barriers among participants. Based on the findings, it is recommended that teachers and service providers follow the same teaching methods and curriculum, outline and use steps for transition, and incorporate communication and collaboration through training for all stakeholders to ensure the continuation of support services. These endeavors may lead to positive social change when stakeholders are involved in collaborative efforts to overcome transition delays for SWDs; thus, reducing delays or gaps in required services for SWDs.

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Dedication

Thank you, Heavenly Father, for being my source of strength and for letting me realize my path in life. This study is dedicated to my son Owen II for letting me realize that much work is needed to be done in early childhood to support students with disabilities. To the dedicated stakeholders of parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers in helping students with disabilities transition from service to service for your dedication and sacrifice.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	iv
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Background	3
Problem Statement	7
Purpose of the Study	11
Research Question(s)	12
Conceptual Framework.....	12
Nature of the Study	15
Definitions.....	20
Assumptions.....	22
Scope and Delimitations	23
Limitations	25
Significance.....	26
Summary	28
Chapter 2: Literature Review	30
Literature Search Strategy.....	33
Conceptual Framework/Theoretical Foundation	34
Bioecological and Ecological and Dynamic Theories	37
Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variable	44
Perspectives of Transition.....	48
Local Early Childhood Transition Policy	54

Transition Perspective to Kindergarten	60
Transition Planning Perspective	68
Summary and Conclusions	72
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	75
Research Design and Rationale	76
Role of the Researcher	80
Methodology	82
Participant Selection	82
Instrumentation	87
Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection	89
Data Analysis Plan	94
Trustworthiness.....	99
Ethical Procedures	105
Summary	107
Chapter 4: Results	110
Setting	111
Participants' Demographics	112
Data Collection	115
Data Analysis	117
Results.....	123
Findings Addressing RQ 1	126
Findings Addressing RQ 2.....	132

Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	138
Summary	143
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations.....	146
Interpretation of the Findings.....	148
Theme 1: Relationships and Classroom Environment Involvement.....	149
Theme 2: Communication and Collaboration Barriers	152
Theme 3: Opportunities for Training and Support Services	154
Theme 4: Preparation and Consistency with Transition Practices.....	157
Limitations of the Study.....	161
Recommendations.....	162
Implications.....	164
Conclusion	166
References.....	169
Appendix A: Child Find Evaluation	199
Appendix B: Teacher Interview Protocol	205
Appendix C: Service Providers Interview Protocol.....	207
Appendix D: Parents Interview Protocol	209
Appendix E: A priori, Open Codes, Participants, Excerpts for RQ 1.....	211
Appendix: F Open Codes, Categories, Participants, Excerpts for RQ 1.....	215
Appendix G: A Priori, Open Codes, Participants, Excerpts for RQ 2	225
Appendix H: Open Codes, Categories, Participants, and Excerpts for RQ 2	229

List of Tables

Table 1 Demographic Information for Parent Participants113

Table 2 Demographic Information for Teacher Participants114

Table 3 Demographic Information for Service Provider Participants114

Table 4 Participant Interview Response Summary to Research Question 1 and 2124

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The transition process from Pre-K to Kindergarten presents a range of challenges for students with disabilities, their parents, teachers, and service providers. Students may have a behavioral disability, intellectual disability, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, emotional disturbance, health impairment, autism, or speech (State Department of Education, States Performance Plan, 2019). These challenges of transition can determine a child's future academic development as they move from service to service (McIntyre & Wildenger-Welchong, 2015; Margetts & Kienig, 2013; Rodriguez et al., 2017; Strnadova & Cumming, 2016). During this time of transition, students and their families face great challenges with the Individual Educational Program (IEP), the physical environment of the new classroom (Gottfried et al., 2019), and new relationships (Dockett & Perry, 2013). This significant milestone can also be challenging for service providers (McIntyre & Garbacz, 2016) and teachers (Lietavcova & ViteKova, 2018) when attempting to meet the developmental needs of students with disabilities (Marsh et al., 2017; O'Toole, 2016; O'Toole et al., 2014). The purpose of this bounded qualitative case study was to explore the perspectives of parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers on transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten and the factors they perceived may have influenced the transition process. Positive social change can come about by exploring multiple perspectives of parents, teachers, and service providers to better address challenges, assist with planning, and support all

stakeholders when facilitating transition for students with disabilities when implementing changes.

To understand the importance of these multiple perspectives, an overview of a southern state's Child Find and Early Childhood Transition Summary Timeline, and Pre-K program was discussed in this study. In a recent review of the applicable Child Find and Early Childhood Transitions Timeline Summary (2015, 2017, 2019), several contributing factors that influenced the transition process were reported that could delay transition when moving students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten. When students with disabilities require supervision and care under federal laws, implications for transition require careful consideration to avoid later developmental challenges (McIntyre & Wildenger-Welchons, 2015). For students with disabilities to transition properly, teachers and service providers need to become aware of and prepared for the process (Allen & Cowdery, 2015; Marsh et al., 2017; Peters, 2016). A more detailed discussion of this Child Find Summary is presented in Chapter 2.

In Chapter 1 of this study, the background section, I provided a summary of the scope of the topic. The problem statement was discussed with evidence of consequences connected to the problem based on a gap in practice in the literature, and to support the need for this study. The purpose statement included the intent of the study to explore multiple perspectives of transitioning students with disabilities and the purpose of the research questions. The conceptual framework, as guided by Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (1995), Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) *person process context*

time, the ecological and dynamic model of transition by Rim-Kaufman and Pianta (2000), and how it relates to the study was presented. The nature of the study and its rationale, and the definitions, assumptions, scope, delimitation, and limitations, defined key concepts, clarify aspects of the study, and describe these specific aspects of the study. Finally, the significance of the study identified potential contributions of the study for the field of practice and elaborate on the potential for social change.

Background

Federal laws, such as Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA, 2004), entitle students with disabilities to a free and appropriate education (FAPE). Under IDEA students with disabilities receive services at no cost, receive appropriate Individualized Education Programs (IEP) to meet their needs, and are provided with a written education services plan before and during transition (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). IDEA also includes mandated parental involvement during the process of transition (Office of Special Education States Performance Plan, 2016, 2017, 2019; Landmark & Zhang, 2012). With recommendations from IDEA, community-based service providers and therapists may go into classrooms and deliver services to students in Pre-K as part of their instruction. At that time, teachers can receive consultative services from the service providers.

Although Pre-K classes may include students with disabilities, these may not be considered state-approved inclusion classrooms (Department of Early Care and Learning, 2019). According to Allen and Cowdery (2015), when students with disabilities are

placed in a Pre-K class that is not state-approved, these students are at risk for not receiving consultative services if a referral process was not completed. In the local state for this study, these services include an approved IEP from the multidisciplinary team which includes the service provider and teacher, and consent from the parent for continued service. Per IDEA (2004), students with disabilities must have placement consideration once the disability is diagnosed to ensure a continuum of alternative placement to support the need of students with disabilities (Heiskanen et al., 2019). The effects of a nonapproved Pre-K class with students who have an active IEP can increase challenges for collaboration among Pre-K teachers and service providers when providing transition services (Allen & Cowdery, 2015; Heiskanen et al., 2019; Kohler et al., 2016; Peters, 2016; Zirkel & Hetrick, 2017). These nonapproved Pre-K classes can include public and private Pre-K, center, and family-based childcare Pre-K programs, and Head Start. Resources provided for teachers and families of students with disabilities in the Pre-K classes include a list of websites and links to programs and services listed on Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL, 2019).

All Pre-K classes throughout this location are required to implement the state's Early Learning Developmental Standards (GELDS, 2019). These standards include learning domains that consist of instruction in social and emotional development, mathematical thinking, scientific thinking, social studies, arts, and physical development (DECAL, 2019). Although standards are in place for learning, currently Pre-K teachers in general education classes are not required to record data for these learning domains if a

student is listed as student with disability (SWD) and who has an IEP in their classroom (DECAL, 2019).

Upon placement of a student with disabilities in a Pre-K class, parents of students with disabilities must complete a waiver to have the students participate in the Pre-K universal state-funded programs. Students listed as having a disability should then be placed in a collaborative class, which consists of service providers, a multidisciplinary team, or Section 504 committee (Department of Education, 2019; IDEA, 2004). A collaborative classroom multidisciplinary team includes the teachers, school counselor, and the early intervention service providers. These stakeholders of the multidisciplinary team all working together to support the students' development (Department of Education, 2019).

If students are placed in this collaborative team and inclusion classroom approved by the state, students with disabilities in each class cannot exceed eight students per classroom (DECAL, 2019). Students with disabilities can then receive a full-time general education teacher and assistants that are funded by the state's DECAL board of education. This process also includes at least four hours of direct service from a special education teacher each day (DECAL, 2019). Parents of children with disabilities enrolled in Pre-K under this state-approved inclusion classroom must comply with DECAL guidelines.

Since 1992 lottery-funded Pre-K has been recognized nationally for providing universal programs that provide services to all four-year-olds regardless of disabilities

and income (DECAL, 2013). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2016), the number of students with disabilities in Pre-K served under IDEA grew from 390,000 in 1990 to 1991, to approximately 730,000 in 2014-2014. During 2013, in this southern state 84,000 students were funded through lottery-funded Pre-K, as well as 867 providers, 2,035 private classrooms, 1,742 public school classrooms, and 42 other classrooms (Voices, 2014). In a study on the state Pre-K programs 2013-2014 evaluation, the Pre-K population grew to 87,000 in varied settings across the state (Peinser-Feinberg et al., 2015). Since 2013, students with disabilities enrolled in lottery-funded Pre-K were 35.5% of the total population (Peisner-Feinber et al., 2013). With this number of students with disabilities, the first year of transition from Pre-K to Kindergarten is important as it can determine a child's success for future development (Margetts & Kienig, 2013; Strnadova & Cumming, 2016). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2017), since 1980's the occurrence of disabilities among students has doubled representing 13% of public-school enrollment.

Although studies have focused on parents and teachers (Gonzalez-Romero et al., 2018; Petrakos & Lehere, 2011; Walker et al., 2012), and students with disabilities (Fortner, & Jenkins, 2018; Gottfried et al., 2019; Rodriguez et al., 2017), and without disabilities (Bakkaloglu, 2013; Mazzotti et al., 2016), no attention has been focused on understanding the multiple perspectives of parents, teachers, and service providers when transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten (Cook & Coley, 2020; McIntyre & Wildenger-Welchons, 2015). This potential gap in practice in the literature

requires finding effective ways to support the transition process for students with disabilities and is something that requires immediate attention and collaboration (Dockett & Perry, 2013; Koher et al., 2016; Marchbank, 2019; Plotner et al., 2017). To understand the transition process among multiple stakeholders, it is imperative to explore their perspectives of transition (Cook & Coley, 2020; McIntyre & Wildenger-Welchons, 2015). A more detailed discussion of the literature on transition and the guidelines of IDEA was presented in Chapter 2.

Problem Statement

There is a problem in the metropolitan area of a southern state concerning the perspectives of the transition process when transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K services to Kindergarten services. Understanding the phenomenon of transition for students with disabilities has been a concern since 1980s. There is growing evidence that suggest the transition has a profound effect on students' knowledge and academic experience (Atchinson & Pomelia, 2018; Rosenberg et al., 2013; Warren et al., 2016). However, little is known about the experience of transition from multiple perspectives when transitioning students from service to service (Cook & Coley, 2020; McIntyre & Wildenger-Welchons, 2015). There is a problem with a gap in practice in the literature concerning the lack of multiple perspectives of the transition process when transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K services to Kindergarten services (Cook & Coley, 2020; McIntyre & Wildenger-Welchons, 2015). Specifically, local and state professionals continue to experience challenges when moving students with disabilities

from Pre-K to Kindergarten to meet inclusion curriculum and continuation of services. Any delay in transition affects students' education plans and creates stress for parents if students do not receive proper placement and instructions typically resulting in delay of transition services (Bakkaloglu, 2013; Fortner & Jenkins, 2017; Miller, 2014; Podvey et al., 2013; Romero-Gonzalez et al., 2018; State Department of Education, 2019). This problem can also be challenging for service providers and teachers when attempting to meet the developmental and social needs of students with disabilities (Broekhuizen et al., 2016; Marsh et al., 2017; O'Toole, 2016; O'Toole et al., 2014; Plotner et al., 2017).

A review of the state's Department of Education Child Find and Early Childhood Transition Summary, Indicator 11 on the States Performance Plan Report (2015; 2016; 2017; 2019), highlighted challenges of transition that may affect students with disabilities (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services States Performance Plan, 2015; 2016; 2017; 2019). Among the list of factors in this report that influence the transition process were: incomplete evaluations among service providers and administrators; missed timelines for transition within a 60 day period for Local Education Agency program; parents' refusal for initial placement; and missing or incomplete data for students' initial screening during the time of evaluation and transition (Fiscal Year 2014, 2015, 2017 Student Record, Department of Education, Division of Special Education Services and Support, Woods, 2019; Office of Special Education States Performance Plan, 2015, 2016; 2017; 2019). In this report and per the state's Department of Education website (2019), students' disabilities include: behavioral disability, intellectual disability,

attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, emotional disturbance, health impairment, autism, and speech. A letter to the state's superintendent from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (2015; 2016; 2017; 2019) indicated that the state received a "needs assistance" rating (Indicator 11/ Part B/619) and did not meet the requirements in implementing services for students with disabilities under Part B of IDEA. However, in another letter to the state's Department of Public Health, which provides services to students with disabilities through Local Education Agencies, the state received a "meets requirements" rating of Part C of IDEA. These determinations were based on the state's data from fiscal year 2014, 2015, and 2017 States Performance Plan /Annual Performance Report (SPP/ARP). The current 2016, 2017 and 2019 data are based on the state's reflected Results Driven Data Accountability Matrix (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2015; 2016; 2017; 2019). Further examination of Part C and Part B was presented in the literature review.

Per this southern state's Department of Education, under the list of descriptions for the definitions that may delay transition, teacher and service provider incomplete evaluations are among all categories of causes that delay transition (Department of Education, Early Childhood Transition Timeline Summary, 2015; 2017; 2019). The term descriptions are used to provide explanation of the factors that influence the transition process and can be found in the Appendix A under Child Find Transition Summary Evaluation. Descriptions of teacher and service provider challenges included paperwork by the professionals assigned as incomplete, missing child data upon evaluation, and

parents' refusal to sign due to reasons unknown, all pointing to a possible gap in practice in the literature concerning the lack of multiple perspectives of the transition process when transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K services to Kindergarten services and the factors they perceive may influence the transition process. This information is also available to teachers, parents, and service providers on the local states' website.

Despite the implementation of early intervention policies, there is still a need for seamless transition services (Durkak & Li-Grining, 2014; Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Service, 2015; 2016; 2017; 2019), and a need to understand multiple perspectives of transition (Cook & Coley, 2020; McIntyre & Wildenger-Welchons, 2015). The National Early Childhood Technical Center (2012) reported that challenges of transition have caused many children with behavioral and developmental disabilities to be delayed in progress beyond Kindergarten. Based on studies of the facilitation of transition, factors that influenced transition depended on the quality of relationships and collaboration among professionals (Besi & Sakellariou, 2020; Phang, 2010; Plotner et al., 2017). Despite the abundance of studies stressing the importance of transition and collaboration among stakeholders (Besi & Sakellariou, 2020; Rothe et al., 2014) to support students with disabilities, there was no study that examined the factors of transition from multiple perspectives of parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers (Cook & Coley, 2020; McIntyre & Windenger-Welchons, 2015).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this bounded qualitative case study was to explore the perspectives of parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers on transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten and the factors they perceived may have influenced the transition process. While the role of teachers and service providers is to provide transition services, it is important to understand their challenges and experiences when supporting students and parents (McIntyre & Garbacz, 2016; Wildenger & McIntyre, 2012). During transition parents also need support when making decisions due to challenges of child adjustment to a new environment (Gonzalez-Romero et al., 2018; Miller, 2014; Stormshak et al., 2020). Although researchers have provided perspectives of parents and teachers (Garbacz et al., 2016; Petrakos & Lehrer, 2011; Walker et al., 2012) and students with disabilities (Fortner & Jenkins, 2018; Gottfried et al., 2019; Rodriguez et al., 2017), and without disabilities (Bakkaloglu, 2013; Hebbeler & Spiker, 2016; Mazzotti et al., 2016), an ongoing effort is needed to understand the perspectives of multiple stakeholders during the process of transition (Crook & Coley, 2020; McIntyre & Wildenger-Welchons, 2015). Understanding the factors that influence the transition process may provide information to support parents, teachers, and service providers when transferring students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten and possibly increase understanding of those involved to improve the process.

Research Question(s)

To explore parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers' perspectives of transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten and the factors they perceived may have influenced the transition process the following guiding questions were addressed:

RQ1. What are Pre-K parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers' perspectives of the transition process when transferring students with disabilities from Pre-K services to Kindergarten services?

RQ2. What are Pre-K parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers' perspectives of the factors that influence transition of Pre-K students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten?

Conceptual Framework

While transition is identified as critical for student success, it is important to understand the different levels of development and the influence of the different systems during transition (O'Toole, 2016; O'Toole et al., 2014). By looking at the perspectives and experiences of parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers at the different stages of the process, Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (1995) of *person process context time* and Rimm-Kaufmann and Pianta (2000) dynamic and ecological model provided a framework for understanding educational transition. These models conceptualize the transition from Pre-K to Kindergarten. As noted by Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000), the ecological and dynamic model of transition identifies the transition

process. This process of transition entails connections to relationships among the stakeholders and the children, the family relationships, the school environment, and context to develop changes in transition. The ecological and dynamic framework of Rim-Kaufman and Pianta (2000) builds on a range of similar ecologically oriented systems theories including the Bioecological framework of *process person context time* (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) which is the primary conceptual framework for this study.

The Bioecological framework also provided a lens for interpreting the background of transitions, relationships formed, beliefs, and exchanges among different levels of systems before and after the transition begins. These levels of systems in transition include the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem of child development of Bronfenbrenner's theory (1995; 2006) of *process person context time*. O'Toole (2016) and O'Toole et al. (2014) conducted a study using Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory with a perspective on educational transition. Per O'Toole (2016) and O'Toole et al. (2014), Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (1995; 2006) provided consideration for understanding the immediate environment (microsystem) of students with disabilities. Microsystems influence a greater environment of social influences (macro-system) during transition. These microsystems include the local school districts in metropolitan area of the southern state, home environment of the disabled child, and the interpersonal relationships among the parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers for the disabled child. Microsystems affect students with disabilities in several

ways that influence the development of the child while preparing for transition to school-based services in Kindergarten (Daily et al., 2012; O'Toole, 2016). Per Miller (2014) and O'Toole (2016), these relationships are transactional and reciprocal among all stakeholders and contribute to the social development of the disabled child.

The microsystems and macrosystems interact among different levels of mesosystems and exosystems (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). These systems are affected over time as students with disabilities experience social, historical, and personal (chrono-systems) changes. During the process of transition, students with disabilities experience several changes among these systems (O'Toole, 2016; O'Toole et al., 2014). This process occurs when students with disabilities experience a new environment while moving from Pre-K to Kindergarten. A more detailed analysis of the frameworks was presented in Chapter 2.

These elements of the framework relate to the study approach and key research questions as well as the instruments developed and data analysis. Constructs for this framework proposed a priori codes of *person process context time* and analysis of the literature through the lens of *process person context time* shows the influential nature of these elements on experiences and outcomes of education transition. For example, transition depended on the quality of experiences among stakeholders can be determined by “person” factors such as age, social skills, independence, communication skills. Researchers have also identified Bronfenbrenner’s term “process” as the main role of relationships in positive educational transitions among students with disabilities and their

peers, among teachers, between parents and teachers, and teachers at different education levels (O'Toole, 2016; O'Toole et al., 2014). Transition depended on the “context” based factors, such as school climate related to discipline procedures and function are important elements to transition. Last constructs for the framework, transition depended on “time,” represented in the current work through identifying and recognizing educational transition as an important time in the lives of students with disabilities and their families, and analysis of the similarities and differences between transition that occur during early or later stages of the individual student’s life (O'Toole, 2016; O'Toole et al., 2014). A more thorough explanation of the Bioecological framework of *process person context time* (1995; 2006) on transition was presented in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

The purpose of this bounded qualitative case study was to explore the perspectives of parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers on transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten and the factors they perceived may have influenced the transition process. This study was narrative in nature, and I collected data on perspectives of participants (Creswell, 2012; 2018; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; 2019; Yin, 2014; 2016), and factors they perceived may influence the transition process. I purposely selected 12 participants: four parents, four teachers, four early intervention service providers of a five-year-old child/children with disabilities for this study. These participants were of interest because they experienced the event in a way that uncovered meaning of the phenomenon (Van Manen, 1990; 2016; Whitehead & Whitehead, 2016).

Due to conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic (China, 2020) I received permission from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to replace face-to-face contact with email, phone, video conference, or online format. Therefore, the interview settings varied and were digitally recorded and transcribed. Data were analyzed thematically using a priori, open, and axial coding strategies to identify themes from in-depth interviews using questions from a modified Teachers Perspective on Transition Questionnaire (TPOT), and questions from a modified Family Experience in Transition Questionnaire (FEIT).

Participants were selected based on the local state's Child Find (2016; 2017; 2019), Office of Special Education Program (OSEP) State Performance Plan (SPP, 2016; 2017; 2019), which also make up the teacher and service providers of the multidisciplinary team with parents of the individual student with a disability. Per OSEP service providers include Administrators, Speech/Language Therapist, Occupational Therapist, School Counselors, Psychologist, and School Nurse. Criteria for the participation of teachers include those working with a student with a disability or children with disabilities within a state-approved classroom with at least eight students. Teachers and service providers must have worked with students with disabilities for at least one year or within a 10-month calendar school year. Parent participants must have a child or children who receive services or who has an assessment for an IEP in Pre-K, and a signed parental consent form.

Due to conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic (China, 2020) the interview settings varied from a mutually agreed upon location, email, video conference using Facetime, and phone interviews which were digitally recorded and transcribed. Interview questions for teachers and service providers were modified from a Teachers Perspective on Transition questionnaire, (Quintero & McIntyre, 2011), and interview questions for parents were modified from a Family Experience in Transition questionnaire (Quintero & McIntyre, 2011). The original authors, Quintero and McIntyre (2011), of these pre-established instruments granted permission to use the instruments and to make changes if necessary. During the interview, teachers, service providers and parents were asked specific questions related to the transition process.

According to Bogdan and Biklen (2003; 2016) and Williams and Moser (2019), qualitative data analysis has been described as organizing data into manageable chunks, searching for patterns, discovering what you would learn, things to learn, and transferring knowledge to others. To analyze the data of the transcripts, I employed thematic analysis using a priori, open, and axial coding strategies (Nowell et al., 2017; Saldana, 2016; Williams & Moser, 2019), to identify themes from the in-dept interviews with parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers. Prior to interviews, constructs from the framework were developed as the a priori codes as described by Miles and Hubberman (1994), Miles et al. (2014), and Saldana (2016), and consist of *process* *person context* and *time*. Once the interviews were completed, each line of the transcripts

were read, notes made in the margins of the transcribed document regarding chunks of data that seem relevant to the research questions and a priori codes of PPCT.

The process of finding information with no restrictions other than discovering meaningful information from the data is referred to as open coding (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Nowell et al., 2017; Saldana, 2016; Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Open coding allowed me to read the data and create labels based on the data that summarized words of participants and established properties of coding; these will then be categorized to describe emerging themes (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Saldana, 2016; Williams & Moser, 2019). Next, axial coding was used to identify the relationships among the open coded data and broader themes descriptors to identify and determine how these categories connect (Nowell et al., 2017; Saldana, 2016; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; 2008; Williams & Moser, 2019). Categories and themes related to the perspectives and factors that influence transition that emerge were recorded from the data within this study. Connections from the themes were discussed as to how the themes aligned to the framework of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (1995; 2006) of *process person context time* and answer the research question in Chapter 4.

To validate the data, I checked for credibility and accuracy through triangulation of the interviews among the three data sources of parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers' perspectives. Triangulation is defined as using several types of data collection and sources to increase the results of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Renz et al., 2018; Saldana, 2016). Triangulation of the data served to discover the recurring

themes from the data as well as corroborated the data collected from the participants (Miles & Hubberman, 1994; Saldana, 2016). Member checking also added validity to my interpretation as the researcher of the data (Lodico et al., 2010; Nowell et al., 2017). Member checking is a common strategy used when ensuring credibility of the findings. This process occurred once the data were analyzed; a summary of the findings were sent to participants to check the findings for accuracy of their data. The perspectives of these parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers provided an understanding of their experiences related to the transition process.

Reflexivity also assured the findings were derived from the personal experiences and perspectives of each participant and not from my own perspectives. A reflexive journal was used to ensure quality of the findings (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016; Denzin, 1970, 1978; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I used a peer reviewer to avoid biases or misinterpretation of the data. I asked the peer reviewer, who is a Walden University alumni doctoral graduate in the field of education, published author, licensed social worker, former educator, and dean of schools in the field of education, to review the transcribed data to avoid biases or misinterpretation of the data and assess if data is adequate. Peer review is the process of allowing a peer to review the data analysis process to make suggestions and assess if the data is accurate (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A more detailed discussion on the participants and analysis was discussed in Chapter 3.

Definitions

The following definitions was used throughout this study:

Early intervention services: Services for students identified as at risk of not reaching or maintaining academic grade level. Early intervention service providers provide services within private and public educational Pre-K program (State Department of Education, 2019).

Department of Education Division of Special Education Child Find and Early Childhood Transition Timeline Summary: A monitoring system and description of data gathered for effective general supervision. This program is monitored under the Office of Special Education Programs State Performance Plan (SPP) with data reporting the requirement of IDEA occurring from July 1 to June 30 each year (States Department of Education, 2019).

Disability (Student with disabilities under the state's Department of Education): Disabilities include: behavioral disability, intellectual disability, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, emotional disturbance, health impairment, autism and speech (Department of Education, 2019).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): A federal law that makes available a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensure special education and related services to those children (Education.gov, 2018).

Individualized Education Program (IEP): A legal document that serves as a framework to determine free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment (States Department of Education, 2019).

Lottery-funded Pre-K: Universal Pre-K programs in a state that services all four-year-olds regardless of income (Han et al., 2019; Peisner-Fienberg et al., 2013).

Multidisciplinary team: The multidisciplinary team is based on the local state's Child Find (2017), Office of Special Education Program (OSEP) State Performance Plan (SPP, 2016; 2017; 2019), which also make up the teacher and service providers with parents of the individual student with disability. Per OSEP service providers include Administrators, Speech/Language Therapist, Occupational Therapist, School Counselors, Psychologist and School Nurse.

School-based services: Public or private school education (National Center for Education Statistics, 1997; State Department of Education, 2019).

Transition: A critical movement from one stage to the other for students that requires the attention of practitioners (Dockett & Perry, 2013; Office of Special Education Program (OSEP) State Performance Plan (SPP, 2016; 2017; 2019).

Transition from early intervention: A movement from Pre-K to Kindergarten special education to public school-based service for school-aged children requiring transition without interruption and proper procedure under 20 U.S.C. 1414 (IDEA, 2004; Office of Special Education Program (OSEP) State Performance Plan (SPP, 2016; 2017; 2019).

Assumptions

Several assumptions were made in this study. I assumed that participants would need to review the interview questions before the interview. During the interviews I assumed that the parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers would effectively express their true perspectives and experiences. This assumption was necessary because without the integrity of their responses, the findings cannot be considered as trustworthy. To ensure that the findings, based on honest responses, were valid and reliable, triangulation (Merten & Wilson, 2012; Renz et al., 2018) and member checking (Lodico et al., 2010; Nowell et al., 2017) were conducted. Triangulation is the process of corroborating the interview data among the participant groups (Mertens & Wilson, 2012; Renz et al., 2017), and member checking is returning a summary of the data findings to the participants to check for accuracy of their data (Lodico et al., 2010; Nowell, Norris, & White, 2017).

The following assumptions were made about the transition process. I assumed the inclusion criteria of the sample were appropriate. I assumed that all participants experienced the transition process when moving children with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten. The participants were current parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers of a child/children with disabilities. I assumed that these parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers represented the population from the metropolitan school district from which they were drawn consisting of two school district that provide lottery funded Pre-K at local schools and daycare facilities within these

districts. I assumed that participants had a sincere interest in participating in the study and other motives for participating other than a sincere desire to improve transition.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of the study were the perspectives of parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers on transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K services to Kindergarten services in a metropolitan area of a southern state. Due to conditions of COVID-19 pandemic (China, 2020) I received permission from Walden University IRB to replace face-to-face contact with email, phone, video conference, or online format. Therefore, participants were interviewed in varied settings with a digital audio recorder which served as means to provide a record of participants responses during the interview. Since parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers were the primary contacts with students with disabilities, their experiences and perspectives helped inform further researchers on the challenges of transition and the scope of their views. According to Yin (2014; 2016) different perspectives increase the chances for case studies to be exemplary. This study was delimited to three groups of four parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers with a total of 12 participants. Participants for this study came from two school districts.

