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Kindergarten Connection: An Early Literacy Intervention Through Home/School/Community Connections

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KINDERGARTEN CONNECTION: AN EARLY LITERACY INTERVENTION
THROUGH HOME/SCHOOL/COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

Central Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Education

Reading Specialist

by

Laurie Card-Roley

August 2009

ABSTRACT

KINDERGARTEN CONNECTION: AN EARLY LITERACY INTERVENTION THROUGH HOME/SCHOOL/COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

by

Laurie Card-Roley

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Students most at-risk for academic failure are the populations of students classified as English Language Learners; migrant students; special education students; children of poverty; homeless students; students in foster care; children of abuse or neglect; and children with social, emotional, or behavioral concerns. The number of students falling within the at-risk population of students has continued to increase over the years. A program and curriculum called Kindergarten Connection attempts to address these barriers to learning by identifying family, societal and academic concerns prior to kindergarten and connecting families to the school and community resources that will provide the needed support. The program seeks to empower parents to become involved in their child's education through knowledge of early literacy development and expectations of kindergarten teachers and state standards. Using a mixed method research design, efficacy of the program and curriculum were examined during the pilot phases of the Kindergarten Connection program to determine if this type of pre-kindergarten early intervention program has merit for future implementation. Recommendations for further studies are included.

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CHAPTER I
THE PROBLEM
Background

According to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as reauthorized under No Child Left Behind in 2001 (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2002), all students need to make adequate yearly progress toward grade-level academic standards, no matter their disabilities, language levels, family income, or living situation.

Acknowledging that this piece of legislation is far from perfect, but that the heart of what it is attempting to do, is right, Terry Bergeson stated at the 2005 Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (WOSPI), Promising Practices Conference in Spokane, Washington, that “For the first time in a long time school administrators are taking a good hard look at the programs that serve students at risk for academic failure.” It is the responsibility of every staff member to make sure there are no students being neglected or falling through the cracks. Students most at risk are the populations classified as English Language Learners; migrant students; special education students; children of poverty; homeless students; students in foster care; children of abuse or neglect; and children with social, emotional, or behavioral concerns.

Students falling within the at-risk population have continued to increase over the years. Sunnyslope Elementary School, in the 2004-2005 school-year had a total student population of 280 with a teaching staff of 22. Sunnyslope’s bilingual population was 4.5% of the total population with two languages represented: Spanish and Russian, Spanish is the language spoken by the greatest number of students. Sunnyslope had only

two staff members who spoke Spanish and none who spoke Russian. Sunnyslope's migrant population was less than 1% and the special education population was 13.1%, which included those students receiving only speech and language services. Also, 21.3% of the population qualified for free and reduced-price meals, which is commonly used as a measure of poverty, as qualification for the lunch program is based on income guidelines (WOSPI, 2005; Wenatchee School District [WSD], 2005). An undisclosed percentage of the student population receives services through the school counselor or other community based agencies. These students are experiencing some sort of home or family dysfunction; have social, emotional, or behavioral concerns; qualify under a section 504 plan; are homeless; or are in foster care. Now, in the 2006-2007 school year, Sunnyslope has a total student population of 307, with 6.4% qualifying for the bilingual program, 5.4% for the migrant program, and 22.7% qualifying for free or reduced-price meals. The languages represented included Spanish, Russian, Punjabi, and Maithali. Special education students dropped to 9.9%, but included a dramatic increase in the number of students with more severe academic and behavioral challenges and students requiring more collaboration and involvement between school and community agencies. There has also been an increase in the number students with social, emotional, or behavioral concerns outside of those qualifying for special education services (WOSPI, 2008; WSD, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

According to Adelman and Taylor, “It is easy to say that schools must ensure that all students succeed. If all students came ready and able to profit from ‘high standards’ curricula, then there would be little problem meeting the goal” (2002, p. 261). The authors of the article, *Building Comprehensive, Multifaceted, and Integrated Approaches to Address Barriers to Student Learning* (Adelman & Taylor, 2002), and many of their other articles, address the premise that there is an essential component missing from all of our attempts to push students toward higher standards: an enabling component. Students come to school with problems associated with poverty, unstable family circumstances, frequent movement, lack of English language skills, violence, substance abuse, inadequate health care, and environments that provide little or no cognitive stimulation. These difficulties create frustrations that can have debilitating effects on a student’s learning. The authors state that, “addressing barriers to learning must be approached from a societal perspective, and will require fundamental systemic reforms,” (Adelman & Taylor, 2002, p. 262).

In spite of the fact that there are programs that address some of the populations at risk for school failure, these programs are underfunded, overburdened, inequitable, and disjointed. Some students receive multiple services, while others receive few or none. There needs to be a coordinator at every school who works as a liaison between school and community to manage the cases of all students who are identified by classroom teachers as needing additional help, whether academic, behavioral, social, economic, or otherwise (Adelman & Taylor, 2002). Currently this responsibility falls to the school

counselor at most schools. However, assistance for these students and their families includes neither the federally funded services, such as special education, the migrant program, the bilingual program, nor interventions funded by individual school buildings, such as a reading specialist, paraprofessional support, or classroom based interventions. Many schools are now adopting a Response to Intervention (RTI) model for providing academic interventions for students who are not meeting state and federal academic standards. These models, however, usually do not coordinate their efforts with school and community services for students whose learning is impacted by emotional disturbances, behavioral challenges, social deficits, poverty, homelessness, violence, neglect, or other societal-based circumstances. RTI is a three- or four-tiered pyramid of interventions for students not making academic progress. The pyramid begins with a foundational base of research-based instructional practices and curricula delivered with fidelity for all students. The next tier of the pyramid addresses the 10-20% of students needing additional interventions within their core classroom instruction. The next tier of the pyramid focuses on the 5-10% of students who need additional strategic intervention. At the next tier are the 1-5% of all students who need intensive interventions. At each tier, the number of students needing such interventions decreases, while the intensity of instruction and the amount of progress monitoring increases, also students are served in smaller groups or individually (National Center for Learning Disabilities [NCLD], 2006; WOSPI, 2006). Will increased intensity of instruction help a child whose home is a car under the bridge or a child who does not know if his mother will be sober enough to not hit him? According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, a child's basic needs for survival

must be met before that child can give any thought to higher order thinking (Maslow 1943; Woolfolk, 2001). The climate for change is not ready for a step that would create an intervention specialist for each school. In conversations with Wenatchee School District's Special Programs director, the cost of staffing each school with an intervention specialist was inhibitive. However, it is this researcher's belief that the need for schools to address the basic needs of students is essential and identifying these needs early in a child's educational experience will increase the likelihood of academic success.

In addition to the aforementioned barriers to learning, a new phenomenon has developed over recent years. There is a widening disparity between children who have had access to an enriched home environment, an academic day care or a preschool and those who have had few or no meaningful social or academic experiences prior to entering school. Many students entering kindergarten are at a disadvantage from the very first day of school, because they have had little or no social or educational experiences before entering public school (Magnuson, Meyers, Ruhm, & Waldfogel, 2004). Some of these students have never held a crayon or pair of scissors; they know nothing of letters or numbers. Teachers must balance between trying to remediate these students' knowledge and skills, and trying to create meaningful experiences for students who have had a relatively large degree of educational experiences before entering kindergarten. The latter mentioned students often know their colors, shapes, numbers, letter names, letter sounds. Some have had opportunities to write, cut, color, and may already be reading. A survey was conducted by this researcher to determine what skills kindergarten teachers would like to see in the in-coming kindergarteners. The survey was given to

Sunnyslope's three kindergarten teachers. One teacher responded with the additional comment, "If students came to school with some basic skills, it would be so nice." The survey was used in part to craft a curriculum that would meet the needs of kindergarten teachers.

It is this researcher's belief that most parents want to know what they can do to help their children be successful in school, but just do not know what to do. Parents need to be invited to and included in the educational team in a way that is comprehensible and doable for them. If schools coordinate with parents and community groups to address barriers to student learning at an early point in the child's educational experience, school can be a much more positive place and the stage can be set for learning to take place.

This project attempts to address the barriers to learning with a "welcome to kindergarten" summer program called Kindergarten Connection. The program attempted to provide a smoother transition for prospective kindergarten students and their families and increase the number of students achieving literacy standards by the end of kindergarten by identifying family, societal and academic concerns, and connecting families to the school and community resources that would provide the needed support. The program provides parents with ways they can help their child get ready for kindergarten; provides a platform for answering parent questions; provides early identification and intervention for students with needs; connects families to community services; and provides opportunities for teachers, parents, and children to come together to learn more about school readiness and the supports their community has to offer. Kindergarten Connection was created by this researcher, Laurie Card-Roley, an

intervention specialist for Sunnyslope Elementary School, because no existing programs of this type were available.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the project was to address the barriers to student learning, integrate the qualities of effective schools for family involvement, and target early literacy skills. In order to determine the effectiveness of such a program, data concerned with academic progress were collected and analyzed. In order to determine how well the program was received and perceived as beneficial, a parent survey was administered and analyzed. The “welcome to kindergarten” program was designed for Wenatchee School District’s prospective kindergarten students and provided information, services, and connections between school, community, and home. The goals of the “welcome to kindergarten” program, Kindergarten Connection, were three-fold:

- All prospective kindergarten students will come to their first day of school more academically and socially prepared to benefit from high quality instruction and more able to tolerate a full day of academic and social activity. (A previous initiative in the state of Washington was implemented in 2004, which increased kindergarten programs from half day to full day as a way to bridge the achievement gap (WOSPI, 2005). This has been found to be successful, but brings its own problems, particularly for immature 5 year-olds or those who have had limited socialization experiences.)

- 2) Students and their families who need extra support services will be identified and served, or assisted in finding community resources that will help reduce the barriers to learning for their children.
- 3) Parents will gain valuable information toward building their child's confidence in reading, writing, mathematics, independence, and school behavior, and a better understanding of the structure of a school day, thereby creating a positive connection between school and home.

In addition, by offering a positive benefit to preregistering kindergarteners, it is possible that the number of kindergarten students who “show up on the doorstep” on the first day of school without preregistering will be reduced and schools will be able to better plan for the number of kindergarten classrooms and teachers.

Significance of the Project

The significance of the project is three-fold. First, the early identification and intervention for students at risk of academic failure, particularly in literacy is essential. The benefits of early literacy intervention are well documented (Adelman & Taylor, 2002; American Academy for the Advancement of Science, 1978; Barnett, Bell, & Carey, 1999; Clay, 1993). This project attempted to address the needs of individual students before they come to school, in order to increase the number of students reaching grade level standards in literacy by the end of kindergarten. Families needing additional support services for learning English, parenting, alleviating factors of poverty, or dealing with family crises were identified and connected with the support and community services they need. Students needing additional academic support will be identified and provided

with materials, instruction, and more intensive interventions as needed. If students come into kindergarten with some of the basic skills they need to be successful in the classroom environment, the district will save money with regard to paraprofessional support and will increase the number of students reaching state and federal standards for literacy by the end of kindergarten.

