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Kindergarten Literacy Readiness Before and After HighScope Implementation

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2016

Abstract

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Chandra K. Youngblood

MA, University of California, 1992

BS, Jackson State University, 1990

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Students who attended preschool in an urban Michigan district are not entering kindergarten with the necessary skills. The preschool implemented the HighScope curriculum and the effect of this curriculum on kindergarten readiness was unknown. The purpose of this causal-comparative study was to investigate the difference in kindergarten readiness scores of students who attended a preschool before and after the High Scope curriculum was implemented. The pedagogical practices of preschool and the HighScope curriculum align with Dewey and Vygotsky's theories on experiential learning which were the foundation that guided this causal comparative study. The research questions examined preschool letter identification and sound identification, kindergarten letter identification and sound identification, and end of kindergarten reading level for students before and after the HighScope implementation. A MANOVA was used to examine ex post facto scores of the preschool and kindergarten Michigan Literacy Progress Profile and kindergarten end of the year Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment reading level data to analyze the 5 dependent variables of 218 students who attended preschool before and after the implementation of the HighScope curriculum. The MANOVA indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the literacy scores, F (10, 424) = 10.286, p = <.0005, Pillai's Trace = .39, partial η^2 = .195. By examining data on literacy outcomes, the effectiveness of the HighScope curriculum in the preschool was highlighted for district leaders. The findings of this study may contribute to positive social change by encouraging early learning educators to plan curriculum and professional development that focuses on letter identification and letter sound skills to improve the literacy foundation of entering kindergarten students.

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Dedication

This project study is dedicated to my grandmother, Agnes Bailey Drew, and all of the passionate educators that have been a part of my journey in teaching and leading to make a difference in children's lives. My desire to be an avid learner, passionate teacher, and determined leader was instilled at an early age and continues today. Education is my life's work. This degree is my life's dream and the result of my Mimi's push for the excellence that she saw in me.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

An early start to formalized schooling provides social-emotional, cognitive, and academic benefits for young children who attend quality programs (Brown 2013; Goldstein, Warde, & Peluso, 2013). Snyder and Dillow (2015) reported that in 2013, 70% of U.S. 4-year-olds attended preschool programs (see Table 202.10 of U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Barnett, Carolan, Squires, Clarke Brown, and Horowitz (2015) reported that 40 states fund free preschool. Locally, a variety of preschool opportunities are available. However, this access does not necessarily result in all students being ready for kindergarten. Less than 80% of the students in an urban Michigan school district enter kindergarten meeting the letter and sound identification benchmarks on the Michigan Literacy Proficiency Profile (MLPP; see Table 1). Lack of these readiness skills may lead to low reading proficiency (Lonigan, Allan, & Lerner, 2011a; Piasta, Petscher, & Justice, 2012). Engle et al. (2011) and Yoshikawa et al. (2013) found that preschool quality is a significant factor in children gaining the necessary prerequisite skills to succeed in kindergarten and beyond.

The Local Problem

Additional state funding increased the number of at-risk students receiving a preschool experience by 10% between 2010 and 2014 (Barnett et al., 2015). The Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) is a licensed, targeted free preschool program offered to the community's at-risk 4-year-olds who have at least two risk factors. The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) defines factors contributing to at-risk status as (a) low family income, (b) diagnosed disability or developmental delay, (c) severe or challenging

behavior, (d) English language learner, (e) parent with low education attainment, (f) abuse or neglect of child or parent, and (g) environmental risks such as parental death, divorce, incarceration, military service or absence (MDE, 2015). The GSRP, governed by the local school district, is offered in six preschool rooms housed in elementary buildings throughout the local K-12 school district, and is a large feeder program to the district's kindergarten program.

All state-funded preschool programs in this urban school district began using the HighScope model in the fall of 2012 as a part of a county-wide consortium policy. HighScope is an adult supported, active learning model based on constructivist theories (Luneburg, 2011). However, Lonigan et al. (2011b) found that at-risk students had an advantage when taught with a curriculum other than the constructivist HighScope because a teacher-directed curriculum focused on literacy skills as an early intervention has been proven to support the closing of the achievement gap. Although HighScope does not support whole-group direct literacy instruction or the assessment of academic skills (HighScope Curriculum, 2016), the GSRP teachers incorporate letter identification and sounds into their play-based instruction to addresses the state recommended standards. The state has approved the curriculum for GSRP, but has not set a benchmark of mastery to determine kindergarten readiness. The district, however, has benchmarks for letter and sound identification designated as indicators that students are ready to succeed in the state prescribed kindergarten literacy curriculum. District administrators have set a goal of at least 80% of kindergarten students being proficient in knowing all letters and sounds at the beginning of kindergarten, and for reading proficiently at the end-of-year kindergarten benchmark level as measured by the MLPP and Fountas and

Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System (FB-BAS), respectively. Table 1 shows the number of kindergarten students that met the proficiency score before the implementation of the HighScope curriculum (Battle Creek Public Schools, 2007-2017). The low achievement of entering kindergarten students and the lack of local research on the effects of the HighScope curriculum in providing kindergarten literacy readiness skills to GSRP preschool students is the problem that created a need for this study.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

The state curriculum and district assessments of proficiency dictate the standards of student achievement. In 2005, the state adopted The Early Childhood Standards of Quality (ECSQ) in compliance with the Bush Administration's 2002 Good Start, Grow Smart initiative (Office of the White House, 2002). The ECSQ is a set of prescribed standards in a spectrum of 10 academic and social domains that students are expected to achieve by the end of the preschool year. The ECSQ serve as a guide for preschool programs to develop the local curriculum and deliver quality instruction. The transition to the state's ECSQ, quality professional development, high quality ratings, and the implementation of an experiential curriculum should result in a positive effect on literacy outcomes for students (Keys et al., 2012; Landry, Swank, Anthony, & Assel, 2011; Lonigan et al., 2011b). However, before 2012, MLPP and FP-BAS scores indicated little to no increase in student achievement in kindergarten (see Table 1), which led district leaders to introduce a replication of the Kindergarten-12th grade (K-12) accountability systems into the preschool program.

Table 1

Number of Kindergarten Students Proficient in Fall MLPP Readiness Skills

Year	*n*	Number of students Proficient		Percent of students Proficient	
		Letter ID	Sound ID	Letter ID	Sound ID
2007-2008	527	290	268	49	45
2008-2009	310	124	89	40	29
2009-2010	474	186	130	39	27
2010-2011	538	215	161	40	30
2011-2012	524	341	231	65	44

The local preschool teachers, certified in early childhood education, are tasked by district leaders to prepare the earliest learners for kindergarten academics and, therefore, took on elementary-grade pedagogical practices which were a result of national accountability expectations (Claessens, Engle, & Curran, 2014; Walker & MacPhee, 2011). The district leaders require no accountability review protocols for the preschool curriculum, assessments, or outcomes for learning, which is not an uncommon practice in preschool or for the adoption of instructional programs (Barnett & Carolan, 2013; Cook, Smith, & Tankersley, 2012; Duncan et al., 2015).

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

Depending on research and local funders' policies, preschool programs utilize a variety of strategies, curriculum designs, and program formats (Fuligni, Howes, Huang, Hong, & Lara-Cinisomo, 2012; Jenkins, 2014). Variations in kindergarten readiness can be attributed to types of curriculum, instructional practices, and program structures (Claessens et al., 2014; Hill et al., 2015). The inconsistencies in programs, misalignment of research and policy, and a wide variety of student life experiences contribute to a multitude of skill levels among children entering kindergarten (Brown, 2013; Voegler-

Lee, Kupersmidt, Field & Willoughby, 2012). Research indicates that students who attend preschool are more prepared for kindergarten than those that do not attend (Ansari & Winsler, 2016; Bierman, Nix, Heinrichs, Domitrovich, Gest, Welsh, & Gill, 2014; Chambers, Cheung, & Slavin, 2016; Coley, Votruba-Drzal, Collins, & Cook, 2016; McWayne, Cheung, Wright, & Hahs-Vaughn, 2012; Swaminathan, Byrd, Humphrey, Heinsch, & Mitchell, 2014). The low level of literacy skills of entering local kindergarten students who attended preschool led to a need for more research on preschool curricula effectiveness and kindergarten literacy readiness (Duncan, Jenkins, Auger, Burchinal, Domina, & Bitler, 2015; Jenkins, Farkas, Duncan, Burchinal, & Vandell, 2016). The purpose of this study was to investigate the difference in four categories of the MLPP and the kindergarten end of the year FP-BAS for students who attended a preschool before HighScope implementation, and those who attended after the HighScope implementation. By determining whether a curriculum is effective in developing students who are ready for kindergarten, I not only sought to provide data for replication and expansion of the community's preschool programs (Ledermann, 2012), but also worked to identify whether the HighScope curriculum is effective in preparing at-risk students for kindergarten (Cross & Conn-Powers, 2014).

Definition of Terms

Curriculum: An educational model designed and implemented based on theory and knowledge that reflects a specific philosophy supported by child development research and educational evaluation (MDE GSRP Implementation Manual, 2013).

Experiential practices: An important characteristic of appropriate practice for preschoolers that is identified as learning through play, exploration, or activities

facilitated by children's choice and strengthened through adult interaction (Hunter & Walsh, 2014; Waite, 2011).

Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP): Michigan's state-funded preschool program for 4-year-old children with factors that may place them at-risk of educational failure (MDE GSRP Implementation Manual, 2013).

HighScope: A research-based and child-focused curriculum which uses a process called "active participatory learning" to achieve outcomes in language and cognitive learning. HighScope also promotes independence, curiosity, decision-making, cooperation, persistence, creativity, and problem solving (HighScope, 2016).

Preschool: The educational program the year before kindergarten for 4-year-old students. Preschool includes the following programs: (a) Head Start, (b) GSRP, the state-funded preschool program for at-risk 4-year-olds in the local school district, (c) private childcare centers, and (d) home-based or family care (Hustedt & Barnett, 2011).

Process quality: A child's direct experiences with people, materials, and objects (Peisner-Feinberg et al., 2014).

Readiness: This names the academic foundational literacy skills with which a child enters kindergarten. These skills are predictors of future school and reading success (McWayne et al., 2012; Sabol & Pianta, 2012).

Structural quality: Refers to teacher and caregiver certification and education, observable classroom characteristics, and issues related to licensing (Anders et al., 2012; Peisner-Feinberg et al., 2014; Sabol, Hong, Pianta, & Burchinal, 2013).

Significance of the Study

Providing the best early learning experience possible, beginning with preschool, will give all students, especially at-risk students, an opportunity for a solid educational foundation leading to future academic success. The objective of the preschool program is to provide 4-year-olds with quality, developmentally appropriate preschool experiences and to prepare them for kindergarten, socially and academically. The local GSRP preschool has highly qualified staff members, ongoing professional learning focused on HighScope, and a structured program model which results in high ratings on both the Program Quality Assessment (PQA) and the state's QRIS, neither of which rates curriculum quality or kindergarten readiness (Sabol et al., 2013). Sabol and Pianta (2015) found stronger growth in preschool students' literacy foundational skills in programs with higher ratings in QRIS, but the local program was not realizing this growth. The low achievement of entering kindergarten students and the curriculum and instruction changes implemented during the 2012-2013 school year created a sensible opportunity for me to examine the readiness of preschool students for kindergarten to determine the effect of the adoption of the new curriculum on literacy skills. The findings from this study can be used to make modifications to not only the program, but to the tools used to determine the achievement of the stated objectives. This information is significant for school districts to prepare for academic abilities of the entering kindergarten students through classroom instruction, enrichment opportunities, and interventions. It is significant for the county consortium to determine if the professional development and curriculum support for the local district is making a positive effect on teaching and learning.

Kindergarten teachers have often reported—verbally and through community surveys—that they can discern very early in the school year the students who have attended the preschool program and the students who have not. These informal reports were usually based on classroom routines and socio-emotional readiness, and were not supported by academic data. Researchers have indicated that preschool students' long-term achievement is enhanced or diminished by the experiences in the subsequent early grades (Hill et al., 2015; Sammons et al., 2013). There are mixed findings in the literature about the long-term effects of preschool (Claessens et al., 2014; Hill, Gormley, & Adelstein, 2015). Findings reveal academic growth variances as late as fifth grade (Barnett, Jung, Youn, & Frede, 2013; Hill et al., 2015) while other studies report no difference after kindergarten (Huang, Invernizzi, & Drake, 2012).

An examination of preschool achievement through a causal-comparative study yields valid information for district leaders to make decisions about continued curriculum implementation (Bergen & Hardin, 2015). The results of this study provided evidence of the effect of the new curriculum and the program's objective of positive effect on kindergarten readiness. By examining data on literacy outcomes, I was able to highlight the effectiveness of the program to district leaders. I used the results of this study to develop a plan for strengthening professional development, system alignment, parent outreach, and transition activities.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Many preschools with high populations of at-risk students similar to those in the local program use the High Scope curriculum (Lonigan & Phillips, 2016). Other than the HighScope Perry Preschool study (Schweinhart, 2013) and research from HighScope

Educational Research Foundation, there is limited research on this particular curriculum and its' effect on kindergarten readiness in the GSRP. Local data indicated that the reading readiness skills of students entering kindergarten were low and affected their ability to become grade level readers. This issue led me to develop five critical questions which compelled the investigation of the effects of the local GSRP preschool on kindergarten readiness before and after the implementation of the HighScope curriculum.

Research Question 1: What is the difference in MLPP letter identification scores between GSRP preschool students before HighScope implementation and after HighScope implementation?

$H_0$1: There is no significant difference between letter identification scores in GSRP preschool students before HighScope implementation and after HighScope implementation.

$H_1$1: There is significant difference between letter identification scores in GSRP preschool students before HighScope implementation and after HighScope implementation.

Research Question 2: What is the difference in MLPP sound identification scores between GSRP preschool students before HighScope implementation and after HighScope implementation?

$H_0$2: There is no significant difference of sound identification scores in GSRP preschool students before HighScope implementation and after HighScope implementation.

$H_1$2: There is significant difference of sound identification scores in GSRP preschool students before HighScope implementation and after HighScope implementation.

Research Question 3: What is the difference in MLPP letter identification scores in kindergarten students before HighScope implementation and after HighScope implementation?

$H_0$3: There is no significant difference of MLPP letter identification scores in kindergarten students before HighScope implementation and after HighScope implementation. $H_1$3: There is significant difference of letter identification scores in kindergarten students before HighScope implementation and after HighScope implementation.

Research Question 4: What is the difference in MLPP sound identification scores in kindergarten students before HighScope implementation and after HighScope implementation?

$H_0$4: There is no significant difference of sound identification scores in beginning kindergarten students before HighScope implementation and after HighScope implementation.

$H_1$4: There is significant difference of sound identification scores in kindergarten students before HighScope implementation and after HighScope implementation.

Research Question 5: What is the difference of the end of year kindergarten FP-BAS reading level of students before HighScope implementation and after HighScope implementation?

$H_0$5: There is no significant difference of end of year kindergarten FP-BAS reading level in students before HighScope implementation and after HighScope implementation.

$H_1$5: There is significant difference of the end of year kindergarten FP-BAS reading level in students before HighScope implementation and after HighScope implementation.

The five dependent variables I analyzed were: (a) end of preschool letter identification, (b) end of preschool sound identification, (c) beginning kindergarten letter identification, (d) beginning kindergarten sound identification, and (e) end of kindergarten FP-BAS reading level.

Review of the Literature

The studies in the literature review provided me a theoretical framework and current research to clarify readiness, HighScope curriculum, alphabetic knowledge, and classroom environment, which I used to plan, design, and conducted the study.

Theoretical Foundation

While recent attention to early childhood education has yielded increased funds and access to programs for more children, it is not a new phenomenon. There is research from the last century that reports the importance of early learning, preschool experiences, and best practice to teach young learners (Auger, Farkas, Burchinal, Duncan, & Vandell, 2014; Li, Farkas, Duncan, Burchinal, & Vandell, 2013). The connection of experiential learning to the quality preschool classroom is grounded in the theoretical ideas of theorists Dewey and Vygotsky.

Before the HighScope adoption, many of the district's early childhood educational practices were no longer based on the student-centered, play-based learning advocated by Cutter-Mackenzie and Edwards (2013) and Van Oers and Duijkers (2013). This change in pedagogy occurred in reaction to increased accountability placed on schools by government officials. Accountability legislation is changing the landscape of early education (Barnett & Carolan, 2013; Fish, Klenk, Mazur, & Sexton, 2015; Miller & Smith, 2011). Learning occurs as a result of experiences via stimuli and senses (Hedges et al., 2013); it occurs throughout life and is the effect of both formal and spontaneous experiences. Prominent theorists Dewey (1916) and Vygotsky (1978) agreed that this development of learning in humans is a result of social interactions and functional, reflective experiences through which humans seek to achieve specific results as a consequence of the experience or action.

Dewey's (1938) emphasis on the essential role of experience in education is parallel to the philosophy of many preschool experts. He also admitted that no experiences are "genuinely or equally educative" (p. 8), which underscores the importance of intentional, organized learning goals in providing a quality preschool experience and the necessary kindergarten readiness skills. Vygotsky's (1978) theory suggested that the broader community, including families and preschools, serve as the change agent for the individual child.

Dewey (1916) believed the basis of education is to prepare students for fundamental experiences, and to instill in them a desire and enjoyment of those experiences, resulting in the development of an individual thinker, a social being, and an agent of change. Both Dewey (1916) and Vygotsky (1978) believed that the teacher

should guide learning through experiences based on the interests of the child. The theorists' differed in their views of teacher-initiated learning versus child- centered learning. Dewey (1925) suggested that learning is self-directed through experiences, while Vygotsky (1978) suggested that the teacher guides the learning that the curriculum or teacher deems necessary. Today's preschool students require a balance of the two theories, a view that has laid the foundation for many of the current practices used in preschool classrooms. Teachers are expected to use a variety of developmentally appropriate practices and facilitate a differentiated academic curriculum based on the needs of diverse learners (Gettinger & Stoiber, 2012; Greenwood et al., 2014). Providing today's preschool children with a curriculum that will enable them to be thinkers and learners while teaching them developmentally appropriate academic skills will enhance their future as students (Hedges et al., 2013; Tran & Winsler, 2011).

