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Kindergarten Teachers' Implementation Methods for School Readiness Skills in a Rural School

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Walden University
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Abstract

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EdS, Troy State University, 1990

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Kindergarten students in a Title 1 elementary school are lacking school readiness skills. When students enter kindergarten unprepared to learn, they may experience difficulties with approaches toward learning skills related to physical, language, social, emotional, and cognitive development, which are reliable predictors of subsequent academic and life success. The purpose of this qualitative bounded case study with a constructivist framework was to examine how kindergarten teachers implemented the five domains of school readiness at a Title 1 school to improve incoming kindergarten students' learning. Convenience sampling was used within a bounded system of four kindergarten teachers in a Title 1 elementary school. Semistructured interviews and observations provided data for thematic qualitative analysis using open and selective codes. Findings indicated that all kindergarten teachers taught the five domains of school readiness using differentiated instruction and used encouragement to improve incoming kindergarten students' learning. Based on the findings, a summer kindergarten boot camp was designed to improve kindergarten teachers' pedagogy and affective teaching strategies to improve incoming kindergarten students' readiness skills. The project may promote positive social change by helping kindergarten teachers and leaders to improve their pedagogical approaches and affective teaching strategies. The development of differentiated instruction and encouragement may enhance students' preparation for kindergarten.

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Dedication

In memory of my parents, Mary and Alexander (Alex) Woods; brothers, Andrew (Andy), James Alexander, and Chester Woods; nephew, Michael Belmar; nieces, Eleanor Irving and Danita Joy Woods; family friend Ronald J. Taylor; and mentor Dr. Jerome Franson, who is the wind beneath my wings. To my family, thank you for your unconditional love and support throughout this journey. To my Godmother, Dr. Judith Franson, thank you for teaching me to follow my dreams, for as I dream, so shall I become. I especially recognize my Sunday school and Schoolhouse children; thank you for teaching me the significance of perseverance, endurance, and absolute assurance. To my professional colleagues, thank you for believing in me unconditionally, and most importantly, to my Sister, Dr. Tracee M. Synco, who encouraged me to reach beyond racial microaggressions and to chant our mantra, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” Philippians 4:13 (NIV).

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

The transition from preschool to kindergarten is challenging for students who have not developed school readiness skills. School readiness is a stage of child development indicated by five early-development dimensions: (a) cognition and general knowledge, (b) physical wellbeing and motor development, (c) language and literacy development, (d) approaches toward learning, and (e) social and emotional development (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University [CDCHU], 2011). These five domains of school readiness are aligned with the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE) for kindergarten children (Kagan et al., 2011). Children who have not developed these learning competencies are expected to meet or exceed GSE expectations during the kindergarten year in order to be prepared for first grade (Annie E. Casey Foundation [AECF], 2014).

The construct of school readiness is broadly defined (Brown, 2010; Farran, 2011; Ursache et al., 2011). The term generally applies to a child who has reached (or will reach) the age of 5 years prior to September 1 to start kindergarten in Georgia (Georgia Department of Education [GDOE], n.d.). School readiness is a stage of development that includes language, social, motor, perceptual, and conceptual competencies (CDCHU, 2011). The Head Start program's definition of school readiness indicates that it entails skills and capabilities of children in essential developmental domains, which include (a) language and literacy, (b) social-emotional development, (c) cognition, (d) approaches toward learning, and (e) physical health and motor development (Office of Head Start

[OHS], 2014a). School readiness arises from interactions that children experience culturally and environmentally that maximize their developmental outcomes (Farran, 2011). School readiness is regarded by some kindergarten teachers as a set of common core standards for social, emotional, and intellectual development that will prepare children for future academic success (National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning [NCQTL], n.d.). These constructs of the five domains of school readiness suggest that learning and development are interconnected and interrelated across all areas of development.

The five domains of school readiness are seen as developing in all children (birth through age 8 years) and as supporting their learning competencies and readiness for school (OHS, 2014b). These five domains connect to children's cognitive, social, emotional, and linguistic skills, as well as to their environment. Development within the domains of school readiness is important for all children to become successful throughout school and life (OHS, 2014a).

Kindergarten teachers play essential roles in preparing students to exhibit school readiness competencies. These teachers are held to increased accountability demands (National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 2015). Kindergarten teachers anticipate that incoming kindergarten children will enter their classrooms prepared to meet certain personal needs, which include using the bathroom without help and cleaning their hands (NAEYC). These are basic self-help skills that give children the opportunity to acquire new learning skills (Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning [GDECAL], n.d.a).

In general, kindergarten teachers spend from 6 to 8 hours a day providing structured learning activities in which kindergartners are expected to ask for help, sit and listen, and follow classroom routines (NCQTL, n.d.). Kindergarten teachers also provide opportunities for children to develop learning competencies through instructional routines, whole-class instruction, learning centers, seat work, and playground time (NCQTL, n.d.). Early childhood educators spend numerous hours of instruction with kindergarten children in multiple environments with different kindergarten readiness skills, levels of preparedness, and general knowledge.

Kindergarten teachers' expectations of the readiness skills of kindergarten students from various environments have changed over time (Bassok et al., 2016). Their expectations have shifted with a move from play-based instruction to explicit instruction. Previously, kindergarten teachers provided child-directed instruction. Currently, kindergarten teachers give teacher-directed instruction. Moreover, these teachers' expectations have shifted in focus from children's social-emotional development to their cognitive development. In recent decades, as Bassok et al., indicated, teachers' expectations have changed as a result of the passage of federal laws such as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001. These mandates have increased expectations related to structural differences (length of day and size of setting), developmental levels of children, appropriate behavior, curriculum focus, and instructional philosophy (NCQTL, n.d.). It is crucial for kindergarteners to have early learning experiences that prepare them for the transition from preschool into kindergarten. This study may help kindergarten teachers to implement the five domains of school readiness to improve incoming kindergarten

student learning. The case study may help educators understand the current problem better and make informed decisions to address it.

Definition of the Problem

Children in a Title 1 elementary school in southwest Georgia are experiencing school readiness challenges when they transition to kindergarten from Head Start programs and school-based preschools, as well as when they enter kindergarten with no exposure to preschool environments (AECF, 2014). The kindergarten teachers at the local elementary school participating in this study acknowledged that incoming kindergarten children's assessment data from the Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (GKIDS) offer strong indications regarding students who are unprepared to learn cognitive, language, social and emotional, and behavioral competencies.

Throughout the kindergarten school year, kindergarten teachers use GKIDS to evaluate student learning and plan instruction across five domains of school readiness. Bable (2013) described GKIDS as an assessment tool to plan instruction and collect data for the GSE across five domains of school readiness. Kindergarten teachers, according to Bable, use GKIDS data to inform instructional decisions, parent conferences, and grades on report cards.

The elementary school principal indicated that for the past 3 years, 85% of incoming kindergarten students had not demonstrated prerequisite competencies in the mathematics, language, speaking, writing, listening, and reading strands on the GKIDS, with many also showing deficiencies in approaches toward learning and social and emotional development. Necessary skills for entering students include looking at books

or pictures, pretending to read books, and recognizing some familiar words in print (Cappelloni, 2013). These are essential readiness skills for children to prepare to read.

During the past 3 years, an administrator at the study site stated "GKIDS data have also indicated that incoming children have experienced mathematics challenges." The principal at the study site indicated that over 80% of incoming children had not demonstrated mathematics and number awareness. Mathematics skills that children entering kindergarten need include numeral identification, counting, pattern recognition and creation, sorting, and classifying. A kindergarten teacher indicated that children in her class could not compare the sizes of groups of objects using language such as "more," "less," and "same as". Another kindergarten teacher agreed that half of the class struggled with the concept of comparing bigger and smaller. Such skills are strong predictors of children's academic success (Cappelloni, 2013).

According to the elementary school principal, one of the greatest challenges of incoming kindergarten children is language and emergent literacy. Important skills in this area include expanding vocabulary. Language and literacy skills (e.g., the use of inflections and affixes) are excellent indicators of kindergarteners' reading abilities throughout school and later life (Segaert et al., 2012). A kindergarten teacher acknowledged that over 90% of incoming children in her class had difficulty in following directions, speaking clearly, and using conventional grammar to engage in conversation with peers and adults. These skills enable a child to function appropriately in the kindergarten environment and to develop relationships with peers and teachers. Segaert et

al. indicated that these skills are developed at the same time that kindergarten children achieve development in other domains.

The elementary school principal further stated that incoming kindergarteners' school readiness challenges include physical well-being and motor development. A kindergarten teacher expressed that more than 80% of incoming kindergarten children had difficulties demonstrating tasks such as feeding, dressing, tearing paper, and holding and writing with a pencil. These skills help children to function in their environment and complete necessary tasks such as turning pages in their books, writing on the chalkboard, using a computer, eating, and holding hands (Segaert et al., 2012). The elementary school principal noted that incoming kindergarten children's physical and motor skills are essential to support other school readiness competencies.

In the past 3 years, incoming kindergarten students have also demonstrated severe challenges in their approaches toward learning. A kindergarten teacher contended that many incoming kindergarten children (80%) could not attend and engage in classroom activities, solve problems, and show curiosity, motivation, flexibility, and inventiveness in thinking. Welchons and McIntyre (2015) found that these skills are necessary for children to achieve success in kindergarten and life. A kindergarten teacher indicated that children who have not developed effective approaches toward learning will more than likely have challenges in developing social and emotional skills as well.

The elementary school principal also noted that incoming kindergarten children (80%) had demonstrated challenges in controlling their emotions, impulses, and tolerating frustration. A kindergarten teacher contended that over 50% of the children in

her class exhibited severe emotional problems in the kindergarten classroom and on the playground. The elementary school principal and four kindergarten teachers noted that the emotional challenges of incoming kindergarten children impact their ability to meet GSE expectations. Isaacs (2012) indicated that children who are experiencing these challenges will most likely enter kindergarten at a disadvantage because of their social and emotional behaviors. The elementary school principal further stated that other assessment data are currently unavailable regarding school-based prekindergarten and Head Start children's transition to kindergarten and school readiness challenges.

Regardless of the principal's and kindergarten teachers' initiatives, problems existed for students transitioning from preschool to kindergarten who were unprepared to learn. When kindergarten teachers and parents work together to support children entering kindergarten from multiple environments, outcomes will impact students' academic success (Berlin et al., 2011). Kindergarten teachers' initiatives included (a) establishing a connection with parents before the first day of kindergarten; (b) mailing information to parents before the first day of the school year, including medical and dental information; (c) inviting parents to visit the kindergarten classroom; (d) contacting parents to schedule home visits; (e) scheduling early registration for parents to enroll children in kindergarten; and (f) placing students who are performing below grade level on a tier support system and using strategies to increase their performance levels (Berlin et al., 2011). The elementary school principal and kindergarten teachers agreed that these strategies were being implemented but had not improved performance levels in content areas (English language arts and mathematics).

When the teachers and school leaders of a school indicate that over 75% of incoming kindergarten children are unprepared to learn school readiness skills, it is necessary to examine and address this problem for their future academic success. The problem of students entering kindergarten from multiple environments lacking readiness skills is not only a local problem, but also a challenge impacting children, schools, and families across America (Mulligan et al., 2014).

Rationale

This subsection includes my rationale for selecting kindergarten teachers' implementation of the five domains of school readiness to improve incoming kindergarten student learning as the topic of this study. I describe evidence of the problem at the local level, as well as evidence of the problem from the academic literature.

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

In the past 3 years, incoming kindergarten students have struggled to demonstrate school readiness skills. These include (a) writing letters of the alphabet correctly, (b) counting to 10, (c) following two- or three-step directions, (d) following classroom rules and routines, and (e) transitioning to activities. A kindergarten teacher noted that incoming kindergarten children (75%) were unprepared to use their hands and fingers in multiple ways, including holding a pencil correctly, stringing beads, and connecting blocks and puzzles. Another kindergarten teacher contended that incoming students entering kindergarten were unprepared to speak openly to express their ideas and emotions appropriately.

The elementary school principal noted that incoming kindergarten students (80%) were not ready to learn school readiness skills. These included (a) general knowledge (reasoning and problem solving), (b) language and literacy (letter knowledge, letter-word identification, vocabulary, expressing ideas so that others can understand them, blending sounds into words, phonological awareness, phonemic awareness), (c) mathematics (number sense and counting), and (d) behavioral skills (interacting appropriately with adults and peers; (AECF, 2014). Mulligan et al. (2014) indicated that students who enter kindergarten unprepared to learn these school readiness skills will more than likely not advance to first grade.

The elementary school principal and kindergarten teachers further contended that 80% of incoming kindergarten students demonstrated challenges with all strands of GKIDS. These strands, which include (a) personal and social development, (b) mathematics, (c) approaches toward learning, and (d) English language arts. are necessary for students to learn for future academic success (NAEYC, n.d.).

The four kindergarten teachers agreed that 80% of incoming students had not demonstrated English language skills in the first GKIDS assessment data. These necessary skills included forming a complete sentence, using the future tense, and speaking openly. These are essential language skills for children to learn to read and write (NAEYC, n.d.).

The elementary school principal further indicated that incoming students had not demonstrated approaches toward learning using the second assessment of GKIDS. These skills included persistence, motivation, and attention and are the foundation for all future

learning (NAEYC, n.d.). A kindergarten teacher agreed that over 75% of the students in her class were not motivated to learn these skills or did not demonstrate interest in doing so. The principal contended that more than 75% of incoming kindergarten children had skill levels significantly below those of typically developing 5-year-old students.

The school principal further indicated that incoming children (80%) still demonstrated deficits in multiple strands by the third assessment of GKIDS. These included (a) English language arts, (b) mathematics, (c) personal and social development, and (d) approaches toward learning. A kindergarten teacher agreed that incoming students (70%) in her class had not demonstrated these strands throughout the kindergarten year. Another kindergarten teacher claimed that incoming children had consistently demonstrated challenges in mathematics. These challenges included counting and recognizing numbers. Skills included identifying dimensional shapes such as circles, triangles, and squares. The principal contended that these skills are necessary for students to succeed in kindergarten.

At the research site, the principal noted that approximately 90 children had enrolled in kindergarten in the past 3 years. The principal contended that 75 of the incoming kindergarten children did not demonstrate progress on each strand of English language arts and mathematics. A kindergarten teacher acknowledged that less than 10% of children in her kindergarten class met expectations for the English language arts strand. Another kindergarten teacher agreed that 90% of children had not demonstrated expected performance levels in the English language arts strand.

The four kindergarten teachers indicated that over 85% of incoming children had not demonstrated progress in the strands of number recognition, sequence, addition, subtraction, place value, measurement, and money. The principal acknowledged that kindergarten students who had not demonstrated performance levels in core strand areas (mathematics, reading, English language arts) were targeted for supplemental services. The elementary principal also contended that kindergarten students who did not demonstrate progress on each strand had experienced peer rejections, punitive contacts with the kindergarten teachers, severe disciplinary actions (in and out of school suspensions), and academic failure.

Evidence of the Problem From the Professional Literature

Daily et al. (2010) acknowledged the need to improve children's school readiness skills; Bernstein et al. (2014) agreed that many students in America are unprepared to enter kindergarten. Referring to findings from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study Kindergarten Class of 2010-2011 [ECLS-K], Bernstein et al. (2014) further stated that over 70% of kindergarten students were academically and behaviorally unprepared for kindergarten across five domains of school readiness. In a recent AECF Data Report (2015), kindergarten teachers acknowledged that students entering kindergarten are unprepared academically in areas such as recognizing the letters of the alphabet and phonics. Other researchers (Bierman et al., 2014; Blair & Raver, 2012) found that children's school readiness skills and later life success involve academic and behavioral abilities as well as language skills, emotional well-being, physical and mental health, and approaches toward learning.

The U.S. government has shown an effort to support kindergarten children's school readiness. Programs supporting this goal have included (a) Early Head Start, (b) Head Start, and (c) Early Childhood Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) System. These initiatives have reduced educational disparities among kindergarten children (Administration for Children and Families [ACF], 2010). According to data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study—Birth Cohort (n = 6,950), Lee et al. (2014) stated that these initiatives (Early Head Start and Head Start programs) helped to promote children's school readiness. Lee et al. further stated that children attending these programs had higher reading and mathematics scores compared to kindergarteners who did not attend Early Head Start and Head Start programs when entering kindergarten.

Daily et al. (2010) stated that other initiatives of NCLB (2001) had involved a national commitment to improve students' school readiness. Daily et al. further stated that across the United States and the District of Columbia, educators had developed common core standards to support incoming kindergarten children who are unprepared to learn school readiness skills. Kagan et al. (2011) indicated that GSE expectations for kindergarten children are aligned with the five domains of school readiness.

In recent decades, various states and communities nationwide have invested a significant amount of time, money, and other resources to prepare students for kindergarten readiness. In 2007, the Louisiana Legislature passed the School Readiness Tax Credits (SRTC), making Louisiana the only state to offer tax credits to improve school readiness skills in children (birth to 5 years; Louisiana Department of Revenue [LDOR], 2007). During the 2012-2013 school year, Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal

signed legislation that required the state board of education to create an Early Childhood System of Local Networks that would be governed by performance standards for kindergarten readiness (Louisiana Department of Education [LDOE], 2012).

In the 2012-2013 school year, a new transitional kindergarten (TK) program was implemented in California (California Department of Education [CDE], 2013). The program was a result of Senate Bill 1381, which amended the California Educational Code to change the required birthdate for children entering kindergarten from December 2 to September 2 (CDE, 2013). Incoming kindergarten children would be prepared to enter kindergarten ready to learn.

In a California county, a collaboration of the Stanislaus Community Foundation (SCF), Stanislaus County Library, Office of Education, and Children and Families Commission found that about 70% of Stanislaus County's kindergarten children entered kindergarten unprepared to learn school readiness skills (SCF, 2016). These include (a) counting out loud, (b) printing words, and (c) recognizing words on a page. Researchers (Peisner-Feinberg et al., 2015) stated that initiatives (prekindergarten programs) across America showed educational improvement in critical areas of school readiness. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine how kindergarten teachers implemented the five domains of school readiness at a Title 1 elementary school to improve incoming kindergarten student learning.

Definitions of Terms

The following operational definitions will be used throughout this project study.

Building blocks: Children's learning competencies that are grouped together with many other similar skills to construct greater learning competencies (ACF, 2015).

Transition to kindergarten: Children moving into new learning environments with the support of their families, schools, and communities (Miller, 2014).

Significance of the Study

The findings from this study may be used to help kindergarten teachers to teach the five domains of school readiness to improve incoming kindergarten student learning. According to Gullo (2014), school readiness skills include (a) cognition and general knowledge, (b) communication and language learning, (c) social and emotional skills, (d) approaches toward learning, and (e) physical well-being and motor development. Children develop these readiness skills when they learn and practice them in meaningful experiences in settings such as schools and communities. Researchers (Li-Grining et al., 2010) have linked and documented the need for students to acquire these essential school readiness skills for academic success.

The results of this study may help to prepare kindergarten teachers to enhance their pedagogical skills for implementing the five domains of school readiness to improve incoming kindergarteners' readiness skills. This study may also add to future research concerning incoming kindergarten children being unprepared to learn.

Research Question

The following research question guided this study: How do kindergarten teachers implement the five domains of school readiness at a Title 1 school to improve incoming kindergarten students' learning?

Review of Literature

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine how kindergarten teachers implemented the five domains of school readiness at a Title 1 elementary school to improve incoming kindergarten students' learning. It is essential for children entering kindergarten to acquire skills within the five dimensions of early development and to demonstrate key learning competencies in order to function in school and life. Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social constructivism guided the literature review, the data collection, and the data analysis. Thus, this literature review included the conceptual framework that grounded the study and its connection to kindergarten teachers' implementation of the five domains of school readiness to improve incoming kindergarten students' learning.

In conducting the literature review, I sought relevant information from ERIC, Google Scholar, ProQuest, and EBSCO. Strategic search terms included *factors that impact school readiness*, *factors that influence school performance*, *five domains of school readiness*, *poverty*, *health and nutrition*, *socioeconomic and school readiness*, *readiness and achievement gaps*, *parental involvement*, *kindergarten curriculum*, *literacy*, *language*, *Head Start programs*, *at-risk preschoolers*, *Georgia performance standards*, *childcare*, *Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (GKIDS)*, *social constructivism*, and *preschool age group.*

Conceptual Framework

In this qualitative case study, I designed the research to capture the essence of the study under investigation through semistructured interviews and classroom observations.

A case study gives a researcher the ability to gain a specific understanding of the study under investigation. I connected the participants' interviews and classroom observations to a social constructivist approach to examine how kindergarten teachers implemented the five domains of school readiness to improve incoming kindergarten student learning.

Social constructivism involves a focus on individuals' perceptions of reality, knowledge, and learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Social constructivism included (a) when reality is constructed through human activities, (b) when knowledge involves human interactions (socially and culturally), and (c) when individuals learn through social activities. Social constructivism, heavily influenced by Vygotsky, emphasizes that individuals construct knowledge from human and social interactions.

Social constructivism is a theory that may be used when a researcher seeks to understand incoming kindergarten students' readiness skills in relation to their environment (Vygotsky, 1978). I used social constructivist theory because my purpose was to understand how kindergarten teachers implemented the five domains of school readiness at a Title 1 school to improve incoming kindergarten students' learning. These five domains of school readiness establish the Head Start Child Early Learning Outcomes Framework (HSELOF, 2015), which may be used to conceptualize school readiness (OHS, 2014a). The constructs for this study involve the five domains of school readiness that have been identified by the HSELOP (OHS, 2014a). At the research site, the kindergarten curriculum was aligned with the five domains of school readiness (Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, n.d.b). These five domains also grounded my efforts of data collection and analysis. The five dimensions of early development and

learning competencies, according to HSELOP, are (a) cognition and general knowledge, (b) language development, (c) social and emotional development, (d) approaches toward learning, and (f) physical wellbeing and motor development.

Physical wellbeing involves the ability of kindergarten children to consistently participate in all developmentally appropriate activities (OHS, 2014a). Physical competencies (energy, strength, flexibility, coordination, stamina, and endurance) allow kindergarten children the ability to focus and have healthy bodies and thus make it possible for them to participate in appropriate activities. These physical competencies are essential and are building blocks for physical wellbeing and motor development.

Motor skills give kindergarten children the ability to be physical in their environment and support other areas of early development and learning competencies (Cappellioni, 2013). Children's motor skills involve three distinct components: gross, fine, and sensorimotor skills (OHS, 2014a). Motor skills that involve large muscle movements are called *gross motor skills*. Kindergarten children's gross motor skills are essential to their performance of everyday tasks and self-care and ultimately support the foundation for their social, behavioral, and emotional development (OHS). Children need these skills to sit, stand, or put a coat on without falling. Gross motor movements include walking, jumping, climbing, and skipping, as well as nonlocomotor activities such as stretching, pushing, turning, and throwing a ball. These skills help kindergarten children to balance and concentrate (NAEYC, n.d.). These skills also help children to show preference for the dominant side of their body and function in their environment (NAEYC, n.d.).

Gross motor skills influence children's ability to demonstrate fine motor skills. Skills in the fine motor category include writing, drawing, cutting, eating, stacking blocks, grasping small objects, and fastening clothing (NAEYC, n.d.). These skills involve the small muscles of both hands. Weaknesses in these skills can affect children's ability to eat, write legibly, or perform self-help skills such as dressing and grooming. Grissmer et al. (2010) found that these skills contribute to kindergarten children's overall development and are indicators for later academic achievement.

Sensorimotor skills integrate children's senses. Such skills include hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching in relation to motor activities (OHS, 2014a). These skills are necessary for children to engage in motor activities (jumping, reaching, and walking) and interact with their environment. Visual perception plays a key role in academic skills such as writing, reading, and copying. Likewise, auditory perception is required in order for children to hear as well as comprehend information in school.

Children's motor development relies upon proper nutrition and rest. Children must eat many types of nutritious foods to grow and develop well. Cameron et al. (2012) observed that proper nutrition gives children the energy and mobility they need to learn, function, and concentrate in their environment. Motor skills (chewing, swallowing, eating, and drinking) are essential to kindergarten children performing necessary tasks in school and life.

The importance of the physical wellbeing and motor development domain to school readiness has been supported by numerous research studies. Romano et al. (2010) found that children's memory, basic knowledge, and motor skills are reliable indicators

of school readiness and later achievement. Cameron et al. (2012) found that motor skills are interrelated and interconnected across multiple domains of school readiness. These studies, and others like them, further indicate that motor development supports other school readiness domains. As an explanation for how motor development supports multiple domains of school readiness, kindergarten children may develop cognitive, language, and social skills from playing a game of football on the playground.