The second goal of the program was to give families the tools they need to help their children be successful in school and to create positive connections between home and school. The significance of involving parents in the functions and decision-making of the school is a higher degree of parental buy-in and support for school practices and policies. Parent involvement is also one of the aspects of high quality schools as identified through the Baldrige National Quality Program (2009), Core Beliefs for Effective Schools (WSD, 2009), The Nine Characteristics of High-Performing Schools (WOSPI, 2007), the International Reading Association (1999, 2002), the National Reading Panel (2000), and several studies by the Harvard Family Research Project (Kreider, 2002). Through the program, families were instructed in how to provide early literacy, self-help, and independence skills to their children. Families learned the structure of school and the expectations for school behavior and student learning targets. Teachers expect parents to read with their children, teach them social and self-help skills, and do homework with them. Acknowledging that parents are concerned about their children, are capable of understanding how children learn, and have already been teaching their children, empowers parents to do the things with their children that teachers expect them to do. If families connected with the school and other families in a

relaxed, friendly format, this opens the door to positive home-to-school relationships, understandings, support, and follow-through.

Third, providing a smoother transition into full-day public kindergarten for all students would ensure that more students are adequately prepared to benefit from high quality instruction. Students need to feel comfortable, confident, and safe in order to benefit from instruction. The affect of the classroom environment is extremely important, particularly for students who are limited in their English language skills (Fillmore & Snow, 2000). Classrooms in which students feel comfortable enough to take risks are classrooms in which students grow dramatically (Stiggins, 2001; Woolfolk, 2001). All the Wenatchee School District schools have full-day kindergarten classes. This can be a difficult adjustment for young children; especially those dealing with limited English language skills, immaturity, limited exposure to structured activities or social situations, and those unaccustomed to adult expectations or instructions. This project offered children approaching their first experience with public school an opportunity to experience school in a safe and friendly format. Students learned school routines, expectations, social interactions, and following adult directions with their parent nearby. Students began with their parents by their sides doing fun, game-type activities, then moved toward independence and complexity in listening to and following directions, structured activities, and interactions with peers. Children arrived at the first day of school with excitement, confidence, and a basic understanding of what to expect and what is expected of them while they are at school. Students who feel comfortable and confident will benefit from high quality instruction, which will increase the percentage of

students meeting literacy and academic standards (Bricker, Pretti-Frontczak, & McComas, 1998).

In addition, Wenatchee schools have had a substantial number of kindergarten students who arrive for kindergarten on the first day of school without preregistering. This makes it difficult for the district to accurately predict numbers, hire teachers, and create classes and class space. This project sought out and actively recruited prospective kindergarten students. With a greater number of kindergarten students pre-registered, schools can be more adequately prepared for the correct number of incoming kindergartners on the first day of school.

In conclusion, this program was developed to coincide with the goals of high quality schools, in which consideration is given to all the stakeholders in the school system, for the purpose of increasing student success. It would be expected that kindergarten teachers would experience less stress and burnout trying to get all their students to grade level standards if they feel their students and families are being adequately supported. Further, students would feel less pressure and frustration, and more students would achieve grade level standards by being ready to benefit from high quality instruction. Parents/guardians would have a better understanding of the expectations and function of school, and it is hoped would have better communication and relationships with school personnel. This project provided a program that helped students begin their public school years with basic skills, confidence, excitement, and readiness to benefit from instruction.

Limitations of the Project

Limitations to this project include, but are not limited to:

- the use of Sunnyslope Elementary as a pilot school;
- the programs and services that are available through Wenatchee School District and the Wenatchee valley community;
- the use of screening and teaching personnel who are qualified to make decisions and have discussions with families concerning sensitive topics; and

Complications to the implementation of the project include, but are not limited to:

- obtaining volunteers who are able to communicate accurately in the native language of families.
- creating a program that is cross-cultural and developmentally appropriate but still engages and informs family members;
- getting families to pre-register for kindergarten and pre-assess their children prior to kindergarten; and
- protecting the identity of illegal families.

The project was limited to the incoming kindergarten students of Sunnyslope Elementary School during the school years of 2007-2008 and 2008-2009, for the piloting of this project, with the hope of district-wide acceptance in subsequent years. Sunnyslope Elementary school is not typical of the other elementary schools in the Wenatchee School District in that it has fewer minority students, fewer students receiving free or reduced-price meals, and generally more parental participation and support. However, this is the

school to which this researcher has access for conducting the pre-kindergarten program, and access to student information because she is the intervention specialist at that site.

There appear to be very few programs that address kindergarten readiness, so searching out the programs that were already in place within the school district, the region, and the state was difficult. Also, some programs have only just begun or have not collected data.

Research into the community resources and how individuals qualify for their programs was done in order to make appropriate recommendations to families that needed community support. This is a limitation to the program, in that those involved in administering the screening protocols and conducting the home visits would, also, need to be knowledgeable of their own community's available resources. Some of the resources used in this study were found on the World Wide Web at <http://www.4people.org>. Recommendations have to be made with knowledge and tact in order to protect the privacy and emotional status of the students and their families.

Applying for a grant was considered to help purchase materials and pay for personnel time and expenses of the program. However, most grants are made through larger institutions rather than for private research. The Special Programs Director was contacted for the possibility of a grant application through Wenatchee School District, however, a concern with equity toward other schools and the availability of supervisory staff over the summer led to a funding denial. Permission was given to proceed with the program, but without school district funding. Therefore, funding was sought at the local school level. Sunnyslope Elementary School Parent Teacher Association contributed

funds for T-shirts, books, and some supplies. Due largely to success of the program, the second year funding from Sunnyslope Elementary School also included an hourly wage for the teacher/researcher. Local businesses and organizations were solicited for contributions, both in the way of discounts and products for our prospective students and their families. The limitations in this area included the time it took to communicate with business owners.

Other limiting factors include locating families who had not registered. Many families move during the summer. Due to the agricultural nature of the Wenatchee area, many families are migrant farm workers. Poverty issues can also play a role in families moving frequently. One of the biggest obstacles in Wenatchee relates to our migrant and Spanish-speaking families, who need to protect their family members from deportation, if they do not have legal citizenship or immigrant status. To help alleviate this limiting factor volunteers who were able to converse with families in their native language were recruited and trained.

A concern that was considered before implementation of the program was the fact that it is difficult to determine if a child demonstration of an initial delay in development will predict that the same child will have delays in learning to read. Most assessments used for preschool children are functional in nature and do not align with the educational rigors of kindergarten (Barnett et al., 1999). A tool for measuring academic skills that would align with kindergarten benchmarks and provide information that could be used to identify at-risk categories such as societal concerns, academic levels, English speaking skills, Special Education needs, and behavior issues was developed by the researcher to

serve as a baseline for academic growth because no other measurement tool was found to address these barriers to learning. However, care must be taken when speaking with families about sensitive issues in regard to confidentiality, tact, and emotional security, and knowledge.

The instruction for the summer program needed to be developmentally appropriate, keeping the attention of young 5 year-olds, while also informative to parents. It can be difficult to maximize the child's exposure to positive and enriched learning experiences, while reducing the possibility of children learning socially inappropriate behaviors from their peers, as some children might not have had any experiences in social situations and some children have parents with limited parenting skills. It is recommended that a certified teacher conduct the program for maximum benefit, preferably a kindergarten teacher who knows well the standards and classroom techniques used for a particular school or classroom or an intervention/reading specialist who knows the benchmarks for childhood and early literacy development.

Purpose of Project Research

Due to the fact that little research has been done on a project such as Kindergarten Connection, data collected for the purpose of answering the question "Will an early intervention, such as a pre-kindergarten summer program, which helps build school, home, and community relationships and provides early identification of students at-risk help kindergarten students meet or exceed academic benchmarks in reading?"

Significance of Project Research

If the data suggest a statistical significance in the reading growth of at-risk children who have received the pre-kindergarten summer early intervention when compared to the reading growth of children who have not had the same intervention, then students with barriers to learning such as societal concerns, low academic levels, English language levels, Special Education needs, and behavioral issues should have access to such interventions.

Limitations of Project Research

Limitations to the research included gaining consent from parents for their kindergarten children to be participants in the study, particularly from the parents of students who were experiencing barriers to learning. Voluntary participation was also a limiting factor for attendance in the summer program sessions. Students identified as at-risk were often students and their parents who attended fewer sessions of the summer program, which theoretically would have limited the effect of the program on reading outcomes.

Researcher bias could be considered a possible limitation since it is the researcher's curriculum and program that are being studied for positive effects on student learning. In consideration of that possibility, the initial or baseline data was collected and reviewed collaboratively between the researcher and the local school's reading specialist. All additional reading benchmark assessments were done by the students' classroom

teachers. The researcher took care to present all the data of qualified participants, whether they supported the researcher's hypothesis or not.

An appropriate pre-kindergarten assessment was difficult to find, so the researcher created an assessment tool that would collect the desired baseline data and provide information concerning each child's academic skills. This academic information was collected for the purpose of remediation of skills, if deficits emerged. The limitation of using the researcher created assessment tool was that the validity and reliability of the measure had not been established.

A limitation when conducting a study over time is the possibility of change. The first year of this study, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) was used to identify at-risk populations and track their progress. The next year, DIBELS assessments were no longer being used. This obstacle was overcome by going back to the classroom-based measures that have been consistently used for all three years of study. The data was less specific, not allowing for the tracking of minor change patterns in growth between data points, but giving overall consistency to the data.

Project and Research Overview

In chapter I, the background, the problem, and the purpose of the project and research were discussed. The program, Kindergarten Connection, that has arisen as a possible solution to the problem, was designed to increase the number of students entering kindergarten with basic literacy readiness skills, to identify and intervene for children who need additional support, and to increase parent involvement in the lives of their children concerning their education, thereby increasing the number of students

meeting literacy standards by the end of kindergarten. Limitations of both the design and implementation of the project and the design and implementation of the research are discussed.

Very little research information regarding prekindergarten entry, summer programs exists. Therefore, the review of literature in chapter II includes previous studies and research relating to foundational literacy skills, barriers to learning, federal recommendations, and the effectiveness of early intervention programs. This research is the background from which the curriculum and scope and sequence of the project, Kindergarten Connection were created. Also included in the review of literature is information about two other preparing-for-kindergarten programs which have recently emerged, but for which there have not been any efficacy studies as of yet.

Discussed in chapter III are the research design and method, an explanation of the selection and limitation of participants in the research, and the selection and design of assessment tools and data analysis tools used in the study. Also included are a detailed description of the procedure and sequence used for implementation of the project, the pre-kindergarten summer program, and data collection.