Review of the Broader Problem

To determine the effectiveness of the curriculum in preparing preschool students with the necessary readiness skills for kindergarten literacy success required knowledge of current research. In this review of current literature, I focused on the broader problem and covered four areas: readiness, alphabet knowledge, classroom environment, and HighScope curriculum. To utilize as much literature as possible on the subject and achieve saturation of the topic, I gathered materials from searches of previous studies related to kindergarten readiness using Google Scholar and the Walden University Library. I used the following search terms and phrases: *rigor in preschool classrooms, pre-k curriculum adoption, pre-k rigor curriculum, preschool curriculum adoption, preschool curriculum implementation, preschool curriculum models, preschool*

curriculum assessments, preschool curriculum designs, preschool outcome, developmentally appropriate practice in preschool, learner-centered classrooms, articles by Barnett, experiential learning in preschool, professional development for preschool teachers, alphabet skills in preschool, preschool quality, HighScope, and *kindergarten readiness*. Finally, I used public data shared by the local district. This information was made available upon request in the form of reports, news articles, and school board proceedings and is made available to the general public upon written request.

Readiness. Pre-kindergarten evaluations or assessment scores usually determine kindergarten readiness in school districts. In this school district, preschool benchmarks have been set cooperatively with teachers and parents, and are identified on the student report card. Readiness has no concrete definition and varies based on the internal standards and the student assessments chosen by the institutions (Gullo, 2015; Sabol & Pianta, 2012). For students in government-funded preschool programs, "readiness" means being able to perform at a certain level of literacy and math, based on the state mandated learning standards (Barnett & Carolan, 2013). Standards-based accountability focuses on the academic domains of readiness and neglects the other developmental domains, which include physical and social-emotional approaches to learning, language development, and cognition (Walker & MacPhee, 2011).

Prescribed assessments or observational checklists are often used by districts to determine readiness. Preschool assessment can be challenging and yield inaccurate results because of the diverse developmental stages, experiences, and home support of preschool students (Conti-Ramsden & Durkin, 2012; Kantor et al., 2011). The MLPP is used to determine literacy readiness skills through individual assessment. Students'

strength in literacy can be identified and monitored through this summative assessment system (Barghaus & Fantuzzo, 2014).

The quality of the preschool program influences readiness outcomes. Preschool quality is often determined by the program's structure and process indicators (Bassok & Galdo, 2016; Slot, Leseman, Verhagen, & Mulder, 2015). Structural quality pertains to teacher education, curriculum, and classroom program features (Bassok & Galdo, 2016; Slot et al., 2015). Process quality relates to interactions among individuals. Studies have revealed that positive effects on children's progress are attributed to process quality (Hamre et al., 2012; Jeon, Buettner, & Hur, 2015).

Alphabet knowledge. Emergent or foundational print skills are the prerequisites to long-term proficiency in reading and writing (Piasta, Justice, McGinty, & Kaderavek, 2012). Early educators have focused on students' ability to name the letters of the alphabet as a precursor of reading, although letter naming alone is not a predictor of later literacy proficiency (Piasta et al., 2012). Prior, Bavin, & Ong (2011) found that the strongest predictors of literacy readiness skills are letter knowledge and phonemic awareness. The National Early Literacy Panel's 2008 report increased the amount of research and dialogue around alphabetic knowledge and the effect it has on future reading success (Huang, Torttorelli, & Invernizzi, 2014; Jones, Clark, & Reutzel, 2012; Piasta et al., 2012). Alphabetic knowledge includes letter names, phonological awareness or sounds, and phonemic awareness (Huang, et al., 2014).

Researchers have suggested that preschool students taught letter names and sounds are better able to decode text during later formal reading instruction (Bailet, Repper, Murphy, Piasta, & Zettler-Greeley, 2011; Callaghan & Madelaine, 2012).

Teaching the foundational alphabetic knowledge skills in preschool requires that teacher training (Prior et al., 2011) and intentionality in their teaching (Bailet, et al., 2011; Block & Duke, 2015). The research on how to teach alphabetic knowledge challenges traditional practices by providing a more basic, systematic, and efficient way to teach for the best results (Huang et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2012). Preschool programs provide a variety of experiences for teaching these skills to prevent the need for later intervention. However, some students still require instructional interventions throughout elementary school (Bailet et al., 2011; Botts, Losardo, Tillery, & Werts, 2014; Lonigan et al., 2011a).

Classroom environment. The classroom environment is an important component of quality preschool classrooms (Denny, Hallam, & Homer, 2012) and student engagement (Aydoğan, Farran, & Sağsöz, 2015). Experiential learning has different definitions depending on the author and the level of education. Experiential learning is the learning that takes place as the result of one's personal experience or involvement in a particular activity (Manolis, Burns, Assudani, & Chinta, 2013). In early learning, experiential learning is characterized by the learning progression and outcomes that are a part of the process of building onto experiences and increasing children's self-efficacy through these interactions (Manolis et al., 2013; Shonkoff, & Fisher, 2013). Authentic and cognitively appropriate learning environments are the most ideal. Unfortunately, preschool classrooms are not necessarily authentic, real-world environments, so teachers provide the most authentic learning opportunities possible. Experiential learning through lesson delivery, supportive facilitation, and active opportunities that provide a balance of cognitive and social domain skills and include interventions for at-risk students is best (De Haan, Elbers, & Leseman, 2014; Lonigan &

Phillips, 2016). The more effective teachers endeavor to at least simulate real world experiences by using the natural and on-line community, and involving children's families as resources (Cabell, DeCoster, LoCasale-Crouch, Hamre, & Pianta, 2013; Conroy, Sutherland, Vo, Carr, & Ogston, 2014).

There is much controversy in the early childhood education community about the role of play in primary and preschool settings. The most current research has shown play to be an essential means to provide the necessary social experiences that will enhance language and learning, especially when coupled with adult interaction (Kemple, Oh, & Porter, 2015; Trawick-Smith & Dziurgot, 2011). Brain-based research provides a rationale for child-centered curriculum and teaching practices that include meaningful learning and play for primary students. To expand experiences, cooperative learning and multiple intelligence are vital components of the curriculum (Van Oers & Duijkers, 2013; Weisberg, Hirsh-Pasek, & Golinkoff, 2013).

Constructivist approaches to preschool curriculum fall somewhere between the two extreme beliefs of play as the core instruction (Chambers et al., 2016; Van Oers & Duijkers, 2013; Vygotsky, 1933) and the teaching of basic skills in whole-group direct instruction. Studies show low effects on child outcomes in classrooms that use a constructivist approach such as HighScope (Chambers et al., 2016; Lonigan & Phillips, 2016). The constructivist's advocacy of active learning, language development, and immersion in experiences is mirrored in developmentally appropriate teaching strategies, which are already being practiced in many early childhood classrooms around the world (Lerkkanen et al., 2016). Barnett (2011) reported that substantial gains identified in preschool studies of executive function result from instruction that balances teacher-

directed and child-initiated activities.

HighScope curriculum. The High Scope website lists language, cognitive learning, independence, curiosity, decision-making, cooperation, persistence, creativity, and problem-solving as skills that students will gain from the curriculum. The HighScope hands-on, child-centered approach provides a specific order to the day which consists of student planning, small and large group instruction, and opportunities for outdoor play and work time which includes choice play (HighScope, 2016).

Adult-child interaction is a critical component of the HighScope program. Effective teaching involves developing quality teacher relationships that foster encouragement, respect, and enthusiasm for learning (Hamre et al., 2013). High quality instruction yields positive teacher-child relationships resulting in an increase of student proficiency in literacy and overall academic achievement (Howes, Fuligni, Hong, Huang, and Lara-Cinisomo, 2013; Tran & Winsler, 2011). Effective teachers have an understanding of what children individually bring to the learning experience and build on the students' prior knowledge (Lonigan et al., 2011b). Studies that have concluded that a quality preschool experience includes high quality teacher-child interactions indicate the need for high quality preschool programs for all children (Araujo Carnerio, Cruz-Aguayo, & Schady, 2016; Howes et al., 2013; Sabol et al., 2013).

Implications

The intent of this study was to examine the local preschool program for its efficacy in preparing young children for success in kindergarten. The process involved the use of ex post facto data to determine if the educational practices and strategies used in HighScope are an effective approach to preparing students for kindergarten. The

findings contribute to the body of knowledge needed to identify the development of pre-literacy skills for the future academic success of students using the HighScope curriculum in preschool. The local preschool can utilize the findings and recommendations to improve instruction and focus on practices that will increase kindergarten literacy readiness. Other preschool programs will be able to use the findings of the study to make curricula decisions to meet the needs of their students. District stakeholders can use the findings to gain an understanding of the literacy readiness skills of incoming kindergarten students to develop and implement interventions if necessary.

Summary

In this study, I determined the effect of implementation of the HighScope curriculum on the ability of the GSRP preschool to provide students the literacy skills needed for kindergarten readiness and reading proficiency. The problem I addressed was the low achievement of entering kindergarten students and the lack of data on the effect of the GSRP preschool in preparing students to enter kindergarten with the appropriate foundational literacy skills. The GSRP preschool had all the components of a quality program, but did not transition academically prepared students to kindergarten. Comparing the effect of the preschool program before and after the implementation of HighScope on kindergarten readiness and reading proficiency was the focus of the study.

The research I conducted in the literature review on preschool instruction and pre-literacy skill development showed that an examination of literacy data before and after curriculum implementation is useful for determining the effect of the current preschool program in preparing students for kindergarten and later reading ability.

In section 2, I include details regarding the data collection, analysis, and findings

of this ex post facto casual comparative quantitative research design that I used to determine the achievement of kindergarten readiness skills in the GSRP program and if students were prepared to be proficient early readers. In sections 3 and 4 I discuss the project, research-based recommendations, and personal reflections on the study process.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

The problem I investigated in this study was the low achievement of entering kindergarten students. The purpose of this study was to investigate the difference in four categories of the MLPP and kindergarten end of the year reading level for students who attended preschool before the implementation of HighScope and student who attended after the implementation of HighScope. In this section, I describe the design and approach of the research study, the setting and sample, instrumentation, data analysis, and the protection of participant rights. The presented findings are a result of the study.

Research Design and Approach

A causal-comparative, quantitative ex post facto design to conduct this study was a suitable choice as it provided me an opportunity to use existing data sets to compare groups that experienced the phenomenon in the past (see Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2006; Simon & Goes, 2013). Yilmaz (2013) described quantitative research as emphasizing the analysis of the causal relationships between the variables in the study. I used causal-comparative research to determine the differences in scores on five dependent variables between the students who attended preschool before the HighScope curriculum implementation and the students who attended after the HighScope curriculum implementation (see Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2006; Schenker & Rumrill Jr., 2004).

To avoid conducting multiple ANOVAs and increasing the possibility of Type I errors, I conducted a MANOVA to provide an accurate analysis of the mean differences

and determine the relationships between the independent variable and the combination of dependent variables (Tonidandel & LeBreton, 2013; Warne, 2014).

Setting and Sample

The setting for this study was an urban Midwestern PK-12 school district of about 5000 students. The population of students is 60% low socio-economic status, 45% African American, 44% White, 5% Hispanic, 3 % Burmese, and 1% Native American. GSRP enrollment averages 225 students, and Kindergarten averages 400 students each year. About 60% of the students transition from GSRP to kindergarten in the district. My use of identified groups was appropriate since this was an ex post facto study. The non-probability sampling consisted of a convenience sample of the school district's 2011-2014 kindergarten students who attended the GSRP in 2010-2013. Preschool students who attended GSRP in 2010 were not taught using the HighScope curriculum, and students who attended in 2011 and 2012 were taught with the HighScope curriculum. Students compared from each year had similar demographics. All students were economically disadvantaged with at least one other risk factor, as designated by the state department of education.

Power analysis for a MANOVA with two levels and five dependent variables was conducted in G*POWER to determine a sufficient sample size using an alpha significance level of 0.05, a power of 0.80, and a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.25$) (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner & Lang, 2013). Based on these assumptions, the desired sample size was 58. The sample size for each year was 73 students except for 2011-12, which was 72 students. The total sample was 218 former GSRP students who had at least a 90% attendance rate in their preschool year.

Instrumentation and Materials

I retrieved the ex post facto data from the district's two literacy instruments, the MLPP and the FP-BAS, from spring of 2011 to spring of 2014. The MDE developed the MLPP in 1997. The MLPP was used statewide until 2002, and teachers continue to use it locally. The MLPP is a one-to-one assessment used in kindergarten through third grades. The assessment is controlled and administered by the teacher to assess the enabling tasks subtests: phonemic awareness, known words, hearing and recording sounds, concepts of print, letter/sound identification, and sight word/decodable word lists. Each subtest can stand alone, and is not a part of a composite score. Carpenter and Paris (2005) described enabling tasks as those that facilitate students to meet benchmark literacy milestones which are essential foundational skills for developing solid reading skills. Students are shown a chart of upper and lower case letters of the alphabet and asked to name the letters and the sounds. The number correct is the score. Letter identification maximum score was 54; letter-sound identification maximum score was 26.

The University of Michigan conducted a study with 700 students from four sites representing urban, rural, and suburban districts. The researchers established the concurrent validity of the MLPP with two similar assessments, the Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI), and the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test (GMRT). MLPP letter identification determined strong correlations with the TPRI ($r = .94$, $p < .001$) and the GMRT ($r = .82$, $p < .05$). Test-retest reliability correlations determined high reliabilities for the letter identification subtest ($r = .96$, $p < .001$) and letter sound identification ($r = .86$, $p < .001$; Carpenter & Paris, 2005). This study only used the subtest letter identification and letter sound identification. Teachers assess students

individually and record a score on a specific form (see Appendix B).

Heinemann publishes the FP-BAS, a comprehensive individual assessment that reliably and systematically matches students' instructional and independent reading abilities to leveled texts. The text level gradient, developed before the assessment in 1996, assigns an alphabetic level to the students' reading proficiency from A to Z (see Appendix C). Reading level determination is made through individual assessments by having the student continuously read aloud while the teacher records and scores a written running record (Fountas & Pinnell, 2014). Accuracy and comprehension are coded with specific markings for errors and reading behaviors observed by the test administrator. Scoring includes accuracy rate, self-correction, fluency, and reading rate, which all have a formula provided on the scoring sheet. The analysis of the reading is used to determine instructional and independent reading levels of the students, and to document student progress and teaching needs through anecdotal notes. There are expected levels for each grade identified in a text level ladder of progress (see Table 2; Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). Field-testers trained by the authors reported that the FP-BAS demonstrated the reliability and validity measures for assessing students reading levels. The field test included 498 students in 22 diverse districts. Test-retest reliability between fiction and nonfiction lower level books A-N demonstrated reliability of 0.93. Convergent validity was determined with Reading Recovery and demonstrated correlations of 0.94 for fiction and 0.93 for nonfiction (Fountas & Pinnell A to Z Benchmark Assessment System, 2014).

Table 2

Reading Proficiency Score

Fountas and Pinnell Level	Progress Benchmarks	Interval Scale
A	Beginning K	1
B	Midyear K	2
C	Midyear K	3
D	End of K	4
E	Beginning 1st	5
F or higher	Beg.-Mid 1st	6

Note: Partial text level ladder of progress indicating highest score of kindergarten students included in the data.

Data Collection and Analysis

I retrieved archived student literacy data from 2011-2014 preschool and kindergarten, and compared the data across the student groups to determine if there was a difference in the students' readiness of those taught with the HighScope curriculum, and those not taught with the HighScope curriculum during their preschool year. The school district's assessment coordinator met with me to provide access to the data after I was granted permission by the superintendent following a written request. All group academic data (MLPP and FP-BAS) were shared electronically from the Data Director online database. Retrieval of GSRP program attendance data from the district's on-line pupil accounting system files provided information to filter the assessment data for students with more than a 90% attendance rate using only student identification numbers.

The independent variables were nominal, as students were either in GSRP before the HighScope curriculum was implemented, or were in GSRP during the HighScope curriculum implementation. The dependent variables were interval scale measurements

of MLPP letter identification, sound identification, and FP-BAP reading proficiency benchmark levels, as listed in Table 4. The student data were organized using Microsoft Excel and then uploaded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 22 software.

I conducted a one-way MANOVA to address the research questions I used to determine whether a significant difference existed in multiple indicators for kindergarten literacy readiness scores. I tested nine assumptions for a one-way MANOVA:

Assumption 1: The five dependent variables are measured at the interval level.

Assumption 2: The independent variable consists of two independent groups, the HighScope group, and the no-HighScope group.

Assumption 3: Independence of observations was assured because participants were only in one group as the archival data were different years.

Assumption 4: An adequate sample size was determined using the G*Power Analysis.

Assumption 5: Using the Regression procedure in SPSS there were no multivariate outliers as assessed by Mahalanobis distance ($p > .001$). The Mahalanobis distance is the recommended measure with multivariate outliers in MANOVA (Laerd Statistics, 2015). Also, I identified a small number of univariate outliers in the end of kindergarten FP-BAS scores through boxplots (see Figure 1).

Assumption 6: Using the EXPLORE procedure in SPSS, preliminary assumption checking revealed that data were normally distributed, as assessed by the Shapiro-Wilk test ($p > .05$). I ran the Shapiro-Wilk test because of the small sample size. The

normality assumption requires that groups of data are normally distributed (Marmolejo-Ramos & Tian, 2015).

