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European Alternative Preschool Philosophies, Styles, and Emergent Literacy Skill Development

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Abstract

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Lynne M. Lawson

MS, Kent State University, 1996

BS, Baldwin-Wallace University, 1979

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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August 2018

Abstract

Many American preschool children enter kindergarten without the emergent literacy skills needed to learn to read. To address this problem, this multicase qualitative study investigated the emergent literacy practices at Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired schools. The research questions focused on how alternative preschool philosophies help staff cultivate emergent literacy skills in young children. The conceptual framework came from Piaget's cognitive development theory, and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. The study included eight participants from two Reggio Emilia-inspired and two Steiner Waldorf-inspired preschools. Data were collected through open-ended interviews, observations, and analyses of de-identified student work, then subjected to thematic cross-case analysis. Regarding the role of the two philosophies in the development of emergent literacy skills, findings indicated that teachers cited the philosophies leading them to honor their students, focus on the development of the whole child, and act as facilitators for children's oral language development through play. Regarding how program staff apply their program philosophies to creating emergent literacy through the learning environment key, the findings showed that both Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired staff viewed the environment as another teacher. Reggio Emilia-inspired staff carefully organized the indoor and outdoor learning environments to provide numerous opportunities for authentic experiences and play, while Waldorf-inspired staff was more likely to draw from nature itself to create opportunities for imaginary play. When children start school with a solid foundation in emergent literacy, they are more likely to be successful readers.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my beloved daughters, Jennifer Lawson and Laura Lawson, for they are a constant source of inspiration and love.

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I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to the many individuals who have guided and supported me throughout this study. Foremost, I wish to thank my doctoral committee chair, Dr. Katherine Hayes Fondation, for her indefatigable support and advice. Many thanks for teaching and guiding my development as a scholar. Words cannot adequately express my appreciation for all she has taught me. Thank you to my methodologist, Dr. Michael Vinella for his detailed critique, high standards, and unwavering support that assisted in the development of this paper.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Recent research has demonstrated that a strong predictor of academic success is the successful social and emotional transition from preschool to kindergarten and school readiness (Quirk, Grimm, Furlong, & Nylund-Gibson, 2016). American preschools are inadequately preparing children for elementary school. "The prevalence of struggling readers by third grade nationwide is estimated at one in three" (Greenwood, Carta, Goldstein, Kaminski, McConnell, & Atwater, 2015, p. 246). Evidence at the national and local levels in the United States further validate this research. In 2013, the National Center for Education Statistics reported that two-thirds of fourth graders, three-fourths of eighth graders, and three-fourths of twelfth graders scored at only a basic reading level when tested. These statistics persist despite increased effort on the part of teachers who begin intervention strategies in kindergarten and continue through twelfth grade (Bailet et al., 2013; Piasta, & Zettler-Greenley, 2013).

In 2016 in the Greenburg City School District (GCSD), Greenburg, Ohio (a pseudonym for a suburban city), 44.6 % of kindergarten–third grade students were not on track for literacy improvement in comparison to 28% of the all schools across the state (Ohio Department of Education [ODE], 2016) and 38% in the United States (National Education Association [NEA], 2016). This was a 5.6% increase in at-risk K–third grade students when compared with the 2016 scores. The curriculum director of the Greenburg City School District stated, "Clearly, the literacy gap is widening for reading achievement as we've seen in the ODE state achievement test results" (Personal communication,

September 19, 2016). Further, 85% of all K–third grade students in Ohio scored a C or lower in the Early Literacy portion of the state achievement test, and 71% scored a D or an F (ODE, 2016). Nationally, 64% of fourth grade students, 66% of eighth grade students, and 65% of twelfth grade students scored below Proficient on state achievement tests (National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP], 2016).

The GCSD shares the national problem of attempting to educate students with insufficient grade-level language and emergent literacy skills. The school district earned a C on an A–F rating system in the category of Early Literacy on the 2016 State Report Card (ODE, 2016). Preschool assessments mandated by the state were not included in the report card.

This problem may have stemmed from the absence of early language and the emergent literacy skills developed typically in preschool (Lonigan, Purpura, Wilson, Walker, & Clancy-Menchetti, 2013). In the spring of 2016, GCDS preschool students were administered the state's Early Learning Assessment. The focus in emergent literacy skills was on oral language, phonological awareness, and vocabulary, all of which measure a child's readiness for kindergarten. In the oral language portion of the assessment, 70% of the children had not mastered the skills necessary for kindergarten, and in phonological awareness and vocabulary, 99% and 80% of children, respectively, had not mastered the skills necessary (strongnet.org, 2016).

GCSD has identified early reading as an outcome desired and includes preschool in its state improvement plan. However, not all scholars agree that the state's current approach to early reading instruction enables young learners to acquire reading skills

(Chambers, Cheung, & Slavin, 2016; Eagan, 2012; Halpern, 2013; Suggate, 2013). Chambers et al. (2016) and Camilli, Vargas, Ryan, and Barnett (2010) argued that society has unrealistic expectations for young children. Further, they noted that school instructional practices do not constitute developmentally appropriate learning. An examination of alternative educational philosophies (such as those espoused by Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia) may provide support for development of preschool students' emergent literacy skills.

Steiner Waldorf and 21st Century Skills

At the 2007 American Education Research Associations' annual conference, a panel discussed the effectiveness of Steiner Waldorf education (Oberman, 2007). The panel was convened at the request of reformers, parents, and policy makers who wanted to examine education philosophies "where students and adults can feel they are being shaped in a way that is meaningful to them as individuals and members of a community" (p. 3). When graduates with 10–14 years in Steiner Waldorf education were asked to report the key results of their education and to reflect on the positive and negative aspects of their education, three themes emerged from the data: rigor, relevance, and relationship (Oberman, 2007). The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation funded the first public Steiner Waldorf methods high school in the country in 2007, followed in 2008 by the Waldorf Methods/Social Justice High School (Oberman, 2007), which adopted the Steiner Waldorf educational philosophy.

Steiner Waldorf Academic Success

Larrison, Daly, and VanVooren (2012) examined data (standardized tests and parent input) from state and national websites about public Steiner Waldorf schools. The researchers initially studied a school located in a high-poverty urban area of Milwaukee, Wisconsin with a 20–year history of implementing the Waldorf philosophy (Larrison et al., 2012). This Waldorf Elementary School increased grade-level reading scores from 23–63% in 3 years (Larrison et al., 2012).

The researchers then compared data points from the national Waldorf schools' scores for reading with comparable districts' reading scores in 2008, 2009, and 2010. They looked at student scores at the above and below basic levels, and advanced reading levels. In second and third grades, the comparable districts outscored the Waldorf schools in reading; however, from fourth through eighth grades, the Waldorf schools outscored the comparable districts by 20% (Larrison et al., 2012). Waldorf schools also scored significantly higher than did the comparison groups in the areas of curriculum, holistic education, art and music, community, 21st century skills, and developmentally appropriate education (Larison et al., 2012).

Reggio Emilia

While few researchers have documented the long-term benefits of Reggio Emilia early education, its student achievement worldwide is known well. According to Wood, Thall, and Parnell (2015), in 1991, the preschools in Reggio Emilia were cited in *Newsweek* magazine as among the "best top ten schools in the world" (p. 98). Wurm (2014) posited that the challenge of implementing full Reggio Emilia preschool programs in the United States is associated with the extensive regulations for public preschools, as

well as those of the Reggio Emilia organization regarding the rollout of their program. There is a dearth of research on the effects of Reggio Emilia schools, because most preschools that adopt the approach are Reggio Emilia-*inspired*, rather than Reggio Emilia schools (Abdelfattah, 2015). As Thornton and Brunton (2015) noted, from the 1970s on, Sweden, Cuba, Bulgaria, Spain, Japan, Switzerland, France, and the United States opened Reggio Emilia-inspired schools. In an interview about these schools and the way in which they offer a sense of discovery and serenity (Edwards et al., 2012), Malaguzzi stated, "I believe that our schools show the attempt has been made to integrate the educational program with the organization of work and the environment, so as to allow for maximum movement, interdependence, and interaction" (p. 41). Edwards et al. (2012) suggested that the Reggio Emilia philosophy followed Piagetian tenets in considering it important for children to work in groups and learn from their mistakes.

Researchers who study gifted and special education applaud the Reggio Emilia educational approach because it meets the educational needs of all students (Bour, 2014; Kaplan & Hertzog, 2016). Kaplan and Hertzog emphasized the importance of quality early childhood education for young gifted learners, defined its essential elements, and provided a framework for creating high-quality, activity-based environments, including deep student-initiated learning. Further, the researchers argued against traditional accelerated academic work for young gifted learners. Instead, they supported play-based activities, artistic endeavors, and critical and creative thinking (Kaplan & Hertzog, 2016).

Following the views of Vygotsky and Piaget, and more recently, the Reggio Emilia approach, Kaplan and Hertzog (2016) agreed that "Life-long learning and success

in college and beyond starts in the early years" (p. 135). The researchers identified three critical beliefs and values of early childhood education: providing challenges, recognizing students and teachers' strengths and interests, and teachers recognizing the strengths, interests, and readiness of the learners. Each critical belief and value fulfills the tenets of the Reggio Emilia educational approach.

Malaguzzi (2016), founder of the Reggio Emilia educational approach, believed that all students have special rights rather than special needs. Followers of the approach embedded a documentation component to conduct classroom research, observation, and assessment (Bour, 2014). Teachers take photographs throughout the process of students' long-term inquiry projects, and then share them with students and families. This process provides the students opportunities to reflect as they gain confidence in their abilities and think critically about ways to improve (Bour, 2014).

According to Bour (2014), special needs students can demonstrate understanding through this type of assessment, and the method of documentation in the Reggio Emilia approach helps students share their learning over time. For example, he noted that special needs students struggled with reading comprehension, but sometimes demonstrated excellent skills in verbal comprehension. Bour argued further that focusing on the progress that students' make over time, rather than through standardized tests, prepares them better for life in the real world.

In the introduction, the focus has been on the local and national problem of children entering kindergarten without the emergent literacy skills needed to learn to read—and the literature that supports this fact. The alternative preschool philosophies of

Reggio Emilia and Steiner Waldorf were discussed in depth. The conceptual framework of this study was Piaget's (1964) theoretical model of cognitive development, and Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, both of which are the basis for developmentally appropriate learning in preschool.

Background

The development of emergent literacy skills is one predictor of academic success (Greenwood et al., 2015; Lonigan et al., 2013), as is the quality of children's play as they develop these skills (Halpern, 2013; Bodrova and Leong, 2015). Halpern (2013) argued that linking preschool to K–12 by instructing and assessing young children as though they were in K–12 helped create the national problem of students entering kindergarten without the skills necessary. As noted in the GCSD improvement plan, and evidenced through state and national achievement assessments, linking preschool to K–12 may contribute to the local and national problem in reading and shows that there is the gap between research and practice (Halpern, 2013; NAEP, 2015; ODE, 2016).

To increase student achievement, and perhaps unwittingly compound the problem further, educators and policymakers in the United States fund proposals and plans that link preschool and K–12 schooling (Chambers, Cheung, & Slavin, 2016). This puts pressure on pre–K teachers to teach children academic skills. Proponents of pre-K–12 schooling assert that joining preschool and K–12 provides a more constructive transition to elementary school, and some proponents have suggested a pre-K–third grade model of increased academics (Halpern, 2013).

This has led those in early childhood education (ECE) to consider whether connecting pre-K to elementary school is developmentally appropriate. Halpern (2013), Engel (2010), and Rogers and Evans (2007) found that when educators focus on school academic readiness and school accountability, less time is spent on play, conversation, and self-generated activity. In addition, test preparation is included in many school districts' ECE classrooms. Halpern (2013) and Engel (2010) argued that school-like instructional approaches are not developmentally appropriate.

Many ECE experts are concerned by the shift in the K–3 learning experience to stricter learning regimes that find their way into preschool classrooms. This shift creates challenges in attempts to develop a constructive transition between preschool and elementary school. One example is the theoretical debate between pretend and realistic play (Dombkowski, 2001). Pretend play is child-initiated and offers opportunities for imagination and acting out stories, which develop language skills, while realistic play is chosen and directed by the teacher for academic purposes only. As shown, kindergarten is becoming more and more academic, with increased teacher-initiated, rather than child-initiated activities that relegate the child to a more passive role.

Increased use of standardized curricula in traditional United States pre-K–3 classrooms with teacher-directed activities allows less time for individuality (Goldstein, 2007; Nicolopoulou, 2010). Yoshikawa et al. (2013) argued that even though research supports developmentally appropriate learning in preschool, the field of education has continued to move to the K–12 model for preschool.

Malaguzzi's conducted an interview with Carolyn Pope Edwards about the Reggio Emilia philosophy and the importance of separating preschool from elementary school (Drummond, 2007) and stated:

> If the school for young children has to be preparatory and provide continuity with the elementary school, then we as educators are already prisoners of a model that ends up as a funnel…It's [the funnel's] purpose to narrow down what is big into what is small. (p. 211)

The Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia philosophies offer an alternative pedagogy that approaches early childhood education and the development of emergent literacy skills in a vastly different way (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 2012).

The following sections describe the history and philosophies of the founders of the two educational movements and their emphasis on emergent literacy vis-à-vis the development of the whole child through developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) including play, creative/artistic experiences and child-directed activities. The purpose of this multicase study was to examine the way in which alternative preschool philosophies may lead to best practices for the cultivation of these skills in preschool.

Rudolf Steiner and Waldorf Pedagogy

Steiner—a philosopher, spiritual scientist, and educator—noted connections between the scientific and spiritual worlds while editing the work of Goethe (Nicol & Taplin, 2012). Steiner developed his theories of education and therapy during the time that he tutored four children in Vienna (Nicol & Taplin, 2012). After World War I, Emil Mott, the Director of the Waldorf Astoria cigarette factory, approached Steiner with the

idea of opening a school for the factory workers' children. One primary goal was that the philosophy should not enforce the ideology of politics, religion, and economics (Steiner, 1995; Nicol & Taplin, 2012). Steiner and Mott agreed that they wanted to foster a sense of renewal after World War I.

Steiner Waldorf pedagogy grew out of anthroposophy, a holistic philosophy, or spiritual science, but as Steiner (1995) stated, "Though Waldorf school takes its starting point from anthroposophical spiritual science, it is nevertheless not an ideological school—and this I hope will be accepted as an important fact" (p. 99). Anthroposophical spiritual science holds every child in deep reverence as a whole, capable human being. Steiner Waldorf schools do not teach anthroposophy, possibly because Steiner worried that people would consider Waldorf sectarian, or denominational, which it is not.

Essential Principles of Steiner Waldorf

Following the Steiner Waldorf theory that everything children experience creates life-long influences, educators create learning environments with care and consideration. Nicol and Taplin (2012) outlined the eight essential principles of the Steiner Waldorf philosophy:

> Care for the environment and nourishment of the senses; creative, artistic experiences through domestic and artistic activities; child-initiated free play; the development of healthy will activity; protection for the forces of childhood: gratitude, reverence, and wonder; imitation; the child at the center. (p. 14)

Focusing on the senses, Steiner Waldorf schools avoid electronic media, tapes, and televisions. Rather, they encourage environments that nurture the child inside and out,

and offer opportunities for them to become self-motivating. For example, Steiner (1995) argued that there is no meaning for children if they touch plastic, but if they touch wood, it is warm and has grooves to which they can relate and with which they can construct meaning. Opportunities for self-education are ever-present, and children may choose to interact in small or large groups, or by themselves. Opportunities for constant social interaction are there, should the child choose them.

Self-initiated play is at the heart of Steiner Waldorf (Sobo, 2014), and both indoors and outdoors are equally important environments for self-initiated play. Sufficient time, large spaces, and natural equipment are all important components of self-initiated play in the Steiner Waldorf School. Steiner valued play as the time when children express themselves with minimal adult interaction and guidance. Guiding children as requested or needed is acceptable in the Steiner Waldorf philosophy, but adults do not necessarily insert themselves into a learning experience (Nicol & Taplin, 2012). Nicol and Taplin (2012) stated further:

> Creativity abounds as the children seamlessly flow from one scenario to another in a natural and free-flowing manner. Stopping a game and starting another does not occur in these situations, but one game develops into another depending on the flow at the given moment. Assuredly, the children have been hard at work, problem solving, increasing oral language skills, and becoming independent learners. (pp. 69-70)

Steiner developed the Steiner Waldorf curriculum and pedagogical approach to learning based on "educational theories founded on a real knowledge of the growing,

developing human being" (Steiner, 1971, p. 15). Understanding the different periods of child development informs the educator of the Steiner Waldorf rationale for beginning to focus on academics in the second period of development. Amso and Casey (2006) have argued that the Steiner Waldorf approach offers a developmental framework that is consistent with the maturity of the brain and the principles of neuroscience. Steiner (1996) discussed the Waldorf method's focus on the development of judgment, critical thinking, and collaboration, and the way in which these skills are consistent with the development of specific systems of the brain. Further, he (1996) argued that the head, heart, and hand align with brain development. Larrison (2013) noted that from ages 0–7 (through first grade), the development of the child and hand (hands-on learning) is consistent with the systems level neuroscience of the sensory motor system. For this reason, Steiner Waldorf teachers include movement in academic and nonacademic learning activities (Larrison, 2013).

Reggio Emilia Foundations

Loris Malaguzzi, a former elementary school teacher in Reggio Emilia, Italy, inspired and founded the philosophy of the Reggio Emilia early childhood education program (Thornton & Brunton, 2015). Steiner Waldorf was established after World War I, and Reggio Emilia followed World War II. Malaguzzi wanted to create a better future for the children and families of his war-torn town (Thornton & Brunton). Also, similar to Steiner, Malaguzzi believed passionately in helping develop independent and confident children (Edwards et al., 2012). In 1963, the municipality of Reggio Emilia established the first secular school in Italy (Thornton & Brunton, 2015). At the outset, Malaguzzi and

the Reggio Emilia approach met with political resistance, which abated later (Thornton & Brunton, 2015; Edwards et al., 2012). As the approach gained popularity, funding increased, and so did the number of schools.

Guiding Principles of Reggio Emilia

Edwards et al. (2012) described the complex literacy discussions and activities inherent in the program and the way in which they foster emergent literacy skills. Edwards et al. stated that the guiding principles of the Reggio Emilia educational philosophy include the following: children as researchers in individual and group learning; teachers as researchers; care and learning in the environment; children as confident, independent, and creative; documentation of children and their work; the use of the space around the children; parents and the community invested in the education of young children, and the *Hundred Languages of Children*.

According to the Reggio Emilia philosophy, children are authors of their own growth and learning (Young & Morgan, 2015). The teachers facilitate the curriculum and projects, based on the child's interests and records of the day's activities. An in-depth examination of the way in which this development is facilitated by the Reggio Emilia philosophy appears later in Chapter 2. As increased numbers of children enter kindergarten without emergent literacy skills and the pressure to link pre-K to K–12 intensifies, early childhood educators are concerned that the focus has moved from developmentally appropriate learning experiences to increased academic instruction. This study is needed because an examination of Reggio Emilia-inspired and Steiner Waldorf-

inspired educational philosophies may offer alternative, developmentally appropriate approaches to foster emergent literacy skills.

Problem Statement

The problem addressed by this study was that children in the United States enter elementary school without the necessary skills required for reading (Greenwood et al., 2015). The purpose of this multicase study was to examine the way in which alternative preschool philosophies may inform the cultivation of emergent literacy skills in preschool. Many researchers (Baker, Tichovolsky, Kupersmidt, Voegler-Lee, & Arnold, 2015; Greenwood et al., 2015; Kim & Pallante, 2012; Wilson, Dickson & Rowe, 2013) have demonstrated that the cultivation of emergent literacy skills is a strong predictor of academic success among preschool aged children (Greenwood et al., 2015). Children enter preschool with a wide array of emergent literacy skills, and some researchers claim that reading deficits occur because many lack the skills needed to learn to read (Ehri & Nunes, 2002; National Early Literacy Panel, 2008; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001).

Secretary of State Duncan (Duncan, 2015) stated that early learning is critical for every child, which prompted President Obama to invest $1 billion in preschool for every child. In addition, a 2015 United States Department of Education report stated that too many children enter kindergarten a year or more behind their classmates. The department searches for best practices in early childhood education and this study would offer timely data to help establish best practices.

Researchers have argued that reading deficits stem from the lack of development of emergent literacy skills, but this situation may improve given an understanding of

alternative preschool philosophies that relate to such development. Moreover, this study may provide different choices to improve the reading problem (Ehri & Nunes, 2002; National Early Literacy Panel, 2008; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001). School improvement plans include educational interventions for preschool through twelfth grade. According to Macon (2012), "Previously, kindergarten was a transitional year between preschool and first grade, but now it has replaced first grade as the start of formal schooling" (p. 159). Ehri (2012) argued that it is inappropriate to teach kindergarten readiness in preschool, and further, that structured reading instruction has not been shown to be effective for all children. It can be posited that this tendency to transfer skills to preschool may eliminate the time needed for emergent literacy skill development.

Greenwood et al. (2015) indicated that American preschools do not prepare children for elementary school. This is consistent with Bailet et al.'s (2013) claim that children who struggle to read in kindergarten may continue to struggle. The previously mentioned National Center for Education Statistics reported that below proficient scores have persisted despite increased efforts on the part of teachers who begin intervention strategies in kindergarten and continue through twelfth grade (Bailet et al., 2013; Piasta, & Zettler-Greenley, 2013). The gap between these students and their higher-achieving peers grows wider with each academic year (Fälth, Svensson, Carlsson, & Gustafson, 2014; Reardon, 2013), and the explanations for these gaps range from cognitive (within-child) to instructional (within-classroom) to curricular (within school; Reardon, 2013). Further, as students struggle with reading, they may develop negative attitudes about it (Piasta & Zettler-Greenley, 2013).

Bierman et al. (2008) and Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) found that students who entered kindergarten without the literacy skills required often remained behind their peers (who demonstrated typical achievement) and have little chance of closing the gap between them. This illustrates the gap between what we know from research about the importance of all emergent literacy skills, particularly that of oral language (Whorall & Cabell, 2015), and current reading pedagogy because, as Murnane, Sawhille, and Snow (2012) stated, "Letters, then letter-sound pairings, then word reading absorb all the instructional attention" (p. 8), leaving little access to oral language interactions.

The GCSD included preschool in its state improvement plan (strongnet.org, 2015), and one goal of the plan reads, "By 2016, we will implement with consistency and fidelity a standards-based report card in grades pre-K–5 to support data-based decision making" (p. 9). Further, the district included preschool in the plan to reach the goal of implementing balanced literacy, previously offered only in grades K–6 (strongnet.org, 2015). District-wide quarterly common and other classroom assessments included the National Governor's Association (NGA) style questions for grades pre-K–5. These questions are based on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and are used to measure students' achievement. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (2012) has "expressed concern…that effort on only two content domains could result in the unintended consequence of narrowing curriculum and instructional practice to the detriment of student learning" (p. 3). NAEYC noted the growing concern on the part of the early childhood education field about the "unintended consequences" of the CCSS (2012). NAEYC also noted that, with its implementation, there may be opportunities for

dialogue about reform in early childhood education. Current research has corroborated further the need for an extensive examination of alternative best practices for the development of emergent literacy skills in preschool children (Bailet et al., 2013).

Purpose of the Study

The problem addressed by this study was that children in the United States enter elementary school without the necessary skills required for reading (Greenwood et al., 2015). The purpose of this multicase study was to examine the way in which alternative preschool philosophies may inform the cultivation of these skills in preschool. The proposed doctoral research addressed the widespread local and national concern about students' poor reading performance, as Suggate (2013) noted. Because of the integration of preschool and K–12, widespread and extensive formal reading instruction occurs in many preschool and kindergarten classrooms (Chambers, Cheung, & Slavin, 2016; Suggate, 2013).

Chambers et al. (2016) and Suggate (2013) asked whether early reading instruction helps sustain reading in the long-term. Soodla et al. (2015) recommended that children begin the acquisition of oral language, phonemic awareness, print knowledge, word reading, and decoding skills during preschool or kindergarten. However, Chambers et al. and Suggate stated that current research does not support this stance. In Chambers et al.'s quantitative study, which evaluated the effects of direct academic instruction on student outcomes, there was no significant difference between the control and experimental groups, further strengthening their results.

The proponents of early reading acknowledge that early intervention for struggling readers is often ineffective (Nicol & Taplin, 2012; Suggate, 2013). Suggate (2013), along with Shinn, Shinn, Hamilton, and Clarke (2002), argued that education scholars have determined that students who struggle with reading in school will gradually extricate themselves from reading instruction, demonstrate behavior issues, and fall further behind in reading. O'Connor and Angus (2014) confirmed the evidence from Elkind (2007), Eiley (1994), and Alexander (2009), and supported Suggate's claim that early didactic instruction leads to increased anxiety and decreased interest in reading on the part of struggling readers.

American educators may benefit from increased understanding of alternative approaches to the development of emergent literacy skills (Yoshikawa et al., 2015) that will support widespread changes in preschool pedagogy. Yoshikawa et al. highlighted the significant relationship between global preschool quality and child development. Global preschool quality is determined by practices that improve children's cognitive, achievement, and socioemotional skills (Keys et al., 2013; Yoshikawa et al., 2015). The research in both studies called for additional studies to address the possible link between literacy-rich learning environments and preschool children's development of literacy.

The lack of literacy skills among preschool aged children in the GCSD, and throughout the United States substantiated the need for an examination of alternative preschool philosophies in Europe. Alternatives to the traditional U.S. preschool philosophies about the development of these skills could lead to changes in Early Childhood Education practices across the country. In contrast to traditional preschool

philosophies, Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia are two alternative approaches built on the premise that children are whole, creative, and intelligent persons (Edwards, 2002). This differs from the United States where academic achievement is often the sole outcome desired (Slavin, Lake, Davis, & Madden, 2011). Slavin et al. stated that while academic programs for preschool children sometimes produced better immediate outcomes, long-term results did not.

An important element in both the Reggio Emilia and Steiner Waldorf philosophies is the idea that children should not begin formal schooling until age 7 (Edwards et al., 2012; O'Connor & Angus, 2014; Steiner, 1996). In contrast, the focus of each educational philosophy is developmentally appropriate early learning experiences. Children attend preschool, but are not educated formally, as is often the case in traditional U.S. public schools. In each alternative educational approach, children guide their own development in tandem with their teachers, parents, and community.

Research Questions

One central research question and four research subquestions guided this qualitative study:

How do the alternative preschool philosophies of Steiner Waldorf-inspired schools and Reggio Emilia-inspired-schools help staff cultivate emergent literacy skills in young children?

1. How do Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired preschool teachers characterize the role of the two philosophies in the development of emergent literacy skills?