While previous researchers have focused on the perspectives of teachers and parents (Garbacz et al., 2016; Petrakos & Lehrer, 2011; Stormshak et al., 2020; Stormshak et al., 2019; Walker et al., 2012), no research has been found that focused on the multiple perspectives of parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers

(Cook & Coley, 2020; McIntyre & Wildenger-Welchons, 2015). To protect these participants, I avoided using any descriptions of persons within the study that might identify a particular school, parent, service provider, teacher, or early intervention program. Formal approval for this study came from Walden's institutional review board (IRB). Other factors related to IDEA was not discussed in this study, except for the process of transition and the evaluation process of transition planning services to ensure proper placement and avoid delay for future development. The conceptual framework used to provide insight to educational transition was based on Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (1995; 2006) of *process person context time*.

Per Van Manen (1990; 2016), a rich description of the participants' experiences and participant selection promoted transferability of the study. Insights from this study might inform teachers new to transition service of best practices and strategies when moving students and potentially improve the transition process. The results of this study could be useful by contributing to the development of successful transition practices in other schools. The finding from this study may also inform future researchers and practitioners on the lived experiences and perspectives of parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers in setting where there are large numbers of disabled children or those incurring issues on transition.

This study was limited to professionals and parents in two school districts in the metropolitan area of the southern state and only described their perspectives of transition and factors they perceived may influence the transition process. Parents who did not

have signed consent forms were excluded from the findings. Parent participants in this study had parental guardianship of a child with a disability or children with disabilities. Professionals are teachers and service providers worked with students diagnosed with a developmental disability or delay within a 10-month calendar school year. These delays are listed under the state's Department of Education website (Department of Education Early Childhood Transition Summary Timeline, 2015-2019; National Disability Policy Progress Report, 2014). Participants have experienced the transition process by moving students from early intervention to school-based services. As the focus of this study is on perspectives of transition of students with disabilities, it may not be transferable to all student populations elsewhere. It is up to the reader to determine transferability to his/her situation.

Limitations

According to Creswell (2012; 2018), limitations are the potential weaknesses in a study and out of the researchers' control. The sample population for this study was limited to two local school districts within a metropolitan area of a southern state and only addressed perspectives of participants during the transition process. While truthful responses were sought, there may be unknown conditions or factors at the local school districts that could bias the responses of the participants. I monitored my own biases by using a reflexive journal to record my personal thoughts throughout the entire study and to account for what is occurring so that others can understand how and why decisions were made (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Purposeful sampling was

used to intentionally select participants and location, as described by Creswell (2012; 2018; Whitehead & Whitehead, 2016), to better understand the factors that influence the transition process for students with disabilities.

This study sample size was limited to small numbers within each category, four per category, with 12 total participants. The four selected may not represent all parents, teachers, and service providers within the area nor all professionals throughout the state or nation. This study is a bounded qualitative case study. A bounded qualitative case study is used to reveal an in-depth understanding of a case (Creswell, 2002; Creswell & Poth, 2018), or “bounded system” (Creswell, 2002, p. 485). I sought to understand perspectives of the process of transition among parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers. Data collected from participants who have developed a close relationship with the students with disabilities, encountered delay of transition, or experienced other events during transition, may have been influenced in a negative or positive way that may result in recollections of events and/or feelings may not be representative of the population as a whole.

Significance

This study is important because I described the parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers’ perspectives of students with disabilities when transitioning from Pre-K to Kindergarten, and the factors they perceived may influence the transition process. Challenges of transition represent an important developmental milestone for students with disabilities (Rodriguez et al., 2017; Strnadova & Cumming,

2016; McIntyre & Wildenger-Welchons, 2015). The current practices and status of students with disabilities were presented along with policy of IDEA (2004). The results of this study based on the experiences and perspectives of parents, Pre-K teachers, and early intervention service providers may help with exploring alternatives, strategies and steps before and after transition within the local school districts of the metropolitan area of this southern state.

The study can be useful to Pre-K teachers, administrators, directors at daycares, and inclusion professionals by providing multiple perspectives that can provide awareness of the experiences when transitioning students with disabilities when moving from service to service (Cook & Coley, 2020; Jeon et al., 2011; McIntyre & Wildenger-Welchons, 2015). These perspectives may provide information to support the multidisciplinary team with transition planning before transition begins and perhaps support teachers and service providers with developing guidelines to use during the transition process. These guidelines could include information pertaining to rights, responsibilities, and strategies to use when supporting students with disabilities.

This study could add to the recommended implications for continued research by exploring multiple stakeholders' perspectives on educational transition for students with disabilities (Cook & Coley, 2020; McIntyre & Garbacz, 2016; McIntyre & Wildenger-Welchons, 2015), and the factors they perceive may influence the transition process. This research could contribute to promoting positive social change for professionals and parents by allowing them opportunity to have their voices heard. Success can come

about by raising the awareness for professionals within the local southern state early, before transitioning students with disabilities, to avoid challenges that can undermine a child's later development. Local organizations that support students with disabilities and their parents can have access to the information in this study to support their own initiatives of providing support and care to students with disabilities.

Summary

There is a problem with a gap in practice in the literature concerning the lack of multiple perspectives of the transition process when transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K services to Kindergarten services. A recent review of the southern state school districts accountability report revealed the school districts need assistance with Part C and B of IDEA transition services for students with disabilities (Office of Special Education State Performance Plan, 2016; 2017; 2019). Using O'Toole's (2014; 2016) adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (1995; 2006) of *process person context time* and Rim-Kaufman and Pianta's (2000) ecological and dynamic model of transition, this study explored parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers' perspectives of transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten and the factors they perceived may influence the transition process. In this study, I presented the multiple perspectives of transition from parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers.

Students with disabilities experience several types of transition throughout their lives. As students with disabilities develop, they experience formal learning within the

context of the classroom and learning from professionals such as teachers and service providers (Marchbank, 2019; Quintero & McIntyre, 2011). According to IDEA (2004), during transition, the family also plays a vital part in providing consent for an Individualized Family Service Plan, and Individualized Education Program to support the student during transition. With these multiple systems of policy and stakeholder exchange, the process of transition can become challenging if it does not occur at the level it should meet the needs of the individual student (O'Toole, 2016; O'Toole et al., 2014). The information gained from this study could support teachers, parents, and service providers with understanding the process of transition to support individual students with disabilities.

Chapter 2 presented literature related to transition and present data within the local setting of the metropolitan area of a southern state and describe challenges of transition from current research and the perceived outcomes that affect students with disabilities if transition does not occur at the level it should. Stakeholders affected by transition would include teachers, early intervention service providers, administrators, and parents who all play an important role in the future development and education for the disabled child. Information included the context of transition based on policy of IDEA, transition perspectives, transition planning, and recommendations for professionals. Literature provided different views of transition and a comparison/contrast with transition outcomes based on research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this bounded qualitative case study was to explore the perspectives of parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers on transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten and the factors they perceive may have influenced the transition process. While researchers have conducted studies on transition to Kindergarten (Karila & Rantavuori, 2014; Lietavcova & ViteKova, 2018; Miller, 2014; Starr, Martini, & Kuo, 2014; Stormshak et al., 2020; Waren et al., 2016), no studies have addressed multiple perspectives of teachers, parents, and service providers within a single study (Cook & Coley, 2020; McIntyre, & Wildenger-Welchons, 2015). This literature review covers research related to transition and how it affects teachers, service providers, parents, and students with disabilities. Studies were organized in the literature review on (a) transition policy, (b) transition perspective, (c) perspectives and challenges regarding transition from Pre-K to Kindergarten, and (d) transition planning. During the literature search, it was necessary to revise the search terms from perspectives of teachers and early intervention service providers to include perspectives of parents to find current articles related to transition. Because studies on multiple perspectives from all three subjects at one time were not found, the search terms *Transition to Kindergarten*, *Kindergarten Transition*, *Successful Transition*, *Practices in Transition to Kindergarten*, *Transition to Primary School*, *School Entry for Students with Disabilities*, and *School Readiness for Students with Disabilities* also lead to a selection of peer-reviewed articles related to the process of moving students with disabilities from service

to service during transition. Other resources included the State Department of Education website, Pre-K Department of Early Learning and Care and other government websites for statistics on transition practices in the United States.

Transition from early intervention services in Pre-K to Kindergarten involves change in services and systems with parent involvement when moving students from early intervention services to school-based services (O'Farrelly & Hennessy, 2014; Marshall et al., 2017; Rothe et al., 2014; Stormshak et al., 2020). Transition is especially a challenge for young students with disabilities when they leave early intervention services in Pre-K and enter school-based services in Kindergarten (Bowdon & Desimore, 2014; Warren et al., 2016; Welchons & McIntyre, 2012). When children with disabilities enter Kindergarten, the family, school, and service providers all play a vital role in making sure the child is successful (Lewis et al., 2017; McIntyre et al., 2014; McIntyre & Garbacz, 2016). This movement affects the child, parent, and professionals working with the child.

While gaps in IDEA (2004) continue to be recognized among researchers (Little et al., 2016; McIntyre & Wildenger-Welchons, 2015), understanding the future effects of transition policy and transition planning can support developmental and long-term education plans for students with disabilities (Barnett et al., 2015; Chandroo et al., 2018; Patton & King, 2016; Purtell et al., 2019). Before professionals can transition students with disabilities, they must understand the important elements of transition planning and evaluation process (Chandroo et al., 2018; Cook & Coley, 2017; Division for Early

Childhood, 2014; Flannery et al., 2015; Morrison et al., 2013), and how inclusion curricula will affect the students' development long term (Allen & Cowdery, 2015; Heiskanen et al., 2019; Purtell et al., 2019). Included in this review are the guidelines for transitioning students with disabilities (see Appendix A) from the local southern state Department of Education website (2019). Understanding this process of transition can avoid stress for students' emotional development and dissatisfaction among parents (Dockett & Perry, 2013; Purtell et al., 2019).

To understand the complexity of transition challenges, the conceptual framework of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (1995; 2006) of *process person context time* emphasizes the influences and interactions between the child's immediate environment and care during transition. These influences include the home, the childcare center, Pre-K class, the community, and environmental contexts at the time of transition. O'Toole (2016) and O'Toole et al. (2014) provided a new perspective of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory for understanding educational transition and expressed the need to further investigate transitions of students with disabilities. This process involved finding strategies and understanding the evaluation process when transitioning students. Therefore, it is important for professionals to become familiar with policy and examine the recommendations to support students with early learning and appropriate transition placement (Heiskanen et al., 2019; Petriwsky, 2014). By looking at the perspectives of multiple stakeholders, this study may raise the awareness for professionals within the local southern state early, before transition, to avoid challenges.

Literature Search Strategy

When looking specifically for multiple perspectives of transition, I found literature related to transition process (Chandaroo et al., 2018; Pears & Peterson, 2018; Podvey et al., 2013; McIntyre et al., 2014; Little et al., 2016) and expanded the search to include perspectives of transition among teachers and teachers' practices (Beamish et al., 2014; Garbacz et al., 2016; Landmark et al., 2013; Plotner et al., 2017; Quintero & McIntyre, 2011), various service providers (McIntyre et al., 2014; McIntyre & Garbacz, 2016; Morningstar & Mazzotti, 2014; Morrison et al., 2013; Petriwskyj, 2014; Plotner et al., 2017), transition policy (IDEA, 2004); Atchinson & Pompelia, 2018; Little et al., 2016), and the family perspective on transition and school readiness (Bakkaloglu, 2013; Garbacz et al., 2016; Marsh et al., 2017; Miller, 2014; O'Farrelly & Hennessy, 2014; Podvey et al., 2013; Stormshak et al., 2020). From this framework, a series of search terms were formed to refine the search terms to incorporate the perspectives of all stakeholders within the context of the study. These search terms included key words: *Transition practice to school for children with disabilities, early intervention school readiness, IDEA mandates, IEP transition plans, students with learning disabilities, transition to school-based services, transition planning, Transition from preschool to Kindergarten.* Several databases were used to obtain an in-depth literature review on transition. Databases PsycINFO, ERIC, SAGE, Research Gate, Science Direct, ProQuest, the Dissertation Database and Walden University's Thoreau Multiple Database tool were used to search. Google Scholar was also used as a cross reference to find

recent articles. Several journals and publications were also used: *American Education Research Journal*, *Pediatric Health Care Journal*, *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *Educational Psychology Journal*, *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *Special Education Technology Journal*, *Journal of Early Intervention*, *Kindergarten Transition and Readiness*, *Journal of Rehabilitation*, *International Journal of Educational Research*, *Young Exceptional Children*, *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, *Child Family Study Journal*, *Council for Exceptional Children; Pre-K Policy Series*, *National Council on Disabilities*, *Prevention Science*, *Disability and Health Journal*, *School Psychology Quarterly*, *Topics in Early Education*.

Conceptual Framework/Theoretical Foundation

This study addresses a gap in practice in the literature concerning the lack of multiple perspectives of the transition process when transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K services to Kindergarten services; therefore, using established theory can help explain how transition affects students with disabilities in the target population of the study. I relied on the ecological and dynamic model of Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000), and the bioecological model of Bronfenbrenner (1995; 2006) of *process person context time* to conceptualize the transition from Pre-K to Kindergarten. As noted by Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000), the ecological and dynamic model of transition identifies transition in terms of the child being in the center of the relationships formed. These processes of transition entail connections to relationships among the stakeholders and the child, the family relationships, the school environment, and context

to develop changes in transition (Brooker, 2016). The ecological and dynamic framework of Rim-Kaufman and Pianta (2000) builds on a range of similar ecologically oriented systems theories including the bioecological model of *process person context time* (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), which is the primary conceptual framework for this study.

The bioecological framework of transition has been mentioned in several studies (Fabian, 2002; O'Toole, 2016, O'Toole et al., 2014; Rouse & Hallam, 2012). O'Toole et al. (2014) emphasized how Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of *process person context time* relates to many systems during transition. Although other models are explored and mentioned in this study, the conceptual framework for this study contains Rimm-Kaufman and Pinata's (2000) ecological model and Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1995; 2006) of *process person context time*. These frameworks were also in a recent study by O'Toole (2016), and O'Toole et al. (2014), and were selected as they show how multiple systems interact and form relationships to support students with disabilities during transition.

Other theorists, including Fabian (2000, 2002), who cited anthropologist Van Gennep and identified transition process as a stage of liminal. At this stage (liminal), the parents of the students experience a state of celebration of the first day of school, the students experience the new environment, and the teachers learn the expectation of the students' IEPs. In agreement with Fabian (2000, 2002), another established theory of transition is Norris (1999) who also mentioned the French word *luminaire*, as relevant to

educational transition. During this stage of transition, the education plan is incorporated and students experience moving from service to service. According to Brooker (2016) this educational level of moving from service to service is necessary to strengthen the connections between the school and home relationships for the individual students with disability to ensure a continuity of services from Pre-K to Kindergarten.

Rouse and Hallam (2012) combined ecological and organizational theory to provide an explanation of the complex interactions of the multiple systems such as various service providers, teachers, and federal laws. According to Rouse and Hallam (2012), students with disabilities are successfully transitioned if the child's characteristics are considered during time of transition. This consideration can support service providers and teachers when developing the IEP to identify the supports the student will need when moving from service to serviced (Cook & Coley, 2017; Zirkel & Hetrick, 2017). Rouse and Hallam (2012) added that parent participation is also needed in the process.

Transition was also mentioned in terms of community theory. Lave and Wenger (1991) used the community of practice model to relate to understanding the perspectives of professionals during transition. Lave and Wegner (1991) argued a child's classroom and community of members are all part of the environment for students during transition. This process of using a community allows participation of families and negotiation within the school community forming rules and roles to support student development.

Pianta and Walsh (1996) mentioned the contextual systems model in transition and suggested the quality of relationships between the home and school is an important

factor for transition. This model suggested students with disabilities are successfully transitioned when the relationships are formed. These relationships need to begin early to give all stakeholders time to work on transition activities and make changes when they do not work out as planned. This model further adds once relationships are formed, resources and school openness can add value to the process due to the context of the partnership.

Although these theoretical concepts all mention transitions from different perspectives, when transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten, the Bioecological model of *process person context time* and the ecological and dynamic model of transition were best fit for this study. These models are suitable for current research on transition in that it provides a framework for the complexity and relationships during transition (O'Toole, 2016; O'Toole et al., 2014). These models also conceptualize the transition process from Pre-K to Kindergarten, as the bioecological model was a fundamental part of the formation of American Head Start (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). Little et al. (2016) agreed about adding the bioecological model and the ecological and dynamic model of transition. The authors further added these models to conceptualize various transition practices which potentially represent the interconnectedness of the systems that make up the transition process.

Bioecological and Ecological and Dynamic Theories

Bronfenbrenner (1995; 2006) contended that a series of systems all interact and individually influence the social and academic development of students. Bronfenbrenner

suggested that students experience layers of influences throughout their lives. He called these layers of influence systems: microsystem, mesosystem, macrosystem, exosystem, and chronosystem. These systems are developed from the immediate environments to the extended environments that students with disabilities interact with on a regular basis. According to Bronfenbrenner (1995, 1998; 2006), each level of the system influences each other. Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000) agreed and further added the student is at the center of these immediate environments that forms systems of peers, family, neighborhood, and the teacher (Little et al., 2016).

Within these layers of systems, the microsystem is the most common layer students with disabilities actively experience. These layers of influence come from the individual parent, teacher, and early intervention service provider whom students have most direct interactions. If these relationships break down, students with disabilities can experience difficulty (Dockett & Perry, 2003; 2013; Stormshak et al., 2020). According to Dockett and Perry (2013), these social relationships are important for a student's existence, forming a web of relationships. According to Little et al. (2016), these layers of influence that form the relationships among students, teachers, and the family are external factors that interact forming the ecological and dynamic model of Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000).

The mesosystem contains the relationships that connect students with disabilities in various settings. These relationships are formed among the school districts and stakeholders that play a vital role when connecting students with disabilities among

various services outside the school and home. These relationships can influence the child's later development and progress beyond Kindergarten. For example, school districts should recognize the potential effect of educational transition on a student's IEP by educating parents, teachers, and service providers on recommended policy (O'Toole, 2016; O'Toole et al., 2014). In the ecological and dynamic model, some of these various settings include the neighborhood that help form the characteristics of the individual student (Rimm-Kauffman & Pinata, 2000). Little et al. (2016) suggested parent visiting the Kindergarten class before school starts to form interconnections by bringing the student, family, and teacher together for a shared experience.

The exosystem recognizes the interactions between all levels of the external environments but do not have a direct effect on the individual students. These environments come from the States' Department of Education and Child Find Transition Summary. The state's Department of Child Find monitors and gathers data to monitor effective general supervision under IDEA and early childhood transition. While the exosystem operates within the southern state DECAL (2019), an interagency for Pre-K programs, all standards and guidelines among school districts would have effect on the students' development.

The macrosystems are the influence of greater societal factors in the environmental context. These systems include the classroom cultural environment of the student and the home environment of the student (O'Toole, 2016; O'Toole et al., 2014). For example, parents are responsible for the caring and decision making for the students.

It is important for teachers and service providers to provide resources to parents to support them with transition, and to support students with individual needs within the classroom.

In 1998, Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) conceptualized the chronosystem. This system involved the temporary changes and interactions students experience in their environments. This change occurs when students transition from Pre-K to Kindergarten (school-based). In this study Bronfenbrenner's and Morris' (1998) chronosystems included the ever-changing systems that students experience during transition. These changing systems occur from early intervention services, from Pre-K to Kindergarten, including teachers, parents, and the individual child in the process.

The development of this evolving theoretical framework with the chronosystems was renamed the bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris 1998). The bioecological model made changes to context by providing more knowledge of the systems and environments rather than the development within the environments (O'Toole, 2016; O'Toole et al., 2014). This new model further developed the roles of *process person context time* to account for the bioecological influences of transition. The O'Toole (2016), and O'Toole et al.'s (2014) perspective highlights the concepts of the bioecological model building on the *process* of interactions between individuals; the *person* and relationships formed during transition; the *context* of the environment and the effect of *time* during transition within the student's first year to school-based services in Kindergarten. The *process person context time* of Bronfenbrenner's theory is explained

below.

The process refers to the central relationships among teachers, parents and service providers before and after transition (O'Toole, 2016; O'Toole et al., 2014). O'Toole (2016) and O'Toole et al. (2014) further mentioned these relationships among professionals should continue to develop to support students with social development when students move from one service to another and start to interact with new peers. Van Luit (2011) agreed with O'Toole et al. (2014) and reported if these relationships are not formed early enough, students with disabilities will encounter greater challenges beyond Kindergarten. Process is the essential relationship among Pre-K professionals who provide transition when moving students from services to service. These relationships extend for students as they interact with peers, teachers, and school programs.

Based on the bioecological theory, the experiences of transition depend on person factors such as student's age, gender, their self-worth skills, and independency (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; 2006). During transition, students with disabilities have special education needs and require support (Cook & Coley, 2017; Van Luit, 2011). O'Toole et al. (2014) suggested that these needs are personal factors and are influenced through experience based on interactions with teachers and the parents. By working together as a team, teachers and parents support the needs of the individual student to ensure accommodations and modifications under the IEP support the student. This can reduce families stress levels for preventative intervention and support students with

disabilities with development during their transition to kindergarten (Cook & Coley, 2017; Smith et al., 2018). This collaboration effort can also effectively reduce behaviors and support the students with disability throughout their lifespan (Stormshak et al., 2019; Stormshak et al., 2017).

Context refers to the factors that surround the climate of the school and the environments where service providers conduct early intervention services (O'Toole; O'Toole et al., 2014). These contextual factors also deal with policy such as IDEA. Context identifies the changes in academics from one educational program to another. McWayne et al. (2014) conducted a study and found these contextual factors influence family decisions and concerns when students with disabilities leave early intervention programs. Students with disabilities experience different developmental aspects based on inclusion curriculum, classroom climate, and increase their level of independency and social behaviors as time progresses (Pears & Peterson, 2018; Welchons & McIntyre, 2012). These contextual factors can decrease or increase stress for the student and family during the transition process.

Time is a crucial element for students, families and the professional while working together (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; 2006) as it entails establishing efficient and comprehensive delivery of services within a given period. According to O'Toole (2016), and O'Toole et al. (2014), time is essential in educational transition whether it occurs early or later in a student's life. As transition become recognized among studies for students with disabilities, the process of moving students from

preschool to school-based can increase stresses due to challenges of the new journey ahead for the student (Little et al., 2016; Miller, 2014). This Bioecological model of *process person context time* builds upon the nature of transition and outcomes based on the perspectives of service providers and teachers (O'Toole, 2016; O'Toole et al. 2014). For example, analysis of the literature of *process person context time* revealed how factors such as communication skills among stakeholders, students' special needs and delivery of services, and student behaviors towards the new teacher or service providers all influenced the nature of time during transition (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, 2006; O'Toole, 2016; O'Toole et al., 2014).

Within this bounded qualitative case study setting, an examination of the contextual factors of the microsystems and macrosystems provided an understanding of the process of transition under IDEA in the metropolitan area of a southern state. The ecological and dynamic model of transition outlined by Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000) conceptualized the transition process from Pre-K to Kindergarten among the interconnectedness of the relationships formed among the student and stakeholders during the process. The influences of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1998; 2006) of *process person context time* present a conceptual framework of transition among professionals such as teachers, and service providers (Miller, 2014), with the elements of *process person context time* being used as a priori codes for data analysis. The influences of *process person context time* also represent a lens to examine transition among professionals and parents that was used to sort the data of the study.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variable

There is a problem with a gap in practice in the literature concerning the lack of multiple perspectives of the transition process when transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K services to Kindergarten services according to the state's accountability performance report (Office of Special Education State Performance Plan, 2016; 2017, 2019). Before 1970 children with disabilities did not receive consideration or have fair rights to education in the United States (Little et al., 2016; Phillips & Meloy, 2012). Children with disabilities were not included in public school education and received no specialized support from teachers. In fact, Rouse and Hallam (2012), and Hebbeler and Spiker (2016) argued that students with disabilities continue to receive unbalance support within the same environment as students without disabilities. This unbalanced system forced families to seek support outside the public schools (Durlak & Li-Grinning, 2014; Heiskaned et al., 2019). By exploring multiple perspectives of educational transition parents, teachers, and service providers can begin to develop understanding of factors affecting the transition process. I have included other sources such as parts of the policy IDEA from the state Department of Education website to provide a detailed history of transition policy.

In 1975 Congress passed the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) that was formerly known as Education of the Handicapped Act (EHA) P.L. 94-142. The amendment was passed to provide students with disabilities a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) within the least restrictive environment (National Disability

Policy, 2014; 2018). In 1986, the IDEA P.L. 99-457 amendment sought to extend eligibility for infants and toddlers with disabilities Part H (now called Part C of IDEA) and extend services and eligibility for children from birth to age two, section 619 of Part B (National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, 2012; National Disability Policy, 2018). IDEA policy was strengthened regarding provisions for children between three-five. In 2004, regulations of IDEA shifted with amendment P.L. 102-119, which implemented more changes to support students with disabilities. These changes included the extending services for students with developmental delays under Part B of the policy (IDEA, 2004; National Disability Policy, 2014). Part of the change in B included providing grants to states for individual students with disabilities starting at age five.

During 1997, Amendment P.L. 105-17 was implemented to produce greater academic outcomes for students with disabilities through a series of requirements for students with disabilities. All changes and requirements affected children ages three-five. Part B of IDEA-Assistance for Education of all Children with Disabilities had a major effect on services for children beyond age three in March of 1991, and later in 2004. The Americans with Disability Act (ADA), section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and requirements for Head Start Act were also amended to include transition services for students with disabilities. Children between ages three-five were affected by the new regulation of Part B of IDEA of 1997 and final regulations in 2004 (IDEA, 2004; National Disability Policy, 2014; 2018) regarding extended services in school-based.

Part C of IDEA (2004) provides funding to assist public schools and states with

developing support for all students with disabilities by implementing a multidisciplinary team of early intervention programs (National Council on Disability, 2012; National Disability Policy, 2018). This team of service providers provides transition services from early intervention to school-based special education services. IDEA (2004) defines elements that should be included in transition planning (IDEA; Part B). These new changes allowed the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education (OSEP) to enforce new policies (34 CFR, 2004) for states and school districts with a State Performance Plan (SPP) that mandated gathering of data and supervision under IDEA for students with disabilities (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2015; 2016; 2017, 2019). The SPP for the local southern state included in this study is Child Find and Early Childhood Transition Summary (Department of Education, 2015; 2016; 2017; 2019; Wood, 2015). The information can also be found in the Appendix.

Among these new policies was the establishment of Local Educational Agency (LEA). LEAs were now encouraged to consider a Family Service Plan (FSP) relevant to the child's needs. This provision of Part B 619 (2004) seeks to ensure that students with disabilities receive services from age three-five, leading to school-based services in Kindergarten (National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, 2012; National Disability Policy, 2018). Therefore, local and state education agencies (Part C, 2004) were now responsible for conveying these mandated services through a legal written document, and an Individualized Education Program (IEP) to better support the students with disabilities and the family. In the local southern state where this study was

conducted, the Local Education Agency is listed as the state's Department of Public Health.

In the metropolitan school district of the southern state in this study, students in preschool are eligible for an IEP through referral from Local Education Agency (LEA) such as Babies Can't Wait (BCW), a statewide interagency service delivery program for infants and preschoolers with disabilities (DECAL, 2019). Service providers from this Local Education Agency may go into the classroom and provide collaborative services to students with disabilities. This agency was established by Part C of IDEA providing access to services for students with disabilities to support development. The Carlson et al. (2011) study also reported that children with disabilities can suffer from lack of impeded mental development if risk factors are not identified and part C services are not implemented early during transition. Nolan and Spohn (2016), Royer (2016), and Chandroo et al. (2018), further added schools need to shift the model of IEP planning to student-centered that will activate learning, empower students with disabilities to develop skills necessary for school-based services.

In an annual review of Department of Education Child Find and Early Childhood Transitions (2015; 2017; 2019), factors that may have delayed transition included lack of information during the referral process within the 90-day period (Wood, 2019). Under IDEA and Child Find in this southern state, if a child is suspected of having a disability, the district must provide an evaluation in all areas of the suspected disability per Section 34 C.F.R. § 300.304(c)(4) within a reasonable time (State Department of Education,

2019). However, student with disabilities must demonstrate improvement for transition with indicators in increasing positive social-emotional skills in social relations. Other areas that students must demonstrate improvement included: developing knowledge and skills through linguistic development; and using appropriate behavior to meet their individual needs (Department of Education, 2019; Wood, 2019).

To ensure students with disabilities meet the requirements of IDEA, the local state Alternative Assessment (AA, 2015) a component of the state's Student Assessment Program, mandates all students with significant cognitive disabilities receive general curricula to meet academic standards. All states must monitor the academic progress through the IEP team and alternative assessment to support the student during transition (Office of Special Education 2015; 2016; 2017; United States Department of Education, 2014; 2017). Although this process of transition is defined through policies and service delivery programs (Department of Education Child Find and Early Childhood Transitions Summary, 2015; 2017; 2019; Woods, 2019), specific transition practices were not found in the states' legislation and expectations. These expectations include the implementation for a step-by-step process of moving students from service to service. However, this does not exist in the state where the study is being conducted.