In chapter IV, the results of the project research are described. Data tables and graphic figures are included to illustrate frequencies and percentages of the collected data. Interesting data details are noted and discussed. A discussion, of the tools used for data analysis and the procedures that were followed to achieve a reliable statistical analysis of the data, is also included.

Chapter V summarizes the results of the project and research. In chapter V, the goals of the project and research are revisited with a reflection on the overall significance of the study, with an interest in what impact the limitations had on the project. The problems that arose during implementation and suggestions for changes to the program are discussed. Recommendations are provided for Kindergarten Connection's continued implementation so a wider population base can be studied with the addition of better data collection tools and monitoring, in order to gain a better picture of the significance of the findings. Further studies and evaluations using the data collected from this study in other areas of interest are also recommended.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The Kindergarten Connection program was created to fill a perceived gap in intervention options. This type of program was difficult to find in literature and research, therefore, in this chapter, the literature that is relevant to early literacy skill development and some of the barriers students experience in the acquisition of those skills was reviewed. Literature supporting family and community collaboration and communication was reviewed. Also, the identification of at risk students and the intervention methods that are currently available prior to kindergarten and those available in kindergarten through second grade were reviewed. Finally, two programs that offer a kindergarten readiness emphasis were found and reviewed, even though neither had clear research that supports them, because they were the most similar to the Kindergarten Connection program.

High-performing schools are identified by high standards, effective leadership, collaboration and parent and community involvement to name four of the “Nine Characteristics of High-Performing Schools,” as identified by the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction in Olympia (WOSPI, 2007). Schools are faced with numerous challenges in educating children in America today, while the current political climate continues to raise the standards for children and teachers with stronger accountability for results. Students come to school with problems associated with unstable family relationships, poverty, neglect, frequent change of residence,

inadequate health care, homelessness, violence in the home or the effects of trauma, substance abuse in the home or the effects of substance abuse prenatally, or environments that provide little or no cognitive stimulation. Students may have limited proficiency in English, or no knowledge of the English language or of the American school culture. These difficulties create frustrations that can have debilitating effects on a student's learning. According to Adelman and Taylor (2002), "It is easy to say that schools must ensure that all students succeed. If all students came ready and able to profit from 'high standards' curricula, then there would be little problem meeting the goal" (p. 261). Daniel, Clark, and Ouellette (1999) state that out of every three kindergarteners only one comes to school unprepared to learn,"

In an effort to address these issues from a Federal standpoint, President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) on January 8, 2002, which reauthorized and amended the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2004).

The major focus of NCLB 2001 (also known as ESEA) is to provide all children with a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education. The U.S. Department of Education (2004) emphasized four pillars within the bill:

- accountability: Ensures that the students who are disadvantaged achieve academic proficiency;
- flexibility: Allows school districts flexibility in how they use federal education funds to improve student achievement;

- research-based education: Emphasizes educational programs and practices that have been proven effective through scientific research; and
- parent options: Increases the choices available to the parents of students attending Title I schools.

NCLB emphasizes the implementation of educational programs and practices that have been demonstrated to be effective. In essence, it is a national extension of the standards-based education reform efforts undertaken in Washington state since 1993 (USDOE, 2005).

President Bush's strategic plan (USDOE, 2002) for implementing this legislation included six goals:

- create a Culture of Achievement;
- improve Student Achievement;
- develop Safe Schools and Strong Character;
- transform Education into an Evidence-Based Field;
- enhance the Quality of and Access to Postsecondary and Adult Education; and
- establish Management Excellence.

Embedded in the plan is a focus on reading as outlined by the Early Reading First and Reading First Fact Sheet produced by the federal government and located at the NCLB website (www.nclb.gov). Along with an emphasis on reading, parent and community involvement is identified as key to school success in the No Child Left Behind Parent Fact Sheet (USDOE, 2005), The Nine Characteristics of High-Performing Schools (Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction [WOSPI],

2007), and the School Self-Assessment Guide to Performance Excellence (ASQ Koalaty Kid, 2003) and Education Criteria for Performance Excellence (Baldrige National Quality Program, 2009)

Acknowledging that legally, if not ethically, all schools have the responsibility of providing a quality education to all students, whatever their circumstances, and that literacy is foundational to all other areas of learning, it was this researcher's intent to review the literature on family involvement, foundational early literacy skills, and the barriers to learning that some students experience. Also, the current research on early literacy interventions for preschool aged children and for school-age children was reviewed. This researcher had difficulty locating programs and research specific to a summer pre-kindergarten intervention program. Therefore, the Kindergarten Connection program were created to fill a perceived gap in intervention options and data were collected and analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the program and curriculum.

Family and Community Involvement

High-performing schools are schools that communicate with and involve families and communities. The Harvard Research Center has published several papers on the promising practices of parent and community involvement such as *Family-School-Community Partnerships: A Compilation of Professional Standards of Practice* (Casper, 2001) and *Getting Parents "Ready" for Kindergarten: The Role of Early Childhood Education* (Kreider, 2002). There are few documented studies that quantify the effectiveness of parent and community involvement, however, this is held to be good practice by prominent organizations and researchers (Fine & Carlson, 1992; Little, 1998).

We know from the business world that stakeholder satisfaction is closely tied to communication and consideration for the wants and needs of the stakeholders. *Education Criteria for Performance Excellence* (Baldrige National Quality Program, 2009) draws on proven management techniques from the business realm and relates them in ways that are reasonably applicable to schools.

One study that substantiated the importance of family involvement with regard to children's development of literacy skills is a study by Senechal, LeFever, Thomas, and Daley (1998). The effects of formal and informal home literacy experiences were examined, with some parents reporting to have begun reading to their child at nine months of age. A more recent study by Senechal and LeFevre (2002) expanded on their previous research by conducting a longitudinal study to examine how early home-literacy experiences contributed to the development of fluent readers. In the discussion of the research, the researchers state that early parental "storybook reading was associated with the development of receptive language and more formal interactions with print, such as teaching about reading were associated with the development of emergent literacy," (p.455). Also, their data showed "clear links from home experiences through early literacy skills, to fluent reading" (p 455).

Foundational Literacy Skills

The importance of developing pre-literacy skills is well documented, as is the need for interventions as early as possible for children not making progress in foundational literacy skills (Clay, 1993; National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities. (2007); National Reading Panel (2000); Snow, Burns, & Griffin, (1998);

Vellutini, Scanlon, Small, & Fanuele, (2006). Marie Clay (1993) suggested that teachers closely observe reading behaviors of their students, and begin interventions no later than one year after formal education has begun. The developmental stages and elements of early literacy are also well defined (Kagan, Britto, Kauerz, & Tarant, (2005); Kucer, 2005; Templeton, 1997; Woolfolk, 2001).

Two basic pre-literacy skills are phonemic awareness and concepts of print. The National Reading Panel (2002) identified the following tasks for assessing phonemic awareness as:

- phoneme isolation (recognizing individual sounds in words) (/k/a/t/);
- phoneme identity (recognizing common sounds in different words) (d-ad, p-ad);
- phoneme categorization (recognizing the word with the different sound in a sequence of words) (pour, more, some, soar);
- phoneme blending (listening to a sequence of separately spoken sounds and combining them to form a recognizable word) (/b/ /a/ /t/ bat);
- phoneme segmentation (breaking a word into its sounds by counting the sounds in each word) (dogs= /d/ /o/ /g/ /s/ =4); and
- phoneme deletion (recognizing what word remains when a specified phoneme is removed (cat - /c/= at).

Marie Clay (1992) identifies the following as the concepts about print that students need to be taught.

The student:

- can identify the front of a book;

- understands that print contains a message;
- knows where to begin reading, which way to go, makes return sweep to left and is capable of matching words;
- understands the concept of first and last, big and little, can locate directionality or spatial relations and positions; and
- understands the role of punctuation.

According to the research by Nichols, Rupley, Rickelman, and Algozzine (2004), *Examining Phonemic Awareness and Concepts of Print Patterns of Kindergarten Students*, children from low socioeconomic backgrounds and Latino children were at a greater risk of not developing phonemic awareness and concepts of print skills in kindergarten. A diagnostic approach to instruction in phonemic awareness and concepts about print, along with maturation, enhanced the development of those early literacy skills. The authors stated that these young students needed to be taught how to consciously attend to phonemes and concepts of print.

There is a growing concern, mainly from proponents of home-schooling, that the federal government is pushing too hard, creating undue stress for teachers and young children. Some of these individuals stated that children will learn faster and with less frustration when they are developmentally ready to receive reading instruction. This researcher, however, found no longitudinal studies that follow students who began their school careers at a later age.

However, according to James Hymes (1973) early childhood programs can make or break a child. "Young children are adventurers: they seek independence; they are

drawn by the new and the different; they want to grow and they want to learn.

Simultaneously, young children are very soft. They are 'feeling-little' people - dependent, easily hurt, easily frightened, vulnerable. Their group must be a personalized, humanized, warm, glowing and happy place" (p.74). He goes on to address how we push children, saying "they are not 'pre-' five year olds, or 'pre-' six year olds....The group that is confused about the age it serves runs the risk of robbing children of their childhood" (p. 74).

Anne Mitchell (2001) sees universal access to preschool supported by state funding as a developing trend. Her study looks at the history of prekindergarten programs beginning before 1960. She examines how the number of states, the number of children served, the eligible ages of children and the programming have changed over the years. Originally, state funded programs were reserved for at-risk populations, such as children whose family have a low level of income, but now a wider target population is accepted into state funded programs. The author views this trend as positive and would like to see state funded preschool for all three and four year olds. Others might view this as giving the state too much control over raising our children and/or pushing children into a formalized education at too early an age.

Kindergarten teachers who have been concerned about a child's readiness for reading instruction often consider retention as a "gift of time" for immature youngsters. Schools might use a tool for determining retention like the Light's Retention Scale (Light, 2006), which holds as some of its criteria such developmental factors as a child's size and whether he/she prefers to play with children younger than him or herself. Other

times schools may recommend that parents wait an extra year to enroll their child in kindergarten and instead enroll them in a preschool that will provide them with learning and socializing opportunities.

Many schools have moved to a full day kindergarten program. This can be a huge transition for those youngsters who may still need an afternoon nap, are not yet developmentally ready to play interactively with other children, have had limited experiences with social situations outside the home, or are unfamiliar with the English language or culture. If this trend is to continue there needs to be a way to bridge the gap between children who have had enriched learning and socializing experiences prior to kindergarten and those who have not had those experiences.