Assumption 7: Using SPSS, I computed correlation coefficients among the four MLPP assessments. Linear relationships were stronger in the correlations in 2011-12 and 2012-13 than the 2010-11 correlations (see Figures 2, 3, and 4). Scatterplots visually show the type of relationship between variables studied (Bavdekar, 2015; Hurley, 2012).

Assumption 8: Box's Test (p = .000) evidenced the violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variance-covariance. Based on this finding, I ran a Pillai's Trace because the sample sizes were similar for each year. Olson (1976) recommended Pillai's Trace as a highly robust test for many violations of the MANOVA assumptions.

Assumption 9: The correlation matrix revealed that no variables were highly inter-correlated (above 0.9). Thus, there was no evidence of multicollinearity, as assessed by Pearson Correlation on the five dependent variables (see Table 3).

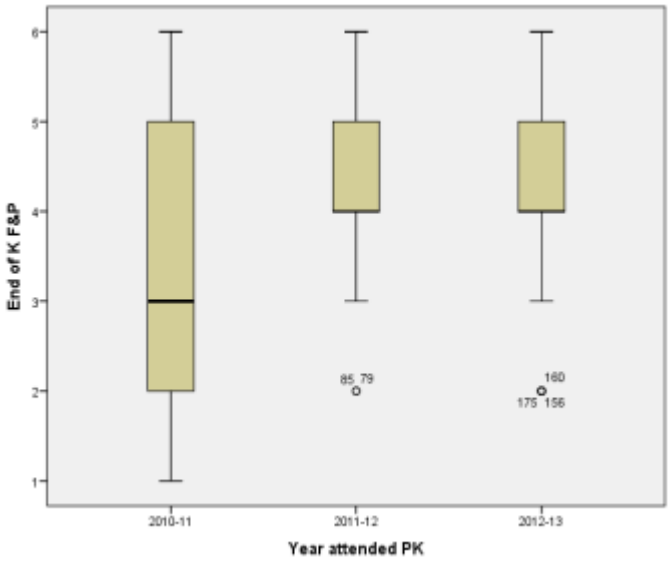

Figure 1. Boxplots of the end of kindergarten reading proficiency outliers. Numbers represent the case numbers in SPSS. Scores range from 1 to 6.

Table 3

Pearson Correlation of Dependent Variables

	End of PK letter ID	End of PK sound ID	Beginning of K letter ID	Beginning of K sound ID	End of K FP-BAS
End of PK letter ID		.705	.825	.507	.596
End of PK sound ID	.705		.585	.603	.497
Beginning of K letter ID	.825	.585		.728	.588
Beginning of K sound ID	.507	.603	.728		.477
End of K FP-BAS	.596	.497	.588	.477	

Boxplots are the most common visual depiction of the distribution of statistical data (Baedeker, 2015; Marmolejo-Ramos & Tian, 2015). Case numbers 79, 85, 156, 169 and 175 represented the outliers in the lowest 25% of scores. The boxplot indicates that the medians in the 2011-12 and 2012-13 school years cluster around scores 4 and 5 for the end of year Kindergarten FP-BAS, which is the end of the year expected benchmark. The box represents the median of the data, and is not affected by outliers. The whiskers represent the range between the highest and lowest 25% of scores.

After the descriptive analysis, I analyzed the five dependent variables of district preschool and kindergarten literacy data using a MANOVA to compare the MLPP and FP-BAS scores. The MANOVA determined if there was a difference between the two levels of the independent variable, students with HighScope and those without (see Table 4), from the 2010-2013 school years—1 year without the curriculum program, and 2

years after the program implementation (Green & Salkind, 2011; Warne, 2014). Additionally, post hoc tests were conducted to analyze results further. In the results section, I explain the data.

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope and Delimitations

For this study, when collecting the data, I assumed that the teachers used the established instruments correctly. Teachers were given training on the instruments with specific protocols. I also assumed that the archival data were correct, meaning that the school district personnel kept accurate attendance and enrollment records and that teachers entered data into the online data warehouse correctly. The district subscription to a data warehouse to archive all student data ensures the storage of data on electronic files.

Limitations that affected the results of data analysis include the various phases of staff member training on the new HighScope curriculum. I analyzed data from the first 2 years of the new curriculum implementation. Chatterji (2008) suggested considerations of the "instabilities and irregularities" (p. 25) of new programs by allowing programs to stabilize for optimal implementation before analysis of outcomes. The other limitations taken into consideration were a variety of teaching styles, differences in student characteristics, and the ability to control variables in research (Rudd & Johnson, 2008).

This study focuses solely on the foundational literacy skills for kindergarten readiness of students in the GSRP program in one school district in Michigan, which delimits the scope of the study. GSRP students who completed the kindergarten year in the district also delimited the study.

Measures Taken for the Protection of Participants

I am a stakeholder in the district as an administrator and community member. The nature of the study, coupled with my membership on the administrative team, encouraged the superintendent to allow access to data for the study. This study was approved by Walden University's Institutional Review Board (approval #01-21-15-0182656) on January 21, 2015. Since all data were archival, there was no risk to students or teachers. I made precautions to remain unbiased during the evaluation by keeping the research questions as the focus in the reporting. To curtail researcher bias, Kolb (2012) suggested reflexivity through all stages of the research process. I will store raw data for 5 years. Reports and explanations of summative findings are available to stakeholders, as directed by the superintendent.

Data Analyses Results

I retrieved and analyzed proficiency scores from the MLPP in four assessments using the benchmark scores that have been set by the district. I compared the archival data from the year before the new HighScope curriculum implementation to the 2 years following HighScope implementation to determine any differences that may have resulted from the change in curriculum. These 3 years of spring preschool and fall kindergarten level MLPP scores included letter identification and letter-sound identification for both levels and end of kindergarten year Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System (FP-BAS) reading scores. The dependent variables were compared to determine if there was a difference in the groups who taught with HighScope curriculum and the group that did not.

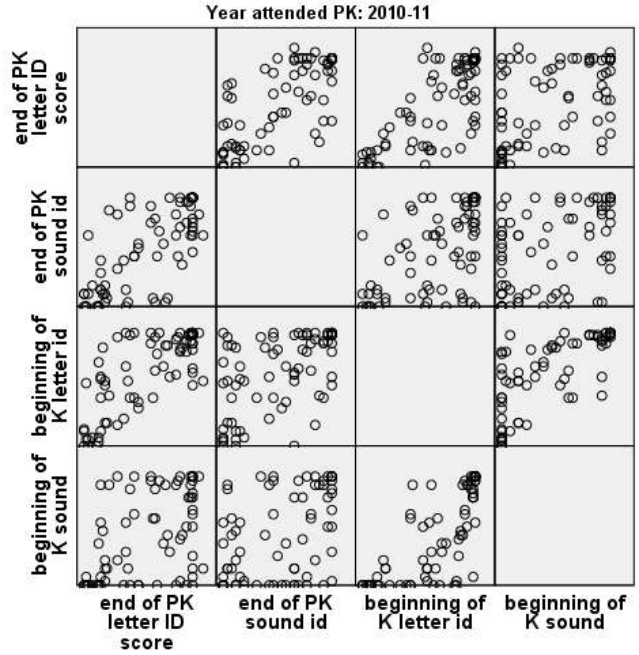

Figure 2. Scatterplot matrix depicting the relationship of literacy scores from 2010-11 school year.

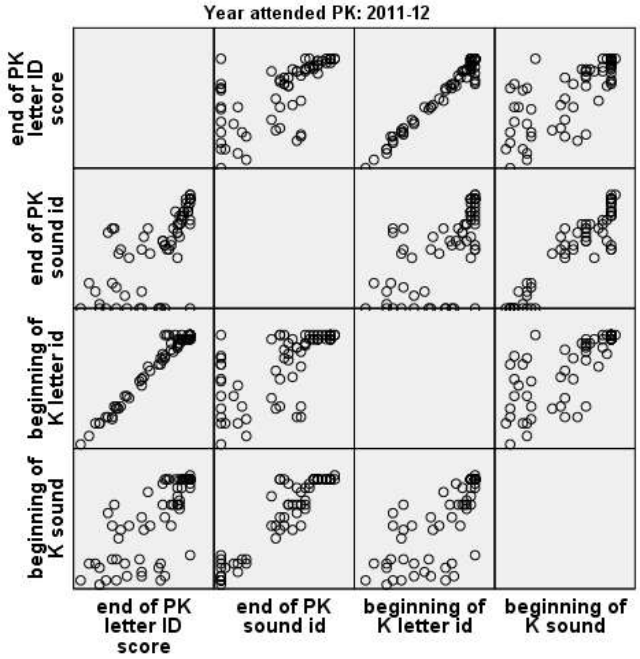

Figure 3. Scatterplot matrix depicting the relationship of literacy scores from 2011-12 school year.

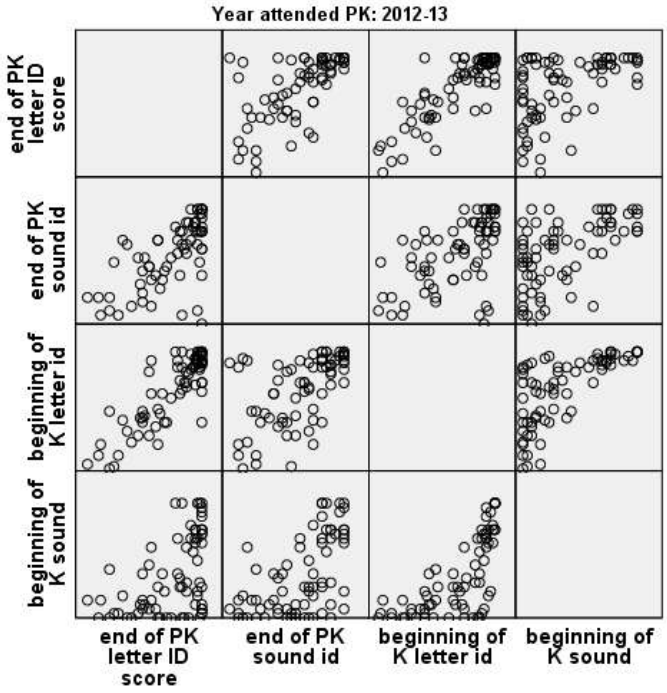

Figure 4. Scatterplot matrix depicting relationship of literacy scores from 2012-13 school year

After checking for assumptions, I conducted a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to determine the effect of the HighScope program implementation on kindergarten literacy readiness based on the five assessment points from preschool to kindergarten. The MANOVA uses the F-test which identifies the overall comparison on whether groups means differ and other multivariate measures such as Pillai's Trace. Table 4 shows means and standard deviations.

Pillai's Trace, the sum of the variance, is the most robust for small sample sizes in protecting against Type I errors (Patel, Padh, & Bhavsar, 2013). The MANOVA indicated a statistically significant difference between the readiness scores $F(10, 424) = 10.286$, $p = <.0005$, Pillai's Trace = .39, partial $\eta^2 = .195$.

Table 4

Mean and Standard Deviations (SD) of Five Assessments over Three School Years: 2010-2013

		Year	
	n = 73	*n* = 72	*n* = 73
Assessment	2010-2011 No HighScope	2011-2012 HighScope	2012-2013 HighScope
	Mean *SD*	Mean *SD*	Mean *SD*
Letter ID			
End of PK	29.97 19.12	37.72 15.11	40.71 14.32
Beginning K	35.01 18.21	40.97 15.42	37.08 15.50
Sound ID			
End of PK	13.48 9.64	15.40 9.35	16.25 7.54
Beginning K	11.75 10.29	17.87 8.96	9.64 8.75
End of K FP-BAS	3.64 1.53	4.44 .92	4.27 1.15

Note. The MLPP letter and sound ID = identification is given at the beginning and end of preschool and kindergarten. FP-BAS Running Record is assessed given throughout the school year. The minimum benchmark at the end of Kindergarten is D = 4.

The null hypotheses were rejected since all of the multivariate tests indicated there was significant difference of the literacy readiness skills in students from GSRP preschool before HighScope implementation and after HighScope implementation.

To answer research question 1, I found that there was a statistically significant difference in the end of the year preschool letter identification score between students from different preschool years, F (2,215) = 8.412, $p < .005$, partial $\eta^2 = .073$ on between subject test. The data indicated that the mean scores for the end of preschool letter

identification increased each year after the implementation of the HighScope curriculum. Also, the end of the year kindergarten reading test score was significant after the HighScope implementation but indicated a stronger significance in the first year of implementation.

The two dependent variables addressed by research question 2 and 3 did not determine a significant difference (see Table 5). Therefore, it was necessary to conduct a post hoc procedure –descriptive discriminant analysis in SPSS (Tonidandel & LeBreton, 2013; Warne, 2014). The Tukey Honestly Significant Difference (HSD) was computed for multiple comparisons of the literacy test in multiple years. Using a Bonferroni adjusted α level of .05 the Tukey posthoc tests showed that the mean score was significantly different between various measures as reflected in Table 5.

In answering research question 4 there was a statistically significant difference in beginning kindergarten sound identification F (2, 215) = 15.101, partial η^2 = .123. There was also a statistically significant difference in the end of Kindergarten Reading Score F (2,215) = 8.606, p < .0005; partial η^2 = .074 which addresses research question 5.

The data demonstrated a rejection of the null hypotheses for research questions one, four and five. The statistical differences in the assessment scores of the MLPP preschool letter identification, kindergarten sound identification, and end of kindergarten FP-BAS reading proficiency indicate the positive effect of the HighScope curriculum implementation on literacy readiness assessment scores.

Table 5

Tukey HSD Post Hoc Results

Dependent Variable	Pre-k Year		Sig.
End of PK Letter ID	2010-11	2011-12	.013
		2012-13	.000*
	2011-12	2012-13	.513
End of PK Sound ID	2010-11	2011-12	.395
		2012-13	.147
	2011-12	2012-13	.835
Beginning K Letter ID	2010-11	2011-12	.076
		2012-13	.727
	2011-12	2012-13	.330
Beginning K Sound ID	2010-11	2011-12	.000*
		2012-13	.363
	2011-12	2012-13	.000*
End of K Reading Proficiency	2010-11	2011-12	.000*
		2012-13	.006*
	2011-12	2012-13	.680

*$p < .05$

Conclusion

In section 2 of this study I explained the ex post facto causal comparative approach of this quantitative study design. The section included a description of the details of the setting and sample selection and data retrieval process for the quantitative

data. I addressed and clarified the assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and scope of the study design. I identified the process for data analysis for the research questions and validation of results to ensure the possibility of replication including the data analysis for the research questions. I used the data analysis findings to determine the effect of the GSRP in preparing students with kindergarten readiness skills by addressing the five research questions through data. Findings from the data analysis led me to plan with the assistant superintendent to develop academic transition activities, professional development on transition, and kindergarten team meetings to discuss assessment practices before the start of the next school year.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

After I analyzed data to investigate whether the GSRP preschool in this district provided students with the literacy skills necessary to be successful kindergarten literacy learners and grade level readers at the end of kindergarten, a project emerged. The project resulted from the need to strengthen and sustain the preschool experience to realize gains in literacy readiness for incoming kindergarten students. In this section, I describe the project and include a literature review to support an outline for an early learning plan that includes educators, community, parents and students.

Description and Goals

Kindergarten readiness begins earlier than the year before kindergarten. Parents are a child's first teacher, developing literacy skills beginning as early as birth. Students should start their formal learning experience with some pre-reading foundational literacy skills. It is more than the school's work to provide the literacy skills that students need to achieve grade level reading skills. However, the school district leaders must lead the work of collaboration with parents, community, and schools to create a system alignment for the support of student literacy (Ma, Shen, Krenn, Yuan, & Hu, 2015). This project is an action plan for the district's early learning strategy. There are two goals for this project. First, to provide the district with a plan to create an environment for all stakeholders to learn and provide the quality early learning experiences for young learners and their families. Secondly, to provide a professional development plan for a variety of stakeholders to receive training that equips them to be authentic, intentional participants in the implementation of the plan. Each goal in the plan includes strategies,

activities, expected outcomes, a professional development plan, and resources to execute the training for specific audiences. As with any plan for continuous improvement, it includes a process for reviewing its effectiveness. The project is an initial action plan which provides a straightforward way to begin this preschool-to-third-grade continuum work in the district and the community it serves. This plan acknowledges and expands on the work done in isolation by creating a common vision and plan for collaboration.

Kauerz and Coffman (2013) recommended a continuum of learning for children from preschool to third grade that will close achievement gaps, increase quality, and provide coherence between preschool and the k-12 education system. Referencing the Kauerz and Coffman framework, I combined the eight components into six, with corresponding goals in a two-phase plan. The first phase focuses on improving adult practice, and the second phase of goals focuses on teaching and learning improvements.

Phase I

- Cross-sector work and family engagement.

  Goal 1: Strengthening community and family engagement.

- Continuity and pathways.

  Goal 2: Increasing enrollment in pre-k through kindergarten, and creating more effective transitions.

- Administrator effectiveness and teacher effectiveness.

  Goal 3: Expanding high quality professional development with attention to literacy, math, and social-emotional learning (SEL).

Phase II

- Instructional tools.

Goal 4: Use of aligned curriculum and assessments across pre-k through third grade.

- Learning environment.

  Goal 5: Establish quality developmentally appropriate learning environments to reflect collaboration, diversity, inclusion and varied learning styles.

- Data-driven improvement.

  Goal 6: Use data to identify and address achievement gaps and instructional quality.