Perspectives of Transition

Within the literature, there have been researchers examining parental perspectives on transition, (Bakkaloglu, 2013; Garbacz et al., 2016; Gonzalez-Romero et al., 2018; O'Farrelly & Hennessy, 2014; Miller, 2014; Podvey et al., 2013; Stormshak et al., 2020;

Stormshak et al., 2019), teacher perspectives, (Boyle & Petriwsky, 2014; Klibthong & Agbenyega, 2020; Landmark et al., 2013; Marchbank, 2019; Plotner et al., 2017; Quintero & McIntyre, 2011), and service providers perspectives, (McIntyre et al., 2014; McIntyre & Garbacz, 2016; Morningstar & Mazzotti, 2014; Morrison et al., 2013; O'Farrelly & Hennessy, 2013). However, no attention has focused on understanding the multiple perspectives of parents, teachers, and service providers (Cook & Coley, 2020; McIntyre & Wildenger-Welchons, 2015). No attention has focused attention on factors that influence the transition practice when moving students from services to service in a single study. This study explored parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers' perspectives of transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten and the factors they perceive may influence the transition process.

Transition has been the focus of studies and policies to support parents, students and teachers (Garbacz et al., 2016; IDEA, 2010, 2004, 1997; Little et al., 2016; Perry et al., 2014; Stormshak et al., 2020; Stormshak et al., 2019). For many parents, this process take place quickly after first discovering the disability, and then learning of the long-term implications, educational needs, and policies (Karili & Rantavuori, 2014; Podvey, Hinjosa, & Koenig, 2013). Transition can be difficult for students with disabilities (McWayne et al., 2012; Strnadova & Cumming 2016). This process can especially be difficult when students with disabilities spend extended long days with professionals at school and daycare centers in Pre-K (Boyle & Petriwskyj, 2014; Gottfried et al., 2016; Gottfried, 2017; Gottfried et al., 2019).

Morrison et al. (2013), and the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT, 2017) argued that transition is a difficult process due to several important factors related to planning for families of students with disabilities. Rouse and Hallam (2012) agreed but added this difficult process may be in part due to the new roles and uncertainty of what lies ahead for the disabled child. Rouse and Hallam (2012) also called the transition process, vertical. This vertical process occurs when moving from early care from birth to early intervention services, and horizontal with family involvement with multiple systems and services during the same time frame (Rouse & Hallam, 2012).

In 2012, Carly conducted a study on transition and identified reoccurring challenges of transition such as stress for the family, but also mentioned these challenges occur for professionals as well. When facilitating the process of moving students from service to service, all stakeholders need to participate (Atchinson & Pompelia, 2018). This phenomenon has been a concern for service providers of early intervention since the beginning of Early Head Start (McWayne et al., 2012). Moreover, there is evidence that suggests stress factors of the transition process have long-term consequences (Fortner & Jenkins, 2018; Myers, et al., 2011) that affect the child's ability to adjust to new inclusive environments (Barton & Smith, 2015). The office of Special Education (OSEP, 2015; 2016; 2017; 2019), and Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA, 2012) has focused attention on identifying these critical elements for intervention by looking at the risk factors such as stress during transition to Kindergarten for students with disabilities.

Durlak and Li-Grinning (2014) conducted a study on narrowing the disparities of transition by focusing on intervention strategies for professionals and parents within the community and found a child's immediate environment determines school transition. Based on Li-Grinning et al.'s (2014) perspectives of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model, these immediate environments and systems make up the microsystems, which have the first effect on transition. Carly (2012), and Besi and Sakellariou (2020), disagreed with Li-Grinning et al. (2014) and O'Toole et al. (2014) and emphasized that transition depended on collaboration by facilitating parent engagement. In Carly's (2012) non-experimental study, descriptive correlation methods were used and found transition increased stress among parents within different socioeconomic status due to lack of relationships between parents and professionals during the process. While teachers and service providers are affected by transition, evidence suggests their relationships with parents are essential during the process (Boyl & Petriwskyj, 2014; Quintero & McIntyre, 2011; Stormshak et al., 2020). In mixed method studies on perspectives of transition, O'Farrelly and Hennesy (2014), and Walker et al. (2012) also mentioned relationships between parent and teachers as essential to transition.

Some themes emerged from studies on the perspectives on transition. Miller (2012) reported that transition is ongoing, transition is a difficult process, and first transition is the most difficult. Podvey et al. (2013) collected data from six families on transition to help service providers of occupational therapy. A theme that emerged included transition was scary (Podvey et al., 2013). Besi and Sakellariou (2020), Karila

and Rantavuori (2014), and Peters (2016) found when developing fluent transition activities among professionals, professional consensus, and collaboration shared practices with transition services. A theme that emerged in Myers et al.'s (2011) study, on perspectives of service providers of occupational therapy, was a barrier to transition was follow through due to lack of time. A theme from this study also included no support from Local Education Agency for the transition meeting (Myers et al., 2011).

Researchers have revealed children with disabilities living in poverty or rural communities are at greater chances for risk factors from inadequate transition (Abry et al., 2018; Deng et al., 2020; Jeon et al., 2011). Jeon et al. (2011) noted risk factors with transition among low-income families were associated with developmental delays and limit transition to school for disabled students. In the southern state's local school district, if families live under low-income guidelines, they are listed in categories such as one or two (DECAL, 2015). When students register for Pre-K programs, if they receive benefits from the federal and local government and have shown proof, they are listed under category one. If a student does not receive aid from the government, they are listed as category two. Transition for low-income students with disabilities signifies a gap in socioeconomic development, which decreases a child's social and academic competency upon Kindergarten entry (Deng et al., 2020; Jong et al., 2011).

McWayne et al. (2012) also conducted a study on transition to school-based services with low-income parents of students with disabilities through a population-based investigation. McWayne et al. (2012) argued although these parents of students with

disabilities were low-income families, transition challenges were based on contextual factors such as teacher experience. In a similar study on transition, Miller (2014) focused on teachers and increasing home-school relations from the perspectives of families living in low socioeconomic status within their first year. Findings from this study indicated educators need to understand family context in relation to school context of transition. Miller (2014) also agreed that low-income families are often unprepared for transition, and teachers should consider the students and their families.

In contrast to Miller (2014), and Deng et al. (2020), Cooper et al. (2010) conducted a longitudinal study using multileveled models of data on transition from early intervention to Kindergarten. This study found socioeconomic status was not a factor associated with a student's achievement during transition. According to Cooper et al. (2010), differences in transition were found between culture and race and partially among professionals. Findings from this study requested examination of family process models when transitioning students and further research on developmental models across cultural subgroups of the population.

Although the existing literature portrays perspectives of transition at different times, it is important to understand how these factors influence the transition process. This study provided a starting point to explore these factors. This study explored a gap in the literature on practice concerning the lack of multiple perspectives of the transition process when transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten services. All stakeholders need to become aware of the challenges faced by these children.

Local Early Childhood Transition Policy

When looking at the perspectives of transition, it is important to develop an understanding for the policies within the local school system. In a recent letter to the local state's Superintendent from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services States Performance Plan (2015; 2016; 2017; 2019), the local state in which this study was conducted received a "needs assistance" rating and did not meet the requirements in implementing services for students with disabilities under Part B of IDEA. However, in another letter to the state's Local Education Agency Department of Public Health that provides services to students with disabilities, the state received a "meets requirements" for purposes of Part C of IDEA. This last determination was based in totality on the state's data from fiscal year (FFY) 2013 States Performance Plan /Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR). The current 2015 data were based on the state's reflected Results Driven Data Accountability Matrix (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2015; 2016; 2017; 2019).

The monitoring procedure of the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) State Performance Plan (SPP) requires school districts to gather data on IDEA in areas of Child Find and Early Childhood Transition. Data are collected each year between June 1st to June 30th of the following year in the southern state included in this study. This performance plan monitors the 11-12 indicators for Child Find. Information in the plan includes the number of students with parental consent for evaluation; the number of students evaluated within the established timeline; and data with the "range of days

beyond the timeline” (Woods, 2015, p. 4).

Other information on the State Performance Plan (SPP, 2015; 2016; 2017; 2019) included the number of children eligible for services from early intervention to school-based services referred by Part C. If a student has an IEP before their third birthday, specific data are required beyond the third birthday. Teachers and service providers must be provided with full access to the data by the Special Education Director. For this study, specific and limited data were available for review due to accessibility to the state’s secure website and the state not meeting the requirement for reported data. A copy of the evaluation requirements is included in the Appendix A of this study. Therefore, this section contained information related to the evaluation terms and definitions from the state website on transitioning students within the local state for this study.

The Individuals with Disability Education Act Part B, Section 619, was designed to support states to ensure students with disabilities ages three to five have special education and other services (IDEA, 2004). The Department of Education is the state agency that monitors and provides supervision of all local school districts. Within each school district of this study, there is only one early intervention school found currently serving students with disabilities, providing full inclusion and support of occupational therapy, physical therapy, counseling services, speech, and vision services. These services are conducted in classes from preschool, to Pre-K, and Kindergarten educating students with typical development and students with special needs (Department of Education, 2019). Other schools within these districts may have one Pre-K Special

Education class or a collaborative inclusion classroom.

The Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL, 2015) in this southern state oversees a wider range of programs that provide care to children birth to school age including Pre-K Program. Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) offers inclusion support through a team-based inclusion specialist. This service provider is responsible for providing resources and support to the Pre-K programs and teachers. According to DECAL (2015), some resources provided include professional development for professionals in an effort to support students with disabilities and their families.

In 2012, the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill reported children in Pre-K in this southern state had significant growth and development in all domains of learning (DECAL, 2014; Peisner-Feinberg et al., 2013). Per Peisner-Feinberg et al. (2013) during school year 2012 to 2013, students with disabilities receiving and attending Pre-K were 35.5% of the population within this southern state. According to Department of Education SPP/APR (2015; 2017; 2019) students with disabilities attending and receiving Special Education regular services in Pre-K increased to 44.2% of the student population throughout the state. Categories of student disabilities are listed on the SPP/APR (2015; 2017; 2019) report under the state's Department of Education website.

In this southern state's Pre-K program, guidelines for each student regardless of disability include documentation for evaluation through a formative assessment called Work Sampling System (DECAL/Pre-K/Assessment, 2014; 2019). This formative

assessment measures students' progress on 69 indicators in seven learning domains (DECAL, 2014; 2019). These domains are aligned with the state's Early Learning and Developmental Standards. Within the classroom Pre-K teachers conduct assessments throughout the year individually and share the results twice a year in conferences with families. This information is then transferred to the Kindergarten teacher at the beginning of the year through a computer-generated report and kept in locked file at the local school. However, students with disabilities are not required to take assessments in the southern state through the work sampling system if they have an IEP before entering Pre-K (DECAL, 2014; 2019). Under IDEA, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) (2011) State Performance Plan (SPP) has mandated states to gather data on the quality and supervision of students with disabilities through Child Find and Early Childhood Transition. Pre-K teachers do not have access to Child Find database unless they are teaching within a full inclusion classroom in the school district.

According to the local state Child Find (2017) when transitioning students with disabilities, ongoing tracking is the key to ensuring data are accurate. Before students with disabilities can transition, they are tested with an initial health screening of vision and hearing (Child Find Transition Summary, 2017). According to Child Find evaluation process (2017) if students fail the initial screening of vision and hearing this can delay the timeline. Parents must become familiar with the transition timeline process to successfully ensure a student's needs will be met for ongoing services and avoid delay in student achievement (Fortner & Jenkins, 2017; 2018).

Data are collected for children starting at age three and determines their eligibility based on data provided until they enter Pre-K (Child Find, 2017). Services students can receive include speech/language, and physical therapy (Wood, 2015; 2019). The Local Education Agency does not collect data beyond the child's third birthday, leaving Pre-K teachers and early intervention service providers to collect and maintain data at the district level for evaluation upon entry. Parental consent is needed for students to receive an evaluation and services (Child Find, 2017; Wood, 2015; 2019).

Section 4 of Steps in Child Find Early Childhood Transition Evaluation and Reevaluation Policy (2017) process is provided in Appendix A. This information provides general information on the evaluation process when students are suspected of having a disability. In order to help students with disabilities succeed teachers should have guidelines to enhance collaboration to transition individual students (Besi & Sakellariou, 2020; Landry et al., 2014). However, steps to follow for transition were not listed in this state evaluation process when moving students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten. We need to know the perspectives of multiple stakeholders. In this study I explored parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers' perspectives of transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten and the factors they perceived may influence the transition process.

When reviewing literature on steps to follow, IDEA (1997; 2004) defines transition services as a coordinating set of activities for students with disabilities. Specific activities are not listed. Under IDEA policy these activities are mentioned as

movement from one school to the other which includes educational services based on the student's needs (IDEA, 2004). The interview questions that were used in this study asked specifically which activities have been used during transition. Questions related to these activities during transition include participants moving students with disabilities from service to service to gain information from multiple perspectives.

A review of the applicable Child Find Early Childhood Transition (2017) reported challenges in transition between Local Education Agency and all school districts. Two of these school districts are included in this study. Per this report, students were ineligible for transition due to student delays such as illness. Parental non-consent to sign the student's IEP's was also factor that delayed transition. Teacher evaluation with incomplete data were also reported as causes that delayed transitioning students with disabilities (Child Find Early Childhood Transition, 2017; Wood, 2015; 2017).

In this review of applicable Child Find definitions, terms, and data reported directly from the state website, 471 students were identified for transition (Child Find Transition Timeline Summary 2017; Department of Education, 2015; Woods, 2015; 2017). There were two exceptions, so 469 applications were accepted. Of these, 387 were eligible on time, while 80 were completed late and were ineligible. When reporting conferences with parents for the Local Education Agency, a total of 114 transition conferences were reported for children transitioning from Part C to Part B. Only 77 students were determined as eligible for continued services and 35 students were ineligible for continued service (Child Find Transition Timeline Summary 2015; 2017;

State’s Department of Education, 2015; 2017; Woods, 2015; 2017). Based on the data in this report, it is evident transition for students with disabilities has become more complex, resulting for a need to examine multiple perspectives and possibly improve the transition process. The literature has provided evidence of the complexity in the transition process and come of the resulting problems experienced by parents, teachers, and service providers who provide services.

After data are entered into the State Performance Plan, a report is generated that calculates the numbers and percentages. In this report on the state’s website, red cells showed there were errors in data entry. Once exceptions are entered, the total number of late counts changes. According to the Student Performance Plan, under Department of Education Website in 2006-2007 school year, the former superintendent received “needs assistance” for not reaching the targeted percentages. In 2008-2009 the state did not “meet requirement” due to noncompliance, and in 2015, 2017, and 2019 the state received a “needs assistance” and did not meet the requirements for reporting data on Indicators for IDEA and Child Find (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2015; 2016; 2017; 2019). By exploring the perspectives of parents, teachers, and service providers, the local state can begin to understand factors that influence the transition process when transferring services and possibly improve the process of moving students with disabilities from service to service.

Transition Perspective to Kindergarten

During the transition from Pre-K to Kindergarten, students with disabilities are

confronted with challenges of social skills, social relationships, and emotional developmental challenges (Broekhuizen et al., 2016; Little et al., 2016). Per McWayne et al. (2012) and Marchbank (2019), some of these challenges include engagement with other students, negotiation of physical space of the new environment in the classroom, and expectations in the school-based setting from teachers and administrators. Another perspective found in the Morrison et al. (2013) study was that the lack of professional development was to be a challenge of transition among teachers when transitioning students to Kindergarten. In contrast, Bierman et al. (2014) mentioned there were more issues during transition for students with disabilities from low performing schools compared to children attending high performance schools in Kindergarten.

According to Morrison et al. (2013) and Chandroo et al. (2017), factors such as teachers finding time for professional development and transition planning were reported as challenges to completing the process of transition. Morrison et al. (2013) research later developed an online training portal tool for teachers to learn about the transition process. Barton and Smith (2015) also recommended professional development for general and special education teachers. These recommendations included education to ensure students with disabilities receive proper placement beyond Kindergarten. Chandroo et al. (2017) called this process transition planning and mentioned the planning process should occur during the IEP meeting.

Rouse and Hallam (2012) argued transition simply depended on the level of knowledge among teachers and service providers. In contrast, McIntyre and Wildenger

(2011) argued transition from Pre-K to Kindergarten continues to be undocumented in empirical literature and does not address other important aspects related to student development and parent and teacher relationships. In the local state for this study, teachers and service providers are part of a multidisciplinary team joined by the parent to gain knowledge and understanding for the transition process before it begins. By exploring multiple perspectives, new research can possibly increase awareness for teachers, parents, and service providers, and begin to lay a foundation for improving the transition process.

Studies on the process of transition to Kindergarten have identified the need for consistent, and interdependent relationships between teachers and parents (Kohler et al., 2016; Lietavcova & ViteKova, 2018; Petrakos & Lehrer, 2011; Starr et al., 2014; Van Laarhoven-Myers et al., 2016). These relationships can promote and support the student's placement and education services in Kindergarten. According to Petrakos and Lehrer (2011), teachers should use various methods to transition students to Kindergarten at the beginning and end of the school year. In a study conducted by Quintero and McIntre (2011) some of these methods included home visits, individual meetings, and in-service trainings. Van Laarhoven-Myers et al. (2016), mentioned using communication through technology as an intervention strategy and method of communicating when transitioning students. Kohler et al.'s (2016) mentioned transition can be improved by collaborative efforts of transition planning into the student's IEP rather than have transition practices as an add on activity.

When exploring transition process to Kindergarten among students with disabilities the Kindergarten transition has been found to be challenging. These challenges occur for students with typical behavior (TD) and students with developmental delays (DD) (Marsh et al., McIntyre, & Wildenger-Welchons, 2015; Quintero & McIntyre, 2011; 2017; Walker et al., 2012), and for the students and family, states and school districts (Daley et al., 2011; Rosenberg et al., 2013; Villeneuve et al., 2013). Quintero and McIntyre (2011) investigated the transition process for children with autism disorder ($n = 19$) and children with other developmental disabilities ($n = 76$). Results of this study reported challenges that occurred were in part due to non-collaboration between teachers and parents, which produced negative outcomes.

McIntyre and Wildger-Welchons (2015) conducted a study on transition with 104 students in their last year of Pre-K; these were students with typical disabilities (TD; $n = 52$) and developmental delays and disabilities (DD; $n = 52$). This study reported Pre-K teachers' ($n = 40$) and Kindergarten teachers' ($n = 49$) involvement with parents during transition to Kindergarten. Per McIntyre and Wildger-Welchons (2015), Pre-K teachers and families reported more involvement as students transition to Kindergarten. Students with DD in this study experienced more teacher and parent involvement than students with TD due to social and behavioral competencies.

In a national study of transition practices to Kindergarten, Daley et al. (2011) used path modeling to examine the relationships of the students, parents, and teachers at the school district. The path modeling examined four variables: district size, district

urbanity, poverty, and if students transitioned from the classroom within the same school or from a different setting. This study is relevant and provided data on the type of support teachers were provided with and compared previously reported data looking for high and low intensity of transition support practices. A variable which emerged from this study as a predictor of transition support was students from larger districts and higher poverty districts entering Kindergarten from other locations were less likely to receive transition support during the transition.

In a national study from Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten (Little et al., 2016), transition practices were examined. Some transition practices outlined for educators to use during transition included utilizing the Kindergarten readiness assessment, and transition activities to support teaches with placement. However, there were discrepancies with the students' engagement in transition activities and the amount of information teachers sent home to parents before the transition begun (Little et al., 2016). Given the amount of evidence that suggests early academic experiences for students with disabilities depend on relationships formed, early transition practices can have an everlasting effect on school readiness and future development of individual students (Jenkins et al., 2016).

Warren et al. (2016) conducted a study on identifying successful factors of school-readiness and transition barriers of children with disabilities as they transition to school-based services. This study focused on the educators' perspectives of children with disabilities within Pre-K early childhood centers using interviews. Teachers in this study

reported success when working with parents who provided information on the individual child. However, one barrier educators indicated in this study were parents' refusal to agree on extended services and support of the individual child (Warren et al., 2016).

Cologon (2015) argued barriers among parents and educators need to be addressed and the lack of mainstream communication can delay transition of a child with disability. Moore (2013) added that to strengthen services for students with disabilities as they transition to continued inclusive services in school-based setting, positive relationships between parents and educators would assist with the success in transition. With new research on documenting student progress during the transition in Kindergarten (Lietavcova & ViteKova, 2018) evidence showed a need for understanding the expectations of teachers in all content areas for students with disabilities (Bassok et al., 2016; Bowden & Desimone, 2014). By exploring multiple perspectives in a single study, I explored parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers' perspectives of transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten and the factors they perceive may influence the transition process.

Other perspectives on transition to Kindergarten have focused their attention on culture and diversity (Starr et al., 2014). According to Starr et al. (2014), no studies address transition to Kindergarten from cultural and diverse perspectives. However, based on the context of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model, Starr et al. (2014), reported several themes related to Kindergarten transition: communication among stakeholders, knowledge of teachers, building relationships and support for parents and

teachers. Their work used Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model on education transition focusing on cultural context of transition.

Kenya et al. (2015) conducted a study on the condition of educational transition. Kenya et al. (2015) identified a demographic shift in understanding how factors may be associated with transition practices and school readiness. These authors found the make-up of school demographics and shift in student population, transition practices should include communication with parents and teachers, to support student on all learning levels to school-based services (Kenya et al., 2015). Curran (2015) agreed and mentioned in addition to a demographic shift in transition policies and practices to Kindergarten among students with disabilities, opportunity for students with disabilities to spend time in Kindergarten classes before transition increase positive transition practices.

When looking at the perspectives of transition, it is important to understand the roles of the service providers (Morgan et al., 2014, Plotner et al., 2017). In the local southern state for this study, service providers are part of the multidisciplinary team which includes speech therapist, occupational therapist, social worker, and psychologist. Although a multidisciplinary team under part C of IDEA is required for transition, few studies have examined school psychologist and counseling services of the multidisciplinary or reevaluating team when transitioning students with disabilities to Kindergarten (Garbacz et al., 2016; McIntyre et al., 2014; McIntyre & Garbacz, 2016). These members play a vital part in the evaluation process and developing the IEP for the

individual student (Allen & Cowdery, 2015; Heiskanen et al., 2019; McIntyre & Garbacz, 2016; Zirkel & Hetrick, 2017). McIntyre et al.'s (2014) study on a psychologist's perspective on involvement and practices of engagement during transition to Kindergarten reported half of the students with disabilities received at least one transition activity.

McIntyre et al. (2014) reported in other urban areas transition activity took place several times within a year. According to McIntyre et al. (2014), activities reported by the psychologist included monthly contacts, home visits, meeting with the students' school team, transition-planning meeting with the Pre-K teacher, Kindergarten classroom visit, written communication of the IEP, and Kindergarten orientation (McIntyre et al., 2014). According to IDEA (2004) and the local southern state Department of Education (2019) for this study, some transition activities included: parental consent before transition, screening by a license service provider such as psychologist to determine appropriate instructional strategies and curriculum, health screening assessments of hearing, vision, and emotional status along with motor skills capability, pre-evaluation from other Local Education Agency and observational notes from parents, and psychologists licensed by the state board of education (Department of Education Child Find Transition Summary, 2019). McIntyre and Garbacz (2016) further reported school psychologist can adopt Rim-Kaufman and Pianta (2000), dynamic model of transition to successfully transition students with disabilities due to the influences of a number of child and contextual factors such as the connections among the student, and relationships

that impact the student during the transition process.

Jimenez et al. (2012) conducted a similar study on transition to Kindergarten and disagree. According to Jimenez et al. (2012), although a multidisciplinary team is assigned, transition continues to be a challenge due to professionals' lack of knowledge during the referral process. Yoshikawa et al. (2012) noted that for students to transition to Kindergarten and have positive outcomes, this multidisciplinary team of teachers and service providers need to be aware of the process and needs of the individual child. With the nation's public schools having major policy shifts and the result of state accountability initiatives, implication for the way schools address transition can help with student achievement data and inform educators of best practices for transition (Rodriguez et al., 2017; Wachen et al., 2015).

Transition Planning Perspective

According to Morgan et al. (2014), an ongoing challenge in transition is making sure students receive transition planning that will enhance their skills and provide early access into school-based services. To provide positive early learning experience for students with disabilities, formal transition planning must begin early (Chandro et al., 2018; Flannery et al., 2015; Rodriguez et al., 2017). Landmark et al. (2013) conducted a study on transition planning using planned behavior theory. Landmark et al. (2013) found common themes on transition planning: concept of parent involvement during transition, barriers for involvement among parents and teachers in the process of

transition and promoting involvement among parents and families during the process of transition (Landmark et al., 2013).

The Landmark et al. (2013) study provided perspectives for understanding the transition process and challenges of the roles parents and teachers play during the process. Teachers in this study reported parents do not understand the importance of the transition and its effect on the child's future development. Teachers in this study also felt parents' perspectives of transition were simply that this was another meeting to attend with the disabled child. Barriers for parental involvement were parent culture, beliefs about their child, their time for scheduled meetings and beliefs about who was responsible for providing education for the student. Teachers in this study reported when promoting parental involvement, ongoing communication and partnership with parents were critical elements to transition (Landmark et al., 2013). These themes are relevant to understanding perspectives of teachers and parents during the process of transition.

Differences in transition practices were also found in a study involving IEP's (Chandroo et al., 2018; Rodriguez et al., 2017), and from the Local Education Agencies during the transition process (Landmark & Zhang, 2013). Per Landmark and Zhang (2013) three major common themes emerged: Parental involvement in the transition process, barriers for parental involvement, and how parental involvement is promoted during transition (Landmark & Zhang, 2013). Landmark and Zhang (2013) used more than 200 Individual Education Plans from eight LEA's to review evidence of the findings during transition planning (Landmark & Zhang, 2013). Landmark and Zhang (2013) also

mentioned that LEAs did not fully understand transition planning and policies, and educators needed to be adequately trained in understanding IDEA and transition policies.

With the amendments of IDEA, states must ensure the transition planning process is appropriate for the disabled child (Chandross et al., 2018; Dockett & Perry, 2013; Rodriguez et al., 2017). Recommendations of IDEA include notifying the Local Education Agency (LEA) of the location where the child will continue to receive services from preschool to school-based services (National Early Childhood Technical Center, 2011; 2017). States also require the parents' approval of an IEP through a conference before the child is eligible for continued services to school-based services (IDEA, 2004). This planning process will ensure students' placement and educational needs are implemented for the accommodation of the IEP (Kohler et al., 2016).

Although professionals and policy makers' statewide have developed transition initiatives, little has been done by several states in the United States. This challenge has caused a decrease in implementing practices, causing negative effects on transition for students with disabilities (Daily et al., 2012; O'Farrelly & Hennessy, 2013; Rodriguez et al., 2017; Wildenger & McIntyre, 2012). In the metropolitan area of the southern state in which this study took place, when a Child Find is submitted the evaluating team responds within "reasonable time" (Department of Education, 2019; Woods, 2019). According to the Office of Special Education Program (2011), a time limitation to seeking consent for transition planning of an IEP from early intervention to school-based is not defined.

One of the most effective forms of promoting transition planning to students with

disabilities is by providing positive social experiences (Wildenger & McIntyre, 2012). Smith (2012) agreed and recommended professionals can do so by providing information to families to decrease adjustment difficulties for the individual child during transition. According to the Office for Special Education Program (2011), states and local LEAs can provide support and evaluation through a Response to Intervention (RTI) strategy and Early Intervention Services (EIS). These methods of RTI and EIS ensuring the child has support into school-based services, (Department of Education, 2014; Office of Special Education Program, 2011). Chandroo et al. (2018) and Nolan and Spohn (2016) recommended services for students with disabilities should start at an early stage with developing the IEP to assist students with disabilities with developing the necessary skills before transition, and further information on transition planning is needed.

A review of literature on the outcomes of transition planning reported practices related to activities to prepare parents and professionals (Chandroo et al., 2018; Kohler et al., 2016; Morningstar & Mazzotti, 2014; Rouse & Hallam, 2012; Rodriguez et al., 2017; Wildenger-Welchons, & McIntyre, 2015)). Despite requirements of IDEA and studies reporting practices, students with disabilities continue to experience delays in transition causing unpreparedness for academic success (Chandroo et al., 2018; Morningstar & Mazzotti, 2014). Morningstar and Mazzotti (2014) argued this inconsistency may have been a result of professionals that work with students with disabilities who were untrained. Morningstar and Mazzotti (2014) also reported teachers and service providers that work with students with disabilities lack experience and skills to effectively plan to

transition students (Morningstar & Mazzotti, 2014). Consequently, professionals who are unprepared or lack professional development could in part contribute to poor outcomes of transition planning (Flannery et al., 2015; Kohler et al., 2016). This study explored parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers' perspectives of transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten and the factors they perceive may influence the transition process.

Summary and Conclusions

There is a problem with a gap in practice in the literature concerning the lack of multiple perspectives of the transition process when transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K services to Kindergarten services. A recent review of the southern state accountability report revealed the school districts need assistance with Part C and B of IDEA transition services for students with disabilities (Office of Special Education State Performance Plan, 2015; 2016; 2017; 2019). Using O'Toole's (2014; 2016) adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (1995; 2006) of *process person context time* and Rim-Kaufman and Pianta's (2000) ecological and dynamic model of transition, this study explored parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers' perspectives of transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten and the factors they perceive may influence the transition process. Although multiple articles on transition were reviewed, there were no data on the multiple perspectives of professionals and parents from a single location. Although researchers have looked at different perspectives of parents and teachers, and students

with and without disabilities during transition in a single study (Kurz, Reinchberg et al., 2020), no study has explored the multiple perspectives of parent, teachers, and service providers in a single study (Cook & Coley, 2020; McIntye & Wildenger-Welchons, 2015). Further research on classroom experiences and lived perspectives among parents and professionals during transition could help to explore multiple perspectives of transition (Starr et al., 2014). More research is needed for all groups of children with disabilities within different socioeconomic status (Miller, 2014).