Social skills involve the ability of kindergarten children to interact with peers and adults, and their capacity for self-regulation in all developmentally appropriate activities (Schultz et al., 2011). Social competencies (asks for help, adjusts to new situations, works cooperatively, and uses words like *please*, *thank you*, and *excuse me*) allow kindergarten children the ability to engage in learning and form positive relationships with peers and teachers. Social competencies also involve cognitive processes. Such skills include goal setting, decision making, and self-discipline (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2013). These social skills are essential for kindergarten students to build confidence, cognitive curiosity, interaction, intentionality, self-control, relatedness, language usage, and cooperativeness (Bierman et al., 2014) and they are indicators of future academic and life success. These social competencies are important as building blocks for social and emotional development.

Emotional competencies involve the ability of kindergarten children to respect themselves, respond to the emotions of others, and comprehend and express their feelings in all developmentally appropriate activities (CASEL, 2013). When these competencies are present, kindergarten children respect the property of others, engage in cooperative

learning environments, sit still, attend, and follow two or three oral directions and rules (Liew, 2011). These emotional competencies form a foundation for the regulation of emotions, attention, and behavior.

Emotional skills allow kindergarten children to engage in appropriate activities and support other areas of early development and learning competencies (CASEL, 2013). Researchers (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010) have found that kindergarten children who demonstrate emotional competencies are more than likely to succeed academically in school.

Kindergarten children's emotional competencies are related to academic achievement (CASEL, Liew, 2011; Valiente et al., 2012). Kindergarten children who are not accepted by their peers may have lower levels of academic self-concept that result in low levels of academic success (CASEL; Liew, 2011; Valiente et al., 2012). The emotional competencies that influence children's sense of academic competency may not be fully developed; they may be unable to take turns and share and unable to care for their personal needs. Valiente et al. observed that children who lack these competencies have poor self-esteem. When kindergarten children have not acquired emotional competencies, they receive less instructional time and less positive feedback from their kindergarten teachers (Valiente et al., 2012), which affects school success.

The importance of the social and emotional development domain to school readiness is that it always remains the cornerstone of school readiness (CASEL, 2013). Children's social and emotional skills are interrelated and are acquired in a predictable

sequence (OHS, 2014a). These skills are essential and are connected to how kindergarten children acquire readiness competencies.

Approaches toward learning involve how kindergarten children acquire learning competencies in social interactions. Such competencies (initiative, engagement, persistence, and curiosity) allow kindergarten children to initiate conversations and wait their turn to speak during group discussions and thus make it possible for them to participate in appropriate activities. These approaches toward learning competencies are essential and are the foundation for future learning.

In past decades, researchers (Bernstein et al., 2014) found that kindergarten teachers can build children's approaches to learning across all domains of school readiness through actions such as being intentional about fostering positive attitudes and behaviors and providing additional support and guidance. Kindergarten teachers may provide hands-on experiences. These experiences may help kindergarten children to develop their ideas to explain "how" and "why" things occur with tools (scissors). These approaches toward learning competencies (reasoning, problem solving, curiosity, and eagerness to learn) are essential and are building blocks for executive function and self-regulation (CDCHU, 2011).

Self-regulation and executive function involve the mental ability of kindergarten children to perform multiple tasks successfully and thus make it possible to engage in all developmentally appropriate activities (CDCHU, 2011). Kindergarten children's executive functions (focusing on tasks, remembering instruction, and exercising inhibitory control) are essential and are demonstrated when they are aware of and interact

with peers and adults. Likewise, self-regulation is necessary in order for kindergarten children to control and manage emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in home and school environments (CDCHU, 2011). Kindergarten children who have these competencies (e.g., who go to their room voluntarily when upset and control their language) are more likely to focus their attention, remember directions, stay on task, and cope with communication challenges (Liew, 2011). These approaches toward learning competencies are essential and are building blocks for other domains of school readiness (Li-Grining et al., 2010).

Kindergarten children's approaches toward learning competencies are related to cognitive development (Vitiello et al., 2011). Approaches toward learning competencies (ability to be engaged, persistent, and attentive) allow kindergarten children to demonstrate these behaviors through cognitive abilities. Vitiello et al. observed that the relationship between kindergarteners' cognitive development and approaches toward learning provide the foundation for learning. Children's cognitive development and approaches toward learning competencies have a significant influence on other domains of school readiness.

Language development involves the ability of kindergarten children to participate in all developmentally appropriate activities, according to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD, n.d.). Language competencies (NIDCD, n.d.) include (a) content (vocabulary and meaning), (b) form (grammatical structure or syntax), and (c) use (function). These language competencies allow kindergarten children the ability to communicate their needs and understandings and thus

make it possible for them to participate in appropriate activities. According to Law et al. (2013), these language competencies are essential and are the building blocks for language development.

Language skills allow kindergarten children to use meaningful communication in their environment and support other domains of school readiness (Cappelloni, 2013). Kindergarten children's language competencies involve three distinct components: phonemes, morphemes, and syntax (University of Oregon [UO] DIBELS Data System, n.d.).

Language skills that involve the smallest distinguishable units in language are called *phonemic skills*. Kindergarten children's phonemes are essential to learning to verbally communicate and ultimately support the foundation for other areas of early development and learning competencies (OHS, 2014a). Children need these skills to be able to read, write, listen, and speak. Phonemic skills include consonant sounds (*b*, *d*, and *p*) related to single phonemes (UO DIBELS Data System, n.d.).

Kindergarten children's language development also involves morphemes (UO DIBELS Data System, n.d.). Morphemes are meaningful parts (e.g., prefixes and suffixes) of words. Kindergarten children need these skills to speak, listen, and learn to read printed text. Likewise, syntax is required in order for children to speak, hear, as well as understand printed text in school. These skills are essential for kindergarten children and are critical indicators of kindergarten children's ability to engage, interpret, and perceive their environment.

The importance of the language development domain to school readiness is connected across all dimensions of early development and learning competencies (OHS, 2014a). Kindergarten children's language development involves communication and literacy, which are building blocks to approaches toward learning and social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development.

Cognitive development involves the ability of kindergarten children to consistently use all competencies of school readiness in developmentally appropriate activities (OHS, 2014a). Cognitive competencies (perceiving, recognizing, conceiving, judging, reasoning, and imagining) allow kindergarten children the ability to ask questions, to observe, to recognize differences and similarities, and to solve problems and thus make it possible for them to participate in appropriate activities. These cognitive competencies are essential and are building blocks for cognitive development.

Cognitive skills allow kindergarten children to develop daily social interactions and experiences and are essential for organizing and acquiring new knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). Such skills include (a) mathematical skills (number sense, recognizing patterns, colors, and shapes) and (b) problem-solving skills (acknowledging similarities and differences, identifying solutions, and increasing attention and focus to challenging tasks). These skills are important for kindergarten children to demonstrate ideas, develop logical and abstract thinking, analyze questions, and comprehend their world.

Kindergarten teachers are expected to support kindergarteners' early learning and to teach students to simultaneously comprehend all five school readiness domains and content (language, reading, mathematics) and socialization. Even if kindergarten children

do not possess school readiness skills when they enter their first year in elementary school, they can succeed if and when their kindergarten teachers provide numerous methods to approach learning and encourage their curiosity, creativity, independence, cooperativeness, and persistence. Bodrova et al. (2013) stated that readiness skills are essential to teach in kindergarten classrooms to prepare children to learn.

Social Constructivist Theory

Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the concept that learners construct understanding from their social interactions (particular relationships and environmental conditions). This approach known as social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978) and has become the primary explanation for young children development and learning in educational research. It is considered the foundation for practicing and teaching of young children in the U.S. educational system (Berk, 2010). Britto (2012) stated that social constructivism is used in many other countries. The theory of social constructivism aligned to school readiness literature and how kindergarten teachers implement the five domains of school readiness to improve incoming kindergarten students learning. I also aligned data collection (semistructured interviews and nonparticipant observations) and data analysis to the theory of social constructivism.

Kindergarten teachers who use the social constructivist approach as the basis for their instructional decisions may encourage incoming kindergarten children to assess how the activities (identify and name letters) are helping them gain new knowledge and meaning. When kindergarten teachers motivate kindergarten children to learn, they will develop the necessary skills to learn and become expert learners (Berk, 2010). The

constructs for this case study involve the theory of social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978) and the five domains of school readiness. The five domains of school readiness, according to OHS (2014a), are (a) cognition and general knowledge, (b) language development, (c) social and emotional development, (d) approaches toward learning, and (f) physical wellbeing and motor development.

Kindergarten children's physical wellbeing occurs in a social context. Through social interactions (imaginary play), kindergarten teachers may guide young learners in developing physical competencies that allow them to engage in appropriate activities (Bodrova et al., 2013). These social interactions are essential and are building blocks for physical wellbeing and motor development.

Motor skills occur not only through social interactions but in an interdependence system of evolving competencies that complement each other. When children's motor skills (show coordination in activities, or show appropriate small and large motor skills) are developed, they have a definite sense of personal well-being and can engage in social interactions with their teachers and peers. Wachs, et al. (2014) observed that kindergarten children's motor skills and maturation are stronger when they have daily practice to interact directly with their environment. Kindergarten teachers can coach children to develop motor skills. These include writing, riding a bicycle or throwing a ball.

The importance of the physical wellbeing and motor domain to social constructivism has been supported by the work of Vygotsky (1978). Vygotsky found that children construct knowledge and meaning through their actual developmental level. Children's developmental level begins through social interaction and thus allows initial

sensory-motor, fine, and gross motor skills. These include learning experience for an emergent writer may involve developing motor skills such as hand and eye coordination to grasp and control writing tools (squeezing water out of sponges). Kindergarten teachers may engage kindergarten children in sensory experiences such as making letters with finger paint. These learning experiences are essential and are building blocks for kindergarten children's cognitive, emotional and social development.

Kindergarten children's social development comes from shared meaning and knowledge of their peers and adult interaction in nurturing environments (Vygotsky, 1978). Social competencies, according to CASEL (2013), include interacting with peers and adults, engaging in learning, and responding to peers and teachers using appropriate language. These social competencies may provide students with opportunities to accommodate and assimilate their current understandings of new information and thus make it possible to socialize with peers and teachers in a kindergarten environment. The social competencies are essential and building blocks for social and emotional development.

Emotional skills allow kindergarten children the ability to create meaning from engaging in social interactions with more knowledgeable peers and adults (collaboration) in the environment (Vygotsky, 1978). Emotional skills support also other areas of early development and learning competencies (OHS, 2014a). Kindergarten teachers may engage students to use active techniques (problem solving) to promote their emotional development. It is critical for kindergarten teachers to become familiar with kindergarteners' previous challenges to guide activities that will address the challenges.

Social and emotional development are tied together because kindergarten children's emotional development occurs in social constructs (CASEL, 2013). Social and emotional competencies are essential and are building blocks for cognitive and language development and how kindergarten children acquire learning competencies.

The core of kindergarten children's social interactions involves approaches toward learning (OHS, 2014a). Such competencies (persistence, problem-solving, and motivation) allow kindergarten teachers and principals to focus on how kindergarten children approach learning in construct social environments and thus make it possible for them to make instructional decisions. These competencies are essential and are building blocks for approaches toward learning.

Kindergarten teachers may construct how kindergarten children learn in a social learning environment. Researchers (Gredler, 2012; Silver, 2012) found that early childhood providers may use numerous teaching techniques such as adult-child interactions, daily routines, scaffolding, and collaborative learning in the classroom. Early childhood teachers may involve learners in their learning experiences such as kindergarten teacher comments on children's attempts to handle a challenging situation: "Derek took the red crayon from you. You did not grab it back from him. You used a different color of crayon. That was a kind way to solve the crayon problem!" Silver further stated that when caregivers are nurturing and guiding, children learn to become actively involved in school activities and persistent in their work.

Primary teachers may use multiple approaches to support kindergarten children to become more actively engaged in learning (Cuticellit et al., 2014). Silver (2012) found

that kindergarten teachers who use Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD, 1978) as an approach toward learning, build children's knowledge and meaning opposed to memorizing basic facts. In kindergarten learning settings, Silver indicated that kindergarten teachers may use scaffolding to help kindergarten children to become engaged in learning by building instruction around the student's previous knowledge.

Kindergarten teachers may use scaffolding as opportunities to gain perspectives about children's current knowledge of problem solving and the chance to build on what they already understanding. Some early childhood educators may use these approaches to demonstrate how children build knowledge through social interaction and collaboration. These strategies include cognitive and language skills to construct knowledge.

Kindergarten children's language development begins through social interactions (Segaert et al., 2012). Language competencies (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) allow kindergarten children the ability to participate in social activities and thus make it possible for kindergarten teachers to construct these competencies in social environments. These language competencies are essential and are building blocks for kindergarten teachers to construct children's language activities.

Kindergarten teachers may construct language activities for kindergarten children through play and cooperative learning (Bodrova et al., 2013; Vygotsky, 1978). Such activities as grouping (whole class, individually or in collaborative thinking teams of two) allow kindergarten teachers the ability to construct kindergarten children's language competencies (to ask questions, to observe and engage, and to recognize differences and similarities) in social interactions. Bodrova et al. stated that early childhood educators

may help to facilitate these language experiences through levels of play, necessary resources, coaching or mentoring kindergarten children as they attempt to link existing knowledge for new knowledge construction.

In the constructivist kindergarten classroom, teachers construct group learning activities (Wachs et al., 2014). As kindergarten children engage in these activities, their success involves how they approach learning, physical, and emotional competencies with significant emphasis on social interactions, and language as well as intellectual development (Li-Grining et al., 2010). Kindergarten teachers are required to understand how groups of kindergarten students construct knowledge and learn together. They must focus on kindergarten students' general knowledge and cognitive development.

Kindergarten children's cognitive development occurs in social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978). Cognitive competencies (abstract reasoning, memory, language, problem-solving, self-motivation, and self-assessment) allow kindergarten children the ability to construct knowledge and thus enabling them to build internally on existing knowledge for new knowledge construction (Vygotsky, 1978) and participate in appropriate activities. These cognitive competencies are essential and are building blocks for kindergarten teachers to help develop kindergarten children’s cognitive skills.

Kindergarten teachers are in a position of authority and should be experts in assisting kindergarten children in developing new skills to existing skills. According to Vygotsky’s (1978) social constructivism, these teaching practices allow students to seek new skills and apply the new skills to existing skills. For example, kindergarten teachers may ask kindergarten students to explain new ideas using their language skills.

Children's language may support their ability to learn new skills. Kindergarten teachers may also provide students with manipulatives to guide their counting which will help support existing skills. Some kindergarten teachers use other methods to assimilate and accommodate new knowledge that include positive reinforcement, hands-on activities, problem-solving, questions and answer, and the use of learning journals by students to monitor progress.

Cognitive development incorporates social interactions in the constructivist framework. According to social constructivism, Vygotsky (1978) found methods that require students to learn from more knowledgeable peers and adults. For instance, kindergarten children collaborate to find logical sources for the information they are seeking which enables them to use five dimensions of early learning and competencies. Through collaboration, kindergarten children can build their knowledge through social experiences and thus allowing them to participate in appropriate activities.

Review of the Broader Problem

Genetic inheritance and the environment are factors that contribute substantially to child development and learning (Biebl, 2012; DiLalla et al., 2012; Meaney, 2010; Tucker-Drob & Briley, 2014). From the moment of conception, interactions between genetic inheritance and the environment contribute to shaping a child's development. Tucker-Drob and Briley noted evidence from multiple studies (studies of twin children and adopted children) indicating the influence of genetic inheritance and environmental factors on intelligence. DiLalla et al. agreed that genetic and environmental factors are reliable predictors of school readiness and early school achievement. Relevant factors

include those related to the environment of the fetus in utero (Pagani & Fitzpatrick, 2014). Before birth, children's exposure to harmful drugs, for instance, may have a critical influence on school readiness (Williams et al., 2013).

Prenatal care is one of the critical factors laying the foundation for children's school readiness skills (Haucke et al., 2012); Roberts et al. (2011) found that insufficient prenatal care may lead to prematurely born children with poor cognitive skills such as short and long term memory, lack self-control, and mental flexibility. Quigley et al. (2012) agreed with Roberts et al. that insufficient prenatal care leads to poor educational achievement as early as 5 years of age. Similarly, Prado and Dewey (2014), Shonkoff et al. (2012), and Williams et al. (2013) contended that prenatal care sets the stage for future learning. Specifically, Prado and Dewey found that nutrients (vitamin A, copper, and folic acid) create the neural plate and tube. Insufficiency of these nutrients during pregnancy and infancy (Prado & Dewey, 2014) can adversely affect children's subsequent learning and academic performance (Loughan & Perna, 2012). Pagani and Fitzpatrick (2014) observed that these nutrient deficiencies can lead to stunting, anemia, or blindness. Further, Pagani and Fitzpatrick found that children who experienced these deficiencies in utero were more likely to experience excessive absenteeism from school, grade retention, and various health, social, emotional, and cognitive challenges. Further, as Loughan and Perna noted, children experiencing these nutrient deficiencies are more likely to have challenges in maintaining relationships with their peers and adults or in following directions.

Prenatal development plays a significant role in kindergarten children's readiness skills. Hanley et al. (2013) observed that delays in early developmental milestones (social, fine and gross motor, language, cognitive, emotional, and adaptive behavior) are associated with prenatal exposure to serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SRI) antidepressants. Smith et al. (2013) agreed that infants exposed to SRIs in the third trimester had delays in fine and gross motor development. According to Koren and Nordeng (2013), several studies based on administrative databases indicated that infants exposed to SRIs during a specific period of gestation had an increased risk of cardiac malformations and that exposure to SRI was likely affect early developmental milestones.

Researchers (Hamilton et al., 2015; Mollborn & Dennis, 2012; Prado & Dewey, 2014) have also linked lack of preparedness for incoming kindergarten children to teen parenting. Childbearing among teens (i.e., individuals aged 15-19 years) is common in United States, according to Mollborn and Dennis. Hamilton et al. agreed that U.S. teenage girls (34%) become pregnant before age 20 years. In comparison to teens in other countries, U.S. teens (24.2%) are more likely to bear premature babies with low birth weight; cognitive, language, social, and emotional challenges; and behavioral and educational problems (National Center for Health Statistics, 2014). Data (AECF, 2014b) indicate that teenage pregnancy and prenatal care may be linked to deficits in five domains of school readiness for incoming kindergarten children at the site of the study. The teenaged (i.e., individuals aged 15-19 years) pregnancy rate is 38.2% and these girls and women are bearing babies with low birthweight and having premature births at a higher rate than women 20 years of age or older (AECF, 2014b).

Researchers (Scott et al., 2013) found that premature (28 weeks' gestation age) and low birthweight children (1000 grams) in kindergarten have higher deficit rates in ability to focus, socialization, and self-control when they reach kindergarten. Pritchard et al. (2014) agreed that kindergarten children who were born prematurely are at higher deficit rate for various school readiness challenges. These include physical deficits, cognitive delay, language difficulties, and social and emotional problems. Similarly, Roberts et al. (2011) showed that premature kindergarten children demonstrate functioning levels (0.5 to 1 standard deviation) compared to full-term peers in all school readiness domains. Further, teens bearing premature and low- birthweight children are at higher rate of chronic respiratory problems, mental illness, and educational delays (Shonkoff et al., 2012). Mollborn and Dennis (2012) stated that prenatal care is strongly linked to teen parents and school readiness.

Researchers (Shonkoff et al., 2012; Woodhead, 2016) have also linked the quality of prenatal care and early learning experiences to incoming kindergarten children's developmental outcomes, including social, emotional, language, physical, and cognitive development. Mollborn and Dennis (2012) stated that babies of teen parents are more likely to be born into impoverished families and no educational resources, which affects their future academic and life success. At the site of the study, data indicate that teen mothers are born into families where parents are not employed (AECF, 2014b). Brophy-Herb et al. (2013) stated that children from impoverished families are at a greater risk of poor school readiness skills (emotional and cognitive development) compared to children from median-income families.

Other researchers (Shonkoff et al., 2012) have stated that kindergarten children who lack prenatal care, safe environments, stable relationships, socioeconomic resources, and consistent exposure to caring caregivers are likely to enter kindergarten unprepared to learn. As a result, incoming kindergarten children transition to kindergarten demonstrating health problems, physical, social and emotional challenges and/or cognitive and language development that require additional educational support and medical services (Cappelloni, 2013; Shonkoff et al., 2012). At the research site of the study, incoming kindergarten students may learn through problem solving and develop what Vygotsky (1978) has described as intellectual adaptation (attention, sensation, perception, and memory), which consequently become an essential part to learn school readiness skills.

Researchers (Cappelloni, 2013; Vygotsky, 1978) have stated that knowledge is constructed personally and developed in a social context of communities and collaboration. Because incoming kindergarten students transition to kindergarten from Head Start programs, school-based preschools, and with no exposure to preschool, a learning environment based on a constructivist framework may help incoming kindergarten students to prepare to learn all five domains of school readiness. These findings have significant implications for examination of how kindergarten teachers implemented the five domains of school readiness at a Title 1 school to improve incoming kindergarten student learning.

Implications

Given the significance of children who may not have developed school readiness skills, the anticipated findings of the data collection and analysis may lead to increased professional development programs for kindergarten teachers to prepare for educating children to enter kindergarten on grade level. Other implications may include parent education programs to inform parents of how to provide enriched learning activities for their children so that when they enter kindergarten they are prepared to learn and are on grade level. The implications for positive social change from a possible project may lead to students entering kindergarten prepared for academic success.

Summary

There is a need to improve school readiness skills of incoming kindergarten student (Daily et al., 2010). While kindergarten teachers continue to struggle to implement the five domains of school readiness, Cappelloni (2013) and OHS (2014c) have stated that readiness skills are interrelated and connected. These include approaches toward learning, physical, language, cognitive, social and emotional development. These five dimensions of early development and learning competencies are based on social constructivism and serves as a guide for data collection and analysis. A literature review was completed to better understand the problem and provide a framework for the data collection and analysis based on the five domains for school readiness.

The following section outlines the methodology implemented to answer the guiding research question. A qualitative case study was used to examine how

kindergarten teachers implemented the five domains of school readiness for a Title 1 school to improve incoming kindergarten student learning.

Section 2: The Methodology

In this section, the qualitative research and the reasons for the chosen methodology, selection of participants, data collection and analysis, and justification of the research design are discussed. Qualitative methods were used to explore how kindergarten teachers implemented the five domains of school readiness to improve incoming kindergarten students' learning. The qualitative study involved one guiding research question: How do kindergarten teachers implement the five domains of school readiness at a Title 1 school to improve incoming kindergarten students' learning? Creswell (2012) stated that guiding research questions begin with the word *how* in qualitative studies. The guiding research question aligned with two methods (semistructured interviews and nonparticipant observations) of data collection in the qualitative case study.

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

A qualitative research method was used to analyze the perspectives of participants and explore the meaning they gave to the case study. A qualitative research method is used to answer "how" and "what" questions, whereas quantitative methods use data that can be changed into numerical form to answer "what," "how much," and "how many," questions. The qualitative research method, according to Creswell (2012), is preferred over the quantitative method when researchers focus on nonnumerical based responses. Quantitative methods would have been less useful for this case study because quantitative data would not have allowed linking raw data to the guiding research question and subquestion.

In quantitative research, researchers use statistical patterns to analyze quantifiable data and changed into useable statistic data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Merriam (2009) stated that quantitative research allows researchers to quantify problems by generating numerical data. Other researchers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2012) have stated that quantitative research is used to quantify participants' opinions and attitudes. Quantitative data and analysis would not have indicated how kindergarten teachers implemented the five domains of school readiness at a Title 1 school to improve incoming kindergarten student learning. In general, qualitative researchers explore the experiences of participants in their natural settings to link raw data to research questions and answer research questions and subquestions. All qualitative research, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), involves a type of social inquiry that focuses on uncovering the nature of people and their perspectives of reality. For the case study design, the guiding research question was constructed to correlate with established research traditions. Through the case study design, I gained a better understanding to answer the research question concerning how kindergarten teachers implemented the five domains of school readiness to improve incoming kindergarten student learning.

Researchers have stated that there are various research approaches for conducting qualitative research, which include (a) grounded theory, (b) ethnography, (c) phenomenology, (d) narrative analysis, (e) critical qualitative research, and (f) case study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Merriam, 2009). These approaches have essential characteristics of qualitative research, and each design has its distinct features. For this

study, case study was the best method because it made it possible to answer the study's one guiding research question.

Researchers have stated that grounded theory allows researchers to establish a theory that is supported by data (Thornberg, 2012; Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). The focus of the case study was not establishing a new theory from the data collected. Using ethnography, researchers look for shared patterns of behaviors, beliefs, and languages exhibited by a group over time (Merriam, 2009). Because I did not seek to study shared patterns of behaviors, beliefs, and languages by a sharing group, the ethnographic approach was not suited to the study.