2. How do Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired preschool teachers apply their program philosophies to provide a learning environment they view as key to emergent literacy?
3. How do the Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired teaching methods with respect to emergent literacy skills overlap?
4. How does the Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired teaching of emergent literacy skills differ across preschools?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study was Piaget's (1964) theoretical model of cognitive development, and Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory. The theories informed the study and were the basis for developmentally appropriate preschool learning experiences. Piaget (1964) and Vygotsky (1978) contributed to the philosophy of constructivist learning, which is another tenet of developmentally appropriate learning. Piaget and Vygotsky were proponents of emotional self-regulation and of learning developed through imaginary play facilitated by the teacher.

Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia philosophies have much in common with Piaget's (1964) and Vygotsky's (1978) theories (Edwards et al., 2012; Nicol & Taplin, 2014). Piaget's theory posited that, in addition to observation, a child participates actively. Ultanir (2012) cited Piaget (1971), stated that "Essential functions of the mind are formed by developing a foundation consisting of understanding and innovation and constructing reality" (p. 202). The notion of "constructing reality" ties together Piaget (1964) and Vygotsky's (1978) theories.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory addressed constructivism and the vast differences in learning between preschool and school-aged children (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). Vygotsky (1978) identified two developmental levels of learning. These are separated by the distance between the authentic developmental level, as determined by independent problem-solving, and the potential level of development when guided by adults or intellectual peers. Vygotsky concluded that knowledge of the appropriate distance between the actual developmental level and what a child could do when guided by adults or intellectual peers proved a successful way to learn. The zone of proximal development (ZPD) is established when a child cannot solve a problem independently. Vygotsky determined a connection between play and school instruction, in that when combined, they create a ZPD. Piaget and Vygotsky's theories influenced Malaguzzi's thinking, as well as that of Steiner Waldorf educators, as discussed in the literature review.

Nature of the Study

Using a multicase design to examine Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia was an appropriate choice for this study because it investigated a current phenomenon in the real-world and helped explain successful approaches to cultivating emergent literacy skills through the application of notable alternative philosophies (Yin, 2014). Participants from Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired preschools offered extensive insight into the phenomenon. Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired early childhood education offer alternative approaches to the traditional educational techniques that are followed currently in the United States. The two philosophies are arts-based alternatives for early childhood education, and, as stated by Sobo (2013; 2014) and

Kelemen (2013), have a world-wide reputation of placing a high value on imaginative play for the development of the child's well-being.

Steiner Waldorf teachers attend training in the philosophy and learn how to implement it in the classroom (Nicol & Taplin, 2012). Reggio Emilia teachers participate in on-going teacher training, because they are considered researchers and strive continually to learn more about the philosophy (Edwards et al., 2012). The two philosophical stances share the ideas that child development is experiential, child-centered, and focused on learning how to learn. The two approaches use developmentally appropriate, literacy-focused experiences to encourage children's exploration and acquisition of emergent literacy skills (Edwards et al., 2012; Nicol & Taplin, 2012).

A multicase study was chosen because interviews and observations at multiple sites were expected to provide extensive, rich data (Yin, 2014). During this multicase study and through examination of the program philosophies as defined by the Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired preschool teachers, I sought to achieve a deeper understanding of the way in which teachers in the two programs foster emergent literacy among preschool students. Interviews were conducted with one teacher and one director from each of the four preschools chosen. Two observations took place on different days, and de-identified student work was examined during the data collection. Thereafter, the data were analyzed through coding and triangulated for common themes and insight into these alternative approaches (Yin, 2014).

Definitions

Child/teacher planning: During child/teacher planning, the teachers facilitate the curriculum and projects based on the child's interests (Young & Morgan, 2015). Edwards et al. (2012) stated that children are considered to be researchers in individual and group learning, and through the belief that they are confident, independent, and creative, are more than capable to offer input into topics of interest for study.

Creative artistic experiences: Creative skill development fosters the literacy skills of oral language, vocabulary, and phonemic awareness in authentic ways (Davies et al., 2013). Davies et al. determined that the indoor and outdoor learning experiences are of primary importance for the development of creative and artistic skills, collaboration, and interpersonal skills.

Developmentally appropriate practices : For preschool children, playful activity "has been shown to support children's early development of symbolic representational skills" (Whitebread & Coltman, 2016, p. 122). Further, play provides contexts for learning and encourages young children to direct their own exploration. Allowing children to plan their own learning is a component of DAP.

Emergent literacy: Emergent literacy skills are those needed to learn to read. These consist of recognizing print, phonological awareness, oral language, and vocabulary (Piasta, 2016). Previously, theorists believed it was appropriate to wait until elementary school to engage children in literacy activities, but those theories have changed (Piasta, 2016). Now, theories of emergent literacy emphasize the continuous development of these skills (Piasta, 2016).

Environment: Lim (2015) agreed with Piaget's and Vygotsky's belief that the learning environment is the third teacher. Children and adults are nurtured in rich learning environments that are engaging and provide opportunities for children to socialize, develop oral language skills, develop critical thinking skills, and think creatively.

Imaginary play: Vygotsky (1978) and Piaget (1951) determined that imaginary play is the leading factor in child development and is at the center of the definition of play. Through imaginary play, interdependence of social and individual process occurs, and are largely child initiated. Stephen (2012) noted that play is the most important way for children to learn.

Self-regulation: The ability to focus and maintain attention, regulate emotion, reflect on information and experience, and engage in sustained positive social interactions with teachers and peers provide children with the skills necessary for school readiness (Blair & Raver, 2015, p. 712).

Social interactions: Vygotsky (1978) and Piaget (1951) stated that self-regulation develops within the framework of social interactions. Providing opportunities to develop and experiment with new skills enhances independence and self-reliance.

Socio-constructivism: Jaramillo (1996) stated that Vygotsky's version of constructivism indicates that the child constructs knowledge through self-discovery. Vygotsky advocated that students interact with peers, teachers, and manipulatives in their contextual setting to learn and determine meaning based on experiences and background knowledge.

Struggling readers: Struggling readers are children who demonstrate delays in the acquisition of critical early literacy skills, and therefore have difficulty learning to read and developing comprehension skills (Bailet, Repper, Piasta, & Murphy, 2009).

Whole-child/child centered: Educating the whole-child nurtures both noncognitive and cognitive skills and helps prepare children for success in school and later life (Garcia & Weiss, 2016). Garcia and Weiss argued that the noncognitive skills of critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, social skills, and self-regulation are linked to academic achievement.

Assumptions

The study was carried out at four schools, two schools that implement Steiner Waldorf-inspired education or Reggio Emilia-inspired education. One assumption was that the Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired teachers and administrators would be open and honest in their responses to the interview questions. Such answers would provide a clear picture of the two alternative preschool philosophies and teachers' perceptions of emergent literacy skill development. A second assumption was that the Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired philosophies cultivate emergent literacy skills better than do traditional U.S. preschools (Bour, 2014; Friedlaender, Beckham, Zheng, & Darling-Hammond, 2015). A third assumption was that all directors have training in the philosophies.

Scope and Delimitations

The boundaries of this multicase study included two Steiner Waldorf-inspired and two Reggio Emilia-inspired preschools found in two metropolitan urban communities in an eastern state. Excluded from the study are traditional U.S. preschools that do not follow the Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired philosophies because the focus is solely on the two philosophies. Because of financial constraints and a sole researcher, the study was delimited further because it could not be conducted in Germany and Italy where the philosophies originated. Studying the philosophies in the countries of origin would have offered a unique perspective and comparison to the inspired philosophies. Specifically, the research questions regarding emergent literacy skill development in the Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired preschools will be explored, and the focus on these philosophies was chosen as a way to potentially improve the emergent literacy skill development of the children in the United States. Yilmaz (2013) asserted that transferring the findings of the study to other settings is a vital part of qualitative research. Thus, the findings from this research have the potential to be transferred, because the phenomenon studied was emergent literacy skill development. The findings that could be transferred may be limited in preschools within the United States due to lack of teacher training in the philosophies.

Limitations

The limitations of this study included the potential bias of the researcher conducting a qualitative multicase study. In such a design, often only one researcher collects and analyzes data. Researcher bias was addressed in the Chapter 3. I did not

work at the studied research sites and used member checking to ensure accuracy of interview transcriptions and findings. Because only four preschools were included in this study, the results were difficult to generalize, however I was able to study each preschool in depth with fewer participants (Yin, 2014). Since the findings were not generalized, threats to external validity were not an issue. Ensuring that I understood potential bias and strived for the highest ethical behavior possible before and during the study helped avoid bias (Yin, 2014).

Significance

In an attempt to increase student achievement, GCSD links preschool with K–12 schooling. Reading skills previously taught formally in kindergarten now are taught in preschool with extensive interventions and monitoring of progress (strongnet.org, 2015). However, this conflicts with the sociocultural theories that espouse an emergent literacy perspective and emphasize contexts and experiences during play, which are not supported during formal reading instruction (Piasta, 2016). The significance of this study was two-fold. First, an examination of two alternative preschool philosophies may inform the teaching methodology and approach of GSCD. Second, the results of the study may offer evidence that the two preschool philosophies help address the gap between research and practices used to teach emergent literacy skills, as noted in Whorall and Cabell (2015) and Piasta (2016). Current research does not support formal reading instruction in preschool, yet it continues to be used in many traditional preschools today (Piasta, 2016). The professional application of the results of the study may provide researchers and

practitioners with additional literature about alternative methods that may inform the development of emergent literacy skills.

Students come to kindergarten with a wide array of skills (Halpern, 2013). Some have attended preschool, lived in enriched learning environments, and developed emergent literacy skills of oral language, phonological awareness, knowledge of environmental print, and vocabulary. The Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia alternative preschool philosophies (a) place value on student and teacher choice, which includes an aesthetics curriculum and creative play, (b) use teaching methods different from traditional U.S. preschools, and (c) are appropriate for all students (Mei-Jou, 2014). Frequently in school, children "know about everything before they have a chance to experience it" (Mei-Jou, 2014, p. 166). Alternative preschool philosophies encourage children to develop through experiential and authentic learning that is based on real-world experiences.

During this research, I explored the gap between research and practice in the development of emergent literacy skills by studying alternative preschool philosophies. I sought to document alternative approaches to the development of these critical skills. The results may inform educational practices for educators of young children. Educators in the local school district and policymakers could benefit from the findings as they examine best practices and consider changes in preschool programs. The findings could lead to positive social change for students as they improve reading skills and gain self-confidence in their abilities.

Summary

Alternative preschool philosophies are explained as they relate to emergent literacy skill development. As stated, children who attend American preschools, especially those tied to public pre-K –12 schools, often begin kindergarten without the emergent literacy skills needed to learn to read. Piaget (1964) and Vygotsky's (1978) theories are commonly taught pre-service teacher training programs (Hatch, 2015), thus the translation of these philosophies into unique developmentally appropriate learning experiences in preschool was examined. The alternative approaches of Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia were studied to address the way in which these philosophies cultivate the development of emergent literacy skills, and the findings may be transferable to other preschools within the United States.

In Chapter 2, a review of the current literature and research on emergent literacy and the alternative preschool approaches that inform and substantiate the problem statement of this study is presented. A detailed explanation of the methodology chosen and its appropriateness for the study, plans for data collection, and analysis is presented in Chapter 3. Additionally, previews of Chapters 4 and 5 are discussed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

A greater number of students enter kindergarten without the emergent literacy skills needed to learn to read in U.S. preschools that are tied to K–12th grade (Arnold et al., 2012). An examination of the way in which alternative preschool philosophies cultivate emergent literacy skill development may shed light on ways to prepare young children to learn to read. In the literature, DAP is important to the development of these skills and often are replaced with formal reading instruction in preschool (Arnold et al., 2012). The conceptual framework based on Piaget (1951) and Vygotsky (1978) was discussed as it related to the Reggio Emilia and Steiner Waldorf educational philosophies and pedagogy (Edwards et al., 2012; Steiner, 1979). Play as DAP and its relation to Piaget and Vygotsky's theories was discussed with respect to child development and the cultivation of emergent literacy skills. The importance of the early childhood educational environment was discussed, together with research on the primary tenets of emergent literacy and development of such skills.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search strategy included identifying articles in peer-reviewed journals and books with content related to Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia or Piaget and Vygotsky's theories about emergent literacy skills, play, and modern K–12 schools. To locate journal articles (and books), I used the following databases: Academic Search Complete, EBSCO ebooks, Education Source, ERIC, Google Scholar, ProQuest Ebook Central , SAGE journals, and Taylor and Francis Online,. Initially, I searched broadly within the databases, then narrowed the searches. For example, in the Thoreau Multi-

Database, I used the Boolean/Phrase "Waldorf AND preschool," "Malaguzzi AND Reggio Emilia, emergent literacy, Vygotsky AND play, and Piaget, limited it to full text, peer-reviewed, scholarly journals, and narrowed the dates to the past 5 years. The literature review was organized according to the developmental and conceptual framework as it relates to emergent literacy skill development and the conceptual framework map (see Figure 1).

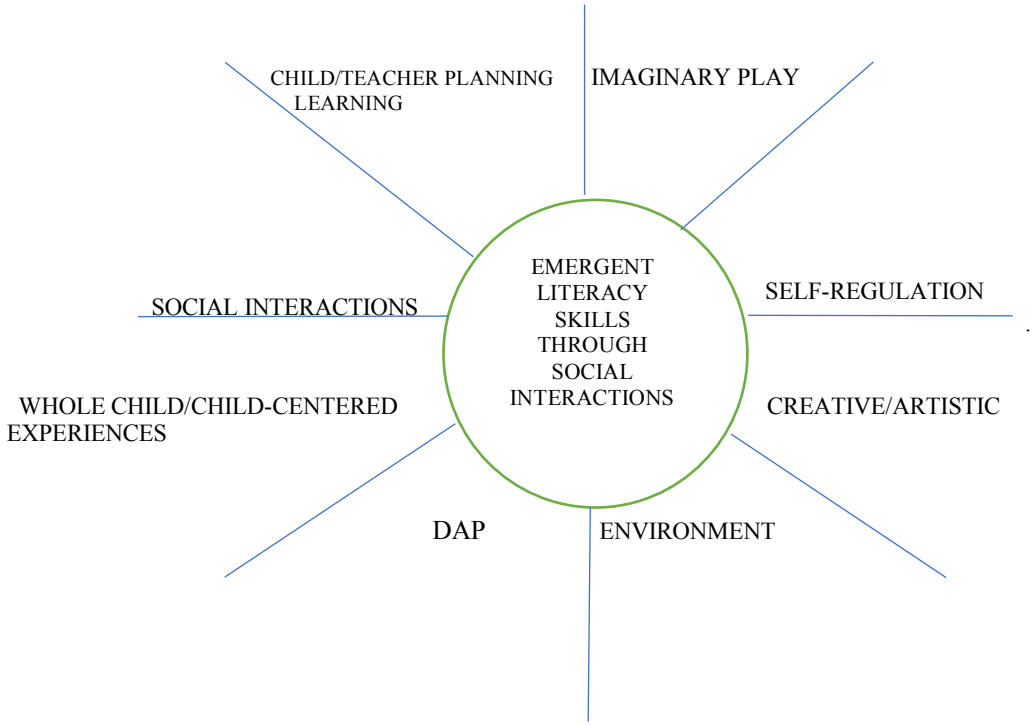

Figure 1. Conceptual framework map for emergent literacy skills.

Conceptual Framework/Theoretical Foundation

The work of Piaget and Vygotsky substantiated the focal educational approaches in the supporting literature. Piaget (1964) tied the development of knowledge to the physical development of the child, citing this as an important reason for providing

children with developmentally appropriate learning experiences. Piaget's theoretical model of cognitive development is based on four operational stages of child development that outline the development of knowledge. In moving from one stage to the next, several factors influence the progression: maturation; the role of the environment; social transition (in the broad sense); linguistic ability, and self-regulation.

Similar to Piaget (1964), Vygotsky (1978) addressed the relation between development and the physical and social environments. Like Piaget, Vygotsky stressed the importance of conceptualizing the relationship between development and learning in young children. However, he cautioned, "Yet it is the most unclear of all the basic issues on which the application of child development theories to educational processes depends" (p. 80). Vygotsky believed that children learn long before they enter formal schooling and that preschool learning differs greatly from that in school.

With each learning experience, background knowledge increases, which helps children in their future learning endeavors. Unlike many psychologists and educators of their times, Piaget, Vygotsky, Steiner, and Malaguzzi believed that imitation is critical for young children's development (Piaget, 1951; Vygotsky, 1978; Steiner, 1979; Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 2012). Vygotsky (1978) and Piaget (1964) stressed that oral language and cooperation working with others and in the environment, are important in the child's achievement of independent development.

With respect to the cultural aspect of child development, the experience occurs first through social interactions, followed by psychological internalization. Valsiner (1987) cited Vygotsky, stating "All higher psychological functions are internalized

relationships of the social kind, and constitutes [*sic*] the social structure of personality" (p. 67). Similar to Vygotsky's ZPD, John-Steiner and Holbrook (1996) stated that the child relies more on others when learning something new, but as she learns more, she depends less on others. The Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia philosophies follow this approach, offering children assistance when needed, after which there is a gradual release of responsibility as the child needs less guidance. Gaining self-confidence will encourage the child to participate in various learning experiences that promote literacy skills.

Vygotsky (1978) believed that in mastering nature we master ourselves, leading to complex thought processes. This thought ties Vygotsky to Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia, in that all three approaches view nature and the environment as the third teacher. John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) discussed a number of thinkers (Calkins, 1986; Emig, 1971; Graves, 1983; Murray, 1985) who considered reading and writing as collaborative efforts, not solitary acts. John-Steiner and Mahn (1996), together with Perry (2012), believed that literacy instruction is supported by the sociocultural theory of learning and development, a point of view that current research supports (Perry, 2012; Skibbe, Bindman, Hindman, Aram, & Morrison, 2014; Wilson & Devereux, 2014).

Vygotsky's theory of sociocultural approaches to learning and development emphasized the interdependence of social and individual progressions (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). Vygotsky conceptualized development as the internalization of social interactions, which become part of our language and development. In the cultural context of child development, experience is acquired first through social interactions, followed by psychological internalization.

Although early childhood education programs include Vygotsky and Piaget's theories, the emphasis on standards-based education has discouraged many early childhood educators in public schools from putting theory into practice (Reigeluth, 2016). Vygotsky (1978) and Piaget (1964) agreed that children must learn self-regulation and take purposeful action necessary for later learning. Piaget also indicated that self-regulation is fundamental in child development and stated that because it is often viewed as unimportant, it is often neglected. Nitecki and Chung (2013) pointed out that children learn self-regulation by making deliberate choices and in interactions with other children during natural play. They affirmed that teacher-directed instruction of targeted reading skills and practicing letter formations hinder the development of self-regulation.

Nitecki and Chung (2013) asserted further that entire preschool curricula are created because pretend play is considered crucial to child development and is "a right of every child" (Ginsburg, the Committee on Communications, & the Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, 2007, p. 182). Vygotsky (1978), a proponent of pretend play, stated that children learn to develop abstract thinking in that way. Vygotsky (1978) stated "Play takes a child to the upper end of his or her zone of proximal development" (p. 86).

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variables

Reggio Emilia

Reggio Emilia's educational approach includes input on the part of children, families, and the community, and values the process of educational work over the product, which is in contrast to the approach of traditional early childhood educators

(Cagliari et al., 2016; Hocevar, Sebart, & Stefanc, 2013). According to the Reggio Emilia approach, motivation increases when children contribute to their learning, much like the view held by Steiner Waldorf (Steiner, 1995).

Educational philosophy. Hocevar et al. (2013) indicated that notable authors in Reggio Emilia (Edwards, et al., 2012; 1998, 1988; Malaguzzi, 1998; Rinaldi, 1998, 2006) emphasized two important components of the pedagogical approach, "the absence of a planned curriculum as a basis for educational work in preschool and children's participation" (p. 478). This supports the views of those who ascribe to the Reggio Emilia pedagogical approach, in which children are protagonists, preschool teachers collaborate with them, and the environment is the third teacher (Caligari et al., 2016; Hall et al., 2014).

Rather than a fixed curriculum with fixed objectives, Reggio Emilia proponents allow the teachers' experience to guide the design of open-ended learning experiences with the children's input. Then, the teacher formulates objectives and goals, always keeping the differences between the children in mind. The teacher follows the children, not plans or a fixed curriculum. Hocevar et al. (2015) noted that while following the children, we must do so in accordance with Vygotskian theory (1978) and offer learning experiences that fall within the child's ZPD. Hocevar et al.'s findings highlighted the appeal and value of the Reggio Emilia pedagogical approach, and teach us that following the plan means following the children. One may consider this pedagogical approach in the development of emergent literacy skills and based on the experience of the teachers and children.

The hundred languages of children. Malaguzzi (2016) supported his theory of the "hundred languages of children" through his connection with Piaget and stated, "Children are recognized as possessing many cultural possibilities, which can too readily be systematically denied and taken away by the culture of school and society" (p. 104). Malaguzzi's (1998) writing provides a clear understanding of the hundred languages of children:

No Way. The Hundred *Is* There

> The child is made of one hundred. The child has a hundred languages a hundred hands a hundred thoughts a hundred ways of thinking of playing, of speaking. A hundred always a hundred ways of listening of marveling of loving a hundred joys for singing and understanding a hundred worlds to invent a hundred worlds to dream. The child has a hundred languages (and a hundred hundred hundred more) but they steal ninety-nine. The school and the culture separate the head from the body. They tell the child: to think without hands to do without head to listen and not to speak to understand without joy to love and to marvel only at Easter and Christmas. They tell the child: to discover the world already there and of the hundred they steal ninety-nine. They tell the child: that work and play reality and fantasy science and imagination sky and earth reason and dream are things that do not belong together. And, thus they tell the child that the hundred is not there. The child says: No way, the hundred *is* there. (p. 3)

Seeing the child through many different lenses, helps educators to understand the complexities of learning. Some children may foster emergent literacy skills in different ways than others, and it is the educator's responsibility to learn and guide in the most effective way.

Essential Elements of Reggio Emilia

Reggio Emilia pedagogy. Increasing interest in European pedagogical models of early childhood education has driven researchers to examine and study them. Bath (2012) shared an example of research conducted by Garrick et al. (2010), in which children's participatory learning was documented with photos and their drawings. The research study consisted of 15 case study settings throughout rural and urban England to ascertain the extent to which children's views informed planning. Bath's study was motivated by her observation that children's views were considered rarely when planning learning experiences (Garrick et al., 2010). An examination of Rinaldi's (2006) work with Reggio Emilia education in Italy, and Carr's (2001, 2005, 2011) in New Zealand helped to answer Bath's question about the extent of children's involvement in documentation and planning learning experiences. When developing new literacy skills and considering the ZPD, including children in planning may provide meaning and encourage them to delve deeper into the learning experience (Rinaldi, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978).

For the purposes of this study, work related to Reggio Emilia education was the focus. European educators have noted a wider pedagogical shift from a primarily centralized summative approach to assessment to a decentralized formative approach that documents children as they progress through the day (Bath, 2012). Using children's work

and views to plan and inform learning experiences is paramount in Reggio Emilia education. Bath upheld Rinaldi's (1993, 2006) claim that pedagogical documentation "is a way to construct ethical relationships between learners and practitioners or pedagogues" (p. 195). Rinaldi also said that the bias of the documenter(s) adds to the poetic narrative through collaboration.

The pedagogue in Reggio Emilia. Bath (2012) stated that the pedagogue and the child must create unique interactions, so they can learn from each other. Children felt excluded when they could not share their views and interests with teachers, or were unable to choose which photos of their work were displayed. Bath included Rinaldi's (2006) findings that documentation and discussion are democratic. Bath drew the conclusion that, "Both pedagogues, adult[s] and children, must work together on documenting learning and develop ever more varied and expressive ways of communicating" (p. 200). Although documentation that involves the children equally is new for many educators, it is important to include children's views when planning learning experiences.

Children's interactions and the Reggio Emilia philosophy. Martin and Evaldsson (2012) studied the way in which children in a Reggio Emilia school participated in appropriating school rules. They were especially interested in the way children interacted and communicated with each other during the study. Few researchers have examined children as active participants in the construction and appropriation of school rules. Martin and Evaldsson (2013) used a sociocultural approach and examined semiotic resources, such as talk, gestures, and physical space, to explore the way in which

children make sense of the rules during their school activities. Caligari et al. (2016) agreed with the claim that the idea that children are capable of participating in their own education is important in the Reggio Emilia educational philosophy.

Communicative and literary skills. Opportunities to participate in every learning experience are essential to Reggio Emilia, and focus on the manner which children develop communicative and literary skills (Bond, 2014; Corsaro & Molinari, 2005; Edwards et al., 1993). The Reggio Emilia schools have pedagogues (teacher experts in pedagogy) who provide children with many opportunities to participate actively in creating and making sense of the rules (Caligari et al., 2016). Martin and Evaldsson (2012) called play within the environment the "third pedagogue" in the activity. The researchers found that the appropriation process of creating rules is a part of children's development, especially in their competent use of language.

In this Reggio Emilia school, the children's informal literacy practices can, quoting Corsaro and Molinari (2005), be seen as "projective representations about future activities" (p. 55) in this pedagogical practice. Children in Reggio Emilia demonstrate communicative competencies and active participation that lead to the development of literacy skills.

The atelierista. A critical component of the Reggio Emilia philosophy is the atelier or art studio, and there always is a trained art teacher known as the atelierista (Cadwell, Ryan, & Shaw, 2015; Mages, 2016). Addressing the often "marginalized role commonly assigned to expressive education," Malaguzzi integrated the atelier into the framework and philosophy of Reggio Emilia (Gandini, 2015, p. 10). The atelier is a place

for the exploration of projects and is incorporated in the classrooms, rather than in a separate room (Cadwell et al., 2015). In addition, the atelier is a place to study and understand children's theories and interests.

Gandini (2015) noted Malaguzzi's belief in the power of documentation and that it was enhanced further by collaboration between the teachers and atelierista. The two felt that children are channels of energy and ideas, not vessels to be filled with knowledge. Gandini (2015) argued further that Reggio Emilia is an open system in which adults and children learn together and seek their full potential. Cultivating and nurturing the growth of ideas enables Reggio Emilia adults and children to learn in cycles, rather than in a linear manner.

Waldorf

Rudolf Steiner created the Waldorf alternative educational approach in 1919, and today there are more than 1,000 Waldorf schools in 44 countries (De Souza, 2012; Paschen, 2013). De Souza studied the Steiner Waldorf view of human development and the way in which it informed the curriculum. Steiner's educational approach differed fundamentally from the mainstream educational practices of his day, with his emphasis on the "balance between the intellectual, physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and aesthetic aspects of human development, and the development of quality of relationship with the natural world" (De Souza, 2012, p. 51).