Rationale

The data on the effect of the HighScope curriculum implementation in preparing at-risk students to enter kindergarten showed that not all students have all the basic literacy readiness skills upon entering kindergarten. Research has indicated that the key to improving outcomes for students is to begin exposing them to literacy before the kindergarten (Jacobson, 2014; Rice, 2011). It is not enough to simply have a preschool program; a comprehensive implementation of an aligned continuum from preschool to third grade is needed to yield effective outcomes for students. There is a national call for birth to third grade alignment of systems and services (Jacobson, 2014; Kauerz & Coffman, 2013; Rice, 2011). In my local district, the community immersion in early education work does not continue in the k-12 district priorities, and there is not an intentional focus on early-grade student outcomes or curriculum implementation. The conditions in the community and the district create a climate that is conducive for effectively implementing an early learning action plan. Providing the early learning community and the school district with the best practice knowledge and strategies to

create a birth through third grade continuum in a plan that includes all stakeholders will support the district in establishing a quality early learning experience (see Jacobson, 2011, 2014).

The project provides recommendations through a plan that can support the district in system alignment through the development of redesigned professional development offerings, community partnerships, curriculum development, and kindergarten readiness transition plans (see Ma et al., 2015; Center for the Study of Education Policy, 2012). If the district implements my recommendations, teacher efficacy can increase as it relates to instruction, assessment practices, and family engagement. The plan, written for internal and external stakeholders, expands current programs and practices. The community's strong early learning partnerships in the education, philanthropic, and business sectors create an opportunity to move towards complementary learning systems (CLS) that will benefit not only the district and families, but also the entire community in supporting student developmental and academic success (Hong & Keahiolalo-Karasuda, 2011).

Review of the Literature

In the literature review for this early learning training plan, I focused on the components of an early learning action strategy. My recommendations are to create and implement a plan of action for developing teacher, parent, community, and administrator trainings. The trainings will focus on developmentally appropriate literacy instruction and assessment practices, parent outreach efforts, and pre-school to kindergarten transition activities. These areas have been found to have an effect on students reading achievement and academic success in the early grades (Jung & Han, 2013; Moore et al., 2015; Nix, Bierman, Domitrovich, & Gill, 2013). This literature review focuses on the

six goals of the plan. I accessed peer-reviewed journal articles for this review primarily from the Walden University online library. The following search terms and phrases were used: *kindergarten parent outreach, community engagement in kindergarten readiness, kindergarten transition, HighScope to kindergarten, community involvement in kindergarten readiness, developmentally appropriate assessment practices, teacher development, teacher professional development in the early grades, principals' role in pre-k through third grade,* and *literacy in early childhood*.

Parent and Community Outreach

Serving at-risk students and families requires specific, intentional supports. Studies have confirmed that economically disadvantaged preschool students benefit from an evidence-based curriculum that expressly embeds and intentionally integrates literacy and social-emotional skills (Nix et al., 2013). Studies specific to minority groups have indicated that kindergarten behavior and adjustment problems are a result of a curriculum that is not engaging and lacks the "cognitive press" that increases rigor through higher-order learning and thinking skills (Hamre, Hatfield, Pianta, & Jamil, 2014; Iruka, Gardner-Neblett, Matthews, & Winn, 2014). Another challenge to minority students' transition is the lack of the children's cultures fused into the school environment (Ansari & Winsler, 2014).

In addition to providing quality instruction, teachers must engage in parent outreach. Researchers have suggested that affirmative school-family partnerships benefit students' literacy achievement in the early grades (Jung & Han, 2013; Wildenger & McIntyre, 2011). Activities related to academic achievement, as indicated by research, include volunteer opportunities, constructive communication, sending books and material

home, home visits, homework, and parents' high expectations for students (Froiland, Peterson, & Davison, 2012; Jung & Han, 2013). Teachers' training and intentional development of collaborative partnerships with parents and students on supporting academic achievement and kindergarten transition is even more critical for minority, at-risk students (Bromer & Weaver, 2014; Jung & Han, 2013; Wildenger & McIntyre, 2011). Barriers such as transportation and childcare should be eliminated to maximize parent outreach efforts (Gratz & Larwin, 2014).

Community outreach should result in outside agencies and programs collaborating with the school district and families to benefit students (Jacobson, 2014; Ma, et al., 2015). Hong and Keahiolalo-Karasuda (2011) posited that CLS focus on including families and communities in support of specific health, social-emotional, and economic needs of all young children through the coordination of programs and services within and outside the school district. In the CLS alignment, it is important that school districts understand the importance of including children younger than those traditionally served by the district.

Transition Activities

Kindergarten transition is an ongoing process that spans at least 2 years, beginning with the year before kindergarten entry and continuing throughout the kindergarten year (Smythe-Leistico et al., 2012). Preschool plays a significant role in preparing students for the kindergarten experience (Gormley, Phillips, Welti, Newmark, & Adelstein, 2011; Iruka, et al., 2014; Smythe-Leistico et al., 2012; Wildenger & McIntyre, 2012). Preschool teachers are encouraged to engage in transition discussions with students facilitated by stories about kindergarten. Munz (2013) has suggested that

teachers and parents should be aware of nonverbal cues and communication styles when discussing the kindergarten transition in addition to validating students concerns and responding to questions and feelings. The transition is also a collaborative partnership between parents, preschool teachers, and kindergarten teachers (Geiser, Horwitz & Gerstein, 2013).

Although there has been an increase in the number of students attending preschool over the last 10 years (Gormley et al., 2011; Moore et al., 2015), many students are still entering kindergarten with no preschool experience. Developing strategies for locating and engaging families not enrolled in formal preschool settings is a challenge, and results in a difficult transition for those students (Smythe-Leistico et al., 2012). It is also essential that the school is prepared to meet the needs of the entering kindergarten students, as they have an array of experiences before coming to kindergarten (Iruka et al., 2014; Smythe-Leistico et al., 2012).

Parents should be considered and included in the transition process. Transition researchers have suggested including parents on transition planning teams, posting welcome signs in the school, engaging in neighborhood outreach, home visits, parent workshops on literacy development, and kindergarten orientation. Classroom visits, district-wide marketing, school letters, enrollment signage, and providing learning opportunities for parents before the kindergarten year are all strategies for engaging parents in the transition to kindergarten (Geiser et al., 2013; Smythe-Leistico et al., 2012; Wildenger & McIntyre, 2011). Parents' perceptions of the academic and behavioral expectations of the school have an effect on the successful transition of students to

kindergarten, and their input on children's academics is valuable (Owens et al., 2015; Wildenger & McIntyre, 2012).

The results of the Smythe-Leistico et al. (2012) study showed a structured plan that includes registration events, transition activities, staff member input, and family collaboration. Intentionally engaging low-income and urban families is necessary since research shows this group is less likely to participate in transition activities (Wildenger & McIntyre, 2011). Also, summer opportunities for at-risk students entering kindergarten can help in closing the achievement gap and creating a successful transition academically and social-emotionally (Gratz & Larwin, 2014; Smythe-Leistico et al., 2012).

Teacher Professional Development

Pre-service training for teachers varies among institutions (Abry, Latham, Bassok, & LoCasale-Crouch, 2015) making it necessary for school districts to provide additional training through professional development (PD) opportunities. Practicing teachers need to continue their professional learning through relevant workshops, coaching, courses, and attendance at state and national conferences (Althauser, 2015; 2011; Snell, Forston, Stanton-Chapman, & Walker, 2013) to increase their skills and maintain motivation to implement effective early childhood learning experiences. Ensuring relevance in professional development is vital to improving student achievement. Anderson (2016) posited that teachers not only need to know the content, but also need to know how to teach it, making a case for professional development in curriculum standards and pedagogy. Professional development practices can include reflective self-study, coaching, workshop series, conferences, full-day curriculum training, and peer

observation models (Blazar & Kraft, 2015; Cecconi, Stegelin, Pintus, & Allegri, 2014; Lauer, Christopher, Firpo-Triplett, & Buchting, 2014).

Professional development should include a focus on improving core content delivery and best practices in the early grades (Althauser, 2015; Weiland & Yoshikawa, 2013). District administrators should support the planning of professional development beginning with a needs assessment based on teacher observation and student achievement data (Lauer et al., 2014). Desimone and Garet (2015) identified five features of effective professional development content which included focus on subject matter; active learning for teachers to participate in the discourse; coherence to the district's goals, beliefs, and curriculum; sustained duration of ongoing PD throughout the school year of 20 or more hours; and collective participation of same grade groups to develop learning communities.

A job- embedded or coaching model of professional development allows teachers to learn and practice their new knowledge under the guidance of an expert (Kissel, Mraz, Algozzine, & Stover, 2011; Skiffington, Washburn, & Elliott, 201l; Spelman, Bell, Thomas, & Briody, 2016). Using experienced teachers to engage novice teachers as learners in lesson planning, content, and new pedagogy has shown to improve instructional quality and students' reading comprehension (Matsumusra, Garnier, & Spybrook, 2013). Coaching supports teachers in reflective practice and analyzing data for meaningful use. An effective coaching program has leader support and a coaching framework while providing coaches with ongoing professional development (Skiffington et al., 201l).

Currently, the district's professional development focuses primarily on the curriculum and content for the kindergarten teachers to deliver but does not provide the age appropriate pedagogical strategies teachers need to be effective. The number of professional development days provided in the school year is insufficient for providing on-going professional development topics. Otaiba et al. (2015) found that the accumulated effects of professional development in developing teachers' knowledge and skill level were positive in at least 2 years. Training to professionally develop preschool and kindergarten teachers creates a collaborative learning opportunity to strengthen both teaching teams to learn about kindergarten readiness expectations and literacy strategies to support the transition for students (Emfinger, 2015).

Administrator Professional Development

Principals often learn how to improve the quality of the early learning grades on their own because graduate programs for educational leadership do not offer specific coursework designed for pre-k through third grade leadership (Brown, Squires, Connors-Tadros, & Horowitz, 2014; Goffin, 2013). The increasing number of elementary schools that include preschool classrooms has caused the need for increased knowledge of principals (NAESP, 2014). Since the body of research on pre-k to third grade leadership is small, school districts that embark on this work have to develop principals through shared vision work and embedded professional development. Many districts assign the early grade leadership to instructional leadership teams that consist of coaches, curriculum directors, early childhood administrators, and teacher leaders (Abel, Talan, Pollitt, & Bornfreund, 2016). Kauerz and Coffman (2013) identified administrator professional development as an important part of maintaining the early learning

continuum. The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP, 2014) developed a guide that identifies six competencies and strategies for principals in pre-k to third grade schools, aligned to the Kauerz and Coffman framework. New Jersey school leaders developed a 4-day training syllabus for school leaders based on these competencies which improved the capacity of the pre-k to third grade leaders (Rice, 2011). The competencies are based on understanding the importance of developmentally appropriate practice and learning environments, multiple assessments of student progress, professional development and engaging families and communities (NAESP, 2014).

Curriculum and Assessment

Squires' (2012) analysis of over 40 years of curriculum alignment research revealed that there are strong correlations between taught curriculum and student achievement when taught curriculum aligns to the standards. Experts recommend that school districts align their local curriculum resources with the state standards and assessments, and develop a structured curriculum with an implementation, monitoring, and assessment plan (Squires, 2012). A quality curriculum implementation that results in literacy performance increases includes teacher flexibility and creativity which leads to students that are engaged, content that is culturally relevant, evidence of developmentally appropriate practice, consistency, and activities that add-on to prior knowledge and skills (Barnes & Crow, 2014; Gullo, 2013). The development of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) did not include preschool, nor did it address the whole child in its design for college and career readiness. The CCSS provide opportunities for teachers to create learning experiences with higher order thinking skills, depth and mastery of concepts and skills, and hands-on, experiential activities (Barnes & Crow, 2014).

Best practice assessment strategies are just as important in the early grades to capture a true picture of students' knowledge, abilities, and literacy performance while recognizing that students are diverse in their experiences, development, culture, and language acquisition (Gullo, 2013). Assessment plans should include a formal and informal collection of data through diagnostic, formative and summative assessments that are appropriate culturally, linguistically, and developmentally (Allen, Kelly, & Council 2015; Gullo, 2013). Not only should professional development address instructional strategies but include assessment strategies in the offerings for early grade teachers. Pyle and DeLuca (2013) identified three assessment practices that encompass best practice assessment in kindergarten. These practices are developmental, blended, and assessment for learning. Developmental assessment creates a holistic picture of students through authentic observation using checklists. Blended assessment includes baseline, formative, and summative assessments through standardized tools and teacher created assessments to guide instruction; and assessment for learning focuses on academic standards to support student learning through the use of self and peer assessment, video feedback, and setting learning goals (Pyle & DeLuca, 2013). Dennis, Rueter, and Simpson (2013) supported the use of authentic assessment for determining young children's abilities in a natural setting with familiar adults. Authentic assessments that provide academic information include observation, running records, anecdotal notes and work sample portfolios. Not only are assessment practices important for driving instruction but they provide information for needed interventions for at-risk learners (Dennis, Rueter, & Simpson, 2013; Pyle & DeLuca, 2013). Assessment practices are important for obtaining

a comprehensive understanding of the child's need so that information is shared with the next teacher and with parents for a positive transition for all stakeholders.

Data Driven Improvement

After assessment data collection, data must be analyzed and interpreted to develop a plan for improvement of the literacy curriculum and instruction that includes a response to intervention (RtI) for students and modifications of instruction for teachers. Data interpretation results in information which is used to understand learning environment and make appropriate changes (Gullo, 2013). Professional development through Professional Learning Communities (PLC) will provide teachers the skills to interpret data, plan for intervention based on data, and share information with parents, students, administrators, and colleagues (Allen et al., 2015).

Student assessment data is just one type of data that is collected to make changes in the early grades. Schools have to be ready to receive students at each grade and have to be open to using multiple data sources to make improvement decisions. Allen, Kelley, and Council (2015) suggested that in addition to multiple sources of student progress data, other data collected should include program quality, family risk factors, program resources, and improvement plan progress.

Quality Learning Environment

La Paro, Thomason, Lower, Kintner-Duffy, and Cassidy (2012) studied the varied definitions of quality and measurements of positive child outcomes. Characteristics of quality include appropriate materials, effective teaching, and teacher-child relationships as indicators for a positive preschool experience. Appropriate materials are vital. The type of materials, specifically manipulatives, is important because children are engaged

in active learning with the materials for more time than they are engaged in receiving direct instruction from teachers. Effective teachers introduce big ideas or concepts by facilitating discovery through questioning and use of language (Gerde, Schachter, & Wasik, 2013; Meacham, Vukelich, Han, & Buell, 2014). This use of multiple instructional practices and the creation of a variety of developmentally appropriate activities in pertinent preschool domains will increase academic readiness in young children (Lonigan, Purpura, Wilson, Walker, & Clancy-Menchetti, 2013). Effective teaching not only entails providing the academic skills identified by readiness, but also involves implementing a curriculum that values students' capabilities, backgrounds, and participation.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) position supports Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP). DAP requires approaching teaching and learning through planned experiences with students' needs, strengths and interests in mind (Taleb, 2013). The intentionality in setting goals and providing the cognitive challenge children need is a critical element of developmentally appropriate practice (Hammond, 2015; Phillips & Scrinzi, 2014). Additionally, best practices should include high quality instructional materials, small group delivery, differentiation of instruction, maximized instruction time, print focused instruction, and intentionality (Otaiba et al., 2015; Roskos & Neuman, 2014; Wanzek, Roberts, Otaiba, & Kent, 2014). Jung and Han (2013) summarized literature that provides active engagement strategies that increase reading achievement. Professional development provided to the teachers in the Hamre, Hatfield, Pianta, and Jamil (2014) study found a positive effect of intentional teacher-child interactions through responsive teaching,

active engagement, motivation, management, and cognitive facilitation in increasing literacy growth in the early childhood classroom.

Project Description

In developing the Early Learning Action Strategy and Professional Development plan, I planned strategies and activities that can be implemented to work toward the goals outlined in the plan. Each strategy has activities and an intended implementation timeline for each. Also, there are committees to support the implementation, communication, and data collection. I anticipated needs, barriers, district and community capacity, and diffusion of information. I developed the plan (see Appendix A) and submitted to the district's school board and administration in the monthly board report packet. Other stakeholders such as teachers and intermediate school district GSRP program staff members were given the opportunity to read the plan as a source of information for planning and implementing coordinated services and professional development. As an internal researcher, I was able to provide formative reports to the superintendent based on data collection and research, and supported the facilitation of necessary changes. Based on the data, a formative decision was made to provide kindergarten teachers a professional development session focused on transitioning students from HighScope preschool classrooms, and to start an inquiry into using a researched-based assessment tool to discontinue the use of MLPP. The district's transition team, including parents, will be reconvened and asked to review the recommendations and to consider additional needs in the action plan. Stakeholders will be trained to deliver a unified message, eliminate confusion, and increase engagement. Due to the district's elementary restructuring the development of the action plan is an ongoing process.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

Based on the recommendations, the resources and supports needed were access to the board report and meeting time with the district transition team. Also, resources included meeting space, refreshments, training materials, and technology (LCD projector, laptop, speakers) for the transition committee and professional development sessions. Financial resources and clerical support staff will be needed for the implementation of enhanced summer transition activities since the workshops will occur before the children's enrollment as district students. Fortunately, the district received grant funds from a local foundation to support early grades. Existing structures that will support the plan include instructional coaches, Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) teams, designated professional learning communities (PLC) times, professional development days, and a county-wide early childhood consortium interested in the work of the pre-k to third grade continuum and partnering with me on this action plan.

Findings from the study created other formative opportunities. The support of the superintendent allowed changes to be made based on the needs revealed by my findings. First, an increase in the academic rigor of the summer mailings to incoming kindergarten students, secondly I conducted a summer meeting with kindergarten teachers about transition activities and developmentally appropriate assessment practices. Also, the recruitment strategy of incoming kindergarten students at private childcare centers enhanced the transition process. Continuous collection of data will be necessary to maintain data-informed decision making and improvement of the early learning action strategy plan.