The phenomenological approach is used to understand a phenomenon under investigation through the experiences of an individual or a group of people (Merriam, 2009). A phenomenological study, which focuses on investigating a particular experience, would not have provided the essential tool for studying how kindergarten teachers implement the five domains of school readiness at a Title 1 school to improve incoming kindergarten student learning. Narrative analysis was not suited for this study because narrative analysis involves the use of participants' written or spoken words or pictures to tell their stories (Merriam, 2009). Critical qualitative research focuses on critiquing and changing how people view society (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). I was not interested in critiquing or changing how kindergarten teachers implemented the five domains of school readiness for a Title 1 school to improve incoming kindergarten student learning. Merriam (2009) stated that a case study allows a researcher to investigate a bounded system or a group of people.

In conclusion and based upon the analyses above, the nature of this project study was suited to a qualitative design with a case study approach. Case study researchers focus on individuals and groups (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Thornberg, 2012). Case study researchers are less likely to identify a cultural theme (Yin, 2012). Merriam (2009) stated that a case study approach allows researchers to investigate a bounded system such as a group of people. Because I sought to focus on the views of a particular group of individuals (kindergarten teachers), a qualitative case study was the approach best suited to answering the one guiding research question.

I adopted an intrinsic case study approach. An intrinsic case study approach, according to Creswell (2012), focuses on a case that is unusual and of particular interest to the researcher. An intrinsic case study allowed a complete analysis of the views of the bounded system under investigation. Kindergarten teachers made up the bounded system of the case study.

The purpose of this study was to examine how kindergarten teachers implemented the five domains of school readiness to improve incoming kindergarten students' learning. According to Merriam (2009), a qualitative case study is appropriate when the researcher seeks to examine one specific phenomenon and to provide an in-depth understanding of the issue. In the qualitative case study, I used thematic analysis to search for, review, define, and identify themes. The participants' semistructured interviews and nonparticipant observations allowed an opportunity to examine the problem from the perspective of kindergarten teachers who had knowledge relating to the

implementation of the five domains of school readiness at a Title 1 school to improve incoming kindergarten student learning.

Justification of the Research Design

An intrinsic case study design was best suited for investigating the events that were interesting to me as the researcher. The purpose of this study was to examine how kindergarten teachers implemented the five domains of school readiness to improve incoming kindergarten student learning. According to Merriam (2009), a qualitative case study is appropriate when the researcher seeks to examine one specific phenomenon and to provide an in-depth understanding of the issue. In this qualitative case study, I used open and selective coding to search for, review, define, and name themes to help describe the data analysis. The participants' semistructured interviews and nonparticipant observations allowed an opportunity to examine the problem from the perspective of kindergarten teachers who had knowledge relating to the implementation of the five domains of school readiness at a Title 1 school to improve incoming kindergarten student learning.

Participants

The qualitative case study was an inquiry into a bounded system. I used a bounded system to select a group of kindergarten teachers who were currently teaching incoming kindergarten children in small rural kindergarten classrooms.

Criteria for Selecting Participants

The focus of the case study was how kindergarten teachers implemented the five domains of school readiness to improve learning among incoming kindergarten students.

Participants were required to hold a baccalaureate or advanced degree in early childhood education (ECE) and to teach incoming kindergarten students at the targeted Title 1 elementary school where the problem had been identified. The use of kindergarten teachers as participants fit the design of the study. Kindergarten teachers were well-qualified to provide information that helped to answer the research question regarding how kindergarten teachers implemented the five domains of school readiness at a Title 1 school to improve incoming kindergarten student learning.

Convenience sampling was used to select kindergarten teachers at the research site to participate. According to Creswell (2012), convenience sampling can be described as a form of nonprobability sampling. In nonprobability sampling, a sample is drawn from part of the population that is readily available and in close proximity to the researcher (Creswell, 2012). I used convenience sampling to select four kindergarten teachers with at least 3 years of teaching experience in a rural kindergarten classroom.

Justification for Number of Participants

Determining the number of participants to include in a study is an essential component of qualitative research. At the research site, the school district had one elementary school with four kindergarten teachers in classrooms where the problem had been identified. This small number of four participants allowed me to provide a detailed picture to answer the research question. Creswell (2012) stated that qualitative research generally involves few participants. Creswell further explained that those participants who are selected must be those who can inform the research and understand the topic under study. The four kindergarten teachers at the study site had in-depth knowledge of

the five domains of school readiness and could provide the insight needed for the purpose of this study.

Procedure for Gaining Access

In qualitative research studies, gaining access to participants may occur in numerous ways. Access may occur (a) through gatekeepers, (b) through the researcher having continual access to the participants, and (c) through the researcher's ability to understand what and why the contemporary phenomenon occurs (Clark, 2010). To gain access to the participants, I submitted a written request to conduct this study to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University when I had successfully completed the first oral defense. The Walden University IRB approved my Research Ethics Review Application on June 26, 2017 and assigned IRB approval number 06-26-17-0302841.

Methods of Establishing Working Relationships

Once I had been given approval to collect data, the principal at the Title 1 elementary school provided the kindergarten teachers' school email address. I invited four kindergarten teachers via email to participate in the study at the research site. Bickman and Rog (2011) stated that the type of research data that participants disclose depends on the researcher participant relationships in the research setting. I was neither an employee at the study site nor associated with the potential participants where the case study occurred.

During the initial meeting, I met individually with potential participants at a designated time established by each participant at the research site. I explained the

purpose of the study and the researcher's and participants' roles and responsibilities. I assured participants that I would protect the anonymity of their personal data, including geographical information, age, gender, and years of experience. I informed potential participants that I would use an alphanumeric system to protect their identity in the findings of the study. For example, the data collected from the first participant's interview and observation data would be identified as KT#2011. I will store these identification numbers (KT#2011, KT#2012, KT#2013, and KT#2014) in a separate locked file located in my home library for 5 years beyond this research study. I also explained that all interviews would be audio recorded. Lastly, I assured potential participants that a high measure of confidentiality would occur.

Methods for Ethical Protection

Before any data collection occurred, I submitted an application to Walden University's IRB to ensure the ethical protection of participants. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) stated that it is essential to establish ethical protection of participants and procedures that defend the human rights of individuals. I sent each participant an invitation via email to participate in the case study. In the invitation, I included the subject of the research, the purpose of the study, the guiding research question and subquestion, procedures, and expectations of participants in the study. I asked potential participants to respond to the letter of invitation to participate with the words "I agree" or "I decline." Once I had received the participants' agreement, I contacted each participant via email to establish a time, date, and location to schedule the initial meeting. At any point during the case study, the participants had the right to withdraw their participation.

If a participant withdrew during the study, I would continue the study with the remaining participants. The participants would not receive compensation for their involvement in this case study.

I assured participants that I would adhere to all measures of confidentiality. I informed participants that their privacy during data collection would be protected and that I would use the alphanumeric system to protect their identity when reporting the findings in the narrative. I also informed participants verbally and in written form that their participation in this case study was entirely voluntary and that any participant had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. In addition, I informed participants that the risks of participation would be anticipated and minimized. I will store interview and observation data in a locked file cabinet in my home for 5 years beyond this research study.

Data Collection

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine how kindergarten teachers implemented the five domains of school readiness at a Title 1 school to improve incoming kindergarten student learning. I used multiple data sources for this case study, including semistructured interviews and nonparticipant observations. These types of data are typically used in case studies (Merriam, 2009; Turner, 2010; Yin, 2012). Braun and Clark (2012) stated that semistructured interviews and nonparticipant observations help to provide the best information to consolidate and link raw data to a research question, identify and integrate patterns, and answer the research question.

Interviews

In this qualitative case study, the first data set involved semistructured interviews. Stuckey (2013) stated that semistructured interviews allow an interviewer to establish the direction for the topics covered and note any discrepant themes. I used semistructured interviews to collect detailed information from participants concerning how kindergarten teachers implemented the five domains of school readiness at a Title 1 school to improve incoming kindergarten student learning.

Stuckey (2013) stated that other types of interviews (structured and narrative) are used in qualitative research to direct participants to respond to specific research questions. Structured interviews allow researchers to have a sequential order in questioning (Stuckey, 2013). Turner (2010) stated that semistructured interviews have a focus but are flexible in order based on the participant' knowledge and experiences of a particular issue. Stuckey stated that structured interviews allow researchers to use a larger number of participants. Merriam (2009) indicated that semistructured interviews allow researchers to use a smaller number of participants. Semistructured interviews allow researchers to use informal and unstructured interviewing to develop a clear understanding of the topic of interest and develop appropriate semistructured questions.

I used semistructured interviews based on the five domains of school readiness and the GKIDS. I prepared five open-ended interview questions. The semistructured interviews enabled me to prepare the questions while allowing for the possibility that follow-up questions would emerge during the interviews. The use of semistructured interviews provided the participants with the opportunity for flexibility in their responses

(Seidman, 2013); Stuckey (2013) indicated that the use of semistructured interviews fit the data collection. Stuckey continued that the interview questions were open ended, the narrative interviews are comprehensive open-ended questions about a participant's experience, and the participants were not interrupted in the telling of their stories.

Nonparticipant Observations

The second qualitative data collection set involved nonparticipant observations. Nonparticipant observations, according to Yin (2012), are a method to collect data by observing participants in their natural setting and without interacting with the participants. These nonparticipant observations allowed researchers to observe events that participants have or have not described in interviews (Merriam, 2009). I used nonparticipant observations to immerse myself into each kindergarten teacher's classroom to gain firsthand insight to answer the guiding research question. I used nonparticipant observations also to help develop trusting relationships with potential participants. These nonparticipant observations were documented in descriptive notes, and I added additional information after leaving the participants' classroom.

Researchers stated that nonparticipant observations may be used to increase the validity of the study (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2012). Validity, according to Merriam, is stronger when combining additional data collection strategies with nonparticipant observations, such as semistructured interviews. I used nonparticipant observations to help answer one descriptive research question. The purpose of the nonparticipant observations was to observe how kindergarten teachers are actually implementing the

five domains of school readiness at a Title 1 school to improve incoming kindergarten student learning.

Braun and Clarke (2012) indicated that a small number of participants will allow researchers to collect sufficient data to link raw data to the research question, consolidate raw data, identify patterns in the data, integrate patterns, and answer to the research question. Creswell (2012) stated that a small number of participants will allow researchers to provide a deeper inquiry per participant. I observed four participants in their kindergarten classroom. These nonparticipant observations also have corroborated the results of the semistructured interviews (Merriam, 2009). These nonparticipant observations may also provide data that can be added to the semistructured interview data making the data collection process stronger.

During the nonparticipant observations, I anticipated seeing four kindergarten teachers implementing each domain of school readiness. For example, I anticipated observing kindergarten teachers teaching students' physical well-being (providing nutritional snacks or taking kindergarteners to the school nurse to receive medication) and motor (providing movement between activities or playing color bingo games) development skills. I also anticipated seeing kindergarten teachers teaching students social and emotional development readiness skills to some degree (modeling positive relationships through group activities such as show and tell).

The other domains of school readiness that I anticipated observing include (a) approaches toward learning (kindergarten teachers inspiring students to be interested in learning), (b) language development (kindergarten teachers teaching appropriate verbal

skills such as thank you or please), and (c) cognition and general knowledge (kindergarten teachers teaching basic reading and mathematics concepts). I recorded each observation on an observational protocol to help collect data. These nonparticipant observations were a firsthand source of information in the data collection process. The nonparticipant observations were used with other data collection methods that will allow the observer the ability to help triangulate the data and establish credibility.

Semistructured Interview Plan

Interviews are used in qualitative studies to gather participant data (Merriam, 2009). Merriam continued that interviews are an in-depth conversation with a purpose. I used a list of five open-ended questions and five follow up questions to collect data concerning kindergarten teachers' implementation of the five domains of school readiness to improve incoming kindergarten student learning. These semistructured interviews were conducted in 45 minutes to an hour to gain a better insight of how kindergarten teachers implement the five domains of school readiness to improve incoming kindergarten student learning. These semistructured interviews were conducted and recorded in the participant's classroom at a time that was conducive for each participant and does not impact instructional time for students. I asked all participants to consent to being interviewed and having their interviews recorded.

I transcribed the audio recording within 24 hours after each interview. I started to analyze the data during the transcription of the interviews to gain a better understanding of the participants' experiences. This information helped provide detailed accounts of

how kindergarten teachers implement the five domains of school readiness to improve incoming kindergarten student learning.

At the conclusion of each semistructured interview, I assured that all information reflected the truthfulness of the interviews. I used strategies of credibility such as member checking. Member checking, according to Creswell (2012), is described as a technique to verify the findings for accuracy of participant's data. After I had completed the data analysis, I also met individually with the participants at a time that was conducive to their schedule to review the findings for the accuracy of their data. This provided the participants an opportunity to check the accuracy and credibility of the overall findings and to make suggestions for any changes that may require changing to present an accurate description of their contribution to the study. There were no changes made of the findings.

Nonparticipant Observation Plan

Data were also collected via nonparticipant observations. I observed participants on one occasion in their kindergarten classroom for 45 minutes to an hour after the interview data have been collected. Merriam (2009) found that it is important for the observer to not be disruptive during observations. I attempted to make these observations as minimally intrusive as possible.

Prior to the nonparticipant observations, I informed all participants about the goals of the study and that the observations are being conducted solely for the purpose of research. I explained about the confidentiality and request participants to sign a consent

form. I scheduled advance appointments (via- e-mail) for each kindergarten teacher that observations would be conducted during a certain date and time frame.

During the kindergarten classroom observation, I used an observational protocol to record how each kindergarten teacher teaches the five domains of school readiness at a Title 1 school to improve incoming kindergarten student learning. I used the observational protocol to record chronology of events, concrete description of activities relating to the research, and quotes from the participants (Creswell, 2012). In the descriptive notes, I included personal reflections that relate to themes that may emerge, hunches, and possible answers to the research question.

At the conclusion of each nonparticipant observation, I transcribed descriptive notes reflecting how each kindergarten teacher teaches the five domains of school readiness at a Title 1 school to improve incoming kindergarten student learning. I assigned the kindergarten teachers an identification number for each nonparticipant observation to connect to the semistructured interview and protect participants' anonymity. I filed the identification numbers in a safe deposit box and the observational protocol in a separate locked file cabinet in my home library, where they will be stored for a period of 5 years beyond completion of the study.

Data Collection and Recording

At the conclusion of each semistructured interview, I typed each recorded interview verbatim by listening to the audio recordings. The top of each interview page included the date, time, and location. During the transcription of the interview, I wrote numbers down the left margin of the page. This numbering process allowed me to

pinpoint lines of text that repeated specific codes and themes. I also placed all interview questions and possibly follow up questions in bold type, which made it easier to locate participants' responses. Merriam (2009) stated that writing descriptive notes as soon as possible is essential during a semistructured interview and nonparticipant observation.

After completing each nonparticipant observation, I wrote descriptive notes within 24 hours. Writing descriptive notes, according to Merriam (2009), allows researchers to summarize their thoughts adequately concerning what occurred during the observation period. I included a detailed account of the activities of each kindergarten teacher implementing the five domains of school readiness to improve incoming kindergarten student learning. These descriptive notes also included the date, time, location, and purpose of the observation on the top of the observation protocol. I also wrote thoughtful comments. Using these thoughtful comments, I could adequately summarize my thoughts and observations about what I observed in each kindergarten teacher's classroom.

Systems for Tracking Data

Data systems are essential for tracking data (Gale et al., 2013). In the case study, the participants' alphanumeric code (KT#2011, KT#2012, KT#2013, and KT#2014) was used for easy retrieval of their data. I used a reflexive journal while conducting the six phases of thematic analysis. Gilgun (2010) stated that reflexive journaling would allow researchers to provide a deeper awareness of the topic under study. These include: (a) an account for their personal and professional perspectives, (b) the perspectives and

experiences of the participants, and (c) the audiences that will receive the research findings (Gilgun, 2010).

I maintained a separate reflexive journal relating to transcribed semistructured interview sessions and nonparticipant observations descriptive notes. I made entries within 24 hours after each semistructured interview and nonparticipant observation. These entries allowed me to track information concerning methodological decisions and the reasons for them. The entries also allowed me to reflect on my personal values and interest, and the audience for the research.

Storage and Handling of Data

I stored transcribed semistructured interview sessions and nonparticipant observations descriptive notes in a Microsoft Word file on a password protected computer for an accessible format. I maintained two copies (original data sets and a copy on a flash drive) of the data sets. I also filed the text copies and audio tapes in a separate locked file cabinet in my home library, where they will be stored for a period of 5 years beyond the study.

Role of the Researcher

I have over 35 years of experience in the field of early childhood and special education. For the last 15 years, I have served in numerous capacities in Head Start programs, such as board member, consultant, and community leader. I have also served as a special education interrelated resource teacher for six years in a rural school district. In serving as a director of special education for 25 years, I have worked with gifted children and students with and without disabilities. I have also worked with parents,

general and special education teachers, support services staff, superintendents, school administrators, leaders from the Georgia Department of Education (GDOE), guidance staff, and outside service providers such as physical and occupational therapists. Currently, I am serving as an early childhood services manager for a Head Start program in southwest Georgia. My professional role did not impact the data collection because I am not involved personally or professionally with the four kindergarten teachers. I put my past personal and professional experiences aside to examine how kindergarten teachers implemented the five domains of school readiness to improve incoming kindergarten student learning. I attempted to strive toward objectivity. My values, bias, and assumptions did not shape how I examined the data collected and interpreted. I also recognized the need to be receptive to the participants' ideas and perceptions.

Data Analysis

In this qualitative case study, thematic analysis was used first to identify codes, then themes from semistructured interview transcripts and nonparticipant observation descriptive notes. I examined the data to determine how kindergarten teachers implemented the five domains of school readiness to improve incoming kindergarten student learning. The six phases of thematic analysis are interconnected, and researchers must not use them independently (Miles et.al, 2013). Braun and Clarke (2012) indicated that the six phases of thematic analysis are familiarizing the data, generating initial codes, searching and reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

How and When Data Were Analyzed

Thematic analysis, according to Boyatzis (1998), is a qualitative method for identifying codes, analyzing data, and reporting patterns and themes within data. I used the six phases of thematic analysis to consolidate raw data, identify and integrate patterns in the data, and to link raw data to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Both data sets (semistructured interviews and nonparticipant observations) were analyzed separately. I then integrate semistructured interviews findings with nonparticipant observations findings to examine how kindergarten teachers teach the five domains of school readiness to incoming kindergarten learning.

Thematic Analysis for Semistructured Interviews

The first phase of thematic analysis involved becoming familiar with the data (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2012; Gest et al., 2012; Miles et al., 2013). I audio recorded the participants' interviews and then transcribed, a verbatim account, each participant's interview. I read the transcribed semistructured interview data multiple times. Reading the data multiple times allows additional time to make connections between the participants' thoughts, ideas, and the data collected (Miles et al. 2013). I organized the raw data by using participants' identification numbers KT#2011, KT#2012, KT#2013, and KT#2014. I also ensured the accuracy of each transcript against the participant's original audio recordings. These strategies provided familiarity with the data related to how kindergarten teachers implement the five domains of school readiness at a Title 1 elementary school to potentially improve incoming kindergarten student learning.

Merriam (2009) stated that researchers' reflections serve as an act of preliminary form of data analysis. Reflexive journaling, according to Gilgun (2010), is described as a researcher's ideas of awareness of data analysis. I recorded entries in a reflexivity journal during each phase of coding a thematic analysis. I also recorded the reasons for methodological decisions and reflections concerning my values and interests.

The second phase of thematic analysis involved generating open codes (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2012; Miles et al., 2013). Researchers stated that the process of coding is part of thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2012; Miles et al., 2013). Researchers indicated that coding involves the assigning of descriptive or conceptual labels to sections of raw data to find answers to the guiding research question (Gale et al., 2013; Merriam, 2009; Namey et al., 2008). Miles et al. stated that codes in qualitative research are a word or short phrase and develop an emergent theory. Coding defines what is happening in the data and help to develop an emergent theme. Braun and Clarke indicated that coding should involve similarities and differences across data items.

Transcripts were manually coded in two cycles. In opening coding, I read the transcripts to identify keywords that emerged from the data. Open coding is assigning a label to concepts that arise from the data (Miles et.al., 2013). I used open codes to analyze each interview transcript as a method to identify repeated words, phrases, or concepts. I used the open codes to identify categories and then I searched for patterns to answer the research questions. I used open codes for the interview transcripts as a beginning point to further analyze how kindergarten teachers teach the five domains of

school readiness to improve incoming kindergarten learning. This resulted in multiple codes that were reduced in the selective coding cycle.

During the selective coding, I identified the core category and related it to the other categories to validate the themes. The approach allowed the opportunity to frame the data toward creating temporary themed that addresses the research question. Miles, et.al. (2013) stated that codes in qualitative research are a word or short phrase and develop an emergent theory. I examined the codes and extracted transcripts data that relate to how kindergarten teachers teach the five domains of school readiness. Lastly, I provided detailed information in my reflexivity journal related to how and why codes were combined, questions about the data, and how codes are related.

The third phase of thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2012), focused on searching for multiple themes and arranging different codes into themes. Themes in qualitative research are large units of information that consist of codes aggregated to form a common idea (Creswell, 2013). The themes are outcomes of coding, categorization, and analytic reflection (Miles et al., 2013). The process of developing themes requires the researcher's interpretation. The purpose of the theme is to elicit the essence of the four kindergarten teachers' perceptions and experiences.

Before I arranged different codes into themes, I searched for patterns to answer the research question. Braun and Clarke (2012) stated that a pattern-based analysis allows the researcher to identify key features of the data, which are meaningful in answering the research questions. In my reflexivity journal, I provided detailed information about how I arranged different codes into themes.

Themes emerged from the selective coded data based on the patterns and relationships among the codes. The fourth phase of thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2012), focused on reviewing themes. In this phase, I searched for how the themes support the data related to how kindergarten teachers implemented the five domains of school readiness to improve learning among incoming kindergarten students. I refined the themes using two levels. Braun and Clarke indicated that the two levels involve reviewing coded data and themes.

In Level 1, according to Braun and Clarke (2012), I reread all the data extracted from participants' transcripts that connect to the themes. If some of the data did not connect to a theme, I considered whether the theme is presenting a problem and whether some of the data extracted from participants' transcripts do not connect. I then read and reread the data to create new themes. At Level 1, there were no new data to create new themes. I also report any discrepant cases that are an exception to the emerged themes in the research findings. The data connected to each theme coherently, I then transition to Level 2.

In Level 2, according to Braun and Clarke (2012), I considered each theme concerning all of the data (from the semistructured interviews). I used a data table to help focus on the connections between themes. If the connection between the themes do not reveal the whole meaning of the data, I reviewed phase three (search for themes) and phase four (reviewing themes). The connection between the themes revealed the whole meaning of the data, I transition to phase five of thematic analysis. I also wrote the

process of understanding themes and how themes fit together with each code in my reflexivity journal.

The fifth phase of thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2012), focused on defining and naming themes. I examined the selective codes concerning the data. Two themes emerged from the selective coded data based on the relationships and patterns among the codes. I reread the data to ensure that the coded data fit into themes. I developed a data table to provide a visual of the themes. The themes emerged from the interviews based on the research question, conceptual framework and literature review. I then wrote about how I described each theme with a couple of sentences in my reflexivity journal.

The sixth phase of thematic analysis, according to Boyatzis (1998), Braun and Clarke (2012), and Miles et al., (2013), they focused on final analysis and writing the report. I used sufficient evidence from the data table to draw the final analysis. I analyzed the data for themes that emerged and reported the findings. The validation of the findings is presented in Evidence of Quality. I developed a data table to represent the themes that emerged from the data analysis. I organized the report by themes and addressed the question. I also considered multiple audiences (school systems and Head Start grantees) in writing the report. I reported the findings by using direct quotes from the semistructured interviews. Lastly, I described the findings in my reflexivity journal.

Thematic Analysis for Nonparticipant Observation Descriptive Notes

The first phase of thematic analysis, according to Boyatzis (1998), allowed researchers to become familiar with the data. I used the six phases of thematic analysis to

analyze nonparticipant observation descriptive notes. For nonparticipant observation descriptive notes to be analyzable, I manually coded raw data from the nonparticipant observation descriptive notes in two cycles. The first cycle, open coding, focused on assigning a label to concepts that arise from the data (Miles et al., 2013). I read the descriptive notes multiple times to identify keywords and develop open codes from the conceptual framework, the literature, and the research question. I also highlighted part of the data that related to the research question and creating codes. I used open codes to analyze each nonparticipant observation descriptive notes as a method to identify repeating words, phrases, or concepts to begin the analysis of how kindergarten teachers teach the five domains of school readiness to improve incoming kindergarten learning.

I used open codes to identify categories and searched for patterns to answer the research questions. I used open codes for the nonparticipant observation descriptive notes as a method to further analyze how kindergarten teachers teach the five domains of school readiness to improve incoming kindergarten learning. This resulted in multiple codes that were reduced in the selective coding cycle.