Similar to Dewey's beliefs, Steiner Waldorf emphasized experiential learning that included the senses and engagement with the natural world. Steiner (1995, 1997, 2007) matched his theory of the seven–year stages of human development to the curriculum in

Waldorf. Steiner Waldorf educators believe there are specific characteristics that must be valued throughout each seven–year cycle. The first stage of development, from birth to age seven, focuses on the child's physical development (De Souza, 2012; Paschen, 2013; Steiner, 1995). In addition, during this time, the child's actions are motivated by will. In the Steiner Waldorf philosophy, will means a very strong "want." Another focus of the educators is strengthening the child's will.

Waldorf pedagogy. When considering a change in pedagogy, certain conditions must be met. First, there must be a deficit in existing pedagogies, because there is no need for a change without a deficit (Paschen, 2014). Steiner Waldorf pedagogy promotes children's individual and holistic characteristics, and socialization to achieve competences, rather than having teachers merely impart knowledge. Second, there must be an educational method to overcome the deficit and Steiner Waldorf pedagogy notes that development is often irreversible and learning and socialization can be forgotten and changed.

Next, pedagogical change requires an alternative pedagogy, like Steiner Waldorf, and the importance of development that creates a person of substance. Finally, the practice and resource premises create pedagogies that work almost anywhere, and with fewer resources than current pedagogy. Steiner Waldorf pedagogy has been in existence since 1919, Steiner Waldorf schools are increasing in numbers, and they use fewer material resources than most early childhood learning centers (Paschen, 2014). Paschen also noted that experiencing situations first, rather than just listening, often leads to gaining additional scientific, human, and moral experiences in the future and argued that

Steiner Waldorf pedagogy is "argumentatively well-founded" (p. 195) and rooted in the development of the whole child.

Steiner believed that fully developed human beings take their natural place in society, rather than that schools mold human beings into what society deems to be the social order (Sommer, 2014). Sommer used Steiner's definition of a Waldorf school, stating it must be "a comprehensive school in the sense that its only concern is to educate and teach in a way that meets the requirements of the human being in its entirety" (Steiner 1992, p. 13). Steiner developed Waldorf education on the premise that children develop through stages, every seven years, until adulthood, and experience the world differently during each stage, thereby linking his philosophy of human development to that of Piaget (Bjornholt, 2014; Steiner, 1995).

Aesthetics and balance. During the early years, children experience the curriculum through their senses, imaginations, and bodies, while writing is taught through oral storytelling and drawing pictures. Steiner (1995) offered the example of the letter B taught through the story of a bear, with the letter representing the shape of the bear. This gives meaning and grounds the abstract concept of the alphabet. Stories are shared orally so the children imagine the characters and setting. Nicol and Taplin (2012) noted that stories told orally often lead to imaginary play, a strong belief shared by Steiner, Piaget, and Vygotsky.

Larsson and Dahlin (2012) noted the correlation between Shiller's (1795/200) *Aesthetic Letters* and Steiner's (1995) views on the importance of aesthetics and balance in the education of young children. Shiller and Steiner described the instinctual nature

and power of play and the will to create through it. The rhythms of the day, the child, and the world are prominent in Steiner Waldorf and are discussed by Shiller (1795/2001: Larsson & Dahlin, 2012; Mathisen, 2015; Nicol & Taplin; Steiner, 1995). Rhythms of the day, month, and year form the structure of Steiner Waldorf education (Bjornholt, 2014; Steiner, 1995) through daily main lessons and monthly feasts. Rhythms are a part of education. Mathisen (2015) cited Allan and Evans' (2006) argument for recognizing rhythms in the school, stating "To live effectively in a rapidly changing world, we need to have a more complex grasp of the rhythmic character of how we reason and relate" (p. 12). Current empirical studies on Steiner Waldorf education recognize rhythms as an integral part of its pedagogy, teaching, and learning (Mathisen, 2015, cited in Libenwein, Barz, & Randoll, 2013; Woods, Ashley, & Woods, 2005).

Rhythms and the Steiner Waldorf philosophy. Mathisen discussed recent research (Green & Hopwood, 2015; Hopwood, 2013; Jacklin, 2004; Leander, Phillips, & Taylor, 2010; Middleton, 2014) on Lefebvre's writings about rhythms and their importance in educational contexts. Lefebvre (2002) understood play as a critical avenue of spontaneity and rhythm (Mathisen, 2015), and argued that teachers are important as rhythmanalysts who organize complex time structures in their classrooms.

Like Steiner (1995), Lefebvre characterized the body as a starting point for rhythms and dealt specifically with rhythms in learning and development (Mathisen, 2015). Learning takes place on different levels, such as the body, ideologies, and traditions (Lefebvre, 2004). Whitehead (1967), a researcher of rhythmic development in education, concluded that a slow rhythmic process takes children through the stages of

development. Similar to Steiner's philosophy, the early stages of development include curiosity and awakening as children learn something new (Mathisen, 2015). Whitehead maintained that the environment must be selected carefully and adapted to children as they grow physically and mentally; he also stated that teaching and experiential learning are critical during this stage.

Larsson and Dahlin (2012) stated that since 2002, Dewey divided education into "old education" and "new education." Old education consisted of the reproduction of human knowledge through memorization and passive learning, with little or no regard for individual motivation. Conversely, new education is child-centered and depends on motivation and interest. Osberg and Biesta (2010) discussed these policies through the lens of the complexity theory. Examining old education, including standardized assessment and strict curriculum control, Osberg and Biesta argued that reducing complexity or the variability of human learning and motivation occurs with these types of education. Complexity, as interpreted by Larsson and Dahlin (2013) "involves the precarious keeping of a sensitive balance" (p. 5). Child-centered learning experiences are foundations of Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia.

Waldorf learning environment. Steiner Waldorf schools are considered equal to public schools and are state funded in part or fully in many European countries (Bjornholt, 2014). Similar to the United States, in Norway, public education is under pressure to conform and develop accountability systems, so alternative educational approaches are in the forefront as possible means to derail the accountability movement. Bjornholt focused on the way in which the design of space informs educational practice

and considered that it has a positive influence in Steiner Waldorf pedagogical thinking and school curriculum.

Steiner was considered an architect with respect to the importance of developmentally appropriate learning environments (Bjornholt, 2014). Steiner Waldorf schools were designed with the belief that children learn during the stages of imitation, imagination, and discrimination (Norlund, 2013). Randoll and Peters (2015) conducted empirical research on Steiner Waldorf education and cited Barz and Randoll's (2007) study of the reason parents said they chose Steiner Waldorf education for their children, in which 46.3% stated that the special pedagogical background was the primary reason for their choice.

Steiner Waldorf students are not motivated by grades based on achievement; instead, they are motivated by their interest in the subject matter and opportunities for creativity and choice. Steiner Waldorf education focuses on "intellectual flexibility, creative thinking, independent judgment, moral discernment, refined written and oral communication skills, and effective collaboration, thus preparing students for success in the changing global community" (waldorfeducation.org, 2015, p. 2). The focus of Steiner Waldorf education is a holistic arts and nature approach to learning and personal development.

Because Steiner believed that early learning is connected to the child's physical body and sensory experience, the physical surroundings indoors and out offer diverse opportunities for self-education (Howard, n.d.). Creative, artistic experiences the teacher designs give young children learning opportunities through song, instrumental music,

speech, and language that include verses, poetry, and oral and print storytelling, painting, and puppetry. The teachers' job is to create opportunities for children to imitate through play, rather than through direct instruction (Howard, n.d.). Each of these learning opportunities has the potential to foster emergent literacy skills naturally and authentically.

Cunningham and Carroll (2011) noted that in the United Kingdom, the Cambridge Primary Review (a comprehensive examination of primary education in the UK) recommends delaying formal reading instruction until age six or seven. They cited Sharp, George, Sargent, O'Donnell, and Heron's research (2009), which stated that 10 out of 12 studies conducted in the UK found a "significant effect of relative age on tests of reading in children between ages 5 and 14" (p. 477). Sharp et al.'s (2009) study complemented other current studies on the effects of age on measures of early literacy. These studies support the Steiner Waldorf philosophy of delaying formal reading instruction until age seven, thus giving young children more opportunities to engage in learning experiences that promote emergent literacy skills.

Primary Tenets of Emergent Literacy Skill Development

Emergent Literacy Skills

Lonigan, Purpura, Wilson, Walker, and Clancy-Menchetti (2013) referenced the 300 studies Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) used in a meta-analysis to identify the emergent literacy skills needed to learn to read. Oral language, phonological awareness, and print knowledge are all predictors of conventional literacy outcomes. Storch and Whitehurst (2002) noted that oral language skills are related directly to reading

comprehension. Without the development of emergent literacy skills in preschool, Lonigan et al. (2013) argued that children will be less likely to succeed in reading.

Hume, Allan, and Lonigan (2016) conducted a study related to emergent literacy skill development and motivation. The authors stated that results from numerous studies demonstrated the connection between interest in literacy the development of literacy skills. Often, teacher-initiated activities lead to inattention, and in turn, to fewer literacy activities and decreased literacy skills (Hume et al., 2016). Including children's interests and ideas for learning experiences, such as educators do in Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia schools, engage them instinctively and potentially decrease the risk of low emergent literacy skill development.

Early Childhood Educational Environment

Like Reggio Emilia and Steiner Waldorf education, Lim (2015) emphasized the significance of "The Third Teacher," the learning environment. Created, it reflects the principles, values, and beliefs that foster and nurture both children and adults (Malaguzzi, 2016; Steiner, 1979). Considering this, rich learning environments must be engaging and provide opportunities for children to socialize, develop oral language, solve problems, and think creatively. Lim cited Stonehouse (2011) and noted that learning environments should be places in which children feel secure, are able to take risks, are encouraged to be curious, and are allowed to reflect. Nicol and Taplin's (2013) and Thornton and Brunton's (2015) research supported this view. Lim posed the question of the way in which this third environment influences literacy and language development. As in Reggio

Emilia (Thornton & Brunton, 2015), documenting and displaying children's work, including artwork, is essential to the program.

Lim (2015) also included writing, questions, and things that children wonder about in the displays. Lim (2015) and Rinaldi (1993) stated that displaying children's work helps them see that their ideas are valued, and helps parents and the community recognize, value, and appreciate their work. Stories, dance, and music are valuable ways for children to communicate visually and verbally. Malaguzzi (2016) stated that children who flourish and grow establish a foundation for literacy skills development.

John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) cited Vygotsky's (1978) position, "Learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child interacts with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers" (p. 80). Vygotsky included the idea of semiotic mediation in the sociocultural approach to learning and development, and touted it as the key to the co-construction of knowledge (Bedrova & Leong, 2015; John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). He (1981) listed several examples of semiotic mediation: "language; various methods of counting; mnemonic devices; algebraic symbol systems; works of art; writing; schemes; diagrams; maps; mechanical drawings; and symbols" (p. 137). John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) cited Bruner (1962), who affirmed that Vygotsky believed that by mastering nature, we master ourselves and, through the internalization of external dialogue, develop complex thought processes.

Imaginary Play

Piaget's (1951) views about the importance of the interactions between children and their environments are still valued today (Bedrova & Leong, 2015; Edwards et al., 2012; Nilsson & Ferholt, 2014; Steiner, 1979; Vygotsky, 1978). Preschool teachers in Europe know that facilitating learning, rather than providing direct instruction, increases child development and learning, with teachers supporting the students as needed, following the Vygotsky philosophy (Nilsson & Ferholt, 2014). Stephen (2012) argued that play is the "essential medium through which children learn" (p. 235) and that is especially true for 3 to 5- year-olds learn, play is essential for their development.

Piaget (1951) discussed his definition of play, and the way in which it differs from that of other theorists. Vygotsky agreed with Piaget that, for preschool children, play creates an imaginary situation, but others considered pretend play to be only one attribute of play. Vygotsky and Piaget placed pretend play at the center of the definition. Vygotsky (1978) stated "The influence of play on child development is enormous" (p. 95), and is the leading factor in childhood development. Vygotsky's theory of sociocultural approaches to learning and development emphasizes the interdependence of social and individual processes (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996), which occur in play largely at the child's initiative. Vygotsky conceptualized development as the internalization of social interactions. Social interactions become part of language acquisition, a precursor to emergent literacy. Piaget (1951) defined the characteristics of play as an end itself, spontaneous, pleasurable, lacking organization, and free from conflict. According to Piaget (1951), play is make-believe and imaginative, an opinion supported by Bedrova

and Leong (2015), Edwards et al. (2012), Nilsson and Ferholt (2014), Steiner (1979), and Vygotsky (1978).

Sobo (2014) argued that merely having a place to play is not enough. Instead, it should be an integral part of early childhood education. Sobo noted that, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), "Play is essential to the social, emotional, and physical well-being of children" (p. 204), and discussed the findings of the importance of play in child development from the Milteer, Ginsburg Council on Communications and Media Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, and Mulligan (2012). The researcher found that play is more than a class of experiences, but a tone the children set, and considered Steiner Waldorf pedagogy to be a prime example of schooling in which imaginative play is valued.

Self-Regulation

Researchers Blair and Raver (2015) studied self-regulation and its relationship to school readiness. In Vygotsky's (1978) view, self-regulation provides young children opportunities to engage in learning during school. Blair and Raver defined self-regulation as mastery of the following skills: focusing and maintaining attention; regulating emotion and stress response; reflecting on information and experience, and engaging in sustained positive social interactions. It does not supplant emergent literacy skills, but rather increases the depth of learning and participation. According to the Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia philosophies, self-regulation develops through social interactions, and prepares children to attend and learn in school. Lack of school readiness is significant to

the local problem of students who are unprepared to learn to read, and the alternative preschool philosophies embed the development of self-regulation in their programs.

Blair and Raver (2015) found that self-regulation and school readiness are interrelated. When kindergarten teachers were asked to rank the skills necessary for school readiness, very few stated that only academic skills were needed and most indicated that social skills and the ability to self-regulate are most important. The authors referred to numerous studies of temperament characterized by high positive emotionality and low levels of distractibility (citing Keogh, 1992, Martin et al., 1998, & Palinsin, 1986). Blair and Raver asserted that both self-regulation and academic abilities are related and are critical for school readiness.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice

DAP is used to describe the tenets of early childhood education, including awareness of the child's developmental stages, a focus on appropriate processes in the curriculum, and acknowledgement of the importance and interdependence of all areas of child development (McGuinness, Sproule, Bojke, Trew, & Walsh, 2014). McGuiness et al. also emphasized the importance of learning through play-based experiences, as discussed by Bredekamp (1987) in a research paper published by the (NAEYC). This supports Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia's claims about the critical role of learning through play with input from the children, particularly in the most recent revisions (NAEYC, 1997, 2009).

Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia education offer a rich arts curriculum with a strong emphasis on experiential learning (Sobo, 2014). Sobo noted that the Steiner

Waldorf philosophy, “The wisdom of humankind” (p. 10), was developed by Steiner in 1907, and also described by Bond (2014) and Nicol and Taplin (2012). Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia programs hold a world-wide reputation of placing a high value on imaginative play and using it to promote the child’s well-being (Sobo, 2013, 2014; Kelemen, 2013). In contrast, current educational practices in the United States incorporate play only as a means to achieve academic goals (Sobo, 2014). “One or two years of developmentally appropriate center-based Early Childhood Education (ECE) for three- and four-year-olds improve[s] children’s early language and literacy when measured at the end of the program or soon after” (Yoshikawa et al., 2013, p. 4).

The conflict between DAP and pressures to meet government targets through formal teaching approaches for young children has been noted commonly and continues to be a concern for early childhood educators (Lonigan et al., 2013; McGuiness et al., 2014). This conflict includes the debate about the nature of play and its role in education. The concept of play as make-believe and imaginative melds with Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia’s views.

Whole Child/Child-Centered Learning

Noncognitive skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, problem solving, persistence, social skills, and self-regulation are linked to academic achievement (Garcia & Weiss, 2016). Noncognitive skills play an important role in the development of cognitive skills, and Garcia and Weiss (2016) argued the necessity of including both in public education. The researchers argued further that noncognitive skills are “responsive to differences in school quality, children’s environment, and various parental

investments" (p. 2). However, many K–12 education policymakers neither prioritize the importance of, nor include these skills as core components of public education policy. Not only should policymakers include the development of noncognitive skills in their education policies and mission statements, accountability practices must be explicit, in that schools and teachers contribute to the development of these skills (Garcia & Weiss, 2016).

Noncognitive skills are valuable throughout life, whether in the workplace or in other contexts. Employers value and seek individuals who demonstrate noncognitive skills and hire them over those who do not (Garcia & Weiss, 2016). Educating the whole child nurtures both noncognitive and cognitive skills and helps prepare children for success in both school and later life. Garcia and Weiss (2016) noted that brain research shows that noncognitive and cognitive skills begin to develop in the early years, and argued that the development of noncognitive skills in the years leading up to formal schooling is highly important (Garcia & Weiss, 2016).

Roffey (2016) argued in favor of educating the whole child, especially among those who experience adversity in their lives. Children who live with acute or chronic stress and trauma are at risk for failure in school, and the education of the whole child is necessary to overcome stressors and become successful in school and in life (Roffey, 2016). The number of children who live in such environments is "extensive and the problems chronic" (p. 30). A nurturing environment that values noncognitive skills helps at-risk children overcome these stressors (Roffey, 2016).

Social Interaction

Recent research has validated consistently the effect of social interaction in the development of executive function (EF) in preschool age children (Moriguchi, 2014). Moriguchi argued that EF develops rapidly in young children, and emphasized the importance of social interaction during this time. According to Moriguchi (2014), EF may help develop the cognitive skills necessary for social interaction, and therefore, a mutual "functional dependency between EF and social interaction" may exist (p. 1). Carpendale and Lewis (2004) emphasized the importance of social interaction in the development of oral language skills, and noted that language skills are critical for social cognitive development. Further, they stated that research on EF must include the roles of social interaction.

Vygotsky (1978) determined that higher mental functions and self-regulation develop within the framework of social interactions. When children have mastery over themselves and connect to the world, it nurtures the "will," enhances self-confidence, and sets the stage for optimal learning (Steiner, 1979). Piaget (1951) argued that peer interaction helps young children understand multiple perspectives, rather than just their own, which contributes to their ability to solve problems. Providing children with opportunities to experiment and develop new skills creates independence and self-reliance. When adults view children as capable, rather than needy, they take risks and their self-confidence increases (Malaguzzi, 2016).

Hamre, Hatfield, Pianta, and Jamil (2014) evaluated a model of social and instructional interactions between the teacher and child. They considered more than a decade of research and established the value of teacher-child interactions in development.

Research studies have linked teacher-child interactions through emotional support, the environment, and instructional support to child development in social, emotional, regulatory, and cognitive functioning (Hamre et al., 2014). Further, Hamre et al. determined that responsive teacher-child interactions developed "early language and literacy skills, increased working memory, and had decreased levels of teacher-child conflict" (p. 1266). In addition, the researchers stated that findings from their study showed gains in preschool children's language and literacy, the greatest of which were found in preschools that had a child-centered instructional approach that emphasized autonomy (Hamre et al., 2014). Finally, they argued that early childhood programs that focus solely on instructional approaches restrict language and literacy development and problem-solving, and may inhibit the child's development (Hamre et al., 2014). In studies conducted in Reggio Emilia schools, students prefer a pedagogic relationship that values mutual respect and allows them input in their learning. When children are included in planning with their teacher, self-worth and interest increase, which improves attention to learning and achievement (Edwards et al., 2012).

Creative and Artistic Learning Experiences

There is a large body of literature that supports the importance of creative skill development in young children (Davies et al., 2013). Further, creative skill development encourages children to develop the literacy skills of oral language, vocabulary, and phonemic awareness in authentic ways. These literacy skills are developed as children role-play through skits and share personal thoughts and feelings about art projects with other children and adults. Davies et al. (2013) noted that "flexible use of space and time,

availability of appropriate materials, working outside of the classroom or school, playful approaches with a great degree of learner autonomy, respectful relationships between teachers and learners, opportunities for peer collaboration, and nonprescriptive planning" are essential components of creative learning experiences (p. 80). They found that the indoor and outdoor environments of Reggio Emilia are of primary importance in fostering creative and artistic skills. In Reggio Emilia, there is an openness and value in an environment that emphasizes light, color, and sound, and includes resources such as clay, foam, wires, tissue paper, and other materials (Davies et al., 2014; Gandini, 2015); this visual environment encourages young children' creative expression.

Outdoor learning environments foster collaboration and ownership, and invite creativity. Steiner Waldorf students spend part of every school day learning and developing creative skills outdoors (Nicol & Taplin, 2012). Outdoor learning can be an extension of the indoor classroom, as children often are seen recreating a story they heard from their teacher (Nicol & Taplin, 2012). There are books in Steiner Waldorf schools, but most pre-literacy activities consist of oral storytelling so that children create their own meaning (Nicol & Taplin, 2012). Providing opportunities for self-expression and student choice develop creativity, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills (Davies et al., 2013).

High Quality Preschools and Emergent Literacy

Chambers, Cheung, and Slavin (2016) cited numerous longitudinal studies that showed that "Children who attend intensive and extensive preschools have long-lasting cognitive outcomes as compared to those children who do not attend preschool" (p. 2).

This has been supported by many researchers (Camilli, Vargas, Ryan, & Barnett, 2010; Chambers et al., 2016; Chambers, deBotton, Cheung, & Slavin, 2013; Coghlan et al., 2009; Gorey, 2001; Nelson, Westhues, & MacLeod, 2003; Jacobs, Creps, & Boulay, 2004; Waldfogel & Washbrook, 2010). According to program evaluations, even basic "run of the mill" preschools may encourage growth on the children's part, but the outcomes do not last, and the academic gains are less than stellar (Chambers et al., 2016).

Highly effective, intensive preschools, such as the Perry Project, included children and their interests in planning the curriculum and lessons (Chambers et al., 2016). The children were considered active learners whom trained teachers facilitated, rather than taught activities. The results of the Perry Project supported the Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia philosophies that it is important to consider children active learners who take part in planning lessons and topics of investigation (Gandini et al., 2012; Steiner, 1996).

A review by Chambers et al. (2016) compared traditional, academic, cognitive based preschool programs with developmental-constructivist or alternative preschools and found the alternative preschools yielded better "long-term educational and social adjustment outcomes" (Chambers et al., 2016, p. 7). The researchers determined that alternative preschool approaches produced better outcomes in literacy and language than did those that employed the direct instruction approach.

Traditional, academic, cognitive based preschool programs in the United States often use prepackaged literacy programs that do not encourage a language-rich environment, which researchers Campbell, Torr, and Cologon (2014) noted as the key to

overall quality in preschool. A language-rich environment supports the development of emergent literacy skills and relates to positive outcomes for children. Reggio Emilia-inspired and Steiner Waldorf schools provide this type of environment for preschool children (Rinaldi, 2006; Nicol & Taplin, 2012).

Chambers et al.'s (2016) premise was that teachers understand the implicit theory that informs their daily lesson plans and the way in which they interact with children. Chambers et al. (2016), and Ramani and Brownell (2014) examined the connection between learning experiences and theory, and stated that Vygotsky and Piaget influenced the teaching practices of preschool teachers heavily. Brostrom, Frokjaer, Johansson, and Sandberg (2012) agreed with Vygotsky's (1978) determination that social interaction is critical in the development of the human mind and self-regulation. Thus, it is the preschool teacher's responsibility to pay attention to young children's social interactions and ensure that they include situations in which meaning can be constructed. When this happens, optimal individual cognitive development occurs (Brostrom et al., 2012). Preschool teachers must encourage active social interactions through "guided participation" (Rogoff, 1990). Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia philosophies, with their focus on children's freedom of interaction, are supported by Johansson and Sandberg (2010). Brostrom et al. (2012) supported play as a means of social interactions and learning, and argued that preschool teachers must give the children opportunities to explore and learn. This study and others are controversial, in that they have indicated that they have indicated that public schools in the United States may not give preschool

children the time to explore and learn through DAP and thus, have the potential to thwart the development of emergent literacy skills.

In Chapter 3, the choice of a case study design was discussed in depth over other research designs. Case study design was the appropriate choice compared to grounded theory, narrative research, phenomenological research, and ethnographic research, as the characteristics of these designs did not match the research problem and questions for this study.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter reviewed the literature and I discussed the following related topics: (a) Piaget and Vygotsky's theories of child development; (b) Reggio Emilia educational philosophy; (c) Steiner Waldorf educational philosophy; (d) emergent literacy skills and the tenets of emergent literacy skills, and (e) review of methodologies. The literature I reviewed contained important themes common to many sources. One that emerged was the importance of DAP in high-quality preschool environments that also include teacher-child interactions (Edwards et al., 2012). An aspect of this theme was including the child when planning learning experiences. Children's interests and ideas lead to engagement and development of the self, and the quality of developmentally appropriate practice is related to emergent literacy development.

Another emergent theme was the importance of play as a method by which young children learn. Vygotsky (1978), Piaget (1964), Reggio Emilia (Malaguzzi, 2016), and Steiner (1995) emphasized the significance of imaginary play as a critical component of developmentally appropriate learning. Children's interactions during pretend play

encourage oral language development, emotional self-regulation, and problem-solving, all necessary for literacy skill development (Vygotsky, 1978). Finally, the theme of the "Third Teacher," or the environment, emerged from the literature review. Steiner (1995) and Malaguzzi (2016) emphasized the importance of environmental effects on children's learning. Both indoor and outdoor environments are critical components of the Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia philosophies, and both approaches take great care when planning learning environments.

In addition to these themes, a gap in the literature was identified with respect to Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia teacher's perceptions about emergent literacy skill development in the respective preschools. This gap was apparent in the different preschool philosophies and the development of emergent literacy skills. In Chapter 3, I address these gaps throughout the study to identify the ways in which the teachers of the Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia alternative educational approaches cultivated the development of emergent literacy skills among preschool children.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

The design of this qualitative multicase study stemmed from its purpose, which was to examine the way in which alternative preschool philosophies may inform best practices for the cultivation of emergent literacy skills in preschool. To address the problem of students who enter kindergarten without these skills, I documented the perceptions of teachers of both approaches, and the way in which they describe and apply their specific program philosophies to foster such literacy skills. Further, I described their perceptions of the role of play in emergent literacy skill development. Finally, I discussed the similarities in, and differences between, the Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia teaching methods as they relate to the development of emergent literacy skills.

This chapter includes a description and rationale for the choice of research design. I describe my role, as well as participant selection, participation, data collection, and the data analysis. I also discuss the issues of ethical procedures related to qualitative design.

Research Design and Rationale

I chose a case study design for this research because data were collected from multiple sources to provide rich descriptions of the phenomenon being investigated: preschool children's emergent literacy skill development through participation in Steiner Waldorf or Reggio Emilia educational philosophies. Emergent literacy skill development was the embedded unit of analysis or case, and for this study, four cases were studied: two Steiner Waldorf-inspired schools and two Reggio Emilia-inspired schools. I collected data from director and teacher interviews, de-identified student work, and observations of instructional practice and facilitation of learning experiences.