Barriers to Learning: Language

One of the most understandable barriers to learning is language. If a child lacks skills in the academic language of school, even if he or she is very intelligent, support is needed to gain access to what is being taught. While it is well documented that students learn best in their native language and that skills transfer from one language to another, students can be instructed in English within the regular classroom with language objectives and supports (Cummings, 1981; Genesee, 1994; 1999, Krashen, 1987). In fact, according to Fillmore and Snow (2000), "They (children acquiring English) must interact directly and frequently with people who know the language well enough to reveal how it works and how it can be used" (p. 24). Echevarria, Vogt, and Short (2004) developed the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) to help teachers become aware of their

use of vocabulary, pacing, tone, idioms, and amount of language used in order to create a learning atmosphere that English language learners can learn English as well as content.

According to a study by Meier (2003), there are linguistic and cultural factors that come into play when children from a different language and/or culture begin to read and write. The Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (2000) has created a document called the *English Language Development Standards*, which outlines for teachers what a child's reading and writing should look like, depending upon their language level. Language levels are determined by an assessment given once a year, the Washington Language Proficiency Test (WLPT). Meier (2003) cites the National Center for Education Statistics (2000) saying that almost 40% of the total United States public school population is made up of students of color, and over 80% in some metropolitan districts. This should not be viewed as a deficit, but as a rich linguistic ability acquired through the speaker's social interactions and cultural framework of the languages he or she speaks. We need to begin to understand that there are foundations of knowledge embedded in each individual's language and experiences (Hughes, 2005; Fillmore & Snow, 2000). Some of these wonderful linguistic differences were collected by Vernon-Feagans, Lynne, Haskins, and Ron (1986) in their work comparing a group of low-income African American children and a group of middle-class European American children the summer before they entered kindergarten. The African-American children engaged in four times as many interactions that involved extended storytelling and also talked more than the European American children. Meier (2003) also states that children who experience book reading will show a positive response to book reading in school,

but children who are unfamiliar with book reading will find it boring and uninteresting. She offers suggestions to preschool and kindergarten teachers for engaging students in multilingual, multicultural classrooms:

- connecting children to the text;
- choosing books that relate to children's lives;
- teaching book reading behaviors explicitly; and
- making books come alive.

According to the California Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (CATESOL) Position Statement on Specially-Designed Academic Instruction in English (1992), almost half of California's K-12 students have a primary language other than English. This document states that teachers need to:

- know general aspects and values of students' culture, including schooling;
- be sensitive to the cultures represented in their classrooms;
- be aware of the personal backgrounds of their students;
- understand the general principles of how languages are structured;
- know the processes of first and second language development; and
- be aware of the cognitive, linguistic and social development of individual students.

The document discusses classroom preparation and interactions within the classroom. Also recommended is making concepts and content comprehensible for students with limited English skills, so they can keep up with grade level standards while learning English. This approach aligns with SIOP and what we have learned from those

researching the best practices for English language learners (Cummings, 1981; Genesee, 1994; 1999, Krashen, 1987; Echevarria et al., 2004)).

Virginia Collier (1995, 2009) states that there are four components to language acquisition that we must address equally, if we are to succeed in developing language to a deep academic proficiency. These four components are the sociocultural process, language development, academic development, and cognitive development. The sociocultural process includes the student's home, and community, along with school and society influences. Language development includes both oral and written language, and incorporates phonology (pronunciation), vocabulary, syntax/morphology (grammar), semantics (meaning), pragmatics (context and social appropriateness), and paralinguistics (non-verbal gestures and body language). Academic development includes the classroom content and academic language. This is the type of language used in school, rich in vocabulary and complexity. The final component is cognitive development. An English language learner's cognitive development is often neglected. The instruction has to be appropriate to the cognitive level of the child, even if the child is just beginning language acquisition. Thus, many students are frustrated by being given "babyish," simplistic tasks (Collier, 1995).

Over the centuries, there have been immigrants of many nationalities to America. In the past, a large percentage of those immigrants were of European heritage, had money, and had some formal schooling, making them dissimilar to today's immigrants. Today, many students come to American schools with little or no formal schooling and low socioeconomic backgrounds according to the *Educating English Language Learners*

in Washington State: Annual Report of the State Transitional Bilingual Instruction Program (WOSPI, 2005). The Bilingual Program for Washington State served 78,504 students in the 2003-2004 school year, an increase of 7.2%, or 5,250 more students from the previous year (WOSPI, 2005).

Ogbu and Maute-Bianchi (1996) researched the sociocultural aspects of student learning, and explored the question of why some minority groups seem to succeed in American schools and some do not. Contrasts are drawn not only between different cultures in American schools but also between different cultures represented in the schools of other countries. For example, in Britain, East Asian students do better than West Indian students and in New Zealand, Polynesians do better than the indigenous Maori children. In America, Asian-American students do better than African-Americans, Mexican Americans, Native Americans, and Puerto Ricans. The conclusion was that these particular cultures have adopted a cast-like mentality and do not believe they can “make it.” They recommended cooperative, small group learning methods, teachers connecting with students and their families, and greater opportunities for success for minority young people (Ogbu and Maute-Bianchi, 1996). The research of Sue and Padilla (1986) dovetails with Ogbu and Maute-Bianchi’s (1996) work, with a deeper look into the values, beliefs, and ways of thinking that underlie both the minority groups and the dominant group and the conflicts or paradoxes that become relevant factors in the education of a culturally diverse population of students.

A study by Lindsey, Manis, and Bailey (2003) examined the relationship between cognitive skills assessed in the first language, at the beginning and at the end of

kindergarten, and reading competence in both the first and second languages at the end of first grade. Their study also showed phonological awareness transferred from Spanish to English and was predictive of word-identification skills in first grade. Letter and word knowledge, concepts of print, and sentence memory also transferred from the first language to English. However, oral language predicted reading comprehension better than word identification. This study is significant in demonstrating that reading skills in the child's primary language do transfer to the acquired language, namely English.

Key to addressing the barrier of language is for teachers to get to know their students and their families. Teachers need to plan their lessons with language and content goals in mind and to follow models of instruction that focus on making content and concepts comprehensible for students whose primary language is not English.

Barriers to Learning: Socioeconomic

There are many programs that attempt to address the barrier of socioeconomic status, but they all work independently from one other, and their efforts can provide some families an abundance of support, while others "fall through the cracks" in the system, not receiving any of the supports that would help their children be successful in school.

Title 1 is the federal program that provides funding to schools that meet the low income criteria. These monies can be used for supplies, personnel, or staff development. Application must be made annually to ensure monies are being used to increase academic success for students at-risk due to low income issues (WOSPI, 2009).

Children can qualify for free- or reduced-price lunches and breakfasts at many schools based on income guidelines, no other qualifications are needed. "The Wenatchee

School District participates in the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program, the Summer Food Program, and the USDA After-School Snack Program. These Child Nutrition Programs are a means of providing nutritious meals to children. They contribute to a better understanding of good nutrition and better eating habits. Research has proven that students who are well nourished perform better in school” (WSD, 2009).

Churches and other community based organizations and programs provide school supplies and school clothes for children who cannot afford them. One of the main distributors of supplies for children and families is Serve Wenatchee Valley, a cooperative effort of the churches in Wenatchee to coordinate services for those families in need.

The Department of Health and Human Services aids low-income families with food coupons, medical coupons, and financial support, depending on qualifying factors. These services are mainly accessed by those families within the generational poverty category, which means families who live below the poverty line from generation to generation. However, situational poverty can impact families instantaneously while these services may take time to access or may be unavailable due to resources that cannot be easily liquidated. Battered women must produce the name of their abuser in order to receive services and this act may again put them and their children in jeopardy. Families must also have a mailing address in order to receive food stamps or welfare checks, which is difficult for homeless families.

There is government-subsidized housing, which adjusts the cost of housing to coincide with the family’s income. However, there can be long waiting lists for these

opportunities. The Wenatchee School District's homeless coordinator helps to provide some stability for families who have no conventional housing. This can be in the form of transportation to a school outside the child's neighborhood school boundary in order to relieve the child of having to make multiple changes in schools due to frequent moving.

Head Start has been a long-standing attempt to address children at-risk for academic failure due to socioeconomic disadvantage. Head Start has proven to be effective, but according to the authors of *Effects of Rhyming, Vocabulary and Phonemic Awareness Instruction on Phoneme Awareness*, (Yeh & Connell, 2008), Head Start curricula does not go far enough in preparing students for kindergarten. "There is ample evidence that phoneme segmentation can and should be taught to preschool children as young as 4 years old in order to promote future reading ability" (p. 244). Their study of sixteen Head Start classrooms examined what was being taught and its effectiveness in preparing disadvantaged children for kindergarten and reading. The curriculum most often used in Head Start programs focuses on rhyming and vocabulary, because the view of the Chief of the Education Services Branch of the Head Start Bureau is that many 4-5 year-old children in Head Start are not developmentally ready for phoneme segmentation and blending.

The programs listed are but a few of the services for low-income families, yet these services do not always adequately address the needs of students who are impacted by financial factors. Sometimes a financial hardship is generated due to a crisis in the family, and is not necessarily a low-income issue or includes additional complicating

factors that exclude the family from the typical assistance programs. This, too, can create a barrier to learning for a child (Payne, 2005).

Key to the barrier of socioeconomics is for teachers to know their students, so referrals can be made to the appropriate agencies, and a plan can be developed that coordinates community and school services for the alleviation of economically based barriers to learning.

Barriers to Learning: Family Health/Mental Health

This is probably the most difficult area to define and to address. There are very few public data, because students and families are protected by confidentiality laws. Some public schools have experienced violence, mass shootings, and death on their campuses. In the homes of some students traumatic occurrences can be a way of life. Students may have experienced violence and death in their own homes. Students come from homes that have been impacted by divorce. Students are bounced between the homes of parents sharing custody. Students are homeless, living in shelters, on the street, or in foster homes. According to Sunnyslope elementary school's counselor, the number of students being raised by grandparents has risen dramatically (2007). Studies by Alderman and Taylor (2002) indicate the need for schools to be more involved in addressing family and mental health issues. The authors state that, "addressing barriers to learning must be approached from a societal perspective, and will require fundamental systemic reforms" (p. 262). They suggest that a district-wide systemic change is needed that will weave together three components: instruction, management, and enablement, into a comprehensive, integrated continuum of systems: systems for positive

development and systems for prevention, systems of early intervention (addressing problems soon after onset), and systems of care (for chronic and severe problems). It would require restructuring the existing programs and resources, with an emphasis on collaboration, cooperation, and coordination of all school and community providers. Adelman and Taylor (2002) recommend that districts start with mechanisms that are already addressing a particular barrier, then analyze what is needed and begin to create mechanisms that enable groups of schools to work together.

Next, move toward making those mechanisms system wide. Districts would have a resource team at a specific site to coordinate resources. This team would establish teams for each of the six curriculum areas of the enabling component:

- Enhancing the teacher's capacity to address problems and foster a student's social, emotional, intellectual and behavioral development;
- Enhancing the capacity of schools to handle the many transition concerns confronting students and their families;
- Responding to, minimizing the impact of, and preventing crisis;
- Enhancing home involvement;
- Reaching out to the surrounding community to build links; and
- Providing special assistance for students and families. (Adelman & Taylor, 2002, p. 263).