Based on the review of literature, there is limited understanding of experiences of transition practices and how teachers and service providers perceive their role before and after transition in relation to the student's success (Quintero & McIntyre, 2011). New approaches would include experiences and concerns of parents, teachers, and specific service providers such as speech therapists, and occupational therapists within a single study from Pre-K to public school-based service (Cook & Coley, 2020; McIntyre & Wildenger-Welchons, 2015). These perspectives could shed light on less favorable transition practices and possibly identify new approaches. These approaches can possibly help to finding strategies when moving students from Pre-K early intervention services to school-based services in Kindergarten inclusion classrooms.

This study addresses gaps in practice in the literature concerning the lack of multiple perspectives of the transition process when transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K services to Kindergarten services and factors they perceive influence the transition process. These gaps include examining multiple perspectives for

transitioning students with disabilities from services at the Pre-K level to services at the Kindergarten level. This study explored multiple perspectives of parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers in a single study to contribute to literature and practices in education transition and possibly improve practices in the local area. Further exploration and examination of how these perspectives contributed to the literature is described in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this bounded qualitative case study was to explore the perspectives of parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers on transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten and the factors they perceived may have influenced the transition process. Understanding the phenomenon of transition for students with disabilities has been a concern since the 1980s. There is growing evidence that suggests the transition has a profound effect on students' knowledge and academic experience (Atchinson & Pompelia, 2018; Warren et al., 2016; Rosenberg et al., 2013). However, little is known about the experience of transition from multiple perspectives when transitioning students from service to service (Cook & Coley, 2020; McIntyre & Wildenger-Welchons, 2015). In this study, I used Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1995; 2006) of *process person context time* and Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta's ecological and dynamic model (2000) of transition to provide a guide to examine educational transition when moving students with disabilities from service to service. This bounded qualitative case study provided multiple perspectives of transition from parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers concerning the transition process from Pre-K to Kindergarten within the metropolitan area of a southern state. Results of this case study could potentially help parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers identify strategies when moving students with disabilities from service to service (Cook & Coley, 2020; Rosenberg et al., 2013; McIntyre & Wildenger-Welchons, 2015).

This chapter is organized into several sections to outline the methodology that was be used for this study. The first section includes the research design and rationale for its use. The role of the researcher as an observer will be explained, describing any biases or ethical issues that needed to be addressed. The research questions are presented, addressed, and I explained how these related to the study. In the methodology section of the study, I discussed the population and identified the justification for the sampling strategy, the number of participants, and the explanation for how participants were selected.

The instruments used for data collection as well as the permission given to use the instrument and how the instrument was modified for the interview questions in this study are discussed. Procedures for recruitment and data collection are described in detail in this chapter. The data analysis process regarding issues of trustworthiness and validity of the study is also discussed. Additionally, I described the ethical procedures in the treatment of human participants, which includes Walden's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, ethical concerns with how participants are recruited, protecting the participants confidentiality of the data collected, and how the data will be stored and then destroyed.

Research Design and Rationale

The research questions for the study were guided by the conceptual framework and related literature. To explore parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers' perspectives of transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten and

the factors they perceived may influence the transition process, the following questions were selected:

RQ1. What are Pre-K parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers' perspectives of the transition process when transferring students with disabilities from Pre-K services to Kindergarten services?

RQ2. What are Pre-K parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers' perspectives of the factors that influence transition of Pre-K students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten?

A bounded qualitative case study was used to reveal an in-depth understanding of a case (Creswell & Poth, 2018), or “bounded system” (Creswell, 2002, p. 485), which is to understand perspectives of process of transition among parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers. The words of the participants sought to develop a deeper understanding of their multiple perspectives of transition. This study described individual participants' perspectives of these events (transitions) in depth within a defined period (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; 2019). Yin (1981; 2014; 2016) noted that case studies allowed researchers to provide details on procedures of events. My role as the researcher was to collect data for this study from multiple participants via interviews. According to Patton (2015), the validity of qualitative research is based upon the comprehensive information gained from the study and the researcher's methodical proficiency rather than the sample size.

Other qualitative designs were considered but were less effective for this study. These designs included ethnography, phenomenological, grounded theory, and quantitative historical design. Per Leedy and Ormrod (2010; 2019), an ethnography is used to examine a specific group that has shared a common culture over a lengthy period to identify behaviors, interactions, and languages. Although this design would focus on a group of students with disabilities, I wanted to describe the multiple perspectives of several groups of individuals.

A phenomenological approach places importance on participants' experiences and how they interpret these experiences. In a phenomenological design, the researcher often shares a common meaning with the phenomenon of focus, which allows the researcher to gain a shared essence of the experiences (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; 2019). This approach was not suitable for my research because I was seeking to explore and understand multiple perspectives. These multiple perspectives are of a process shared by parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers. In this case, the phenomenological design was not the best match.

Grounded theory aims to build theory and is not mainly concerned with providing detailed-rich descriptions (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Although this would be a logical model, as little is known about the topic of transition of multiple perspectives, this approach was not suitable for my research because I would have difficulty in my current situation to coordinate a study that would require the extensive data collection for generating a theory (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; 2019). Furthermore, I

was not seeking to build or develop theory but seek to explore the perspectives of participants.

A historical design would be useful for developing a rationale for understanding sequences of events and speculate on the causes and effects of relationships (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; 2019). This process would include looking for artifacts of events, legal documents, diary entries, and witnesses. This would also include the use of these sources to establish cause and effects, which were not things I would include in my study. This approach was rejected because the intent would not fulfill the goals of this research study to explore multiple perspectives of transition.

Quantitative research was considered for this study but was rejected. One reason was a set of measurable variables could not be established. Wildenger and McIntyre (2012) conducted a correlational study, investigating relationships between Kindergarten preparation variables using the Teachers' Perception on Transition and the Family Experiences in Transition questionnaires. A descriptive correlational design would also include statistics of demographics, skills of students, kinds of disabilities, and experiences of teachers, service providers, and parents. A quantitative design would not be appropriate for this study as the purpose of this bounded qualitative case study was to explore the perspectives of parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers on transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten and the factors they perceive may have influenced the transition process.

This study was guided by the conceptual framework of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1995; 2006) of *process person context time* and Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta's (2000) ecological and dynamic model of transition. The use of this conceptual framework provides justification for conducting this study and serves as a guide to analyzing the data within this study. In a recent study, O'Toole (2016) and O'Toole et al. (2014) used this framework as a model to construct a central phenomenon of the lived experiences of participants such as parents, teachers, and the students. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1995; 2006) of *process person context time* and Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta's (2000) ecological and dynamic model of transition was used to provide a guide to examine educational transition.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher and observer was to recruit participants and volunteers within two school districts. I contacted the participants, purposefully selected participants, and interviewed participants. I interviewed, recorded, and interpreted the data in this qualitative study. Currently, I am serving as a general education Kindergarten teacher in one of the metropolitan areas of the southern state for this study. I have worked in the county area of this southern state for five years. I have experiences as both a general education and experience co-teaching for inclusion Pre-K classes. To avoid conflicts of interest, the study was not conducted at my school. I did not have any close personal relationship with any of participants. I do not serve in a leadership position and

do not have authority over other parents, teachers, and/or early intervention service providers.

My biases of transition deal with the fact that although there is a law for transitioning students with disabilities from service to service, there are still many issues with the process. I believe there are unresolved factors such as adequate collaboration among service providers and parents of students with disabilities. For the transition process to support the developing needs of the student, I believe all stakeholders must collaborate. I monitored my own biases by using a reflexive journal.

I used a reflexive journal to record my personal thoughts throughout the entire study and the account of what is occurring so that others can understand how and why decisions were made (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016; Koch, 1994; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). When using a reflexive journal, I recorded my personal thoughts without echoing my voice during the research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). It is important to monitor my own biases, as I have some knowledge of transition and the challenges faced by all three groups. I also know how adversely delayed transition can affect the students. The reflexive journal encouraged self-awareness (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016; Finlay, 2002; Ravitch & Carl, 2016), helped me not to impose what I already knew about the transition process, and provided a critical evaluation to record new knowledge and insights of the things that I did not know. I recorded my thoughts without voicing them before, during, and after interviews as needed and during the data analysis process.

Methodology

In this study the multiple perspectives of factors that influence the transition process was explored by conducting interviews with 12 participants. Data were collected from parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers to understand their perspectives of moving students with disabilities from service to service. The organization of this section includes the rationale for the selection of participants for the study, instruments, procedures for recruitment of participants, and issues of trustworthiness. Each section includes supporting details and information that provide the reader with the procedures and processes necessary to extend or recreate the study. A data analysis plan is also presented.

Participant Selection

Procedures for how to identify, contact, and recruit participants began by obtaining a Letter of Cooperation (National Institution of Health, 2014) to conduct the study from the school district personnel in which the service providers, teachers, and families reside. Two districts provided their own letter of cooperation. The sample of participants were composed of parents of a child with disabilities, or children with disabilities, teachers of students with disabilities in Pre-K, and early intervention service providers of students with disabilities within the metropolitan area of a southern state. Participants were purposefully selected for this inquiry (Van Manen, 1990; 2016; Whitehead & Whitehead, 2016); these participants were of interest because they had experienced transition in a way that uncovered meaning of the phenomenon. These

participants came from the two school districts that I named District 1 and District 3. Per the annual State Performance Plan Summary (2015; 2016; 2017; 2019), these were two of the districts needing assistance with transition services, per the report.

District 1 was the largest school district within the state but is now the seventh largest District, and District 3 is the third largest school district within the same metropolitan area of the southern state (State Performance Report, 2013-2015, 2019). Within these districts, there are several schools that provide services for students with disabilities in Pre-K and Kindergarten inclusion classrooms only. District 1 provides educational and therapeutic programs. Students are exposed to the regular curriculum with a maximum teacher ratio of 2:8 for students in Pre-K. Some classes are integrated with disabled and nondisabled students learning together. In District 1, speech, physical and occupational therapy services are provided (Department of Education, 2015; 2019).

In District 3, schools provide a research-based educational model with 12 inclusion classrooms with six to seven children with special needs, and 10 to 14 typically developing children within a classroom with two teachers. There are four self-contained classrooms that serve children with severe disabilities not quite ready for inclusion. These students do receive multiple learning experiences with developing children throughout the school day (Department of Education, 2015; 2019). In District 3, speech/language, occupational, physical, vision and recreational services are provided (Department of Education, 2015; 2019).

I purposefully selected 12 participants: four parents, four teachers, and four service providers from these districts. Guest et al. (2006) believed sufficient data for a case study usually occurs within 12 participants in small homogeneous groups. Maxwell (2013) reported qualitative research studies can benefit from smaller sample. Malterud et al. (2016) proposed the concept of information power, as means to provide sufficient sample size in qualitative studies and identified the need for having smaller amounts of participants to provide more information. With this number of participants, all who have a relationship with the student(s) with disabilities, I was able to provide each participant the proper consideration of time and analysis (Malterud et al., 2016). Although larger number of participants can produce more data, a smaller number of participants such as 12 can produce high standards of ethics (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; 2019) as researchers build and maintain relationships with participants in qualitative studies (Malterud et al., 2016)). With a smaller number of participants, I had greater depth of data.

Criteria for the participation of teachers included those working with a student with a disability or children with disabilities within a state-approved classroom with at least eight students. Teachers and service providers must have worked with students with disabilities for at least one school year or within a 10-month calendar school year. The length of service for teachers and service providers were verified by the participant and the school's website. To be a parent participant in the study, they must have a child/children who received services or assessment for an IEP in Pre-K, and a signed

parental consent form on file. The information regarding the students with a disability having an IEP was verified by the parent.

Once I received Walden's IRB approval number and permission to conduct the study from the school districts personnel, to recruit teachers and service providers participants, I posted a flyer in the building where the exceptional education classes were held to recruit participants from the schools. Walden University's approval number for this study is 09-20-19-0383982 and it expired on September 19, 2020. The flyer contained the title of the study, the purpose, and included my contact information, and inclusion criteria. In addition to the classes, to recruit parents, I posted the flyers on the parent information boards in the schools and handout flyers in the car line during parent pick up and drop off. Due to conditions of COVID-19 pandemic (China, 2020). I received permission from Walden University IRB to replace face-to-face contact with email, phone, video conference, or online format. A flyer was then sent via email to prospective participants to introduce the study. Once participants responded to the flyer posted and via email, I allowed interested participants to ask questions about the study and collected contact information from those who were interested.

After I collected contact information of telephone numbers and emails addresses from parents, teachers, and service providers, I established eligibility based on the criteria. Criteria for the participation of teachers included those working with a student with a disability or children with disabilities within a state-approved classroom with at least eight students. Teachers and service providers must have worked with students with

disabilities for at least one school year or within a 10-month calendar school year. To be a parent participant in the study, they must have a child/children who received services or assessment for an IEP in Pre-K, and a signed parental consent form on file. Once I established that the criteria were met by the school's website and parent IEP on file, I contacted parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers via telephone and email using the contact information provided and further discussed the study in detail, allowing questions, discussing confidentiality, and participants' rights to drop out at any point. I then set an appointment for the interview via email and telephone, during non-instructional time at a mutually agreed private location, video conference using Facetime, and phone interviews.

I emailed the consent forms to allow participants time to reviewed before the interview. At the beginning of the interview, I allowed time for questions, reviewed their obligations as participants, and their right to drop out of the study at any time, as well as my obligations as the researcher for the study. I secured and stored the participants' contact information on a secure laptop computer that is password protected, along with storing it on an USB flash drive. The consent forms, audio recordings, transcripts along with my USB flash drive, are stored in a locked file cabinet in my home office. No one else has access to the data. I will shred all paper documents and consent forms, delete audio recordings and all data files on the laptop computer and delete the USB flash drive after five years upon completion of the study.

Instrumentation

The data collection for this study employed interviews (Hesser-Biber & Leavey, 2010; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; 2019) with open-ended questions (see Appendix B and C) modified from a Teachers' Perceptions on Transition Questionnaire for teachers and service providers (Quintero & McIntyre, 2011). Parents were interviewed with open-ended questions modified (see Appendix D) from a Family Experience in Transition Questionnaire (Quintero & McIntyre, 2011). The instruments align with the conceptual framework of *process person context time*, as taken from O'Toole (2016), and O'Toole et al. (2014) updated research of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of child development on education transition and was used to examine the transition process from the perspectives of parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers. Questions varied slightly in order and phrasing for each subgroup (parents, teachers, service providers) of participants, but each question was asked as written for each subgroup to ensure accuracy of data. During the interviews, I used an interview protocol to ensure each subgroup received the same information and I asked the same questions in the same order per the protocol. A digital recorder served as means to provide a record of participants responses during the interview.

The original instruments, TPOT and FEIT, were produced by Dr. Laura Lee McIntyre, Professor and Director, School Psychologist, Associate Director, Child and Family Center, Prevention Science Institute of Oregon, and Nicole Quintero at the University of Illinois at Chicago. I contacted Dr. McIntyre to secure permission to use

the instrument and permission was granted to use and modify the instruments. I searched for studies throughout the library and ResearchGate but could not find any other studies that used the TPOT and FEIT except the original authors (Quintero & McIntyre, 2011). The original instruments were used in studies conducted by the authors with groups of parents of students with and without disabilities (McIntyre & Wildenger-Welchons, 2015; Wildenger & McIntyre, 2011), service providers such as school psychologist (McIntyre et al., 2014), and groups of teachers of students with and without disabilities who reside in a northwestern state (Quintero & McIntyre, 2010; 2011). To establish content validity of the questions, the district special education coordinator reviewed the interview questions for clarity and biases. This special education coordinator is an expert in the field and holds a certification in early childhood education in special education. To ensure confidentiality, the special education coordinator signed a letter of confidentiality to ensure the identity of the participants would not be disclosed.

The TPOT was modified to examine the perspectives of transition from teachers and service providers within two school districts using open ended questions. The FEIT was modified to examine parents' perspectives on transition when moving students with disabilities from service to service, again, using open ended questions. The basis for choosing these instruments was that they are appropriate for my study as they were designed to examine multiple perspectives of the transition process from parents, teachers, and service providers. For example, the TPOT was originally designed to analyze parents' perspectives of transition (Quintero & McIntyre, 2011). These

instruments allowed participants to share their perspectives of experiences and outcomes during transition. The interview protocol for this study contained questions that addressed RQ1; related to understanding the participants' perspectives of the transition process for parents (Interview Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5), teachers (Interview Questions 1, 2, 3), and service providers (Interview Questions 1, 2, 3), when transferring students with disabilities from Pre-K services to Kindergarten services. The interview protocol for this study also contained interview questions that answered RQ2; understanding the perspectives of the factors that influence transition from Pre-K services to Kindergarten service for parents (Interview Questions 6, 7, 8, 9), teachers (Interview Questions 4, 5, 6), and service providers (Interview Questions 4, 5, 6).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Recruitment

Participants or volunteers for this study came from two school districts that make up Part C of IDEA of the multidisciplinary team of parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers during transition (IDEA, 2004). First, to recruit parents, teachers, and early intervention service provider participants, I posted a flyer in the building where exceptional education classes were held in the schools. The flyer contains the title of the study, the purpose, and includes my contact information, and inclusion criteria. I also posted the flyers on the parent information boards in the schools, and handout flyers in the car line during parent pick up and drop off. Due to conditions of COVID-19 pandemic (China, 2020) I received permission from Walden University's IRB

to replace face-to-face contact with email, phone, video conference, or online format.

The flyer was then sent via email to introduce the study to participants. Once participants responded to the flyer posted, via email and telephone, I allowed interested participants to ask questions about the study and collected contact information from those who were interested.

Second, after I collected contact information, such as telephone numbers and emails addresses of participants, I established eligibility based on the criteria. I verified teachers and service providers employment within a 10-month calendar school year, and parents of a child/children with a signed IEP by the participant and the school's website and asked parents to provide a copy of the child's IEP. Once I established all criteria were met, I contacted participants via telephone with the contact information provided and emailed the informed consent. I emailed the consent forms to allow participants time to review before the interview. I further discussed the study in detail to allow questions, discussed confidentiality, and participants' rights to drop out at any point.

Participation

Parents, teachers, and early intervention service provider participants for this study came from two school districts. The identity of these parents, teachers, and early intervention service provider participants and location of the schools and school districts remain anonymous. The districts are assigned alphanumeric codes such as D1 and D3. Parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers were assigned alphanumeric codes such as P1, P2, and so forth for a parent, T1, T2, and so forth for a teacher, and

SP1, SP2, and so forth for a service provider. In the southern state for this study, the multidisciplinary team is based on the local state's Child Find (2017), Office of Special Education Program (OSEP) State Performance Plan (SPP, 2015; 2016; 2017; 2019), which also make up the teachers and early intervention service providers with parents of the individual student with disability. Per OSEP service providers included: administrators, speech/language therapist, occupational therapist, school counselors, psychologist, and school nurse.

Data Collection

Once I received Walden's IRB approval number and permission to conduct the study from the school district personnel, I posted a flyer at the buildings where exceptional education classes were held, to recruit participants from the schools. Walden University's approval number for this study is 09-20-19-0383982 and it expired on September 19, 2020. The flyer contained the title of the study, the purpose, and included my contact information, and inclusion criteria. In addition to the classes, to recruit parents, I posted the flyers on the parent information boards in the schools and provided handout flyers in the car line during parent pick up and drop off. Due to conditions of COVID-19 pandemic (China, 2020) I received permission from Walden University's IRB to replace face-to-face contact with email, phone, video conference, or online format. I then posted the same flyer via email to participants. Once parents, teachers, and service providers agreed to volunteer for the study by responding to the flyers, emails, and telephone, I secured their contact information. I then followed up with parents, teachers,

and early intervention service provider participants within a week by telephone and email to schedule an interview.

Upon receiving notification from persons who were willing to volunteer to be in the study, I applied purposeful sampling for this study, and selected 12 participants: four parents, four teachers, and four service providers from two school districts. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), purposeful sampling in qualitative research allowed researchers to select individuals to participate in the study for specified reasons that developed from main concepts and outline of the research questions. I utilized purposeful sampling by collecting and examining data from participants who had similar knowledge and events (Patton, 2015). To secure there were enough participants I extended my search to other schools in the district, following the same protocol outlined above. Once participants who meet the criteria were chosen, I contacted participants via telephone to begin establishing a researcher-participant relationship, emailed the informed consent, allowed time for questions, and scheduled an interview. I emailed the consent forms to allow participants time to review before the interview. The interviews were scheduled within five days after initial contact during non-instructional time at a mutually agreed private location, phone, and video conference using facetime, and email responses. Participants were asked to sign the consent forms before the interview began.

Participants were reminded two days before the scheduled interview via telephone of the meeting time and day of interview. For the interview, I used a digital recorder to provide a detailed record of each interview. The interview would last approximately 45-

60 minutes and not for more than an hour, unless the participants wished to go over the allotted time. I scheduled and conducted two interviews each week for six weeks, allowing two extra weeks in cases of cancellation and/or rescheduling.

For teachers and service providers, the interview questions provided data to answer RQ1; understanding the perspectives of the transition process when students with disabilities are transferred from Pre-K services to Kindergarten services, and RQ2; understanding their perspectives of factors that influence the transition process of Pre-K students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten. For parents, the interview questions provided data to answer RQ1; understanding their perspectives of the transition process when students with disabilities are transferred from Pre-K services to Kindergarten services, and to answer RQ2; understanding their perspectives of factors that influence the transition process of Pre-K students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten (see Appendix D). Questions vary slightly in order and phrasing for each subgroup of participants, but each question was asked as written for each subgroup to ensure accuracy of data. I included a sample list of follow-up and probing question in each protocol to be used during the interviews. The interview protocols ensured each subgroup of participants are asked the same questions in the same order in the same way and a digital recorder serve as means to provide a record of participants responses during the interview.

Once the interviews were completed, I thanked participants for their time and verified contact information in the event I needed to clarify an answer. I transcribed the

recording immediately by hand following each interview and saved the transcripts on a secure laptop computer that is password protected, along with storing it on an USB flash drive. The identity of participants and location of the school districts remained confidential by assigning alphanumeric codes of D1 for District 1 and D3 for District 3. Parents, teachers and early intervention service providers were also assigned alphanumeric codes such as P1, P2, and so forth for a parent, T1, T2, and so forth for a teacher, and SP1, SP2, and so forth for an early intervention service provider.

Data collected from these instruments and from the data sources of parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers were stored on a secure laptop computer that is password protected, along with storing it on an USB flash drive that will be stored in a locked file cabinet in my home office for five years. No one else will have access to the data. Five years after the completion of this study, I will personally delete all documents and digital data. Paper data will be shredded, the USB flash drive will be deleted, and audio recordings will be deleted.

Data Analysis Plan

According to Bogdan and Biklen (2003, 2016), Saldana (2016), and Williams and Moser (2019), qualitative data analysis is described as organizing the collected data into meaningful chunks, searching for patterns, and discovering what is important, and how to convey what is learned to others. Creswell (2013), Patton (2015), and Rubin and Rubin (2012) agreed that data analysis involves exploring and organizing data, identifying occurrences and the overall meaning of the data, conducting analysis and provide a

description of the participants perspectives to identify themes, generalize the data and providing interpretation of the data. During the analysis I reviewed the data, searching for categories, and relationships among the categories, starting from initial categories to form themes (Saldana, 2016; Strauss & Cobin, 1998; Williams & Moser, 2019). The data collected from the interviews of parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers were used to answer research questions to understand the participants' perspectives of the transition process when students with disabilities are transferring from service to service, and the factors that they perceived influence the transition process. Once the interviews were completed, I transcribed the recording immediately following each interview. I listened to the audio recording several times before transcribing and to be sure the transcripts were accurate.

To analyze the data from the transcripts, I employed thematic analysis using a priori, open and axial coding strategies to identify themes from the in-depth interviews with parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers. I used thematic analysis to establish themes. According to Nowell et al. (2017), Scharp and Sanders (2019), and Williams and Moser (2019), thematic analysis is the process of finding, exploring, and reporting themes within the data. I reviewed the data until the point of saturation, which arises when no new themes or patterns were found through continued data collection but, instead emphasizes what has already been drawn from previous data analysis (Burkholder et al., 2016; Maltured et al., 2016). According to Miles and Hubberman (1994), Miles et al. (2014), and Saldana (2016), this analysis can be with a priori themes

based on theory or to generate emergent themes. I used open coding to organize the data into chunks that were able to be managed, to help me identify ideas and concepts, through the analysis of the transcribed text (Saldana, 2016; William & Moser, 2019). I used axial coding to organize the codes into categories, compare the codes searching for similar words, and phrases to support the initial codes to identify connections from the data and the study research questions (Saldana, 2016; Williams & Moser, 2019).

First, I read through the complete transcripts without coding. This step helped me to become familiar with the data. Each line of the transcripts of transcripts from parent, teachers, and earl intervention service providers were read, notes made in the margin of the transcripts, then I read the notes regarding chunks of data that seem relevant to the research questions. I then used a priori codes developed from the conceptual framework of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (1995; 2006) of *process person context time*. Miles and Hubberman (1994), Miles et al. (2014), and Saldana (2016), suggested to develop a start list of codes from the theoretical framework prior to fieldwork. The a priori codes were used to identify meaning without any preconceived ideas. The start list and findings were compared, and codes revisited. My a priori codes were developed from Bronfenbrenner's (1995; 2006) *process person context time* model: "process" as the main role of relationships in positive educational transitions among students with disabilities and their peers, among teachers, between parents and teachers, and teachers at different education levels; "person" factors such as age, social skills, independence, communication skills; "context" based factors, such as school climate related to

discipline procedures and function are important elements to transition; “time,” the most essential construct represented in the current work through identifying and recognizing educational transition as an important time in the lives of students with disabilities and their families, and analysis of the similarities and differences between transitions that occur. Each line of the transcripts from parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers were read, notes made in the margins of the transcript document regarding chunks of data that seem relevant to the research questions and a priori codes of *process person context time*.

According to Saldana (2016), Strauss and Corbin (1998), Ravitch and Carl (2016), and Williams and Moser (2019), by identifying temporary themes emerging from the raw data is a process referred to as open coding. Open coding allowed me to read the data and developed codes from the narratives of the transcripts. By organizing the data into manageable chunks, this process helped me to discover the ideas, and concepts (Saldana, 2016). By hand, I used different color highlighters to determine the open coded data. In the subsequent rounds of coding, I focused specifically on the research question until I coded all data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The responses and codes were merged to find similar patterns/categories among each participant. I identified and tentatively named the categories (Saldana, 2016). This process of open coding included reading the data several times, identifying text segments, and assigning tentative labels for each chunks of data from the open coded data. Words, phrases, or events that appear to be the same were grouped into the same categories.

Last, a re-examination of the categories examined the a priori and open coding data and broader themes descriptors to identify and determine how these categories connect through a process called axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; 2008; Norwell et al., 2017; William & Moser, 2019). According to Norwell et al. (2017), Strauss and Corbin (1998), and William and Moser (2019), the distinct categories identified in the open coding were compared and combined to acquire new understanding of the phenomenon. Axial coding was used to find relationships among the open codes and the raw data. During axial coding, I determined whether sufficient data existed to support the themes by reducing the open codes into categories (Norwell et al., 2017; William & Moser, 2019). Themes were emerged by looking for patterns among the categories.

I reviewed the transcripts at least three times and used highlighters to identify words and phrases that were the same, and references to support taking another look at the initial codes into categories that were applicable for concentrated consideration. Codes were organized based on their similarities. I documented the categories and codes in my journal and looked for patterns in the categories. I identified the occurrence of the words or phrases identified as codes in the interview transcripts. I compared and placed the codes into different categories to discover connections between the data and research questions.

Triangulation of the data among the different perspectives of parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers served to discover the recurring themes from the data as well as corroborating the data collected from participants. The data collected

from each group of participants provided thick, rich, and detailed data to the study. Any discrepant data from any of the data collected are included in the study, because these may provide a more representative account of what occurred (Miles et al., 2014; Saldana, 2016). Discrepant data are contradictions, and data that counters a theme. There were no discrepant data from the perspectives of parents, teachers, and service providers.

Trustworthiness

The organization of this section included how I ensured trustworthiness of the study. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), Merriam (2009), Merriam and Tisdell (2016), and Van Manen (2016), qualitative researchers should use terms such as *credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability*. I considered issues of quality and trustworthiness for this qualitative research study by addressing the components of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Each terms and subsection address specific elements that are unique to a qualitative case study research and establishes trustworthiness. Merriam (2009) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016) mentioned qualitative researchers use various validation strategies to ensure their research demonstrated validity and reliability. Each topic describes how I ensured accuracy of the finding and analysis. This section concludes with ethical procedures for the treatment of participants' rights in the study.

Credibility

To ensure internal validity, credibility of the findings, I checked for credibility of the interview among parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers. This

allowed me to triangulate the data and look for emerging themes (Creswell, 2012; 2018; Van Manen, 2016) as I compared the data. I followed several strategies: triangulation, member checks, and reflexivity. I triangulated by corroborating findings among the three data sources of parent, teachers, and early intervention service providers. Triangulation is defined as using several types of data collection and sources to increase the results of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Renz et al., 2018). Triangulation of the data served to discover the recurring themes from the data as well as corroborate the data collected from each group of participants (Miles & Hubberman, 1994; Miles et al., 2014; Saldana, 2016).