For cycle two, I used selective coding. Selective coding involved identifying the core category and related it to the other categories to validate the storyline that forms the themes. The approach allowed the opportunity to frame the data toward creating temporary themes that addresses the research question. Miles et al. (2013) stated that codes in qualitative research are a word or short phrase and develop an emergent theory. I examined the codes and extracted observation data that related to how kindergarten teachers teach the five domains of school readiness. I also transferred these concepts and

categories into a data table. Lastly, I provided detailed information in my reflexivity journal related to how and why codes were combined, questions about the data, and how codes are related.

The second phase of thematic analysis involved generating open codes (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2012; Miles et al., 2013). Researchers stated that the process of coding is part of thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2012; Miles, et al., 2013). Researchers indicated that coding involves the assigning of descriptive or conceptual labels to sections of raw data to find answers to the guiding research question (Namey et al., 2008; Merriam, 2009; Gale et al., 2013). I read and reread raw data from each participant's nonparticipant observation descriptive notes. I then highlighted raw data from the participant's nonparticipant observation descriptive notes that were used to link raw data to the research question.

Merriam (2009) stated that researchers may use highlights to distinguish concepts and categories. For example, I observed kindergarten teachers consistently introducing language and literacy skills, each time kindergarten teacher discusses language and literacy skills, I used the same color highlight. I considered language and literacy skills as a concept. The other skills involving language and literacy will become categories. Since I anticipated more than two or three concepts and categories, I used multiple colored highlights. I then reduce the data to create concepts and categories for more efficient analysis. I also transferred these concepts and categories into a data table that includes main headings and sub-headings. Lastly, I provided detailed information in my

reflexivity journal related to how and why codes were combined, questions about the data, and how codes are related.

The third phase of thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2012), focused on searching for multiple themes and arranging different codes into themes. Before I arranged different codes into themes, I searched for patterns to answer the research question. Braun and Clarke stated that a pattern-based analysis allows the researcher to identify key features of the data, which are meaningful in answering the research questions. I identified the patterns that are the most relevant to answering the research question. In my reflexivity journal, I provided detailed information about how selective codes were interpreted and combined to form themes.

Themes emerged from the selective coded data based on the patterns and relationships among the codes. The fourth phase of thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2012), focused on reviewing themes. In this phase, I searched for how the themes support the data related to how kindergarten teachers implement the five domains of school readiness to improve learning among incoming kindergarten students. I refined the themes using two levels. Braun and Clarke indicated that the two levels involve reviewing coded data and themes.

In Level 1, according to Braun and Clarke (2012), I re-read all the data extracted from participants' nonparticipant observation descriptive notes that connect to the themes. If some of the data did not connect into a theme, I considered whether the theme is presenting a problem and whether some of the data extracted from participants' nonparticipant observation descriptive notes do not connect. I then read and reread the

data to create new themes. At Level 1, there were no new data to create new themes. I also report any discrepant cases that are an exception to the emerged themes in the research findings. The data connected to each theme coherently, I then transition to Level 2.

In Level 2, according to Braun and Clarke (2012), I considered each theme concerning all of the data (nonparticipant observation descriptive notes). I used a data table to help focus on the connections between themes. If the connection between the themes do not reveal the whole meaning of the data, I reviewed phase three (search for themes) and phase four (reviewing themes). The connection between the themes revealed the whole meaning of the data, I transition to phase five of thematic analysis. I also wrote the process of understanding themes and how themes fit together with each code in my reflexivity journal.

The fifth phase of thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2012), focuses on defining and naming themes. I examined the selective codes concerning the data. Two themes emerged from the selective coded data based on the relationships and patterns among the codes. I reread the data to ensure that the coded data fit into themes. I developed a data table to provide a visual of the themes. The themes emerged from the observations based on the research question, conceptual framework and the literature review. I then wrote about how I described each theme with a couple of sentences in my reflexivity journal.

The sixth phase of thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2012), focuses on final analysis and writing the report. I used sufficient evidence from the data

table to draw the final analysis. I analyzed the data for themes that emerged and reported the findings. The validation of the findings is presented in Evidence of Quality. I developed a data table to represent the themes that emerged from the data analysis. I organized the report by themes and addressed the question. I also considered multiple audiences (school systems and Head Start grantees) in writing the report. I reported the findings by using direct quotes from the nonparticipant observation descriptive notes. Lastly, I described the findings in my reflexivity journal.

Evidence of Quality

In this qualitative case study, I used five measures to ensure the quality of the research after the data collection process. These include accuracy, transferability, reliability, trustworthiness, and researcher's reflexivity. Internal validity (accuracy and credibility), external validity (transferability), and reliability (consistency) determine the quality of any research (Yin, 2012).

The first measure to ensure the quality of the research involved internal validity. I demonstrated internal validity (accuracy) by using different types of data collection procedures (semistructured interviews and nonparticipant observations). I also demonstrated the accuracy of the data by comparing the patterns of the coded interview responses and classroom observations. Yin (2012) stated that pattern matching would ensure internal validity.

Creswell (2012) suggested that the qualitative researcher also uses member checking to address validity in qualitative studies. Creswell continued that member checking allows participants the opportunity to verify the adequacy of analyzed data.

When I completed the six phases of thematic data analysis, I emailed all participants a copy of the findings.

Member checking is a strategy to enhance a study's validity, credibility, and participant involvement (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Marshall and Rossman (2011) stated that researchers may provide participants the findings for accuracy of their data during member checking. I wrote a summary and emailed the summary to each participant to provide feedback to ensure their views have been adequately captured. The participants did not make corrections to my interpretations.

The second measure, according to Creswell (2012), involved external validity. I demonstrated external validity (transferability) by providing a rich, context description of the study. These included (a) justification of the research design, (b) criteria for selecting participants, (c) procedure for gaining access to participant, and (d) nature of the researcher and participants' relationship. These descriptions may help the reader transfer the study to the study setting, as well as similar settings.

The third measure to ensure the quality of the research involved reliability. Merriam (2009) stated that many sources would ensure that the data were credible and reliable. I demonstrated reliability by maintaining detailed descriptive notes and the use of a high-quality audio- recorder and transcribing the tapes. I also determined the reliability through cross-referencing analytic codes assigned to participants' responses after the interviewed conversations have been transcribed.

The fourth measure, according to Creswell (2012), involved evidence of trustworthiness. I have experiences that will enhance my awareness, knowledge, and

sensitivity toward the potential participants in the case study. These experiences include following an ethical protocol, documenting all data, coding all data in logical order, and providing descriptions that are factual. I demonstrated evidence of redefining the initial themes such as cross referencing of data. I recognized my limits of subjectivity in the data analysis process. I also demonstrated a bias free research through maintaining a reflexivity journal.

The fifth measure to ensure the quality of the research involved my reflexivity journal. Qualitative researchers should keep a detailed record of the research process (Merriam, 2009). I kept a reflexivity journal to record my thoughts and procedures of the six phases of thematic data analysis. I also kept track of each phase of the research process in a Microsoft Word file on a computer with a password. The data will be stored in locked file cabinet at my home library for 5 years beyond this research study.

Discrepant Cases

Data that provide an alternative explanation, according to Creswell (2012), are discrepant cases. Merriam (2009) noted that discrepancies can occur during any phase of the data analysis process. Miles et al. (2013) stated that some data would not fit into themes. I clarified and resolved inconsistent data by redefining how the themes support the data using the process of thematic analysis. In phase four of thematic analysis (Level 1), I read and reread data extracted from participants' transcripts and nonparticipant observation descriptive notes that do not fit into themes. If the data do not fit into themes, I reported discrepant data that are an exception to the emerged themes in the research

findings. For this case study, there were no discrepant cases that emerged during the analysis of the semistructured interviews and nonparticipant observations.

Data Analysis

An intrinsic case study was used to examine how kindergarten teachers implemented the five domains of school readiness at a Title 1 elementary school to improve incoming kindergarten student learning. To accomplish this goal, I utilized semistructured interviews data and nonparticipant observation descriptive notes. All qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis and were coded using open and selective coding strategies. Considering all the data, I was cautious in the presentation of the case study results.

This section includes descriptions of how kindergarten teachers implemented the five domains of school readiness at a Title 1 elementary school to improve incoming kindergarten student learning according to kindergarten teachers' perceptions and observations. The following research question was created to examine how kindergarten teachers implemented the five domains of school readiness at a Title 1 school to improve incoming kindergarten student learning:

Research Question 1: How kindergarten teachers implement the five domains of school readiness at a Title 1 elementary school to improve incoming kindergarten student learning?

Semistructured Interviews

The kindergarten teachers were interviewed using open-ended questions that allowed the participants to describe their experiences teaching the five domains of school

readiness. Kindergarten teachers had five interview and follow up questions which equates to 10 questions that were designed to allow participants to provide detailed descriptions about teaching the five domains of school readiness. I audio-recorded and transcribed manually all transcripts and placed in Word documents. I read the participants' transcripts multiple times to become familiar with the data and to think about concepts and challenges related to teaching the five domains of school readiness.

Open codes were derived from the conceptual framework, identified keywords, and relevant literature data (Miles et al., 2013). I highlighted the repeated words with a word that defined the open code. I highlighted data that were linked to open codes: Physical wellbeing and Motor Development/ encouragement (red), Approaches toward Learning/modeling (blue), Social and Emotional Development/demonstration (green), Language Development/ direct instruction (yellow), and Cognition and General Knowledge/encouragement (orange) from identified keywords, the framework, and related literature review. This process resulted in multiple open codes.

Table 1 shows an example of open codes applied to the raw data from interviews. The left column contains the specific domain, the middle column indicates the open code, and the right column contains raw data from the transcripts and the kindergarten teacher's identification number.

Table 1

Open Coding Example for How the Five Domains Are Taught

	Open coding	Raw data: Interviews
Physical wellbeing and motor development	Encouragement	I encourage students to use inside voices while in

	Open coding	Raw data: Interviews
		different centers #2011, I encourage students to create pictures of self, family members or an event in the writing center #2014, and I encourage students to use inside voices while in different centers #2014.
Approaches toward learning	Modeling	I model how to eat with folks and spoons #2011, I model appropriate grammar in the classroom, #2011, #2012, and #2014, and I model collaboration with my paraprofessional #2014.
Social and emotional development	Demonstrate	I demonstrate how to use hand sanitizer #2012, I demonstrate how to use forks and spoons at breakfast, lunch, and snack #2013, and I demonstrate the task and ask students to demonstrate the task #2014.
Language development	Direct instruction	I read out loud to my students; teach physical education every other nine weeks, daily for 45 minutes and teach all activities in small groups (all KTs).
Cognition and general knowledge	Encouragement	I encourage kindergarten students to write, draw, cut paper, stack blocks, grasp small objects, and fasten clothing #2011, I encourage students to

(*table continues*)

	Open coding	Raw data: Interviews
		create pictures of self, family members or an event in the writing center #2014.

Nonparticipant Observations

I used thematic analysis to analyze observation notes. Observation notes were collected, recorded on the observation protocol, and stored on my personal password protected computer. In the open cycle of coding, I reread the observation notes to become familiar with the data and to think about concepts and challenges that relate to how kindergarten teachers teach the five domains of school readiness. I labeled the repeated words with a word that defined the open code. I highlighted data that were linked to open codes: Physical wellbeing and Motor Development/ engagement (red), Approaches toward Learning/questions (blue), Social and Emotional Development/teacher directed/technology (green), Language Development/ teacher directed (yellow), and Cognition and General Knowledge/individualized instruction (orange) from identified keywords, the framework, and related literature review.

Table 2 shows an example of open codes applied to the raw data from observations. The left column contains the specific domain, the middle column indicates the open code, and the right column contains raw data from the observations and the kindergarten teacher's identification number.

Table 2

Open Coding Example for How the Five Domains Are Taught

	Open coding	Raw data: Observations
Physical wellbeing and motor development	Student involvement	She let the students point while she read #2012, she let the students wash hands after breakfast #2011, and she let the students work on tracing the letters of the alphabets #2014.
Approaches toward learning	Questioning	The teacher asked the students to count the objects on the card as she held them up #2013, the teacher engaged students by asking questions about the book's front and back covers, title and author #2012, and the teacher asked the students questions about what they hear#2014.
Social and emotional development	Teacher directed/technology	The teacher engaged students to make the designs on the Smartboard #2011, student drew on the Smartboard to illustrate the book #2012, and the teacher use music from the Smartboard to transition to centers #2014.

(*table continues*)

	Open coding	Raw data: Observations
Language development	Teacher directed	The teacher read a story while sitting in a rocking chair and students listen #2012, the teacher reminded student to keep hands to self #2013, teacher asks students to transition to the rug for circle time #2011.
Cognition and general knowledge	Individualized instruction	The teacher assists the students with counting their friends when she called their names #2014, the teacher provided one on one instruction for students who did not get a concept #2011, and the teacher demonstrate the "R" sound for a student #2012.

Focusing on the interviews and observations data and the concepts that may be constructed from them, I searched the open codes to identify the core category. Researchers (Miles et al., 2013) indicated that the core category is the concept that repeatedly appears in the data set described by the participants. Discovering emergent categories and relationships, I used selective coding. Selective coding served as verification for the results that emerge in the open coding. Selective coding also allows further development of refinement of concepts, categories, and connections (Miles et al., 2013).

Results

Three categories emerged from the interviews data relating to how kindergarten teachers teach the five domains of school readiness: (a) encouragement, (b) modeling, and (c) direct instruction. Two categories emerged from the observations data concerning how kindergarten teachers teach the five domains of school readiness: (a) differentiated instruction and (b) encouragement. The temporary themes were based on these categories and then developed into two themes to answer the research question 1: "How kindergarten teachers implement the five domains of school readiness for a Title 1 school to improve incoming kindergarten student learning?" The themes that emerged were differentiated instruction and encouragement.

Theme 1: Differentiated Instruction

In a social constructivism kindergarten learning environment, differentiated instruction is a pedagogy approach that gives kindergarten teachers a beginning point to teach students who are unprepared to learn (Bondie et al., 2019; Smale-Jacobse et al., 2019). Kindergarten teachers who utilize differentiated pedagogy may adapt their teaching strategies to their students' developmental levels, interests, and learning styles (Tomlinson, 2017). The role of kindergarten teachers, in a social constructivism learning paradigm, is to assist the student to uncover meaning and construct for themselves a genuine understanding of the concept in which they are engaged (Vygotsky, 1978).

There are traditions in the pedagogy of kindergarten; however, it is essential to remain receptive to different pedagogy approaches to improve student outcomes (Vogt et al., 2018). Vogt et al. continued that new strategies are easily integrated into the

pedagogy of kindergarten. Differentiated instruction consists of the efforts of teachers to assist students (Tomlinson, 2017) to construct for themselves learning in the classroom (Vygotsky, 1978).

Differentiated instruction is a teaching strategy in which teachers intentionally plan (content, process, product, and learning environment) for students' differences so that all students are engaging and learning (Tomlinson, 2017). All kindergarten teachers (KT#2011, #2012, #2013, and #2014) introduced all activities in whole group instruction. Tomlinson (2017) stated that whole group instruction is the most appropriate delivery model. KT#2011 stated, "I begin helping a girl count out loud the number of girls and a boy with counting the boys." In the KT#2011 kindergarten classroom, students worked in small groups or individually to complete activities targeted to their readiness levels, interests, and learning styles. In KT#2011 Mathematic classroom, one group of students may be using manipulatives and counting the numbers aloud, while another group works on writing the numbers on a chart. KT#2012 stated, "I used multiple games (number bingo, number charts, and puzzles) to teach students to count." "I provide an opportunity for students to work in flexible groups with other students with similar readiness levels, interests, and learning styles so students can construct their meaning of the activity taught," according to KT#2012. KT#2013 stated that when "I teach my students to count (1 to 100), some of my students learn best through group work and some by working alone (puzzles), some learn best by doing projects (building blocks), while others learn by discussion (smartboard)." KT#2014 stated, "I demonstrated mathematic skills using multiple worksheets that vary in complexity to different groups of students on the

smartboard." I have learning centers around the kindergarten classroom, which contain an assortment of mathematic tasks for students to choose from when they transition to small groups based on their interests, readiness levels, and learning styles.

Student interest refers to “that which engages the attention, curiosity, and involvement of a student” (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010, p. 16). KT#2014 aligned particular students’ interests in several areas such as music and sports. KT#2011 provided opportunities for students to form letters of the alphabet by tracing the letters in the writing center. KT#2013 offered students the opportunities to improve their fluency skills by reading to their friends. KT#2013 used the smartboard to help students to display photos, audio clips, and video.

When differentiation is based on learning styles, students are provided with opportunities to learn in multiple ways. All kindergarten teachers allow students to work independently, with peers, or as a group. All kindergarten teachers provided work areas conducive to various learning preferences, such as workspaces with tables instead of desks. Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) indicate essential factors in student learning styles include learning environment preferences, group orientation, cognitive styles, and intelligence preferences.

Differentiated instruction emphasizes that learning is appropriate when teachers assess students' levels of functioning and learning styles and then use it to teach students to learn on a higher level of functioning (Tomlinson, 2017). Kindergarten teachers identified multiple ways to use differentiated instruction to teach the five domains of school readiness for all students. KT#2011 stated, “I presented the text on audiotape and

supplementing oral presentations with videotapes and visual demonstrations.” By providing students the use of human-read audiobooks coupled with highlighted text, kindergarten teachers may help their students to learn. It helps students access content aligned to their intellect rather than their reading ability, so they build fluency, vocabulary, comprehension and background knowledge. KT#2011 continued that “I reteach nursery rhymes using audiotapes for students who did not comprehend the nursery rhyme in the large group. I provide my students the opportunity to use the audiotape to record their version of the nursery rhyme." KT#2012 stated, I teach language skills through daily welcome songs.” KT#2013 stated, “I used circle time to introduce multiple language games, such as telling tales, sorting beans, and creating a name book.” KT#2014 provided text materials at varied reading levels of complexity.

Differentiating content, according to Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010), requires teachers to either modify or adapt how they provide students access to the material they want the students to learn. Kindergarten teacher (#2014) shared strategies concerning how to teach physical wellbeing and motor development. I introduced the skill in flexible grouping, where kindergarten students can work in pairs, small groups, or alone, using books, tape, or the Smartboard as a method of developing understanding and knowledge of the skill. KT#2013 stated, “I demonstrated how to catch a ball and how to appropriately grip crayons and pencils.”

Differentiated instruction stretches student thinking and offers opportunities for interaction. One of the fundamental tenets of differentiated instruction is that teachers must engage students (Tomlinson, 2017). All teachers engaged students positively in the

social and emotional process. KT#2013 stated, “I discussed with students why it is important to use good manners to be a good friend.” KT#2012 stated, “I remind students to keep hands to self.” The developmental theory of Vygotsky (1978) is essential for how social skills are taught, in which kindergarten teachers influence students' development through interaction. Vygotsky viewed social interaction as necessary for each student’s development.

All kindergarten teachers shared strategies relating to how they teach language skills such as practicing spoken words in syllables. KT#2011 stated, “I say a word. The students repeat the word and then clap out the syllables.” All kindergarten teachers taught phonics. KT#2013 stated, “when students encounter an unfamiliar word while reading aloud in small group with peers, I encourage students to look at the word and look for letter patterns they have learned, so they can sound out the word.” All kindergarten teachers initiated alphabet instruction with a consonant vowel consonant (cvc) word introduction. KT#2012 stated, “I teach five to ten letters each week. I have groups of three students that name the letters and how to write the letters. My advanced students may brainstorm words that begin with the target letter.”

Differentiated instruction means connecting students’ approaches toward learning with the appropriate pedagogy (Tomlinson, 2017), and opportunities for showing the acquired knowledge (Vygotsky, 1986). KT#2011 stated, “I provide multiple options of expression such as drawing or creating activities that strengthen students’ preferred learning modalities.” The process (activities) is differentiated not only by how all kindergarten teachers decided to teach, such as lectures for auditory learners, learning

centers for tactile learners, and whole and small groups, allowing students to understand the readiness skills being taught (Tomlinson, 2005a).

All kindergarten teachers shared multiple differentiated instruction strategies related to how to teach cognitive development and general knowledge. Kindergarten teachers help students think about and understand their environments, such as people, places, things; mathematical concepts; science concepts; problem-solving skills; and logic and reasoning skills. KT#2014 stated, "I teach cognitive skills through play (sight words bingo) and multiple learning centers in the kindergarten environment." Another kindergarten teacher (#2013) indicated that cognitive activities (alphabets, numbers, and shapes) are introduced in the whole group. I transition students to small groups to provide additional practice through the use of manipulatives or worksheets. All kindergarten teachers' differentiated instruction strategies were different to teach cognitive development and general knowledge. Differentiated instruction provides teachers a different approach to think about teaching and learning (Tomlinson & Sousa, 2020).

I used data from nonparticipant descriptive notes to identify how kindergarten teachers used differentiated instruction strategies to create diverse environments and to teach the five domains of school readiness. Tomlinson and Sousa (2020) indicated that teachers might provide differentiated instruction strategies to teach a wide range of students and skills. In KT#2011 classroom, students work with peers who had readiness needs like their needs and interests. I observed students who shared their interests and students who had interests quite different from their own. KT#2011 assigned four to five students to the flexible group to use their fine motor skills. KT#2011 responded to the

students' needs by encouraging students to work together. Other kindergarten teachers (#2012, #2013, and #2014) used flexible groups (copying shapes, cutting paper, transferring small objects, cutting with scissors, and writing first name) to teach fine and gross and motor skills. One flexible group learned how to grasp a pencil to write; another group learned how to hold crayons to color a picture. Students can use these fine motor skills to work with manipulative in mathematics or other domains of learning.

All kindergarten teachers created a learning environment that balances structure and flexibility to accommodate all students' social and emotional readiness levels. Tomlinson and Imbeau (2013) indicated that managing routines and processes in differentiated classrooms is essential for teachers to help students understand, contribute, and participate in structures designed to facilitate learning. For a flexible classroom, KT#2011 created the classroom, so students' materials were easily accessible. KT#2012 provided directions for tasks in which not all students will do the same work. KT#2013 provided guidelines for what a student should do (and how) when an assigned task is completed. And KT#2014 shared expectations for students to transition around the classroom to multiple learning centers.

I used data from nonparticipant descriptive notes to identify how kindergarten teachers used differentiated instruction strategies to teach language skills in diverse environments. Kindergarten teachers (#2011 and #2012) transition to flexible groups to teach syllable patterns in English: vowel consonant consonant vowel (vccv), vowel consonant vowel (vcv), vowel consonant consonant consonant vowel (vcccv), and vowel vowel (vv). Each group worked on a syllable pattern. KT#2011 encouraged students to

look for letter patterns they have learned to sound out the word. KT#2014 introduced language skills (sight words) in a whole group and practiced saying the sight words. The teacher used the word in a sentence. KT#2012 introduced language skills through a welcome song and morning greeting, and KT#2013 used a sign-in system, welcome and morning greeting, read aloud, and decodable books.

I used data from nonparticipant descriptive notes to identify how kindergarten teachers used differentiated instruction strategies to teach approaches toward learning in diverse environments. KT#2014 provided different tasks to different learners. She created a variety of related tasks at varying levels of difficulty and provided specific tasks to certain groups and individual students based on their skill level.

I used data from nonparticipant descriptive notes to identify how kindergarten teachers used differentiated instruction strategies to teach cognitive development and general knowledge in diverse classrooms. Tomlinson (2014) stated that the most obvious way of differentiating the learning process is to change the type of content teachers used in lessons. KT#2011 used various learning modalities (audio, visual, and kinesthetic) to teach letters of the alphabet.

To summarize, all kindergarten teachers provided differentiated instruction that relates to the pedagogy approach of social constructivism. Social constructivist learning theory can be used to underpin multiple differentiated instruction strategies which aligned with traditional education, whereby knowledge is constructed through interaction with others (Vygotsky, 1978). Differentiated instruction involves teachers' actions to meet the readiness levels, interests, and learning styles among students in diverse classrooms

(Tomlinson, 2017). Kindergarten teachers can use differentiated instruction strategies that provide students opportunities to learn the five domains of school readiness. The pedagogy approach, social constructivism, allows kindergarten teachers to utilize these teaching practices (Tomlinson, 2017), and with incoming kindergarten students to seek new readiness skills and apply the new skills to existing readiness skills (Vygotsky, 1978).

Theme 2: Encouragement

In a social constructivism kindergarten diverse environment, kindergarten teachers used encouragement to teach students to learn the five domains of school readiness. Kindergarten teachers who used encouragement may adapt to their students' developmental levels, interests, and learning styles (Tomlinson, 2017). Kindergarten teachers used encouragement but need to do so frequently and in meaningful ways to encourage the students to learn physical wellbeing and motor skills. KT#2011 stated, "I encouraged kindergarten students to be kind to their peers, such as please watch where you are going. It hurts when you bumped me." Encouragement, according to Bailey (2015), is about noticing, connecting, and accepting students.