Researchers use case study methodology to understand complex and social phenomena (Yin, 2014). When there is more than one case to study, a multicase study is chosen. Considering why or how research questions helps determine whether a case study is the correct methodology (Soy, 2015; Yin, 2014). Researchers choose case studies when they examine contemporary events and behaviors that cannot be manipulated, and when interviews and observations are a part of the process.

Multiple data sources and data collection techniques are the significant strengths of a case study (Soy, 2015). In this research, the primary methods of data collection were multiple interviews and observations. The secondary method of data collection was de-identified student work samples. Soy stated that case studies can generate large amounts of data from multiple sources, and that triangulation of those data identifies themes that, when examined together, often offer insights that support and extend previous research.

Following Yin (2014), I examined different methodologies, both qualitative and quantitative, to determine the most appropriate design for this study. Researchers use quantitative methods to explain phenomena by statistical analyses of numerical data (Yilmaz, 2013). A quantitative research design would not be an appropriate choice because I did not use numerical data in this study. Further, gathering quantitative data would not permit me to delve into the nuances of the ways in which young children's interest and skills in literacy emerge.

A qualitative research design best matched my research questions because the study documented perceptions, the approach was open-ended, and the participants could pose additional questions (Creswell, 2012). Researchers create ethnographic research

designs to collect data about a culture's "shared patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language that develop over time" (Creswell, 2012, p. 462). Sometimes, the term case study is used in conjunction with ethnography, but case studies are used to identify activities in a group, rather than cultural themes (Creswell). Thus, as I was not studying a culture, ethnography would not be the best choice.

Grounded theory entails the development of theory from data gathered in social research (Glaser & Strauss 1967). This design is used when the goal is to develop a broad theory based on data that offer an improved or advanced explanation. The researcher's ability to expand or change direction based on the data s/he analyzes is important in this theory (Creswell, 2012). This type of research is not consistent with the tenets of my research, because I did not seek to develop a new theory of emergent literacy.

A narrative research design is used when people share their lives and tell their stories to researchers (Creswell, 2012), and when the stories follow the chronology of events (Creswell, 2012). Narrative research design participants often share events as part of their biography. This design does not match my study, as I did not report the participants' individual stories. Furthermore, I implemented classroom observations and document review as part of my case study. These methodologies are not applied in narrative research.

Lodico, Spaulding, and Vogetle (2010) defined a phenomenological research design as the study of lived experiences and the meanings people construct from them. In such research, people share interpretations of their experiences through interviews. This design did not match my study, because I was not involved with the participants'

everyday experiences or the meanings they assigned to them and because I did not limit my data collection to interviews. Therefore, after examining the various types of research designs above, I chose the multicase study design. Yin (2014) considered single- and multiple-type case studies in the same framework, and believed the data from multicase design is more compelling than are those of a single-case design.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher, I understand that it is the participants who give meaning to the phenomenon and make it explicit (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013). It is important to ask questions and probe for more detail, but the participants' interpretation is critically important. The participants must be allowed to communicate in-depth and the focus must be on opportunities for a full understanding of their perspectives (Ritchie et al., 2013). As the researcher, I listened actively to the participants' responses and remained objective throughout the interviews, and was not a participant during the observations. I did not participate directly in the lessons, but recorded observations (Lodico et al., 2010).

Since I conducted the research at sites where I do not work, there was no risk of personal bias from professional relationships. I knew that I must examine the data objectively to answer the research question clearly. My interview questions and observations were designed to organize and separate my personal thoughts from the facts. I did not offer the participants incentives for their time.

Methodology

Yin (2014) provided a twofold definition of case study design and stated that it examines a current phenomenon (the case) within its real-world context. He indicated that the data collected may consist of many variables that may converge through triangulation. Multiple sources of evidence should be examined, and previous development of theoretical propositions should guide the analysis.

Yin (2014) considered further that single- and multicase designs are rooted in the same framework. Multicase designs have advantages and disadvantages. Yin referred to Herriott and Firestone (1983), who argued that multicase studies are "often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust" (p. 57). A disadvantage of conducting a multicase study is the time and extensive resources needed.

Participant Selection

The goal of qualitative research is to obtain rich detail about the phenomenon, so the participants will be chosen with care (Polkinghorne, 2005). Participant selection requires "collecting a series of intense, full, and saturated descriptions of the experience under investigation" (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 139). The selection of participants began with identifying the settings of Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired preschools in Ohio. The chosen preschools followed the philosophies of the approaches, as determined through conversation with their directors. There were eight participants, including a director and a lead teacher trained in the philosophies of their school from each of the two Steiner Waldorf-inspired and two Reggio Emilia-inspired preschools.

Trained, lead teacher participants were chosen because their qualifications and years of teaching were greater than other teachers in the schools. These teachers lent increased credibility to the study because of their role, qualifications, and years of teaching.

Eight participants were chosen because, as Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) noted, it is important in qualitative research to determine a sample size that is not so large that it will compromise the ability to obtain rich, detailed data. Two participants from each site were chosen. Two sites per philosophical approach were chosen and two staff members from each site were selected to obtain different perspectives and points of view. This enabled me to arrive at a holistic understanding of how sample members experience alternative philosophies of early education (Boblin, Ireland, Kirkpatrick, & Robertson, 2013).

Researchers use purposeful sampling to gain information and data related to the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). In this study, the research candidates and sites were chosen using purposeful sampling from the population of Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired preschool teachers and directors so that the data collected reflected their respective philosophies. The two cities included in this study were from major metropolitan areas, had established schools that followed the philosophies and approaches considered, and had granted written permission to conduct the study.

Instrumentation

Yin (2014) confirmed the importance of following the four principles of data collection. He stated that these principles have sometimes been neglected in the past and as researchers, we must be cognizant of them. The principles of data collection are as

follows: "(a) using multiple, not just single, sources of evidence; (b) creating a case study database; (c) maintaining a chain of evidence, and (d) exercising care in using data from electronic sources of evidence, such as social media communications" (p. 105). Direct observations and interviews were the primary methods of data collection in this study. They were the primary methods because rich-detailed data were collected through observation and interview. The secondary method of data collection supported the data collection from the primary methods and was the use photos of de-identified student work, samples of which were chosen during the visit. Before the first site visit, I collected the consent agreement from the participants. The consent form provided information about, and confirmed the time of the observation and interview, its 30–45-minute duration, and exchanged contact information. I asked the participants for student work that demonstrated different developmental levels of emergent literacy skills or for samples that best illustrate the process of acquiring these skills. The artifacts that related to emergent literacy skills were available since the schools' philosophies place a high value on art and science as ways to demonstrate and document literacy skills. Yin stated that such photos "corroborate information from other sources and are a valuable source of information" (p. 107). This work shed light on emergent literacy skill development.

One source of evidence for my study was direct observation. I planned to observe each teacher one time for approximately 30–45 minutes during the morning, followed by the interview. I chose the morning to observe instructional time. During the direct observation, I spent approximately 10 minutes simply observing and becoming acclimated to the surroundings. Thereafter, I followed Creswell's (2012) observational

protocol and focus on one activity at the site, and then began recording descriptive field notes for later reflection on my descriptions regarding literacy skills. Creswell suggested creating a "chronology of events, portraits of individuals, or sketches of the site" (p. 228). During the observation, I observed whole group and small group learning experiences, teacher interaction with students, student-to-student interaction, and document when and how emergent literacy skills were presented within the indoor and outdoor learning environments. I used my Conceptual Framework as a heuristic and the chart found in Appendix A when writing field notes. Appendix A, the Observational Field Notes Guide was an open-ended document for note taking void of perceived expectations. The observation guide included a section for reflective notes, so I documented my thoughts or questions and kept them separate from the raw data, as Creswell (2012), Miles et al. (2014), and Yin (2014) recommended. Further, I re-created an observational checklist (Appendix B) to document the components of emergent literacy skill development. When the observation concluded, I wrote a passage that included the direct observations and reflective field notes recorded.

Appendix B is an Observation Checklist was specifically about emergent literacy environments, language-rich environments, and supporting literacy within families (Saskatchewanreads, 2014). Yin (2014) stated that direct observations are appropriate when the researcher wants to see action in real-time and cover the case context. Direct observations were an appropriate method of data collection for this study, because my research questions related to Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired

teaching methods for emergent literacy skill development. Thus, classroom observations offered insights and answers to my research questions.

Direct observations offer additional information about the phenomena being studied (Yin, 2014). I adopted the role of a nonparticipant observer, because I have never had contact with the preschool children, and to observe the teachers in the natural setting of the Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired learning environments. Observing the learning experiences indoors and outdoors offered valuable insights for the study. Yin (2014) noted that taking photographs of the fieldwork site or of student work can be a valuable addition to the data collection process. There were not any photographs of students during this study and the photographs of their work contributed to the study because I asked the teachers to walk me through their interpretation of what the child was producing.

Yin (2014) determined that conducting interviews provides the researcher with a targeted focus on the case study topic, and assesses the perceptions and attitudes of the participants as well. The research questions focused on the way the preschool teachers defined their program philosophies, how they viewed their environment, and how they differed with respect to emergent literacy skill development in Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired schools. Therefore, interviews were an appropriate method of data collection for this study. Research subquestion one, "How do Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired preschool teachers characterize the role of the two philosophies in the development of emergent literacy skills?" was answered through interview questions one through six. Research subquestion two, "How do Steiner

Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired preschool teachers apply their program philosophies to provide a learning environment they view as key to emergent literacy?" was answered through interview questions three through six (see Appendix C).

I conducted one interview per participant, in a private area of the school or location of their choice. During the interview, I helped the participant relax by asking warm-up questions, then eight specific questions that related to the research questions (see Appendix C) and followed appropriate interview etiquette (Yin, 2014). Sub RQ1 was answered through interview questions one, two, five, and six. Sub RQ2 was answered through interview questions three, four, and seven. I was considerate, acknowledge that the interviewee was the expert, observed acutely, and allowed the responses to guide the questions. Yin (2014) noted the two jobs of the researcher during the interview: "(a) to follow your own line of inquiry, as reflected by your case study protocol, and (b) to ask your actual (conversational) questions in an unbiased manner that also serves the needs of your line of inquiry" (p. 110). I followed both jobs of the researcher as stated by Yin.

To collect comprehensive, rich data, it is important to ask open-ended questions and give participants time to reflect on them (Yin, 2014). Rich data offered an in-depth examination of the central phenomenon and added validity to the study, overall. Reflective responses on my part encouraged the interviewee to confirm what s/he stated and expand upon responses. For example, one question that was asked of the participant was to describe their role in young children's education. Because of the responses from the participant, I asked, "Can you tell me more, or I'd like to understand more about your perspective." The interview structure (Appendix C) consisted of: (a) warm-up questions;

(b) specific interview questions; (c) wrap up, and (d) thanks for their participation. The interviewees permitted an audio recording during the interview, and I used a password protected Smartphone as the recorder. I also used a password protected Sony recorder to tape all interviews, and used a password protected Smartphone to document student work. Because the student work was de-identified and the schools have granted permission for photographs, I did not require parental permission to use it.

The basis for instrument development was centered on the research of Hinkley, Salmon, Crawford, Okely, and Hesketh (2016) as related to preschool activity, and the Ontario Ministry of Education (2014). After each observation and interview, I entered the information in a case study database. The ATLAS.ti data analysis software was used for data organization and coding. Yin (2014) confirmed the importance of case study databases as a method of organizing and documenting the data collected. The database contained a separate compilation of the data collected, including photos taken at the field sites.

To increase the reliability (consistency) of the information collected, I maintained a chain of evidence (Noble & Smith, 2015). Yin (2014) asserted that it is important that the reader is able to "follow the derivation of any evidence from initial research questions to ultimate case study conclusions" (p. 127). Further, it is critical that all of the evidence collected remains intact and none is lost through neglect or because of bias. Also, I used member checks to enhance validity (truth and value) of the findings (Noble & Smith, 2015).

Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data for this doctoral research originated from interviews, observations, and de-identified student work, and the raw data gathered was expanded through write-ups, transcription, examination, and analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Miles et al. (2014) noted that analysis has "three concurrent flows of activity: (1) data condensation, (2) data display, and (3) conclusion drawing/verification" (p. 12). Once the field notes were written-up, photos were catalogued and described, and interviews were transcribed, the data was condensed. Miles et al. (2014) and Yin (2014) noted that it is important to condense data throughout the data collection process, and I did this throughout my study following Miles et al.'s display 1.1 (p. 14).

Miles et al. (2014) stated that when conducting multicase studies, one of the researcher's primary goals is to compare and contrast the specific cases. They also stressed the importance of concurrent data collection and analysis because new and different data may be collected. To accomplish this with fidelity, I transcribed the individual interviews immediately, and created a personal file listing the participants' names and aliases to avoid confusion. The files were stored on a personal, secure computer that only I could access. I stored the hand-written notes with the signed consent forms in a locked file cabinet that only I could access.

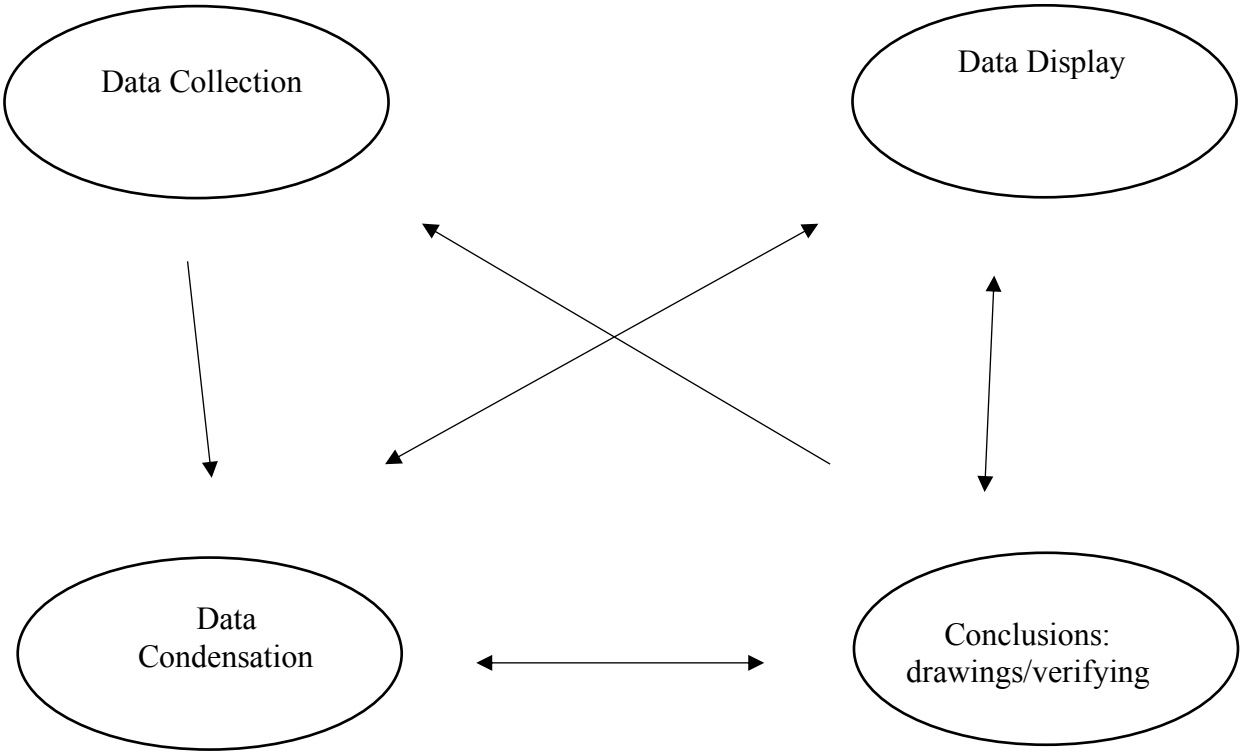

Figure 2. Data collection process.

From "*Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (3rd ed.), p.14, by M.B. Miles, A.M. Huberman, and J. Saldana. Copyright 2014 by Sage Publications.

Shenton (2004) argued that member checking, in which participants read the interview transcripts to determine their accuracy is "the single most important provision that can be made to bolster a study's credibility" (p. 68). In addition, member checking enhances validity because the participants assess the transcripts' accuracy. Within one week, after the interview, I sent a copy of the transcribed interview to each participant and the findings from the study, for member checking (Creswell, 2012) either via email. I asked the participants to check the accuracy of the account and whether the description was complete (Creswell, 2012).

After data were collected from the field sites, I used the ATLAS.ti computer assisted software program to create a database to arrange the interviews, observations, and student work collected. I entered the data before setting up the codes that I analyzed through the ATLAS.ti program. I realized that this software would assist me only in reducing and analyzing the data. Thereafter, I secured the data collected immediately in a locked file cabinet. This protected the chain of evidence and increased the validity of the data (Yin, 2014).

Creswell (2012) confirmed the significance of first conducting a preliminary exploratory analysis to obtain an initial impression of the data overall. After doing so, l used coding and categorizing strategies to analyze the interview and observational data. Using the ATLAS.ti software program, the first cycle codes and coding helped identify and code chunks of data, after which the program determined codes based on the participants' words (Miles et al., 2014). This method "honors the participants' voice" (Miles et al., p. 74). After the definitions of the codes were inserted, a second cycle of coding or pattern codes were identified, organized, and counted, and the matching codes or themes were completed by grouping the data into categories (Miles et al., 2014; Yin, 2014).

Creswell (2012) stated that the coding process is important, as it involves dividing the data, examining the codes for overlap, and then determining the broad themes. I selected specific data and discounted any information that was unrelated to the study using the ATLAS.ti software outputs. This inductive process reduced the information and enabled me to create specific categories. Creswell discussed common topics studied

during the coding process that pertain to this study: "(a) setting and context; (b) perspectives held by the participants; (c) activities; (d) teacher strategies, and (e) social structure" (p. 244). I conducted the final analysis myself, without the software assistance.

By studying the coding from the ATLAS.ti program, I determined any emerging patterns or themes. I realized that a computer program cannot analyze behaviors found in real-world settings. A within-case analysis as described by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) was used when considering the first three research questions. Because the first three research questions focus on the specific alternative approaches, a detailed within-case analysis was appropriate. I did not compare the two alternative preschool approaches, Reggio Emilia and Steiner Waldorf, except when considering the third and fourth research question regarding the similarities and differences between the two programs.

Triangulation of data from the interviews, observations, and de-identified student work lent credibility to the study. Yin (2014) cited COSMOS Corporation (1983) and stated: "Multiple sources of evidence were rated more highly, in terms of overall quality, than those that relied on only single sources of information" (p. 119). Yin also noted the advantage of using multiple sources of evidence because it leads to "converging lines of inquiry" (p. 120). As Yardley (2009) noted, researchers follow the principle of triangulation because, when based on several sources of information, the intersection of lines of inquiry may lead to convincing and robust findings. To strengthen the construct validity and reliability of this multicase study, I determined the findings through data triangulation (Shenton, 2004).

It is crucial to ensure that the data analysis is of the highest quality (Yin, 2014). To do so, I showed that I attended to all of the evidence pertaining to the Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia educational philosophies, especially as they related to emergent literacy skill development. Specifically, I examined opposing information and addressed the research questions thoroughly. Yin (2014) argued: "Your analysis should address the most significant aspect of your case study. Whether it is a single- or multicase study, you will have demonstrated your best analytic skills if the analysis focuses on the most important issue" (p. 168). Further, Yin stated that focusing on the most important issues demonstrates that a researcher has not overlooked or ignored possible contrary information.

After examining the patterns, themes, and associations in the data, I determined whether the findings from the study showed how the Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired alternative preschool philosophies cultivated emergent literacy skills (Creswell, 2012; Yin, 2014). According to Yin, if empirical research supports the multicase studies' patterns of evidence and "appears to be similar, the results can help a case study to strengthen its internal validity" (p. 143). The purpose of this chapter was to describe the methodology that I used in the study. I explained the relation between the research design and the problem statement. I discussed the cases in this multicase study research design, the two Steiner Waldorf-inspired and two Reggio Emilia-inspired preschools. To substantiate my choice of multicase design, I presented reasons why other research designs would be less effective. Further, I discussed the criteria for selecting study participants, and the way in which they were protected ethically. Data collection

and analysis methods and procedures were addressed and I included the interview guide, observation guide and checklist, and a reliability checklist in the appendices.

Reliability and Validity

Recognizing that atypical or discrepant cases may occur, I examined the data closely and noted any new insights gained from them (Erickson, 2012). Erickson argued that "discrepant instances are not leftovers in analysis" (p. 1462). A thorough analysis of all data must be performed to distinguish between typical and atypical data. Erickson also noted that through analytic induction, threads of information help the researcher identify discrete information that s/he might miss without an in-depth analysis.

Maxwell (1992) stated that validity is not intrinsic to qualitative studies, but stems instead from the data collected or the participants' accounts. Miles et al. (2014) argued that findings are valid when:

> Descriptions are context-rich, the accountings ring true and make sense, triangulation among data sources produced generally converging conclusions, the data was presented linked to emerging theory, finding were clear and coherent, negative evidence was sought, and the conclusions were considered to be accurate by the participants. (p. 313)

I ensured that my facts were accurate accounts that represented the beliefs and perspectives of the participants. As indicated previously, member checking was one method I used to increase the validity and reliability of the study. Observing multiple sites offered opportunities for rich data collection and detailed description. Moreover, studying different research sites offered a variety of participants who viewed the

approaches through a different lens.

Ethical Procedures

There were specific steps to take before beginning a study that includes humans. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) assured that research participants receive ethical treatment ("Protecting Human Subjects," 2011) Before conducting research, I received approval from my institution's IRB, and obtained permission to conduct the research from the director of each research site. Before conducting the interviews and observations, a consent form was sent to and collected from the participants. The consent form included the type of data collection, the length of the interview and observations, voluntary nature of participation, the option to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, confidentiality of the participant's information, including his/her name, request to view de-identified student work, request to record the interview, that there would be no compensation for participation, the potential benefits of this study, and my name and contact information.

Every effort was made to establish a safe and relaxed researcher-participant working relationship. I fostered this through conversation and warm-up questions as noted in Appendix C. The interviews were conducted in a private room at the schools or an outside location, to ensure confidentiality. I put them at ease by asking simple questions about themselves as noted in the interview guide before beginning the specific questions. The confidentiality of the participant's information, and the context of the interview was reiterated and a time for participant questions were included before any specific questions were asked.

I strove to maintain the highest ethical standards throughout the study. One way to do so was to commit to reporting only true facts, without plagiarism, and to avoid deception of any kind (Yin, 2014). In addition, Yin (2014) advocated maintaining the strongest professionalism possible, which includes, "keeping up with related research, ensuring accuracy, striving for credibility, and understanding and divulging the needed methodological qualifiers and limitations to one's work" (p. 77). Avoiding bias was an important part of qualitative research studies, and Yin (2014) stated that being open to contrary evidence was one way to avoid bias. Because I genuinely wanted to determine whether either of the alternative educational approaches studied cultivates emergent literacy skills, contrary evidence was welcomed as part of this research.

Summary

The purpose of Chapter 3 was to describe the methodology that I planned to use in this study. I explained the relation between the research design and the problem statement. To substantiate my choice of a multicase design, I presented reasons why other research designs would be less effective. I indicated that the cases for this multicase study research design are the two Steiner Waldorf-inspired and two Reggio Emilia-inspired preschools. Further, I discussed the criteria for selecting participants, and their ethical protection. Data collection and analysis methods were addressed, and I included the interview guide, observation guide and checklist, and a reliability checklist as appendices. The results are presented in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this multicase study was to examine the way in which alternative preschool philosophies may lead to best practices for the cultivation of emergent literacy skills. Recent research by Greenwood et al. (2015) claimed that American preschools are inadequately preparing students to learn to read, and Lonigan et al. (2013) argued that the problem may stem from the lack of emergent literacy skill development. Using a qualitative multicase study, data were collected through interviews, observations, and de-identified student work. Four cases were studied: two Steiner Waldorf-inspired schools and two Reggio Emilia-inspired schools. The participants included the directors and lead teachers from the chosen schools.

The following central research question and research subquestions guided this study:

How do the alternative preschool philosophies of Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired-schools help staff cultivate emergent literacy skills in young children?

1. How do Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired preschool teachers characterize the role of the two philosophies in the development of emergent literacy skills?
2. How do Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired preschool teachers apply their program philosophies to provide a learning environment they view as key to emergent literacy?

3. How do the Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired teaching methods with respect to emergent literacy skills overlap?
4. How does the Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired teaching of emergent literacy skills differ across preschools?

The data were analyzed to offer further understanding of the how the alternative preschool philosophies of Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia foster the development of emergent literacy skills in children. In this chapter, I describe the settings of the study, the demographics of the schools and participants, the method of data collection, and the analysis of data as it relates to the research questions, the results of data analysis, and evidence of trustworthiness.

Setting and Sample

The settings for the interviews and observations of the participants were at two Reggio Emilia-inspired preschools and two Steiner Waldorf-inspired preschools. Two of the schools were in central Ohio and two were in northern Ohio. The purposeful sample represented different areas of the state to gain a broader perspective. One Reggio Emilia-inspired preschool, identified as R-1, was in a city in central Ohio, and was an integral part of the county board of developmental disabilities agency. The participants were identified as R-1T for the teacher and R-1D for the director of the school. I observed a preschool classroom in the early morning and the art studio in the later morning. The preschool classroom had several areas for different types of learning experiences. There was a living room play area that included small couches, chairs, tables, and items found in a home. There was a large area with wooden toys and various sizes of blocks. Books

were in every area of the room, and were displayed for the children to read. There were round tables and chairs that were used when the artist was teaching and a separate area with small couches and rocking chairs where meetings and stories took place. The walls had individual alphabet letters on them with pictures of animals that started with the letters hanging below. Also, on the walls were student artwork and treasures they had brought to school. There were baskets with bound plain white paper that the children used to write and illustrate stories. Right outside the preschool classroom was a large garden full of pumpkins in various stages of growth.

The art studio was another learning environment and has round tables covered with lace cloths, a large tree chair was in the back of the room. The artist took many tall branches filled with leaves and arranged them around a large cushioned chair. Bird soundscapes were added to "ignite the children's imaginations as they search for what they are hearing" (R-1T, 2017, p. 5). Also in the art studio was a large lighted table for the children to use to view items from a different perspective. Other areas have a variety of art supplies that are used throughout the school year. The outdoor play area included a large section filled with sand, other areas have climbing structures for the children's use.