At the completion of the data analysis, I conducted member checking with participants (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Member checking is a common strategy used to ensure credibility of the findings. This process occurred once the data were analyzed and themes created. I employed this strategy as I returned a two-page summary of the study findings to participants for them to check the accuracy of the information. Again, this was emailed, and participants had one week to review.

Reflexivity and peer review were the last strategies I used to ensure credibility. Reflexivity required me to think about the knowledge constructions, especially related to my biases, in the entire research process, and how my role as the researcher and experience might impact the results of the study (Merriam, 2009; Ravitch, & Carl, 2016). To employ reflexivity in my role as a researcher, I respected the participants and the sites of this study as I interpret the data, not allowing any biases or personal experiences

determine how I interpreted the data. I used a reflexive journal throughout the entire research process (Bogden & Biklen, 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

In my reflexive journal, I recorded data analysis and provided a rationale throughout the research process. I recorded my biases, and the account of what was occurring in terms of my interest (Bogden & Biklen, 2016; Koch, 1994; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I recorded my personal thoughts without echoing my voice during the research. I used a peer reviewer to avoid such biases or misinterpretation of the data. Peer review is the process of allowing a peer to review the data analysis process in order to make suggestions (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I asked a peer reviewer, who is a Walden University alumnus, doctoral graduate in the field of education, published author, licensed social worker, former educator, and dean of schools in the field of education to review the transcribed data to avoid biases or misinterpretation of the data and assess if data is adequate.

Transferability

Transferability or external validity is the responsibility of the reader of the research. In qualitative research, researchers strive to understand how the findings would prove to be useful in other situations, or whether the finding can apply to another similar context (Van Manen, 1990; 2016). To strive to provide sufficient information to allow researchers to replicate the study in similar context, the thick description from parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers, of the transition process, could

possibly allow the findings that are transferable to expand other locations, participants, and settings, especially those with a large number of disabled children or those incurring issues with transition. After coding the data, I compared the data from the three groups of participants which provided a rich, thick description of the setting, and participants' perspectives and experiences. This comprehensive description of context can assist readers in identifying if their situations are comparable to the study.

Triangulation of the data served to discover the recurring themes as well as corroborated the data collected from each group of participants (Miles, Hubberman & Saldana, 2014; Renz et al., 2018; Saldana, 2016). I triangulated my data by corroborating findings among multiple data sources of parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers. Quotes from parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers, and description of the phenomenon under study were included in Chapter 4. The thick descriptions can allow the reader to have proper understanding of the study, enabling them to compare the phenomenon in the study with those which the reader has seen emerge in their own situations.

Dependability

To achieve dependability, as it relates to the consistency of the findings, I used triangulation (Denzin, 1970, 1978; Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Renz, Carrington, & Badger, 2018; Van Manen, 2016) to ensure the process was logical, traceable, and documented clearly. Triangulation is the process of corroborating the findings among multiple data sets. Renz et al.'s (2018) mentioned three subtype that

triangulated data: interviews, note taking, and tape recording. For this study I triangulated by corroborating the findings of interviews gathered from multiple perspectives of parent, teachers, and early intervention service providers. Each participant was interviewed using an interview protocol with modified questions from a TPOT and/or FEIT (Quintero & McIntyre, 2011).

Once the interview data were transcribed to ensure that the findings are valid and reliable, member checking was used (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) was used. Member checking is returning a summary of the data findings to the participants to check for accuracy of the findings (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Nowell et al., 2017). Reflexivity assured the findings were derived from the personal experiences and perspectives of each participant and not from my own perspectives. A reflexive journal was used to which add perspective of any biased I might have or if the process of the study needs to be audited (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I also used a peer reviewer to avoid biases or misinterpretation of the data. Peer review is the process of allowing a peer to review the transcribed data in order to make suggestions and assess if the data is accurate (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I asked the peer reviewer, who is a Walden University alumnus, doctoral graduate in education, published author, licensed social worker, former educator, and dean of school in the field of education to review the transcribed data in order to avoid biases or misinterpretation of the data and assess if data is adequate.

Confirmability

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2019), Lincoln and Guba (1985), and Van Manen (2016), confirmability and objectivity are the same in that the outcome of an investigation informs the context but is not the result of the researchers' biases.

Confirmability is established when credibility, transferability, and dependability are all achieved (Lincoln and Guba, 1989; Van Manen, 2016). Confirmability for the study was established when the interpretations and findings were clearly derived from the data. As the researcher, I assured confirmability by keeping a personal reflexive journal and recording my feelings, biases, and knowledge of transition throughout the interview and data analysis process. I used a reflexive journal throughout the entire process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In my reflexive journal, I recorded the process of data analysis and provide a rationale throughout the research process for decisions made.

Confirmability can also be established by creating an audit trail with notes and memos that document how data were collected, how decisions were made during the process of coding the data, how categories or themes were developed, and an explanation of the themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Van Manen, 2016). Denzin (1970, 1978) mentioned using a reflexive journal if the process of the study needs to be audited. Bogdan and Biklen (2016), and Ravitch and Carl's (2016) study also supported using a reflective journal throughout the process of the study. I also used a peer reviewer to avoid biases or misinterpretation of the data. Peer review is the

process of allowing peers to review the data analysis process in order to make suggestions (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I asked the peer reviewer, who is a Walden University alumnus, doctoral graduate in education, published author, licensed social worker, former educator, and dean of schools in the field of education to review the transcribed data to avoid biases or misinterpretation of the data analysis and assess if data is adequate. Triangulation of the different sources of information can also increase the validity of a study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Renz et al., 2018). Data triangulation also demonstrated trustworthiness and confirmability in the data that was gathered from the multiple perspectives among parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers.

Ethical Procedures

Prior to beginning the research, I received permission to conduct the study from Walden's IRB, and then from two districts' personnel offices. Once I receive Walden's IRB approval number and permission to conduct the study from the school districts, I received permission from two school district personnel and obtained a letter of cooperation to conduct the study. Walden University's approval number for this study is 09-20-19-0383982 and it expired on September 19, 2020. I then followed all IRB guidelines concerning the privacy of all participants. Once I obtained the letter of cooperation from two school districts, I recruited participants through a generated flyer where I posted in the schools and meeting rooms, and on parent information boards. The flyer outlines the title of the study, the purpose, and included my contact information, and

inclusion criteria. Due to conditions of COVID-19 pandemic (China, 2020) I received permission from Walden to replace face to face contact with email, phone, video conference or online format. A flyer was then sent via email to introduce the study to participants. The interview settings varied from during non-instructional time at a mutually agreed private location, video conference using Facetime, phone interviews, and email.

Before beginning the research and collecting data, potential ethical dilemmas were addressed. The rights of the participants and the research site were respected, not putting the site or any vulnerable population at risk while protecting their privacy (Creswell, 2012; 2018). I obtained a signed consent form from each participant before the interview began, keeping a copy and providing them with a copy. All participants received a consent form giving an in-depth explanation as to the purpose of the study, their individual rights as a volunteer participant, the right of privacy, the right to ask questions, the benefits of the study, their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences, and receive a copy of the study (Creswell, 2010; National Institution of Health, 2014). The consent forms included permission to audiotape the interviews, asking the participants to review the final data, and time it took for each interview. If there were not enough participants to provide sufficient data, I extended my search to other schools in the district, following the same protocol outlined above. The participants in this study could choose to withdraw with no consequences and their confidentiality and privacy would be preserved.

For data collection purposes, I needed to know the identity of each participant. However, the identify of these participants and locations of the school districts remain confidential. Yin (2014) mentioned researchers need to protect human subjects to maintain ethical practices in research. In order to protect the privacy of the participants, I ensured that participants understood that neither their names, nor the location of the school districts would be revealed. Once participants agreed to participate in the study, I assigned an alpha numeric code, such as D1 for districts, P1, P2, and so forth for parents, T1, T2, and so forth for teachers, and SP1, SP2, and so forth for service providers. At the completion of the study, I shared a one to two-page summary of the finding with all participants, district personnel, and school administrators. All data were stored on a secure laptop computer that is password protected, along with storing it on an USB flash drive in a locked file cabinet in my home office. The consent forms, along with my USB flash drive, was stored in a locked file cabinet in my home office. Files will be deleted from the USB flash drive, and audio recordings deleted after five years upon completion of this study.

Summary

There is a problem in a metropolitan area in a southern state concerning the lack of multiple perspectives of the transition process when transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K services to Kindergarten service. There is growing evidence that suggest the transition has a profound effect on students' knowledge and academic experiences (Atchinson & Pompelia, 2018; Rosenberg et al., 2013; Warren et al., 2016).

However, little is known about the experiences from multiple perspectives when transitioning students from service to service (Cook & Coley, 2020; McIntyre & Wildenger-Welchons, 2015). There is a gap in practice in the literature on transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K services to Kindergarten services. A recent review of the southern state school districts' accountability report revealed school districts need assistance with Part C and B of IDEA transition services for students with disabilities (Office of Special Education State Performance Plan, 2015; 2016; 2017). Using O'Toole's (2014; 2016) adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (1995; 2006) of *process person context time* and Rim-Kaufman and Pianta's (2000) ecological and dynamic model of transition, this study explored parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers' perspectives of transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten and the factors they perceived may influence the transition process.

The research method in this study allowed the understanding of events, perspectives, and experiences connected to the transition process, and challenges of transition among professionals who work with students with disabilities and parents of students with disabilities. By using a bounded qualitative case study, I explored, described, categorized, and interpret the data, organizing these into themes synthesized for an in-depth description of participants' perspectives (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; 2019). The results of this study may potentially help teachers, service providers, and parents identify strategies to make the transition process smoother when moving students with disabilities

from service to service (Cook & Coley, 2020; McIntyre & Wildenger-Welchons, 2015; Rosenberg et al., 2013).

This chapter outlined the methodology used for this study, the research design and rationale for its use, research questions, and how each research question related to the study. In the methodology of the study, I discussed the population and identified the justification for the sampling strategy, the number of participants, and the explanation for how participants were selected. The instruments used for data collection were presented in detail as well as the permission given to use existing instruments and how the instruments were modified for the interview questions in this study. Procedures for recruitment and data collection, issues of trustworthiness and validity of the study and ethical procedures in the treatment of human participants with IRB approval, recruitment of participants, and steps protecting the anonymity of these participants were presented. In Chapter four I discussed the reflections and conclusion, the setting, data collection, data analysis and results, and evidence of trustworthiness.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this bounded qualitative case study was to explore the perspectives of parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers on transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten and the factors they perceived may have influenced the transition process in a metropolitan area of a Southern state. While researchers have conducted studies on transition to Kindergarten (Karila & Rantavuori, 2014; Lietavcova & ViteKova, 2018; Miller, 2014; Starr et al., 2014; Stormshak et al., 2020; Stormshak & Caruthers, 2020; Waren et al., 2016), relatively no studies have addressed multiple perspectives of parents, teachers, and service providers within a single study (Cook and Coley, 2020; McIntyre & Wildenger-Welchons, 2015). Due to an insufficient amount of research conducted on multiple perspectives of transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten (Cook & Coley, 2020; McIntyre & Wildenger-Welchons, 2015), my study provided multiple perspectives of parents, teachers, and service providers on transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten and the factors they perceived influenced transition.

To explore perspectives of parents, teachers, and service providers, information was obtained through interviews to answer the following research questions: RQ1. What are Pre-K parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers' perspectives of the transition process when transferring students with disabilities from Pre-K services to Kindergarten services? RQ2. What are Pre-K parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers' perspectives of the factors that influence transition of Pre-K students

with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten? The organization of this chapter contains an analysis of data related to the questions to gain a deeper understanding of the perspectives of parents, teachers, and service providers. In Chapter 4, I presented the results of the study which included: (a) the setting, (b) participant demographics, (c) data collections, (d) data analysis, (e) results to address each research question, and (f) evidence of trustworthiness.

Setting

The participants in this study were recruited from two school districts within a metropolitan area of a southern state. District 1 is the seventh largest district, and District 3 is the third largest school district within the metropolitan area of the southern state (State Performance Report, 2019). Within these two districts, several schools provide services for students with disabilities in Pre-K and Kindergarten inclusion classrooms only. District 1 provides educational and therapeutic programs. Students are exposed to the regular curriculum with a maximum teacher ratio of 2:8 for students in Pre-K. Some classes are integrated with disabled and nondisabled students learning together. In District 1, speech, physical, and occupational therapy services are provided (Department of Education, 2016; 2019).

District 3 schools provide a research-based educational model with 12 inclusion classrooms with six to seven children with special needs, and 10 to 14 typically developing children within a classroom with two teachers. These students do receive multiple learning experiences with developing children throughout the school day

(Department of Education, 2016; 2019). In District 3, speech/language, occupational, physical, vision, and recreational services are provided (Department of Education, 2016; 2019). Due to conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic (China, 2020), the interview settings varied taking place during non-instructional time at a mutually agreed private location, during a video conference using Facetime, phone interviews, and email responses.

Participants' Demographics

The participants in this study included 11 females and one male; four parents, four teachers, and four early intervention service providers. I assigned an alphanumeric code, such as D1 for districts, P1, P2, and so forth for parents, T1, T2, and so forth for teachers, and SP1, SP2, and so forth for service providers. Parents in the study had a student with a disability enrolled in public school Pre-K with an active IEP. Four parents were females, and one parent was a male. One parent, P3 had a child who received occupational therapy services and has been diagnosed with a disability for three year. Three parents, P1, P2, and P4 had a child who received speech services and has been diagnosed with a disability for two to three years (see Table 1).

Table 1*Demographic Information for Parent Participants*

Participant	District	Services received	Years diagnosed with a disability
P1	D3	Speech Therapy	3
P2	D1	Speech Therapy	2
P3	D3	Occupational Therapy	3
P4	D1	Speech Therapy	2

Teachers were employed in public schools with certified teaching experience in the inclusion setting ranging from five to 22 years at their current school. Two teachers held a Doctorate. All teachers were females and certified in special education. T1 had educated students with disabilities in her current school for three years but had been working with students with disabilities for a total of 20 years. T2 had educated students with disabilities in her current school for five years but had been educating students with disabilities for a total of 11 years. T3 had educated students with disabilities at her current school for five years. T4 had educated students with disabilities at her current school for 22 years but had been educating students with disabilities for a total of 36 years (see Table 2).

Table 2*Demographic Information for Teacher Participants*

Participants	District	Teachers	Years of experience teaching
T1	D3	Pre-K Teacher	20
T2	D1	Pre-K Teacher	11
T3	D1	Pre-K Teacher	5
T4	D1	Pre-K Teacher	36

Service providers were employed in the public schools with experience ranging from three to 20 years. One service provider held a Doctorate. All service providers were females. SP1 had provided speech therapy services to students with disabilities for 12 years. SP2 had provided occupational therapy services to students with disabilities for seven years. SP3 had provided counseling/occupational therapy services to students with disabilities for 20 years. SP4 had provided speech therapy services to students with disabilities for three years (see table 3).

Table 3*Demographic Information for Service Provider Participants*

Participants	District	Service Provider	Years of experience providing services
SP1	D3	Speech Therapist	12
SP2	D3	Occupational Therapy	7
SP3	D3	Counseling/Occupational	20
SP4	D3	Speech Therapy	3

Data Collection

I ensured that the data collection process was aligned with the study research questions and data collection plan. The data collection process began after I obtained Walden University's IRB approval (approval 09-20-19-0383982). I collected data from 12 participants: four parents, four teachers, and four service providers from two school districts in a metropolitan area of a southern state. Due to conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, I received Walden's IRB approval to replace face to face interview with video conferences using Facetime, phone interviews, and emails responses. Data collection was based on the participant's preference of email responses from one parent, one teacher, and one service provider, followed by an immediate phone call to review the transcripts; during non-instructional time at a mutually agreed private location with one teacher; during a video conference using Facetime with one parent, and one service provider; and semistructured phone interviews with two parents, two service providers, and two teachers.

The interviews were scheduled within five days after initial contact. I scheduled and conducted two interviews each week for six weeks, allowing two extra weeks for cancellation and rescheduling. Participants were reminded two days before the scheduled interview via telephone of the time and day. The length of each interview varied based on the amount of information each participant shared and lasted 30-45 minutes. I conducted each interview in one single session in a semistructured format. During the interviews, I used an interview protocol (see Appendix B, C, and D) to ensure each

subgroup received the same information and I asked the same questions in the same order per the protocol. Questions varied slightly in order and phrasing for each subgroup (parents, teachers, service providers) of participants, but each question was asked as written for each subgroup to ensure the accuracy of data. I used a reflexive journal to record my personal thoughts throughout the entire study to control for bias. For the interview questions that were sent electronically via email at the request of the three participants, I followed up with participants via telephone immediately to review and acknowledge receipt of the transcripts.

I collected and recorded data on an interview protocol (see Appendix B, C, and D). I used a digital audio recorder to record the interview responses of the telephone, face to face, and facetime interviews. I transcribed all recordings immediately after the interview by hand. The typed transcripts with the date, place or type of interview, and participant's alphanumeric codes (for identification) were stored on secure laptop computer that is password protected. Once the interviews were completed and I collected the email responses, I conducted a post-interview with the following steps: (a) thanked the participants for interviewing, (b) thanked participants for agreeing to be interviewed question responses that were emailed, (c) reminded participants of the confidentiality and treatment of data, (d) informed the participants' to contact me if they had any questions, and (d) informed the participants they would be contacted via email to review the study findings for accuracy.

There was one variation in data collection from my original plan. As stated in Chapter 3, the interviews would last approximately 45-60 minutes and not for more than an hour, unless the participants wished to go over the allotted time. The interviews ranged from 30 minutes to up to 45 minutes as opposed to 45-60 minutes mentioned in Chapter 3 for the amount of time the interviews took place. The time depended on the details and experiences of the participant's perspective of the transition process. There were no unusual circumstances encountered in data collection.

Data Analysis

I analyzed the data in this qualitative bounded case study by employing four steps: (a) arrange and prepare the transcribed data, (b) apply thematic analysis using a priori, open, and axial coding strategies, (c) identify themes emerged, and (d) define the themes from the in-depth interviews with parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers. The procedure for analyzing the data involved listening to the digital audios, transcribed the participant responses verbatim after each interview, and reviewed the transcripts. I employed thematic analysis (Williams & Moser, 2019), using a priori, open, and axial coding strategies to identify themes from the in-depth interviews with parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers. I used thematic analysis to establish themes. I reviewed the transcripts, research questions and themes to define and determine the developing themes.

Arrange and Prepare the Transcribed Data

For this step of analyzing the data, I prepared and arranged the transcribed data. I collected all digital audio recordings from the face-to-face interview, Face time interviews, telephone interview transcripts, and email responses. I listened to the digital audio recordings and transcribed the participants' responses verbatim immediately after each interview. I reviewed the transcripts with the digital audio recordings for accuracy. I saved the transcripts and email responses using alphanumeric identifiers to protect the identity of each participant on a password protected computer. I printed out a copy of the transcripts, and email responses. I listened to the digital audios and I read through the completed transcripts twice without coding to become familiar with the data, rereading the transcripts line by line (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; 2016) to identify codes that emerged based on similar words and phrases.

Thematic Analysis

According to Nowell et al. (2017), Sharp and Sanders (2019), and Williams and Moser (2019), thematic analysis is the process of finding, exploring, and reporting themes within the data. According to Miles and Hubberman (1994), Miles et al. (2014), and Saldana (2016), thematic analysis can be completed with a priori themes based on theory or to generate emergent themes. During the initial analysis procedure, I listened to the digital audio and transcribed the participants' responses verbatim immediately after each interview. I read through the completed transcripts without coding to become familiar with the data then made notes of first impressions, rereading the transcripts line

by line (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; 2016). Each line of the transcripts from parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers were read, notes made in the margins of the transcript document regarding chunks of data that seemed relevant to the research questions.

To begin Bronfenbrenner's bioecological framework, I used different colors to highlight concepts, phrases, or recurrent patterns of words relevant to the conceptual framework of *process person context time* of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (1995; 2006) for each participant's interview. I reread the data looking for patterns of words and phrases before assigning a priori code. The analysis of 12 participants' words and phrases fit under color coding: (a) process-orange, (b) person-green, (c) context-pink, (d) time-yellow. In conducting a priori coding I searched for ideas, phrases, and words that were reflective of the constructs based on Bronfenbrenner bioecological model (1995; 2006) of *process person*, for RQ1, and *context time* for RQ2 (see Appendix E and G).

After a priori coding was completed, I applied open coding in a step-by-step process to the a priori codes and the interview data from the 12 participants. Open coding allowed me to read the data and develop codes from the narratives of the transcripts. I organized the data into chunks to help me identify ideas and concepts, through the analysis of the transcribed text (Saldana, 2016; William & Moser, 2019). I read the data looking for repetition of words, phrases, or concepts. The repeated words, phrases, or concepts were labeled and used to give the group of similar words meaning. I

assigned 28 open codes among three groups of participants each and placed them in a document file. Common threads were identified from the 12 participants' initial interview responses to answer the research questions addressed. Transcript excerpts are listed separately for parents, teachers, and service providers (see Appendix F and H).

After a priori and open coding, I used axial coding in a two-step process: identified the relationships among the open codes, reviewed the transcripts to form categories, and searched the categories for patterns to form themes (Saldana, 2016; Williams & Moser, 2019). Through axial coding, I re-examined the categories, the a priori, and open coding data, and broader themes descriptors, to identify and determine how these categories connected (Strauss & Corbin, 2008; Williams & Moser, 2019). According to Strauss and Corbin (2008), the distinct categories identified in the open coding should be compared and combined to acquire new understanding of the phenomenon. Axial coding was used to find relationships among the open codes and the raw data. For example: during axial coding, I determined whether sufficient data existed to support the themes by reducing the open codes into categories searching for patterns (Norwell et al., 2017; William & Moser, 2019). The 28 codes among three groups of four participants were reduced to 14 during axial coding. Seven categories emerged from the data for RQ1 (see Appendix F). The seven categories that addressed parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers' perspectives of the transition process when transferring students with disabilities from Pre-K services to Kindergarten services which addressed RQ1, were:

- minimal involvement and relationships,
- concerns for the new classroom environment/student relationships,
- concerns for curriculum and instructional support services,
- challenges for parents, teachers, and service providers to engage in transition,
- communication barriers for parents, teachers, and service providers,
- need for communication of resources for students with disabilities,
- positive communication to support parents, teachers, and service providers with barriers.

I repeated the same procedures for open coding done for RQ1, and for RQ2.

Seven categories emerged for RQ2 (see Appendix H). The seven categories that addresses parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers' perspectives of the factors that influenced transition of Pre-K students from Pre-K to Kindergarten which addressed RQ2 were:

- transition support services to prepare students,
- consistency and training,
- support systems and resources for parents,
- types of transition practices used,
- transition practices and preparation of the IEP meeting,
- consistency and mutual agreement with transition practices,
- opportunity for training/support services for parent.

Identify Emerging Themes

Next step to axial coding included reviewing the categories searching for patterns or emerging themes (Saldana, 2016; Williams & Moser, 2019). I explored the patterns among the 14 categories to identify relationships of the open codes within the participant sets of parent, teacher, and service provider. I reviewed the themes to ensure they aligned with the conceptual framework of Bronfenbrenner bioecological theory (1995; 2006) of *process person context time*, and the literature review. I wanted to identify if the emerging themes revealed the perspectives of parents, teachers, and service providers. I reviewed the data again to compress categories into themes in ways that represent the participants' interview responses and answered the research questions. From the seven categories (see Appendix F) two themes emerged for RQ1: (a) relationships and classroom environment involvement, and (b) communication and collaboration barriers among parents, teachers, and service providers. From the seven categories (see Appendix H) two themes emerged for RQ2: (c) opportunities for training and/or support services, and (d) the importance of preparation and consistency with transition practices.

Themes Defined

Parents, teachers, and service providers described barriers they experienced to developing relationships; described the type of involvement they experienced with each group; how the types of involvement assisted or hindered them with transition; communication barriers for support services, training, and resources; and the need for consistency with transition practices. Parents shared their concerns for the students'

classroom environment and relationships, and positive and negative experiences with the types of involvements. Teachers and service providers described barriers to a successful transition, transition practices used when working with each group. All participants referenced the transition process. There were no discrepant perspectives from participants regarding their perspectives of the transition process and the factors perceived may influence transition.

Results

Four themes emerged from the data. Thematic analysis revealed the importance of (a) relationships and classroom environment involvement, (b) communication and collaboration barriers among parents, teachers, and service providers, (c) opportunities for training and/or support services, and (d) the importance of preparation and consistency with transition practices. Theme 1: Relationships and classroom environment involvement addressed participants' perspectives on the importance of building relationships to support the developmental needs of the individual student entering the new classroom. Theme 2: Communication and collaboration barriers among parents, teachers, and service providers addressed the minimal communication among the three groups of participants. Theme 3: Opportunities for training and/or support addressed the need for transition practices that include training and support services for all participants to prepare for a smooth transition. Theme 4: The importance of preparation and consistency with transition practices address how the different types of transition practices influenced the transition process for parents, teachers, and service

providers. Table 4 shows a summary of participants' interview responses answering the research questions.

Table 4

Participant Interview Response Summary to Research Question 1 and 2

Participants	Question 1: What are Pre-K parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers' perspectives of the transition process when transferring students with disabilities from Pre-K services to Kindergarten services?	Question 2: What are Pre-K parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers' perspectives of the factors that influence transition of Pre-K students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten?
P1	"My concern is my son getting Individual attention in areas where he is already showing delay." "I would love to still see him integrated into classrooms with typical students." "There is a lack of communication with the involved parties." "Progress reports come after asking his teacher how he is doing."	"Recommendations around the best learning environment; making adjustments from his first-year experience; suggest certain accommodations with data to back up the decisions would be helpful." "I'm still not fully confident in our education plan, moving forward." "Getting my preferred strategy in alignment with both teacher and therapist." "It takes a little while to make sure our schedules line up to have a face-to-face meeting."
P2	"My concerns in his new classroom environment is that he is able to stay focus on day to day activities and receive continued support services with his social skills."	"Challenges I feel may prevent me from engaging is being able to attend his meeting due to my schedule at work." "I would like to know the kind of services he will receive and how often the services will be provided." "If I could get a copy of his schedule on a regular basis that would be helpful." "Timing and cooperation are challenges."
P3	"My main concern is that he is not building the necessary skills to form interpersonal relationships with other students, namely, by way of lack of verbal and communication skills." "There is no involvement or contact from our teachers, other than attending an open house, weekly lesson plans, and an occasional update, very minimal."	"Scheduling and availability can be a challenge." "Literature to support parents with a child with Down Syndrome would be helpful."
P4	"My concern is with her social skills to express her feeling." "I have hopes that she will receive the attention she needs and the size of her classroom with the ratio of teachers." "I would like to see consistency in her progress and ongoing communication."	"Challenges that may prevent me from engaging would be my schedule and the teacher schedule." "I would like to engage in training to help me to better prepare her and myself for thing to expect." "Parent training classes would be helpful so that we can know what to expect as she moves up."
T1	"To my knowledge, the county offers no guide on transitioning Pre-K special education students to Kindergarten." "There are no measures to qualify students for kindergarten, age is the only determining factor." "There is a disconnect between what the county's requirement are for transitioning and concept and skills that the receiving teachers expect." "Parent education is a concern."	"Lack of cooperation and support." "Transition is left mostly up to the teacher. There is a checklist of documents that are required." "The teacher completes the documents and submit them to the LTSE." "Parent involvement is minimal in the process." "Summer packets are sent home in preparation for Kindergarten." "Parents neglect to work with their children on Kindergarten preparation activities." "Receiving teachers may not always be receptive to accommodating Pre-K students during in-school field trips to their classes." "There is a lack of consistent support on our efforts."