Encouragement motivates students to achieve (Bailey, 2015) in the five domains of school readiness. Kindergarten teachers used encouragement to teach students to learn social and emotional skills. KT#2011 stated, "I encouraged the students to use inside voices while in different centers." KT#2012 stated, "I encouraged students to be kind to their friends, and to use their inside voices." KT#2013 stated, "I encouraged kindergarten students to use their words (feeling words to express their emotions)." KT#2012 stated, "I

encouraged students to build with different types of blocks and described how they feel." KT#2014 stated, "I encouraged students to do the right thing throughout the kindergarten day." Kindergarten teachers who utilized encouragement have a powerful tool to reach discouraged students to learn social and emotional skills (Osher et al., 2020; Vygotsky, 1978).

Kindergarten teachers used encouragement to teach students language skills. KT#2011 stated, “I encouraged students (That took determination or That was gutsy,) when they recognize letters of the alphabet.” Another kindergarten teacher (#2014) stated, “I encouraged students (That was thoughtful or That was kind) when they read to a friend.” KT#2013 stated, “I encouraged students to use activities (audiobooks, computer games, and flashcards) that interest them, challenge their language skills, and help them love learning.” KT#2014 stated, “I encouraged students’ deep thinking skills (Outstanding Thinking) when I read aloud.”

All kindergarten teachers used encouragement to teach students to learn multiple approaches toward learning. KT#2014 stated, “I encouraged students to interact with friends with a grumpy look on their face.” KT#2012 stated, “I encouraged students to be creative in small groups.” KT#2011 stated, “I encouraged students to respect each other’s ideas.” KT#2013 stated, “I encouraged students to be part of the decision making process, such as taking breaks or creating classroom rules.” KT#2013 continued that students who participate in the decision-making process are an excellent way to encourage students.

Kindergarten teachers used encouragement to teach students to learn cognitive and general knowledge skills. KT#2013 stated, “I encouraged students to use prior

knowledge when reading a story." KT#2014 stated, "I encouraged students to use number lines, ten frames, and manipulatives in small group activities." KT#2012 stated, "I encouraged students to practice skills (writing letters of the alphabet, drawing shapes, and writing numbers)."

I used data from nonparticipant descriptive notes to identify how kindergarten teachers used encouragement in diverse environments to teach the five domains of school readiness. Kindergarten teachers used encouragement to teach physical well-being and motor development. KT#2011 encouraged kindergarten students to write, draw, cut paper, stack blocks, grasp small objects, and fasten clothing. KT#2012 encouraged kindergarten students to sit in a chair, circle, and walk in a line.

All kindergarten teachers used encouragement to teach social and emotional skills. KT#2011 encouraged students to use inside voices while in different centers. KT#2012 encouraged students to be kind to their friends and used their inside voices. KT#2013 encouraged kindergarten students to use their words (feeling words to express their emotions). KT#2012 encouraged students to build with different types of blocks and describe how they feel. KT#2014 encouraged students to do the right thing throughout the kindergarten day. The skill of encouragement provides opportunities for all kindergarten teachers to use multiple modalities to learn.

Kindergarten teachers faced the challenge of providing developmentally appropriate encouragement in language development. Researchers (Mantzicopoulos, et al., 2018) indicated that teachers' practices are essential for teaching effectiveness and student achievement. All kindergarten teachers used encouragement to teach language

skills. KT#2013 encouraged students to use activities (audio books, computer games, and flashcards) that interest them, challenge their language skills, and help them love learning. KT#2014 encouraged children's deep thinking when she read aloud.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) indicated that developmental relationships allowed teachers to teach social, affective, emotional, and cognitive skills. All kindergarten teachers used encouragement to teach approaches toward learning. KT#2012 encouraged students to be creative in small groups. KT#2011 encouraged students to respect each other's ideas. KT#2013 encouraged students to be part of the decision making process, such as taking breaks or creating classroom rules. KT#2014 encouraged students to interact with friends.

All kindergarten teachers used encouragement to teach cognitive development and general knowledge. KT#2013 encouraged students to use prior knowledge. KT#2014 encouraged students to use number lines, ten frames, and manipulatives in small group activities. KT#2012 encouraged students to practice skills, such as writing letters of the alphabet, drawing shapes, and writing numbers. Evidence from the observation review identified kindergarten teachers used encouragement to capture students' developmental levels, interests, and learning styles in the five domains of school readiness (Tomlinson, 2017).

To summarize, all kindergarten teachers provided encouragement that relates to affective teaching methods (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Past researchers stated that the affective domain (Krathwohl et al., 1973) revolves around how we deal with things emotionally, such as feelings, values, appreciation, enthusiasm, motivations, and

attitudes. Krathwohl et al. continued that affective domain has five categories, each with several subcategories. These levels of learning included: (a) receiving, (b) responding, (c) valuing, (d) organization, and (e) characterization. Kindergarten teachers can use these five levels to encourage students to receive information, to respond to what they learned in a diverse learning environment, to value it, to organize it, and to characterize themselves as lifelong learners (Osher et al., 2020). Affective teaching methods can be used to teach the five domains of school readiness (Bailey, 2015). The importance of encouragement improves kindergarten teachers' differentiated instruction strategies and students' readiness performance (Tomlinson, 2017).

Summary of Findings

Two themes emerged from the thematic analysis of the interview and observation data. The two themes are:

Theme 1: Kindergarten teachers used differentiated instruction strategies to teach the five domains of school readiness.

Theme 2: Kindergarten teachers used encouragement to teach the five domains of school readiness.

The purpose of this case study was to determine how kindergarten teachers implemented the five domains of school readiness for a Title 1 elementary school to improve incoming kindergarten student learning. The findings in this case study indicated that all kindergarten teachers used differentiated instruction and encouragement to teach five domains of school readiness. To further strengthen differentiated instruction and encouragement, kindergarten teachers may benefit from additional training to improve

student learning. Researchers, Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) and Wu and Chang (2015), identified how differentiated instruction (tiered instruction, collaborative learning, self-regulation, and anchor activities) can be used to teach school readiness skills. Bailey (2015) indicated that encouragement (Conscious Discipline) can be used as opportunities to teach essential readiness skills to students.

Teachers can use tiered instruction as a teaching strategy that supports the philosophy of success for all students (Tomlinson, 2017), which is consistent with the philosophy behind NAEYC position statement on school readiness that focused on educating the whole child (NAEYC, 1995). NAEYC's position statement on school readiness involved three areas: (a) experiences of young children, (b) children's developmental level, and (c) appropriate expectations of young children). These three areas encircled the five domains, as outlined in NEPG's Goal 1 (Kagan, 1992; NAEYC).

Tiered instruction can be used as a teaching strategy that meets students' needs and provides the delivery of instruction to meet these needs based on readiness level, style of learning, and interest level (Tomlinson, 2017). Teachers can use the students' level of progress to transition them toward a new understanding (Vygotsky, 1978). The concept is to encourage students to transition beyond their present independent readiness levels. When there are challenges that interfere with students to complete a task without support (independent level) and what they can achieve with support (instructional level), an effective instruction strategy, scaffolding, requires the teacher to adjust the level of support for each student in regard to the student's level of performance. Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD distinguishes between actual development (what students can do without

support), and potential development (what students can do with support). Tiered instruction can be used for higher-level thinking and built around every tier of instruction. Educating the "whole child," which relates to the five domains of school readiness, reveals the core of tiered instruction (Tomlinson, 2017).

The concept of collaborative learning involves multiple educational processes such as the teacher-centered learning process, the communication among peers, and the instructional material introduced in a collaborative learning environment. Collaborative learning in kindergarten is interconnected and interrelated to differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 2017), affective teaching strategies (Bailey, 2015; Jones et al., 2017; Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010), and aligned to social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978). In the collaborative learning environment, the kindergarten teachers serve as the manager and the facilitator, which helps students to develop readiness skills that will help them learn (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). Also, kindergarten teachers are responsible, primarily through these kinds of strategies, for creating opportunities to provide students with social and emotional skills, such as self-regulation and empathy skills.

Collaborative learning, along with differentiated instruction and affective teaching strategies, provides multiple benefits to kindergarten teachers, incoming kindergarten students as well as to the learning process. The five domains of school readiness activities that are subject to collaborative learning are several (physical, language, and mathematics) and help students develop social, cognitive, and emotional skills (Bailey, 2015), as well as approaches toward learning that will be useful in their lives (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010).

Self-regulation is an essential component of the five domains of school readiness (Blair & Raver, 2015) and students' ability to learn in a diverse learning environment (Tomlinson, 2017). Also, self-regulation is a neurological process (Bailey, 2015) that helps students to engage in goal-directed behaviors (Daucourt et al., 2018) and conceptualized as the ability to use executive function (Blair & Raver, 2015). Executive function can be used as a set of regulatory processes that control both thought and action necessary for goal directed behavior (Daucourt et al., 2018). Blair and Raver (2015) stated that executive function focused on inhibition control (the ability to control impulses and reactions), mental flexibility (the ability to shift between rules according to changing circumstances) and working memory (the ability to retain and process information).

Self-regulation skills can be used to help students learn new concepts and engage in classroom activities (Bailey, 2014; Blair & Raver, 2015). Researchers (Bailey, 2015; Bodrova & Leong, 2013) stated that teaching self-regulation skills in the classroom are essential because the prefrontal areas of the brain may not reach their full potential if students do not consistently practice self-regulation at a young age. Kindergarten teachers can use differentiated instruction and encouragement to teach self-regulation skills. Also, kindergarten teachers may adapt their teaching style to the student's temperament in proving individualized instruction (Tomlinson, 2017). Self-regulation skills also can help support students' ability to handle their emotional reactions to new situations (Bailey, 2015).

Anchor activities can be used to connect students' developmental levels, interests, and learning styles (Tomlinson, 2001; Tomlinson, 2017). Kindergarten teachers can use anchor activities when students are waiting for the next task to begin or for individualized instruction. Also, anchor activities can be used in a meaningful and intentional way (Tomlinson, 2017). The goal of anchor activities is to help students understand a concept or skill. Kindergarten teachers can use anchor activities to improve their differentiated instruction and encouragement to enhance the school readiness skills of the incoming kindergarten students.

Kindergarten teachers also would likely benefit from learning how to implement affective teaching strategies, such as Conscious Discipline, which may improve students' future learning. Conscious Discipline (Bailey, 2015) is a classroom management program that integrates social and emotional learning with classroom management and research and practices in child development, neuropsychology, and character education. According to Bailey (2015), Conscious Discipline focuses on philosophy, common language, and a set of behavior management strategies and positive discipline techniques that teachers can use to manage their thoughts, feelings, and actions in problem-solving as well as teach these skills to students. Kindergarten teachers can use Conscious Discipline's seven core skills (composure, encouragement, assertiveness, choices, positive intent, empathy, and consequences) to improve their affective teaching strategies and help student learn the five school readiness domains. Jones et al. (2017) indicated that teachers could learn and model these skills in their classrooms through intensive teacher training and self-study and ongoing coaching and support.

Based on the findings of this case study, kindergarten teachers are utilizing differentiated instruction and encouragement to implement the five domains of school readiness at a Title 1 elementary school to improve incoming kindergarten student learning. It was determined from the data analysis that the kindergarten teachers would likely benefit from learning how to implement differentiated instruction such as tiered instruction, collaborative learning, self-regulation, and anchor activities, which may improve student achievement. When encouragement is combined with the differentiated instruction, kindergarten teachers also would likely benefit from learning how to implement affective teaching strategies such as Conscious Discipline training.

Project Deliverable

The project deliverable will be a Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project that improves kindergarten teachers' differentiated instruction and encouragement in a Title 1 elementary school that may lead to incoming kindergarten students' learning. Data from the semistructured interview data and nonparticipant observation descriptive notes were used to inform the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project. The project is also informed from current research-based practices to discover what is missing in the five domains to teaching kindergarten readiness skills.

The Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project is an 8-week project designed to teach kindergarten teachers the skills they need to increase incoming kindergarten students learning the five domains of school readiness. The district's local board of education is responsible for making all decisions, along with support from the school

administrators and kindergarten teachers to decide whether to implement the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project.

Conclusions

This section focused on the research methodology, data collection, and thematic analysis. A qualitative case study was used to examine how kindergarten teachers implemented the five domains of school readiness at a Title 1 school to improve incoming kindergarten student learning. The researcher's role and methods for handling data were discussed. Data collection included semistructured interviews using open-ended questions and nonparticipant observations descriptive notes.

In Section 3, the project for this case study is a Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project. I will present a brief description of the project, the purpose, goal, and review of the relevant literature relating to differentiated instruction, encouragement, tiered instruction, collaborative learning, self-regulation, anchor activities, and Conscious Discipline. The pedagogy approach, social constructivism, allows kindergarten teachers to utilize these teaching practices (Tomlinson, 2017) and motivates (Bailey, 2015) kindergarten teachers to improve incoming kindergarten student learning. Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social constructivism can be used to connect differentiated instruction and encouragement at the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp. I will also describe the rationale of why the project was chosen, implementation, project evaluation, and implications for social change.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

To address the problem concerning how kindergarten teachers implement the five domains of school readiness to improve incoming kindergarten student learning, I developed a Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project (Appendix A). I chose this genre or project deliverable because my case study findings and recommendations from early childhood literature indicated that although the four kindergarten teachers were using differentiated instruction and encouragement to implement the five domains of school readiness at a Title 1 elementary school to improve incoming kindergarten student learning, the kindergarten teachers would likely benefit from learning how to implement research-based differentiated instruction strategies such as tiered instruction, collaborative learning, self-regulation, anchor activities, and Conscious Discipline training, which might improve student achievement.

Researchers (Pears et al., 2014) have found that Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp projects can help students develop necessary kindergarten readiness skills. Readiness skills equip students with the ability to learn from their peers and teachers in a social learning environment and ease the transition to formal schooling. Bailey et al. (2016) agreed that Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp projects support students who enter kindergarten without formal education. Several studies have documented that kindergarten students (50% or more) were not enrolled in kindergarten boot camp or kindergarten during 2001 and 2016 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). The Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy (2018) indicated that only 50% of

kindergarten students participated in a formal school experience before entering kindergarten.

The goal for the project is to improve the teachers' research-based differentiated instructional strategies and encouragement through collaborative learning, self-regulation, anchor activities, Conscious Discipline training, readiness levels, styles, interests, and opportunities to improve the school readiness skills of the incoming kindergarten students by the end of the kindergarten year. The project will be implemented over the span for 8 weeks, from May 20 through August 15, from 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.

Rationale

Based on the case study findings and recommendations from early childhood literature, a Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp was identified as the most suitable genre or project deliverable to close the gap of kindergarten readiness. The four kindergarten teachers will have an opportunity to improve their teaching practices by learning how to implement research-based strategies such as tiered instruction, collaborative learning, self-regulation, anchor activities, and Conscious Discipline training to improve kindergarten students' readiness skills. The content of the project includes research-based differentiated instructional strategies (tiered instruction, collaborative learning, self-regulation, and anchor activities) and encouragement (Conscious Discipline training) to improve incoming kindergarten students' readiness skills.

The pedagogical approach, social constructivism, can be used by kindergarten teachers to apply research-based differentiated instructional strategies (Tomlinson, 2017).

Encouragement can be used by kindergarten teachers to improve incoming kindergarten students' learning (Bailey, 2015). Social constructivist theory was used to underpin multiple research-based differentiated instructional strategies and affective teaching strategies to improve how kindergarten teachers implement the five school readiness domains to improve incoming kindergarten student learning.

Review of the Literature

The literature reviewed in this section relates to the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project, the project's description, the five domains of school readiness, and the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp's content concerning research-based differentiated instructional strategies and encouragement to improve incoming kindergarten student learning. The Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project was designed to improve four kindergarten teachers' research-based differentiated instructional strategies (tiered instruction, collaborative learning, self-regulation, anchor activities, and encouragement [Conscious Discipline training] to improve the readiness skills of incoming kindergarten students who are unprepared to learn at the research site.

The HSELOF (2015) defines kindergarten readiness through five domains: (a) cognition and general knowledge, (b) language development, (c) social and emotional development, (d) approaches toward learning, and (f) physical wellbeing and motor development (Section 1). Search terms included *differentiated instruction*, *tiered instruction, collaborative learning*, *self-regulation, anchor activities*, *encouragement*, and *Conscious Discipline.* The case study findings and recommendations from early childhood literature provided support for the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project.

Professional works provided evidence to support several strategies and methodologies for developing the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project. Following is a review of multiple research-based differentiated instructional strategies and affective teaching strategies that drove project development, which were selected based on the case study findings and recommendations from early childhood literature.

Differentiated Instruction

Across America, kindergarten teachers have used a differentiated instruction approach in classrooms; however, Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) indicated that differentiated instruction is a challenge for teachers to implement. Because teachers are faced with large class sizes and a wide range of ability levels during the regular school year, differentiation is a challenge. Through the Summer Boot Camp project, kindergarten teachers can use differentiated instruction to focus on kindergarten students' readiness levels, interests, and learning needs.

Differentiated instruction is necessary for kindergarten students because it involves responsiveness, flexibility, and balance in promoting how students learn (Tomlinson, 2014). Researchers (Watts-Taffe et al., 2013) have shown correlational evidence that differentiated instruction is more effective than other types of teaching, though they did not explore how teachers can know the differentiated capabilities of students. Watts-Taffe et al. continued indicated that grouping students by interest level allowed for greater collaboration between students and allowed students to better draw on their strengths to achieve learning goals.

Differentiated instruction has been linked to improved outcomes among students. Valiandes (2015) indicated that in a study of 479 students and 24 teachers, systematically integrated differentiated instruction was linked to improvements in literacy in classroom settings where students were of mixed abilities. Other researchers (Bondie et al., 2019) indicated how differentiated instruction in P-12 classrooms in 28 U.S. based research studies from 2001 and 2015 had defined, described, and measured changes in teaching practices. Paolini (2015) noted that differentiated instruction was the hallmark of a good teacher because teachers who used differentiated instruction were best able to meet the learning needs of students of all abilities. Finally, research by Boelens (2018) indicated that differentiated instruction in a blended learning environment was characterized by adaptability on the part of a teacher. Arrow (2015) stated that differentiated instruction was critical to overcoming the learning gaps between students entering a class. As such, differentiated instruction is considered critical to helping students perform their best in class and vital in helping kindergarten teachers to improve differentiated instruction to enhance students' readiness skills.

Tiered Instruction

Tiered instruction is one of multiple research-based differentiated instructional strategies (Tomlinson, 2014). Kindergarten teachers can learn how to implement tiered instruction in three or more levels of instruction to implement the five domains of school readiness to improve incoming kindergarten student learning. Each level of instruction, beginning with instruction in the whole-group classroom setting, is referred to as Tier 1 of instruction (Pullen & Kennedy, 2019). Teachers can use tiered instruction strategies to

target individual learning styles by designing and delivering instruction to support all students (Burns, n.d.; Shapiro, n.d.).

Students who are unprepared to respond in Tier 1 whole-group learning receive a second tier of an intervention designed to intensify instruction through evidence-based, small-group supplemental instruction over the course of 8 weeks for 30 minutes per day, 5 days per week. Tier 3 instructional strategies are used when students have not responded appropriately to the Tier 1 and Tier 2 instructional strategies. The third tier of instruction can be used to provide students who continue to struggle after Tier 2 instruction. Tier 3 instruction is the most intensive level of intervention.

Tiered instruction is constructed according to student readiness level, style of learning, and interest level and builds on prior knowledge while the instructional concept remains the same (Tomlinson, 2017). Tomlinson continued that tiered instruction must be meaningful and impact learning. With tiered instruction, students are less likely to become bored or disruptive; thus, tiered instruction will promote student learning (Tomlinson, 2017) over the course of 8 weeks from May 20 through August 15 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Collaborative Learning

Using the collaborative learning strategy, kindergarten teachers will learn how to access multiple learning opportunities (Tomlinson, 2017). In this approach, kindergarten teachers can learn how to implement peer interactions in the kindergarten classroom. Tomlinson indicated that collaborative learning, discussion, and cooperation can result in multiple benefits for students, such as critical thinking, cognitive engagement, and social

skill development. Furthermore, students learn to communicate their ideas, develop their self-esteem and flexibility, and listen. Collaborative learning gives teachers opportunities to use peer scaffolding through shared student experiences and knowledge (Tomlinson, 2017). Bailey (2015) stated that collaborative learning creates opportunities to furnish students with strong social and emotional skills, such as those involved in making choices and experiencing empathy.

Collaborative learning involves a wide range of educational approaches (Garmston & Wellman, 2016). Collaborative learning represents a change in teacher-centered kindergarten classrooms. In collaborative kindergarten classrooms, whole-group learning may not disappear entirely, but it continues with other processes that are based upon the needs of students. Kindergarten teachers who use collaborative learning approaches consider themselves designers of learning opportunities (Tomlinson, 2017).

Collaborative learning is a popular method that supports students and teachers in the learning process. The goals and processes of collaborative activities also vary widely. Kindergarten teachers can learn to design collaborative activities around specific sequential steps (*Seven Norms of Collaboration: A Supporting Toolkit*; Garmston & Wellman, 2016), structured tasks (Conscious Discipline; Bailey, 2015), or students' readiness levels, interests, learning styles and activities (Tomlinson, 2017). Collaborative learning stimulates both teachers and students. Kindergarten teachers can learn collaborative learning strategies that can provide responsibility, persistence, and sensitivity, in which teachers and students can participate and grow (Bailey, 2015).

Kindergarten teachers can learn how to implement collaborative learning over the course of 8 weeks.

Self-Regulation

A comprehensive review of self-regulation intervention studies published from 1989 thru 2013 indicated that self-regulation domains and functional outcomes result in definite improvement in student development, with multiple approaches and different types of programs (Murray & Rosanbalm, 2017). Another researcher (Panadero, 2017) provided critical reviews of existing self-regulated learning studies. Panadero noted that self-regulation studies on kindergarten students were limited.

Self-regulation can be defined as a psychological construct that involves a range of important competencies, such as the capacity for controlling one's emotions, ability to have positive interactions with others, capacity for avoiding inappropriate or aggressive behaviors, and ability to carry out self-directed learning (Bailey, 2015; Panadero, 2017). Bailey (2015) stated, "Self-regulation is the cornerstone skill for all development. It refers to both the conscious and unconscious processes that allow us to regulate our thoughts, feelings, and actions in service of a goal" (p. 12). The competencies are the capacity to control one's emotions, have positive interactions with others, avoid inappropriate or aggressive behaviors, and carry out self-directed learning (Bailey, 2015; Panadero, 2017).

Cognitive processes contributing to self-regulation are referred to as *executive functions*. Executive functions include the ability to direct or focus attention, shift perspective, and adapt flexibly to changes (cognitive flexibility); retain information

(working memory); and inhibit automatic or impulsive responses to achieve a goal, such as problem solving (impulse control), according to Murray and Rosanbalm (2017). Self-regulated learning consists of many strategies, including goal setting, self-efficacy, goal orientation, metacognitive monitoring, and self-evaluation (Panadero, 2017), which emphasizes the active role of the teacher and student (Bailey, 2015; Panadero, 2017). Self-regulation is vital for the development of social-emotional competency, academic skills, learning, and life successes (Bailey, 2015). Over the span of 8 weeks, kindergarten teachers can learn how to implement self-regulation skills to improve student learning.

Anchor Activities

Differentiated instruction also includes the approach of anchor activities, where the skills and concepts remain same for all students, but the kindergarten teacher provides paths that vary in difficulty in areas such as the five domains of school readiness. Teachers may also create multiple learning centers and anchor activities focusing on the diverse needs of individual students (Tomlinson, 2017). During the span of 8 weeks, kindergarten teachers can learn how to implement anchor activities to improve students' learning.

Encouragement

Encouragement can be used to improve teachers' affective domain of teaching and learning during the span of 8 weeks. The affective domain of teaching and learning focuses on teachers' motivations, moods, feelings, emotions, attitudes, beliefs, values, choices, power, and communication skills (Bailey, 2015). Teachers can use the affective domain, according to Bailey (2015), to improve their relationship with students, which

plays essential roles in students' physical, language, emotional, cognitive, and social development, as well as approaches toward learning.

A powerful relationship between affective learning and anchor activities can result in significant learning for students (Bailey, 2015). Another researcher (Evan, 1996) provided a model with strategies to encourage students. For example, Evans (1996) suggested that teachers need human relations skills to manage democratic, cooperative classrooms. A differentiated learning environment is orderly and flexible (Tomlinson, 2010), where no one is to blame and everyone contributes to finding solutions. Toward these ends, researchers (Carlson et al., 1992) stressed six practices: (a) making relationships a priority, (b) carrying on respectful dialogue, (c) practicing encouragement and affirmation daily, (d) making decisions through shared involvement (e.g., classroom meetings), (e) resolving conflict, and (f) having fun on a regular basis.