The homeless program provides services and benefits for children who qualify as homeless. This can be through foster care, living with a relative or another family, or living somewhere other than a typical dwelling.

Readiness to Learn (RTL) is a program that attempts to address the social, emotional, and behavioral barriers to learning. “The Readiness to Learn (RTL) program, administered by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, is part of the Education Reform Act enacted by the 1993 Legislature. Its primary purpose is to reduce barriers to learning and link education with human service providers in an effort to assist in the removal of non academic barriers and ensure that all children are able to attend school prepared to learn.” (WOPSI, 2009). Students are referred by the school counselor, the family situation is evaluated, and scholarships are provided for activities or programs that the school’s intervention team determines would be beneficial for the individual needs of the child. Such activities may include attending horse camp to develop a positive relationship and caring for a living creature, a membership in the YMCA, after school tutoring, helping parents fill out applications for government assistance, and more. However, funding is limited and there is usually a waiting list for students needing services.

Along with concerns of family health are the mental, emotional, and behavioral health of students. While some behaviors presented by students can be related to family health, some may stem from physiological factors, learning disabilities, or other factors. Not all students with behavior concerns qualify for special education. Anti-bullying policies and school-wide discipline programs have been under discussion at WOSPI in an effort to address student behavior.

There is a wide variety of school-based programs for dealing with student behavior such as Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies, Second Step, First Step to

Success, Anger Coping Program and Brain Power Program (Leff, Power, Manz, Costigan, & Nabors (2001). Make Your Day is a school-wide citizenship program created by Earl Brown (1975) and piloted in schools in Arizona. The emphasis of this program is on helping students become aware that their actions are their choices, and that their choices can have negative consequences, not only on their learning and safety, but on the learning and safety of other children in their learning community. The program is based on all school personnel, including custodians, bus drivers, secretaries, and specialists, taking responsibility for informing students of the expectations for any given activity or situation and the consequences of their choices. Richard Stiggins (2001) states, "Clear and appropriate targets are essential for providing students with the motivation they need to be successful" (p. 64). In the Make Your Day program (Brown, 1975) children move through a series of steps in response to infractions with the final step being a conference with their parent before they can return to class. This approach works well for most students, but there are a few students with more serious emotional or behavioral challenges, who need additional supports.

Some behaviors emerge as frustration response to the level of academic work expected. If a child has a learning disability, work can be modified appropriately (Curran 2001, personal communication; Lambert, 2001, personal communication). This will help alleviate some of the frustration, and help the student feel a part of classroom learning environment. If the child has an emotional/behavioral difficulty, clear expectations along with modified materials or approaches can alleviate some of the potential for inappropriate externalized behaviors (Appelstein, 1988; Mercer & Mercer, 2001). This

approach is frequently called Positive Behavioral Supports (Office of Special Education Programs [OSEP], 2004) because interventions are positive instead of punitive. This approach encourages teachers to structure all the elements of the learning environment to promote appropriate behavior. They should consider the physical arrangement of the environment, time structure, instructional structure, and verbal structure (Alberto & Troutman, 1999; Essa, 1999). Many schools are now employing behavior specialists to create behavior plans, modified school days, or modified programs for the management of students with difficulty controlling their emotions and behaviors.

The key to addressing emotional and behavioral concerns is for teachers to know their students, and make referrals when concerns arise. It is important for teachers to remember that higher level thinking on academic subjects is not a priority to students who are lacking their basic needs for survival, safety, and belonging (Maslow, 1943; Woolfolk, 2001). It is important for children to feel they can trust their classroom teachers, however, teachers need to make sure that students know they can talk to the school counselor, if they have a serious concern.

Barriers to Learning: Disabilities

Originally, the Education for the Handicapped Act (EHA), a public law established in 1975 and later reauthorized as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990, is a federal mandate that is the underpinning of services for students with disabilities. This law declares that students have the right to a free and appropriate public education, no matter what their disabilities. The law was reauthorized again in

2004 to include reforms and a move toward changes in qualifying assessments, funding guidelines, and services for students with disabilities that affect their access to education.

The shift was meant to provide services to students before they fall so far behind academically that they cannot catch up. The previous model has often been called a “wait to fail” model, while the new model encourages intervention as soon as concerns arise, using a three-tiered approach to intervention. Intervention at the first tier would require general education teachers to evaluate student progress, and provide small group intensive instruction within the student’s regular classroom. After monitoring the child’s progress and seeing little or no growth, a student would receive increasingly more intensive interventions and smaller group settings, until the right combination for progress are achieved. The student does not qualify for special education services until several attempts at scientifically proven interventions, taught with integrity, have been tried and documented over a period of time, and it has been shown that the student’s response to intervention has been minimal. This is being termed Response to Intervention (RTI), and would replace or supplement the discrepancy model for qualifying students for special education services. The discrepancy model compares a child’s IQ against the same child’s academic performance, and if a discrepancy of 1.55 standard deviations (for students in Washington state) or more is found, the child is considered to have a learning disability. This kind of learning disability is usually a specific learning disability, meaning the disability is limited to certain areas of functioning such as mathematics, reading, writing, or combinations of these. There are many other types of disability that can affect a child’s academic performance. There are health impairments, which includes

attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), and many others. There are hearing impairments and vision impairments. There are communication disorders and emotional/behavioral disorders. Autism, developmental delay, mental retardation, and traumatic brain injury are but a few of the other qualifying categories of special education (Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank & Leal, 2002; WAC 392-172-114 through WAC 392-172-148).

Child Find is a service of special education that attempts to identify children from birth to six years old who are at-risk for academic difficulties due to physical or cognitive delays and disabilities. Early identification and intervention provides families and schools opportunities to work together for a smooth educational experience for children (WAC 192-172-100).

What is Early Intervention?

For the purpose of this paper, “interventions” are support services and individualized instruction provided to children and/or families in addition to the regular services of public education. “Early” denotes those services offered to children birth through second grade.

Barriers to Intervention

Intervention providers need to have specialized training in instruction and intervention in order to provide the best experiences for a variety of students with learning and behavioral difficulties (Barnett et al., 1999; Clay, 1993).

Parental involvement, although important, may be difficult to obtain and maintain, especially with non-English speaking families and working families (Caplan, Hall, Lubin, & Fleming, 1997).

A cross-cultural design is needed to include students of differing cultures without over identifying students due to assessments that do not take into account cultural differences. Educators need to be cognizant of the ethnic validity of the assessments, curricula, and practice used in public schools (Barnett et al., 1995 & 1999).

Interventions need to be worth the financial cost. In the current economic climate in which school funding has been cut, budgets must be cut and programs are being cut. Only programs that have been proven to be effective by scientifically-based research and are efficient in cost will continue.

Also, there can be psychological costs to parents, care-givers, teachers, and students. If an intervention is too exhaustive or too intensive, teachers may not be willing to continue it. The need for intervention for a child may be met with disbelief, anger, or rejection. Care must be taken to work with parents in a sensitive and tactful approach, but with clarity and honesty (Thyfaut, 2001, personal communication). Parents and care givers need to be involved, but if too much is required of them, their support could be lost or turned against the intervention. Children may become discouraged, alienated, or ridiculed for their involvement in a particular intervention (Barnett et al., 1999).

The Need for an Early Intervention

Often interventions are not begun until students are well into their third or fourth year of formal education. Interventions often may be too little, too late at this point.

According to Marie Clay (1993), the results of waiting to begin interventions are these:

- a great gap or deficit develops which is difficult to make up;
- deficits in other educational areas become a consequence of the reading deficit;
- the child's personality and confidence suffer; and
- the child has habitualized reading strategies and practices that are ineffective that are difficult to unlearn.

Models of Early Intervention for School-Age Children

Response to Intervention and the 3-Tier Model

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a multi-step approach to providing interventions to students who struggle academically (NCLD, 2006; WOSPI, 2006). One of the goals of RTI is to provide earlier interventions for all students who need extra help. It includes close monitoring and increasingly intensive interventions. Another goal is to reduce the chance of mislabeling a child as having a learning disability when perhaps they just needed a little additional help initially. Whatever the child's barrier to learning might be, the RTI approach is to provide interventions before the student falls too far behind his or her peers to catch up. In Tier 1, at the base of a pyramid shaped figure, all students receive reading instruction from their regular classroom teacher. In addition the classroom teacher may need to work with students in small groups within the classroom.

According to the model, 80-90% of students will respond well at this level. Tier 2

involves a smaller percentage of students, (5-10% of the student population) who would receive additional instruction in small group settings, either in the classroom or pull out and targeting specific areas of concern. In Tier 3 are those students who continue to struggle and need additional individualized intensive intervention or possible referral for special education services. This group represents 1-5% of the total student population. Groups with three or fewer students are more effective for intervention than those that are larger. All students receiving interventions are closely monitored and data are tracked, so if a referral for special education is made, these data can be used to help make an accurate decision concerning placement and a student's areas of deficit (NCLD, 2006; WOSPI, 2006).

Tools for Intervention Identification of School-Age Children

Schools vary in their use of screening tools, but all schools in Washington State are required to track student progress. One of the commonly used screening tools is the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Language Skills (DIBELS) (University of Oregon, 2007). The kindergarten DIBELS screening tool consists of Letter Naming Fluency and Initial Sound Fluency, which is administered at the beginning of the year. Students are identified as "low risk," "some risk," and "at-risk." The kindergarteners are assessed again mid-year and at the end of the school year, adding subtests for Phoneme Segmentation Fluency and Nonsense Word Fluency. This tool was developed using the early literacy domains identified as essential in the National Reading Panel (2000) and the National Research Council (1998) (University of Oregon, 2007).

A longitudinal study by Speece and Ritchey (2005) evaluated the correlation of oral reading fluency as a predictor of growth for at-risk first grade students. This was done by administering a battery of fluency assessments to students at-risk and students not at-risk and comparing their trajectories of fluency growth over time. The at-risk students, those who scored low on the first fluency assessments, continued to show slow growth over time as compared with their peers. This indicated that fluency measures were a reliable predictor of students at-risk.

The Wenatchee School District uses the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) for assessing students in reading from kindergarten to second grade (Pearson, 2009). This assessment is given by the classroom teacher using a short text from the kit. The texts have been leveled for readability. The child reads the text, and miscues are marked by the teacher; the child is also timed and asked to provide a retelling of the text. A score is compiled using accuracy, phrasing, fluency, and retelling and a reading level determined. A rank order is developed from the DRA scores and students from the lowest quartile are selected for intervention through the federally funded Learning Assistance Program (LAP). This program does not have specific curriculum or instructional approaches associated with it. Schools in the Wenatchee School District use highly qualified reading specialists to facilitate this program to determine priority of students to be served, assessments to be used for diagnostic purposes, and the design of student learning plans for individual students or small groups of students, depending on student needs.