Participants	Question 1: What are Pre-K parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers' perspectives of the transition process when transferring students with disabilities from Pre-K services to Kindergarten services?	Question 2: What are Pre-K parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers' perspectives of the factors that influence transition of Pre-K students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten?
T2	"My concerns is that children who are transitioning may experience some form of anxiety because they are entering a new environment, experience hard time adjusting to a more academic driven environment, and certain types of behaviors that could affect their learning." "Service providers sometimes may or may not show up to the transition meetings to clearly explain the transition process to students."	"Communication for starters make things so much easier." "Prior to transition meeting, in the IEP meeting before transition meeting, I explain to parents that we are going to have another meeting to prepare them." "If the child has a relationship with the service provider in the receiving school, it's easier with the transition." "Parents do not show up to the meeting." "I encourage parents to visit the school, meet the administrators, and talk about the transition process." "Teachers and administration need to be more educated about special ed."
T3	"My concerns are if their new teachers will put forth the care and effort as my team and I have provided not only for them, but their parents." "I am concerned with a lack of program and a number of settings offered for our students as many are placed in classes with K-5 as appose to only one or two grade level." "Parents are often informed students are being placed in small group environments but are shocked when they arrive and see so many children in the classroom, some do not proceed to enroll after this observation, especially if a child specifically cannot do large groups."	"Communication definitely puts out many fires because parents feel secure in knowing you are supportive, and they can talk to you when needed". "We place students accordingly, but there are times when parents have certain discretions and ultimately win the battle, however, this happens far, few and in between". "Service providers effectively communicate; we are always on the same page when it comes to recommendation for the children." "I start at the beginning of the year preparing parents for transition, describe various setting that are possible for the child, offer parents opportunities to visit and observe setting to get a feel for what they could experience." "Parents may not agree with placements". "Lack of resources or support from parents or service providers, however this has not happened often".
T4	"A lot of regular ed. teachers are not being trained to accommodate our children, therefore when our kids step in the door, they are uncertain with the disability". "Parents tend to not be realistic." "Service providers are always overwhelmed."	"Sometimes parents do not have the correct phone numbers, so we have to make sure we have that in place." We have to make sure parent understand the terminology." "We give opportunities for the speech therapist to come in when we send home packets." "We would go into the classes, do a couple of lessons to get them acclimated to the setting, this gets our babies excited." "We start showing the parents and provide education so that they can start doing their work." "It's just training."
SP1	"There are still concerns with them being able to keep up and being integrated with other students in a more academic field." "If you can get information before the child transitions that would help like when I get information from an IEP from someone else, it's not in always great context" "I have never been in those meetings and it may depend on the location."	"Basically, I can do a push or pull-out type of service and it depends on the level of transition, but I was pushed out of the classroom by the teacher." "I might try to start to incorporate practices for children who may be ready to be exposed, like things they may expect to learn in Kindergarten." "The barriers I may have come across is being an itinerary person to be involved, I may not always know of the meetings that may take place."
SP2	"My concern is when I'm writing the IEP to make sure that I reflect the correct type of services, and amount of time the student may need for when they go to kindergarten." "I don't generally get to speak with the Kindergarten teacher per say which is a disadvantage." "Having a good relationship with the lead teacher at the schools that the students will go is really important so that we know the type of services to recommend."	"I don't get feedback when I've written IEP's and preparation for students to go to Kindergarten, I don't necessary hear back from any of the teachers, the Kindergarten teachers to find out if the amount of services that I recommended is actually adequate." "We do try to make the effort in the beginning of the school year to touch basis with them, but it's not always possible to get to get everybody." "Parents are a huge part of the process, and generally comforted knowing the students are going to have that increase support in the beginning." "One factor that hinder the transition are parents are not ready for Kindergarten."

Participants	Question 1: What are Pre-K parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers' perspectives of the transition process when transferring students with disabilities from Pre-K services to Kindergarten services?	Question 2: What are Pre-K parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers' perspectives of the factors that influence transition of Pre-K students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten?
SP3	"Scholars have developmental (gross and fine motor), and mental health and family trauma that weighs heavily on the early childhood transition process of services." "These factors can hinder the academic success of scholars, modeling of speech, parental awareness, and family parenting classes can alleviate these deficiencies." "The school system has taken major steps to combat these areas of concerns, the problem continues because of lack of communication."	"Building relationships throughout transition is extremely important." "Proper communication can only help in improving the academics success of scholars who transition from Pre-K to Kindergarten programs." "Scholars who experience Severe Developmental Delays also benefited from transition with constant contact from the school's teachers and support staff."
SP4	"My concerns are in regards for the building that foundation for students at home academically that they get accustom to a work ethic, and parents building that work ethic with them, and teachers acknowledge the services within the year of receiving them." "Training was important and teachers learning how to identify a student with a disability."	"I would try to incorporate some of the content from the upper grades to see if the student is ready or see if the student is going to be overwhelmed to test their readiness." "I would also provide parents with a spectrum book that they can buy in the store to help students transition over the summer." "We have to learn to work as a team, collaborate with each other, and parents should also be trained in workshops."

Findings Addressing RQ 1

Two themes related to RQ1 emerged from the data. Theme 1: Relationships and classroom environment involvement and Theme 2: Communication and collaboration barriers aligned with Bronfenbrenner's bioecological framework (1995; 2006) of process and person. For each theme, I identified parent, teacher, and service provider perspectives of the transition process when transferring students with disabilities from Pre-K services to Kindergarten services. Theme 1 addressed the participant perspectives on the importance of building relationships to support the developmental needs of the individual student entering the new classroom, and Theme 2 addressed participant perspectives on minimal communication and collaboration barriers when transferring students with disabilities from Pre-K level services to Kindergarten level services.

Theme 1: Relationships and Classroom Environment Involvement

This theme contained the importance of establishing initial and ongoing relationships throughout the school year to support students; concerns for the student relationship with peers and the new classroom environment; and parents, teachers, and service providers' involvement and challenges to engage in transition when transferring students with disabilities from Pre-K services to Kindergarten services. Table 4 shows parents spoke of their perspectives on the transition process with concerns for the student environment and challenges to establish relationships, and support services at the organizational level. Table 4 shows that teachers spoke of their perspectives of the transition process and described substances based on relationships formed with parents and service providers. Service providers spoke of their perspectives of the transition process on communication gaps, forming relationships with parents and teachers for mutual practices, and consistency with follow-ups to support student needs.

Participants' responses suggested minimal involvement and relationships between each group. All parents' perspectives of transition depended on the establishment of the initial relationships formed during the initial meeting and the substance of the relationships throughout the year to support student development. The participants in each group provided their views. P3 explained,

I received information at the beginning but was concerned for there not being someone to put in the extra time it takes to work with my son. I have had no

involvement or contact from our teachers, other than attending an open house, weekly lesson plans, and an occasional update.

All teachers suggested transition depended on establishing and building trusting relationships but experienced challenges to engage with recommended services and types of involvement. T3 explained, “Challenges in transition may cause some parents to not proceed to enroll after observation and want to remain in our class, especially if a child cannot do large groups.” All service providers shared concerns for establishing either parent and/or teachers’ receptiveness of services. When attempting types of involvements such as providing support services to students, SP1 stated, “Teachers are very dedicated to their children and protective of them.”

All parents, teachers, and service providers shared similar concerns for changes in student relationships and academics when transferring from Pre-K services to Kindergarten services, and the new school and/or classroom environment. P1 explained, The concern I have as my son transitions from Pre-K services to Kindergarten level services are around getting enough individual attention in areas where he is already showing delays. I would love to see him integrated into classrooms with typical students, but I don’t want to compromise the amount of individual attention he receives.

T2 stated, “My concern is that children who are transitioning may experience anxiety entering a new environment that is very unfamiliar.” SP1 shared concerns for teacher

constraints with releasing students and stated, “There are still concerns with students being able to keep up and being integrated with other students in a more academic field.”

All participants shared concerns for the student experiences within the classroom environment and the kind of curriculum and instructional support services recommended; resources available to support the individual student; and the individual attention students would receive from the new schools. P4 stated, “I have a fear that my daughter may not be ready, and I want her to be prepared for Kindergarten due to classroom size and ratio of teachers as well as her social skills to express herself.” Teachers and service providers also shared similar concerns for student individual development, independence, and the availability of resources. One teacher shared concern for having no guide on transitioning. T1 explained, “The county offers no guide on transitioning Pre-K special education students to Kindergarten.” T1 further elaborated, “Thankfully, there are resources available from an organization to assist with ideas, tips, and other resources to educate parents. There are no measures to qualify students, age is the only determining factor once students reach age 5.” SP2 shared a similar perspective and stated, “I have concerns for not getting feedback when writing an IEP and preparation for students to go to kindergarten.”

Participants experienced challenges to engage in transition, but all participants felt the need for maintaining relationships and understanding individual roles when it came to providing services for the students. P1 stated, “After meeting with the teachers I was able to confirm that his teacher was ok with doing minimum requirements.” T2

addressed concerns at the organizational level and stated, “Teachers are unfamiliar with students, service providers sometimes may or may not show up to the transition meetings to clearly explain the transition process thus delaying communication with parents understanding what to expect after transition.” SP1 shared her experiences of not working in the same building with all teachers and reported when working with teachers, she has experienced “challenges with building relationships to ensure a successful transition” and further stated, “If you can get information before the child transitions that would help, like when I get information from an IEP from someone else, it’s not always in great context.”

Theme 2: Communication and Collaboration Barriers

The participants’ narratives revealed their perspectives for communication during the transition process when transferring students with disabilities from Pre-K level services to Kindergarten level services. This theme contained participant concerns for minimal communication and barriers that may hinder the transition process. Parents mentioned the need for resources to promote communication for student development; all participants mentioned a need for, and importance of positive communication when transferring students with disabilities from Pre-K services to Kindergarten services. Table 4 showed that parents spoke of their perspectives on concerns for minimal communication when it came to receiving information about student development; teachers spoke of their perspectives on cooperation among stakeholders and

communication barriers with stakeholders; and service providers spoke of their perspectives on communication gaps with the type of resources provided.

The perspectives shared by the participants supported communication barriers as a major factor that hindered transition and facilitating meetings/conferences for individual students; parents, teachers, and service providers and to promote understanding of support services beyond Pre-K. P4 stated, “I want to see consistency in my daughter’s progress and ongoing communication so that I can know what I need to do to support her.” Teachers and service providers shared different perspectives from parents and stated the challenges they experienced when trying different types of involvements with parents. According to T4, “Parents may not have the correct numbers to make connections.” SP3 shared similar concerns and further explained Parents were “more responsive to technology, but technology did not guarantee everyone was reached to participate.”

The transition process entails classroom instructional strategies and providing resources for students with disabilities. Parents identified a need for resources that would help support them through the process. P3 stated, “Literature that teaches parents of children with down syndrome on how they can best teach their children at home would be nice.” P3 shared concerns for his son “not building the necessary skills to form interpersonal relationships with other students and communication skills.” To support parents, T1 stated she sent home a “checklist of documents to parents that is required.”

SP4 stated, “I would incorporate some of the content from the upper grades, provide parents with a spectrum book to help with transition.”

Participants shared their optimism for positive communication to support student needs and to minimize the barriers. After meeting with the teacher and service provider, P1 stated, “I would like to maintain this aptitude of achievement if we can continue a certain capacity of individual attention to cater to my son’s learning process.” T2 agreed and stated, “Once the initial meeting was held, parents became receptive to things that are required but communication has to be there.” SP1 reported, “When I have a child that I know needs time to settle down, I work with the teacher and try to get to know the student.”

Findings Addressing RQ 2

Two themes related to RQ2 emerged from the data. Theme 3: Opportunities for training and/or support services, and Theme 4: Preparation and consistency with transition practices, align with Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological Framework of Context and Time, and reported factors parents, teachers, and service providers perceived influenced the transition process. Theme 3 addressed parent, teacher, and service provider concern for transition practices and expectations, concerns for training opportunities and support services, and resources to promote smooth transition. Theme 4 addressed participants’ experiences with preparation of the transition practices, transition practice barriers, the importance and impact of consistency with transition practices. For

each theme, I identified parent, teacher, and service provider perspectives of factors they perceived may influence the transition process.

Theme 3: Opportunities for training and/or support services

Theme 3 included factors participants perceived that influence transition such as transition practices and expectations, concerns for transition practices, and support systems for academic preparation and completion of transition practices for students. Table 4 shows that parents spoke of their perspectives of factors that influence the transition process such as changes in student academic programs, school discipline for preparation, and the classroom climate. Table 4 shows that teachers spoke of their perspectives of the transition process on organizational support and training services, availability of resources, and no specified guidelines causing inconsistency. Table 4 shows that service providers spoke of their perspectives of the transition process on preparation and support services, minimal consistent support from parents, and yearly programs to support parents' understanding.

Participants' narrative revealed their perspectives regarding transition support services as it related to the classroom environment and interaction among each group. All parents shared concerns for changes in the student's academics, school discipline, and classroom climate monitoring. P4 stated, "Parent training classes would be helpful so that we can know what to expect." Teachers and service providers all shared different perspectives on factors that influence transition practices. T3 described her experience when attempting to provide support and explained, "Parents are often informed students

are being placed in small group environments but are shocked when they arrive and see so many children in the classroom.” SP3 shared a different perspective and stated, “Modeling of speech, parental awareness, and family parent classes can alleviate these deficiencies,” when referring to the expectations of parents and teachers during the transition process.

All parents shared their concerns for consistency and training with transition practices in relation to interacting among each other. P4 expressed concerns for the new teachers and stated her son is “very comfortable with her current Pre-K teacher.” Teachers shared different perspectives and concerns for transition practices of having organizational support with transition activities to educate parents. T1 explained, “Parent education is a concern when working with parents during the transition process, due to working with parents who may have low expectations, or unrealistic expectations and goals.” T1 further stated, “Transition is left mostly up to the teacher.” T2 stated, “I encourage parents to visit because our children get nervous going into these new environments.” T3 explained her concerns and stated, “Students may not be in the same buildings with their service providers.” T4 elaborated and stated, “A lot of regular education teachers are not being trained to accommodate our children. Therefore, when our children step in the door, they are uncertain with the disability they may have.” SP4 shared a different perspective when working with teachers, and stated, “training was important and teachers learning how to identify a student with a disability” was a concern.

All participants addressed the need for some form of support system or resources for the individual student. Participants described how the support systems helped. P3 stated, “The contact support I received helped a little but are mere formalities with no depth of involvement behind it.” To support parents with transition T2 stated, “Prior to the transition meeting, I explain to parents that we are going to have another meeting.” To support parents, SP1 stated, “If I know the child may move from a more restrictive to an education environment, I would spend time incorporating practices.”

Participants described their experiences with the completion of transition practices, mentioned the type of transition practices the used or experienced and concerns they had during the process. P1, P2, P3, and P4 all addressed some form of transition practices. P2 stated,

I have experienced kindergarten orientation for my son and thought this was extremely helpful with letting him see what to expect. I received a lot of information from the school and therapist on the type of classroom instruction he will receive.

Teachers and service providers described how transition practices affected the transition process. T3 works at a school with teachers and service providers in the same building and stated, “Most service providers assist. We are on the same page when it comes to recommendations.” SP2 works in a separate building from teachers and service providers. SP2 stated, “We were told what’s easy to cut back, and start out with enough support then increase it.”

Theme 4: Preparation and consistency with transition practices

This theme addressed participants' present experiences and expectations of transition practices, transition practice barriers, the need for consistency of transition practices, and the effect of transition practices among each group of participants. Table 4 shows that parents focused their perspectives on factors that influence the transition process such as preparation of events and IEP meetings to provide student support services, and shared concerns with scheduling to receive consistent support services. Table 4 also shows that teachers spoke of their perspectives of the transition process for incorporating age-appropriate practices and maintaining consistency with progress throughout the year and student readiness. Service providers spoke of their perspectives of the transition process on discontinuity of services, providing intervention practices to prepare parents, and consistency with transition curricula.

All participants described a type of transition practice and/or need for transition practice and expectations about concerns for the students' new environment. Parents were passionate and emotional when describing their experiences. P3 stated, "I have experienced no involvement other than open house, weekly lessons plan, and an occasional update." While T2 stated, "Parents and service providers may not always show up for the IEP meetings." T3 shared a different perspective and stated, "I am fortunate to work with individuals in the same building." SP1 stated, "Basically, I can do a push or pull-out type of service and it depends on the level of transition, but I may not always know of the meetings that may take place."

All participants felt consistency, mutual agreement, and support with transition practices could increase participation. All parents shared concerns for scheduling meetings due to their work schedule to receive consistent support services. P4 felt the practices to prepare student help in some capacity. P4 explained,

When we have conferences, I am able to get the one-on-one attention to ask questions, but they are not long enough to really help me with understanding what to expect. I have questions afterward and would send an email and get a response back.

To support parents T1 stated, "Receiving teachers [assigned to specific students] and service providers are invited to the IEP review and evaluation meeting." SP3 elaborated on having weeklong activities to help parents with preparing students for transition. SP3 explained,

We held a weeklong event for local daycares, community leaders, and local Pre-K scholars and parents. This event had several guests including the local principal, school counselors, and community service board. We complete a school tour, registration forms, medical vaccinations ... [as] needed, and a checklist to assist parents with preparing their scholars for transition.

Although there were several transition practices mentioned, the influence of the practices mentioned revealed a need for training and support system for parents. Parents provided different perspectives with concerns for consistency after the IEP meeting. P1 stated, "I'm still not confident in our education plan moving forward." P2 reported, "I

have an idea of the type of services I would receive and what to expect.” P3 stated, “The help they provide is but a small amount.” P4 stated, “I have questions afterward and would send an email and get no response back.”

Teachers and service providers explained how the types of practices they have provided supported parents. T1 stated, “During the IEP review, parents get the opportunity to ask questions and voice their concerns.” T2 stated, “Parents get a feel for what’s to come and see the new environment.” SP4 stated, “We came together and worked together and that is how I helped my students’ transition.” While there was a range in the participants’ perspectives of the transition process, all participants expressed the need for transition practices related to communication, developing relationships, support services, training, and consistency with transition practices to support the social, emotional, and academic outcomes for their student. There were no discrepant perspectives from participants regarding their perspectives of the transition process and the factors perceived may influence transition.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

To ensure internal validity, credibility of the findings, I followed several strategies provided by Merriam (Merriam 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016): triangulation, member checks, and reflexivity. I triangulated the data by corroborating findings among the three data sources of parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers.

Triangulation is defined as using several types of data collection and sources to increase

credibility of the results of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This allowed me to triangulate the data and look for emerging themes (Creswell, 2012; 2018) as I compared the data.

After the data analysis, I conducted member checking with participants (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Member checking was conducted to verify any possible disparities in the summary of the study findings. A summary was emailed, and participants had one week to review the findings for any discrepancies. Participants were asked to read the summary and decide if the data were thorough and accurate, if the themes were accurate, and report if the interpretations were a representation of their responses (Creswell & Poth, 2016). I received verification of the findings from participants and recorded no discrepant findings. I also used a peer reviewer to avoid such biases or misinterpretation of the data. Peer review is the process of allowing a peer to review the data analysis process to make suggestions (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I asked a peer reviewer, who is a Walden University alumnus, doctoral graduate in the field of education, published author, licensed social worker, former educator, and dean of schools in the field of education to review my data analysis of the data.

To employ reflexivity in my role as a researcher, I respected the participants and the sites of this study as I interpreted the data, not allowing any biases or personal experiences to determine how I interpreted the data. I used a reflexive journal throughout the entire research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In my

reflexive journal, I recorded data analysis and provided a rationale throughout the research process. I recorded my personal thoughts without echoing my voice during the research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Transferability

Transferability or external validity is the responsibility of the reader of the research to apply how the findings would prove to be useful in other situations, populations, or whether the findings can apply to another similar context (Van Manen, 1990; 2016). To strive to provide sufficient information to allow researchers to replicate the study in similar context, the thick description of participant perspectives of the transition process can allow the findings that are transferable to expand to other locations, participants, and settings, especially those with a large number of disabled children or those incurring issues with transition. In this study, I provided information from the interview responses of parents, teachers, and service providers that made transferability judgments of the transition process possibly on the part of others. I employed semistructured interviews, email responses, additional question prompts, and journal notes to obtain thick descriptions. This thick comprehensive description of context can assist readers in identifying if their situations are comparable to the study, or whether the findings are transferable.

Triangulation of the data served to discover the recurring themes as well as corroborated the data collected from each group of participants (Miles & Hubberman, 1994; Miles et al., 2014; Saldana, 2016). I triangulated my data by corroborating

findings among multiple data sources of parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers. Quotes from parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers, and descriptions of the phenomenon under study were included. The thick descriptions can allow the reader to have a deeper understanding of the study, enabling them to compare the phenomenon in the study with those which the reader has seen emerge in their situations.

Dependability

To achieve dependability, as it relates to the consistency of the findings, I used triangulation (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to ensure the process was logical, traceable, documented clearly, and provided steps to support dependability of the findings. Triangulation is the process of corroborating the findings among multiple data sets. I triangulated by corroborating the findings gathered from multiple perspectives of parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers. Participants were interviewed using an interview protocol with modified questions from a Teacher's Perceptions on Transition (TPOT) and Family Experiences and Involvement in Transition (FEIT) (Quintero & McIntyre, 2011). The emerging themes were compared to current literature for corroboration, development, or indifference of the findings.

An audit trail was kept, keeping track of these steps during the data collection and data analysis process. Participants were reminded that they could withdraw from the study at any time. To sustain consistency of the data, I used a digital audio recorder, my secure password protected laptop and wrote notes in my reflexive journal to ensure

accuracy of the data. Reflexivity assured the findings were derived from the personal experiences and perspectives of each participant and not from my perspectives. A reflexive journal was used to ensure quality of the findings which add perspective, or if the process of the study needs to be audited (Denzin, 1970, 1978; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Once the interview data were transcribed to ensure that the findings, based on honest responses, were valid and reliable, member checking (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) was used. Member checking is returning a two-page summary of the data findings to the participants to check for accuracy of their data (Lodico et al., 2010). I also used a qualified peer reviewer to review the transcribed data to make suggestions and assess if the data were accurate (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to avoid biases or misinterpretation of the data.

Confirmability

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), confirmability of a study is validated by the identification and evaluation of data used by researchers to interpret the researchers' biases and to consider problems using a structured reflexivity process. Creswell (2012) explained, confirmability is established by reflexivity to address any biases the researcher may have. Confirmability for the study was established when the interpretations and findings were derived from the data. As the researcher, I assured confirmability by keeping a personal reflexive journal, wrote descriptive notes, and recorded my feelings, biases, and knowledge of transition throughout the interview and data analysis process. Confirmability is also established when the findings can be

confirmed by other researchers. The participants' perspectives were corroborated which determined confirmability, as each participant brought an individual and unique perspective to the study. I corroborated the findings by comparing the data from the different sources to help present accuracy and conclusion. All the themes derived from the findings were related to the research questions. I paid close attention and maintained an open mind and reflected on the information throughout the research process.

Summary

Within this bounded qualitative case study, I explored parent, teacher, and early intervention service provider perspectives on transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten and the factors they perceived influenced the transition process. In chapter 4, I presented the themes that emerged from the analysis of data collection via semistructured interviews of 12 participants from a metropolitan area of a southern state. Data were analyzed thematically using a priori, open, and axial coding strategies using the conceptual framework of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory of *process person context time* (1995; 2006) that guided the research and data collection process. After the analysis of the data, two themes emerged to answer RQ1. Theme 1: Relationships and classroom environment involvement and Theme 2: Communication and collaboration Barriers. Two themes emerged to answer RQ2: Theme 3; Opportunities for training and/or support services and Theme 4: Preparation and consistency with transition practices.

Parents reported concerns for their child as he/she transitioned from Pre-K to Kindergarten services such as concerns for relationships, the continuum of support services and support services in the classroom environment, and the challenges that may prevent them from engaging in the transition process. Parents also reported the factors they perceived may influence transition by reporting the types of information they felt would be helpful as they planned for transition. Teachers and service providers reported the types of involvement they experienced during transition as very minimal to using technology to engage parents regularly, and how the various types of involvements affected the transition process. Teachers and service providers also reported their perspectives on factors they perceived influenced transition by describing transition activities and practices they used as beginning of the school year parent conferences to yearly Kindergarten round up, and how these types of transition activities assisted or hindered the transition process.

In Chapter 5, the interpretation of the findings is discussed and confirmed by comparing the perspectives of transition with the literature and conceptual framework of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory of *process, person, context, and time* (1995; 2006). I also discussed implications, the limitations of the study, recommendations for further research, and conclusion in Chapter 5. Studies in the literature confirmed the importance of communication before and after transition (Besi & Sakellariou 2020; Brooker, 2016; Karila & Rantavuori, 2014; Marchbank, 2019). Parents in this study expressed the need for transition practices related to communication to support the

academic progress of the individual student. Teachers and service providers in this study also identified the need for developing relationships at the organizational level by getting administrators involved in the process and identified the need for communication and collaboration when working with parents to ensure the continuity of services beyond Kindergarten. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (1995) of *process person context time* and Rimm-Kaufmann and Pinata's (2000) dynamic and ecological model confirmed the importance of relationships among the stakeholders and the student, the family relationships, the school environment, and context to develop changes in transition.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this bounded qualitative case study was to explore the perspectives of parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers on transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten and the factors they perceived that influenced the transition process. This study was narrative in nature, and I collected data on the perspectives of participants (Creswell, 2012; 2018; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; 2019; Yin, 2013) and factors they perceived that influenced the transition process. I explored, described, categorized, and interpreted the data, organizing these into themes synthesized for an in-depth description of participants' perspectives (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; 2019). While researchers have conducted research on transition to Kindergarten (Karila & Rantavuori, 2014; Miller, 2014; Starr et al., 2014; Waren et al., 2016), relatively no studies have addressed multiple perspectives of parents, teachers, and service providers within a single study (Cook & Coley, 2020; McIntyre & Wildenger-Welchons, 2015). During my literature review, I did not locate qualitative studies that specifically focused on exploring multiple perspectives of parents, teachers, and service providers transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten. Despite the implementation of early intervention policies, there is still a need for seamless transition services (Li-Grining & Durlak, 2014; Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Service, 2015; 2016; 2017), and a need to understand multiple perspectives of transition (Cook & Coley, 2020; McIntyre & Wildenger-Welchons, 2015). This bounded qualitative case study contributes to the literature on transitioning students with

disabilities from multiple perspectives by exploring parent, teacher, and service provider perspectives of the transition process in a single study. The findings of this study were a result of semistructured interviews from 12 participants using an interview protocol in three, small, homogenous groups.

The data collected identified initial codes, tentatively named the categories, and explored the relationships among the categories to produce themes (Strauss & Cobin, 1998; William & Moser, 2019). Thematic analysis revealed the importance of (a) relationships and classroom environment involvement; (b) communication and collaboration barriers among parents, teachers, and service providers; (c) opportunities for training and/or support services; and (d) the importance of preparation and consistency with transition practices. Each theme is related to the perspectives of transition and the perceived factors that influenced transition. The themes were connected to the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 2. While there was a range in the participants' perspectives of the transition process, parents expressed the need for transition practices related to different types of involvement, student environment, and consistency of services to support them with understanding the social, and academic developmental outcomes for their student. Teachers and service providers identified the need for developing relationships and reported minimal communication and collaboration were challenges during the process to ensure the continuity of services and supports beyond Kindergarten.

To explore perspectives of parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten and the factors they perceived influenced the transition process, the following guiding questions were addressed:

RQ1. What are Pre-K parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers' perspectives of the transition process when transferring students with disabilities from Pre-K services to Kindergarten services?

RQ2. What are Pre-K parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers' perspectives of the factors that influence transition of Pre-K students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten?

Interpretation of the Findings

The results from this study presented the perspectives of parents, teachers, and service providers on transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten. The findings from this study extended knowledge of exploring multiple participant perspectives on educational transition for students with disabilities and the perceived factors that influence the transition process. The findings of this bounded qualitative case study were in alignment with the conceptual framework. Two conceptual frameworks guided my study: Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (1995; 2006) of *person process context time*, which is the primary conceptual framework for this study, and Rimm-Kaufmann and Pinata's (2000) dynamic and ecological model for understanding educational transition. For this study, themes emerged from parent, teacher, and service

provider perspectives of transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten. Thematic analysis revealed the importance of (a) relationships and classroom environment involvement; (b) communication and collaboration barriers among parents, teachers, and service providers; (c) opportunities for training and/or support services; and (d) the importance of preparation and consistency with transition practices.

In this Chapter I provided a discussion of the themes that emerged, and an interpretation of the findings related to the literature from Chapter 2. In Chapter 2 it was stated that this study would address gaps in the literature on practice concerning the minimal multiple perspectives of the transition process when transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K services to Kindergarten services. These gaps included examining multiple perspectives for transitioning students with disabilities from services at the Pre-K level to services at the Kindergarten level. In addition, an analysis of the findings as they related to the conceptual framework was discussed.

Theme 1: Relationships and Classroom Environment Involvement

By looking at the perspectives and experiences of parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers at the different stages of the process, Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (1995; 2006) of *process person context time* and Rimm-Kaufmann and Pinata's (2000) dynamic and ecological model provided a framework for understanding educational transition. These frameworks confirmed connections to relationships among the stakeholders and the student, family relationships, the school

environment, and context to develop changes in transition. According to the findings on Table 4 of participants' summary responses in Chapter 4, all participants' perspectives of transition practices were related to establishing relationships in the classroom environment based on the types of involvements and transition practices they experienced. Moore (2013) and Brooker's (2016) study reported the need to strengthen services for students with disabilities and positive relationships between parents and educators would assist with the success in transition. Garbacz et al. (2016) found several factors that influence relationships between parents and teachers were the types of involvements and support services for the individual students. All participants in this study discussed the desire and need for continuous effort to build relationships to ensure the continuity of services for the student.

While teachers and service providers are affected by transition, studies reported in the literature review confirmed their relationships with the parent are essential during the process (Bakkaloglu, 2013; Carley, 2012; Garbacz et al., 2016; Marsh et al., 2017; Miller, 2014; O'Farrelly & Hennessy, 2014; Podvey et al., 2013; Quintero & McIntyre, 2011; Stormshak et al., 2020), and confirmed that transition increased stress among parents due to poor relationships. These studies also reported transition depended on collaboration to facilitate parent engagement. All parents in this study reported they felt transition would be more successful after meeting in person and receiving explanation of services during the IEP meeting. It was revealed that relationships were formed during the initial parent-teacher conference at the beginning of the school year, and during the IEP meeting where

recommendations were discussed which provided parents with better understanding of the transition process.

Podvey et al. (2013) conducted a study with six families on transition to help service providers. The main theme that emerged was transition was “scary.” All teachers in this study identified that parents experience some form of “anxiety” and may “not always agree with placement.” Warren et al.’s (2016) reported one barrier teachers reported was parents’ refusal to agree or extend services and support of the individual student. Persuading some parents to attend parent conferences to discuss transition procedures were also reported by teachers as a barrier in this study. Atchinson and Pompelia (2018), Miller (2013), and Warren et al.’s (2016) confirmed transition is ongoing and a difficult process and the first transition is the most difficult.