Conscious Discipline

Conscious Discipline is a brain-based research behavioral management program designed by Bailey (2011) that kindergarten teachers may use over the program's 8 weeks. Part of the Conscious Discipline philosophy is to start training teachers first and accept the changes in their perspectives before teaching students the essential skills to succeed in school and life. Sorell (2013) agreed that teachers focus on developmentally appropriate teaching practices while they learn about themselves. The Conscious Discipline paradigm focuses on teaching teachers about creating safe environments, making meaningful connections, and self-empowering (Bailey, 2015). When teachers learn and practice Conscious Discipline strategies and develop a clear understanding of

themselves and others, they can teach these skills to students (Bailey, 2015). Conscious Discipline training can be used to enhance kindergarten teachers' encouragement and daily affirmation, motivation, and confidence to implement the five domains of school readiness to improve incoming kindergarten student learning.

Project Description

Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project is designed to improve kindergarten teachers' differentiated instruction and encouragement in a Title 1 elementary school that may lead to enhancing incoming kindergarten students' learning. Data from the semistructured interview data and nonparticipant observation descriptive notes were used to inform the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project. The project is also informed from current research-based practices relating to multiple differentiated instruction strategies and encouragement to improve incoming kindergarten student learnings. The project will be implemented over the span for 8 weeks beginning May 20 through August 15 from 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.

The Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project includes a Kindergarten Teachers' *Guide to Readiness Skills* and a book study. A book study can allow kindergarten teachers to build a shared knowledge base and improve their affective teaching skills in the classroom. Kindergarten teachers are involved in an 8 weeks' session where there is a continuous discussion around each chapter topic that has arisen from improving differentiated instruction and encouragement in a Title 1 elementary school.

Kindergarten teachers can use the Kindergarten Teachers' *Guide to Readiness Skills* as a resource guide. All kindergarten teachers can use a Kindergarten Teachers'

Guide to Readiness Skills to inform how they teach during the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project. The purpose of the Kindergarten Teachers' *Guide to School Readiness* is to serve as an age-appropriate practice resource guide when incoming kindergarteners enter the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp unprepared to learn readiness skills and provide answers to questions about differentiated instruction and encouragement over the span for 8 weeks beginning May 20 through August 15 from 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.

The needed resources included $60,000 for salaries and benefits for kindergarten teachers. I presented a written proposal for financial support to United Way that included the anticipated outcomes and costs for the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project. The United Way propose budget included $60,000 for salaries and benefits for four kindergarten teachers. I presented also a written proposal for in kind support to the Title 1 local school district that included services, materials and supplies, and other operating costs such as free breakfast and lunch for incoming kindergarten students as well as transportation for field trips to and from the library. The needed resources from the Title 1 local school district also included breakfast and lunch, materials and supplies, transportation for field trips to and from the local library, and other operating costs associated with the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project.

The Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project budget reflects spending plans for four kindergarten teachers. Based upon each kindergarten teacher's monthly salary, they will receive a stipend for the 8 weeks of training as well as receive professional development credits toward renewing their teaching credentials. Typically, it would cost

$3,000 per child or more for 8 weeks based on the kindergarten teachers' instruction, activities offered, and field trips. There are no registration fees for incoming kindergarten students to attend the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project.

Potential barriers to implementation may include the availability of scheduling the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project during the summer months for kindergarten teachers to attend. One solution would be to propose dates that would be conducive for kindergarten teachers to attend. Another solution may be to offer compensation and staff development credits toward recertification.

The Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project includes the teachers' roles and students' actions, equipment, materials, resources needed, and timetable for implementation. Table 3 is the implementation timetable for the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project. Upon the local board of education approval, the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project should be in full operation.

Table 3

Implementation Timeline

	Kindergarten teachers' roles
Immediately following local board of education approval of the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project kindergarten teachers will receive access to the classroom management system.	Contact office personnel to request the following: access to the classroom management system; instructions for posting documents and links; post links to resources online classroom for self-directed learning and teaching.
Within 3 weeks of the summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project approval	Finalize the agenda and instructional plans for the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project. Submit a draft of The Kindergarten Teachers' *Guide to Readiness Skills*; and Finalize and publish the guide as a PDF document. Submit a request to the administrative office to print copies of the student guide. Introduce the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project to the staff of the Title 1 elementary school.

Table 4 includes the personnel and teacher roles and students' actions regarding the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project.

Table 4

Personnel and Students: Roles and Responsibilities

	Roles and responsibilities
Kindergarten teachers	Plan and implement the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project agenda.
	Select or develop students' resources for self-directed readiness development.
	Conduct program evaluations at the beginning and end of the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project.
	Create lesson plans for each session based on professional knowledge and experiences and the students' specific needs.
	Introduce interactive activities (smartboard) into the classroom and encourage students to vocalize their questions and interest.
	Collaborate with peers about students' progress and kindergarten readiness skills.
	Organize students in small groups for social skills.
	Engage students in creativity by organizing art and craft projects on a daily basis.
	Create a nurturing and inspiring atmosphere in the kindergarten classroom.
Local board of education	Provide resources to support the Summer Boot Camp project.
Office personnel	Provide classroom management-system access for kindergarten teachers to post materials.
	Provide the kindergarten teachers with parents 'phone numbers and e-mail addresses for incoming kindergarten students.

(*table continues*)

	Roles and responsibilities
	Provide the kindergarten teachers with enrollment data for incoming kindergarten students. Publish hard copies of the Kindergarten Teachers' Guide to Kindergarten Readiness for students and Title 1elementary school personnel. Print handouts for instructional sessions. Print formative and summative assessment forms for use during the first and last week of the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project. Ensure instructional settings are equipped with working computers connected to a projector, a screen, and wireless Internet connections. Coordinate field trips and accommodation plans with the kindergarten teachers.
Students	Attend 40 days of the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project. Practice all readiness skills presented in the *Kindergarten Teachers' Guide to Kindergarten Readiness,* classroom, and weekly field trips.

Table 5 contains itemized lists of the equipment, materials, and resources needed for implementation of the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project. The Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project will not require additional equipment because the local library already has the material available such as paper, crayons, puzzles, card games, and jump ropes for all students during the 8 weeks.

Table 5

Equipment, Materials, and Resources

	Equipment	Materials	Resources
Administrative office	Office computer Printer	Printer ink Paper Journals suitable for adding pages to the Student Guide to Kindergarten Readiness Staples for handouts	Kindergarten teachers' compensation per agreement
Classroom	Portable computers with PowerPoint Projector Screen Whiteboard Wireless internet access Electrical connections for laptop computers Comfortable seating Desks or tables for all students	Conscious Discipline books Whiteboard markers Whiteboard eraser	

(*table continues*)

	Equipment	Materials	Resources
Playground	Playground equipment		

Note. The Title 1 elementary school may already have some of the equipment, materials, and resources listed. The Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project will not require additional resources if existing resources are available.

Kindergarten teachers serve as the primary audience and support for this Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project. Most of the early childhood literature regarding differentiated instruction and encouragement emphasized that all teachers share the responsibilities to improve their teaching and learning skills. However, this project will involve improving incoming kindergarten student learning. Nevertheless, when kindergarten teachers commit to implementing the five domains of school readiness to improve incoming kindergarten student learning, the final responsibility to learn kindergarten readiness skills belongs to incoming kindergarten students. My role and responsibilities are to design the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project.

Project Evaluation Plan

The quality of a project may be enhanced through evaluation (Bailey et al., 2016). Feedback data can be used to make project improvement for future use. Project evaluations can help developers identify project objectives, level of changes, and needed supports. Creswell (2012) indicated that a program evaluation should be used to guide decision making.

The purpose of an evaluation is to make formative and summative decisions. Summative assessment can be used to measure students' achievement after they

completed the lesson and are evaluated to determine to what extent the instructional and learning goals have been met (Wyatt-Smith et al., 2017). Summative assessment results also can be used to make final decisions about whether a project should continue, expand, or discontinue based on evaluation findings. Another critical purpose of the evaluation is to make formative decisions. Formative assessment is a process by which teachers gather data to improve student learning outcomes (Yee, 2016). The use of formative assessment is to provide feedback about the project functioning and short-term outcomes.

Teachers can use formative assessment to continually monitor and determine the next learning goal (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). Formative assessment is an opportunity to monitor and adjust project functioning before transitioning to summative evaluation. An evaluation can be conducted by someone internal or someone external to the staff. The best practice is a partnership between the internal and external evaluators, such as forming an evaluation team that includes both internal and external evaluators.

The project evaluation plan for the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp is formative assessments. The kindergarten teachers will determine if the goal of the Summer School Boot Camp project is achieved. The goal is to improve differentiated instruction and encouragement through Conscious Discipline training, multiple activities, readiness levels, styles, interests, and opportunities to improve the school readiness skills of the incoming kindergarten students by the end of the kindergarten year.

To implement the formative assessment effectively, the National Research Council (2001) recommended that three questions guide the implementation process. The questions are: “where are you trying to go? where are you now? how can you get there?”

(p. 26). According to the National Research Council (2001), the questions also "provide a framework for achieving powerful classroom assessment" (p. 26). This framework also emphasizes the involvement of students throughout the formative assessment. To effectively implement formative assessment, kindergarten teachers also need to have multiple strategies (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013) and Conscious Discipline training that can be used in their classrooms (Bailey, 2015).

The formative assessment will be the kindergarten teachers meet weekly to discuss what is working and what is not working. The summative assessment will be a final meeting at the end of 8 weeks to answer questions about what worked well, what did not work well, and what are ways to improve the Summer School Boot Camp project? The kindergarten teachers can use the GKIDS Readiness Check (Component 3: Assessment of Kindergarten Students) for the formative and summative evaluation of the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project. As the Summer School Boot Camp project developer, I could observe the project as it is being implemented to monitor any progress in student learning and the teachers' practices. The project's evaluation is to determine if the goal of the Summer School Boot Camp project is met.

Project Implications

The kindergarten teachers work in positions with opportunities for social change as an inherent feature of their duties and responsibilities. There are multiple career positions for kindergarten teachers described as their work contexts. These include (a) school principal for elementary, middle, high schools, and superintendent, (b) supervisor

or assist community activities such as communication skills, goal setting, and time management, (c) care provider in the home of children, and (d) school social worker.

The knowledge gained from the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project can help kindergarten teachers broaden their influence by supporting other teachers by assisting them in establishing long-term goals for student achievement, short-term goals for student growth, and assist teachers in identifying best practices to improve differentiated instruction and encouragement. The kindergarten teachers could establish and monitor short and long term goals for the Title 1 elementary school to improve student achievement. The kindergarten teachers could engage in collaborative conversations to identify evidence of effectiveness and determine the next instructional steps to improve student achievement, such as how teachers transferred knowledge from training into classroom practices.

This project study holds multiple possibilities for social change. This project, Kindergarten Boot Camp, can contribute to school districts across America by providing information concerning how kindergarten teachers used differentiated instruction and encouragement to teach the five domains of school readiness to improve incoming kindergarten student learning. Kindergarten teachers and incoming kindergarten students may benefit from this study. Kindergarten teachers may enhance their pedagogy and affective teaching strategies, activities, and resources to improve incoming kindergarten student learning. By becoming familiar with kindergarten readiness skills, incoming kindergarten students may be prepared to enter kindergarten better prepared to learn. Long-term benefits of the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project may include a new

vision in how kindergarten teachers learn multiple approaches and teach readiness skills. Kindergarten teachers may change the way they teach to improve incoming kindergarten student learning.

In Section 3, I presented a description and goal on the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project, presented the rationale, reviewed relevant literature, project description, project evaluation, and identified the implications for social change. I presented also the implementation plan, support, and barriers. The Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project will take place within one year of the district's local board of education approval. In Section 4, I will present the strengths along with the limitations of my project. I will bring closure to this section with a summary of what I gained from the experience.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

The results of the qualitative case study led to the development of a project that may improve kindergarten teachers' differentiated instruction and encouragement. In this section, I discuss the strengths and limitations of the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project. I present my self-reflection concerning what I learned from conducting this study by examining myself through the lens of a researcher, scholar, practitioner, and project developer. I reflect on how this study may influence social change both locally and in a broader context. I also consider possible areas for future research. Finally, I summarize the key points of my work and provide my conclusions.

Project Strengths

The Kindergarten Boot Camp project is aimed at improving kindergarten teachers' differentiated instruction and encouragement. This Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project has multiple strengths. First, it addresses the need for kindergarten teachers to improve their differentiated instruction and encouragement to teach the five domains of school readiness. Kindergarten teachers can learn multiple differentiated instruction strategies (tiered instruction, collaborative learning, and anchor activities) to improve student learning. These strategies also give teachers more access to student learning readiness skills so that they can address students' needs or add essential insights to move students forward (Tomlinson, 2017). Students can engage each other's thinking, contribute ideas, and improve their physical, social and emotional, language, and cognitive development, as well as their approaches toward learning. Another strength of

this project is that it may help kindergarten teachers to sustain and improve teaching readiness skills, build secure connections to incoming kindergarten students, and reinforce positive work habits and attitudes.

The Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project can support kindergarten teachers' encouragement to take charge of their learning, much in the same way that they encourage students to take charge of their learning. Teachers' learning is focused not only on pedagogical strategies, but also on improving how students learn readiness skills. As teachers understand how their students learn best, these teaching strategies can be used to constitute the best practices to teach their students. Kindergarten teachers' application of encouragement enables new relationships to develop between students and allows existing connections to be improved (Bailey, 2015). A teacher can take differences such as readiness levels, learning styles, and learning levels into consideration and direct students to learn together and help one another in forming learning groups (Bailey, 2015; Tomlinson, 2014).

Project Limitations

The limitation of this Summer School Boot Camp project is that it has been designed for 8 weeks. Researchers (Pears et al., 2014) indicated that a brief kindergarten summer program could help students build necessary readiness skills and equip them with the confidence needed to benefit from the new relationships, knowledge, and experiences they will be exposed to as they transition to kindergarten. Pears et al. continued that summer school programs may be beneficial for students who have not previously attended a preschool program. While a summer program certainly is not a

substitute for 180 days of academic preschool experience, educational summer programs may provide learning opportunities for students who would otherwise enter kindergarten without formal schooling. Other researchers (Augustine et al., 2016) have suggested that programs are effective when students attend regularly and spend more time working on academic tasks. Another limitation of this Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project is that there are no provisions for students' transportation to attend.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

The existing problem is that incoming kindergarten students in a Title 1 elementary school are unprepared to succeed in school. An alternative approach to the existing problem might be a professional development program with coaching and an ongoing professional learning community (Patti et al., 2015). The Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project could also exist with professional development and provide kindergarten teachers with an original form of professional development by practicing what they are learning in an actual learning environment. Professional development is a system by which teachers improve their instructional skills, and there are several contexts and approaches in which this can occur. Vangrieken et al. (2017) indicated that teacher communities are one example of a professional development context in which various stakeholders, from administrators to teachers, are involved.

Patti et al. (2015) found that appropriate professional development was linked to increased commitment to teaching, better self-awareness, and improved relationships with others. Kosnik et al. (2015) suggested that there are three core methods of professional development: informal, formal, and community approaches to professional

development. Research has indicated the diverse ways in which professional development may be delivered, which include not only formally established means of development, but also informal relationships and connections by which teachers benefit from their peers.

As the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project begins, school administrators should consider the following actions to initiate professional development:

1. Establish a period before the start of the school year for instructional planning and classroom setup.
2. Create an assessment plan that involves formal and informal formative assessments that inform the instruction of children using various practices.
3. Form a professional learning community (PLC) for teachers to have opportunities to deepen their understanding of child development and learning, explore best practices, study initial and ongoing assessment tools, review student assessment data, and plan differentiated instruction while monitoring child progress.
4. Provide teacher training, such as in-service workshops, conferences, and classes.

Professional development depends on teachers' teaching and professional development experiences.

The study described in Section 2 focused on how kindergarten teachers implemented the five domains of school readiness at a Title 1 elementary school to improve incoming kindergarten student learning. Based on findings from the professional

literature, professional development with coaching and an ongoing professional learning community may be used to improve kindergarten teachers' practices such as differentiated instruction and encouragement (Schachter et al. 2019). A study by Egert et al. (2018) showed that professional development can improve student development. Other researchers have found a definite link between professional development and student outcomes using rigorous methodologies (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

Leadership and Change

Leadership and change are interconnected. Leadership and change involve strategies that improve the skills, abilities, and confidence of individuals. There are multiple forms of development used to develop leaders, such as mentoring and coaching. My years at Walden University have enhanced my leadership skills through coaching. The coaching process involves assessment, feedback, action planning, a measure of success, and sustaining progress and continued growth.

My awareness of leadership and change has developed over the past several years. I have learned that to be a successful educational leader, which requires specific skills. An educational leader must engage in a collaborative process to identify what teachers need to know, how to recognize how they know it, and what to do if they do not know it. I have sought to establish this process during my leadership meetings by asking teachers to share how they teach specific lessons. I learned that an effective leader ensures that teachers are focused on continually improving their teaching and student achievement. I will continue supporting teachers in sharing and learning strategies that are effective in

improving student learning. I will also collaborate with teachers to enhance student learning.

I grew academically as I led changes within my workplace. My independent research and development of a project demonstrated my increased capacity for taking the lead on my projects, applying theoretical knowledge, and creating a functioning project design to meet the needs of teachers and incoming kindergarteners. I have transitioned from a learner to a leader. I can identify needs in the population, identify critical research related to that need, and subsequently fill that need by creating theory-based interventions that respond to the identified problem.

Project Development

A project developer is an individual who has the leadership skills necessary to plan and coordinate the activities of an individual or a group of individuals. A project developer also has the leadership ability required to monitor activities and take appropriate corrective action when the project is not on point. When I faced challenges, I used leadership and change skills to overcome them. The project, Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp, is an indication of my ability to design a project.

I designed the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project based on scholarly research and the problem. Using multiple components to create the project, I recognized the importance of being organized, focusing on details, and coping with challenges. The development of the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project started as a concept to improve kindergarten teachers' understanding of how to implement differentiated instruction and encouragement for incoming kindergarten students. Initially, I focused on

addressing the needs of kindergarten teachers that emerged from the study data. Eventually, I had to limit the project to multiple components that could provide significant support for kindergarten teachers. The project does not address every need, but it can be used to make a difference, both effectively and efficiently, in how kindergarten teachers teach the five domains of school readiness skills.

For a project developer, organization skills are essential. The structure and direction of the project depended on my ability to organize the project. I completed a specific list to identify the multiple components of the project. Focusing on details required me to take time to remember the errors that I was making in my project. I had to make specific changes and apply the skills I was learning. I learned the importance of being flexible and having the patience and perseverance needed to complete the project. I also learned how to limit distractions so that I could focus on the project.

Reflecting on the project reminded me of an early struggle that I experienced while designing the case study. After deciding on the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp as my project, I remembered learning about project development in one of my Walden courses. Project development includes multiple components that needed to be added, such as initiation, planning, designing, developing, implementation, and follow up. These components required me to identify the elements of the project and use the design to create the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project.

Scholarship

As a Walden scholar, I have strived to exemplify scholarly qualities. These qualities are grounded in intellectual curiosity, creative thinking, servant leadership,

communication skills, and making contributions to communities. These qualities have shaped two and a half years of course work that led to 8 years of completing my project study. My course work, proposal, and project study have changed my perspectives on how to be tolerant as a scholar. Additionally, I have learned how to locate information by utilizing the Walden library website. I have learned how to identify an educational problem, find current peer-reviewed literature, develop a hypothesis, and formulate research questions. I have also learned how to conduct research, interview participants, and analyze data.

During this process, I have learned multiple lessons as a practitioner. I have over 40 years of experience in the field of elementary, middle, secondary, and special education. Currently, I am also serving as an early childhood services manager for a Head Start program in a Title 1 school district. During the past 8 years, I have become involved in learning about and solving educational problems that impact incoming kindergarten students in rural southwest Georgia. Throughout this journey, I have learned how to research and provide strategies to address educational issues that were prevalent in my community. I now serve on committees and discuss educational problems with parents, teachers, and local board of education members. This journey has also allowed me the opportunity to apply the skills that I have learned in my workplace and become a high-quality leader in my community.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

The current study is potentially significant because it may improve how kindergarten teachers implement the five domains of school readiness at a Title 1 school

to improve incoming kindergarten student learning. The study may improve kindergarten teachers' understanding of how to implement differentiated instruction and encouragement for incoming kindergarten students. Further, the study is significant because kindergarten teachers will learn multiple pedagogical approaches and effective teaching strategies. In my current position, I hope to pass along knowledge to teachers and continue supporting student achievement, even when students enter kindergarten with various strengths and weaknesses.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Findings from this study contribute to an in-depth understanding of a widespread problem across America, which is that kindergarten teachers face multiple challenges in teaching the five domains of school readiness. There are too many kindergarten students who are unprepared to enter kindergarten and be successful academically. The study findings and project could significantly improve the educational experiences of kindergarten teachers implementing the five domains of school readiness at a Title 1 school to improve incoming kindergarten student learning.

Directions for Future Research

Future research could focus on the question of how parents can play an essential role in implementing the five domains of school readiness to improve student learning. Another direction for future research could involve replicating the study. After the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project has been implemented for a year, kindergarten teachers could use professional development formats to replicate the study. School leaders must communicate and implement practical professional development formats for

supporting teachers' continuing education. Professional development could be used to select quality content and formats that result in positive teacher practices (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Schachter et al., 2019).

Directions for future research could also include a longitudinal study to determine whether students who participated in the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project demonstrate greater success in future grades compared to students who did not participate in the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project.

Applications

The Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project could be implemented with a different population. Teachers should implement formative assessment procedures at the beginning of the project and enforce summative assessment procedures at the end of the project. The teachers who oversee the project should then implement modifications to meet the specific needs of students.

Implications

Implications for future research could include conducting a study on the effectiveness of the project that identifies the need to improve kindergarten teachers' differentiated instruction and encouragement and their effect on incoming kindergarten students' learning. A quantitative study using a rating scale or a questionnaire could explore how kindergarten teachers implement differentiated instruction and encouragement to improve incoming kindergarten students' learning.

Conclusion

A Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project was used to improve how kindergarten teachers implement the five school readiness domains at a Title 1 elementary school to enhance incoming kindergarten student learning. Kindergarten teachers who complete the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp may learn how to implement multiple differentiated instructional strategies and use encouragement to improve incoming kindergarten students' achievement. When students understand and apply readiness skills, they will achieve academically throughout their school years. Subsequently, they will become agents of positive social change.

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Appendix A: The Project

The Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp Project

Project Developer

Beverly Woods

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Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp Project

The Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project is designed to improve kindergarten teachers' differentiated instruction and encouragement that may lead to enhancing incoming kindergarten students' learning. The project will be implemented over the span for 8 weeks beginning May 20 through August 15 from 8:30 AM until 4:30 PM. Data from the semistructured interview data and nonparticipant observation descriptive notes were used to inform the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project. The project is also informed from current research-based practices relating to multiple differentiated instruction strategies and strategic encouragement to improve incoming kindergarten student learnings.

I presented a written proposal for financial support to United Way that included the anticipated outcomes and costs for the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project. The United Way propose budget included $60,000 for salaries and benefits for four kindergarten teachers. I presented also a written proposal for in kind support to the Title 1 local school district that included services, materials and supplies, and other operating costs such as free breakfast and lunch for incoming kindergarten students as well as transportation for field trips to and from the library.

There are no registration fees for incoming kindergarten students to attend the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project. Typically, it would cost $3,000 per child or more for 8 weeks based on the kindergarten teachers' instruction, activities offered, and field trips. The maximum student to teacher ratio is 10-to-1. All boot camp classrooms are self-contained, so students are grouped according to their age in an individual class

for comfort and safety. In this way, kindergarten teachers can guarantee age-appropriate activities and play. The students will receive free instructional tools to complete home assignments.

Using the study findings and recommendations from early childhood literature, I have designed a Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project to improve kindergarten teachers' differentiated instruction, such as tiered instruction, collaborative learning, self-regulate, and anchor activities. I have also included in the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project to improve kindergarten teachers' encouragement, such as Conscious Discipline training.

The Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project includes a Kindergarten Teachers' *Guide to Readiness Skills* and a book study. A book study can allow kindergarten teachers to build a shared knowledge base and improve their affective teaching skills in the classroom. Kindergarten teachers are involved in an 8 weeks' session where there is a continuous discussion around each chapter topic that has arisen from improving differentiated instruction and encouragement. Conscious Discipline training will be through the book study where kindergarten teachers commit to implementing ideas and strategies from the book. Kindergarten teachers will gather to engage in professional discourse around each chapter of the book study's Conscious Discipline.