The center enrolled a diverse population of children with or without developmental disabilities and extended beyond intellectual differences. There were children with social, economic, racial, and ethnic diversities. Following the Universal Design for Learning (UDL), teachers attempted to meet all needs of the children. The center adhered to state regulations through the State Department of Education, and there were early interventions for children under three, through the federal guidelines of

Department of Developmental Disabilities, Head Start and the YMCA with Jobs and Family Services standards. There were also typically developing peers who attended the preschool. The early childhood education program was housed within the agency and includes children birth through age five. The focus of this study were the preschool children at each school.

The second Reggio Emilia-inspired preschool, identified as R-2, and located in a large suburb of a major metropolitan city in Northern Ohio, was housed in a section of a church with three classrooms. The participants were identified as R-2T for the teacher and R-2D for the director of the school. The classroom I observed was very large with many different areas for learning. There were block areas, a living room, science, art, and writing centers, the meeting area, and purposefully designed outdoor educational area with water centers, gardens, stools made from tree trunks, and structures made from old tree branches. Books were found all around the room and available for children. The school was a Universal Pre-K, so no children were excluded and the educational philosophy applied to all children. The socioeconomic levels of the families ranged from poverty to wealthy**.** The school has been awarded a 5-star rating from the state, and it receives funding from the ODE and the county. Also, the State of Ohio recognized the Reggio Emilia-inspired philosophy as an alternative form of education. There were 25 children on the waiting list to attend the school.

The first Steiner Waldorf-inspired preschool, now identified as W-1, and located in a suburban environment in a city in central Ohio offered morning preschool classes for 3–6-year-old children and offered a program for 4–7-year-old children in the afternoon.

The participants were identified as W-1T for the teacher and W-1D for the director of the school. At this school, the indoor and outdoor environments were equally important to the children's education. During my observation, most of the time was spent in the outdoor environment. A beautiful wooden fence designed by the artist/teacher contained the environment. There was a large grassy area filled with trees around the perimeter that was used for climbing. An extensive treehouse built by the teachers and children had a large piece of wood for the floor. The children have added branches and twigs banded together by twine. The teachers said that the children continue to add to it and it was a work in progress. A large round circle resembling a fire pit was used for digging, imaginary play, and story time. There were various gardens around that the children, teachers, and parents planted and cared for, as well as bales of hay and a large outdoor sink with water that they children used when they wanted. The indoor learning environment was housed in one large room with many different play areas located around the perimeter of the room. The preschool room, set up like a home, had a designated area with a wooden kitchen sink, child-size table and chairs, cradles with traditional Waldorf dolls made with organic cotton and wool with a plain face and long hair, a bed, and hutch. Other areas included a seasons table with seasonal items such as gourds and books about fall, and a large imaginary play area that housed wooden castles, knights, trucks, cars, horses, and wooden rainbows. The preschool had four round wooden tables with animal designs created by the artist/teacher and small chairs. These were used for meals and during imaginary play time or when working with the artist/teacher. There were families from all socioeconomic backgrounds, many German, Greek, and Korean

families and seven children were English language learners (ELLs). One-third of the children spoke more than one language and the students were from a variety of geographic locations, with one family living 45 minutes away. This was the only Steiner Waldorf-inspired school in central Ohio.

The second Steiner Waldorf-inspired preschool, identified as W-2, was in the outskirts of a major metropolitan area of northern Ohio. There was one participant from the school and was identified as W-2T for the teacher at the school. Only one of the potential participants chose to be in the study. The school had programs for toddlers and preschool through grade six, depending on enrollment. The early childhood program served children ages 18 months–6 years and included a parent-child program, nursery school, preschool, and kindergarten. The preschool room was very large with many different areas for the children to play, cook, and eat. The different play areas were rooms set up like a home, with wooden furniture and objects, open-ended toys, blocks, and silks. There was a living room, kitchen, and playroom. The kitchen area included a toaster oven, cutting area, refrigerator, sink with tubs for the children to wash and stack their plates after snack time. Also, there was a very long wooden dinner table with stools for each child and the teachers. It was decorated with fresh-cut flowers in glass vases, candles, and place mats. During snack, the children's food was placed on ceramic dishes, they drank out of glasses, and the candles were lit. There was a purposefully designed outdoor environment where the children were involved in imaginary play, using leaves, tree trunks, sticks, and water. The teacher assistant was just hired to work in the preschool, so she told me she was learning the rhythms of the classroom.

The participants in the study have different levels of education and training. This information was collected during the individual interviews with the participants. The demographic questions were added at the urging of the participants. The W-1 participants have Master of Education degrees, and have previously taught in public education. They stated that they were discouraged with the direction of public education, so they searched another avenue for meaningful teaching. One W-1 participant had extensive Steiner Waldorf early education training at the Rudolph Steiner College in California, was a Steiner Waldorf student growing up, and taught at a Steiner Waldorf school in Princeton, N.J. Similarly, the W-2 participant was a third generation Steiner Waldorf student who attended school in Germany before moving to the United States. She also had formal Steiner Waldorf teacher training. The W-1 teachers have traveled to Michigan and recently to Boulder, CO for additional training. The participants stated that they believed in the philosophy, then actively and intentionally engaged in additional training as they worked together to develop and deepen their understanding as a group. During meetings, they said they talked about not only the children, but the families and the community, too.

The Reggio Emilia-inspired participants have varying levels of education. Each classroom teacher has a Master of Education degree, an artist has a Master of Fine Arts degree, and one teacher was a professor, teaching an introduction to the Reggio Emilia educational philosophy at a local university. The R-2 participants belong to the North American Reggio Emilia Alliance study group that meets regularly in Columbus, OH. In the summer of 2017, the participants studied at the *Istituzione* of the Municipal Infant-

toddler Centers and Preschools of Reggio Emilia and the Diana School, both located in Reggio Emilia, Italy.

The R-1 participants also traveled to Reggio Emilia, Italy before implementing the philosophy at their preschool. The director discussed the importance of understanding the philosophy and what it meant to the people in Reggio Emilia, Italy. She said that it was clear that relationships were the key to the work, reflected the culture, everything was very connected, respect was at the core of their work, and recognizing differences and honoring them was integral. The Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired participants stated that they view the philosophy as the guiding force behind their continuing education, so they can put their trust in the wisdom of the children and express their commitment to children as the future.

Data Collection

After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), approval number 07-25-17-0455526, the site directors were contacted and potential participant names were given to me. I contacted the potential participants via email and after agreeing to participate and consent forms were sent out, interviews were scheduled. Since the IRB approval was granted in the summer, I conducted the interviews first, using the questions in Appendix C. I used Appendix D: Trustworthiness Checklist before , during, and after data collection. I considered the most suitable data to collect and decided that interviews, observations, and de-identified student work would be the best types of data to answer the research questions. I identified participants from each philosophy, and affirmed the accuracy of the interview data and results.

Interviews

There was a total of eight participants and the consent forms were signed before beginning. At the R-1 school, I interviewed three participants, and at the W-2 school, I interviewed one, totaling four. The interviews were all conducted in person, but I was unable to conduct two interviews at the W-2 site because one research participant never made herself available. However, I did conduct three interviews at the R-1 site, which I had not planned to do, but the opportunity presented itself. I interviewed two participants at the R-2 and two at the W-2 schools, totaling another four. The interview data from the R-1, R-2, and W-2 were collected at the specific preschools. The W-1 interviews were conducted off site, at the request of the participants to avoid lengthy travel time. One interview was conducted outdoors at a small coffee house and the second was conducted at the participant's home. All interviews were conducted one-on-one for privacy purposes. The interviews lasted 45– 60 minutes, were recorded on two password protected devices, transcribed, and emailed to the addresses specified by the participants for member checking. The interview transcripts were secured on a password protected computer used exclusively by the researcher. Data results from the interviews are presented under research subquestion 1 research subquestion 2.

Observations

The observations were conducted at the preschool sites and lasted from two to four hours, each. Data for the observations were collected using the Field Notes Guide (Appendix A), the Observation Checklist for Emergent Literacy (Appendix B), and photographs of student work taken with a password protected device. I was a

nonparticipant observer in the preschool sites and placed myself in a discrete spot in the room. I did not interact with the children unless one asked a question directly of me, and attempted to not influence them in any way. I used direct observation and wrote field notes throughout the observation. When taking field notes, I wrote down specific conversations related to the tenets of emergent literacy skills as identified in Figure 1. Conceptual Framework Map for Emergent Literacy Skills found in Chapter 2. All data were stored on a password protected computer and a smartphone, and transcribed interview notes, written field notes and checklists were locked in a file cabinet in my home. Variations in data collection from the plan as presented in Chapter 3 were the order in which the data was collected and that there was only one interview from the W-2 school.

De-identified Student Work

Student work samples were found at each of the Reggio Emilia-inspired and Steiner Waldorf-inspired schools, however more work samples were found at the Reggio Emilia-inspired schools than the Steiner Waldorf-inspired schools. There were fewer examples of Steiner Waldorf-inspired school work samples and there were many at the Reggio Emilia-inspired schools. Data results from de-identified student work are listed in the data analysis section, below.

Data Analysis

After transcribing the interviews and observations, I uploaded them into the ATLAS.ti computer assisted software program for coding. I set up the a priori codes based on the tenets of emergent literacy skills, then highlighted the transcribed

interviews, observation notes, and checklists, adding the appropriate code/codes (Appendix E). After highlighting and coding, I printed out the transcripts and field notes, read through each one and identified aspects of emergent literacy skill development and determined the a posteriori codes (Appendix E). Further, I created Appendix F: Individual Examination of Frequency of A priori and A posteriori Codes. From there, I identified larger categories, patterns, and themes. The specific a priori codes were child-centered, creative/artistic, DAP, the environment, imaginary play, literacy, oral language, self-regulation, social interactions, philosophy/pedagogy, teacher/child interactions, and whole child. Initially, I determined there to be 17 a posteriori codes, but after condensing the data, identified eight. From there, I narrowed the codes into categories, noting that some codes were categories. I concluded that the categories were child-centered, the environment, and social interactions. The prominent themes from the triangulation of data that related to emergent literacy skill development in the studied philosophies included nurturing the whole child, authentic imaginary play, developmentally appropriate practice for three and four-year-olds, and opportunities to practice and develop self-regulation within the environment. There were no discrepant cases or unusual circumstances during the data collection and analysis.

Results

Four preschool research sites and participants were identified for this study. The preschool classroom observations, using the Observational Field Notes Guide (Appendix A) and Emergent Literacy Checklist (Appendix B), and individual interviews with the participants provided the primary data for examination of the research questions. The

analysis of student work samples supported the data collection from the observations and interviews and is presented in detail under each research question, below. A summary of the instrument findings can be found in Appendix E, Appendix F, Appendix G, and Appendix H.

Data Results from De-Identified Student Work

The Steiner Waldorf-inspired preschools student work consisted of authentic products, one being the child-dictated grocery lists that the children helped the teachers develop for the week. The child that helped write the list took it home and the families provided the groceries. Other work samples included art projects with dictated words about it and the children took these home with them, so I was unable to see them. The teachers reported that many of these art projects had to do with the seasons the children were studying. Other work samples were created at the student request and were often the product of oral language learning experiences, such as drawings and re-telling of stories, or 3-D structures. One example of a 3-D product was the student, carved by hand wooden boats that they spent all of September working on. The project was at the students' request and was the result of an oral story told by the teachers.

The Reggio Emilia-inspired student work was extensive in the area of art projects and writing. Following the Reggio Emilia philosophy of documentation, extensive writing and drawings of student work were seen throughout both preschools. Each year, the R-2 school provided binders for work created throughout the year. I examined several copied binders from the previous school year with numerous writing samples throughout,

and at the top of most pages were a label with the Ohio Early Learning Standard for the work.

At the beginning of the year, just the name of the child was written by them, with the standard as Language and Literacy Development, Writing: Early Writing. As the year progressed, there were illustrated poems with the learning standard of Language and Literacy Development, Reading: Phonological Awareness. Later, the children recorded their findings on their own clipboards, wrote their names without help, and one girl dictated to the teacher, "We went on a scavenger hunt to look for three missing pairs of mittens." The standard was listed at the top of the page as Language and Literacy Development, Reading: Early Reading. Another student dictated to the teacher, "I made a violet and I made a fire ant and the sun and blue sky and walls." As the year progressed, so did the detail of the entries, and the school year culminated with a Family Literacy Day. In the binders were typed documentation with pictures of each literacy activity from the entire day. Finally, the teachers wrote the children's reflections from the year and the portfolios went home as a memory of everything they experienced throughout the school year. A clear progression of emergent literacy skill development was evident in these portfolios.

Research Questions

The central research question was "How do the alternative preschool philosophies of Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired-schools help staff cultivate emergent literacy skills in young children?" and guided the development of the four sub-questions and is answered through them. Specifically, the data for each research

subquestion is presented below and collectively supported the answer to the central research question. The next sections present the data collected through interviews and observations using the Field Notes Guide and Observational Checklist, and themes that emerged under each research subquestion.

Research Subquestion 1

> How do Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired preschool teachers characterize the role of the two philosophies in the development of emergent literacy skills?

The Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired preschool teachers placed the development of the whole-child at the heart of every learning experience and every interaction with their young students. The ATLAS.ti computer software program was used to organize the data from the interviews and observations. The collected data demonstrated the active philosophy at each research site, and is evidenced below and through the summaries of participant responses to sub-research question one (Appendix H). The analysis of the interviews, observations, and de-identified student work through triangulation of the data have been documented to show that the application of the philosophy aids in the development of emergent literacy skills.

Data Results from Interviews

Research subquestion 1

> How do Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired preschool teachers characterize the role of the two philosophies in the development of emergent literacy skills?

Table 1

Participant Responses to Research Subquestion 1

	Interview Question 1: Describe how you were inspired you to study and teach the (Waldorf or Reggio Emilia) educational philosophy?	Interview Question 2: Describe your role in young children's education.	Interview Question 5: How do you foster the development of early literacy skills with young children in your school?	Interview Question 6: Describe the strategies you use to develop oral language skills with young children
W1-D:	Teachers strive to do purposeful work	They strive to be worthy of imitation	An authentic place where children can express themselves	Hear children talking in our school, we use oral storytelling
W1-T:	Educated in Waldorf School 1-12 grade	Teachers hold their role with dignity, there is an art to being a teacher	Circle and story time with rich verbal language	The foundation of early literacy skills
W2-T:	Third generation Waldorf teacher	Help children take first steps in the world	Storytelling, important for literacy, teach joy of everything	Children talk to each other, create stories, oral storytelling
R1-D:	Relationships and respect that honor children	Offers a lot of parent education.	Mindful of literacy opportunities in the environment	Verbal expression, enrich the environment through materials
R1-T:	Reggio philosophy values children and art.	Dual role: Works with children and teachers	Engage in conversation, writing, building relationships	Dialogue always going on, sharing, talking
R2-D:	Wanted to do right by children	Advocate for children, do a lot of parent education	Emergent curriculum, learn where children are at beginning of year	It's the conversations that go on in that little living room
R2-T:	Respects and listens to children	Sees self as facilitator or co-researcher	Always take notes, the children learn scribbling, inventive spelling	Teachers don't do a lot of talking, the children have conversations

Research subquestion 1 was answered through interview questions one, two, five, and six. The first interview question posed to the participants inquired about how they were inspired to study and teach the Steiner Waldorf or Reggio Emilia educational philosophy. The results of the transcribed interviews were similar between the participants from Steiner Waldorf-inspired and the Reggio Emilia-inspired preschools because both were inspired by their experiences and training in the Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia educational philosophies. For example, the W1-T said, "I needed to find something I'm proud of working, and that was Waldorf." The W1-T stated, "So, it was a big change, but it was more in line with the arts I've been involved in and so I was sort of back to my roots." The R1-T said, "Once I learned more about the Reggio philosophy and Loris Malaguzzi, and that they found value in children and the connection to art." Additionally, gleaned through the interview question was that Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired participants were inspired by the authentic learning experiences, the real-world learning, and the way teachers strive to be worthy of imitation by the children.

The second interview question asked the participants about their role in young children's education. The participants of the Steiner Waldorf-inspired schools saw themselves as role models for the children. The W1-D said, "I strive to be worthy of imitation, to be centered and ready to be there with the children." The W2-T said, "My role is to help these little ones step out into the world and we need to make a strong connection to their homes." The Reggio Emilia participants see themselves in dual roles in the education of young children. The R2-T said, "I see myself as a facilitator or as a

researcher because I'm always learning from them. I'm learning so that makes me a better facilitator." The R1-D offered, I set up an environment that offers a lot of parent education," while the R1-T said he had a "dual role in the environment because I work with the children and plan professional development for the adults." Both the Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired participants saw themselves as advocates for children.

The fifth interview question asked the participants about how they foster early literacy skills in their schools. Both philosophies emphasized the importance of conversations through play and having the freedom to express themselves, and of the importance of authentic learning. The W1-D said, "When you come in our school you will hear children talking," and the W2-T said, "When it does come to the actual symbolism of reading and writing, we are very authentic about it." The W1-T offered that early literacy skills are fostered through circle and story time, songs, rhymes, and poetry. "Within the context of every classroom it has a group area where they're reading stories or some form of literacy development writing, signing in, drawings, engaging them in conversation, or writing down their words," was stated by the R1-D.

The sixth interview question asked the participants to describe the strategies they use to develop oral language skills with young children. Each participant stated the importance of conversations for the development of oral language skills. Each Steiner Waldorf-inspired participant spoke about the role of oral storytelling in their schools. The W1-D shared, "With oral storytelling, the teachers rehearse and practice beforehand," and that "There is a lot of rich language through our songs and oral storytelling." The R2-D

talked about the conversations in the living room area, "When you talk about literacy, literacy is language and about the time you give them for conversations." The Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired participants stated that oral language is critical to the development of other early literacy skills.

Throughout the interviews the preschool teachers said they have taken what they feel is "the best" of their philosophy for the development of emergent literacy skills. There was a strong emphasis on movement and sociodramatic play in the role of whole child development, which in turn fostered the development of emergent literacy skills. Through the observations I noted rich verbal language experiences and child centered learning. The theme of nurturing the whole child through DAP were evident throughout the interviews and observations and discussed below. As W-1T stated:

> It's Waldorf inspired and nature inspired and gives a view of each child as basically good and we try to see that in everybody. That's the view and the methods are Waldorf-inspired, so the school is very lively and we have peace in our hearts for wild and vibrant play, running around, jumping, and building sandcastles. It is that three-five-year-old age, so we have a strong focus on movement and sociodramatic play. We use the Waldorf inspiration method because we really appreciate the environment and the pedagogical philosophy. The goal of the teachers is to support the children's ability to be competent, self-regulate, and express themselves which are important components of each philosophy. The children are taught in creative and respectful ways with the teachers modeling purposeful work that is worthy of imitation. The teachers hold

> their role with such dignity, there is the art of being a teacher and there is a lot of pride in making the space beautiful, but infusing it with magic and song. We do model a lot of purposeful work, and make it worthy of imitation.

The R-2D noted:

> The children have choices of many things that are connected to their lives, what's appropriate for them. Often, in many classrooms, it's what the teacher thinks they should be learning and what the teacher decides they should be doing. And it's not, it's about what is real in their lives, so they can develop their philosophies about the world.

When asked about the development of emergent literacy skills, each participant discussed the importance of oral language. Each research site offered many opportunities for social interactions between children and teachers through storytelling and imaginative play. When asked about early literacy, the W-1T stated:

> I would say one way is through the circle and the story and all of the singing throughout the day. There are a lot of rhymes, poetry, and rich verbal language that the children are hearing and learning, and memorizing, and saying, so they enter it into their play. Sometimes they memorize the whole puppet show, then enter it into their play. Those are high literacy skills because they are richer than our spoken language. The teachers work on memorizing the story so it's richer. We do writing where they dictate and I write the letters and sometimes they write their names or ask to write part of the words. We don't push it at all. They want to write it when they are five. The fours and threes don't care at all, usually, unless

> they are a very unique child. They are just usually happy for you to write what they dictate and then they draw.

The Steiner Waldorf-inspired teachers used oral storytelling, rather than reading directly from books. Some picture books were found in the Steiner Waldorf-inspired schools, but the emphasis was on oral storytelling. When asked about the reason for oral storytelling rather than reading it from a picture book, the W-1T stated:

> I think the puppet shows and the oral storytelling strengthen their own visual imagination and they can make it their own for what's happening. You see them playing it and manipulating it and maybe the story changes. We see it in their play, their play gets richer throughout the year, and they have more interesting scenarios developing.

I asked the same teacher: Do you see children recreate the story with other children? The W-1T stated:

> That kind of interplay – yes, they build on each other's understanding, thought, and ideas. There are some higher-level thinking coming in through those puppet shows, and stories, and through the songs because the songs are all rich.

Additionally, the R-2D stated:

> The children must talk. How are you going to have language and literacy, if the children don't carry on conversations? At this age, you get literacy from conversations. Words, simple words. So much happens in that little living room space. It is beyond what you could even imagine. I've had people come in and say, look they're not doing anything, they are just sitting there and talking

(chuckle). And I say, do you realize these are three and four-year-olds? It's the most important part.

The alternative philosophies of Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia place the development of the whole-child as central in the learning process, with an emphasis on oral language development. The theme of nurturing the whole-child through DAP was evident from the interview questions and observations. Learning experiences in developmentally appropriate environments contribute to the development of the whole child.

Research Subquestion 2

How do Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired preschool teachers apply their program philosophies to provide a learning environment they view as key to emergent literacy?

The Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired preschool teachers viewed the environment as though it were another teacher. To answer research subquestion two, the ATLAS.ti computer software program was used to organize the data from the interviews and observations. The collected data showed how the philosophy was actualized at each research site, and is evidenced below and through the summaries of participant responses to research subquestion two (Appendix H).

Data Results from Interviews

Research subquestion 2

How do Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired preschool teachers apply their program philosophies to provide a learning environment they view as key to emergent literacy?

Table 2

Sample of Participant Responses to Research Subquestion 2

RQ2:	Interview Question 3: What role does the environment play in young children's literacy development?	Interview Question 4: How do you describe a developmentally appropriate learning environment?	Interview Question 7: How do you use play to cultivate early literacy skills?
W1-D:	Outdoor and indoor space very important. Fosters imagination.	Open-ended space, toys have many purposes, foster oral language development	Love to get the dolls and puppets and tell stories. Outdoor play, imaginary play very important
W1-T:	Opportunities to move, jump, develop gross and fine motor skills	Teachers keep the child naturally at what they do best	Wood toys, natural, provide dignity to child, open ended.
W2-T:	Gross and fine motor skills are building blocks for literacy	Climbing, building sand castles, problem solving when building forts	During play, talk to each other, create stories, work out differences
R1-D:	Environment is first teacher, set up meaningful and authentic learning	Rich in universal design, full engagement	About action, and language evolves through conversation and communicating
R1-T:	Environment is key in Reggio, promotes discussions	Open-ended approach is naturally what fits best	Creativity is play and play is creativity
R2-D:	Environment is literally the teacher	Scavenger hunts, choice, connections to their lives	Play - number one thing children do to test philosophies
R2-T:	Environment is a teacher, an intentional piece, organized for purpose	Everything done inside we can do outside Outdoors is a literacy rich as indoors	Everything is integrated in the play area, part of every single thing they do

Research subquestion 2 was answered through interview questions three, four, and seven. The third interview question asked about the role of the environment in young children's literacy development. The participants answered the interview question about the role of the environment in young children's literacy development with a focus on the importance of the indoor and outdoor environments. The Steiner Waldorf-inspired participants viewed the indoor and outdoor spaces as central to the expansion of children's imaginations. The W2-T stated, "We have sandboxes and climbing for the gross motor skills, again which we truly believe is one of the foundations of building the literacy." The R1D stated, "They say the environment is the third teacher, but I believe it's the first." The R2-D offered, "We set up the environment to encourage the type of response we want from the children." The participants stated that what could be done in the indoor environment could be done in the outdoor environment.

Interview question four was posed to the participants, asking them how they describe a developmentally appropriate learning environment? The participants see the space as open-ended, with toys that have multiple purposes. The W1-T said, "We keep the child naturally what they are best at, play, movement, and opportunities for being a little by themselves, in some trees, or having time to regulate." The R2-T noted, "Materials are accessible for any child so that regardless of their developmental stage and having an open-ended approach is naturally the way that best fits that." The participants stated that they meet the children at their entry level and offer learning experiences to meet their developmental needs.

Interview question seven asked the participants how they use play to cultivate early literacy skills and for some examples. Both Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired participants invest time setting up an environment conducive to play. The W1-T said, "At the beginning of the year we take a lot of time setting up play situations, and the W2-T shared, "They create families, mommy and daddy have their babies, the block building, they create stories with that." The R2-T shared, "If they're playing with blocks we might use new vocabulary words, and talk about the strong foundation they're building." Both groups of participants said that literacy development might not be obvious, and that play authentic and imaginary.

Data Results for Observations and Observation Checklist – Emergent Literacy Environment

In the Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia educational approaches, the environment is considered the third teacher, and is substantiated by Lim (2015). The Observation Checklist for Emergent Literacy focused on components of the emergent literacy environment and language-rich environments. The *Frequently* (F), *Often* (O), and *Seldom* (S) ratings were determined by how often I observed each component of the checklists. To receive an F, the component was observed constantly, an O rating was given if I observed the component often, and the S was given for seldom seen. Table 3 demonstrated the primary components of the overall emergent literacy environment and how those components differed across the two philosophical approaches.

Table 3

Observation Checklist – Emergent Literacy
Emergent Literacy Environment

Emergent Literacy Environment	Waldorf-inspired Frequently, (F) Often, (O) Seldom (S)	Reggio Emilia-inspired Frequently, (F) Often, (O) Seldom (S)
Indoor/Outdoor learning environments encourage oral storytelling or read aloud stories	F	F
Photographs, charts, children's work and educator's documentation-relevance and meaning to child	O	F
Literacy props, materials, and equipment are evident	F	F
Song, chant, and rhyme books, pop-up books	S	F
Props, materials, and equipment for supporting oral language development through dramatic role play	F	O
Variety of materials in an art center that encourages the manipulation of the alphabet and other shapes and creations	F	F

It is notable that there were not many books available for the children to read in the Steiner Waldorf-inspired preschools. The Steiner Waldorf philosophy places a strong emphasis on oral storytelling and extensive props, and extensive open-ended materials were available for the children to recreate stories or make up their own. The Reggio Emilia philosophy places a strong emphasis on books and the stories come from reading the books to the children. There were fewer props for the children to use to recreate stories or make up their own (See Table 3), but both Reggio Emilia-inspired schools had

extensive collections of books for the children to read. Both philosophies offered supportive and engaging indoor and outdoor environments where children have many opportunities for conversations with their peers and adults.