Teachers revealed some service providers are placed at their existing school while other service providers are considered community-based teachers and travel to the school to provide services to individual students with disabilities resulting in a disconnect. One service provider identified teachers as being “very protective” of their students and experienced constraints with releasing students to receive services. Service providers felt parents are a huge part of the transition process and felt parents were comforted knowing the children were going to have an increased amount of support. This supports previous research of Besi and Sakellariou (2020), Petriwskyj (2014), Lietavcova and Viteckova (2018), and Plotner et al.’s (2017) studies that reported while teachers and service

providers are affected by transition, evidence suggests their relationship with parents are essential during the process.

While some information reported in this study may appear negative, participants explained that minimal communication and information left them in a protective position with the student, and transition depended on the open and honest communication among each other throughout the school year. Over time, parents, teachers, and service providers can develop trusting and supportive relationships, reassuring their roles and expanding shared knowledge to support students with the transition. While the nature of this theme was participants' perspectives of relationships and how the types of involvement supported them with the classroom environment, their levels of reported involvement varied.

Theme 2: Communication and Collaboration Barriers

Minimal communication arose as a recurring theme throughout this research which supports findings from previous studies (Besi & Sakellariou 2020; Brooker, 2016; Karila & Rantavuori, 2014; Marchbank, 2019). Analysis of the literature of bioecological framework (1995; 2006) of *process person context time* revealed how factors such as communication skills among stakeholders, students' special needs and delivery of services, and student behaviors towards the new teacher or service providers all influenced the nature of time during transition (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; O'Toole, 2016; O'Toole et al., 2014). Time is a crucial element for students, families, and the professional while working together (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; 2006) as it

entails establishing efficient and comprehensive delivery of services within a given period. Parents reported concerns about the nature of transition. Parents recognized communication should be steady and ongoing with teachers and service providers throughout the school year. All parents reported “timing and their schedule” played an important factor in meeting with teachers in person. Cologon (2015) argued barriers among parents and educators need to be addressed and the lack of mainstream communication can delay transition of a child with disability.

All teachers indicated one barrier to effective communication was parents’ communication about the individual student’s needs. Teachers used methods such as email, and telephone to communicate with parents. Van Laarhoven-Myers et al.’s (2016) mentioned using communication through technology as an intervention strategy and method of communicating when transitioning students. One service provider also reported a communication barrier was not always knowing of the meetings that may take place if they were stationed at another location other than the individual student’s school. All service providers expressed the desire to report progress when parents asked. Besi and Sakellariou (2020), Karila and Rantavuori (2014), and Marchbank’s (2019) previous studies confirmed communication and collaboration as a shared practice with transition services when developing fluent transition activities among stakeholders. The collaboration among parents, teachers, and service providers strengthens the continuity of services and contributes to a smooth transition due to the context of the partnership (Brooker, 2016). It is not suggested that the minimal communication depended on one

group of participants. All participants recognized open communication must be reciprocal between each group to ensure a smoother transition for the individual student.

Theme 3: Opportunities for Training and Support Services

The Bioecological framework (1995; 2006) of *process person context time* involved finding strategies and understanding the evaluation process when transitioning students. Guidance from the ecological and dynamic model (Rimm-Kaufmann & Pinata, 2000) conceptualized the opportunities to develop transition practices examined in this study as potentially representing the factors that influence the transition process. Having students and parents visit the Kindergarten classroom together before the school year begins can support families with opportunities to learn and teachers' opportunities to provide training to parents (Little et al., 2016). All parents reported after attending the IEP meeting, it helped increase awareness of teachers and service providers' process. Chandroo et al. (2017) called this process transition planning and mentioned the planning process should occur during the IEP meeting. Parents also reported how passionate they were about the transition, but also reported having information, parent training, and recommendations around the best learning environment would be helpful. One parent indicated she needed support with understanding the student's "schedule and activities on a regular basis." Another parent reported having "literature that teaches parents of a child with Down Syndrome how they can best teach [lessons] at home" would be helpful. To support parents with understanding the transition process, one teacher reported contacting parents frequently made them more aware of the support and understanding of the

policies and available support services. All teachers in the study expressed a commitment to teaching parents how to support students beyond the classroom and to supporting students within the context of the new classroom.

Teachers and service providers identified training as an essential element for transitioning students at the organizational level. One teacher reported, “to my knowledge, the county offers no guide on transitioning Pre-K special education students to Kindergarten.” The teacher further elaborated, that she was thankful there are resources available from the state organization to assist with preparing Pre-K students ready for Kindergarten as well as ideas for transitioning them to Kindergarten. Garbacz et al. (2016), IDEA (2010, 2004, 1997), Little et al. (2016), Perry et al. (2014), Stormshak et al. (2020), and Stormshak et al.’s (2019) also confirmed it is important for professionals to become familiar with transition policy of IDEA (2014) and examine the recommendations to support students with early learning and appropriate transition placement.

One teacher reported parents may express anxiety regarding the transition process and may “fear losing that support system they have.” This teacher also reported “teachers and administration need to be more educated about special education,” when trying to include students with disabilities in the general classroom. Another teacher also reported, “I am concerned with the lack of programs and the number of settings offered for our students as many are placed in classes with K-5 as opposed to only one or two grade levels.” All teachers reported parents may not always agree with placement and

want their child in a setting either in a more advanced environment, or one which is less demanding on the child. One teacher reported, “a lot of regular education teachers are not being trained to accommodate our children.” This teacher further reported, “if they could have the knowledge and training by just taking one class or having someone come in and do inservice and ongoing support service and not just minimal training for the teacher.” Another teacher suggested “personally I think there should ... [be] one training per grade level to teach them about the fine motor skills, phonemic awareness, and so on” to support students with disabilities. Studies confirmed early learning experiences or students with disabilities come from formal transition planning which must be done early (Flamery et al., 2015; Klutch & Belijung, 2014; Landmark et al., 2013; Rodriguez et al., 2017). Landmark et al.’s (2013) confirmed common themes related to transition planning: concept of parent involvement, barriers for involvement among parents and teachers, and promoting involvement among parents and families.

Two service providers reported not having much interaction with the Pre-K or Kindergarten teachers but have worked with the lead teacher in charge by recommending “more support” in the beginning of the school year. One service provider reported “modeling of speech, parental awareness, and family parenting classes” can alleviate deficiencies students may experience. However, one service provider reported supplying the necessary support services, and communicating the availability of these services was an issue. This supports findings from previous research which found before professionals can transition students with disabilities, they must understand the important elements of

the evaluation, the process, and how inclusion curricula will affect the students' development long term (Allen & Cowdery, 2015; Flannery et al., 2015; Heiskanen et al., 2019). Furthermore, one service provider reported supporting parents with tours and parent meetings for Pre-K and Kindergarten programs on weekends were helpful to support parents with training, inclusion curricular, and support services.

Theme 4: Preparation and Consistency with Transition Practices

Preparation and consistency were discussed by all participants as they related to timing and planning for transition practices. Myers et al.'s (2011) confirmed there are barriers to the transition process, and these barriers are often not followed up on due to lack of time and limited to no support from local education agencies offering information on quality transition processes. In Myers et al.'s (2011 study on perspectives of service providers of occupational therapy, they discovered that time was the critical barrier to a smoother transition. The authors also identified no support from the local education agency for scheduling transition meetings with all stakeholders as a key finding (Myers et al., 2011).

Peters (2016) identified when developing consistent transition activities among professionals, professional consensus, and collaboration were shared practices with transition services. Planning was overwhelmingly identified as a factor that influenced transition for teachers and service providers. It is important to note that all parents reported timing and scheduling as factors that hindered them from engaging in transition practices with teachers and service providers. One parent reported, "It takes a little while

to make sure our schedules line up to have a face-to-face meeting to plan.” Furthermore, this parent reported, “sometimes there are factors in our personal schedules that prevent us from being able to meet or communicate in a timely manner.” One parent reported barriers that prevented her from engaging in transition preparation were “timing and scheduling.” While one parent reported having “no involvement or contact from teachers other than attending an open house, weekly lesson plans, and occasional updates.” Another parent reported, “I would like to engage in planning to help me better prepare him and myself for the things to expect.” Furthermore, this parent stated, “parenting class would be helpful.” Morrison et al. (2013) and Kohler et al.’s (2016) confirmed that transition is a difficult process due to factors related to the planning process for parents and students.

Guidance from the ecological and dynamic model (Rimm-Kaufmann & Pinata, 2000) also helped to conceptualize the various practices teachers and service providers used in this study as representing potential factors that influenced a smoother transition. Rim-Kaufmann and Pinata’s (2000) model identified areas of high intensity practices such as visiting the classroom to support parents with preparation. Several high intensity practices were identified in this study. To begin, all teachers identified having a “checklist of documents that are required” as well as several transition practices used during the transition process. These transition practices of activities for one teacher included social stories with discussion about kindergarten, parent/teacher conferences, extended group activities, reducing rest time, structured writing activities in addition to

making signing in and out part of the daily routine, creating homework packets for students to complete at home, ensuring students' progress towards potty training, and giving students opportunities to develop age appropriate adaptive/self-help skills to build independence and self-awareness. In a national study from Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten (2016), transition practices were examined. This study confirmed practices educators used that included Kindergarten readiness assessment to support teachers with placement similar to practices mentioned in this study.

One teacher reported using communication of contacting parents ahead of time, before, during, and after meetings to annual review at least twice per week, consistency with telephone calls, advise parents to speak to service providers, and encourage parents to visit schools. One teacher reported, "I start planning at the beginning of the year preparing parents for transition describing various settings that are possible for their child." This teacher also offered parents the opportunity to visit and observe the school setting before transition. Chandroo et al. (2018), Petrakos and Lehrer (2011), and Rodriguez et al.'s (2017) confirmed teachers should use various practices to transition students to Kindergarten at the beginning and end of the school year. In my study, one teacher reported, that "in some cases, I am allowed to transition my students to visit in kindergarten, even if they are going from a regular Pre-K to Kindergarten [and] even practice transition with students who may have to stay one more year in Pre-K." These activities included planning a couple of lessons to get the student acclimated to the

setting. Other transition practices included field trips, having lunch with other students, and showing parents, and provide education so that they can start doing the work.

In my study service providers identified planning for transition included incorporating “practices for children who were ready to be exposed.” One service provider reported, “I might incorporate things they will learn, or I will know that child may move from a more restrictive to educational environment and I would spend time incorporating the practices.” Another service provider reported planning for the yearly “Kindergarten round-up” and incorporating support services from the lead teacher of special education and engaging other teachers for more information about the receiving school due to not being on the same campus as students. Another service provider reported supplying an orientation to the community, placing advertisements on local school and county websites, using calling posts, and text messages to provide information have all been used to help parents transition and plan. One service provider stated, “I would try to incorporate some of the content from the upper grades, even though the curriculum is too rigid to see if the student is ready or see if the student is going to be overwhelmed.”

In the Bioecological framework (1995; 2006) of *process person context time*, time was a crucial element for parents, teachers, and service providers as it entailed establishing efficient and comprehensive delivery of services within a given period before and after transition. Rim-Kauffman and Pianta’s (2000) model also conceptualized the transition process as developing over time due to the nature of

transition starting in Pre-K and services continuing to Kindergarten. Parents, teachers, and service providers believed successful transition for students with disabilities can result from having mutual agreement, consistency, planning and implementing transition practices that may include the construction of the initial IEP meeting and/or parent orientations.

Limitations of the Study

According to Creswell (2012; 2018), limitations are the potential weaknesses in a study and out of the researchers' control. Due to conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic (China, 2020), the interview settings varied from a mutual agreed upon location, video conference using Facetime, phone interviews which were digitally recorded and transcribed, and emailed responses. It is important to recognize this study is limited to the in-depth experiences and perspectives of 12 participants: four parents, four teachers, and four service providers from two school districts. These participants included 11 females and one male. The parents, teachers, and service providers who responded by volunteering to be interviewed may have represented schools with a higher percentage of enrollment of students with disabilities than would be expected if it was required by all schools with Pre-K special education classes in the specified geographical location to respond. These parents, teachers and service providers selected for interviews were selected to represent a range of schools from two school districts and their experiences and perspectives of their voluntary participation may not be reflective of a more inclusive group.

Recommendations

Findings from the current research identified several gaps in practice in the literature and the influence on parents, teachers, and service providers. Although the process of transition is defined through policies and service delivery programs (Department of Education Child Find and Early Childhood Transitions Summary, 2017; Woods, 2015), specific step by step transition practices were not found. Since many transition practices involve communication and collaboration, all stakeholders must work together to increase the occurrences and frequency of transition practices. While there are discrepancies in the way transition practices are used across schools, as well as discrepancies with recommended services reported by participants, transition practices have increased over time (Little et al., 2016). Findings from this study lay a foundation for further research on the need for transition practices across local and state school districts and the effect on multiple perspectives of parents, teachers, and service providers. Further research is also needed to identify and recommend guidelines for student readiness from Pre-K to Kindergarten.

It is recommended that the organization of teachers and service providers should follow the same teaching methods and apply a joint curriculum to ensure the continuation of support services, and transition practices are in place to support students. This recommendation should include the implementation of a step-by-step process of moving students from service to service. According to several teachers in this study, this does not exist in the state where the study was conducted and there are no clear guidelines to a

step-by-step transition process for students as transition is based on age as the determining factor and not readiness.

While there are no suggestions for quick solutions to supporting parents, teachers, and service providers, it is suggested identifying and implementing a step-by-step process of transition practices for all participants would assist with an alignment of IDEA (2004) recommended services from start to finish. This step-by-step process could help build relationships at the start of the school year, incorporate communication and collaboration through training for parents, teachers, and service providers at the beginning, mid-year, and before the school year ends. With recommendations from IDEA, community-based service providers and therapists may go into classrooms and deliver services to students in Pre-K as part of their instruction. At that time, teachers could receive consultative services from the service providers. Based on the perspectives of several service providers in this study, teachers were not always receptive to interrupt services for intervention. Administrators also need to participate in this collaborative effort. An underlying goal of the policy (IDEA, 2004) changes was to demonstrate student progress data that administrators could use to help inform teachers of practices to increase classroom instructions (Wachen et al., 2015). The greater the communication and collaboration across all stakeholders, the greater the likelihood for successful transition.

Recommendations for practice at the state level include having a fundamental document for parents, teachers, and service providers in paper and electronic form with steps to follow, which would include conceptual groundwork for the importance of

transitioning students with disabilities as well as pedagogical approaches to ensure a smoother transition from Pre-k services to Kindergarten services. At the local level, IEP initial orientation meeting before the school year begins (Chandroo et al., 2018), followed by mid-year meeting to track progress, and an end of the year transition meeting and checklist are needed to demonstrate completion of services and transition from Pre-K to Kindergarten for parents. Last, the inclusion of a Pre-K Special Education Instructional Support Specialist to provide resources for parents, training for new teachers and service providers, and ongoing support for current teachers to promote and provide policy and procedural practices is recommended. This would ensure information is accessible in one place.

Implications

The multiple perspectives of parents, teachers, and early intervention service providers in a single study to contribute to literature and practices in education transition were explored in this study. While transition practices of different activities were reported by teachers and service providers, they were largely implemented by the school districts per the district personnel. Little literature is available on the complex interactions among multiple perspectives and the factors that influence the transition process from Pre-K to Kindergarten (Cook & Coley, 2020; McIntyre & Wildenger-Welchons, 2015). Although evidence in the literature addressed a gap in practice in the literature, there is evidence of some transition practices experienced by parents, teachers,

and service providers in this study. Based on participants' responses several common cited transition practices were identified:

1. Phone calls and send home information packets to parents about Kindergarten.
2. Pre-K students spend time in the new Kindergarten class.
3. Parents and students visited the Kindergarten classroom before the start of school year.
4. Parent orientation before the start, or at the start of the school year.

Implication for positive social change includes developing an informative document with possible transition practices that may benefit all stakeholders with information. This document would include successful transition processes such as welcoming parents as part of the transition team and successful transition strategies that teachers and service providers will present to parents. This document could be in the form of a printed or electronic handbook that can be introduced to parents before the start of the school year for parent orientation, used as a tool for mid-year check progress, and a sign off showing the child is ready for transition to Kindergarten before the school year ends. Suggested transition practices should be included in this handbook as a tool for new teachers as well as service providers. These suggested transition practices include an initial IEP planning meeting, a visit to the new school, transition planning meeting with the multidisciplinary team, and a final evaluation and eligibility for the student followed by a classroom observation for parents and students of the new classroom environment.

A variety of transition practices must be offered to meet the individual needs of the parents (Besi & Sakellariou, 2020; Pianta & Walsh, 1994), teachers, and service providers. Participants expressed positive attitudes towards the use of transition practices, yet expressed the need for further communication to determine highly effective transition strategies. Positive social change can take place by exploring parents, teachers, and service providers' perspectives of the transition process they experienced to better address challenges, assist with planning, and support all stakeholders when facilitating transition for students with disabilities. Transition success can come about by raising the awareness for professionals within the local southern state early, before transitioning students with disabilities, to avoid challenges that can undermine a child's later development. Local organizations that support students with disabilities and their parents have access to the information in this study to support their own initiatives of providing support and care to students with disabilities.

Conclusion

The transition process entails the collective responsibility of many stakeholders to be turned into a positive experience for students. It is important for professionals to become familiar with a district transition policy and examine the recommendations to support students with early learning and appropriate transition placement (Petriwsky, 2014). A letter to the state's superintendent from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (2015; 2016; 2017; 2019) indicated that the state received a "*needs assistance*" rating in their employment of

present transition practices and did not meet the requirements in implementing services for students with disabilities under Part B of IDEA. The State Department of Education determined that incomplete evaluations were the central causes that delayed appropriate transition processes to support students' appropriate placement (Department of Education, Early Childhood Transition Timeline Summary, 2015; 2017; 2019).

There is a gap in the literature about the practice about multiple perspectives of the transition process when transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K services to Kindergarten services. Although research has provided perspectives of parents and teachers and students with and without disabilities, an ongoing effort is needed to understand the perspectives of multiple stakeholders during the process of transition (Cook & Coley, 2020; McIntyre & Wildenger-Welchons, 2015). Understanding the factors that influence the transition process may provide information to support parents, teachers, and service providers when transferring students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten and may increase understanding of those involved to improve the process. This research explored parent, teacher, and service provider perspectives of transitioning students with disabilities from Pre-K to Kindergarten and the factors they perceived that influenced transition.

In this study, participants reported practices and activities they have used that influenced transition. The findings for this study provided data to suggest several common practices reported by teachers and service providers as well as barriers to a successful transition. Parents expressed concerns about the nature of transition as it

relates to students entering a different learning environment and having adjustment challenges as well as insufficient involvement with teachers and service providers. All participants reported factors such as the communication level and skills to support the student and the level of engagement that may influence a successful transition due to the new environment. For transition to be successful, a variety of practices should be used and flexibility to support the individual needs of the students and family. Employing a variety of practices can help build relationships and classroom involvement, encourage communication among stakeholders, and provide opportunities for training and support services to help prepare planning for a successful transition.

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Appendix A: Child Find Evaluation

Code: IDDF (4)

160-4-7-.04 EVALUATIONS AND REEVALUATIONS.

(1) INITIAL EVALUATIONS. (a) Each LEA must conduct a full and individual initial evaluation before the initial provision of special education and related services to a child with a disability. [34 C.F.R. § 300.301

(a)]1. Each LEA shall ensure that evaluation procedures are established and implemented that meet the requirements of this Rule. (b) Once a child is referred for an evaluation by a parent or Student Support Team (SST) to determine if the child is a child with a disability, the initial evaluation:

1. Must be completed within 60 calendar days of receiving parental consent for evaluation. [34 C.F.R. § 300.301(c)(1)(i)]

(i) Holiday periods and other circumstances when children are not in attendance for five consecutive school days shall not be counted toward the 60-calendar day timeline, including the weekend days before and after such holiday periods, if contiguous to the holidays except:

(ii) Any summer vacation period in which the majority of an LEA's teachers are not under contract shall not be included in the 60day timeline for evaluation. However, an LEA is not prohibited from conducting evaluations over a summer vacation period

I. Consent received 30 days or more prior to the end of the school year must be completed within the 60-calendar day evaluation timeframe.

II. Students who turn three during the summer period or other holiday periods must have an eligibility decision and IEP (if appropriate) in place by the third birthday.

2. Must consist of procedures which determine if the child is a child with a disability and to determine the educational needs of the child. [34 C.F.R. § 300.301(c)(2)(i) – (ii)] (c) The timeframe described above does not apply to a LEA if:

1. The parent of a child repeatedly fails or refuses to produce the child for the evaluation; or

2. A child enrolls in a school of another LEA after the relevant timeline in this Rule has begun and prior to a determination by the child's previous LEA as to whether the child is a child with a disability; [34 C.F.R. § 300.301(d)(1) – (2)]

160-4-7-.04-2 EVALUATIONS AND REEVALUATIONS

3. The exception in (c)(2) above applies only if the subsequent LEA is making sufficient progress to ensure a prompt completion of the evaluation and the parent and subsequent LEA have agreed to a specific time when the evaluation will be completed. [34 C.F.R. § 300.301(e)]

4. If extenuating circumstances, e.g., illness, unusual evaluation needs, or revocation of parent's consent for evaluation affect this timeline, the LEA shall document the exceptions.

(2) PARENTAL CONSENT FOR EVALUATION.

(a) The LEA proposing to conduct an initial evaluation to determine if the child qualifies as a child with a disability shall, after providing notice, obtain an informed consent from the parents of such child before the evaluation is conducted. The LEA must make reasonable efforts to obtain the informed consent from the parents. To meet the reasonable efforts requirement, the LEA must document its attempts to obtain parental consent using procedures that may include detailed records of telephone calls made or attempted and the results of those calls, copies of correspondence sent to the parents and any responses received, and detailed records of visits made to the parent's home or place of employment and the results of those visits. [34 C.F.R. § 300.300(a)(1)(i); § 300.300(a)(1)(iii); § 300.300(d)(5); § 300.322(d)(1) – (3)]

(b) If the parents of a child refuses consent for the evaluation or the parents fail to respond to a request to provide consent, the LEA may, but is not required to, pursue the initial evaluation of the child by utilizing the mediation and impartial due process hearing procedures provided for in the procedural safeguards. However, if a parent of a child who is home schooled or placed in a private school by the parents at their own expense does not provide consent for the initial evaluation or the reevaluation, or such parent fails to respond to a request to provide consent, the LEA may not use the consent override procedures, and the LEA is not required to consider the child as eligible for services. [34 C.F.R. § 300.300(a)(3)(i); § 300.300(d)(4)(i) – (ii)]

(c) For initial evaluations only, if the child is a ward of the State and is not residing with the child's parent, the LEA is not required to obtain informed consent from the parent for initial evaluation to determine whether the child is a child with a disability if –

1. Despite reasonable efforts to do so, the LEA cannot discover the whereabouts of the parent of the child.
2. The rights of the parents of the child have been terminated in accordance with State law; or 160-4-7-.04-3

EVALUATIONS AND REEVALUATIONS

3. The rights of the parents to make educational decisions have been subrogated by a judge in accordance with State law and consent for an initial evaluation has been given by an individual appointed by the judge to represent the child. [34 C.F.R. § 300.300(a)(2)(i) – (iii)]

(d) Other consent requirements. 1. Parental consent is not required before -

- (i) Reviewing existing data as part of an evaluation or a reevaluation; or
- (ii) Administering a test or other evaluation that is administered to all children unless, before administration of that test or evaluation, consent is required of parents of all children. [34 C.F.R. § 300.300(d)(1)(i) – (ii)]
- (iii) The screening of a child by a teacher or specialist to determine appropriate instructional strategies for curriculum implementation. This shall not be considered to be an evaluation for eligibility for special education and related services. [34 C.F.R. § 300.302]

(3) REEVALUATION.

(a) Each LEA must ensure that a reevaluation of each child with a disability is conducted at least once every 3 years, unless the parent and the LEA agree that a reevaluation is unnecessary:

1. If the LEA determines that the educational or related service's needs, including improved academic achievement and functional performance, of the child warrants a reevaluation; or

2. If the child's parent or teacher requests a reevaluation. [34 C.F.R. § 300.303 (a)(1) – (2); § 300.303(b)(2)]

(b) Limitation. A reevaluation may not occur more than once a year, unless the parent and the LEA agree otherwise; and must occur at least once every 3 years, unless the parent and the LEA agree that a re-evaluation is unnecessary. [34 C.F.R. § 300.303(b)]

(c) Each LEA shall obtain informed parental consent prior to conducting any reevaluation of a child with a disability, except that such informed parental consent need not be obtained if the LEA can demonstrate that it has taken reasonable measures to obtain such consent and the child's parents failed to respond. [34 C.F.R. § 300.300 (c)(1) – (2)]

(4) EVALUATION PROCEDURES.

160-4-7-.04-4 EVALUATIONS AND REEVALUATIONS

(a) Notice. The LEA shall provide notice to the parents of a child suspected with a disability, in accordance with all notice requirements as described in Rule 160-4-7-.09 Procedural Safeguards/Parent Rights. [34 C.F.R. § 300.304(a)] (b) Conduct of evaluation.

In conducting an evaluation, the LEA must - 1. Use a variety of evaluation tools and strategies to gather relevant academic, functional, and developmental information about the child, including information provided by the parents that may assist in determining:

- (i) Whether the child is a child with a disability; and
- (ii) The content of the child's individualized education program including information related to enabling the child to be involved in and progress in the general curriculum (or for a preschool child to participate in appropriate activities)

2. Not use any single procedure as the sole criterion for determining whether a child is a child with a disability and for determining an appropriate educational program for the child.

3. Use technically sound instruments that may assess the relative contribution of cognitive and behavioral factors, in addition to physical or developmental factors. [34 C.F.R. § 300.304(b)(1) – (3)] (c) Other evaluation procedures. Each LEA shall ensure that:

1. Assessments and other evaluation materials used to assess a child under this section:

- (i) Are selected and administered so as not to be discriminatory on a racial or cultural basis;

- (ii) Are provided and administered in the child's native language or other mode of communication and in the form most likely to yield accurate information on what the child knows and can do academically, developmentally, and functionally, unless it is clearly not feasible to so provide or administer;

- (iii) Are used for the purposes for which the evaluations or measures are valid and reliable;
- (iv) Are administered by trained and knowledgeable personnel; and
- (v) Are administered in accordance with any instructions provided by the producer of the assessments. [34 C.F.R. § 300.304(c)(1)(i) – (v)] 160-4-7-.04-5 EVALUATIONS AND

REEVALUATIONS

2. The child is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability, including, if appropriate, health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status, and motor abilities. [34 C.F.R. § 300.304(c)(4)]
3. Evaluation tools and strategies are used which provide relevant information that directly assists persons in determining the educational needs of the child. [34 C.F.R. § 300.304(c)(7)]
4. Assessments and other evaluation materials include those tailored to assess specific areas of educational need and not merely those which are designed to provide a single general intelligence quotient. [34 C.F.R. § 300.304(c)(2)]
5. Assessment selection and administration is such that, when administered to a child with impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills, the results accurately reflect the child's aptitude or achievement level, or whatever other factors the assessment purports to measure, rather than reflecting the child's impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills, except where those skills are the factors which the assessment purports to measure. [34 C.F.R. § 300.304(c)(3)]
6. If an evaluation is not conducted under standard conditions, a description of the extent to which it varied from standard conditions, i.e., the qualifications of the person administering the test, or the method of test administration must be included in the evaluation report.
7. In evaluating each child with a disability under this rule, the evaluation shall be sufficiently comprehensive to identify all of the child's special education and related service's needs, whether or not commonly linked to the disability category in which the child has been classified. [34 C.F.R. § 300.304(c)(6)]
8. Evaluations of children with disabilities who transfer from one LEA to another LEA in the same school year are coordinated with those children's prior and subsequent schools, as necessary and expeditiously as possible, to ensure prompt completion of full evaluations. [34 C.F.R. § 300.304(c)(5)]
9. The evaluation of children referred because of learning and/or behavior problems is the responsibility of a multidisciplinary evaluation team. For children who require a psychological and clinical evaluation, it must be conducted by a qualified psychological examiner:
 - (i) Qualified Psychological Examiner Requirements.

(ii) Initial evaluation results used for consideration of eligibility for special education, if not provided by a school psychologist with a valid S-5 (or higher) certificate in school psychology, shall be from one of the following: 160-4-7-.04-6

EVALUATIONS AND REEVALUATIONS

(I) A psychologist licensed by the Georgia Board of Examiners of Psychologists and having training and experience in school psychology or child clinical psychology.

(II) A full-time graduate student in an approved, properly supervised school psychology or child clinical psychology training program internship/practicum, who has completed a minimum of one year of approved appropriate graduate training.

(III) A Georgia Merit System employee who has a classification rating of psychologist, senior psychologist, or psychology program specialist.

(5) ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS.