Methods of Intervention for School-Age Children

The Learning Assistance Program at Sunnyslope Elementary school “uses a balanced approach to literature, using genuine literature, leveled books, quick recall of district sight words, phonemic awareness activities, making and breaking words, fluency building and comprehension strategies with a face-paced, direct instruction approach” Card-Roley (2009). Over the course of the 2008-09 school year, LAP served ten first grade students with an emphasis on reading and writing. Of those ten students, three students made average growth and attained end of the year standard reading benchmarks, three students made slow growth and did not make standard, and two students made very slow growth. Of the two students who made very slow growth, one was retained and will repeat first grade the next year and one was referred for special education testing (Card-Roley, 2009).

Reading Recovery is a reading program created by Marie Clay (1993). The approach of this program is one of providing 30 mins of specialized instruction to struggling readers on an individual and daily basis. The teacher encourages independence by moving the student on to harder texts as quickly as is feasible, while backing up progress with large quantities of easier independent reading. This program has been widely used and has shown significant success. However, Reading Recovery requires intervention teachers to be certified and receive additional intensive training, and that intervention is done on an individual basis with students, which makes it a fairly expensive program for schools to operate and maintain.

A study of three scripted, phonics-based reading programs was conducted in Kansas by Kamps and Greenwood (2005). The Response to Intervention model was used to formulate and implement secondary interventions for first graders. At-risk students were identified using DIBELS indicators. Interventions were implemented using small groups of three to six students, intensive teacher training, and the instructional materials for Reading Mastery, ReadWell, and Proactive Reading, provided in separate groupings. The control groups were involved in whole group instruction with very little small group or individualizing of instruction. The at-risk (experimental) groups did as well or better than the control group.

Many reading approaches for at-risk students emphasize phonics and decoding, including the ones previously mentioned in the Kamps and Greenwood (2005) study. Susan Trostle Brand (2006) sought to study the effects of providing a balance of reading instructional approaches, including principles from Gardner's Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1993), with inner-city kindergarteners. Pretest and posttest DIBELS scores were used to measure progress. The study showed significant gains for all the students who participated in the study using a balance approach to literacy.

Recently, many software programs have emerged with claims to increase student achievement. Bauserman, Cassady, Smith, and Stroud (2005) studied the PLATO Integrated Learning System (ILS) for effectiveness when used with kindergarteners. The study used a quasi-experimental design to examine the change scores in phonological awareness, knowledge of print concepts, and listening comprehension of kindergarteners who used the ILS and kindergarteners who did not. The software program contained

interactive activities, games, and stories with three to five lessons per unit, and taking approximately 30 min. The program was implemented daily during center time over an eight-week period. The group of children with access to the ILS showed change scores that were statistically higher in comparison to the group of children who did not have access to this computer based program.

Similar to the PLATO study, was a study using a computer-based program called Lexia, which was implemented with first graders. The students selected for the intervention group were considered to be at-risk for reading failure, and included students eligible for special education services and English Language Learners. Teachers and computer lab staff were given an orientation and training sessions on the software. The children had 2-4 weekly sessions of 20-30 min each. The software has 17 skill activities at the beginning level. The teacher selected the student's initial level. Then, the student worked independently through increasingly difficult tasks. The activities were highly structured and sequential, using natural speech sounds and visual stimuli that required student response. Each activity applied direct reinforcement for specific rules related to word-attack strategies. Only a small number of the students moved on to a more advanced level of the software program. Lexia, showed great promise for even the most impaired students. Many other intervention programs have not shown significant gains for students with severe impairments (Macaruso, Hook, and McCabe, 2006).

Tools for Intervention Identification of Preschool Children

There are numerous daycares and preschools, but do they help prepare children for the social and academic rigors of public school? Hojnoski and Missal (2006) state that, although more parents are accessing educational opportunities for their preschoolers, there are tremendous differences between the types and qualities of preschool experiences that are available.

A few private preschools provide an assessment of preschool skills and some schools and school districts have developed a prior-to-kindergarten assessment. However, all of these are administered on a voluntary basis, because this is not a requirement of Washington state. Many schools and preschools do no screening or assessment at all (Hojnoski & Missal, 2006).

Hojnoski and Missal (2006) suggest an expanded role for school psychologists to act as liaisons between early learning centers and elementary schools. They suggest that the school psychologist can assist parents and early childhood educators in deliberately facilitating child development. School psychologists can contribute with meaningful assessments and suggestions for strategic interventions prior to a child's entry into kindergarten. Two particular approaches employed by school psychologists are the General Outcome Measurement (GOM; Fuchs & Deno, 1991; Shinn, 1989) and Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBA; O'Neill et al., 1997) (Hojnoski & Missal, 2006). Both approaches include more than the traditional special education eligibility model of refer-test-place, which is the typical role of the school psychologist. Instead these assessment approaches emphasize a teach-test-teach model. FBA can be used to

assess and address problem behaviors that can interfere with a child's ability to learn and interact appropriately with other children. GOM is an approach that uses assessments to set goals and frequently monitor and evaluate a child's progress based on those assessments in the same way that elementary schools use assessment, but in a preschool setting. Both FBA and GOM can be used to increase school readiness for children who need additional support transitioning from early childhood settings to elementary school (Hojnoski & Missall, 2006).

Child Find is a service of Special Education that seeks out children within the community who are at-risk socially, emotionally, developmentally, or physically. Children qualifying through this program are from birth to six years old and have been evaluated by the school psychologist, along with a team of specialists and recommended for early intervention in one or more areas. Developmental preschool classes may serve the needs of these children with an array of specialists and support service providers.

A recently published work, *Transitioning to Kindergarten: A Toolkit for Early Childhood Educators* (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2006) is a tool that is well laid out for easy use by early childhood educators. The toolkit comes with a PowerPoint presentation and training guidelines, school readiness information and an assessment tool for preschool teachers. It also contains activities, information, and web resources for parents.

Methods of Intervention for Preschool Children

There are a number of pre-school programs, but most focus on the social aspects of children, rather than school readiness and foundational skills that precede reading, writing, and math.

Landry, Swank, Smith, Assel, and Gunnewig, (2006) in, *Enhancing Early Literacy Skills for Preschool Children: Bringing a Professional Development Model to Scale* challenge the statement that the government is advocating for no child to be left behind academically, but many government dollars have gone into the Head Start program, which is focused primarily on social and emotional gains, rather than on cognitive readiness for kindergarten. The authors suggest that the previously mentioned skills can be taught simultaneously with phonemic awareness activities and concepts of print instruction to increase kindergarten readiness. Balancing teacher-directed and child-centered self-discovery play activities would help preschoolers gain essential pre-reading skills (Landry et al., 2006). Twenty Head Start sites were chosen, and teachers were trained during the summer and over the school year on facilitating phonological awareness skills. The students were assessed on multiple measures, and it was found that students showed significant gains in phonological awareness. The full-day programs showed higher gains than did half-day programs, and all programs showed great gains for the second year of the study as teachers gained more knowledge from on-going teacher trainings (Landry et al, 2006).

Gail T. Gillon (2005) studied 3- and 4-year olds who demonstrated speech difficulties, and were considered at-risk for reading failure were identified. The children

in the treatment group received two, 45-min therapy sessions per week in 4-6 week blocks. The sessions consisted of phoneme and phonological awareness activities such as phoneme detection, phoneme categorization, initial phoneme matching, and phoneme isolation. Letter-name and letter-sound knowledge were added when the phoneme tasks became easier for the child. The study demonstrated that phonological awareness can improved concurrently with improvement in intelligibility during speech therapy sessions with children as young as 3 years of age (Gillon, 2005).

School readiness includes much more than knowing the ABCs. Researchers say children need to be self-confident and to have skills in problem solving. They should be able to concentrate and persist on challenging tasks, develop positive relationships with peers and adults, effectively communicate, and listen and follow instructions (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Hemmeter, Ostroski, & Fox, 2006). Fox, Dunlap, Hemmeter, Joseph, & Strain, (2003) suggest a model of four components:

- building positive relationships with children, families, and colleagues;
- designing supportive and engaging environments;
- teaching social and emotional skills; and
- developing individualized interventions for children with the most challenging behaviors.

It is called the Teaching Pyramid. This program incorporates positive behavior support and instruction using an RTI framework. This model is designed to be used in settings where all children spend time (ie: playground, classroom, lunchroom), in promoting the social and emotional competence of all children, is focused on building positive

relationships with families, and involves all relevant caregivers. This is a conceptual model and has not been validated by research (Hemmeter et al., 2006).

Kindergarten Readiness Programs

This researcher found only two programs that addressed the specific needs of children in transition to kindergarten: Ready! for Kindergarten and Countdown to Kindergarten.

Ready! for Kindergarten (National Reading Foundation [NRF], 2009) is a family-based program that provides three classes per year for parents of children birth to five years old. Classes are conducted in groups based on four different age categories. This program is not just for children who will be entering kindergarten in the immediate future, but the classes do focus on helping parents to be the early education teachers of their own children by providing them with information, support, and the tools they need. The program was conceived by the Kennewick School District, and developed and implemented through the non-profit organization, National Reading Foundation, formed for the purpose of the program's administration. The mission of the program is to have all students reading at grade level by the time they reach the third grade. According to the Kennewick School District (2006) and the NRF (2009) in the fall of 2000, half (50%) of the district's incoming kindergarteners were already two to three years behind "average" kindergarten children on the first day of school. After attending the program for three years 78% of students entered kindergarten at the standard level compared to 39% who had not attended the program at all. In spite of the popularity of the Ready! for Kindergarten program and the percentages provided on the website, this researcher could

not find any studies or data-based research that have been conducted on this program to verify its efficacy. The authors declare the keys to their success are:

- strong district leadership;
- data-driven, research-based programming;
- a clear focus on reading;
- an emphasis on birth to age five (not just four-year-olds); and
- empowerment of parents.

The thrust of this program is hinged on working with parents longitudinally, which can be difficult in an area with a highly mobile population like Wenatchee.

Countdown to Kindergarten is a year-long, city-wide, kindergarten readiness program in Boston, where kindergarten registration begins in January prior to the child's kindergarten year. Then, every month parents receive information and phone calls from the school and school parent volunteers with information and strategies to help parents create learning opportunities for their children at home. Parents are encouraged to visit schools and attend information sessions as well (Vaishnav, 2000, cited in Bohan-Baker and Little, 2004; Boston Public Schools, 2009). No research could be found which indicated the success of the program.