Potential Barriers

Barriers can be known and unknown. Unknown barriers can be inevitable and used as learning experiences to create change. Anticipated barriers and implementation plans reflect solutions or avoidance of the barrier. As an urban district, the challenge of staff turnover is constant. This barrier impedes the ability to have sustainable professional development and consistent implementation of the early learning action strategy plan. This barrier requires annual and ongoing professional development for teachers new to the district, new to teaching, and new to the kindergarten or preschool level.

The collaboration of the school district with community based leaders and child care providers could lead to barriers as each has perceptions about the roles and responsibilities across both sectors. Other collaboration barriers include norms for collective teams and competition for resources. Although there is already a collaborative culture in the community among early childcare providers and agencies, all stakeholders are not involved. As the stakeholder involvement expands to include more sectors and agencies such as health care and social services, consideration should be taken on the different policies, structures, funding, and priorities (Allen et al., 2015). Partners should participate as collaborators and not representatives of an organization (Foster-Fishman & Watson, 2016). To implement a comprehensive pre-k to third grade plan with full collaboration Stephens (2014) suggested a facilitator, designated staff for oversight of all pre-k programs, and written agreements that include roles, responsibilities, costs allocations, enrollment procedures, and a process for conflict resolution. Also, district and community providers' engagement in frequent, regularly scheduled partner meetings

that include two-way information reporting, and shared decision making is a suggested strategy (Stephens, 2014).

Identification of incoming kindergarten students not enrolled in childcare also creates a barrier for transition and kindergarten readiness skill development. The transition team will have to include potential strategies to reach families for early enrollment so that they can access spring and summer transition activities. With the implementation of family location strategies, a district increase of students applying for preschool could be realized. This increase could become an access to preschool slots barrier if funding levels remain constant.

Lastly, the intermediate school district is the fiduciary of the GSRP grant and ultimate decision maker on county-wide professional development. Incorporating supplemental curriculum models to strengthen readiness skills in preschool students will not be an option for our GRSP program and creates a need for teachers to master the integration of skills into the play-based constructivist HighScope program.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

The superintendent and the school board will receive the action plan and sections 3 and 4 in fall 2016. The plan is a two-phase multi-year implementation of strategies and activities. Full implementation of the action plan is pending board approval, planning, community partnership meetings, and the availability of financial resources. A 3-day stakeholders training will be held to introduce and engage the participants in the goals and strategies of the pre-k to third grade action plan to create a shared vision and increase the knowledge about the plan. The training will provide a detailed overview of the plan

and development of work groups that will focus on increasing stakeholder participation. A PowerPoint presentation has been developed to guide this training (see Appendix A1).

The proposed timeline for the implementation is to begin in 2017. Each of the six goals has an implementation timeline for each activity and a professional development timeline. External training will be held monthly, and internal staff is training quarterly. Teachers will receive ongoing professional development through coaching and multiple offerings of monthly professional development opportunities. Presenters will be confirmed, and invitation lists developed once the plan is approved. Much of the meeting, planning, and strategy implementation will occur simultaneously, each year. No cost transition activities and collaborations will be ongoing throughout the school year with student activities occurring in the spring.

Roles and Responsibilities

Students do not have any responsibilities in this project. The teachers' role is to implement current curriculum models with fidelity, data collection, PLC participation, and application of strategies learned in professional development to enhance the adult-child relationship and improve instructional practices. Instructional Coaches will model and observe teachers for professional feedback and development, and support teachers in PLC work. Principals will monitor implementation of strategies learned in the professional development and nurture the relationships developed with outside agencies and families. As the researcher, my role consisted of collecting data, entering all data into SPSS software, analyzing all data, creating the early learning action strategy plan, and presenting findings and recommendations. As a district administrator, my role is to

convene committees, schedule the PD, plan activities, develop agenda and materials, or secure presenters for the PD.

Project Evaluation Plan

The first goal of the project is to provide the district with an early learning action strategy plan to create an environment for all stakeholders to learn and provide the quality early learning experiences for young learners and their families. Secondly, the project provides a professional development plan for a variety of stakeholders to receive training for the support of the implementation of the plan. The plan has six goals for the district. A variety of data will be collected to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the plan. Data collection will include participation records such as meeting calendars, minutes, and sign-in sheets. Also, data about the families that are participating may be useful in determining whether at-risk families are being served and increasing parent participation (Frew, Zhou, Duran, Kwok, & Benz, 2013). Surveys and professional development feedback will capture participant satisfaction data (see Appendix A2). Academic data collected through PLC data and notes, and classroom assessments (FP-BAS, letter-sound ID) will continue. Partnership compacts, the number of preschool tours, tour feedback, transition activity attendance, and community referral data will be collected to determine increased participation of community and school. Classroom observations, coaching logs, and principal walkthroughs will document adult practice changes. Analysis of the implementation of completed curriculum documents for early grades and school improvement plans will add to the information collected for determining if changes are occurring in the alignment. An early learning action strategy evaluation will be completed by internal and external evaluators to determine implementation fidelity and

whether the plan is effective for increasing the literacy skills of students in the early grades through collaborative work of the school, home, and community.

Project Implications

Local Community

Initially, HighScope was met with resistance in this district which resulted in implementation compliance. Required coaching support and extensive professional development supported teachers' learning. Data indicated the effect that the HighScope model had on literacy readiness skills for kindergarten was significant. The finding is significant because at-risk preschool students benefitted and entered kindergarten with foundational skills that supported the district's efforts to close the achievement gap for minority and low-income students. The study created an awareness of students' level of academic skills upon entering kindergarten which can lead to further research and training on teacher's expectations and classroom supports in preschool and kindergarten.

The project provides a plan for incorporating all stakeholders in the successful development of the district's youngest learners. Creating a protected space for the child care community, parents, school leaders, school staff and teachers to collaborate, plan and learn together to align systems for children who will attend the local school district is the approach of the plan. Including all stakeholders provides for the needs of all children to be met and therefore an opportunity for each child to live up to his/her full potential which is an improvement that exemplifies social justice. The collaboration of all stakeholders across multiple community sectors reduces local inequities. Established accountability protocols and norms eliminate inequities as a consequence of the implementation. Also, building parents capacity through engagement and increased

knowledge of the school goals to become change agents and information resources as they share the unified message with friends and neighbors. The plan can be replicated in other districts and modified to adjust for the resources that are available.

Far-Reaching

There is research on HighScope and research on state-funded preschool but not much current research on the implementation of HighScope in state-funded preschool programs giving this study a unique perspective. This county has implemented HighScope in all state-funded preschool rooms. As the largest GSRP program in the county, this study may serve as an example resulting in the county and state's smaller programs collecting data, analyzing effects and creating action plans for continuous improvement so that more teachers and students can improve their learning. Making intentional data-informed decisions will increase the likelihood of a broader, sustainable influence on student achievement. Since national research on the pre-k to third grade continuum supports the action plan, its goals and strategies are general enough to be used in other districts and states.

Conclusion

In section 3, I provided a review of the relevant literature and a description of the project study. The literature review is a summary of the research on the recommendations from the early learning action strategy plan to improve kindergarten readiness. Topics included teacher professional development focused on developmentally appropriate literacy instruction and assessment practices, parent outreach efforts, and pre-school to kindergarten transition activities. The literature provided evidence to support the recommendations. The action plan (see Appendix A)

will be presented to stakeholders for consideration of implementation. In this section I discussed the implementation timeline of the project and implications for social change and replication. In section 4, I provide reflections about the project study.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

In the final section of this project study, I discuss strengths, limitations, and alternative strategies for addressing the problem and the project. Additionally, this section includes a discussion of reflections and analysis of my learning as a scholar, leader, practitioner, and project developer. Finally, I close by discussing implications for future research and social change.

Project Strengths and Limitations

The purpose of preschool is to enhance the success of students in kindergarten and beyond. Much research has provided evidence to indicate that preschool purpose is being fulfilled on various levels using a variety of curriculum models (Ansari & Winsler, 2014; Goldstein et al., 2013). The early learning action plan I produced (see Appendix A) yielded strategic professional development for consideration by district stakeholders. The first strength of this project was that it focused on strengthening the early grades, and the continuum from pre-k through third grade. This study is advantageous to other districts in the county which also have preschool programs and want to use the action plan as a reference and an opportunity to collaborate. A second strength of the project was that it included all stakeholders. The district administration received recommendations throughout the study, and the action plan was a final recommendation for implementation. Additionally, the action plan provided possible low- and no-cost research-based suggestions for improving kindergarten readiness, transitions, and professional growth of teachers that could be implemented in the district within the next school year. Recommendations were developed based on the current research on best

practices to increase academic achievement and student success in kindergarten and beyond (Hamre et al., 2014; Weiland & Yoshikawa, 2013; Wildenger & McIntyre, 2012). Lastly, the project can become a baseline for ongoing capacity building and early grade improvements.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

The problem I addressed in this study was the low literacy scores of entering kindergarten students and the lack of research on the effect of the HighScope curriculum in academically preparing at-risk students for kindergarten. The local GSRP goals are (a) to provide designated literacy readiness skills to 4-year-olds, (b) to develop specific socio-emotional readiness skills, and (c) to prepare and engage families for the transition to the public schools. An alternative approach to the study would be to address the second goal and the improvement of the teachers'skills in handling social-emotional skills through the HighScope curriculum and kindergarten programs. A kindergarten readiness strategic plan for the development of social-emotional skills including a professional development design would have been an alternative project that could address the problem.

The district does not have a specific kindergarten curriculum focus or professional development for social-emotional skills. Schindler et al. (2015) have referred to early learning experiences without an intentional social emotional focus as a level-1 program. However, the GSRP program, in its implementation of the HighScope model, incorporates adult-child interaction, routines, and activities focused on developing social-emotional skills is considered a level-2 program and yields fewer students with behavior issues (Schindler et al., 2015). Level-3 programs provide specific training for teachers in

child social skills and behavior management so that teachers have the skills to provide instruction to develop social-emotional competence (Schindler et al., 2015). This alternative approach is relevant because developing students' social-emotional competence results in students who have the ability to regulate emotions and are more academically engaged, leading to higher rates of success in elementary school (Denham et al., 2012; Moore et al., 2015; Urasche, Blair, & Raver, 2012). One method of developing the social-emotional competence in young children is to strengthen the teacher-child interactions. Urasche et al. (2012) found that training teachers to create optimal learning environments that are structured and that provide consistent routines contributed to better behavior, emotional regulation by both the teacher and students, fewer negative redirections of behavior, and yielded more academic engagement. Better social skills are demonstrated in classrooms with higher-quality learning environments (Broekhuizen, Mokrova, Burchinal, Garrett-Peters, & Family Life Project Key Investigators, 2016; Denham et al., 2012; Hestenes et al., 2014) which can also be supported by professional development.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

This project study was very close to my professional work. Through it, I learned to use peer-reviewed research in my daily work. The research that I read throughout this process provided resources that supported my planning and implementation as a practitioner. Synthesizing the research in two literature reviews allowed me to develop a level of expertise in the area of early childhood education. I was able to support teachers, colleagues, and community partners in the local decision-making process with researched-based information.

Also, I learned to focus on detail. Researching and choosing a research design required me to think strategically about the questions that I wanted to answer. Lastly, I learned perseverance in seeing this process to the end. This doctorate is by far the most challenging degree I have earned. Time constraints related to career and personal commitments created barriers for my consistent work on the doctoral study, but I was determined to complete the process. Additionally, the daunting task of analyzing quantitative data using SPSS required additional studying, time, and perseverance.

Working on a project of this depth required consistency, scholarly writing, and attention to style and form. I was initially undecided about a project, but decided on the early learning action strategy and professional development plan because the format allowed me to present a relevant and attainable project to the district leaders. Presenting to the district leadership team, the school board trustees, and early childhood leaders in the local community gave me the opportunity to field questions, describe the study in detail, and offer opportunities for future research. I was surprised by the interest in my findings and the project.

Informed shared leadership leads to change. Leadership and change do not occur in isolation. To make needed changes for our youngest students, teachers, and leaders, it is necessary to develop a shared understanding and vision for improvements in kindergarten readiness and the pre-k to third grade continuum. Data is the primary reason educators consider a change. Sharing the data from the study with teachers may lead to a shared understanding of the need for transitions, professional development, and parent outreach. The study results may empower teachers to become leaders in optimizing these early learning experiences for children and their families.

As a result of this project study, I believe that I have changed as a leader. Now, my practice is more informed by research. School leaders use data often, but rarely couple the data with research to implement quality programs based on the data. After completing this doctoral study, I made instructional decisions and coached principals and teachers based on research-based best practice. We often posit that we are lifelong learners, but through this process, I believe that I have justly become a lifelong learner and researcher.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

My work as an early childhood administrator and an avid reader of books on relevant subjects was all the information I thought I needed to be a good practitioner. However, my work as a scholarly researcher heightened my awareness of the most currently available research in so many aspects of early childhood work. I learned how to combine data collection with empirical research to apply practices that affect my local community.

Developing a study and research design that best supported the needs of our program and the data that was available to answer the research questions was a new skill that had not been a part of my work as an educator. I studied various design models before conferring with my committee members to decide on a final research method. This model resulted in various kinds of data collections, multiple research questions, and a challenging MANOVA which gave the study a robust analysis. After completing my data analysis, I found that I was more focused on the results and data presentations in the articles I was reading.

Through this process, I have been able to develop other research-based reports and projects that support my work as a practitioner and increase the knowledge and level of implementation in my school district. I have used my research and formative reports to begin to inform incremental change in the preschool and kindergarten programs in the district. The district leadership has been open to recommendations, and often seeks my expertise or relies on my ability to cite research on early education topics.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

This project will have a positive effect on teachers, students, and families of young children. My local community has a strong culture of supporting early childhood education. Community stakeholders will welcome this data and seek collaboration with teachers to support their professional learning around active learning, structured classrooms, transitions, and parent outreach. Not only will this project have an effect on teacher's knowledge and student achievement with the continuation of the child centered instructional model, HighScope, but it also will result in more students being academically and social-emotionally prepared for kindergarten. The increase in the achievement of low-income students could potentially close the achievement gap at kindergarten.

The most challenging effect on student achievement is the engagement of parents in the transition to kindergarten. Approaching this in the new ways described in the project may yield higher participation than has been realized in the past. When parents are involved, student achievement is increased which has a positive effect on the family as a whole.

As the urban school district in this area, there are challenges which include the loss of enrollment, lack of trust in education systems, and poor staff retention. This early learning action strategy plan outlines an implementation plan for change. This information, if widely shared, may positively affect the district's image, enrollment, and staff turnover, and the plan can improve student achievement in reading and empower parents to be more engaged.

This study showed that the HighScope preschool model provides the necessary literacy skills needed to result in students reading at or above grade level at the end of kindergarten. This study may lead to the community-wide adoption of the model in non-state-funded programs such as Head Start and private preschools, which would result in more kindergarten students entering with stronger literacy skills.

The district would benefit from continued data collection. Quantitative data is collected throughout the county, but not as in-depth as this study in one school district. Future research could include cohort studies through third grade, and studies of the effects of the professional development on teacher practice. I recommend future research on how the types of parent involvement, teacher-parent-child relationships, and transition activities affect kindergarten success.

Conclusion

In concluding the doctoral study process, this section served as a reflection on the process, my role and learning, and recommendations for future research. I discussed strengths, challenges, and implications for social change in my local community. The local early childhood education community has readily accepted this study, and I designed the recommendations so that they could be implemented in a short timeline. By

noting the project's strengths and limitations, I have provided suggestions that may affect replications of the study.

The effects that the study has had on me as a scholar-practitioner have been many. I have been improved as a researcher, change leader, and thought partner. I valued Walden University's requirement to use the most current research, which is a more rigorous expectation than that of other universities. The significant finding from this study is that the HighScope model in our local preschool program has a positive effect on kindergarten reading achievement.

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Appendix A: The Project

[DISTRICT LOGO]

Early Learning Action Strategy Plan

Creating a Strong Foundation for students through Professional Development

Chandra Youngblood

2016

This document is a work plan for the EC committee, administrators, and district stakeholders. It is an ongoing plan that supports the Early Learning continuum.

Public School District Early Learning Action Training Plan

Rationale

Research on early learning and development is clear, children learn best when what they learn in one setting connects with and prepares them for what they will learn next. Recognizing that significant achievement gaps continue to exist for disadvantaged students even after major reform efforts with no early childhood foundations have been implemented. In this district like much of the nation what children experience before they enter school is not consistent with what they will experience when they enter school. This disconnect is responsible for much of the differences in how children experience the transition into Kindergarten and their ultimate school success.

Adults who are responsible for closing the achievement gap and creating smooth school transitions are not always knowledgeable about best practices for creating change in schools and enhancing the experience for the early learner. We recognize that training and planning are necessary to develop high quality programs to build stronger foundations for students.

Mission and Vision

The mission of the district is to ensure a quality education for all students through quality teaching and support from all staff members. To ensure the success for all children requires that we act with an intentional focus to provide equitable opportunities. While the responsibility for this effort lies with the district, ultimately the success for our children depends on community-wide collaboration and engagement. We frame our early learning initiative work from the perspective that our effect as a school district varies based on the family, community, and the individual student. Therefore, we are focusing

our work on providing a developmental system that encompasses all the contexts of a child's life.

Our students will enter with some pre-kindergarten learning experience and ready for school. Our schools will be equipped to academically prepare kindergarten students to be successful grade-level learners by third grade by making intentional changes to adult practice, skills and development of knowledge.