(a) Review of existing evaluation data. As part of an initial evaluation (if appropriate) and as part of any reevaluation, the parent, and other qualified professionals, as appropriate, must review existing evaluation data on the child, including:

1. Evaluations and information provided by the parents of the child;
2. Current classroom-based, local, or State assessments and classroom-based observations; and
3. Observations by teachers and related services providers. [34 C.F.R. § 300.305(a)(1)(i) – (iii)]

(b) On the basis of that review and input from the child's parents, identify what additional data, if any, are needed to determine:

1. Whether the child is a child with a disability and the educational needs of the child, or in case of a reevaluation of a child, whether the child continues to have such a disability and the educational needs of the child; [34 C.F.R. § 300.305(a)(2)(i)(A) – (B)]
2. The present levels of academic achievement and related developmental needs of the child; [34 C.F.R. § 300.305(a)(2)(ii)]
3. Whether the child needs special education and related services, or in the case of a reevaluation of a child, whether the child continues to need special education and related services; and [34 C.F.R. § 300.305(a)(2)(iii)(A) – (B)]
4. Whether any additions or modifications to the special education and related services are needed to enable the child to meet the measurable annual goals set out in the IEP of the child and to participate, as appropriate, in the general curriculum. [34 C.F.R. § 300.305(a)(2)(iv)] 160-4-7-.04-7

EVALUATIONS AND REEVALUATIONS

(c) The parent and other qualified professionals may conduct its review without a meeting. [34 C.F.R. § 300.305(b)]

(d) The LEA must administer such assessments and other evaluation measures as may be needed to produce the data identified. [34 C.F.R. § 300.305(c)]

(e) Requirements if additional data are not needed –

1. If the IEP Team and other qualified professionals, as appropriate, determine that no additional data are needed to determine whether the child continues to be a child with a disability and to determine the child's educational needs, the LEA:

(i) Must notify the child's parents of that determination and the reasons for it and notify the parents of the right to request an evaluation to determine whether the child continues to be a child with a disability and to determine the child's educational needs; [34 C.F.R. § 300.305(d)(1)(i) –

(ii)] (ii) Is not required to conduct such an evaluation to determine whether the child continues to be a child with a disability unless requested by the child's parents. [34 C.F.R. § 300.305(d)(2)]

(f) Evaluations before change in eligibility. The LEA must evaluate a child with a disability before determining that the child is no longer a child with a disability. [34 C.F.R. § 300.305(e)(1)]

1. The evaluation is not required before termination of a child's disability due to graduation from high school with a regular education diploma, or due to exceeding the age eligibility for FAPE. [34 C.F.R. § 300.305(e)(2)]

2. However, the LEA must provide the child with a summary of the child's academic achievement and functional performance, which shall include recommendations on how to assist the child in meeting the child's post-secondary goals. [34 C.F.R. § 300.305(e)(3)]

(6) DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY.

(a) Upon completion of the administration of tests and other evaluation measures

1. A group of qualified professionals and the parents of the child (Eligibility Team) determines whether the child is a child with a disability and the educational needs of the child; and

2. The LEA provides a copy of the evaluation report and the documentation of determination of eligibility at no cost to the parents. [34 C.F.R. § 300.306

(a)(1)-(2)] 160-4-7-.04-8

EVALUATIONS AND REEVALUATIONS

(b) In making a determination of eligibility, a child must not be determined to be a child with a disability: if the determinant factor for that eligibility is lack of appropriate instruction in reading, including the essential components of reading instruction (as defined in section 1208(3) of ESEA); lack of appropriate instruction in math; or limited English proficiency; and if the child does not otherwise meet the program area eligibility criteria for a child with a disability. [34 C.F.R. § 300.306(b)(1) – (2)]

Appendix B: Teacher Interview Protocol

(Modified TPOT)

Quintero, N., & McIntyre, L. L. (2011). Kindergarten transition preparation: A comparison of teacher and parent practices for children with autism and other developmental disabilities. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 38(6), 411-420.

Background:

1) How long have you educated students with disabilities in your current school?

Perspectives of transition:

2) What concerns do you have about students with disabilities' transitioning from Pre-K level services to Kindergarten level services? Please explain your reason of concern.

3) What concerns do you have when working with parents during transition to Kindergarten? _____

a) What concerns do you have when working with service providers during transition to Kindergarten? _____

Factors that influence the transition:

4) Please describe how monthly contacts: ie. Phone visits, home visits have assisted/hindered you with transition. _____

a) Please provide an example when service providers assisted or hindered you with transition. _____

b) Please provide an example when parents assisted or hindered you with transition.

5) Please describe transition practices you used during the transition process.

a) Describe any challenges you experienced when using these transition practices during transition. _____

6) What are some barriers that you feel may prevent you from engaging in transition practices with parents and service providers?

7) Do you have anything else you would like to add?

Possible follow up prompts that I will keep visible as I interview each participant:

What did you mean by...?

Tell me more about....

You mentioned....Tell me more

Appendix C: Service Providers Interview Protocol

(Modified from TPOT)

Quintero, N., & McIntyre, L. L. (2011). Kindergarten transition preparation: A comparison of teacher and parent practices for children with autism and other developmental disabilities. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 38(6), 411-420.

Background:

1) How long have you worked with students with disabilities in your current position?

Perspectives of transition:

2) What concerns do you have regarding the transition process for students with disabilities transitioning from Pre-K level services to Kindergarten level services?

3) What type of involvement have you experienced when working with teachers during transition? _____

a) How did these types of involvement affect the transition process with teachers?

Factors that influence transition:

4) Please describe how monthly contacts: ie. Phone visits, home visits have assisted/hindered you with transition. _____

a) Please provide an example when teachers assisted or hindered you with transition.

b) Please provide an example when parents assisted or hindered you with transition.

5) Please describe transition practices you used during the transition process.

a) Describe any challenges you experienced when using these transition practices during transition. _____

6) What are some barriers that you feel may prevent you from engaging in transition practices with parents and teachers? _____

7) Do you have anything else you would like to add?

Possible follow up prompts that I will keep visible as I interview each participant:

What did you mean by...?

Tell me more about....

You mentioned....Tell me more

Appendix D: Parents Interview Protocol

(Modified from FEIT)

McIntyre, L. L., Eckert, T. L., Fiese, B. H., DiGenaro, F. D., & Wildenger L. K. (2007). The transition to kindergarten: Families experiences and involvement. *Early Childhood Educational Journal*, 35, 83-88.

Background:

1) How long has you child been diagnosed with a disability?

2) What services does your child currently receive (e.g. speech, occupational therapy) in addition to special education supports this school year? _____

Perspectives of Transition:

3) What concerns do you have for your child as he/she transitions from Pre-K services to Kindergarten level services? _____

4) What concerns do you have for your child regarding your child's new classroom environment (teachers, curriculum, academics) as he/she transitions to Kindergarten?

5) What challenges may prevent you from engaging in transition process from Pre-K level services to Kindergarten level services? _____

Factors that Influence Transition:

6) What information would be helpful as you plan for your child's transition to Kindergarten? Example: Individual Education Program, parent's rights, accommodations for your child. (Context) _____

7) What involvement have you experienced in your child's transition with the teacher and service provider? Example, monthly contacts, attend transition planning meeting, communication regarding transition, open house, Kindergarten orientation, written communication regarding transition. _____

8) How did these types of involvement with your child's teacher or service provider affect the transition process? _____

9) What barriers may prevent you from engaging in the transition process when working with teachers or service providers? _____

10) Do you have anything else you would like to add?

Possible follow up prompts that I will keep visible as I interview each participant:

What did you mean by...?

Tell me more about....

You mentioned... Tell me more

Appendix E: A priori, Open Codes, Participants, Excerpts for RQ 1

A priori	Open Codes	Participants	Excerpts
Establishment of relationships	Involvement and contacts	P1	“The meeting helped my awareness for the process.”
		P2	“Not being able to attend his meeting.”
		P3	“Information at the beginning helped.”
		P4	“No involvement or contact.”
		T1	“Parents who have no concern.”
		T2	“Parents may express anxiety.”
		T3	“Parents express their concerns.”
		T4	“Parents are not realistic.”
		SP1	“Teachers are very protective.”
		SP2	“I don’t get to speak with the teachers.”
		SP3	“Strong program, but in need of building relationships.”
		SP4	“Concern for parent work ethics.”
		Substance based on relationships	Classroom environment
P2	“Concerns for his new classroom environment.”		
P3	“Concerns for skills to form interpersonal relationships.”		
P4	“Concerns for social skills.”		
T1	“Concerns for no guide on transition.”		
T2	“Concerns for student’s anxiety.”		
T3	“Concerns for lack of programs.”		
T4	“Concerns for professional support.”		

		SP1	“Concerns for releasing students.”
		SP2	“Concerns for not hearing back from teachers.”
		SP3	“Concerns for building relationships and teachers’ skills.”
		SP4	“Concerns for building a foundation.”
Influence of relationships	Recommend services	P1	“Keep this gap as small as possible.”
		P2	“Day to day activities schedule.”
		P3	“Put in extra time.”
		P4	“Social skills to express her feelings.”
		T1	“No measure to qualify students.”
		T2	“Hard time to adjusting.”
		T3	“Divide grade levels.”
		T4	“A lot going on.”
		SP1	“No conferencing.”
		SP2	“No feedback.”
		SP3	“Dealing with parents.”
		SP4	“Teacher training.”
Pathway and direction of relationships formed	Challenges to engage	P1	“Until I met in person, I was able to confirm.”
		P2	“Challenging for me to get to his school.”
		P3	“Engaging in the transition process.”
		P4	“My schedule and the teacher schedule.”
		T1	“Disconnect.”
		T2	“Teachers are unfamiliar with students.”
		T3	“Hardship on teachers.”
		T4	“Look at the whole child.”
		SP1	“Same school environment.”
		SP2	“Not always possible to get everyone.”
		SP3	“Barriers for addressing transition.”
		SP4	“No acknowledgement of disability.”

Individual experiences	Communication concerns	P1	“Lack of communication.”		
		P2	“Timing and communication.”		
		P3	“Very minimal communication.”		
		P4	“Ongoing communication.”		
		T1	“Lack of cooperation.”		
		T2	“Communication to start.”		
		T3	“Lack of resources or support.”		
		T4	“No contact information.”		
		SP1	“Never attended those meetings.”		
		SP2	“No opportunity to speak to Kindergarten teachers.”		
		SP3	“Parents responses not guaranteed.”		
		SP4	“We have to work as a team.”		
		Resources provided	Classroom instructions and strategies	P1	“Weekly reports to students.”
				P2	“Copy of his schedule and activities.”
P3	“Literature that teaches parents.”				
P4	“Parent training classes.”				
T1	“Checklist of documents.”				
T2	“IEP meeting.”				
T3	“Use of technology.”				
T4	“Packets and visits.”				
SP1	“Push-in or pull-out services.”				
SP2	“Kindergarten round up.”				
SP3	“Orientation, advertisement, calling post, technology.”				
SP4	“Upper-grade content, spectrum book.”				
Motivation to engage interactions	Support services			P1	“Individual attention.”

P2	“Services he will receive.”
P3	“Someone to put in extra time.”
P4	“Keep up to date.”
T1	“Parents actively involved.”
T2	“Parents become receptive.”
T3	“Communication and support.”
T4	“Break things down for parents.”
SP1	“Time incorporated into practices.”
SP2	“Relationship with the lead teacher.”
SP3	“Yearly planned events.”
SP4	“Training was important.”

Appendix: F Open Codes, Categories, Participants, Excerpts for RQ 1

Open Codes	Categories	Participants	Excerpts
Involvement and contact	Minimal involvement and relationships between parents, teachers, service providers	P1	“The meeting help increase my awareness for the process and how passionate they were about making sure my son progressed.”
		P2	“Challenges that prevent me from engaging is not being to attend his meeting due to my schedule.”
		P3	“I received a lot of information at the beginning.”
		P4	“I personally have no involvement or contact from our teachers other than attending an open house, weekly lesson plans and an occasional update.”
		T1	“There is a lack of cooperation and support, parent education is a concern, they have no concern about their children’s education.”
		T2	“Parents may express a level of anxiety in regards to the transition process and have an fear of losing support systems in place.”
		T3	“Parents express their concerns with leaving and their desire to remain in our class.”
		T4	“Parents tend to not be realistic, would not understand, accept, and grow, to move past what they can teach their babies.”
		SP1	“Teachers are very dedicated to their

			children and protective of them.”
		SP2	“I don’t generally get to speak with the Kindergarten teacher which is a disadvantage.”
		SP3	“My school has an extremely strong Pre-K and Kindergarten program but are in need of building relationships with parents.”
		SP4	“My concern is if parents are building the work ethics, and foundation for students at home.”
Classroom environment	Concerns for the new classroom environment and student relationships	P1	“My concern is my son getting individual attention in areas where he is already showing delay.”
		P2	“My concern is his new classroom environment and he received support services.”
		P3	“My main concern is that he is not building the necessary skills to form interpersonal relationships with other students.”
		P4	“My concern is with her social skills to express her feelings. I have hopes she will receive the attention she needs.”
		T1	“My concern is the county offers no guidelines on transitioning Pre-K special education student to Kindergarten.”
		T2	“My concern is that children who are transitioning may experience anxiety

		T3	entering a new environment that is unfamiliar.” “I am concerned with a lack of program and the number of setting offered for our students.”
		T4	“My concern is that they will have professional support, and the staff have background knowledge.”
		SP1	“My concern is with them not being about to keep up and there are some constraints with releasing students.”
		SP2	“My concern is not getting feedback from the teacher when I have written the IEP and the amount of time the student may need.”
		SP3	“Teachers are in dire need of assistance with building relationships with parents.”
		SP4	“My concerns are for students getting accustom to a work ethic, and parents building the work ethic with them.”
Recommend services	Concerns for curriculum and Instructional/support services for student development	P1	“I would like to stay ahead of any therapy that is needed in order to keep his gap as small as possible.”
		P2	“He is able to focus on day-to-day activities and receive continued support services with his social skills.”
		P3	“I have concerns for her not being someone to put in the extra time it takes to work with him.”

		P4	“I hope that he is able to receive the attention she needs and the size of her classroom with the ratio of teachers.”
		T1	“There is no measure to qualify students, age is the only determining factor.”
		T2	“Some students may have a hard time adjusting to a more academic driven environment.”
		T3	“If classrooms were divided by two or three grade levels, we would have more commonalities with regard to expectations and state standards.”
		T4	“We have to consider the students have a lot going on already.”
		SP1	“There has been no conferencing.”
		SP2	“I don’t get feedback when I’ve written the IEP and preparation for students to go to kindergarten.”
		SP3	“My concern is dealing with two sets of parents for the students, biological parent, grandparents, and who is actually taking care of the student.”
		SP4	“Training was important and teaches learning how to identify a student with a disability.”
Challenges to engage	Challenges for parents, teachers, and service providers to engage in transition	P1	“I was able to confirm that his teacher was ok with doing minimum requirement because she didn’t contribute that in the meeting.”
		P2	“I work at a hospital and it may be

	challenging for me to get to his school.”
P3	“There are no challenges that may prevent me from engaging in the process except scheduling.”
P4	“Challenges that may prevent me from engaging in transition would be my schedule and the teacher’s schedule.”
T1	“There is a disconnect between what the county requires and the concepts and skills that the receiving teacher expects.”
T2	“The teachers are very unfamiliar with the students.”
T3	“There is a huge gap, it’s a hardship on the teachers to service such as a wide span of grade levels.”
T4	“Teachers need to look at the whole child, recognize their purpose, but are also overwhelmed with the amount of students they have.”
SP1	“If there is a program in the school, a lot of teachers are really good at knowing how to prepare students for kindergarten.”
SP2	“We try to make the effort in the beginning of the school year, but it is not always possible to get everybody.”
SP3	“Teachers are alternatively certified, lack skills to develop relationships with their parents which are

		SP4	barriers of addressing transition planning.” “The teachers I have worked with would not acknowledge the disability of the child due to lack of training.”
Communication	Communication barriers for parents, teachers, and service providers	P1	“There is a lack of communication with the involved parties.”
		P2	“I want to be involved in some of his activities, but my work does not allow me to leave during work.”
		P3	“There are no involvement or contact.”
		P4	“I would like to see a consistency in her progress and ongoing communication.”
		T1	“There is a lack of cooperation and support from parents, some of whom have unrealistic expectations and goals.”
		T2	“Communication for starters make things so much easier once you get in contact with parents.”
		T3	“There is a lack of resources or support from parents or service providers.”
		T4	“Some parents do not have the correct numbers to make connections.”
		SP1	“I have never been in those meeting and it may depend on location.”
		SP2	“I don’t necessary hear back from any of the Kindergarten teachers to find out if the amount of services I

			recommend is adequate.”
		SP3	“Some parents are more responsive to technology. The use of technology has increased the availability of knowledge but does not guarantee that it reaches every parent.”
		SP4	“We have to learn to work as a team, collaborate with each other, and parents should be trained in workshops.”
Classroom instructions /strategies.	Need for communication of resources for students with disabilities	P1	“I would like to have a teacher who is required to give me a weekly report so that we can work together to make sure he is hitting his milestone in and out of the classroom.”
		P2	“If I could get a copy of his schedule and activities on a regular basis that would be helpful.”
		P3	“I would like literature that teaches parent of children with Down syndrome on how they can best teach their children at home.”
		P4	“I have attended IEP meeting, conferences and Kindergarten orientation that was helpful.”
		T1	“There is a checklist of documents that is required.”
		T2	“I send home notices, stay in contact with parents, make phone calls, send an envelope prior to the meetings.”
		T3	“I contact parents via class dojo, text

			message, and those who are not tech-savvy through phone calls, and parent express appreciation from being informed.”
		T4	“We giv opportunity from the therapist to visit and we send home packets giving parents an idea of how we can help.”
		SP1	“I can do a push in or pull out type of service and it depend on the level of the transition.”
		SP2	“I suggest Kindergarten round up and encourage parent to attend and reach out to the Lead Teacher of Special Education.”
		SP3	“I supply an orientation to the community, place advertisement on local schools and county website and use calling post to provide information to help transition parents.”
		SP4	“I would incorporate some of the content from the upper grades, provide parents with a spectrum book to help with transition over the summer.”
Support services	Positive communication support parents, teachers, and service providers with barriers	P1	“I would like to maintain this aptitude of achievement if we can continue a certain capacity of individual attention in order to cater to his learning process.”
		P2	“I would like to know the kind of services he will receive for his disability and how often the services will be provided.”

P3	“I have concerns for not having someone to put in the extra time it takes to work with him.”
P4	“I hope that her next teacher will keep me up to date like her current teacher is doing right now.”
T1	“There are millennial parents of children with disabilities who are actively involved in every aspect of their children.”
T2	“Parents become receptive to things that are required, but communication has to be there.”
T3	“My goal is to provide communication and support to the parent and service provider in supporting the child while exercising professionalism at all times.”
T4	“We meet parents at their needs, break it down for them to understand.”
SP1	“When I have a child that I know need time to settle down, I work with the teacher and try to get the student out.”
SP2	“The Lead Teacher of Special Ed is the person I always have much interaction with than the Pre-k or Kindergarten teachers.”
SP3	“The events planned yearly with teachers, daycares, and local principals was extremely helpful and parents were able to provide feedback.”

SP4

“Training was important and our regular education teachers and parents learning how to identify a student with disability.”

Appendix G: A Priori, Open Codes, Participants, Excerpts for RQ 2

A priori	Open Codes	Participants	Excerpts
Concerns for student environment (Microsystem)	Transition practices and expectations	P1	“Best learning environment.”
		P2	“Kind of services.”
		P3	“Interpersonal skills.”
		P4	“Skills needed to perform.”
		T1	“Appropriate adaptive/self-help skills.”
		T1	“Student visits helped.”
		T3	“New teacher effort.”
		T4	“Therapists visit for support.”
		SP1	“Incorporate practices.”
		SP2	“Student visits.”
		SP3	“Alleviate these deficiencies.”
		SP4	“Content from upper grade.”
Concerns for interaction among stakeholders (Mesosystem)	Concerns for transition practices	P1	“Keep up with peers.”
		P2	“Classroom environment.”
		P3	“Being bullied.”
		P4	“Comfortable with his current teacher.”
		T1	“Left up to teachers.”
		T2	“Encourage parents to visit the school.”
		T3	“Student placement and location.”
		T4	“Inconsistent support for students.”
		SP1	“Teachers and parents may disagree.”

		SP2	“Teachers do their own thing; parents are not ready.”
		SP3	“Lack of communication between parents.”
		SP4	“Parents and teacher contact.”
Indirect systems Influence (Exosystems)	Support systems for transition practices	P1	“Results of another diagnostic test.”
		P2	“Kindergarten orientation.”
		P3	“Contact from teachers.”
		P4	“Conferences and IEP meeting.”
		T1	“Not required to create goal.”
		T2	“IEP meeting before the transition meeting.”
		T3	“Beginning of the year preparation.”
		T4	“Packets are sent home.”
		SP1	“Time incorporated into practice.”
		SP2	“Beginning of the year practices.”
		SP3	“Orientation and events.”
		SP4	“Parent and teachers training.”
Community systems influence (Macrosystem)	Completion of transition practices	P1	“IEP meeting.”
		P2	“Kindergarten orientation.”
		P3	“Open house.”
		P4	“Visit the classroom.”
		T1	“Preparation activities.”
		T2	“Collaborative effort.”
		T3	“Team effort.”
		T4	“Parent education.”
		SP1	“Gains from practices.”

		SP2	“Cut back on services.”
		SP3	“Parenting classes outside of work time.”
		SP4	“Regular contact.”
Present experience	Experience/preparation of transition practices	P1	“IEP meeting involvement .”
		P2	“Involved in some of the activities.”
		P3	“No involvement.”
		P4	“One on one conference.”
		T1	“Complete documents.”
		T2	“Parent and service providers no show.”
		T3	“Same building support.”
		T4	“Kindergarten visits.”
		SP1	“Not knowing about meetings.”
		SP2	“Not needing much support services.”
		SP3	“Checklist to assist, Kindergarten roundup.”
		SP4	“Content to determine readiness.”
Consistency of experiences	Transition practice barriers	P1	“Integrated into class.”
		P2	“Beginning of the school year.”
		P3	“Little help.”
		P4	“Not long enough.”
		T1	“Teachers are invited.”
		T2	“Parents are advised.”
		T3	“Come to agreement.”
		T4	“Parent visits to support students.”
		SP1	“Barriers to working with the child.”

		SP2	“Community services.”
		SP3	“Weeklong activities.”
		SP4	“Progress made with practice.”
Influences of experience	Impact of consistent transition practices	P1	“Not fully confident.”
		P2	“Idea of the type of services.”
		P3	“Small amounts.”
		P4	“Questions afterward.”
		T1	“Parents get an opportunity.”
		T2	“Parents see the new environment.”
		T3	“Students are placed accordingly.”
		T4	“Parents may not agree.”
		SP1	“Parents may not know.”
		SP2	“Need for community services.”
		SP3	“Constant contact.”
		SP4	“Work together.”

Appendix H: Open Codes, Categories, Participants, and Excerpts for RQ 2

Open Codes	Categories	Participants	Excerpts
Transition practices and expectations	Transition support services to prepare students	P1	“Recommendations around the best learning environment were helpful.”
		P2	“I would like to know the kind of services he will receive for his disability and how often the services will be provided.”
		P3	“My concerns is that he is not building the necessary skills to inform his interpersonal relationships with other students.”
		P4	“I am concerned with her social skills to express his feelings and get along with her peers.”
		T1	“I give students the opportunity to develop age-appropriate adaptive/self-help skills.”
		T2	“We take the students to visit the school and do the Kindergarten transition visit.”
		T3	“If new teachers would put forth the care and effort that would be helpful.”
		T4	“The speech therapist come in when we send home packets.”
		SP1	“I might start to incorporate practices for children who may be ready to be exposed.”
		SP2	“I was able to visit classes to see how things were going.”
		SP3	“Modeling of speech, parental awareness, and

		SP4	<p>family parenting classes can alleviate these deficiencies. The school has not taken major steps to combat these areas of concerns.”</p> <p>“I would incorporate some of the content from the upper grades to try to prepare them academically.”</p>
Concerns for transition practices	Consistency and training of transition practices	P1	“My desire is for him to keep up with his peers to avoid being held back in the future.”
		P2	“I want his new classroom environment a place to help him on day-to-day activities.”
		P3	“I am worried about him being bullied by others.”
		P4	“She is very comfortable with her current Pre-K teachers and she is very concerned with her progress.”
		T1	“Transition is left mostly up to the teachers.”
		T2	“I encourage parents to visit because our children get nervous going into these new environments.”
		T3	“Students may not be in the same building as their current teachers and service providers.”
		T4	“Some speech therapists and service providers may provide half-step work then complain about it.”
		SP1	“Parents may disagree if a child is ready, teachers may think the child is not ready.”

		SP2	“Teachers haven’t reached out to me anymore; parents were not ready for Kindergarten.”
		SP3	“The problem continues because of a lack of communication among parents, and most parents are not aware of the school services until it is too late.”
		SP4	“Parents and teachers need to be trained.”
Support systems for transition practices	Support systems and resources	P1	“Results of another diagnostic test, similar to the one performed before would be helpful.”
		P2	“Kindergarten orientation at the beginning of the school year was extremely helpful.”
		P3	“The contact support I received helped a little but are mere formalities with no depth of involvement behind it.”
		P4	“Parents classes would be helpful.”
		T1	“Transition services are not required, teachers are not required to create transition goals for these students, there is a checklist of documents.”
		T2	“Prior to the transition meeting, I explain to parent that we are going to have another meeting to support them with question.”
		T3	“I started at the beginning of the year preparing parent for transition through visits

		T4	and to observe the setting.”
		SP1	“Parents are given ideas of how we can help to move forward, and we send packets.”
		SP2	“If I know the child may move from a more restrictive to educational environment, I would spend time incorporating practices.”
		SP3	“We try to make the effort in the beginning of the school year.”
		SP4	“I have completed parenting classes for transition, conducted transition meetings, and provided speech and language, occupational services, and physical therapy.”
			“Parent and teacher contact have assisted me.”
Completion of transition practices	Type of transition practices	P1	“I have experienced one IEP meeting.”
		P2	“I have experienced orientation.”
		P3	“I have experienced open house.”
		P4	“I have visited the new classroom.”
		T1	“I send home summer break preparation packets for parents to minimize regression.”
		T2	“It’s a collaboration effort, everyone in this child’s life should be working together as a team.”
		T3	“Most service providers assist, and we are on the same page when it comes to recommendations.”

		T4	“We make them go in and make arrangements with an activity to get our babies excited.”
		SP1	“When parents see gains, they are more than likely pleased with the services.”
		SP2	“We were told what’s easy to cut back on, and start out with enough support, and increase it later.”
		SP3	“I have conducted parenting class for transition on Saturday’s to support parents, and parents were more involved in the academics, attended and participated in conferences.”
		SP4	“You can only better your environment and academics when you have contact with the parents and teachers on a regular basis.”
Experience/preparation of transition practices	Transition practices and preparation of the IEP meetings	P1	“IEP meeting involvement has given me a better view of my son’s plan.”
		P2	“Knowing what to expect is helpful to be involved in some of the activities like the Kindergarten orientation.”
		P3	“I have experienced no involvement other than open house, weekly lesson plans, and an occasional update.”
		P4	“I was able to get a one-on-one conference and get to ask questions.”
		T1	“I completed the documents and submit them to the Lead

			Teacher Special Education.”
		T2	“Parents and service providers may not always show up for the IEP meeting.”
		T3	“I am fortunate to work with individuals in the same building.”
		T4	“I am allowed to bring my kids in the Kindergarten class even if they are going to a regular Kindergarten class.”
		SP1	“I may not always know of the meetings that may take place.”
		SP2	“I would say the vast majority of the community students typically don’t need much support, but I do have a few.”
		SP3	“During the week of Kindergarten round up, we provide a checklist to assist parents.”
		SP4	“Even though the curriculum is rigor, I would try to incorporate things from the upper grades to see if a student is ready or see if the student is going to be overwhelmed.”
Transition practice barriers	Consistency and mutual agreements with transition practices	P1	“I would love to see him integrated in classrooms with typical students.”
		P2	“At the beginning, I received a lot of information from the school on instructions.”
		P3	“The system helped a little.”
		P4	“The conferences are not long enough to really help with

		T1	understanding what to truly expect.” “Receiving teachers and service provider are invited to the IEP review and reevaluation meetings.”
		T2	“If service providers are there, I advise parents to speak positively.”
		T3	“If we disagree, we discuss it and come to a consensus almost immediately.”
		T4	“Once we visit, we show parents to provide education so that they can start doing the work.”
		SP1	“If parents want to speak to the speech pathologist that will work with their child it is helpful.”
		SP2	“We would provide community services to students once or twice a week for just an hour a week, then increase services.”
		SP3	“The week-long activities helped parents with preparing students for transition.”
		SP4	“The resources I have provided has helped students prepare academically and they get to practice before Kindergarten.”
Impact of transition practices and experience	Opportunity for training /support services for parents	P1	“I’m still not fully confident in our education plan, moving forward.”
		P2	“I have an idea of the type of services I would receive and what to expect when my son goes to kindergarten.”

P3	“The help they provided is a small amount.”
P4	“I have questions afterward and would send an email and get no response back.”
T1	“During the IEP review, parents get the opportunity to ask questions and voice their concerns about the transition process.”
T2	“Parents get a feel for what’s to come and see the new environment.”
T3	“We place students accordingly, but parents may have discretions and ultimately win the battle.”
T4	“Parents may shut down and leave.”
SP1	“Parents may not always know who the service providers are.”
SP2	“When we increase their special education support services the transition is smoother.”
SP3	“Scholars who experience developmental delays benefited from transition with constant contact from the teachers and support staff.”
SP4	“We came together and work together and that is how I helped my students’ transition.”