Kindergarten teachers can use the Kindergarten Teachers' *Guide to Readiness Skills* as an age-appropriate practice resource guide when incoming kindergarteners enter kindergarten unprepared to learn readiness skills and provide answers to questions about differentiated instruction and encouragement over the span for 8 weeks beginning May

20 through August 15 beginning 8:30 a.m. ending 4:30 p.m. The Kindergarten Teachers' *Guide to Readiness Skills* is supported by professional literature. I have referenced the resources created by multiple Department of Education (Georgia, California, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts).

The Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project includes the teachers' roles and students' actions, equipment, materials, resources needed, and timetable for implementation. Table A1 includes the personnel and teacher roles and students' actions regarding the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project.

Table A1

Implementation Timeline

	Kindergarten teachers' roles
Immediately following local board of education approval of the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project kindergarten teachers will receive access to the classroom management system.	Contact office personnel to request the following: access to the classroom management system; instructions for posting documents and links; post links to resources online classroom for self-directed learning and teaching.
Within 3 weeks of the summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project approval	Finalize the agenda and instructional plans for the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project. Submit a draft of The Kindergarten Teachers' *Guide to Readiness Skills*; and Finalize and publish the guide as a PDF document. Submit a request to the administrative office to print copies of the student guide; Introduce the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project to the staff of the Title 1 elementary school.

Table A2

Personnel and Students: Roles and Responsibilities

	Roles and responsibilities
Kindergarten teachers	Develop the Student Guide to Kindergarten Readiness. Select assessment instrument to identify students' readiness developmental needs. Plan and implement the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project agenda. Select or develop students' resources for self-directed readiness development. Conduct program evaluations at the beginning and end of the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project. Create lesson plans for each session based on professional knowledge and experiences and the students' specific needs during Team Building and Reflections. Introduce interactive activities (smartboard) into the classroom and encourage students to vocalize their questions and interest. Collaborate with peers about students' progress and kindergarten readiness skills. Organize students in small groups for social skills. Engage students in creativity by organizing art and craft projects daily. Create a nurturing and inspiring atmosphere in the classroom.

(*table continues*)

	Roles and responsibilities
Local board of education	Review and approve the Student Guide to Kindergarten Readiness.
Office personnel	Provide classroom-management-system access for kindergarten teachers to post materials. Provide the kindergarten teachers with e-mail addresses for incoming kindergarten students. Provide the kindergarten teachers with enrollment data for incoming kindergarten students. Publish hard copies of the Kindergarten Teachers' Guide to Kindergarten Readiness for students and Title 1elemetary school personnel. Print handouts for instructional sessions. Print survey instruments for use during the first and last week of the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project. Ensure instructional settings are equipped with working computers connected to a projector, a screen, and wireless Internet connections. Coordinate field trips and accommodation plans with the kindergarten teachers.
Students	Attend 40 days of the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project. Practice all readiness skills presented in the *Kindergarten Teachers' Guide to Kindergarten Readiness,* classroom, and weekly field trips.

Table A3 contains itemized lists of the equipment, materials, and resources needed for implementation of the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project. The Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project will not require additional equipment because the local library already has the material available such as puzzles, card games, and jump ropes for all students during the 8 weeks.

Table A3

Equipment, Materials, and Resources

	Equipment	Materials	Resources
Administrative office	Office computer Printer	Printer ink Paper Journals suitable for adding pages to the Student Guide to Kindergarten Readiness Staples for handouts	Kindergarten teachers' compensation per agreement
Classroom	Portable computers, connected to PowerPoint projector Screen Whiteboard Wireless Internet access Electrical connections for laptop computers Comfortable seating with desks or tables for all students	Conscious Discipline Books Whiteboard markers Whiteboard eraser	
Playground	Playground equipment		

Note. The Title 1 elementary school may already have some of the equipment, materials, and resources listed. The Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project will not require additional resources if existing resources are available.

The following is a sample of the Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project components. These include: (a) Component 1: The Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp Project Agenda; (b) Component 2: The Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp Program Instructional Plan; and (c) Component 3: The Kindergarten Teachers' *Guide to Readiness Skills*.

Component 1: The Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp Project Agenda

Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp

Week: 1

Monday Welcome and introduction to Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp project (Each kindergarten teacher and 10 incoming kindergarten students in self-contained classroom). Prepare for breakfast (Ensure students wear face mask, social distancing, take temperature and record, bathroom/wash hands, and transition to the cafeteria for breakfast). **All kindergarten teachers establish a solid routine**.

7:30-8:30 Breakfast/Morning Enrichment (Application of the Five Domains of School Readiness) in the cafeteria (Kindergarten teachers engage all 10 students to use prior knowledge during breakfast such as socialization skills.) Social skills such as waiting for teacher to call your name, taking turn to get breakfast, and being kind to others. During breakfast/morning enrichment, kindergarten teachers begin to develop relationships (Conscious Discipline) with students. Transition back to the bathroom, wash hands and practice social distancing.

8:30-9:30	Unlocking the Five Domains of School Readiness in each kindergarten classroom (Beginning with movement-dance physical wellbeing—Kindergarten teacher assign students to groups) At the end of all activities (art, music, health, and safety), kindergarten students have a bathroom break with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing.
9:30-10:30:	Classroom setting: First, whole-group instruction (Kindergarten teacher will start with Language Arts skills such as read a fiction story to all students. Circle time in each kindergarten classroom.) Second, kindergarten teacher will transition students to learning centers to demonstrate the big concepts from the fiction story such as the mathematics center, the students would identify the number of characters in the story.
10:30-10:45	Bathroom break with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing.
10:45-11:45	Small- group learning: Guided teaching and learning (Application of Conscious Discipline through tiered instruction, collaborative learning, self-regulation, and anchor activities (each kindergarten teacher work with students in assigned groups) Kindergarten teachers would encourage students such as give students happy faces.
11:45-12:15	Reading/Writing/ Math/ Science/Literacy and Critical Thinking: For example, kindergarten children learn the names

	of numbers and how to count them in sequence. By the end of the Summer Boot Camp project, kindergarten students should be able to recognize and name shapes such as triangle, rectangles, circles, and squares. (Kindergarten teachers will rotate activities in 30 minutes' intervals).
12:20-1:30	Prepare for Lunch (with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing) During lunch, family style (students eat lunch in the classroom at tables). Kindergarten teachers continue the application of the Five Domains of School Readiness such as appropriate table manners. Clean-up and Bathroom /Indoor recess (Student Choice—games).
1:30-2:30	Enrichment and Remediation: Art/Music/Technology (All kindergarten teachers provide additional practice/activities to improve incoming kindergarten student learning the Five Domains of School Readiness). Transition to bathroom with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing. Follow by a snack.
2:30-3:15	Enrichment and Remediation- (Consistency and Repetition) All kindergarten teachers provide hands on activities in learning centers to learn the Five Domains of School Readiness through Art/Music/Technology.
3:15- 3:30	Departure of Kindergarten students from the Kindergarten Boot Camp

3:30-4:30	Kindergarten Teachers: Collaborative Learning and Reflections. All kindergarten teachers develop lesson plans based on professional knowledge and experiences and the students' specific needs consideration and processing of content information. Kindergarten teachers use the Kindergarten Teachers' *Guide to School Readiness.* Kindergarten teachers transition to Book Study: Conscious Discipline: Building Resilient Classrooms: KT#2011 will lead the Introduction which involves the first three chapters of the book Conscious Discipline, KT#2012 will lead chapters four and five, KT#2013 will lead chapters six, seven, and eight, and KT#2014 will lead chapters nine and ten.

Tuesday

7:30-8:30:Breakfast/Morning Enrichment (Follow established Breakfast routine)

8:30-10:30: Unlocking the Five Domains of School Readiness in each kindergarten classroom. Whole-group instruction (Reading), transition to learning centers and kindergarten teacher work with students in a smaller setting.

10:30-10:45	Bathroom break with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing.
10:45-11:45	Decodable Readers: Kindergarten teachers provide engaging stories that reinforce phonics instruction using Smartboard.
11:45-12:30	Reading/Mathematics/ Science/Literacy/ and Critical Thinking (Students ask questions as they listen to the topic in each subject). Kindergarten students will learn to use question words, such as "who," "what," "when," "where," "Why," and

	"how."
12:35-1:30	Prepare for Lunch (with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing) During lunch, family style (students eat lunch in the classroom at tables). Kindergarten teachers continue the application of the Five Domains of School Readiness such as appropriate table manners. Clean-up and Bathroom /Indoor recess (Student Choice—games).
1:30-2:30	Enrichment and Remediation: Art/Music/Technology: In learning centers, all kindergarten teachers provide additional practice/activities to improve incoming kindergarten student learning the Five Domains of School Readiness.
2:30-3:15	Enrichment and Remediation: All kindergarten teachers provide hands on activities to learn the Five Domains of School Readiness through Art/Music/Technology) in learning centers.
3:15- 3:30	Departure of Kindergarten students from the Kindergarten Boot Camp
3:30-4:30	Kindergarten Teachers: Collaborative Learning and Reflections. Kindergarten teachers use the Kindergarten Teachers' *Guide to School Readiness.* All kindergarten teachers develop lesson plans based on professional knowledge and experiences and the students' specific needs consideration and processing of content information. Transition to Book Study: Conscious Discipline: Building Resilient. (KT#2011

will lead Chapter 2).

Wednesday

7:30-8:30:	Breakfast/Morning Enrichment (Follow established Breakfast routine)

8:30-9:30: Kindergarten teachers introduce the first 10 letters of the alphabets in whole-group instruction.

9:30-10:30	Classroom setting: small-group instruction and including activities from each domain of school readiness (writing, numbers, and sight words). Students transition to learning centers to reinforce skills learn.
10:30-10:45	Bathroom break with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing.
10:45-11:45	Whole- group learning: Guided teaching and learning (How to be a friend)
11:45-12:30	Reading/Writing/ Mathematics/ Science/Literacy and Critical Thinking (rotate activities in 15 minutes' intervals) Repeat routine from previous learning.
12:35-1:30	Lunch/Indoor recess (Follow established lunch routine)
1:30-2:30	Enrichment and Remediation (Follow established routine)
2:30-3:15	Enrichment and Remediation (Follow established routine)
3:15- 3:30	Departure of Kindergarten students from the Kindergarten

Boot Camp

3:30-4:30	Kindergarten Teachers: Collaborative Learning and Reflections: All kindergarten teachers develop lesson plans based on professional knowledge and experiences and the students' specific needs consideration and processing of content information consideration and processing of content information. Kindergarten teachers use the Kindergarten Teachers' *Guide to School Readiness.* Transition to Book Study: KT#2011 will lead Chapter 3.
Thursday	
7:30-8:30:	Breakfast/Morning Enrichment (Follow established Breakfast routine)
8:30-9:30:	Kindergarten teachers teach across five domains of school readiness (learning centers) using established routine
9:30-10:30	Classroom setting: Whole-group instruction and including differentiated instruction for all students (Recognizing and writing letters of the alphabet)
10:30-10:45	Bathroom break with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing.
10:45-11:45	Small-group learning: Guided teaching and learning
11:45-12:30	Reading/Writing/ Mathematics/ Science/Literacy and Critical Thinking (rotate activities in 15 minutes' intervals)
12:35-1:30	Lunch/Indoor recess (Follow established lunch routine)

1:30-2:30	Enrichment and Remediation--Art/Music/Technology (Follow established routine)
2:30-3:15	Enrichment and Remediation-Art/Music/Technology (Follow established routine)
3:15- 3:30	Departure of Kindergarten students from the Kindergarten Boot Camp
3:30-4:30	Kindergarten Teachers: Collaborative Learning and Reflections. Kindergarten teachers use the Kindergarten Teachers' *Guide to School Readiness.* All kindergarten teachers develop lesson plans based on professional knowledge and experiences and the students' specific needs consideration and processing of content information. Transition to Book Study: (KT#2012 will lead Chapter 4).
Friday	
7:30-8:30	Breakfast/Morning Enrichment (Follow established Breakfast routine)
8:30-9:30	Kindergarten teachers teach across five domains of school readiness (learning centers) using activities in each domain.
9:30-10:30	Classroom setting: small-group instruction and including differentiated instruction for all students.
10:30-10:45	Bathroom break with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing.
10:45-11:45	Whole- group learning: Guided teaching and learning
11:45-12:30	Reading/Writing/ Mathematics/ Science/Literacy and Critical Thinking (rotate activities in 15 minutes' intervals)

12:35-1:30	Prepare for Lunch (with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing) During lunch, family style (students eat lunch in the classroom at tables). Kindergarten teachers continue the application of the Five Domains of School Readiness such as appropriate table manners. Clean-up and Bathroom /Indoor recess (Student Choice—games).
1:30-2:30	Enrichment and Remediation--Art/Music/Technology (Follow established routine)
2:30-3:15	Enrichment and Remediation-Art/Music/Technology (Follow established routine)
3:15- 3:30	Departure of Kindergarten students from the Kindergarten Boot Camp
3:30-4:30	Kindergarten Teachers: Collaborative Learning and Reflections. All kindergarten teachers develop lesson plans based on professional knowledge and experiences and the students' specific needs consideration and processing of content information. Kindergarten teachers use the Kindergarten Teachers' *Guide to School Readiness.* (KT#2012 will lead Chapter #5 Assertiveness)

Week 2

Monday	Application of Kindergarten Readiness: Field Trip to Elliott Farms
7:30-8:30	Breakfast/Morning Enrichment (Follow established Breakfast

	routine)
8:30--9:00	Departure
9:30-10:00	Arrive
10:00-12:30	Elliott Farm Interactive Presentation and Tour
12:35-1:00	Lunch (Box)
1:00-2:30	Elliott Farms Presentation-Agricultural Activities involving the Production of Corn, Strawberries, and Ice Cream.
2:30-3:15	Return to the local library
3:15- 3:30	Departure of Kindergarten students from the Kindergarten Boot Camp
3:30-4:30	Kindergarten Teachers: Collaborative Learning and Reflections. All kindergarten teachers develop lesson plans based on professional knowledge and experiences and the students' specific needs consideration and processing of content information. Kindergarten teachers use the Kindergarten Teachers' *Guide to School Readiness.* (KT#2013 will lead Chapter 6: Encouragement)
Tuesday	
7:30-8:30	Breakfast/Morning Enrichment (Kindergarten teachers will follow the establish breakfast routine).
8:30-10:30	Small-group instruction and including differentiated instruction

	and strategic encouragement for all students in learning centers. (Language Arts Skills)
10:30-10:45	Bathroom break with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing.
10:45-11:45	Decodable Readers: Kindergarten teachers provide engaging stories that reinforce phonics instruction.
11:45-12:30	Reading/Mathematics/ Science/Literacy/ and Critical Thinking
12:35-1:30	Prepare for Lunch (with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing) During lunch, family style (students eat lunch in the classroom at tables). Kindergarten teachers continue the application of the Five Domains of School Readiness such as appropriate table manners. Clean-up and Bathroom /Indoor recess (Student Choice—games).
1:30-2:30	Enrichment and Remediation: Art/Music/Technology/Softball
2:30-3:30	Enrichment and Remediation: Art/Music/Technology/Softball
3:30-4:30	Kindergarten Teachers: Collaborative Learning and Reflections. Kindergarten teachers use the Kindergarten Teachers' *Guide to School Readiness.* All kindergarten teachers develop lesson plans based on professional knowledge and experiences and the students' specific needs consideration and processing of content information. Transition to Book

	Study: (KT#2013 will lead Chapter #7: Choices).
Wednesday	
7:30-8:30	Breakfast/Morning Enrichment (Follow the established routine)
8:30-9:30	Kindergarten teachers teach the five domains of school readiness (Mathematic Skills)
9:30-10:30	Classroom setting: small-group instruction and including differentiated instruction and encouragement
10:30-10:45	Bathroom break with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing.
10:45-11:45	Whole- group learning: Guided teaching and learning
11:45-12:30	Reading/Writing/ Mathematics/ Science/Literacy and Critical Thinking (rotate activities in 15 minutes' intervals)
10:30-10:45	Bathroom break with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing.
12:35-1:30	Prepare for Lunch (with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing) During lunch, family style (students eat lunch in the classroom at tables). Kindergarten teachers continue the application of the Five Domains of School Readiness such as appropriate table manners. Clean-up and Bathroom /Indoor recess (Student Choice—games).

1:30-2:30	Art/Music/Technology/Softball
2:30-3:15	Art/Music/Technology/Softball
3:15- 3:30	Departure of Kindergarten students from the Kindergarten Boot Camp
3:30-4:30	Kindergarten Teachers: Collaborative Learning and Reflections. Kindergarten teachers use the Kindergarten Teachers' *Guide to School Readiness.* All kindergarten teachers develop lesson plans based on professional knowledge and experiences and the students' specific needs consideration and processing of content information. Transition to Book Study: KT#2013 will lead Chapter # 8: Empathy.

Thursday

7:30-8:30	Breakfast/Morning Enrichment
8:30-10:30	Socialization skills: Small-group instruction and including differentiated instruction and encouragement
10:30-10:45	Bathroom break with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing.
10:45-11:45	Story Time
11:45-12:30	Reading/Math/ Science/Literacy and Critical Thinking (rotate activities in 15 minutes' intervals)
12:35-1:30	Prepare for Lunch (with emphasis on washing hands, wearing

	face mask, and practicing social distancing) During lunch, family style (students eat lunch in the classroom at tables). Kindergarten teachers continue the application of the Five Domains of School Readiness such as appropriate table manners. Clean-up and Bathroom /Indoor recess (Student Choice—games).
1:30-2:30	Art/Music/Technology/Softball
2:30-3:15	Art/Music/Technology/Softball
3:15- 3:30	Departure of Kindergarten students from the Kindergarten Boot Camp
3:30-4:30	Kindergarten Teachers: Team Building and Reflections-consideration and processing of content information. KT# 2014 will lead Chapter 9: Positive Intent.

Friday: Field Trip

7:30-8:30	Breakfast/Morning Enrichment (Follow established Breakfast routine)
8:30-10:30	Travel to Atlanta
10:30-10:45	Break (Bathroom and water)
10:45-12:30	Tour the Georgia Aquarium Guided Interactive Tour
12:30-1:30	Eat Sack Lunches

1:30 -3:15	Travel back to the library
3:15- 3:30	Departure of Kindergarten students from the Kindergarten Boot Camp
3:30-4:30	Kindergarten Teachers: Collaborative Learning and Reflections. Kindergarten teachers use the Kindergarten Teachers' *Guide to School Readiness.* All kindergarten teachers develop lesson plans based on professional knowledge and experiences and the students' specific needs consideration and processing of content information. Transition to Book Study: Conscious Discipline: KT#2014 will lead Chapter 10: Consequences.

Week 3: Students' Science Project

Monday

7:30-8:30	Breakfast/Morning Enrichment (Follow established Breakfast routine).
8:30-10:30	Small-group instruction including differentiated instruction and encouragement
10:45-11:00	Bathroom break with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing.
10:45-12:30	Reading/Mathematics/ Science/Literacy (Students transition from learning stations to learning stations)

12:35-1:30	Lunch/Indoor recess/Basketball
1:30-2:30	Art/Music/Technology/Basketball
2:30-3:15	Art/Music/Technology/Basketball
3:15- 3:30	Departure of Kindergarten students from the Kindergarten Boot Camp
3:30-4:30	Kindergarten Teachers: Collaborative Learning and Reflections. All kindergarten teachers develop lesson plans based on professional knowledge and experiences and the students' specific needs consideration and processing of content information. Kindergarten teachers start discussing summative assessment.
Tuesday	
7:30-8:30	Breakfast/Morning Enrichment (Follow established Breakfast routine)
8:30-10:30	Small-group instruction including differentiated instruction and encouragement
10:30-10:45	Break (Bathroom and water)
10:45-11:45	Story Time
11:45-12:30	Reading/Mathematics/ Science/Literacy Critical Thinking (rotate activities in 15 minutes' intervals)

12:35-1:30	Lunch/Indoor recess
1:30-2:30	Art/Music/Technology/Swimming
2:30-3:30	Art/Music/Technology/Swimming
3:30-4:30	Kindergarten Teachers: Collaborative Learning and Reflections. All kindergarten teachers develop lesson plans based on professional knowledge and experiences and the students' specific needs consideration and processing of content information. Kindergarten teachers continued discussing summative assessment.

Wednesday

7:30-8:30	Breakfast/Morning Enrichment (Follow established Breakfast routine)
8:30-10:30	Small-group instruction including differentiation for all students
10:30-10:45	Bathroom break with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing.
10:45-11:45	Story Time
11:45-12:30	Reading/Mathematics/ Science/Literacy (Students transition from learning stations to learning stations)
12:35-1:30	Prepare for Lunch (with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing) During lunch, family style (students eat lunch in the classroom at tables).

	Kindergarten teachers continue the application of the Five Domains of School Readiness such as appropriate table manners. Clean-up and Bathroom /Indoor recess (Student Choice—games).
1:30-2:30	Art/Music/Technology/ Swimming
2:30-3:30	Art/Music/Technology/Swimming
3:30-4:30	Kindergarten Teachers: Collaborative Learning and Reflections. Kindergarten teachers use the Kindergarten Teachers' *Guide to School Readiness.* All kindergarten teachers develop lesson plans based on professional knowledge and experiences and the students' specific needs consideration and processing of content information. Kindergarten teachers continued discussing summative assessment.
Thursday	Museum of Aviation Field Trip
7:30-8:30	Breakfast/Morning Enrichment (Follow established Breakfast routine)
8:30-9:00	Board Bus
9:00-10:00	Museum of Aviation NASA Educational Resource Center
12:35-1:30	Lunch (Box)
1:30-2:30	Return to the library
2:30-3:15	Art/Music/Technology/Swimming

3:15- 3:30	Departure of Kindergarten students from the Kindergarten Boot Camp
3:30-4:30	Kindergarten teachers continued discussing summative assessment.
Friday	
7:30-8:30	Breakfast/Morning Enrichment (Follow established Breakfast routine)
8:30-10:30	Small-group instruction including differentiation for all students
10:30-10:45	Bathroom break with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing.
10:45-11:45	Whole-group learning: Guided teaching and learning
11:45-12:30	Reading/Writing/ Math/ Science/Literacy and Critical Thinking (rotate activities in 15 minutes' intervals)
12:35-1:30	Prepare for Lunch (with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing) During lunch, family style (students eat lunch in the classroom at tables). Kindergarten teachers continue the application of the Five Domains of School Readiness such as appropriate table manners. Clean-up and Bathroom /Indoor recess (Student Choice—games).
1:30-2:30	Enrichment and Remediation-Art/Music/Technology/ Tennis

2:30-3:15	Enrichment and Remediation-Art/Music/Technology/Tennis
3:15- 3:30	Departure of Kindergarten students from the Kindergarten Boot Camp
3:30-4:30	Kindergarten Teachers: Collaborative Learning and Reflections. All kindergarten teachers develop lesson plans based on professional knowledge and experiences and the students' specific needs consideration and processing of content information. Kindergarten teachers continued discussing summative assessment.

Week 4 Project Development (Science Project: Students and Teachers Developed)

Monday

7:30-8:30	Breakfast/Morning Enrichment (Follow established Breakfast routine)
8:30-10:30	Student/Teacher: Design Project
10:30-10:45	Bathroom break with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing.
10:45-11:45	Reading/Mathematics: Remediation
11:45-12:30	Reading/Mathematics/ Science/Literacy (Students transition from learning centers to learning centers)
12:35-1:30	Prepare for Lunch (with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing) During lunch,

	family style (students eat lunch in the classroom at tables). Kindergarten teachers continue the application of the Five Domains of School Readiness such as appropriate table manners. Clean-up and Bathroom /Indoor recess (Student Choice—games).
1:30-2:30	Art/Music/Technology/Bowling
2:30-3:30	Art/Music/Technology/Bowling
3:30-4:30	Kindergarten Teachers: Collaborative Learning and Reflections. All kindergarten teachers develop lesson plans based on professional knowledge and experiences and the students' specific needs consideration and processing of content information. Review chapters of the book study.
Tuesday	Science Project Development
7:30-8:30	Breakfast/Morning Enrichment ((Follow established Breakfast routine)
8:30-10:30	Student and Teacher: Design Project
10:30-10:45	Bathroom break with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing.
10:45-11:45	Reading/Mathematics: Remediation
11:45-12:30	Reading/Math/ Science/Literacy (Students transition from learning centers to learning centers)

12:35-1:30	Prepare for Lunch (with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing) During lunch, family style (students eat lunch in the classroom at tables). Kindergarten teachers continue the application of the Five Domains of School Readiness such as appropriate table manners. Clean-up and Bathroom /Indoor recess (Student Choice—games).
1:30-2:30	Art/Music/Technology/Bowling
2:30-3:15	Art/Music/Technology/Bowling
3:15- 3:30	Departure of Kindergarten students from the Kindergarten Boot Camp
3:30-4:30	Kindergarten Teachers: Collaborative Learning and Reflections. All kindergarten teachers develop lesson plans based on professional knowledge and experiences and the students' specific needs consideration and processing of content information. Kindergarten teachers continued discussing summative assessment.
Wednesday	Project Development
7:30-8:30	Breakfast/Morning Enrichment (Follow established Breakfast routine)
8:30-10:30	Student and Teacher: Continue to Design Project
10:30-10:45	Bathroom break with emphasis on washing hands, wearing

	face mask, and practicing social distancing.
10:45-11:45	Reading/Mathematics: Remediation
11:45-12:30	Reading/Mathematics/ Science/Literacy (Students transition from learning centers to learning centers)
12:35-1:30	Prepare for Lunch (with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing) During lunch, family style (students eat lunch in the classroom at tables). Kindergarten teachers continue the application of the Five Domains of School Readiness such as appropriate table manners. Clean-up and Bathroom /Indoor recess (Student Choice—games).
1:30-2:30	Art/Music/Technology/Bowling
2:30-3:15	Art/Music/Technology/Bowling
3:15- 3:30	Departure of Kindergarten students from the Kindergarten Boot Camp
3:30-4:30	Kindergarten Teachers: Collaborative Learning and Reflections. All kindergarten teachers develop lesson plans based on professional knowledge and experiences and the students' specific needs consideration and processing of content information. Kindergarten teachers continued discussing summative assessment.