During my observations and interviews, the environment played a critical role in the development of emergent literacy skills. The W-1D discussed during the interview:

> I think with young children so much of their literacy and brain development happens with their whole bodies, especially our young three-year-olds. So, when I see them enter the school in the fall and they're stumbling even walking on the sidewalk, I know that they have a lot of work to do, so we really encourage running, climbing, and getting up in the trees, walking over the uneven ground and carrying really heavy things, and in my view, all of this physical activity helping them develop their future academics.

The indoor environment was equally important, especially the types and quality of toys and structures. The W-1T shared her insight:

> The wooden toys, natural, provide a sense of dignity to the child, that the child's play is important, that it's not just a cheap, throw-away thing, that it's beautiful and well-made and it sort of honors their play. The toys are very open-ended. The dolls have not a lot of expression on their faces on purpose, so the child can bring in their own imagination in their play, and I guess allow for more creativity.

The Observation Checklist for Table 4 focused on the facets of emergent literacy skills as related to oral language development. Oral language development is at the forefront of

both philosophies as noted in the *Frequently* (F) rating of each component of the checklist. The Observation Checklist is listed in its entirety in Appendix F.

Table 4

Observation Checklist – Emergent Literacy
Language-Rich Environments

Language-Rich Environments	Waldorf-inspired Frequently, (F) Often, (O) Seldom (S)	Reggio Emilia-inspired Frequently, (F) Often, (O) Seldom (S)
A supportive, interactive and engaging environment where children have conversations with their peers and adults in the classroom	F	F
Children listen to, interact, and share stories and ideas	F	F
Time is given for each child individually and in groups to express ideas or feelings during an activity, routine, and throughout the day	F	F
Approaches that are used in building and enhancing communication (oral language development) skills. Words are expressed orally, visually and physically for clarity and understanding	F	F
Props, materials, and equipment that build on the interests of children and encourage conversation	F	F
To support and extend oral language development educators use a variety of strategies and approaches	F	F
Provides demonstrations and opportunities both indoors and outdoors for children to practice and develop oral and written	F	F

language connections through
representing ideas

Campbell, Torr, and Cologon (2014) noted that an environment that promoted opportunities for language-rich discussions was key to a high-quality preschool. During the interview with the R-2T, the sense of the value of quality materials was clear as were the opportunities for oral language development through discussions:

> There are a lot of materials for them to manipulate and play and their freedom to choose. And the materials have to be of quality. And I also think some toys are all you can do because that's what it's only meant to do. Toys should be open-ended with options. We want the higher-level thinking. We have little living rooms in the classrooms, and if I ask you where do you think the most time is spent, it would be that most of the time is spent in that living room area. The conversation, the things they talk about. The things that happen in that little area is amazing. And when you talk about literacy, literacy is language and about the time you give them for conversations.

The analysis of the interviews, observations, and de-identified student work through triangulation of the data from each research site have been documented to show the actualization of the purpose and objectives in the development of emergent literacy skills. Commonalities among data from the two Steiner Waldorf-inspired schools and two Reggio Emilia-inspired schools were noted and can be found in Appendix H.

The themes of DAP with opportunities to develop self-regulation within the environment were observed and discussed below. When setting up the learning

environments, the spaces were designed for optimal student engagement and purpose. During the observations, I used the Observational Checklist for Emergent Literacy that emphasized the emergent literacy and language-rich environments (Appendix B) and complemented the results of the checklists in Appendix G. R-2T spoke about the role of the environment in young children's learning:

> I definitely see the environment as a primary teacher. They say third teacher, but I really feel it's more like the first. If we don't set the spacing environment to evoke the type of experience and engagement that we want to occur there, it won't happen. The environment specifically speaks to our expectations. We assess the environment for literacy opportunities. Within the context of every classroom it has a group area where they're reading stories or some form of literacy development, they do a lot of literacy development through writing, signing in, and drawings.

The R-2D shared this:

> The environment is key obviously in a Reggio-inspired school. The environment provokes and promotes discussions, provokes and promotes interaction with the environment and with others. We spend hours setting up the environment. The environment is literally the teacher. In America, we have this image that we need to label everything in the room, to see a letter wall, to see a word wall, and my environment is very literacy rich but you don't see any of those things. The environment is a teacher, we think of it as that intentional piece that if you have it in the room, it's for a reason, so everything in here is intentional and purposeful

> for an overlying goal or objective. Because of the approach, we don't have everything integrated. We do have a center dedicated to writing but you also see literacy everywhere, books everywhere but nothing is labeled.

With regard to the outdoor environment, the children engaged in rich discussions and thoughtful listening. The participants said that the children felt free to express themselves, regardless of how they were feeling. This was seen during the W-1 observation where two children had a disagreement about how many shovels a child should use at a time. A girl tried to take away one of the shovels, yelled at him, and the boy threw dirt at her while yelling back that he could use as many as he wanted. The teacher responded, calmly by gently removing the child and talking to him about friendship and the importance of caring for each other. I observed the R-2 school's literacy rich outdoor environment. There was a large container with the clipboard, paper, and pencils. The teacher told me about the on-going scavenger hunts with the children investigating, searching for things, drawing their observations and writing what they saw. Everything they do inside, they do outside. I observed plant books, sand, and water books for the children to use.

In the R-1 school, most of the observation was conducted indoors and in two different classroom settings: one was a preschool classroom, and the other was in the art studio. On-going conversations between students and teacher and students with each other demonstrated the development of oral language skills through imaginary play. For example, two boys were playing pirates and one named himself Pirate Jack and said, "I have a peg eye" with the other boy responding, "How did you get a peg eye? I have one,

too," and the conversation went on about their adventures on the ship. Literacy skill development through art was evident as the children added sentences to their drawn or painted pictures. The artist was in the classroom during my observation and took photographs for documentation, an activity also observed at the R-2 school.

Also, the R-1T shared the book he had bound containing student drawings and sentences the children had dictated to the teachers. The children were extremely excited to see their drawings and called out remembering facts about the pictures. They even remembered facts about other children's drawings. The children imagined they were in the story and I observed them predicting problems and solutions about the drawings. One child said, "I am in a cave and can't get out," followed by another child saying, "Jump on the dragon and you can fly out." In addition, I observed pictures representing the sounds of the alphabet with the alphabet letters attached, children singing the alphabet song, and everyone was clapping with excitement. More conversations about the sketchbooks were noted when the children were seated at the tables drawing other pictures or adding to ones they had already started. One boy said, "I saw a firetruck and watched it put out a fire." They related and discussed real life experiences during this time. As the children told more of their thoughts about the drawings, the teachers wrote them down as the children watched.

The Steiner Waldorf-inspired schools' outdoor learning environment was clearly as important, and the teachers said if not more important than the indoor learning environment. Most of the day at one site was spent outdoors and I observed on-going

discussions about their creations, problem-solving, self-regulation, and creativity in both the indoor and outdoor environments. The W-1T stated:

> The outdoor environment offers a lot of opportunities to move, jump, gross motor, fine motor, knitting, sewing. So, there is a lot of brain neurons firing with all of that handwork and fine motor is really focused on, and those tie in with literacy. There are opportunities for unique, varied, interesting movements and the play is the whole part of the curriculum and where they are getting their pre-literacy skills by talking and figuring out and deciding this is what we want to do, and this is how were going to do it, then doing it, and completing a task and working together.

The W-2T noted:

> The children love climbing and building sand castles and we have lots of cut wood and long branches, they build forts against the fences pack them with leaves. If the leaves keep falling through one of them will come up and say, we need another stick and definitely that is a part of the problem solving is a part of building literacy.

During the W-1 visit, I observed the W-1D holding children's hands, walking and talking, while the W-1T was sweeping the stone areas. The three and four-year-old children were running or digging with real shovels, while another strung up buckets to make a pulley system to bring water up into the treehouse. The W-1D stated that these activities helped the children expend their energy out while learning and experiencing the outdoor environment. This was called the "out breath" in Waldorf and when they go

indoors, they were more settled and able to self-regulate themselves. This was called the "in breath." I asked the teacher why she was sweeping and she explained that she was modeling purposeful work for the children to imitate. The children interacted with the teachers whenever they wanted or needed to. One example of this was when a child took a leaf and talked with the teacher saying it was a boat. The teacher responded, saying that she wondered if it could float like a boat, so they took the leaf to a pail of water to find out. Then, they added more leaves and started making "a potion." The teacher said that nothing in the learning environment was for decoration because everything was used and purposeful. One child had sticks built up like a fire and ask another child to join him by the fire. He proceeded to tell an imaginary story about himself and the fire. Imaginary play was everywhere and on-going. In another example, the children were painting the treehouse with brushes, and they used pails full of water for the paint. The children worked together to solve problems and regulate their emotions. Noah was struggling, clearly frustrated by the sounds he was making, to make the small buckets into a pulley system to hoist up to the top level of the treehouse. Andrew offered to help and the boys worked together to work the pulley system. Then, they "painted" the treehouse together. Also, during indoor playtime I observed two children having a conflict over the blocks. Sarah had built an elaborate structure with blocks and another girl, Jan wanted to use them. Sarah said no and Jan knocked the structure down. Rather than acting out, Sarah cried a little, and then started building the tower, again. Jan went away for a moment, then came back and helped Sarah pick up the blocks, exclaiming, "We're friends."

When it was time to go in, the W-1T sang a song to signal it was time to go in. Songs were a big part of both Steiner Waldorf-inspired schools' day, and the children seemed used to this routine. The indoor environment and routines were similar in both schools, with children taking off their outdoor shoes and putting on their slippers, then sitting on the rug. Next, were finger play stories. One three-year-old child had trouble sitting still, but when he sat in the teacher's lap, he settled down. During the interview, the teacher stated that they meet the children at their individual entry points. The children were involved in all the songs and vocabulary development is evident as it is built into the songs.

The Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired preschool teachers viewed the environment as the third teacher. The themes of DAP with opportunities to develop self-regulation within the environment was identified throughout the observations as articulated in this section and displayed in Appendix G.

Research Subquestion 3

How do the Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired teaching methods with respect to emergent literacy skills overlap?

The Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired teaching methods overlap in several areas. Nurturing the whole child included opportunities for imaginary play and multiple times to practice self-regulation were present at all research sites and were a consistent theme noted through interviews, observations, and through documentation from the observational checklist.

In Table 5, I presented the frequency of the most significant a priori codes for emergent literacy skills that were identified from the observations and interviews. The a priori codes were chosen based on the emergent literacy skills noted in the literature. Notable, are the similarities in the frequency of the a priori codes for the Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired philosophies. Appendix E contains all of the a priori and a posteriori codes and their frequency. Examples of coded interview excerpts can be seen in Appendix H.

Table 5

Frequency of A priori *Codes for Emergent Literacy Skills*

A priori Code	Waldorf-inspired	Reggio Emilia-inspired	Total
Child Centered	38	40	78
Oral Language	41	30	71
DAP	34	32	66
Imaginary Play	36	27	63
Pedagogy/Philosophy	33	25	58
Literacy	28	29	57
Environment	35	20	55
Self-Regulation	30	15	45

As can be observed in Table 5, child centered teaching, oral language development, and DAP (DAP) were the most commonly observed. The top three codes were consistently noted in the interview and observation data. Here are examples from the interviews and observations demonstrating what *Child Centered* looks like.

The W-1D noted:

> The teacher holds the space and the art activity but children don't have to go if they would much rather be in their imaginative play, they don't have to complete

> the picture but if they do want to, then they're invited to come and do the art project.

Additionally, I observed numerous examples of child-centered teaching. One example was noted as the children sang songs, they acted them out and were a part of songs and oral storytelling. The children were the story. Also, I observed the wooden boats that the children made from blocks of wood that they had cut and sanded with the help of an adult.

During an interview with the R-1D, she stated that the children are not seen as empty vessels, that have no thoughts, rather, their voices are valued and are the focus of every learning experience. The R-1D also offered that they encourage risk taking and help the children to express themselves with confidence and competence. At each research site I observed many open-ended learning experiences and the children had choice.

DAP for three and four-year-olds through imaginary play and all learning experiences were an integral part of the schools. These opportunities fostered the development of emergent literacy skills through oral language and creative problem solving. The W-1T stated:

> What inspires me most about Waldorf is the magic, the wonder, how much imagination is encouraged, and holding childhood as sort of a precious and sacred time, and protecting it, really allowing the child to be in that space for as long as they need. And when they're ready to move on, then you know and you provide

> richer stories, more academic opportunities and I think the best part about Waldorf is children having confidence in their abilities.

The W-2T explained, "They talk to each other, have each of the stories they make up, they create families with mommy and daddy and they have their babies. Within all of that, they work out their differences." I asked the W-2T how she handled situations when children have differences and her response was like the other Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired participants:

> We don't guide them away from problems, unless there was a real conflict where one can't focus anymore, but usually we are able to catch those times. We help them, we give them little hints, let's see if in that basket there's one just like it. Even in tense situations, the child is never reprimanded.

I observed this calm guidance and teachers giving the children time to work out their problems at each research site. There were many times that the teachers helped children understand about hurting another child's feeling and encouraged them to work out their problems. One example of this was when children were digging in the dirt and a child was not happy that another child had two shovels. The child threw dirt at the girl with two shovels and the teacher took him inside to get a towel while talking with him saying, "We are going to take such good care of our friends today. We can be so kind." Most often, the children worked out their differences by themselves.

DAP were evident and on-going at each research site. I observed a young three-year-old boy who spent a lot of time at the kitchen sink, playing in the water with measuring cups and glasses. I mentioned this to the W-1D and she said, "Nathan will be

at the sink for a long time," meaning this is where he needed to be and where he would stay as long as necessary. The W-1D explained how different age children choose activities, (in this case an activity with the artist) based on their developmental ages:

> Usually, the young three-year-olds who want to be by a teacher will come and do it, not because of the art, but because they want to have something very structured with the teacher. And the older children will attend because they want to do the art project, but then the four-year-olds are just in imagination land and their developmental stage and personalities reflect that.

Creative and artistic opportunities through imaginary play were on-going at each research site. I observed children making up imaginary scenarios as knights, or families, or with the silks on running around pretending they were the wind. During the observation, the children spent most of the time in imaginary play and the development of emergent literacy skills was a natural result as I watched them write and draw imaginary stories, have conversations in the living room about being the mommy and baby. The W-2T discussed social interactions during play:

> They love to get the dolls and the puppets and tell stories. Sometimes, we encourage it, we might do something like the Three Little Pigs and the Big Bad Wolf, and then they build a house outside. They retell the story with their play. This is especially helpful at the beginning of the year when some children may not be used to unstructured play and need a little support.

Similarly, the R-1 artist offered that creativity is play and play is creativity, and play is learning. He stated that the children were invited to play and explore the materials (art)

that they have in the studio. During this observation, I saw children taking their art creations and making up imaginary scenarios with them.

The teaching methods of Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia overlap in several areas as stated above. The theme of nurturing the whole child that included opportunities for imaginary play and multiple times to practice self-regulation were evident at all research sites and were noted through interviews and observations.

Research Subquestion 4

How does the Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired teaching of emergent literacy skills differ across preschools?

Seasons and rhythms were important and consistent themes in both Steiner Waldorf - inspired schools and fall was the focus during my visits. In both Steiner Waldorf-inspired schools, the children wore different colored silk capes and acted out the part of the leaves falling to the ground while the teacher sang a song. The W-2T talked about the way everything and everyone was connected to the earth. Everything was done with a gentleness, as the teachers never raised their voices and the children waited to hear their names being called. During this time, the teachers and children did more finger plays, saying Good morning dear earth, Good morning dear sun, Good morning to the stones, and flowers. Next, the children ran around with the capes on, squealing with joy as the teacher called colors to stand and run as the leaves, then falling to the ground to signal the change in seasons from fall to winter. The teacher draped the children in a white silk to signal snow. The skills were taught in authentic ways that had meaning to the children.

The approach of themes and seasons differed in the Reggio Emilia-inspired schools. Attention was paid to the seasons, but not to the extent of the Steiner Waldorf-inspired schools. Books and art projects related to the seasons were shared and completed in the Reggio Emilia-inspired schools. In the Reggio Emilia-inspired schools, if the children expressed an interest in learning about the seasons, the teachers would facilitate and work together with the children. An example of this was seen with the extensive pumpkin patch that was growing outside of the classroom. Stories and art projects about plants growing were evident throughout the classroom.

Another major difference with emergent literacy skill development was reading books to the children vs oral storytelling. Books were much more prevalent and placed strategically throughout the classroom for the children to read in the Reggio Emilia-inspired schools than in the Steiner Waldorf-inspired schools. Of the interviewed, each Reggio Emilia-inspired participant emphasized the importance of strategically placing books around the room. Both schools successfully nurtured and developed emergent literacy skills, but the approaches and philosophies regarding books differed. In a Reggio Emilia-inspired school I observed children sitting in the "living room" or on the carpet with books. They were telling the stories to each other, even though they could not read. Julian said to one of the teachers, "I can't read" and the R-2T responded, "That's ok, you can look at the pictures and make up stories in your head," which is what happened. This differs from the Steiner Waldorf-inspired schools where I observed the children as integral parts of the story and storytelling.

Since the R-1 preschool was a part of the Ohio Department of Education, the Department of Developmental Disabilities, Head Start, the YWCA, and Job and Family Services all standards and regulations must be met, and according to the director, making it a system and not just a school. The R-1 preschool used the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation tool (ELLCO) and felt that through that lens they were mindful of literacy opportunities. They used the tool when they assessed the environment for literacy opportunities. The R-2 preschool was connected to the Ohio Department of Education, has earned the 5-Star rating, and was tied to the Early Learning State Standards. The R-2 preschool school must use assessments as required by the state. They used Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA), the Ages and Stages Social Emotional Questionnaire (ASQ:SE), and individual student portfolios to show the educational growth of the children throughout the school year. The Steiner Waldorf-inspired teachers do not formally assess the children, but said they continually monitor and assess the children's social and emotional status through observations and discussions at their teacher meetings. There were no discrepant cases or nonconfirming data in this study.

Central Research Question

The central research question was "How do the alternative preschool philosophies of Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired-schools help staff cultivate emergent literacy skills in young children?" The central research question was answered through the development of the whole child, through viewing the environment as the third teacher, and through offering endless opportunities for oral language

development through imaginary play. The data from the research subquestions offered detailed information that answered the question of how the two philosophies help staff cultivate emergent literacy skills in young children.

Emergent Literacy

Emergent literacy skills are predictors of conventional literacy outcomes and without the development of them, children would be less likely to succeed in reading (Storch & Whitehurst, 2002). According to Hume, Allan, and Lonigan (2016), interest in literacy and the development of literacy skills are linked because high interest leads to increased participation in learning. The Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia educational philosophies actively engaged children in every learning experience and leads to the development of emergent literacy skills.

Through the interviews of the participants and during observations, emergent literacy skill development was evident through the types of learning experiences. The children were actively engaged during the entire observations at each research site. Both Reggio Emilia-inspired sites use research-based instruments to evaluate the children's progress. The R-1 site uses the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) tool and the R-2 site uses the Devereaux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA), the Ages and Stages Questionnaire-Social Emotional assessment (ASQ-SE), and the Early Learning Assessment (ELA) since they were accountable to the State Department of Education. During the interview, the participants from both school shared the ways in which literacy was developed.

In the Reggio Emilia-inspired schools, the participants explained and I observed that within every context of the classroom, group areas where the children were reading stories, writing, drawings, and even the youngest learners had big markers where they drew at a table, or on the carpet and there were many opportunities to refine the skills. The R-2T stated:

> It's all about action and we learn through our behaviors and our languages evolves from, that so we create very play rich experiences that are relationship building so they are in connection and communicating in dialoguing with their peers. Opportunities for that setting up situations intentionally, so those things occur. They do lots of writing and lots of storytelling through their play, for the block building will have documentation panels that may depict what they did. Our stories are very visual as well as graphic.

Similarly, the R-1 school conducted on-going documentation of everything the children drew, dictated, and experienced. The teachers had cameras available to record pictures of the learning experiences. The children had their own bound journals for drawing and writing stories that they dictated to the teachers. The teachers said that as the year progressed, the children began to write their own stories using inventive spelling. In this school, there were lists that the children make detailing things they want to accomplish. Later, there were photographs of the students accomplishing the items on the lists. For example, the children wanted to raise money for other children in the school who could not afford to pay for a field trip. They created a store called, “Our Store” with the tagline, “Come buy stuff, we need money” written in their own handwriting. They even drew

pictures of the items for sale. The children raised over the amount needed for the field trip. Also documented, was a child led approach to developing an outdoor space. There were detailed descriptions of the children's ideas, and under each picture the children created were typed descriptions of each phase. Another bulletin board, called Circle/Books, featured photos of children sitting around reading books. Some children were reading books by themselves, while others read with either an adult or other children.

The Steiner Waldorf-inspired participants discussed the ways in which emergent literacy skills were fostered in their schools and believe if the children were taught the joy of everything, the learning and literacy fall into place. The W-2T stated:

> We do a lot of storytelling with them, which we find is one of the building blocks for literacy, besides all of the gross motor and fine motor skills that children need to learn that are also building blocks for literacy. Then, we build upon that and nurture the literacy skills, and I think if you teach them the joy of everything then the literacy, the learning of that will fall into place more naturally. We do a lot of puppetry with them where we tell stories and be use little tabletop puppets and we tell them for some time so it really becomes a part of them just like to read a book over and over again.

The W-2T talked about children who already read and that sometimes parents felt it was not the school for them. She mentioned that the children who read are not held back, rather another layer is added to their literacy development through enrichment. The Steiner Waldorf philosophy focused on the developmental readiness of learning to read

and the teachers believed that when reading was pushed too early, remedial work was often needed. The W-2T stated in paragraph 20: “I always think, no these children don’t need remedial work, you just need to wait and it will fall right into place.”

Imaginary Play

Piaget (1951) and Vygotsky (1978) argued for the importance of play on a child’s development. Vygotsky theorized play as the internalization of social interactions and are a part of language acquisition and emergent literacy skill development. Piaget believed that play as imaginative, spontaneous, and lacking organization. Sobo (2014) stated that play should be an integral part of early childhood education and this was substantiated during my observations and interviews at the research sites. During my observation, I watched two girls playing with wooden doll-like figures that they deemed to be superheroes. Jane said, “I’m going to squash you,” and they ran flying around the room. Sam yelled, “I’m running out of power.” Other children joined in and said, “I see a wall-come on-it’s right over there.” There were many opportunities for imaginary play that were all initiated by the children. The R-2D discussed the importance of play in the development of early literacy skills:

> Play is the number one thing children should be able to do to test their philosophies and figure out how the world works. As they play, that’s where they have the conversations, that’s where they have TIME for conversations. That’s all of your vocabulary: EVERYTHING happens there through children’s play. We make sure they have time to play. And we make sure they have choices of what they can play with.

The W-1T spoke about the amount of time they spend setting up play situations such as building a house or a boat and how the children come in and make it their own. She spoke about the way the children create different scenarios. In the middle of the year, children may be "stuck" in a habitual play pattern, so the teachers may lead them to a new idea or "given them another way into another world." Also, the participant mentioned that their playmates help them with new ideas, too.

Self-regulation

Self-regulation as defined by Blair and Raver (2015) primarily emphasized the mastery of maintaining attention, regulating emotion, and engaging in sustained positive social interactions. Self-regulation was not in place of emergent literacy skills, but helped to increase participation in learning. The Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia philosophy emphasized that self-regulation was developed through social interactions, thus preparing children to learn in school.

Teachers from the Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired schools shared that Kindergarten teachers regularly communicate that children from these schools can listen, calm their bodies, and turn off their thinking for a moment while engaging their thinking in the current lesson. The W-1D shared:

> We are very sensitive to the developmental level of the child, and maybe at four their conflict is solved with the word: "Are you ok?" "Do you want to play?" So, we are wanting them to develop some skills in asserting themselves, and be able to handle the situation themselves without our help eventually. At first, we are

very helpful in guiding and in navigating, and then we want them to do it on their own.

The participants from Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired schools focused on developmentally appropriate ways to handle self-regulation with their children. They looked for natural ways to find what they are "best at," whether it be movement, play, or opportunities to spend a little time by themselves. They gave the child time and opportunities to practice self-regulation. I observed teachers giving children the space and assistance when needed to develop capacity for self-regulation. They noted that sometimes circle time can be too long for some children to sit, and that they try to grow capacity throughout the year so they can sit a little longer. Each participant stated that every learning experience was adaptable to the developmental level of the child.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP)

Developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) focused on the developmental stages of the child and their readiness to focus on appropriate parts of the curriculum (McGuinness et al., 2014). DAP recognized the importance and interdependence of all areas of child development curriculum (Mcguinness, Sproule, Bojke, Trew, & Walsh, 2014). Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia philosophies claim that play and the environment contribute to DAP (Edwards et al., 2012; Nicol and Taplin, 2012). Opportunities for play in appropriate learning environments increase the development of emergent literacy skills. When I asked the participants from the Steiner Waldorf-inspired

and Reggio Emilia-inspired preschools how they would describe a developmentally learning environment, the R-1D responded:

> I view DAP as an environment where I see full engagement and I can't say that enough. When children are engaged they are interested in the activity, it makes sense to them, is meaningful, and they will learn when it is not a fit, you will find dis-regulated and dis-interested children and therefore they are not at their best. They come in at their own entry point and another child does fairly elaborate things with little motors that make things move. Some children, their way of entering and interacting with it is to hold it and feel the vibration and it can be very regulating.

The R-2 staff recently returned from visiting the flagship preschool in Reggio Emilia, Italy, and spoke with the Italian teachers about DAP. When the R-2 participants asked the Reggio Emilia, Italy teachers what they do when a child doesn't want to do something, the teachers were unsure how to respond. The interpreter said that the teachers didn't understand the question and asked, "Why wouldn't a child want to do something?" The R-2 participants responded, "What if you wanted all of the children to do something and they didn't want to?" to which the Italian teachers replied, "Well, if you're asking them to do something and they don't want to, they're not ready. We've never had a child not want to do something. You must be asking them to do something they're not ready for." Also, the R-2D spoke about discussions with the Italian teachers, and offered:

> They are four, they are only four. And they say in Italy that they are four they are only four. And they are very big on this is their first, a lot of these things are their

> first. The first time they can do something, the first time in their life, it's so big, it's the first time. We need to respect that. They are so big on respecting everything, and that everything is connected.

The Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired participants incorporated DAP for all children daily by offering open-ended learning experiences. I observed these learning experiences for children at their individual entry level and saw developmentally appropriate learning opportunities that foster the development of emergent literacy skills through play, as noted in Chapter 4.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

The purpose of this multicase study was to examine the way in which European alternative preschool philosophies may inform best practices for the cultivation of emergent literacy skills. To ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, I did the following: Purposeful selection was the strategy used to identify the most knowledgeable participants, the four research sites were chosen to address the research questions and because staff used the philosophies under study, and the observation checklist and field notes were taken consistently during the preschool sessions. The findings were sent to the participants for their feedback, with only one suggestion sent back.