A Framework for the District Early Learning Strategy

The Framework for Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating Pre K-third grade Approaches (Kauerz & Coffman 2013) was the research theory of this plan. The Framework outlines the eight components identified as crucial to attend to in creating an effective early education continuum. This district plan combines these components into a two-phase plan with six components. This document outlines goals, strategies, activities, and initial training. These include:

- Resources For Cross Sector Engagement
- Administrator and Leadership Quality
- Teacher/Teaching Quality
- Instructional Tools
- Learning Environment
- Data Driven Improvement
- Engaged Families
- Access, Transitions, and Pathways

Initial Steps

Create Collaborative Committees

The implementation of the early learning action training plan requires the collaboration and training of community and district stakeholders. All stakeholders will be informed of the strategies. The plan will reflect the culture and context of the community and its resources. Four multi-level committees will provide an intentional method of building and sustaining relationships that provide support to school staff members, families, and students through professional development, and transition to school planning.

District stakeholder training will focus on the importance of early childhood education, intervention, the role of the stakeholders, district early learning goals and the data supported the need for planning and implementation in the district. Stakeholder groups will include district planning committee, advisory council, district leadership, and building transition teams.

Early Learning Committees

District Planning Team

The internal planning team will consist of district teachers and administrators who will work cooperatively to solidify the early learning plan by meeting bi-monthly throughout the school year to:

- Develop a common understanding of the early learning and transition plans
- Support development of the action steps
- Provide input /feedback on all phases of the plan from various perspectives of the district.

The team will also be responsible for developing the initial transition activities from pre-k to kindergarten and each grade through third grade which may also include training for stakeholders.

Advisory Council

The advisory council will consist of community members, school board members, funders, parents, child care providers, teachers, and district administrators. These stakeholders will work cooperatively to learn strategies to increase awareness of the district early learning plan and provide feedback on community needs, the relevance of the action plans, and public relations efforts.

Community collaborations include agencies that provide support to families in transition. They may include health services, financial security services, vision services, mental health, special education and transportation. Birth to three early childhood programs and Head Start programs will be a part of the council as ad hoc transition committees since they have direct contact and supports for the preschool students entering kindergarten. Those teams will consist of agency program directors, family outreach workers, instructional coaches and classroom teaching staff members. The council will meet at least three times a year for planning and training.

District Leadership Team

The leadership team consists of building, district and department leaders who will support the vision and action strategies of the early learning plan by supporting professional development, curriculum alignment, quality instruction and support of programs that provide opportunities for young children and their families. The team will promote not only the district but early learning programs through school communications

with families and staff members. The leadership team will receive monthly training and updates.

Building Transition Teams

The elementary school teams will consist of the building principal, a kindergarten teacher, the school's family advocate and a preschool teacher and others as designated by the principal. Each school will have a designated school coordinator that serves on the district planning team. The coordinator will attend the district planning team meetings and provide training to their building teams. Each building will have a transition team that will:

- Serve as a liaison between preschool age students and community and district preschool program by inviting preschoolers in for kindergarten visits, registration or transition events, creating a simple enrollment process for parents.
- Follow- up on families who choose not to attend kindergarten and report on the follow-up efforts.
- Incorporate the early childhood work in the building's professional learning plans and work with community members to raise the awareness of the importance of early learning opportunities
- Develop a school plan in alignment with the district plan and activities.

Goals

The early learning strategy goals will be the basis for the professional development so that the stakeholders can execute the action plan in the community and district. Each goal has strategies, activities, and a professional development plan.

Phase I

To see meaningful student achievement outcomes, intentional changes to adult practice and skills must first be implemented. Therefore, we will begin our strategy implementation with the following components and goals:

- *Cross Sector Work & Family Engagement*

  Goal 1: Strengthening Community and Family Engagement

- *Continuity and Pathways*

  Goal 2: Increasing enrollment in pre-k & creating more effective transitions

- *Administrator Effectiveness & Teacher Effectiveness*

  Goal 3: Expanding high quality professional development with attention to literacy, math and social emotional learning (SEL).

Phase II

The last three components in the framework will occur simultaneously and in collaboration with the district Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment (CIA) Department to create a coherent pre-k through third grade educational experience.

- *Instructional Tools*

Goal 4: Use of aligned curriculum and assessments across pe-k through third grade

- *Learning Environment*

  Goal 5: Establish quality learning environments to reflect collaboration, diversity, inclusion and varied learning styles.

- *Data-driven Improvement*

  Goal 6: Use data to identify and address achievement gaps and instructional quality.

Evaluation Plan

Each component of the plan will have an evaluation of effectiveness based on follow-up surveys, execution and completion of activities and attendance at training and events. Ultimately, we will see evidence of increased kindergarten entry literacy skills, with goals based on the district's theory of action and district improvement plan. Also, there will be data collected on increased in-school parent involvement and attendance. The plan will be reviewed and updated annually based on evaluation results. Grant funded activity evaluations conducted evaluated by an outside evaluator will include recommendations for consideration in the annual review. Data collection will include but is not limited to participation records such as meeting calendars, minutes, and sign-in sheets, family data, participant satisfaction, PD feedback. Also, Partnership compacts, preschool tour records, transition activity attendance and community referral data will be collected to document the participation of community and school. At the school level academic data is collected through PLC notes and classroom assessments (FP-BAS, letter-sound ID). Classroom observations, coaching logs, and principal walkthroughs

will document adult practice changes. Analysis of the implementation of completed curriculum documents for early grades and school improvement plans will add to the information collected for determining if changes are occurring in the alignment of the early grades.

Communication Plan

A multi-media plan will provide stakeholders with schedules of workshops and activities, ongoing information, data, and updates. Media forums will include postcard mailings, email, radio, print media, building marquees, class and school newsletters, social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.), district and school website pages, partners' websites and text messages. Each committee will be responsible for communicating the progress of a specific component. The advisory council will communicate on cross-sector and family engagement; the district leadership team will communicate on phase 2 components: instructional tools, and data-driven improvement. The building transition teams will communicate progress on continuity and pathways along with the district planning team which will also communicate about the learning environment.

Goals and Action Strategy Implementation

Cross Sector Work & Family Engagement

Goal 1 Strengthen Community and Family Engagement

Parent involvement can positively affect a child's cognitive and social-emotional success. Schools that highly encourage and offer opportunities for involvement are more likely to have parents involved (Van Voorhis, Maier, Epstein, & Lloyd, 2013; Galindo & Sheldon, 2012).

Community Strategies/Activities

- Increase the number of home and center child care providers who collaborate with the district on kindergarten transitions and readiness.
    - *Strategic outreach meetings/training for providers who serve future students living in the district catchment areas*-See professional development timeline
    - *Encourage providers to participate in Great Start Connect Quality Rating system (QRIS)*- Biennial fall workshops
    - *Conduct tours and kindergarten visits in the district schools with providers*- Annually March -May
    - *Collaborate on providing quality preschool experiences for 4-year-olds in their care through workshops, monthly resource sharing, etc.*
    - *Invite members to participate on the district early childhood transition planning committee*

- Collaborate with community early childhood partners on common messaging to increase preschool enrollment.
    - *Provide preschool slots community-wide to accommodate family needs*- Annually July/August
    - *Shared enrollment procedures and round-up activities*- Annually March-August
    - *Communicate with partners to share information about events*- Monthly
    - *Partner with multicultural community centers (Burmese, Hispanic, Arabic) to share information* - Monthly

Family Strategies/Activities

- Provide a variety of communication tools for pre-k through 3rd-grade families to stay connected with the schools.
    - *Provide culturally relevant workshops in multiple languages on high interest topics as identified by parents through surveys and interviews*- Monthly
    - *Frequent print communication in English, Spanish, Burmese and Arabic*
        - *Newsletters*
        - *Website*
        - *Facebook*
- Strengthen home-school partnerships to build relationships and trust through the continuum.- Monthly workshops, see professional development timeline
    - *Develop a shared vision of early education roles with parents*

- *Shared understanding of academic goals*
- *Positive Behavior Supports*
- *Home- School Instructional supports*
- *Parent advisory boards*

Goal 1 Professional Development Plan

Workshops will be provided in school buildings, childcare centers, community centers and churches to get maximum attendance, develop partnerships and introduce caregivers and families to a variety of programs and facilities in the community. Providers and families will have a joint meeting at least three times a year to maintain the shared vision and understanding.

Workshop Topics

These are initial topics based on the action plan strategies. Topics may change each year based on needs and the feedback of the participants. A variety of expert presenters based on the topic will train participants.

Each workshop is a minimum of 2 hours and handouts will be provided.

	Childcare Providers	**Families**
September	Topic: Understanding the District's Strategic Plan	Topic: School- "Where do I fit in?"
October	Topic: Preschool Curriculum and Developmentally Appropriate Practice (Joint Meeting)	
November	Topic: Managing the QRIS System to Increase Quality Rating	Kindergarten Expectations/Classroom Visits
January	Topic: Kindergarten Expectations/Classroom Visits	Topic: Providing Diverse Opportunities for Each Child
February	Topic: Community/Family Needs for Early Care and Education (Joint Meeting)	
March	Topic: Teaching ELL through Play and Vocabulary Development	Topic: Understanding the District's Strategic Plan
May	Topic: Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS)- How to Prepare incoming Kindergarten students for Success (Joint Meeting)	

Resources:

- Locations
- Presenters
- AV equipment
- Refreshments
- District strategic plan
- Early Childhood Standards of Quality
- DAP Module 1
- Great Start to Quality handbook
- Kindergarten curriculum guide
- Castro, D. C., Ayankoya, B., & Kasprzak, C. (2011). *The New Voices= Nuevas Voces Guide to Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Early Childhood/The New Voices= Nuevas Voces Facilitator's Guide to Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Early Childhood*. Baltimore: Brookes Publishing Company.
- District PBIS handbook
- PBIS overview video
- Childcare providers contact information

Continuity and Pathways

Goal 2 Create effective transitions from Preschool to Kindergarten

Schools that have a collaborative relationship with preschool providers align curriculum and practices. Schools that have a collaborative relationship with parents and orient them on the school have students with early positive educational experiences. (Ahtola et al., 2011).

Activities/Strategies

- Create elementary transition teams to facilitate preschool to kindergarten transition activities and increase early/on-time enrollment. –December
    - *District transition team designs district-wide transition plan*
    - *Building teams and plans created at each building*
    - *Transition Data Meetings each spring and fall from grade to grade*
    - *Coordinate summer transition opportunities for students*
- Create internal systems for data collection to identify areas of need and progress-Quarterly collections
    - *Preschool experience of kindergarteners*
    - *Enrollment*
    - *Mobility/stability*
    - *Student achievement*
    - *Exit and entry benchmark score differences to monitor summer slide*
- Provide Family Supports for all families that will create barrier-free transitions-Ongoing

    - *Bilingual supports*
    - *Connect at-risk families to non-educational services with limited barriers*
    - *Kindergarten readiness materials created for preschool parents in multiple languages*
    - *Kindergarten readiness workshops held for parents bi-monthly*
    - *Build relationships and trust between families and schools in the early grades*
    - *Secretary training related to transitions and family supports*
    - *Bus personnel training on behavior and bus safety*
- Collaborate with Head Start and private centers to create smooth transitions from outside agencies to the district- January
    - *Develop data sharing agreements*
    - *Kindergarten visits*
    - *Registration activities*
    - *Home- school partnerships*

Goal 2 Professional Development Plan

Workshops will be provided in school buildings and at the central administration offices.

Workshop Topics

The topics in the plan are initial topics based on the action plan strategies. Topics will change each year based on the needs of the plan, new membership, and the feedback from the participants. Topics presented by central office administrators and early childhood committee members are designed mostly for internal district staff members. These topics will also be a part of the district professional development menu and offered to all school staff members as options during voluntary PD opportunities each quarter. Each workshop is a minimum of 2 hours and handouts will be provided.

Participants	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer
School Transition Teams	1-Understanding the importance of PK/K Transitions 2-Review of District Plan	1-Review if transition data 2-Facilitation of building plan development	1-Data Meetings -early grade teams 2- Summer Transition Activities for Greatest effect	1-Kindergarten Entry Assessments 2-Working with First Time School Families
Building Office Staff Members	Early Grade Attendance Matters	What/Why is data important?	Data Collection Systems Review	Data Warehouse Systems Refreshers
Parent Advocates/ Interventionists	Supporting Families through Home Routine Changes for Kindergarten Entry	Parent Involvement During Transition to Elementary School	Outreach for All Families	Recruitment and Enrollment Practices
Childcare Providers	Preschool Outcomes and Kindergarten Readiness	Public School District Enrollment Practices	Understanding the importance of PK/K Transitions and Data Sharing	Working with First Time School Families

Resources:

- Locations
- Presenters
- AV equipment
- Refreshments
- Calendar of meetings
- District Early Learning/Transition Plan
- Transition data
- Attendance Matters website
- PowerPoint decks for
    - Importance of PK/K Transitions
    - Working with first-time school families
    - Supporting families through home routine changes
    - Parent involvement
    - Outreach for all families
- District expected preschool outcomes
- District enrollment procedure

Administrator and Teacher Effectiveness

Goal 3 Expand high quality professional development with attention to literacy, math, and social emotional development for teacher, administrative, and non-certified staff members' leadership quality improvement.

Teachers who receive professional development that is both procedural and conceptual with more than 50 hours of support in intensive direct instruction on the foundations of literacy instruction show gains in student achievement within a year (Wasik & Hindman, 2011).

Strategies/Activities

- Provide professional development to internal stakeholders to strengthen the early learning community academically and culturally- Quarterly.
    - *Principals participate in professional development related to quality instruction and developmentally appropriate practice*
    - *Collaborate with district partners to provide regular, relevant, horizontal and vertical professional development to early grade teachers focused on researched based quality instruction and teacher-child relationships*
    - *Provide regular instructional coaching for early grade teachers*
    - *Providing cultural competence professional development to staff members*
    - *Work collaboratively with behavior interventionist on common tools for observing/ identifying challenging behaviors and creating a process for behavior intervention*

- *Develop a shared understanding among non-certified staff members through training*

- Align research –based instructional practices in early grades to ensure success for all learners- Monthly
    - *Support students needing interventions(MTSS)*
    - *Support ELL learners*
    - *Support curriculum adoption and vertical grade level alignment*
    - *Support quality instruction through observation, feedback, and modeling*
    - *Use data reports and administrator feedback as a tool to reflect on practice in early grades*
    - *Use a variety of data as evidence of improvements in instruction over time*

Goal 3 Professional Development Plan

The district provides all teachers with 37 workshop hours of professional development. Professional development topics include:

- District curriculum
- Literacy benchmarks assessments
- Progress monitoring
- Science instruction
- Classroom management

Embedded professional development is provided weekly by the building instructional coach based on data, observed teacher need, and requests.

The after school Teacher Training Institute (TTI) provides an opportunity for additional hours. The TTI is an optional menu of professional development courses and series focused on the areas identified in goal 3. Teachers will be paid a stipend to attend sessions and are encouraged to attend a related series of workshops.

- Literacy instruction
- Workshop model for reading and math
- Technology integration
- Reading intervention
- Data analysis
- Parent outreach
- Best practice for instructional effect

Principals receive monthly professional development as a part of the principal meeting. This professional development designed around a current research-based book is relevant to the early learning continuum and includes strategies that are easily applied. Also, principals will receive extensive training on teacher and administrator evaluation tools so that there is inter-rater reliability for the teacher rubrics and observations. Leadership walk-through classroom observations will be conducted monthly to support principals in observing instructional practice. The team will consist of district level. Walkthroughs occur monthly with the administrator and teacher coaches. District level teams will support principals quarterly on classroom observation walkthroughs to determine further professional development needs of the building and grade level teachers.

Resources:

- Locations
- Presenters
- AV equipment
- Refreshments
- District curriculum
- Common Core State Standards
- Curriculum resources (Journeys, Investigations)
- District instructional guidebook
- Implementation Guides for:
    - Workshop model
    - Literacy assessments
- Response to intervention plans
- CHAMPS books
- Dibels Next training manuals
- BCAMSC training documents

Instructional Tools

Goal 4: Use aligned curriculum and assessments across early learning with a focus on literacy and math.

Aligned standards create shared expectations of student achievement, focus and depth on curriculum content, and quality assessments (Porter, McMaken, Hwang, & Yang, 2011).

Strategies/Activities

- Support CIA with curriculum alignment process to ensure it is developmentally appropriate, rigorous, relevant and sequential.- Annually Spring/Summer
    - *Use state alignment documents to implement Common Core State Standards (CCSS) K-third grade*
    - *Use state Early Childhood Standards of Quality (ECSQ) to align pre-k with CCSS and Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP)strategies*
    - *Reference curriculum standards in PLC, PD and parent- teacher conferences*
    - *Engage and support teachers and administrators with resources for developing a cohesive curricular framework.*
- Support CIA with the development of common relevant assessments to ensure efficiency and consistency of instruction and data use throughout the

continuum developmentally appropriate, rigorous, relevant, and sequential-Annually Spring/Summer.

- *Create common measures of progress and a timeline of assessments*
- *Develop consistent assessment practices and inter-rater reliability*
- *Use assessment data for timely interventions through a Multi-Tiered Support System (MTSS)*
- *Share preschool data with principals and kindergarten teachers*
- *End of year vertical data transition meetings for early grades*

- Develop and provide Curriculum and Assessment focused Professional Development on creating a shared understanding among instructional leaders and staff members.
    - *Collaborate with district partners to provide regular, relevant, horizontal and vertical professional development to early grade teachers focused on curriculum alignment, delivery, and assessment.*

Goal 4 Professional Development Plan

With the training and support of a curriculum consultant, teacher teams at each grade level will learn the process of curriculum development. Teams of teachers will work to develop vertical and horizontal curriculum that includes power standards, formative assessments, and benchmark assessments from the Common Core Curriculum in multiple sessions of training and work. The work will continue in phases throughout the school year to maximize time and incorporate adjustments.