Thursday	Callaway Gardens: A Beautiful Place to Learn About the Natural World (Field Trip)
7:30-8:30	Breakfast/Morning Enrichment (Follow established Breakfast routine)
8:30	Board Bus
8:45	Depart for Callaway Gardens—Return 3:00
3:15- 3:30	Departure of Kindergarten students from the Kindergarten Boot Camp
3:30-4:30	Kindergarten Teachers: Collaborative Learning and Reflections. All kindergarten teachers develop lesson plans based on professional knowledge and experiences and the students' specific needs consideration and processing of content information. Discuss formative and summative assessment.
Friday	Project Development
7:30-8:30	Breakfast/Morning Enrichment (Follow established Breakfast routine)
8:30-10:30	Student and Teacher: Design Project
10:30-10:45	Bathroom break with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing.
10:45-11:45	Reading/Mathematics: Remediation

11:45-12:30	Reading/Mathematics/ Science/Literacy (Students transition from learning centers)
12:35-1:30	Prepare for Lunch (with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing) During lunch, family style (students eat lunch in the classroom at tables). Kindergarten teachers continue the application of the Five Domains of School Readiness such as appropriate table manners. Clean-up and Bathroom /Indoor recess (Student Choice—games).
1:30-2:30	Art/Music/Technology/Soccer
2:30-3:15	Art/Music/Technology/Soccer
3:15- 3:30	Departure of Kindergarten students from the Kindergarten Boot Camp
3:30-4:30	Kindergarten Teachers: Collaborative Learning and Reflections. All kindergarten teachers develop lesson plans based on professional knowledge and experiences and the students' specific needs consideration and processing of content information.
Monday	Completion of Multiple Student Projects
7:30-8:30	Breakfast/Morning Enrichment (Follow established Breakfast routine)
8:30-12:30	Completion of Multiple Student Projects (Science, Technology,

	Reading, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics)
12:35-1:30	Prepare for Lunch (with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing) During lunch, family style (students eat lunch in the classroom at tables). Kindergarten teachers continue the application of the Five Domains of School Readiness such as appropriate table manners. Clean-up and Bathroom /Indoor recess (Student Choice—games).
1:30-3:15	Students and teachers continued to complete projects
3:15- 3:30	Departure of Kindergarten students from the Kindergarten Boot Camp
3:30-4:30	Kindergarten Teachers: Collaborative Learning and Reflections. All kindergarten teachers develop lesson plans based on professional knowledge and experiences and the students' specific needs consideration and processing of content information. Kindergarten teachers use the Kindergarten Teachers' *Guide to School Readiness.*
Tuesday	Complete students and teachers Science Projects
7:30-8:30	Breakfast/Morning Enrichment (Follow established Breakfast routine)
8:30-10:30	(Complete summative Assessment)
10:30-10:45	Bathroom break with emphasis on washing hands, wearing

	face mask, and practicing social distancing.
10:45-11:45	Art/Music/Technology (Students rotate to all learning centers)
11:45-12:30	Prepare for Lunch (with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing) During lunch, family style (students eat lunch in the classroom at tables). Kindergarten teachers continue the application of the Five Domains of School Readiness such as appropriate table manners.
12:35-3:15	Final Field Trip: Ga. Sports Hall of Fame
3:15- 3:30	Departure of Kindergarten students from the Kindergarten Boot Camp
3:30-4:30	Kindergarten Teachers: Collaborative Learning and Reflections. All kindergarten teachers completed summative assessment.
Wednesday	Graduation Ceremony
7:30-8:30	Breakfast/Morning Enrichment (Follow established Breakfast routine)
9:00-12:00	Honors and Awards Programs
12:00-1:30	Prepare for Lunch (with emphasis on washing hands, wearing face mask, and practicing social distancing) During lunch, family style (students eat lunch in the classroom at tables). Kindergarten teachers continue the application of the Five

	Domains of School Readiness such as appropriate table manners. Clean-up and Bathroom.
Lunch	
1:30-2:00	Departure of Kindergarten students from the Kindergarten Boot Camp
2:00-4:30	Kindergarten Teachers: Collaborative Learning and Reflections. All kindergarten teachers discuss the results of the summative assessment.

Component 2: The Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp Project

Instructional Lesson Plan (Sample)

Methodology: Teacher and Student-Centered Approach to Learning

Kindergarten teachers will provide differentiated instruction and strategic encouragement.

Learners: Incoming kindergarten students and kindergarten teachers

Materials: Smartboard with the activities and resources

Objectives: By the end of the instructional sessions, incoming kindergarten students will have gained a basic understanding of readiness skills. Kindergarten teachers will have learned multiple teaching strategies and strategic encouragement activities relating to how to teach the five domains of school readiness.

Lesson Plan:

1. Introduce incoming kindergarten students.

2. Use Smartboard.

3. Use the Smartboard presentation with talking points to discuss the five domains of school readiness.

a. Demonstrate how incoming kindergarten students can access resources for self-directed learning.

Component 3: The Kindergarten Teachers' Guide to Readiness Skills

Kindergarten is a place for students to thrive. The kindergarten year is essential for developing readiness skills for academic and future success. All incoming kindergarten students enter kindergarten with different needs and capabilities. It is the kindergarten teachers' duty and responsibility to acknowledge these differences and attempt to meet these varied needs by teaching kindergarten readiness skills. Kindergarten teachers teach the readiness skill through the provision of a differentiated instruction such as tiered instruction, collaborative learning, self-regulation learning, anchor activities and encouragement that require students to learn in small and large groups.

The purpose of this Kindergarten Teachers' *Guide to School Readiness* is twofold. These included: (a) to serve as an age-appropriate practice resource guide when incoming kindergarteners are entering Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp unprepared to learn readiness skills, and (b) to provide answers to questions about differentiated instruction and encouragement. This Guide is NOT an order concerning how kindergarten teachers implement the five domains of school readiness to improve incoming kindergarten student learning. This resource does not incorporate all characteristics of kindergarten instruction and programming but attempts to address the informational and "gap in practice" of conceptual rigor with developmentally and appropriate practice. Instead, this Guide has been developed in response to the kindergarten teachers at the Title 1 elementary school to improve the use of differentiated instruction and strategic encouragement to improve incoming kindergarten student learning. This Guide is

supported by professional literature. I have referenced the resources created by multiple Department of Education (Georgia, California, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts) in this Kindergarten Teachers' Guide to School Readiness.

Part I: Kindergarten Teachers' Philosophy and Goals

It is essential for kindergarten teachers to comprehend the developmental stages in which children acquire specific skills. High-quality kindergarten programming embraces the concept of learning in five domains of readiness and align with Vygotsky's theoretical framework in that social interaction plays an essential role in child development.

Vygotsky (1978) states:

Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals. (p. 57)

Vygotsky's theory reflects an understanding of other childhood theories (social and situated learning theory and genetic epistemology) that students learn through actively engaging in social interactions in multiple ways. This model has provided teachers with critical knowledge on how students develop and learn. For additional information on child developmental milestones.

Website Resources:

- http://www.pbs.org/wholechild/abc/http://www.med.umich.edu/1libr/yourchild/devmilele.htm
- http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html
  http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/spanish/actearly/index.html

Application of the Five Domains of School Readiness

In high-quality kindergarten programming, kindergarten teachers should know teaching revolves around the five domains of school readiness. These include: (a) language and literacy development, (b)cognition and general knowledge (including early mathematics and early scientific development), (c) approaches toward learning, (d) physical well-being and motor development, and (e) social and emotional development. These five domains of school readiness are intentionally overlapping and interconnected indicators of a child's ability to succeed in a school setting. These five domains are not intended to be chronological milestones but rather skills that children develop simultaneously. The domains also serve as a method for kindergarten teachers to guide their differentiated instruction, such as tiered instruction, collaborative learning, self-regulate learning, anchor activities and encouragement towards school readiness and age-appropriate activities.

Socially and emotionally development: Researchers (Luby, Barch, Whalen, Tillman, & Freedland, 2018) indicated that young children who struggled to develop minimal social and emotional skills and suffer neglect or rejection from peers are at a higher risk for childhood depression and other mental health disorders. Incoming kindergarten students entering kindergarten have different ability to self-regulate by self-

control, mental flexibility, and working memory. Since these self-regulation and executive function skills are critical, it is essential for their kindergarten teachers to limit the sources of frustration, overstimulation, and stress in the learning environment. However, to develop problem-solving skills, young children should have opportunities to experience appropriate frustrations and stress.

Physical well-being and motor development: Kindergartners are competent in demonstrating physical skills such as hoping and skipping, and dressing without help; however, some kindergartners experience difficulties with fine motor skills such as writing, drawing and precise cutting. Kindergarten teachers should provide multiple learning opportunities across all domains of school readiness.

Approaches toward learning: Kindergarteners' approaches to learning are also vital to their future school success and support the other domains of school readiness. Kindergarten students develop an interest in learning and creativity; students develop the ability to start and finish activities with persistence and attention; students can focus on collaborating with peers.

Cognition and general knowledge: Kindergartners exhibit flexibility, reasoning, and problem solving than younger students. Kindergartners can use over 2,027 words. They have the capability to learn multiple concepts when presented in a manner that is understandable to them. As a result, hands-on, research-based learning, is essential to this period of development.

Language and literacy development: Kindergartners ask multiple questions, such as "why." For additional information on the Five Domains of School Readiness.

https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/article/head-start-approach-school-readiness-overview

Part II: High Quality Kindergarten Learning Environment

Kindergarten teachers should know the kindergarten learning environment plays a vital role in developmental domains (physical, social and emotional, language, cognitive, and motor). Kindergarten teachers create developmentally appropriate and structured classrooms. A safe, responsive, compassionate, and nurturing environments are critical components of a kindergarten classroom. A safe and supportive environment also help kindergarten students to develop positive self-esteem and approaches toward learning for future academic success.

Students can respond when they:

- Are structured
- Have collaboration among families, schools and communities
- Provide predictable routines to learn through discovery, interaction, creativity, problem-solving, conversation, and play
- Have consistent expectations and supports differences in the needs, skills, and abilities of students as they develop as individuals
- Represent the children culturally
- Demonstrate mutual respect with parents, peers, and teachers
- Foster positive relationships with teachers and peers

When kindergarten teachers develop eight critical elements of high-quality kindergarten, they may create a kindergarten learning environment that intentionally

invites, intrigues, and stimulates students' learning modalities. The features of high-quality kindergarten include (a) organizing kindergarten classroom, (b) classroom management, (c) curriculum, (d) instruction, (e) assessment of children, (f) family engagement, (g) leadership and professional development, and (h) evaluation of program quality.

Organizing Kindergarten Classroom

The kindergarten classroom must be intentionally arranged to engage in interaction, conversation, play, discovery, creativity, and problem-solving. The kindergarten classroom is organized to provide the learning environment for individuals and small and large groups.

The kindergarten classroom is designed so kindergarten students may work independently, plan activities, and self-select materials. To intentionally accomplish this type of learning, kindergarten teachers create learning centers or workstations. Teachers emphasize arranging centers to connect to each other. Kindergarten Learning Experiences and links to related resources are also available online at www.doe.mass.edu/ess.

Classroom Management for Kindergarten Teachers: Classroom management refers to multiple skills and strategies that teachers implement to help students to become focused, organized, and academically productive during the learning environment. These strategies are essential to the teaching and learning process.

Classroom management is challenging!

Proactively teach kindergarteners how to manage their emotions: Teaching kindergarten students' social skills during the first month of the kindergarten year is

critical for future success in school and in life. Researchers (Bassok, Latham, & Rorem, 2016; Cappelloni, 2013) substantiates that healthy social, emotional, physical, language, cognitive development, and approaches toward learning are essential ingredients for future academic success. Kindergarten teachers must have a system of managing inappropriate behaviors. For information on how to manage inappropriate behaviors Go to: http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/modules/module1/script.pdf and the book: Bailey, B. A. (2015). Conscious Discipline: Building resilient classrooms. Oviedo, FL: Loving Guidance.

Set clear rules

Multiple kindergarten teachers believe that consistency, expectations, and teaching what is expected with logical consequences and rewards are vital to classroom management. Establishing clear classroom rules supports pro-social behaviors. Kindergarten teachers should develop at least 4 or 5 practices.

Avoid timeout

When kindergarten students act up, teachers should engage in a conversation with the student about their behaviors, actions, and consequences. With the teacher's support, students begin to understand their behaviors, actions, and consequences appropriately. Also, engaging in conversation with students about their behaviors, actions, and consequences build empathy.

When a child's behavior commands your attention, raise these questions, "What do I want this student to learn from my response to his/her action?"

Resources to consider:

- TLPI (Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative): https://traumasensitiveschools.org/
- CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning): https://casel.org/
- Responsive Classroom: https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/

When kindergarten teachers provide the most appropriate environments and intentional teaching, some students may require additional support for inappropriate behaviors. There are multiple factors (lack of food or sleep, poor language skills, sickness, and stress from home) that may trigger inappropriate actions. When this occurs in kindergarten learning environments, teachers may implement strategies such as redirecting the student or provide less attention to inappropriate behavior. For information on how to create positive behavior plans (PBS) for kindergarten children, http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/modules/module3a/script.pdf.

Curriculum

The curriculum should involve students' ability to use all their learning modalities along the continuum of development. As the kindergarten teacher, you provide activities and materials to help students engage in learning with their peers from implementing the curriculum. Kindergarten teachers must recognize if the curriculum is developmentally appropriate and meet the needs of each child in the kindergarten learning environment, such as through learning centers.

Centers

Centers are areas in the classroom where small groups of students may work or play, often defined physically with dividers or furniture as markers of the space dedicated to each, where teachers organize materials and experiences designed intentionally to engage students in an area of curriculum, a theme, or a type of activity (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2017). The learning centers are at students' hand and eye-level to learn actively in meaningful and relevant ways in their special place.

Kindergarten teachers should know how to organize teaching theories into four categories based on two major parameters: teacher-center approach versus a student-centered and high-tech material use low-tech material use.

For information on these two major parameters, googled

- https://teach.com/what/teachers-know/teaching-methods/

Listed below is another website of strategies kindergarten teachers currently use in kindergarten classrooms.

- https://www.earlychildhoodteacher.org/blog/six-strategies-for-21st-century-early-childhood-teachers/

Kindergarten teachers must know how to find a balance in teaching methods. Kindergarten teachers may provide instruction through play. Play encompasses the five domains of school readiness. As Vygotsky (1978) noted, it “contains all developmental tendencies in a condensed form and is itself a major source of development (p. 102).” Through play, kindergarten teachers can intentionally plan to help students' development, including all domains of school readiness.

Assessment of Kindergarten Students

High-quality assessment of incoming kindergarten students may be given when students enter kindergarten. The school considers the evaluation as a developmental screening. The purpose of the screen is to provide teachers with an opportunity to become aware of each child's early learning skills. Kindergarten teachers will Not use the screen for placement or label the student. Kindergarten teachers should know that Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills and Readiness Check training is required.

Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (GKIDS) Readiness Check.

The Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (GKIDS) Readiness Check is designed to be developmentally appropriate for kindergarten students and will provide information that guides kindergarten teachers to individualize student instruction. The assessment instrument is an Excel worksheet document, which will allow evaluators to check the readiness skills in detail and provide opportunities to add additional rows and comments. The first column of the instrument includes brief descriptions of readiness skills to consider during the evaluation process. The second column of the tool consists of space to record examples of readiness deficits and their corrections. The third column includes a description. The instrument is designed for an evaluator to use only. The detailed evaluations can inform instructional plans, agendas, and plans for individualized assistance. The evaluators should provide positive reinforcements for incoming kindergarten students.

GEORGIA KINDERGARTEN INVENTORY OF DEVELOPING SKILLS (GKIDS)
READINESS CHECK

	Date Assessed	Date Mastered
Cognitive and General Knowledge: Basic Skills		
· Identifies basic colors		
· Identifies simple shapes		
· Understands positional concepts: up/down, over/under, in/out, far/near, above/below, and off/on		
Reading Readiness		
· Identifies pictures of objects		
· Follow simple directions		
· Asks simple questions		
· Recites the alphabet		
· Identifies uppercase letters		
· Identifies lowercase letters		
· Listen to stories with interest		
· Answer questions about a story		
· Repeats songs from memory		
Mathematics Readiness		
· Rote counts to 10		
· Identifies numbers to 10		
· Uses ordinal number first through fifth		
· Identifies patterns		
· Creates simple patterns		
· Recognizes quantitative differences: big/little, more/fewer, empty/full, and short/long		
Language and Literacy Development		
· Is using language effectively to express needs and wants		

	Date Assessed	Date Mastered
· Can speak in sentences using 10 to 12 words		
· Can recognize letters and familiar words		
· Can print own name		
· Verbalizing many questions		
· Enjoys sharing information with peers and adults		
Approaches toward Learning		
· Can anticipate what happens next independently, or with the use of classroom pictures prompts		
· Puts away books or other materials where they belong when finished		
· Self-selects a variety of activities during free choice.		
· Can asks others for information, "Why, Who, Where, When, and how questions?"		
· Expresses intention and interests, (e.g., "I want to work in the block area again today. I brought a car for the road.").		
Social and Emotional Development		
· Play well with peers		
· Has a very active imagination		
· Engages in new adventures		
· Communicates to a friend, "I like it because the colors are pretty."		
· Makes up a new way of playing the Memory game and explains the rules to playmates		

	Date Assessed	Date Mastered
Physical and Motor Development: Fine (small) Motor Skills		
· Hold pencil correctly		
· Colors within lines		
· Cuts a line with scissors		
· Traces vertical lines		
· Traces horizontal lines		
· Traces slanted lines		
· Traces curves and circles		
· Traces letters and numbers		
· Prints first name		
· Prints letters and numbers		
Gross (Large) Motor Skills		
· Runs with without falling		
· Jumps with two feet		
· Walks backward		
· Hops on one foot		
· Balances on one foot		
· Skips, alternating feet		
· Catches a ball		
· Can swing well		

The Georgia Department's website (https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Documents/GKIDS/Resources_18-19/GKIDS) provides links to training.

Part III Family Engagement

Kindergarten teachers have multiple opportunities to develop relationships that may impact students and their families for a lifetime. Kindergarten teachers should know that solid relationships with families promote parent involvement and family engagement. Family engagement and parent involvement both involve positive interactions with families. Kindergarten teachers should know that with family engagement, these interactions occur in the manner of a continuing and collaborative relationship.

Kindergarten teachers may promote family engagement when engaging families in an interactive process of relationship-building. This strategy involves kindergarten teachers being respectful toward a family's language and culture. With this strategy, kindergarten teachers may partner with families to have a shared responsibility for nurturing, caring, and learning of students. For additional information on Key Features of Family Engagement: https://usa.childcareaware.org/2017/10/family-engagement-look-like/

Part IV: Leadership and Professional Development

Professional development (PD) is an essential strategy that multiple school districts use to structure professional learning to improve practices for teachers and student learning outcomes. The plan may include a conference, online training seminar, workshop, or collaborative learning among peers of a grade level. Regardless of the approach, the primary goal is to support teacher learning and improve student achievement. It is vital that teacher professional development helps teachers to improve

student outcomes. There are many approaches in professional development for teachers, such as teachers providing professional development. Since teachers are in the classrooms trying new strategies and gaining wisdom to be shared, they are the ideal facilitators.

The following are common areas for professional development through Chattahoochee-Flint GYSTC at Chattahoochee-Flint Regional Educational Service Agency (https://gystc.org/chattahoochee-flint-gystc/).

- Common Core State Standards
- Face-to-face trainings
- On-site training
- A web-based professional learning platform
- Online resources

For additional information Around Effective Professional Development:

- Maximizing the Use of New State Professional Learning Investments to Support Student, Educator, and School System Growth https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/publications/execsummary maximizing-learning-investments.pdf

Teacher leadership

For additional information on Teacher leadership:

http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/105048/chapters/What-Is-Teacher-Leadership%C2%A2.aspx

https://www.learningforward.org/teacher-leaders

https://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/finding_common_ground/2017/06/unlocking_teacher_leadership_finding_the_hidden_leaders_in_your_building.html

Part V: Assessment of Program Quality

Assessment of program quality is a systematic process of describing standards and results of strategies. The method of evaluation of program quality offers school administrators and teachers with data to understand the progress of students to meet state standards that are aligned to improved student outcomes. Assessment of program quality also provides school administrators and teachers information concerning programming, such as revising the curriculum and the daily schedule.

Kindergarten teachers should know that a high-quality kindergarten program annually evaluates the quality of the program, to gain an understanding and identifying factors concerning students' outcomes. The Georgia Department's website (https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Accountability/Pages/default.aspx) pages on Accountability, Partnership and Assistance provide links to several self-assessment tools aligned with areas of District Standards.

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Appendix B: Kindergarten Teachers' Interview Questions

Kindergarten Teachers' Implementation Methods for School Readiness Skills in a Rural School

Participant: _____

Site: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

I. Interview Questions 1-5 will focus on how you teach the five domains of school readiness to improve incoming kindergarten student learning.

1. Describe how you teach physical well-being and motor development.

    Possible follow up question: Tell me about how you teach incoming kindergarten children to transition from activities to activities in the kindergarten environment

    Possible follow up question: Tell me about how you teach your students to care for their personal needs such as washing their hands after using the bathroom.

    Possible follow up question: How do you teach incoming kindergarten children to eat breakfast, lunch, and snack in the kindergarten classroom?

2. Describe how you teach social and emotional development.

    Possible follow up question: Describe how you teach collaboration among incoming kindergarten children.

    Possible follow up question: Describe how you teach incoming kindergarten children to play games (letter bingo) with peers and adults.

    Possible follow up question: Describe how you teach your students to finish tasks, raise their hands, and take turns and share.

Possible follow up question: When your students become frustrated, describe how you teach your students to refrain from hitting, kicking, or biting their peers and adults.

3. Describe how you teach language development.

Possible follow up question: Describe how you teach decoding skills.

Possible follow up question: Describe how you teach standard grammar.

Possible follow up question: Describe how you teach phonemic awareness.

Possible follow up question: Describe how you teach students to use their words to acquire new knowledge.

4. Describe how you teach approaches toward learning.

Possible follow up question: How do you teach your students to show creativity, independence, cooperativeness, and persistence?

Possible follow up question: Describe how you teach your children to solve problems.

5. Describe how you teach cognition and general knowledge.

Possible follow up question: Describe how you teach reading, writing, speaking, listening, language, and mathematic skills.

Possible follow up question: Describe how you teach kindergarten sight words.

Possible follow up question: Describe how you teach your students to count (1 to 100).

Possible follow up question: Describe how you teach pattern recognition (squares, circles, triangles, and rectangles).

Possible follow up question: Describe how you teach learning across five domains of school readiness.

Appendix C: Observation Protocol

Kindergarten Teachers' Implementation Methods for School Readiness Skills in a Rural School

Identification Number: _____ Date: _____

Kindergarten Classroom: _____ _____

Observation Initiation Time: _____

Observation Conclusion Time: _____

I will record the events that I observe in each participant's kindergarten classroom to answer the one research and then analyze the data using thematic analysis. The research question includes (a) how kindergarten teachers implement the five domains of school readiness at a Title 1 school to improve incoming kindergarten student learning.