One central research question and four research subquestions were developed and the interview questions were created to answer the research questions. After the interviews, I sent the transcripts to the participants and two made minor clarifications. Collecting data from interviews, observations, the checklist, and photos of de-identified

student work provided multiple sources of rich and extensive information, and an opportunity for triangulation of that data as noted in the Data Analysis section of this chapter. These strategies helped to provide verification of the quality and credibility of the data collected during the study.

The process of triangulation of data helped ensure there were no inconsistencies and bias in the research. Previously, I had not observed or interviewed any of the participants and was careful to clarify my research purpose to the schools. I was a nonparticipant observer and sat in discrete locations at each site so as not to distract or affect the children. The children were comfortable with adults in the room and rarely sought me out for questions or discussions. When they did ask questions of me, they were not interested in why I was there, rather wanted to talk about whatever they were doing at the time.

The process of conducting the study, collecting and analyzing the data occurred as stated in Chapter 3, except for the order of data collection and one less interview from the W-2 research site. I used the interview questions, observational checklist, field notes guide, and took photos of de-identified student work. I entered the data into the ATLAS.ti software program to organize it. This process helped me analyze the data, and from there, I identified categories and themes to answer the research questions. This process supported the confirmability of the study.

Summary

In Chapter 4, I presented the results from the data collected during interviews of the participants, observations of the preschool classrooms, and photos of de-identified

student work. The data collected from the research sites answered the research subquestions, which answered the central research question. The type of activities and the environment provided data related to the studied philosophies development of emergent literacy skills and the four major themes most evident in the data, including: nurturing the whole child; authentic imaginary play; developmentally appropriate practice for three- and four-year-olds; and opportunities to practice self-regulation through the environment.

The central research question was "How do the alternative preschool philosophies of Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired-schools help staff cultivate emergent literacy skills in young children?" It was answered through the development of the whole child, through viewing the environment as the third teacher, offering endless opportunities for oral language development through imaginary play. The two studied philosophies overlapped in these areas, and differed in the approach of storytelling. The Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired preschool teachers value the importance of storytelling, but approach it differently.

I answered research subquestion 1 through interviews and placed the development of the whole child at the heart of every learning experience and when considering the environment and the pedagogical philosophy. The children's interests drove the curriculum and the goal of the teachers was to support the children's ability to be competent, to self-regulate, and express themselves. The development of oral language and imaginary play were critical components for the emergent literacy skills.

Next, I answered research subquestion 2 through interviews and observations of the environment. The environment in both philosophies was looked upon as 'the third

teacher,' and extensive consideration was given to the development of the indoor and outdoor environments. Open-ended learning opportunities were vast in these environments and the development of the whole child was enhanced because of them. In the indoor and outdoor environments, oral language development was ongoing with limitless opportunities for creative problem solving, imaginary play, and discussions.

Next, I answered research subquestion 3 through observations and interviews. The two philosophies were very similar regarding the development of the whole child through social interactions. Extensive opportunities for practice in self-regulation were evident through imaginary play. Children solved problems, and emergent literacy skill development was evidenced through authentic learning experiences, as they retold and created their own stories and wrote and illustrated picture books about their lives or something they made up.

Finally, I answered research subquestion 4 through observations. In the Steiner Waldorf-inspired schools, there was a strong emphasis on oral storytelling and finger plays. The children were an integral part of the stories and the teachers practice extensively to memorize them. In the Reggio Emilia-inspired schools, books were found all throughout the classrooms and were used to enhance features of different centers. The children were observed "reading books" to themselves and others and the teachers also read them during story time. In Chapter 5, the discussions included the interpretation of the findings, the recommendations, and implications for social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of the multicase study was to examine the way in which teachers who embrace European alternative preschool philosophies engage in the cultivation of emergent literacy skills. I focused on the way in which preschool teachers fostered emergent literacy skills using the Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired philosophies. The problem of students entering kindergarten without the emergent literacy skills needed to learn to read (Greenwood et al., 2015) and the absence of early language and the emergent literacy skills typically developed in preschool, informed the investigation (Lonigan et al., 2013). In this chapter I interpret the findings, implications for social change, and recommendations for the development of emergent literacy skills through alternative preschool philosophies.

Key Findings

The intended outcome of this multicase study was to provide insight into and information about the development of emergent literacy skills through the alternative preschool philosophies of Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia. The findings from this study strengthens and extends this knowledge to early childhood educators and policy makers. Educators, administrators, policy makers, students, and families can benefit from the findings of this study. Through this multicase study, which included observations, interviews, and de-identified student work, four major themes emerged: (a) nurturing the whole child; (b) authentic imaginary play; (c) developmentally appropriate practice for 3- and 4-year-olds; and (d) opportunities to practice self-regulation through the environment.

Additionally, the institutional structure of the two philosophies differ: the Steiner Waldorf-inspired schools are fee-based and the Reggio Emilia-inspired schools have different opportunities to supplement tuition. One such school implements Universal Pre-K, which is part of the State of Ohio educational system, and receives funding that offsets tuition fees. It is required to assess and report student progress and is tied to the state standards. The other such school is part of the Department of Developmental Disabilities, receives funding from the State of Ohio, must assess and report student progress, and is tied to the state standards. The previously mentioned Steiner Waldorf-inspired school reported that it recognizes the need for diversity and have submitted a grant proposal for scholarships. The same Steiner Waldorf-inspired school is in the planning stages to expand the preschool as a charter school in the major metropolitan area public school district.

A multicase study was selected to explore the research questions within real-life settings and multiple sites offered extensive, rich data (Yin, 2014). Data were collected in the natural setting of two Steiner Waldorf-inspired and two Reggio Emilia-inspired preschools located in northern and central Ohio. There was one participant from the W2 site, two from the W1 site, three from the R1 site, and two from the R2 site, for a total of eight participants. During four different observations, I took field notes, completed an observational checklist, and took photos of de-identified student work from what I saw and heard as a nonparticipant observer. I interviewed eight participants, transcribed the data, sent transcripts to check for accuracy, and then analyzed them. Two of the

participants clarified statements; the others did not provide feedback. Coding was used to identify patterns and themes that emerged from the data.

Interpretations of the Findings

This study supported previous research discussed in Chapter 2, and supports the value and importance of DAP within an environment that nurtured the whole child and afforded opportunities to practice and develop self-regulation, as noted by Edwards et al. (2012) and Mei-Jou (2014). As seen in Figure 1., the tenets comprising emergent literacy skills through social interactions were repeatedly observed during interviews and observations, including imaginary play, self-regulation, the environment, DAP, whole-child/child-centered, child/teacher learning/planning, creative and artistic experiences, and social interactions.

The research of Kaplan and Hertzog (2016) supported the findings of the importance of high-quality, activity-based environments, including deep student-initiated learning. Also in line with the findings, the researchers supported play-based learning experiences, artistic expression, and critical and creative thinking. Further, as observed in Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired approaches, Kaplan and Hertzog, and Bour (2014) discussed the importance of recognizing student strengths and interests toward the development of the whole child.

Conceptual Framework

Piaget (1964) and Vygotsky's (1978) theories were the basis for developmentally appropriate learning experiences in preschool and were substantiated by the comments of the participants of this study. Both theorists were proponents of self-regulation developed

through imaginary play. Piaget and Vygotsky believed that children must actively participate in learning and constructing reality, both of which were evidenced in interviews and observations during this study. At each research site, I observed the children engaged in every aspect of their learning. The children talked with each other and the teachers during play in the outdoor and indoor environments. Four boys and one girl pretended they were architects, building floors in the tree house, or I watched two girls drawing a large house with chalk, then they discussed in detail and told a story about each room in the house and their role in each room. Then, I observed two girls pretending they were water fairies, flying around with conversations about it. Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD and independent problem-solving were observed during the observations, when the teachers were available to assist, as needed or as requested by the children.

According to Vygotsky (1978) imaginary play supports the development of cognitive skills in children. This study confirmed that emergent literacy skills are developed through play in the preschool setting. Each research site was set up for optimal imaginary play opportunities, whether it was with blocks, in different rooms in a house, through the creation of imaginary scenarios with wooden figurines, or in the outdoor environment. Also evident, was that the imaginary play was completely directed by the children. The teachers did not create the scenarios and clearly stated in the interviews that strive not to interrupt the children's play. They believe this is the time where conflicts are solved.

Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted at two Steiner Waldorf-inspired and two Reggio Emilia-inspired preschools in northern and central Ohio. The number of participants was small; three participants from one Reggio Emilia-inspired preschool, two from the second Reggio Emilia-inspired preschool, two from one Steiner Waldorf-inspired school, and one from the second Steiner Waldorf-inspired school. The Steiner Waldorf-inspired schools had fewer participants than did the Reggio Emilia-inspired schools which could have privileged one approach over another. Even though the participant number was small, results may be transferable to other preschools because I observed the philosophies interpreted in the same way, with similar learning experiences, and comparable opportunities for emergent literacy skill development.

Enrollment in three of the four research sites was open to all children. The R-1 research site was open to children with developmental disabilities and some typically developing peers. Recommendations could be applicable to other preschool settings. Triangulation of the data through interviews, observations, and emergent literacy checklists verified the quality and credibility of the data for this study and helped to avoid researcher bias. Since I was not affiliated in any way with the research sites, bias was further limited and I was a nonparticipant observer and attempted to place myself in a discrete location in the classrooms so as not to affect the children's behavior or play.

Recommendations

Recommendations were based on the results and findings of this multicase study. The findings offer evidence for the development of emergent literacy skills through the

Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia educational philosophies. The findings also corroborated research on the importance of imaginary play, the environment, DAP, and social interactions in the development of early literacy skills (Chambers et al., 2016; Brostrom et al., 2012; Sobo, 2014). It is recommended that the findings be disseminated to early childhood educators, policy makers, and parents.

It is recommended that the findings be presented to early childhood educators, superintendents, curriculum directors, and board of education members through presentations at state and national conferences. Locally, the findings may be presented to school administrators through presentations. Another way to disseminate the information is through journal articles, or a white paper, so that a better understanding of the importance of imaginary play, the environment, DAP, and social interactions in the development of emergent literacy skills. It is recommended that the results be disseminated to parents on parents' night at the beginning of the school year, through resources on the district webpages, and through educational workshops so they can develop an understanding of the importance of the development of early literacy skills through imaginary play.

Further research supporting the development of early literacy skills through imaginary play in an environment conducive to oral language development, and social interactions could be helpful to early childhood educators and policy makers. Future research examining how delayed formal reading instruction served Steiner Waldorf graduates. A replication of this study could include developing environments that follow the Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia educational philosophies with a focus on the

whole-child and was child-centered. As educators recognize the value of imaginary play in developmentally appropriate environments, emergent literacy skills can be fostered. Additionally, preschool directors in the United States could implement the components of these philosophies into their school programs, thus affording young children opportunities to develop emergent literacy skills through imaginary play, the environment, and through social interactions.

Implications

In the United States, early childhood educators implement an academic curriculum with preschool children that have fixed objectives (Hocevar et al., 2015). Implementing an academic, standards-based curriculum with preschool children diminished the time for imaginary play and led to unintended consequences (NAEYC, 2012). This study added to and confirmed the literature to support or expand preschool program's development of emergent literacy skills through imaginary play in appropriate learning environments.

Benefits of social change can follow as implementation of the Steiner Waldorf or Reggio Emilia educational philosophies are implemented. This study supports the importance of imaginary play as a means to develop oral language skills among preschool children. The findings offer methods to support preschool programs so early childhood educators can be confident in different ways to develop early literacy skills. This study was based on the previous research of Lonigan et al. (2013), Camilli et al. (2010, and Sobo (2014) with the focus on appropriate learning practices for the development of emergent literacy skills. This previous research noted the connection

between imaginary play and the development of oral language skills. It is likely that one contributing factor to the success of these philosophies is the articulation and passion with which they are implemented.

This study can enhance and add to the perspectives of parents, teachers, and policy makers about the importance of imaginary play for oral language development, especially in developmentally appropriate learning environments. The value of imaginary play must be understood by these stakeholders so that it can be implemented and applied in the preschool setting and was explained through this research. Positive social change can be created through an understanding of the value of developmentally appropriate ways to develop emergent literacy skills by employing the Steiner Waldorf or Reggio Emilia educational philosophies.

Conclusion

The development of emergent literacy skills in preschool children is a vital component to success in learning to read (Lonigan et al., 2013). The teachers using the educational philosophies of Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia offer DAP through imaginary play in learning environments conducive to oral language development (Malaguzzi, 2016; Steiner, 1979). An increase in academic instruction and a decrease in imaginary play places children at risk for reading difficulties (Chambers et al., 2016). This study confirms and extends the previous research of the importance of DAP and through the implementation of the educational philosophies of Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilia, preschools can support the development of emergent literacy skills in preschool children.

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Appendix A: Observation Field Notes Guide

Teacher:	Observer:
School:	Role:
Setting within school:	Time:
Location:	Date:

Descriptive Field Notes	Reflective Notes (insights, thoughts, themes)

Appendix B: Observation Checklist-Emergent Literacy
1.Emergent Literacy Environments

Date:_____Classroom:_____ Educator: _____

Descriptors for Literacy-Rich Environments –

The environment invites learning. The environment supports emergent literacy learning and development with open-ended materials that are thoughtfully presented to and accessible by children. Learning experiences are meaningful and connect children to their culture, daily life, interests and inquiries. Educators consider the ways the materials could be supportive and accessible for children during inquiry, play-based learning experiences.

Key:

F – Frequently O-Occasionally S-Seldom

The following are evident, accessible, and available	**F**	**O**	**S**	**Comments**
Indoor and outdoor learning environments encourage and support open-ended opportunities for children to reenact oral or read-aloud stories, independently, or with guided assistance from adults.				
Photographs, charts, children's work and educator's documentation about the work is displayed at children's eye-level and has relevance to the children, their interests, cultures and inquiry projects				
Literacy props, materials, and equipment are evident and accessible in all areas of the classroom, along with a variety of high quality text types.				
Song, chant, and rhyme books Pop-up books				

The following are evident, accessible, and available	F	O	S	Comments
Books that range in interest and skill level (e.g. board books, wordless picture books, soft cover, hardcover, lift-the-flap)				
Books that reflect the cultures, languages and families of the children in the classroom				
Books written and compiled by the children (both individually and the whole class)				
Space for adults to comfortably sit and read with and/or tell stories with individual children as well as with small and large groups				
Props, materials and equipment essential for supporting oral language development and developing dispositions for literacy learning through dramatic role -play:				
Dress-up clothes and props that invite children to dramatize daily living activities (e.g. playing house, a new pet, going on a trip)				
Props and materials that reflect the cultures and customs of the children				
Props and materials that invite children to dramatize recreational and community activities (e.g. camping)				
Props and materials that invite children to role play various occupations within the community (e.g. post office, hospital)				
Dress-up clothes, props and materials that promote retelling familiar stories as well as creating new stories				
Puppets, finger puppets				

The following are evident, accessible, and available	F	O	S	Comments
Flannel board/felt board characters				
Musical instruments				
Props that are reflective of the children's cultures (e.g. chopsticks, ethnic play food and containers)				
A variety of art materials included in an art center and infused throughout other learning that encourages the manipulation of the alphabet and other shapes and creations.				
Assortment of paper:				
Construction				
Manila tag board				
Tissue and tracing paper				
Finger paint paper				
Wrapping paper				
Brown craft paper				
A variety of writing/drawing tools:				
Colored pencils				
Pens				
Crayons				
Markers				
Specialty pens (e.g. charcoal, pastels, chalk, dry erase, highlighters, watercolours)				
Paint (e.g. tempera, water colour)				
Plasticine, play dough, clay				
Wikki sticks, pipe cleaners, wire				
Modpodge				
Glue				
Easels				
Boxes				
Wire/pipe cleaners				

2. Language-Rich Environment

Date:_____Classroom:_____ Educator: _____

Descriptors for Language-Rich Environments –

Preschool programs support children's language development, build vocabulary and increase conceptual knowledge resulting in higher level language skills that lead to competencies in reading and comprehension. Educators are literacy models providing rich demonstrations, interactions and shared literacy experiences. Positive, trusting, caring, relationships are supported with meaningful conversations, open-ended questions and reflective discussions. Shared reading and writing experiences happen throughout the day with individuals, small and large groups. Children have many opportunities to explore text types and real-world materials through inquiry and literacy-based play experiences.

Key:

F – Frequently O-Occasionally S-Seldom

The following are evident, accessible, and available	**F**	**O**	**S**	**Comments**
A supportive, interactive and engaging environment where children have conversations with their peers and adults in the classroom throughout the Day				
Children listen to, interact, and share stories and ideas				
Large blocks of uninterrupted time scheduled every day for inquiry, play-based learning				
Time is given for each child individuallyand in groups to express ideas or feelings during an activity, routine, and throughout the day				

The following are evident, accessible, and available	F	O	S	Comments
Props, materials, and equipment that build on the interests of children and encourage conversation				
Access to musical instruments				
A variety of recorded books and music (with accompanying words, books) for children to listen to				
To support and extend oral language development educators use a variety of strategies and approaches: **Simplify and slow down** language **Repeat and expand** on child's language **Use consistent words** for objects and activities **Use reflective/active listening** **Use key words and phrases from the languages spoken by children** and families in the program **Use open-ended questioning**, inquiry and inferencing to scaffold learning (e.g. Bloom's Taxonomy) **Model** conversational skills **Introduce a familiar item that links** to a new one **Promotes awareness of the connection** between oral and written language (e.g. stories dictated by children) **Record children's explanations and narratives** during play, storytelling, projects, and creating art				
Provides opportunities for children to identify environmental print and includes the print in their inquiry, play-based learning				

Source: Adapted from Saskatchewan Reads. (2014). Retrieved April 23, 2017, from https://saskatchewanreads.files.wordpress.com

Appendix C: Individual Interview Questions Guide

Before beginning the questions listed below, I will ask introductory questions:

a. Tell me about your school? What's it like teaching here?

b. What are your class sizes? Do you have assistants or helpers? What are their roles?

c. What do you like best about teaching at this school? (Why?)

1. Describe how you were inspired to study and teach the (Waldorf or Reggio Emilia) educational philosophy?
2. Describe your role in young children's education.
3. What role does the environment play in young children's literacy development?
4. How do you describe a developmentally appropriate learning environment? What examples can you share from your school?
5. How do you foster the development of early literacy skills with young children in your school?
6. Describe the strategies you use to develop oral language skills with young children.
7. How do you use play to cultivate early literacy skills? What are some examples?
8. What else would you like to share regarding your perceptions about your program and the development of early literacy skills in young children?

Appendix D Trustworthiness Checklist

Checklist for Researchers Attempting to Improve the Trustworthiness of a Content Analysis Study.

Questions to Check

Data collection method: How do I collect the most suitable data for my content analysis? Is this method the best available to answer the target research question? Should I use either descriptive or semi-structured questions? Self-awareness: what are my skills as a researcher? How do I pre-test my data collection method? Sampling strategy: What is the best sampling method for my study? Who are the best informants for my study? What criteria should be used to select the participants? Is my sample appropriate? Is my data well saturated?

Selecting the unit of analysis: What is the unit of analysis? Is the unit of analysis too narrow or too broad?

Categorization and abstraction: How should the concepts or categories be created? Is there still too many concepts? Is there any overlap between categories?

Interpretation: What is the degree of interpretation in the analysis? How do I ensure that the data accurately represent the information that the participants provided?

Representativeness: How to I check the trustworthiness of the analysis process? How do I check the representativeness of the data as a whole?

Reporting results: Are the results reported systematically and logically? How are connections between the data and results reported? Is the content and structure of concepts presented in a clear and understandable way? Can the reader evaluate the transferability of the results (are the data, sampling method, and participants described in a detailed manner)? Are quotations used systematically? How well do the categories cover the data? Are there similarities within and differences between categories? Is scientific language used to convey the results?

Reporting analysis process: Is there a full description of the analysis process? Is the trustworthiness of the content analysis discussed based on some criteria?

Note: Used with permission "Qualitative content Analysis: A focus on trustworthiness" Elo, S., Kääriäinen, M., Kanste, O., Pölkki, T., Utriainen, K., & Kyngäs, H. (2014). *Sage Open*, *4*(1), 2158244014522633."

Appendix E: Frequency of A priori Codes For Emergent Literacy Skills

A priori Code	Waldorf-inspired	Reggio Emilia-inspired
Child Centered	38	40
Creative/Artistic	22	20
DAP	34	32
Environment	35	20
Imaginary Play	36	27
Literacy	28	29
Oral Language	41	30
Pedagogy/Philosophy	33	25
Self-Regulation	30	15
Social Interactions	28	21
Teacher/Child Interactions	23	23
Whole Child	33	28

Frequency of A posteriori Codes for Emergent Literacy Skills

A posteriori Code	Waldorf-inspired	Reggio Emilia-inspired
Assessment	2	4
Curriculum	2	6
Demographics	4	6

Documentation	3	13
Family	4	2
Imitation	12	7
Institutional Structure	2	9
Training	8	14
Respect for Children	16	8

Appendix F: Individual Examination of Frequency of a priori and a posteriori Codes

A priori Code	Waldorf-inspired
Oral Language	41
Child Centered	38
Imaginary Play	36
Environment	35
DAP	34
Pedagogy/Philosophy Whole Child	33
Self-regulation	30
Literacy Social Interactions	28
Teacher/Child Interaction	23
Creative/Artistic	22

A priori Code	Reggio Emilia-inspired
Child Centered	40
DAP	32
Oral Language	30
Literacy	29
Whole Child	28
Imaginary Play	27

A priori Code	Reggio Emilia-inspired
Pedagogy/Philosophy	25
Teacher/Child Interaction	23
Social Interaction	21
Creative/Artistic Environment	20
Self-Regulation	15

A posteriori Code	Waldorf-inspired
Respect for Children	16
Imitation	12
Teacher Training	8
Demographics Family	4
Documentation Institutional Structure	3
Assessment Curriculum	2

A posteriori Code	Reggio Emilia-inspired
Training	14
Documentation	13
Institutional Structure	9
Respect for Children	8
Imitation	7
Curriculum Demographics	6
Assessment	4
Family	2

Appendix G: Results from the Observational Checklist - Emergent Literacy

1. Emergent Literacy Environment

Emergent Literacy Environment	Waldorf-inspired Frequently, (F) Often, (O) Seldom (S)	Reggio Emilia-inspired Frequently, (F) Often, (O) Seldom (S)
Indoor/Outdoor learning environments encourage oral storytelling or read aloud stories	F	F
Photographs, charts, children's work and educator's documentation-relevance and meaning to child	O	F
Literacy props, materials, and equipment are evident	F	F
Song, chant, and rhyme books, pop-up books	S	F
Books that reflect the culture, languages, board books, hardcover	S	O
Space for adults to comfortably sit and read or tell stories with children	F	F
Props, materials, and equipment for supporting oral language development through dramatic role play	F	O
Musical instruments, props of children's culture	F	O
Variety of materials in an art center that encourages the manipulation of the alphabet and other shapes and creations	F	F
Variety of equipment to explore and document	O	F

2. Language-Rich Environments

Language-Rich Environments	Waldorf-inspired Frequently, (F) Often, (O) Seldom (S)	Reggio Emilia-inspired Frequently, (F) Often, (O) Seldom (S)
A supportive, interactive and engaging environment where children have conversations with their peers and adults in the classroom	F	F
Children listen to, interact, and share stories and ideas	F	F
Time is given for each child individually and in groups to express ideas or feelings during an activity, routine, and throughout the day	F	F
Approaches that are used in building and enhancing communication (oral language development) skills. Words are expressed orally, visually and physically for clarity and understanding	F	F
Props, materials, and equipment that build on the interests of children and encourage conversation	F	F
Access to musical instruments	S	S
A variety of recorded books and music (with accompanying words, books) for children to listen to	S	O
To support and extend oral language development	F	F

educators use a variety of strategies and approaches		
Provides demonstrations and opportunities both indoors and outdoors for children to practice and develop oral and written language connections through representing ideas	F	F
Provides opportunities for children to identify environmental print and includes the print in their inquiry, play-based learning	O	F

Appendix H: Coded Excerpts of Participant Responses to Research Subquestions 1 and 2

1. Research subquestion 1: How do Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired preschool teachers characterize the role of the two philosophies in the development of emergent literacy skills?

W-1D:

Code - Philosophy: What inspires me about Waldorf is that it's very authentic, the teachers strive to be imitated, they are striving to do meaningful work with joy, doing purposeful work, cooking and gardening to plant a tree for example. We're sewing and making a beautiful watercolor painting to hang on the wall or turn into gift cards. It's meaningful and the children are welcome to participate with us or they can just be in their imaginative play.

Code - Oral Language/Literacy: Our outdoor time develops oral language, and we come indoors and have a circle time that on revolves around the seasons, so in the fall, we might have singing, doing rhymes and finger plays about apples, or about whatever the children are inspired by in that season. During circle time, we do a lot of literacy as far as singing, rhymes, games with words, and it's all oral, but then the teacher will also do movement to go along with the songs correlates with a lot of body crossover will bend down, and go side to side. We end our day with a story and our stories are all told orally and we frame it with the same introductory song and candle lighting. We tell the story orally, maybe with a few wooden puppets, and we close the story with a similar song and extinguishing the candle and in Waldorf we call that an in-breath and the out-breath is where the children are playing and running and playing and then an in-breath where they

come in and are quiet and centered and listening. I think this idea of listening and enjoying the adventures of the story and listening to the characters is huge. When I see our children from J. go on to kindergarten, the biggest thing I've heard from kindergarten teachers is they know how to listen. It's not that these children are overly obedient but that they are used to calming their bodies, turning off their thinking for a minute or engaging their thinking with what their teacher's saying and they really just know how to listen.

W-1T:

Code - Philosophy/Oral Language/Literacy: I would say the main way for literacy development is through the circle and the story and all of the singing throughout the day so there's a lot of rhymes and poetry and rich verbal language that the children are hearing and learning and memorizing and saying, so they are getting it and it can enter into their play. So, maybe there's a puppet show, and they learn how to do it. Maybe it's repeated, so they learn the same words, that they memorize the whole puppet show, then they can play.

Code - Philosophy/Literacy: Oral storytelling is high literacy skills because it is richer than our spoken language. They teachers work on memorizing the story so it's richer that what we would just say in a story and then they learn that early pre-literacy skill. For the actual literacy skill we do writing where they dictate and I write the letters and sometimes they write their names or asked to write part of the words. They are just usually happy for you to write what they dictate and then they draw. And they see us writing our grocery list, there's some writing but not a whole lot and there's not reading because it's so much

more of an oral program. There are a few times when they might see us reading a book, and we have some books here.