Summary

This researcher has reviewed the literature that is relevant to early literacy development and some of the barriers students experience in the acquisition of those skills. The identification of at-risk students and the intervention methods that are currently available prior to kindergarten and the identification of at-risk students and the

intervention methods available in kindergarten through second grade were reviewed. The importance of family and community collaboration and communication was also reviewed. Finally, the only two programs that offer a kindergarten readiness emphasis were found and reviewed. Neither of the two programs had clear research support nor were they exactly like Kindergarten Connection.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to answer the question, “Will an early intervention program, introduced the summer prior to kindergarten entrance, which builds school, home, and community relationships and provides identification and intervention for students at-risk, help all kindergarten students meet or exceed academic benchmarks in reading by the end of kindergarten?” The main focus of the research study was the impact of the intervention on students at-risk for academic failure. The perceived benefits of the intervention program to all students and their families were examined in the study as a secondary interest.

Research Design

This study used a mixed method design due to the purpose of the research having a main and secondary focus. The design of the research for the main goal of the study was quasi-experimental, using a control group that had no treatment and two experimental groups that received a common intervention. The study was designed to evaluate the effects of a pre-kindergarten summer program, Kindergarten Connection, on the early literacy development of at-risk kindergarteners when compared to at-risk kindergarteners who did not have access to the intervention or program during the summer prior to kindergarten entry. This was done through the disaggregation of data collected for students identified as at-risk in academic level, English speaking skills,

behavioral development, and/or those identified as special education students. The types of intervention provided for each of the at-risk categories were also examined (McMillian, 2004).

The design of the secondary goal of the research was non-experimental, descriptive. A one-time survey was given to parents of students who participated in the summer program and the information was quantified and analyzed (McMillian, 2004).

Method

The research methodology for this study was a mixed method design. The first method was quantitative, in which data were collected from one control group and two sets of experimental groups over three consecutive years of kindergarten students attending one elementary school. Data from the two experimental groups were combined creating one control group and one experimental group. The treatment used for the experimental group was an early literacy intervention program called Kindergarten Connection. Baseline data, beginning kindergarten and end of kindergarten data from both groups were collected, analyzed and compared to determine if a statistically significant difference in outcomes existed between students who attended the Kindergarten Connection summer program and those who did not.

The second method used was qualitative sampling. The parents of participating students were asked to complete a survey that reflected their thoughts and opinions concerning the effectiveness of the program related to their child's kindergarten experiences and their own experiences with their local school.

The curriculum that was used for the pre-kindergarten early intervention summer program was Kindergarten Connection created by Laurie Card-Roley (2005), which was implemented as a two-year pilot study using one elementary school within the Wenatchee School District. It is this researcher's hope that the program, Kindergarten Connection, will be piloted or adopted by more schools in subsequent years, to permit a larger pool of data to be studied.

Participants

Participants in the study were minors, whose birthdays fell within Washington State's guidelines for kindergarten attendance, 4 and 5 years old, and their parents. Children needed to be within the age range and living within the Sunnyslope school boundary, or have been accepted for "choice" to Sunnyslope School (planning to attend Sunnyslope School for kindergarten in the same school year as screened). Adults had to be parents or legal guardians of these children. Children were both male and female and all ethnic populations that were represented among those pre-registered for kindergarten were included. Also included were those students who had qualified for special education or were identified as bilingual. For the sake of this study, children identified as bilingual were those children who had qualified for the bilingual program through the district's assessment process or were noted during the screening assessment to have limited or no English speaking skills. Children not included in the study were those whose parents chose not to have their children participate or students who did not attend the full day of kindergarten or the full year of kindergarten at Sunnyslope (i.e., those who came mid-year or left mid-year). No particular caution was taken to ensure a balanced sampling of

subjects. In all, 38 students participated in the study, 19 male and 19 female, 18 of those students were identified as at-risk, 2 students identified as at-risk were removed from the research group because they did not participate in the intervention. The scores of the 16 students, 9 male and 7 female, identified as the at-risk population, were those used in the statistical evaluation of the efficacy of the program, because the program's main purpose was to be an intervention for students who need additional supports in order to make adequate academic gains. All necessary paperwork was submitted to the Human Subjects Research Committee and approved. Consent was obtained from legal parents/guardians for their minor children to participate in the study. Some of the children also chose to sign the consent form for themselves.

Procedures

Parents were invited to pre-register their children for kindergarten during the months of April, May, and June through local advertising and regular district procedures. For district kindergarten registration, parents report to their neighborhood school, fill out an informational form, show their child's birth certificate and immunization record, and if the staff has time, they may go on a school tour or visit a classroom. If the parent reports their home language to be anything other than English, they are sent to the school district office to have the child's English language level assessed. If the parents report their child has had special education services, they are sent to the Special Education office to request documentation of qualification for services. Parents who pre-registered their children at Sunnyslope elementary school were contacted and invited to a parent information night at which time they met the kindergarten teachers, principal, and intervention staff. Parents

were given information regarding full-day kindergarten, day care options, kindergarten screening, and the Kindergarten Connection summer program. (See Appendix A for the parent meeting agenda and the flyer used for Kindergarten Connection.) The organized program was followed by an open format question and answer time period. During the meeting, parents were given the opportunity to sign up to have their child screened and to sign up for the summer program. A follow-up phone call was made to parents who did not attend the parent event or did not sign up for a screening time in order to set up a screening time.

All students, who were pre-registered for kindergarten, were screened using a pre-kindergarten screening tool and parent information form that was developed by the researcher for the purpose of obtaining a baseline for this study. (See Appendix B.) The screening assessment was designed to be given in the spring (June) prior to the beginning of the first experience with kindergarten in a public school setting. This baseline data were collected and reviewed collaboratively by this researcher and the school's reading specialist. Following the screening an appointment for a home visit was scheduled with parents. The home visit is the first part of the Kindergarten Connection intervention and program, and is not part of regular district procedure.

During the home visit, parents received a copy of their child's screening results, and results were discussed. Parents were encouraged to ask questions and voice concerns. If the child was found to need additional support, per the screening results or parental concerns, those concerns were also discussed, and supports, materials, or services were recommended. Examples of additional support needs included speech, academic focus,

financial needs, and behavioral concerns. The need for speech evaluation or monitoring was met by alerting the school's speech/language pathologist or classroom teacher, depending upon severity, as soon as school began. If the need for increasing academic skills was discovered, parents were provided with materials and strategies for focusing on letter naming, counting with one-to-one correspondence, cutting skills, or whatever was identified as deficit. If a family had economic struggles, information was provided about community resources. Behavioral concerns were often brought up by parents, as well as noted by screening personnel. Parenting strategies, suggestions, information, and community resources were provided. For students with little or few English language skills, families were provided with video-tapes to practice English, and connected with the school district and school-based migrant/bilingual personnel. Issues of immaturity were also discussed with parents. These parents were strongly encouraged to attend the summer program, and given parenting strategies for increasing self-help and adaptive skills with their child.

Prior to the release of students for summer break, students who would be entering the fifth grade the following school year were recruited and trained to be fifth-grade buddies to incoming kindergarten students. Each fifth-grader was expected to attend the final summer session of the Kindergarten Connection program just a few days prior to the first day of the new school year. Fifth-graders were asked to bring a new or gently used favorite book to give to their kindergarten buddy. (See the Fifth-Grade Buddy Permission Form in Appendix C.) During this final session, the fifth-graders shared their experiences of kindergarten, asked and answered questions, helped, played, and read with a randomly

selected kindergartener or kindergarteners. The fifth-graders were expected to be good role models, to be helpful and friendly to their buddy during the first few weeks of school, especially on the playground where kindergarteners can feel overwhelmed.

The Kindergarten Connection summer program began the last week of June and continued with six workshops throughout the summer with each workshop lasting 90 minutes. Parents and their children attended the workshops together in the setting of a regular kindergarten classroom within the school building where their children would be attending kindergarten. If parents could not attend with their children, grandparents or care-givers were invited to attend, particularly if these were the adults who spent the most time with the children. The instruction was provided by a certified teacher, and was geared toward instructing parents on the use of educational play to build foundational skills of reading, writing, and math with their children. Instruction was given in English with native language support as needed for families who didn't speak much English. The workshop topics included phonemic awareness, school routines, library, reading, writing, and meet your teacher. Activities in session one (Playday #1) included: name recognition, following directions, lining up, getting dressed, hanging up and putting away, playground rules, and taking turns. Session two (Playday #2) included: staying well at school, using the toilet, washing hands, illness and injuries, sharing school tools, toys, and talk time, eating lunch at school, and citizenship and classroom behavior. Session three (Library Day) included the proper care of books, reading aloud, vocabulary development, comprehension, concepts of print, rhyming, and phonemic awareness. Session four (Reading Day) included reading development, environmental reading, the alphabetic

principal, rhyming and word families, sight words, blending, and reading for meaning. Session five (Writing Day) included: gross motor skills, fine motor skills, pencil grip, correct letter formation, scissor grip, sequencing, and telling a story. The final workshop (Celebrate), session six, was celebrated by the children reading with a fifth grade buddy, transitioning in centers, and making flowers for and writing to their new kindergarten teacher. Each child received an award of program completion. The children were able to interact with their summer kindergarten teacher, their new kindergarten teacher, their parents, and their fifth grade buddy through structured, but informal developmental play activities. During the last half hour of the final session, students and parents went to their new kindergarten classroom with their new kindergarten teacher to listen to a story and ask questions. (See Appendix D for calendar of events and a sample lesson from Kindergarten Connection.)

Activities incorporated into each workshop included familiarizing kindergarteners and their parents with the routines and expectations of a classroom: responding to a musical cue, lining up, listening to a story, following directions, putting things away, and the academic benchmarks for expected progress throughout the school year. Initially, activities and transitions were supported by parents, giving their children the opportunity to ease into their new role as kindergarteners and to develop independence. Then, parents were coached to step back, and let their child act and interact independently. Parents were also encouraged to connect with other parents, and set up play dates for their children in addition to the summer program workshops, as these would be their child's school playmates for many years to come.

Following each workshop, children were given “homework” to complete for the week with activities and extensions from the theme of the session, a new book that coordinated with the theme of the session, and a variety of “gifts” that would enable completion of the homework tasks or that were used in that session’s activities. In addition, some “gifts” were coupons or donations from local businesses, such as rulers or pencils. The homework usually consisted of a one page worksheet with suggested daily activities for developmental play and self-help activities for the child or parent to do together or the child to do independently. The activities could be checked off or stickers placed on them to indicate which activities had been completed. (See Appendix E for a sample homework chart.)

During the school year, the students, who were participating in the study attended regular full-day kindergarten classes, and were assessed through regular district protocols. Beginning kindergarten (Begin K) data were collected following the summer program, after regular kindergarten classes had begun in September, and at the end of kindergarten (End K) data were collected in May. Both of these assessments were given by the student’s regular kindergarten teachers per Wenatchee School District protocols and standards. All Wenatchee School district kindergarteners undergo district assessments three times during the school year: September, January, and May. These assessments include letter naming, letter sounds, phonemic awareness, and the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). The data were collected and analyzed to determine if there was a statistically significant correlation between attending the summer program and literacy scores.