Session	Topic	1-Year Timeline
1	Understanding Power Standards	Fall
2	Unwrapping Standards	Fall
3	Planning Assessments in PLC	Winter
4-7	Works sessions- Unwrapping Standards	Winter-Summer
8-9	Creating Assessments	Summer
10	Presentation to grade level teachers	Fall

Curriculum teams will receive a stipend for summer work sessions. Teacher presenters will support the fidelity of the implementation.

Resources:

- Locations
- Presenters
- AV equipment
- Common Core State Standards
- Bailey, K., & Jakicic, C. (2010). *Common formative assessment: A toolkit for professional learning communities at work*. Bloomington: Solution Tree Press.
- Bailey, K., Jakicic, C. & Spiller, J (2013). *Collaborating for success with the common core: A toolkit for professional learning communities at work.* Bloomington: Solution Tree Press.
- Houghton Mifflin Journeys Series
- Investigations Math Series

Learning Environment

Goal 5: Establish quality learning environments to reflect collaboration, diversity, inclusion and varied learning styles in each Early Learning classroom/building.

When children participate in developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant classrooms, they have better academic achievement, social adjustment and higher rates of graduation (Coggshall, Osher, & Colombi, 2013; Mokrova, Broekhuizen, & Burchinal, 2015).

Strategy/Activities

- Investigate use of a nationally recognized tool to evaluate learning environment quality (i.e. ECERS-R/E, CLASS, or ECCOM)- Summer 2017
- Support the elementary schools in creating and sustaining an inviting family-friendly environment with culturally inclusive resources for parents to support family learning – Ongoing.
    - *Provide translation/interpreter services*
    - *Multi-language newsletters and referral resources*
    - *Multi- language study/homework tasks*
    - *Partnerships with VOCES and Burma Center*
- Address learning styles in instructional practice- Ongoing.
    - *Ensure instruction is planned and delivered with multiple learning styles evident.*
    - *Support teachers in providing active, child-centered curriculum supported learning activities.*

- Create a learning environment in which diverse learners have individual success
    - *Support teachers in providing appropriate individualized instruction*
    - *Support school in maintaining learning environments that provide access for all learners including English Language Learners(ELL) and students with Individualized Education Plans(IEP)*
    - *Maintain bilingual preschool classrooms in neighborhoods where needed*

Goal 5 Professional Development Plan

An annual professional learning plan is recommended specifically for the early learning classroom teachers to occur throughout the school year. To meet district goals and improve the quality of the classroom instruction, the following are recommendations for standard training for all early learning staff members.

Topic	**Month**	**Grade**
Curriculum Overview	August	K-2
High Scope Implementation	Monthly	Pre-k
Culturally Relevant Teaching and Learning	September	PK-2
Benchmark Assessment	September/ October/ January	K-2
Developmentally Appropriate Practice	November	PK-K
Workshop Model	September/December	K-2

Resources:

- Locations
- Presenters
- AV equipment
- District curriculum
- High Scope teacher resources
- Hammond, Z. (2014). *Culturally responsive teaching and the brain: Promoting authentic engagement and rigor among culturally and linguistically diverse students*. Corwin Press.
- Bredekamp, S. (2009). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8*. National Association for the Education of Young Children. Washington D.C.: NAEYC
- Sammons, L. (2009). *Guided math: A framework for mathematics instruction*. Huntington Beach: Shell Education.

Data Driven Improvement

Goal 6: Use data to identify and address achievement gaps and instructional quality.

Teaching and learning do not change merely from the collection of data. It is practical to use data to identify unsuccessful practices and the implementation of new best practice (Crawford, Cobb, Clifford, & Ritchie, 2013; Mandinach, 2012).

Strategy/Activities

- Strengthen the system for collecting and transferring preschool data to kindergarten teachers-January 2017
    - *Create a data transfer system between the district and Head Start*
    - *Collaborate with the ISD and the district technology departments to transfer data within the district*
    - *Establish collaborative spring data days between giving and receiving early grade teachers*
- Establish pre-k through third grade expectations and goals - Ongoing
    - *Minimize the number of initiatives*
    - *Monitor instruction*
    - *Monitor data (academic and behavioral)*
    - *Implement MTSS*
    - *Support PLC among teachers and administrators*
- Use data to gain knowledge about student achievement- Ongoing
    - Student progress
    - Achievement gap

    - Instructional effectiveness
    - Kindergarten readiness

- Use data to make decisions for improvement
    - *Allocate resources for intervention*
    - *Establish professional development priorities*
    - *Plan for transitions*
    - *Determine curriculum and instruction resource needs*
    - *Incorporate data into parent conversations*
    - *Program improvement/realignment*

Goal 6 Professional Development Plan

The professional development for this goal focuses on developing and sustaining systems that support the use of data to guide instruction at the classroom level and decision-making at the school and district level.

- Teachers trained by PLC leaders on the professional learning community protocols (Dufour & Dufour, 2013) - Ongoing.
- Response to Intervention (RtI) instruction will be designed based on the bi-monthly data findings.
- Principals will tier teachers based on their needs to design a professional learning plan that is individualized and relevant to make a change- November.
- Instructional coaches will model, observe and provide resources for teachers in their classrooms- Ongoing.

- Teachers, coaches, and leaders will be taught to retrieve data reports from the data warehouse. These reports will be used to analyze student growth, trends, and plan for instruction. Reports will also be used to make quarterly effect reports and for the district data dashboard- Ongoing.

Resources:

- Buffum, A., & Mattos, M. (2014). *Pyramid response to intervention: RTI, professional learning communities, and how to respond when kids don't learn*. Solution Tree Press.
- DuFour, R., & DuFour, R. (2013). *Learning by doing: A handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work TM*. Solution Tree Press.

Acronyms

CIA- Curriculum, Assessment and Instruction Department of the school district

CCSS- Common Core State Standards

EC- Early Childhood

ISD- Intermediate School District

DAP- Developmentally Appropriate Practice

ECSQ- Early Childhood Standards of Quality

ELL- English Language Learners

IEP- Individualized Education Plan

MTSS- Multi-Tiered System of Support

PLC- Professional Learning Community

PD- Professional Development

Pre-k- Pre-kindergarten- the year before Kindergarten

SEL- Social emotional learning

TTI- Teacher Training Institute

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Crawford, G. M., Cobb, C. T., Clifford, R. M., & Ritchie, S. (2013). The groundswell for transforming pre-kindergarten through third grade. *First school: Transforming Pre-k through third grade for african american, latino, and low-income children*, 9.

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Mandinach, E. B. (2012). A perfect time for data use: Using data-driven decision making to inform practice. *Educational Psychologist, 47*(2), 71-85. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2012.667064

Mokrova, I., Broekhuizen, M., & Burchinal, M. (2015). Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classroom quality and children's social and academic skills in early elementary grades. *Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness*. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED562445.pdf

Porter, A., McMaken, J., Hwang, J., & Yang, R. (2011). Common core standards the new US intended curriculum. *Educational Researcher, 40*(3), 103-116. doi: 10.3102/0013189X11405038

Van Voorhis, F. L., Maier, M. F., Epstein, J. L., & Lloyd, C. M. (2013). The effect of family Involvement on the Education of Children Ages 3 to 8: A focus on literacy and math achievement outcomes and social-emotional skills. *MDRC*. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED545474.pdf

Wasik, B. A., & Hindman, A. H. (2011). Improving vocabulary and pre-literacy skills of at-risk preschoolers through teacher professional development. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *103*(2), 455-469. doi: 10.1037/a0023067

Appendix A1: Presentation

Introduction to the Early Learning Action Strategy Plan

Creating a Strong Foundation for students through Professional Development

Chandra Youngblood, Presenter

Agenda Day 1

Introductions/Ice Breaker
Purpose
Overview of the workshops
Mission and Vision Activity
Introduce the PntK-3rd Grade Framework
Introduce District Plan
Goal I
Group discussion
Lunch Break
Gallery Walk
Goal2
Group discussion
Gallery Walk
Summary and Reflections

Purpose of Workshops

- Introduce and "unpack" the District PK-3 Grade Action Strategy Plan
- Understand the goals, strategies and activities
- Discuss implementation and stakeholder participation
- Understand the committee roles
- Form work groups to begin the implementation

Workshop Overview

Day I
- *Cross Sector Work & Family Engagement*
- *Continuity and Pathways*

Day 2
- *Administrator Effectiveness & Teacher Effectiveness*
- *Instructional Tools*

Day 3
- *Learning Environment*
- *Data-driven Improvement*

Mission and Vision

District Mission

To ensure a quality education for all students through quality teaching and support from all staff.

Vision

Our students will enter ready for school.

Our schools will be equipped to academically prepare kindergarten students to be successful grade-level learners by third grade by making intentional changes to adult practice, skills and development of knowledge.

Pre-K-3'd Grade Framework

The Framework for Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating Pre K-3'd Grade Approaches (Kauerz & Coffman 2013).

District Plan
6 Components

Cross Sector Work & Family Engagement

Continuity and Pathways

Administrator Effectiveness & Teacher Effectiveness

District Plan
6 Components

Instructional Tools

Learning Environment

Data-driven Improvement

6 PK-3rd District Goals

Goal 1: Strengthening Community and Family Engagement

Goal 2: Increasing enrollment in Pre K-K & creating more effective transitions

Goal 3: Expanding high quality professional development with attention to literacy, math and social emotional learning (SEL).

District Goals

Goal **4:** Use of aligned curriculum and assessments across PreK-3rct Grade

Goal 5: Establish quality learning environments to reflect collaboration, diversity, inclusion and varied learning styles.

Goal 6: Use data to identify and address achievement gaps and instructional quality.

Cross Sector Work & Family Engagement
Goal 1Strengthen Community and Family Engagement

Parent involvement can positively affect a child's cognitive and social-emotional success. Schools that highly encourage and offer opportunities for involvement are more likely to have parents involved (Van Voorhis, Maier, Epstein, & Lloyd,2013; Galindo, & Sheldon, 2012).

Cross Sector Work & Family Engagement
Goal 1Strengthen Community and Family Engagement

Community Strategy 1

Increase the number of home and center childcare providers who collaborate with the district on kindergarten transitions and readiness.

Cross Sector Work & Family Engagement
Goal 1Strengthen Community and Family Engagement

Community Strategy 1Activities

- *-Strategic outreach meetings/training for providers who serve future students living in the district catchment areas-See* professional developmenttimeline
- *-Encourage providers to participate in Great Start connect Quality Rating system (QRIS}-* Biennial fall workshops

Cross Sector Work & Family Engagement
Goal 1Strengthen Community and Family Engagement

Community Strategy 1Activities Continued

- *-Conduct tours and Kindergarten visits in the district schools with providers-* Annually March -May
- *-Collaborate on providing quality preschool experiences for 4-year-olds in their care through workshops, monthly resource sharing, etc.*
- *-Invite members to participate on the district Early Childhood Transition Planning Committee*

Cross Sector Work & Family Engagement
Goal 1Strengthen Community and Family Engagement

Community Strategy 2

Collaborate with community early childhood partners on common messaging to increase preschool enrollment.

Cross Sector Work & Family Engagement
Goal 1Strengthen Community and Family Engagement

Community Strategy 2 Activities

- *– Provide preschool slots community-wide to accommodate family needs-* Annually July/August
- *-Shared enrollment procedures and round-up activities-* Annually March-August
- *– Communicate with partners to share information about events-* Monthly
- *– Partner with community multicultural centers (Burmese, Hispanic, Arabic) to share information -* Monthly

Cross Sector Work & Family Engagement
Goal 1Strengthen Community and Family Engagement

Community Strategies/Activities
Small Group Discussion

What other strategies can be added?

How can we involve other stakeholders?

What commitments need to be made to start implementation?

Cross Sector Work & Family Engagement
Goal 1Strengthen Community and Family Engagement

Family Strategy 1

Provide a variety of communication tools for PreK-3 families to stay connected with the schools.

Cross Sector Work & Family Engagement
Goal 1Strengthen Community and Family Engagement

Family Strategy 1 Activities

-*Provide culturally relevant workshops in multiple languages on high interest topics as identified by parents through surveys and interviews*-Monthly

-*Frequent print communication in English, Spanish, Burmese and Arabic*
- *Newsletters*
- *Website*
- *Facebook*

Cross Sector Work & Family Engagement
Goal 1Strengthen Community and Family Engagement

Family Strategy 2

Strengthen Home-School Partnerships to build relationships and trust through the continuum.- Monthly workshops, see Professional Development timeline

Cross Sector Work & Family Engagement
Goal 1Strengthen Community and Family Engagement

Family Strategy 2 Activities

-*Develop a shared vision of early education roles with parents*
-*Shared understanding of academic goals*
–*Positive Behavior Supports*
–*Home- School Instructional supports*
–*Parent Advisory Boards*

Cross Sector Work & Family Engagement
Goal 1Strengthen Community and Family Engagement

Family Strategies/Activities

Small Group Discussion

What other strategies can be added?
How can we involve other stakeholders?
What existing policies and practices create barriers?
What commitments need to be made to start implementation?

Cross Sector Work & Family Engagement **Goal 1Strengthen Community and Family Engagement**

Community Workshops

Childcare Provider Topics

Understanding the District's Strategic Plan

Managing the QRIS System to Increase Quality Rating

Kindergarten Expectations/Classroom Visits

Teaching ELL through Play and Vocabulary Development

Cross Sector Work & Family Engagement
Goal 1Strengthen Community and Family Engagement
Community Workshops
Family Topics

School- "Where do I fit in?"

Kindergarten Expectations/Classroom Visits

Providing Diverse Opportunities for Each Child

Understanding the District's Strategic Plan

Cross Sector Work & Family Engagement
Goal 1Strengthen Community and Family Engagement
Community Workshops
Joint Community and Family Topics

Preschool Curriculum and Developmentally Appropriate Practice

Community/Family Needs for Early Care and Education

Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS)- How to Prepare incoming Kindergarten students for Success

Goal 1
Gallery Walk

Look at each small group's poster

Use sticky notes to add questions, comments.

Continuity and Pathways
Goal 2: Increasing enrollment in Pre K-K & creating more effective transitions

Schools that have a collaborative relationship with preschool providers to align curriculum and practices and with parents to orient them on the school result in early learners' positive educational experiences. (Ahtola, Silinskas, Poikonen, Kontoniemi Niemi, & Nurmi, 2011).

Continuity and Pathways
Goal 2: Increasing enrollment in Pre K-K & creating more effective transitions

Strategy 1

Create Elementary Transition Teams to facilitate Preschool to Kindergarten transition activities and increase early/on-time enrollment.

Continuity and Pathways
Goal 2: Increasing enrollment in Pre K-K & creating more effective transitions

Strategy 1 Activities

-District transition team designs district-wide transition plan

– Building teams and plans created at each building

-Transition Data Meetings each spring and/or fall from grade to grade

– Coordinate summer transition opportunities for students

Continuity and Pathways

Goal 2: Increasing enrollment in Pre K-K & creating more effective transitions

Strategy 2

Create internal systems for data collection to identify areas of need and progress

Continuity and Pathways

Goal 2: Increasing enrollment in Pre K-K & creating more effective transitions

Strategy 2 Activities

- *Preschool Experience of Kindergarteners*
- *Enrollment*
- *Mobility/stability*
- *Student achievement*
- *Exit and entry benchmark score differences to monitor summer slide*

Continuity and Pathways

Goal 2: Increasing enrollment in Pre K-K & creating more effective transitions

Strategy 3

Provide Family Supports for all families that will create barrier free transitions

Continuity and Pathways

Goal 2: Increasing enrollment in Pre K-K & creating more effective transitions

Strategy 3 Activities

- *Bilingual supports*
- *Connect at-risk families to non-educational services with limited barriers*
- *Kindergarten readiness materials created for preschool parents in multiple languages*

Continuity and Pathways

Goal 2: Increasing enrollment in Pre K-K & creating more effective transitions

Strategy 3 Activities Continued

- *Kindergarten Readiness workshops held for parents bi-monthly*
- *Build relationships and trust between families and schools in the early grades*
- *Secretary training related to transitions and family supports*
- *Bus Personnel Training on behavior and bus safety*

Continuity and Pathways

Goal 2: Increasing enrollment in Pre K-K & creating more effective transitions

Strategy 4

Collaborate with Head Start and private centers to create smooth transitions from outside agencies to the district

Continuity and Pathways

Goal 2: Increasing enrollment in Pre K-K & creating more effective transitions

Strategy 4 Activities

- *Develop data sharing agreements*
- *Kindergarten visits*
- *Registration activities*
- *-Home- School Partnerships*

Continuity and Pathways

Goal 2: Increasing enrollment in Pre K-K & creating more effective transitions

Strategies/Activities

Small Group Discussion

What other strategies can be added?

What existing policies and practices create barriers?

How can we involve other stakeholders?

What commitments need to be made to start implementation?

Goal 2 Gallery Walk

Look at each small group's poster

Use sticky notes to add questions, comments.

Continuity and Pathways

Goal2: Increasing enrollment in Pre K-K & creating more effective transitions

School Transition Team Workshop Topics

Understanding the importance of PK/K Transitions
Review of District Plan
Review if transition data
Facilitation of building plan development
Data Meetings -early grade teams
Summer Transition Activities for Greatest Impact
Kindergarten Entry Assessments
Working with First Time School Families

Continuity and Pathways

Goal 2: Increasing enrollment in Pre K-K & creating more effective transitions

Building Office Staff Workshop Topics

Early Grade Attendance Matters
What/Why is Data is Important?
Data Collection Systems Review
Data Warehouse Systems Refreshers

Continuity and Pathways

Goal 2: Increasing enrollment in Pre K-K & creating more effective transitions

Parent Advocates/Interventionists Workshop Topics

Supporting Families through Home Routine Changes for Kindergarten Entry
Parent involvement during transition to Elementary School
Outreach for all families
Recruitment and Enrollment Practices

Continuity and Pathways

Goal 2: Increasing enrollment in Pre K-K & creating more effective transitions

Childcare Providers Workshop Topics

Preschool Outcomes and Kindergarten Readiness

Public School District Enrollment Practices

Understanding the importance of PK/K Transitions and Data Sharing

Working with first time school families

Exit Ticket

Questions and Reflections

What questions come up for you?