Code - Philosophy/Oral Language/Literacy: I think the puppet shows and the oral storytelling are really strengthening for their own visual imagination and they can make it their own story about what's happening. You see them playing it and manipulating it and maybe the story changes. We see it in their play, their play gets richer throughout the year, and they have more interesting scenarios developing.

W-2T:

Code - Philosophy: What we try to do, even into the grades with many of our projects, we do with them more as the hands-on activities and they are things that they can carry out from beginning to end. There's nothing that we say that we will finish that for you or we will start that for you and you can finish it, so when they're allowed to do something from beginning to end it also gives them this confidence of I CAN.

Code - Philosophy/Oral Language/Literacy: We do a lot of puppetry with them where we tell stories and be use little tabletop puppets and we tell them for some time so it really becomes a part of them just like reading a book over and over.

Code - Philosophy/Literacy: We always have a seasons table and that might be a part of the story. Now, it's the Billy Goats Gruff that and you see, but then they also sometimes build the bridges out of all the stools and they become the three Billy goats, but nobody wants to be the troll. For learning how to read and write and letter recognition, we really wait for them to show readiness and that in children can have a wide range, I think even wider than learning how to walk and to talk. There are children who are very early

readers, and we don't hold them back. We add to that, yes if a child is there and ready to read and doing that then they can, but what we then add is to really appreciate the story. In first grade we draw the letters, have you seen the pictures that there's a story to every letter and that's not a set story, it's a story that the teacher might come up with for things like that.

Code - Philosophy/Literacy: Our literacy is developed with repetition, with circle time, and songs with finger plays. I choose one little seasonal poems that turns into a little play where they get to wear colored capes to be the ladybugs, but it's very simple and it's not like a stage play, just within the circle where the sun gets to walk around the circle and that the wind gets to run, things like that. They are learning all the words and that full body.

R-1D:

Code - Philosophy: Reggio calls it the hundred languages of children and that spoke to me because they talk about languages from the perspective of 100 more, that we have lots of different ways to express ourselves and to show our understanding, so for me that spoke very much to this population and was helpful for me in terms of rolling out a way of thinking about work and teaching and learning. So, we then embraced the philosophy, and we designed the space that was about community. The influence of Reggio really helped us to look deeper into the power of children and identifying all of their potential and we can only do that if we created situations where they felt it was meaningful and authentic for them.

Code - Literacy: Literacy is embedded in all we do. We use the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) tool and through that tool place a lens on being very mindful of literacy opportunities in the context of the environment. Within the context of every classroom it has a group area where they're reading stories or some form of literacy development, they do a lot of literacy development through writing, signing in, drawings, even our youngest learners have tools like big markers where they are drawing planes, in front of them or under table, and lots of opportunities to use those refining skills and a lot of labeling.

Code - Philosophy/Oral Language/Literacy: We emphasize verbal expression, opportunities for verbal expression, materials that support language expression. The children are the documentation, so whether it's drawings or whether it's photo images of them being engaged in various types of experiences but yes, the children are the story. We create very play rich experiences that are relationship building so they are in connection and communicating in dialoguing with their peers. They do lots of writing and lots of storytelling through their play, for the block building will have documentation panels that may depict what they did. Our stories are very visual as well as graphic.

R-1T:

Code - Philosophy: It is possible to teach children in such a creative and respectful way. Reggio made sense to me because there was so much creativity involved in it and so much respect for the children. I think the primary thing is to build a positive nurturing relationship with them so that they can have the experience of a positive nurturing adult. What I always attempt to do is present materials in a way that is accessible for any child

so that regardless of their developmental stage and having an open-ended approach is naturally the way that best fits. With any given material that we're working with, they come in and things are in the table and we talk about what you think we're going to do?

Code - Oral Language/Literacy: Engaging them in conversation, writing down the words, is another way is a way that I used to work with the idea of sharing. What I do with them is we make lists. They grab a paper and pencil and say, let's make a list. There is always dialogue going on in the in the studio and I'm always encouraging children to share their ideas and opinions. Creativity is play and play is creativity and play is learning. And they're invited to play and explore the materials that we have as the main focus for that day.

R-2D:

Code - Philosophy: The state came in and inspected and they took (accepted) our Reggio. Everyone thought there was no way that it would be accepted, but they did. Even now, on the Universal Pre-k documents there's a box to check if you are a Reggio-inspired school. It is gaining acceptance as an alternative form of education. I discovered more about the Reggio philosophy and thought, "This is what I believe." I ended up buying the school, started with 30 kids and are up to 110. A teacher from a local public school noticed our kids self-help skills, that they were so self-sufficient, they knew how to follow rules, they were ahead of the game on everything, so she ended up calling and saying, I want to know more about your school. And she started telling me the difference in their test scores and their reading skills, everything. So, she was asking how our school

runs and she had never heard of Reggio and said, I have to tell you, these children are so amazing.

Code - Philosophy/Oral Language/Literacy: The kids say, today I think, so they see their thoughts on paper. A lot of times they are building and we say, Do you want to draw that so someone else might see it, or we can put it in this book. We like documenting and working with young children to show their progress. How else would you show that? In their portfolios are pictures and student writing. This is about what is real in their lives, so that they can develop their philosophies about the world. There are a lot of materials for them to manipulate and play and their freedom to choose. Toys should be open-ended with options. We want the higher-level thinking. Most of the time is spent in that living room area. The conversation, the things they talk about. The things that happen in that little area is amazing. And when you talk about literacy, literacy is language and about the time you give them for conversations. How are you going to have language and literacy if children are not allowed to talk, if they can't carry on a conversation. And at this age, where are you going to get literacy? Conversations. Words, simple words. At the beginning of the year we spend a lot of time with them getting to know them.

Code - Literacy: You find out what the class kind of knows. So, if everyone knows their colors, we take it one step further. Some kids are sitting down writing their whole names, so let's move on. Some don't know how to hold a pencil, so you'll see the teachers working in different groups because we do try to develop skills when you see that they don't have certain skills, a lot of time things are placed in that room for a specific reason.

Code - Philosophy/Oral Language/Play: Our philosophy is a Reggio philosophy and our curriculum is emergent and it becomes projects. Play is the number one thing children should be able to do to test their philosophies and figure out how the world works. As they play, that's where they have the conversations, that's where they have TIME for conversations. That's all of your vocabulary: EVERYTHING happens there through children's play. We make sure they have time to play. And we make sure they have choices of what they can play with. When we visited Reggio Emilia, Italy, we asked, "What do you do if a child doesn't want to do something?" The interpreter told them this and for the longest time, they just talked among themselves. Finally, the interpreter said, They don't understand the question, Why would a child not want to do something? The American said, what if you want them all to do something and they don't want to do it. The Italian teachers said, Well if you're asking them to do something and they don't want to, they're not ready. We've never had a child not want to do something. You must be asking them to do something they're not ready for.

R-2T:

Code - Philosophy: I would definitely say I'm a facilitator or a researcher because as I'm watching them, I'm always learning so much more, always questioning what they're thinking, where did that definition come from. Yes, I facilitate learning but am a co-researcher because I'm learning what they're doing. Every topic we get into, I'm learning so that makes me a better facilitator.

Code - Literacy: It gets tricky because people that come to visit ask, Well how do you teach letters and numbers? It's just more emergent. When it happens, it happens. The

other day we were at the art table and I said, Which one is yours? I don't know which one is yours. I said, Does it have your name on it and they said, no they didn't know how. I said, I have something here, see if you can find your picture and it has your name and these are the letters in your name. That's how they learn to write their name. Then they start writing letters to each other, they want to know how to write someone else's name, everything is purposeful and authentic. It comes up when they are ready and then it happens organically. It's not forced and they want to do it. People ask how does the learning happen with literacy, the letters the sounds the writing and reading. It happens because they're seeing it all the time.

Code - Philosophy: Something you see in our classroom is that we are always taking notes. The children see this every day. So by October, November they say, Are you going to write this down and I say, I will write this down. Or they'll say, Can you write my words, because we're always writing. So they know that everything we do is meaningful and purposeful and that those symbols have meaning, they're my words.

Code - Philosophy/Literacy: Then they want to write and we're seeing the stages of scribbling, inventive spelling, and it just takes off. Some of the things they see us do, they start mimicking. We write down our rules and everything isn't beautiful or typed, but it's authentic and they see us make a mistake and cross it out and they see us write it again. They see us taking notes, writing notes, writing down students' words, taking photographs and then hanging them up. Remember when we did that stop sign, it's in our book, let's go get that book. If they have a block structure they want to keep up, they go and get the book and maybe Sam who has an S in his name makes a really good S and

that's not cheating, that's being resourceful. That's a really good critical thinking skill. They don't say, don't touch that, it's not yours. That's great collaboration. The very first time we say, We have all these journals, you get your very own, so find your name, stick it on your journal. They get to pick it out. Would you like to draw in your journal and we talk about not tearing it out yet. So, that's the hardest thing, they want to take it home so we just take it to the copy machine and copy it. We want it to show growth. So, at first, we might ask if they want to write something, maybe about our hedgehogs or the butterfly that just hatched from a chrysalis and I said, We should put this in our journals so we don't forget. Just saying that is invitation enough and if you set the journals out with colored pencils next to the butterfly, it invites them to do it. They don't have to do it. Everything is so integrated. It's hard to say that this is the art area, or this is the science area because when we are writing their words and books are a part of every single thing they're doing. If they're playing with blocks we might be using new vocabulary words, saying wow when you have the blocks set so wide it's stronger and you have a good foundation. When we bring in the literacy it might not seem so obvious. We might say, a good way to remember this is to draw it, do you want to draw it and they have to draw before they can write.

2. Research subquestion 2: How do Steiner Waldorf-inspired and Reggio Emilia-inspired preschool teachers apply their program philosophies to provide a learning environment they view as key to emergent literacy?

W-1D:

Code - Environment/Play: The environment – the outdoor space is very important and the indoor space, we really strive to create a place that fosters imagination. Our toys are very simple, they're wooden or natural materials. Instead of costumes we have just naturally dyed play silks. We keep a lot of space really open-ended, if we buy a toy, we want to make sure that it could be seen as having many different purposes, and all of that is in order to foster imagination because that's where we're thinking and language (oral language) will have an opportunity to develop.

Code - Environment/Philosophy/Oral Language: When a child asks, can you help me build a house, and I don't want anyone in here except the team of cheetahs, can you help me with a sign that says, Cheetahs only, we do. We don't let anyone hurt anyone, so we will firmly stop someone if they are hurting feelings or hurting bodies. And the way we've set up our lunchtime with our small groups really fosters language development and the teacher sits with a small group of children takes a breath and just hold in the snack time and the lunchtime as kind of a calm time to really learn about conversation and how do you wait your turn and how do you tell a joke, and how do you listen to a friend's story. Because the teachers are with the same children all year, the conversation skills really develop. It's one of my favorite parts of the day as a teacher.

Code - Environment/Philosophy/Whole Child: We try to view the J. school like a bridge from home. That we really nurture these children and take care of them, like their mom would or their dad? We provide snack time and lunch, but if they're hungry we can let them have an apple. We have a lot of outdoor time at the beginning of the day which

is very appropriate for their bodies to get moving and be outside and socialize before we asked them to come to circle time.

Code - Environment/Literacy: We are outdoors at 8 30 and we're outdoors in all weather. If it's very cold we might shorten it, but we're still outside every day. During the day, the children have access to the toys, they can play, they can help a teacher cook and one teacher offers an art activity and it's the same each day every day of the week, so every Monday it might be bees wax modeling and another day it might be water colors. The teacher holds the space and the art activity but children don't have to go if they would much rather be in their imaginative play, they don't have to complete the picture but if they do want to, then they're invited to come and do the art project.

Code - Environment/Oral Language/Literacy: I think when you walk into our school hopefully you will hear children talking, unless the teacher's telling a story at the end of the day. We want the children to be free to talk and I think sometimes it's really loud, but the goal is to have a place where they can really express themselves. When it does come to the actual symbolism of reading and writing, we are very authentic about it. If I am looking through the refrigerator to decide what we need for the grocery, I'll usually have a few children with me to write the grocery list, and a child each week takes that grocery list home to buy the groceries and so they know that print has meaning.

Code - Environment/Literacy: Literacy skills are very authentic, we do a lot of cooking and we always have a written recipe, so even though we aren't teaching children directly to read, they will see that we are reading. They see that you read maple syrup and they watch you get maple syrup, they see that printed literacy has meaning.

Code - Environment/Oral Language/Literacy: With the oral storytelling, the teachers rehearse and practice beforehand. There is a lot of prep time that goes into it. This may sound a little old-fashioned but there is a lot of rich language through our songs and oral storytelling, just to increase vocabulary and an awareness of other sentence structures.

W-1T:

Code - Environment/Philosophy/Whole Child: We don't want to have an overly talkative model where we tell the child and now say this and now say that and we are very sensitive to the developmental level of the child, and maybe at four their conflict is solved with the word: "Are you ok?" "Do you want to play?" So, we want them to develop some skills in asserting themselves, and be able to handle the situation themselves without our help eventually. At first, we are very helpful in guiding and in navigating, and then we want them to do it on their own.

Code - Environment/Philosophy/Whole Child/Literacy: I think it's the way that the teachers hold their role with such dignity, there is the art of being a teacher and there is a lot of kind of pride in making the space beautiful, but infusing it with magic and song. I guess what inspires me about Waldorf is the magic, the wonder, how much imagination is encouraged, and holding the childhood as sort of a precious and sacred time, and protecting it and really allowing the child to be in that space for as long as they need. And when they're ready to move on then you know and you provide richer stories, more academic opportunities and I think the best part about Waldorf is children having confidence in their abilities, and a really strong aesthetic sense because the arts are woven around everything and a lot of music and a lot of theater.

Code - Environment/Literacy: The outdoor environment offers a lot of opportunities to move, jump, gross motor, fine motor, knitting, sewing. So, there is a lot of brain neurons firing with all of that handwork and fine motor is really focused on, and those tie in with literacy. The environment is more about their movement rather than being a print rich environment. More like opportunities for unique, varied, interesting movements and the play and the play is the whole part of the curriculum and where they are getting their pre-literacy skills by talking and figuring out and deciding this is what we want to do, and this is how were going to do it, then doing it, and completing a task and working together. The wooden toys, natural, provide a sense of dignity to the child, that the child's play is important, that it's not just a cheap, throw-away thing, that it's beautiful and well-made and it sort of honors their play. The toys are very open-ended. The dolls have not a lot of expression on their faces intentionally, so the child can bring in their own imagination in their play, and allows for more creativity.

Code - Environment/Whole Child/DAP: One thing we do for developmentally appropriate things we do is keep the child naturally what they are best at, play, movement, and opportunities for being a little by themselves, in some trees, or having time to regulate. There are little nook, crannies, where they can be a little private, or with the group. What's appropriate for the individual child.

W-2T:

Code - Environment/Philosophy: There is a gentleness of the program, the way the we do many real-world things with the children, when we bake they get to measure for this, when we make the dough together but it's not all about the measuring it's about the end

product of them having the dough, they all get to stir, they all get to bake, and we put it in the oven and they all get to eat and some goes home, but they also have it here for our snack.

Code - Environment/Literacy: We have sandboxes and climbing for the gross motor skills, again which we truly believe is one of the foundations of building the literacy. They climb out there, they build out there, there are lots of sticks and we go outside every single day. In the wintertime we dress really warm, sometimes dressing takes half an hour and we will only be out there for 10 minutes. They are not the ones who want to come inside where they want to be outside, so I bring my snowsuit because I want to be comfortable and I'm right there with them, with the sled riding and building snowmen now and in the summertime, it's other things. They love climbing and building sand castles and we have lots of cut wood and long branches, they build forts against the fences and pack them with leaves. There is problem solving, if the leaves keep falling through the fort, they will decide that they need another stick and definitely that is a part of the problem solving and it is a part of building literacy.

Code - Environment/Oral Language/Literacy: They talk to each other, have each of the stories, they create families, mommy and daddy and they have their babies, the block building, they create stories with that. They also within all that work, out differences.

R-1D:

Code - Environment/Philosophy/DAP: The universal design allows us to individually meet the needs of the children in the group. I traveled to Italy in 1999 to study the influences of Reggio Emilia and I was very instrumental in designing this center in this

facility and I wanted to understand a little more about what it really meant to them what the inspiration was and it was pretty clear through my travel there that relationships were the key to the work and represented, reflected the culture there. Everything was very connected, respect was at the core of the work, recognizing differences and honoring them was integral and what I've captured and felt was really speaking very much to my work here with children with varying needs. We created communities and the whole notion is everyone is connected and we all are interdependent and our strength comes from one another. So that is been the heartbeat of our work, building the center and the system in recognizing that we all learn and need one another so the influence of Reggio really helped us to look deeper into the power of children and identifying all of their potentials and we can only do that if we created situations where they felt it was meaningful and authentic for them.

Code - Environment/Literacy: We use our experiences and make them as rich and universal in design as possible as our template for aligning the standards with that rather than looking at the standards first and then do experiences. We do experiences and we align, and that has been very beneficial.

Code - Environment/Philosophy: I definitely see the environment as a primary teacher. They say third teacher, but I really feel it's more like the first. If we don't set the spacing environment to evoke the type of experience and engagement that we want to occur there, it won't happen. The environment specifically speaks to our expectations.

Code - Environment/DAP/Whole Child: What I view as being DAP is an environment where I see full engagement I can't say that enough. When children are engaged they are

interested in it makes sense and the learning is meaningful and they will learn and when it is not a fit, you will find dis-regulated and dis-interested children and therefore they are not at their proximal. All of our teachers basically assess the environment for literacy opportunities.

Code - Environment/Literacy: We have speech language pathologists for children who need more stimulation for the interventions, so that support is built in through the individual education plan, the IEP, or the service plans for Individual Family Service Plans, IFSP, so that's the more structured, but for the children who are developing more typically we just enrich the environment through materials.

Code - Environment/Philosophy/Literacy: Documentation certainly is part of everything we do in helping teachers to be more keen in their observations and through observations they are able to capture the stories. We are really very intentional about what we document as it has relevance and so we have documentation panels outside of all the classrooms that tell a story. We're very intentional about not having Holcomb's or prefabricated ways of telling a story, but as I tell the staff what you see as the story is about your work, so what story do you want to tell.

R-1T:

Code - Environment: For preschool, they come into my studio, and other times I go into their regular classroom environment. In the art studio they come in and I don't have any assistants of my own but the teachers stay with children so there are with a typical preschool classroom that is a combination of Franklin County Board of DD students and teachers and Head Start, so there is a lead teacher and assistant for each of those agencies.

Code - Environment/Philosophy/Literacy/Child-Centered: The environment is key obviously in a Reggio-inspired school. For the environment, the first way that pops in my mind is that the environment provokes in a positive way, provokes and promotes discussions, provokes and promotes interaction with the environment and with others. As I respond to the environment in my studio that I shared with Danielle, one of the other studio teachers, we redesigned it at the beginning of last year based on how we saw the children using it the previous year. We brought in more natural materials and also took away as many as possible plastic toys. We had real attraction to translucent colorful magnetic blocks that were on the light table and we took all those out and the light table became a different kind of thing. It became something where you could trace, where you could draw, or you could lay clear things or maybe pieces of string.

Code - Environment/Literacy: I created documentation board that invited anyone coming there to buy the things that the children made and explained how we got the title from them. They decided to call it Our Store. One of the children had written that out, and so I use that as the title. In their writing and the subtitles, the children wrote come buy stuff, we need money.

Code - Environment/DAP: For this particular age, what I always attempt to do is present materials in a way that is accessible for any child so that regardless of their developmental stage and having an open-ended approach is naturally the way that best fits that. And for a developmentally appropriate learning environment, in terms of working with materials, that would be one aspect of developing that learning environment. What happens when the children come in, is that any given material that

they were working with and things are on the table and we talk about what you think we're going to do? They have their own entry point.

Code - Environment/Oral Language/Whole Child: There is always dialogue going on in the in the studio and what always encouraging children sharing their ideas and opinions and sometimes another thing is you may need to build a relationship in a different way. There was a little girl came in that year last year and was probably the youngest in the classroom and she just sat at the end of that at the table and just sort of looked around, so after I got everybody going on something, I would just come over and comment on what she did and then I would take modeling clay that doesn't dry out and I would roll little balls and give her one and she would play. I don't know how it developed, whether it was already on the table or not but it became a way that we sort of communicated with each other to build trust and then eventually she said a few words. When they're finished and especially quickly, I'll engage them by asking them to tell me about what they did and I will have the lesson planned in stages, so that when a child is finished, I will say, I see that you drew with a pencil and a piece of paper, I have some watercolors, would you like to add water or some color to it and you know that seems really special because it re-engages them.

R-2D:

Code - Environment: Are you familiar with NAEYC? We are accredited which is a national honor. That's why the state of Ohio came to us. Cuyahoga County will give you some money…. if you are a Universal Prekindergarten program, which we are. We're very big on relationships, we have a great parent group and parents are allowed to come

and work in the classroom. For example, If something happens in the classroom we call a class meeting, and say, this happened, what should we do? Then the children solve it. I just got more and more involved in the Reggio and thought little children should not be sitting and doing pencil paper. That's ridiculous. It took a while (to catch on) because people thought, "This is not a typical American school" where the teacher knows everything. We do a lot of parent education.

Code - Environment/Oral Language/Literacy: We spend hours setting up the environment. The environment is literally the teacher. We set up the environment to encourage the type of response we would want from the children. Hence, you would have a writing center, or you would see clipboards around the room or when we're outside we say, What do you notice, draw it here. We do scavenger hunts with pencils and paper. All across the room the words that the children say are typed out. And we'll say, Look yesterday this is what you said. What do you think today? Do you still think that's true, or did you change your mind since we went outside?

Code - Environment/Philosophy/Literacy: A lot of times if they build that building we have them draw a picture or we take a picture of it. We tell them, in case someone else gets stuck you can help them. So, we take tons of pictures, tons of pictures. You see the teachers' carrying cameras.

Code - Environment/Literacy: A developmentally appropriate learning environment is one that upon children entering it would be calm, peaceful, reflect the community that the classroom is or becoming because it's theirs. There are materials are available to them and they are quality, true materials. The paints are quality paints, true quality materials

that are available to them. Also, they have choices of many things that are connected to their lives, what's appropriate for them. I walk into some classrooms and there's so much stuff plastered all over the walls that you feel like you're in a kaleidoscope. And it's what the teacher thinks they should be learning and what the teacher decides that they are doing today.

Code - Environment/Oral Language/Literacy: We have little living rooms in the classrooms, and if I ask you where do you think the most time is spent, it would be that most of the time is spent in that living room area. The conversation, the things they talk about.

Code - Environment/Philosophy: We used to have an art studio, but then when we had such a waiting list the church offered to give us another classroom if we gave the art studio up. We thought long and hard about it so now we have more space for more children. He goes around to different classrooms and they work with materials and I don't know how to make everything aesthetically pleasing and he takes us one step further. Part of his job is to come around and make sure everything is aesthetically pleasing to the eye and the children work with him because he knows art, I don't know art.

Code - Environment in Reggio Emilia, Italy: The classrooms are beautiful and the materials are beautiful and the children just come in and the teachers talk nicely, they can go outside whenever they want to go outside, and we were like, where are they going? When you walk into the classroom the teachers are very calm, very respectful and they tell you the children have a story to tell us and we are listening to the children. It is just

calm and peaceful and there is a kitchen and when school starts, some children go into the kitchen and come out with a plate of fruit and they have their morning meeting while each child gets a piece of fruit. The children take turns going into the kitchen and they were making homemade lasagna and a salad. They use the whole school. In the hallways are the tables and chairs. The children just go to the bathroom, the bathrooms are beautiful, the children can play in the bathroom. There are big pieces of slate in the bathrooms and the children just sit there and write or draw on them. They are big about inside and outside, so there are big windows and trees. All of the children sit down and eat, then they get down and you see them go someplace. Have you been to a child care center in America – they look like orphanages, and there they have all of these little beds and the children just go and lie down. They are four, they are only four. And they are saying in Italy that they are four, they are only four. And they are very big on this is their first, a lot of these things are their first. The first time they can do something, the first time in their life, it's so big, it's the first time. We need to respect that. They are so big on respecting everything.

R-2T

Code - Environment/Literacy: In America we have this image that we need to label everything in the room, to see a letter wall, to see a word wall, and my environment is very literacy rich but you don't see any of those things. The environment is a teacher, we think of it as that intentional piece that if you have it in the room, it's for a reason, so everything in here is intentional and purposeful for an overlying goal or objective. Because of the approach, we have everything integrated. We do have a center dedicated

to writing but you also see literacy everywhere, books everywhere but nothing is labeled. We don't label everything in your house, so why would we label everything here? We do name the Name Books but that's for a literacy purpose.

Code - Environment/Literacy: People that come to visit ask, Well how do you teach letters and numbers? It's just more emergent. When it happens, it happens. The other day we were at the art table and I said, Which one is yours? I don't know which one is yours. I said, Does it have your name on it and they said, no they didn't know how. I said, I have something here, see if you can find your picture and it has your name and these are the letters in your name. That's how they learn to write their name. Then they start writing letters to each other, they want to know how to write someone else's name, everything is purposeful and authentic. It comes up when they are ready and then it happens organically. It's not forced and they want to do it.

Code - Environment/Oral Language: We start every day with a meeting and that's the most important part of the day because you find out what they did, what's new, they're bringing stuff in, someone lost a tooth, or someone found a chrysalis outside, so my lesson plans go out the window. It's following through, it's listening, it's hearing their ideas and then putting them into action. We don't say, Oh that's adorable, but today we're talking about teeth, because that's what you hear.

Code - Environment/Philosophy: We have a lot of new students who are away from mom and dad for the first time. We believe those social skills are foundational because everything happens through relationships. We're still developing teacher child relationship, but they're still developing the peer to peer relationships. Miss M. and I

have modeled it over and over just talking so they hear it and they see it. It's one thing if teachers are talking like teachers or if they're modeling it.

Code - Environment/Literacy: We really get to know them first. We already know them pretty well. We don't have set small groups because they change based on what you are doing. You know which children might be really good at journal writing. Who might read a story then want to write about it. Or, they might want to write down or draw about something that happened to them. That might be four of them. And another group may not be ready for that. So we have lots of small groups constantly throughout the year.

Code - Environment/Literacy: In the outdoor classroom there is a lot of vocabulary, a lot of talking, a lot of listening. Right by the door we have a big container of clipboards, and paper, and we have scavenger hunts and there are trays and plain paper. They usually want to investigate, search for things, draw it, write it down. Everything we do inside, they can do outside. They have plant books, sand, water books that go out. And it's as literacy rich as the indoor classrooms.

Code - Environment/Literacy/DAP: We know that the children are never at the same level at any time. If you have a mixed age group, it should be the same as if you have a group of three-year olds. They are all in different places. And we bring out more things depending on the need or interest. They don't know what they can do with something at first, but then they learn.