What would you like to know more about?

Explain what you are taking away with you today?

Day 2 Agenda

- Review Goals and Strategies from Day 1
- Reflections and/or questions from Day 1
- Today's Components and Goals
- Goal 3
- Group discussion
- Lunch Break
  Cafe discussions
  Goa14
  Group discussion
- Cafe discussions
- Summary and Reflections

Review Day 1 Goals

Cross Sector Work & Family Engagement

- Goal 1:Strengthening Community and Family Engagement

Continuity and Pathways

Goal 2: Increasing enrollment in Pre K-K & creating more effective transitions

Review Day 1 Strategies

Strengthening Community & Family Engagement

1. Home and Childcare Center visits
2. Community EC partner collaboration
3. Variety of communication methods
4. Strengthen home school-partnerships

Review Day 1 Strategies

Increasing enrollment in Pre K-K & creating more effective transitions

1. Provide professional Development to internal stakeholders to strengthen the early learning community academically and culturally.

Today's Components and Goals

Administrator Effectiveness & Teacher Effectiveness

- Goal 3: Expanding high quality professional development with attention to literacy, math and social emotional learn

Instructional Tools

- Goal 4: Use of aligned curriculum and assessments across PreK-third grade

Administrator and Teacher Effectiveness

Goal 3 High quality professional development

Teachers who receive professional development that is both procedural and conceptual with more than 50 hours of support in intensive direct instruction on the foundations of literacy instruction show gains in student achievement within a year (Wasik & Hindman, 2011).

Administrator and Teacher Effectiveness

Goal 3 High quality professional development

Strategy 1

Provide professional Development to internal stakeholders to strengthen the early learning community academically and culturally.

Administrator and Teacher Effectiveness

Goal 3 High quality professional development

Strategy 1Activities

– *Principals participate In professional development related to quality instruction and developmentally appropriate practice*

– *Collaborate with district partners to provide regular, relevant, horizontal and vertical professional development to early grade teachers focused on researched based quality instruction and teacher-child relationships*

-Provide regular instructional coaching for early grade teachers

Administrator and Teacher Effectiveness

Goal 3 High quality professional development

Strategy 1 Activities continued

– *Providing cultural competence professional development to staff*

– *Work collaboratively with behavior interventionist an common tools for observing/ identifying challenging behaviors and creating a process for Behavior intervention*

-Develop a shared understanding among non-certified staff through training

Administrator and Teacher Effectiveness

Goal 3 High quality professional development

Strategy 2

Align research -based instructional practices in early grades to ensure success for all

Administrator and Teacher Effectiveness

Goal 3 High quality professional development

Strategy 2 Activities

- *Support students needing interventions (MTSS}*
- *Support ELL learners*
- *-Support curriculum adoption and vertical grade level alignment*

Administrator and Teacher Effectiveness

Goal 3 High quality professional development

Strategy 2 Activities Continued

- *Support quality instruction through observation, feedback and modeling*
- *Use data reports and administrator feedback as a tool to reflect on practice in early grades*
- *Use a variety of data as evidence of improvements in instruction over time*

Administrator and Teacher Effectiveness

Goal 3 High quality professional development

Strategies/Activities

Small Group Discussion

What other strategies can be added?

What internal practices create barriers? How can we involve other stakeholders?

What commitments need to be made to start implementation?

Goal 3 Cafe

Move from to each table for 5 minutes

Discuss the strategy and activities with your group

Leave sticky notes on wonderings, comments, and suggestions

Administrator and Teacher Effectiveness

Goal 3 High quality professional development

Teacher Professional Development Topics

- District Curriculum
- Literacy Benchmark assessments
- Progress Monitoring
- Science Instruction
- Classroom Management

Administrator and Teacher Effectiveness

Goal 3 High quality professional development

Additional Teacher Professional Development Topics

- Literacy Instruction
- Workshop Model for Reading and Math
- Technology Integration
- Reading intervention

  Data Analysis
- Parent Outreach
- Best Practice for instructional impact

Administrator and Teacher Effectiveness

Goal 3 High quality professional development

Imbedded Teacher Professional Development

- Weekly Coaching
- Bi-monthly PLC
- Bi-monthly staff meetings
- Books studies

Administrator and Teacher Effectiveness

Goal 3 High quality professional development

Administrator Professional Development

– District Transformation Coaching

– Leadership Team walkthroughs

– Monthly Principal Meetings

Instructional Tools

Goal 4: Aligned Reading and Math curriculum and assessments

Aligned standards create shared expectations of student achievement, focus and depth on curriculum content, and quality assessments (Porter, McMaken, Hwang & Yang, 2011).

Instructional Tools

Goal 4: Aligned Reading and Math curriculum and assessments

Strategy 1

Support CIA with curriculum alignment process to ensure it is developmentally appropriate, rigorous, relevant and sequential.

Instructional Tools

Goal **4:** Aligned Reading and Math curriculum and assessments

Strategy 1 Activities

– *Use state alignment documents to implement Common Core State Standards (CCSS) K-3n1 grade*

– *Use State Early Childhood Standards of Quality (ECSQ) to align Pre-K with Common Core Curriculum and Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) strategies*

Instructional Tools

Goal 4: Aligned Reading and Math curriculum and assessments

Strategy 1 Activities Continued

-Reference curriculum standards in PLC, PD and parent- teacher conferences

-Engage and support teachers and administrators with resources for developing a cohesive curricular framework.

Instructional Tools

Goal 4: Aligned Reading and Math curriculum and assessments

Strategy 2

Support CIA with development of common relevant assessments to ensure efficiency and consistency of instruction and data use throughout the continuum developmentally appropriate, rigorous, relevant, and sequential

Instructional Tools

Goal 4: Aligned Reading and Math curriculum and assessments

Strategy 2 Activities

-Create common measures of progress and a time line of assessments

– Develop consistent assessment practices and inter-rater reliability

-Use assessment data for timely interventions through a Multi-Tiered Support System (MTSS)

Instructional Tools

Goal 4: Aligned Reading and Math curriculum and assessments

Strategy 2 Activities Continued

-Share Preschool data with principals and Kindergarten teachers

-End of year vertical data transition meetings for early grades

Instructional Tools

Goal 4: Aligned Reading and Math curriculum and assessments

Strategy 3

Develop and provide Curriculum and Assessment focused Professional Development to create a shared understanding among instructional leaders and staff

Instructional Tools

Goal 4: Aligned Reading and Math curriculum and assessments

Strategy 3 Activity

-Collaborate with district partners to provide regular, relevant, horizontal and vertical professional development to early grade teachers focused on curriculum alignment, delivery and assessment.

Instructional Tools

Goal 4: Aligned Reading and Math curriculum and assessments

Strategies/Activities

Small Group Discussion

What other strategies can be added? What internal practices create barriers?
How can we involve other stakeholders?
What commitments need to be made to start implementation?

Instructional Tools

Goal **4:** Aligned Reading and **Math** curriculum and assessments

Teacher Curriculum Professional Development

- Curriculum consultant
- Teacher teams at each grade level will work to develop
- Vertical and horizontal curriculum
- Power standards, formative assessments# and benchmark assessments
- Aligned to common Core Curriculum
  Multiple sessions of training and work

Instructional Tools

Goal 4: Aligned Reading and Math curriculum and assessments

Teacher Curriculum Professional Development and Work Session Topics

- Understanding Power Standards
- Unwrapping Standards
- Planning Assessments in PLC
- Works sessions- Unwrapping Standards
- Creating Assessments
- Presentation to grade level teachers

Goal 4 Cafe

Move from to each table for 3-4 minutes

Discuss the strategy and activities with your group

Leave sticky notes on wonderings, comments, and suggestions

Exit Ticket

Questions and Reflections

What questions come up for you?

What would you like to know more about?

Explain what you are taking away with you today?

What next steps can you commit to?

Day 3 Agenda

- Review Goals and Strategies from Day 1and 2
  Reflections and/or questions from Day 2
- Today's Components and Goals
  Goals
  Group discussion
- Lunch Break
- Group Mix Up
  Goal6
- Groupdiscussion
- Group Mix Up
- Summary and Reflections

Review Day 1and 2 Goals

- Goal 1Strengthen Community and Family Engagement
- Goal2: Increasingenrollment inPreK-K& creating more effective transitions
- Goal 3 High quality professional development
- Goal 4: Aligned Reading and Math curriculum and assessments

Review Day 1and 2 Strategies

High quality professional development

1. Provide professional Development to internal stakeholders to strengthen the early learning community academically and culturally.
2. Align research -based instructional practices in early grades to ensure success for all

Review Day 1and 2 Strategies

Aligned Reading and Math curriculum and assessments

1. Support CIA with curriculum alignment process to ensure it is Developmentally appropriate, rigorous, relevant and sequential.
2. Support CIA with development of common relevant assessments to ensure efficiency and consistency of instruction and data use throughout the continuum developmentally appropriate, rigorous, relevant, and sequential
3. *Collaborate with district partners to provide regular, relevant, horizontal and vertical professional development to early grade teachers focused on curriculum alignment, delivery and assessment.*

Today's Components and Goals

Learning Environment

- Goal 5: Establish quality learning environments to reflect collaboration, diversity, inclusion and varied learning styles.

Data-driven Improvement

- Goal 6: Use data to identify and address achievement gaps and instructional quality.

Learning Environment

Goal 5: Establish collaborative, quality learning environments

When children participate in developmentally appropriate and culturally competent classrooms they have better academic achievement, social adjustment and higher rates of graduation (Coggshall, Osher,& Colombi,2013; Mokrova, Broekhuizen,& Burchinal,2015).

Learning Environment

Goal 5: Establish collaborative, quality learning environments

Strategy 1

Investigate use of a nationally recognized tool to evaluate learning environment quality

Learning Environment

Goal 5: Establish collaborative, quality learning environments

- Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-R/E)
- Class Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)
- Early Childhood Classroom Observation Measure (ECCOM)

Learning Environment

Goal 5: Establish collaborative, quality learning environments

Strategy Z

Support the elementary schools in creating and sustaining an inviting family friendly environment with culturally inclusive resources for parents to support family learning.

Learning Environment

Goal 5: Establish collaborative, quality learning environments

Strategy Z Activities

– *Provide translation/interpreter services*

– *Multi-language newsletters and referral resources*

– *Multi- language study/homework tasks*

– *Partnerships with VOCES and Burma Center*

Learning Environment

Goal 5: Establish collaborative, quality learning environments

Strategy 3

Address learning styles in instructional practice.

Strategy 3 Activities

- *Ensure instruction is planned and delivered with multiple learning styles evident.*

– *Support teachers in providing active, child – centered curriculum supported learning activities.*

Learning Environment

Goal 5: Establish collaborative, quality learning environments

Strategy 4

Create a learning environment in which diverse learners have individual success

Learning Environment

Goal 5: Establish collaborative, quality learning environments

Strategy 4 Activities

– *Support teachers in providing appropriate individualized instruction*

– *Support school in maintaining learning environments that provide access for all learners including English Language Learners (ELL) and students with Individualized Education Plans(IEP)*

– *Maintain Bilingual Preschool classrooms in neighborhoods where needed*

Learning Environment

Goal 5: Establish collaborative, quality learning environments

Strategies/Activities

Small Group Discussion

What other strategies can be added? What internal biases may be impeding this? How can we involve other stakeholders?

What commitments need to be made to start implementation?

Learning Environment

Goal 5: Establish collaborative, quality learning environments

Early Childhood Teacher Professional Development

- Curriculum overview
- High Scope Implementation
- Culturally Relevant Teaching and Learning
- Benchmark Assessment
- Developmentally Appropriate Practice
- Workshop Model

Goal 5

Mix It Up

Count off

Mix up into new groups based on your number

Share your group's discussion with your new group

Data Driven Improvement

Goal 6: Using data

Teaching and learning does not change merely from the collection of data. It is practical to use data to identify unsuccessful practices and the implementation of new best practice (Crawford, Cobb, Clifford,& Ritchie, 2013; Mandinach, 2012).

Data Driven Improvement

Goal 6: Using data

Strategy 1

Strengthen the system for collecting and transferring Preschool data to Kindergarten teachers

Data Driven Improvement

Goal 6: Using data

Strategy 1Activities

-Create a data transfer system between the district and Head Start

-Collaborate with the ISO and the district technology departments to transfer data within the district

-Establish collaborative spring data days between giving and receiving early grade teachers

Data Driven Improvement

Goal 6: Using data

Strategy 2

Establish Pre-K _third grade expectations and goals

Data Driven Improvement

Goal 6: Using data

Strategy 2 Activities

- *-Minimize number of initiatives*
- *– Monitor instruction*
- *-Monitor data (academic and behavioral)*
- *-Implement a Multi-tiered System of Support*
- *-Support Professional Learning Communities (PLC) among teachers and administrators*

Data Driven Improvement

Goal 6: Using data

Strategy 3

Use data to gain knowledge about student achievement

Data Driven Improvement

Goal 6: Using data

Strategy 3 Activities

- – Student progress
- – Achievement gap
- – Instructional effectiveness
- – Kindergarten readiness

Data Driven Improvement

Goal 6: Using data

Strategy 4

Use data to make decisions for improvement

Data Driven Improvement

Goal 6: Using data

Strategy 4 Activities

- *– Allocate resources for intervention*
- *– Establish Professional Development priorities*
- *– Plan for transitions*
- *-Determine Curriculum and Instruction resource needs*
- *– Incorporate data into parent conversations*
- *– Program improvement/realignment*

Data Driven Improvement

Goal 6: Using data

Strategy 4 Activities

- *– Allocate resources for intervention*
- *– Establish Professional Development priorities*
- *– Plan for transitions*
- *– Determine Curriculum and Instruction resource needs*
- *– Incorporate data into parent conversations*
- *– Program improvement/realignment*

Data Driven Improvement

Goal 6: Using data

Professional Development

- PLC -professional learning community protocols
- Response to Intervention (Rtl) instruction
- Individualized professional learning plan for teachers based on their needs
- Instructional coaching in their classrooms
- Data Training for teachers, coaches and leaders

Goal 6

Mix It Up

Count off

Mix up into new groups based on your number

Share your group's discussion with your new group

Exit Ticket

Questions and Reflections

What questions come up for you?

What would you like to know more about?

Explain what you are taking away with you today?

What next steps can you commit to?

Appendix A2: Professional Development Evaluation

1. Early Learning Plan Goal (Choose all that apply)

☐	Goal 1	☐	Goal 4
☐	Goal 2	☐	Goal 5
☐	Goal 3	☐	Goal 6

2. The design of the session (organization, format, pacing) was:

Excellent Good Fair Poor

3. The presentation of information and new concepts was:

Excellent Good Fair Poor

4. The relevance of the information to my day to day work was:

Excellent Good Fair Poor

5. My understanding of the content of the PD before attending was:

Excellent Good Fair Poor

6. My understanding of the content of the PD after attending was:

Excellent Good Fair Poor

7. My ability to apply the content of the PD to my work before attending was:

Excellent Good Fair Poor

8. My ability to apply the content of the PD to my work after attending was:

Excellent Good Fair Poor

9. Overall quality of the session was:

Excellent Good Fair Poor

10. Will you attend other sessions related to the Early Learning Action Plan?

Yes No

11. What did you value most about the PD?

12. How will you apply the learning from the PD to your work?

Appendix B: MLPP Score Sheet

LETTER/SOUND IDENTIFICATON SCORE SHEET

Student's Name _____ **Date** _____ **Grade** ____

✓ in "N" column for letter name response.
✓ in "S" column for letter sound response.
Record word in "Word" column for word response.
Record the child's response in "I.R." column for incorrect response.

	N	I.R.		N	S	WORD	I.R.
A			a				
F			f				
K			k				
P			p				
W			w				
Z			z				
B			b				
H			h				
O			o				
J			j				
U			u				
			a				
C			c				
Y			y				
L			l				
Q			q				
M			m				
D			d				
N			n				
S			s				
X			x				
I			i				
E			e				
G			g				
R			r				
V			v				
T			t				
			g				
26			28		26		

Observations

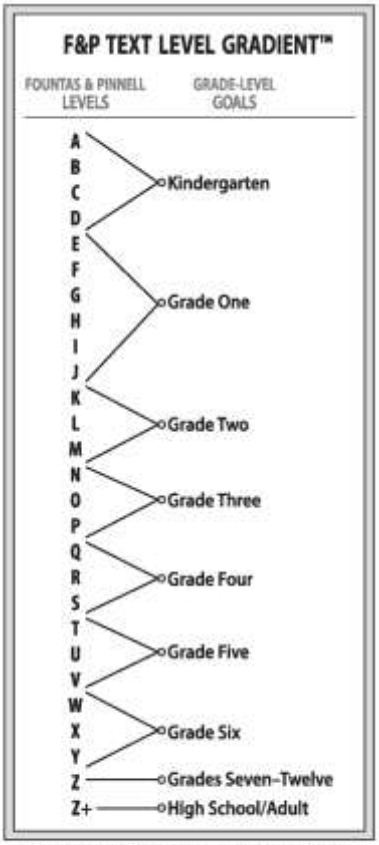
Note such things as:
- Speed of response
- Confusions: e.g.: b/d
- Patterns of response

Letter Name Total Score /54

Letter Sound Total Score /26

Clay, Marie M. (1993) an Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement. Heinemann Education

Appendix C: Text Level Gradient



The grade-level goals on the F&P Text Level Gradient™ are intended to provide general guidelines, which should be adjusted based on school/district requirements and professional teacher judgement.