Toward the end of their child's kindergarten year, parents were asked to complete a one-time survey (see Appendix F), to indicate how they felt about the summer kindergarten program in terms of how their child did in kindergarten, and if the program was helpful to them as the parents.

Measurement Tools

The tool used for screening students prior to kindergarten was developed by the researcher to be criterion-referenced, and included letter naming, letter sounds (used only if the student did well on letter naming), color and shape identification, identifying numerals, counting (rote and with one-to-one correspondence), drawing, cutting, writing, visual discrimination and readiness to read. This information was recorded and scored on a rubric scale of 1 to 4 to determine a standard performance score for children entering kindergarten and to establish a baseline for student progress over the course of the kindergarten year. A score of 3 would indicate a standard academic level. Although the screening tool collected valuable data in many different areas of pre-school skills, the only measure used in this study was letter identification, in order to maintain simplicity and focus on literacy development. According to discussions with kindergarten teachers, a child's knowledge of letters is a strong indicator of pre-school experiences or lack thereof. Also included on the screening tool was an observation of the student's attending skills, ability to follow directions, book handling skills, and any other relevant comments. This information was used along with insights from the parent information form, to determine students at-risk for behavior concerns in a full day kindergarten program.

The parent information form used during initial the screening included both structured and unstructured questions regarding pre-school attendance, complications during pregnancy, birth, or delivery, developmental benchmarks, preferences for play, and concerns about their child. The form was available in Spanish for Spanish-speaking families to respond to questions in their native language. The information collected was used primarily for intervention purposes to determine if there were any concerns about the child that needed to be addressed during the home visit or if a referral needed to be made to school or community agencies. This form was also developed by the researcher with thought given to the common etiologies of learning difficulties (Curran, 2001; Lambert, 2001; Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank & Leal, 2002).

It was originally anticipated that the data collection tool for screening and progress monitoring would be the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). The district-wide use of this tool was discontinued following the collection of data on the control group of students. However, the researcher was able to mine data from the district-wide assessment tools that have been consistently used by the kindergarten classroom teachers for recording and reporting student progress, which ultimately reduced researcher bias with regard to data collection, but limited the accuracy of the data. The Wenatchee School District assessment tools used for following student progress in literacy throughout their kindergarten year include letter naming, letter sounds, phonemic awareness, and the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). The assessments take place three times during the school year: September, January/February, and May. These tools are criterion referenced using a rubric scale of 1 to 4, with standard

benchmarks for kindergarten set at a score of 3, for each of the testing windows/reporting periods. (Appendix G).

The final measurement tool was a parent program evaluation questionnaire (Appendix F), which allowed parents to self-report what they thought was beneficial about the pre-kindergarten summer program, Kindergarten Connection, for both their child and themselves. The questionnaire was given to parents whose children attended the summer program, during the last month of their child's kindergarten experience, and was available in both English and Spanish. The questionnaire included both structured and unstructured questions, and was developed by the researcher to be easy to understand and complete. The first eight questions of the survey used a Likert scale of limited answer choices: strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree, and strongly disagree. Question 9 included structured preference choices concerning number of sessions and timing of sessions offered by the summer program. Questions 10 through 13 were unstructured questions with regard to the respondent's likes, dislikes, and suggestions for change concerning the summer program (McMillian, 2004).

Analysis Tools

The hypothesis of the study is that the null hypothesis will be rejected and the intervention will have statistical significance of .05 or greater in its effectiveness for the experimental group. The research design was a control group and two combined experimental groups, each containing a random sampling of the kindergarten population, and further limited to subjects identified as at-risk. The control group and the experimental group were unequal in number, and no measures were taken to match

descriptive characteristics between control and experimental subjects. Therefore, the model of analysis for two-sample problems was indicated. Means were derived for both the control and experimental groups for each of the data points and the change from the baseline measure to the final measure. The means being <30 indicated the use of a t test. The t test was applied to both the control and the experimental group to determine the variability of the groups. The F test was used to find the critical values of the distribution. The standard deviation and the degrees of freedom were calculated. Then, the statistical formulas of the two sample groups were calculated and compared (Larsen, 1975).

Statistical analysis of the survey data were rejected as unnecessary due to the clarity the frequency table and percentage figure were able to show and the negatively skewed distribution of the scores (McMillian, 2004).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

In June of 2006, 37 prekindergarten students were screened prior to entry into full-day kindergarten at Sunnyslope Elementary School. At-risk populations were determined during pre-kindergarten screening for each of the three years of kindergarten students in the study. No intervention or summer program was offered to students who fell within the at-risk categories during 2006. These scores of these students were used as the control group for this study.

In June of 2007, 34 prekindergarten students were screened prior to entry into full-day kindergarten at Sunnyslope Elementary School. Eight of those students were identified through the screening process as at-risk. These students needed a little extra help to be ready for kindergarten as determined by the screening assessment and observation. All students were invited to attend the summer program, Kindergarten Connection. Altogether, 29 students attended the summer program for at least one session, including seven of the at-risk students, one first grader with autism for the purpose of school acclimation, and one student who had been retained from the previous year. Central Washington University Human Subjects Review Committee consent forms were received for 65% of the students who attended the summer program and 56% of the students screened for kindergarten entry. This first group of participants in the study of the effects of the early intervention summer program and curriculum, Kindergarten Connection, will henceforth be referred to as Experimental Group I (E-1).

In the following year, June of 2008, 33 prekindergarten students were screened for full-day kindergarten attendance at Sunnyslope Elementary School. Ten students were identified as at-risk because they fell within the criteria of one or more of the four at-risk categories used in this study. Again, all students were invited to attend the Kindergarten Connection summer program. Of the 33 kindergarteners who were screened, 25 attended the summer program for at least one workshop, including eight of the at-risk students. Consent forms were received for 55% of the preregistered kindergarteners. These were the students participating in the second Experimental Group II (E-2) of kindergarteners, participants in the Kindergarten Connection treatment.

Control Group

There were 37 students in the control group, which contained a 19:18 ratio of male to female respectively. Poverty is one of the at-risk populations of students and qualification for free or reduce-priced lunches is a commonly used indicator of students of low socioeconomic status. However, students can no longer be identified on an individual basis, so the number of qualified kindergarten students was not available. The percentage would be expected to be similar to the 20.3% of the whole school population. Ten students were identified during the screening process as falling within one or more of the at-risk categories. Demographics of at-risk categories used in this study for the control group included 2% of the students qualified for special education (D), 8% qualified as bilingual having few or no English language skills (C), 13% were below the academic standard (A) using the pre-kindergarten screening tool, 13% displayed behavior concerns (B) identified either by observation during screening or from parent comments

in person or on the parent information form, and 2% demonstrated both academic and behavioral concerns (A/B). See information in Table 1.

Table 1

Distribution of Control Group Reporting Risk Category and Data Frequency

Student#	Risk Category	Baseline	Begin K	End K
002	C	3	3	3
004	A	1	2	3
009	B	3	3	3
015	A	0	1	1
017	C/A	3	3	2
019	D/B	3	2	2
030	B	2	3	3
031	A/B	0	1	1
032	A/B	1	1	1
034	C/A	0	0	0

Note. At-risk Categories: A=academic B=behavior C=limited English D=special education

Experimental Group 1

The first Experimental group contained 19 students with a male to female ratio of 7:12 and came from a whole school population of 22.7% who qualified for free or reduce-priced lunches. Parent consent forms were received for 65% of the students that attended the summer program of 2007. The at-risk demographics for E-1 included 14% students with low academic performance (A), 2% students with no or low English language skills (C), 8% students with behavioral concerns (B), and 0% students with special education needs (D). See the data in Table 2.

Table 2

Distribution of Experiment Group 1 Reporting Risk Category and Data Frequency

Student #	Risk category	Baseline	Begin K	End K
107	A	0	1	2
110	B	3	3	4
113	A/C	0	1	2
114	A	1	3	3
116	A/B	0	1	3
117	B	3	3	4
118	B	2	3	3
119	A	2	3	3

Note. At-risk Categories: A=academic B=behavior C=limited English D=special education

Experimental Group 2

The second experimental group had 19 subjects with a male to female ratio of 12:7 and an unknown number of students qualified for free or reduce- priced lunches. The reporting information for poverty level was not yet available at the time of this report. Consent forms for study participants were received from 55% of the students screened for entry to kindergarten. Of those participating in the study group E-2, the at-risk students showed the following demographics: 0% with only low academic performance (A), 0% with no or low English language skills (C), 21% with behavioral concerns (B), 26% with both low academic performance and behavioral concerns (A/B), and 5% with identified special education needs (D). See data in Table 3. Included in research group E-2 were 2 students who did not attend any of the summer program

sessions other than the initial home visit, which is part of the program/treatment. These students, indicated with an asterisk, were not included in the data analysis, as they technically did not receive the treatment.

Two students in this experimental group were identified as at-risk, but did not attend any sessions of the summer program. One student #203, was identified as displaying behavioral concerns, but screened at a 3 which was considered standard for this study. This student's score dropped at the beginning of the school year, but returned to standard by the end of the school year. The other student #207, was identified as having behavioral and academic concerns. This student's screening score was 0, the beginning kindergarten score was 2 and the ending kindergarten score was 2. Although this student did not attend the summer program, parents were given information on how to work with him over the summer to improve his foundational academic skills during the home visit. The home visit is considered the first session of the program and may have been a contributing factor to the student's initial gain in score.

Table 3

Distribution of Experiment Group 2 Reporting Risk Category and Data Frequency

Student #	Risk Category	Baseline	Begin K	End K
*203	B	3	2	3
204	A/B	1	1	3
205	B	2	3	3
*207	A/B	0	2	2
208	B	2	1	3
214	D	3	2	2
215	A/B	1	2	3
217	A/B	1	1	3
218	B	3	3	4
219	A/B	0	1	2

Note. At-risk Categories: A=academic B=behavior C=limited English D=special education

Results

The data collected for the control group were used to establish a mean for the reading benchmarks chosen for this research. A compilation of the data collected from both experimental groups was used to gain a mean for the students who received the intervention. The means of both groups were graphed as illustrated in Figure 1. The primary purpose of the study was to determine if a summer program prior to kindergarten entry, which identifies and intervenes for at-risk students and connects families to their school would affect the end of year reading outcomes for those at-risk students. The end of year benchmark for reading on a rubric of 1 to 4 is 3. In the control group, 40% of the students identified as at-risk reached the end of year standard benchmark, and in the experimental groups, 75% of the students identified as at-risk, who attended at least one

session of the summer program, reached the end of year standard benchmark for kindergarten reading.

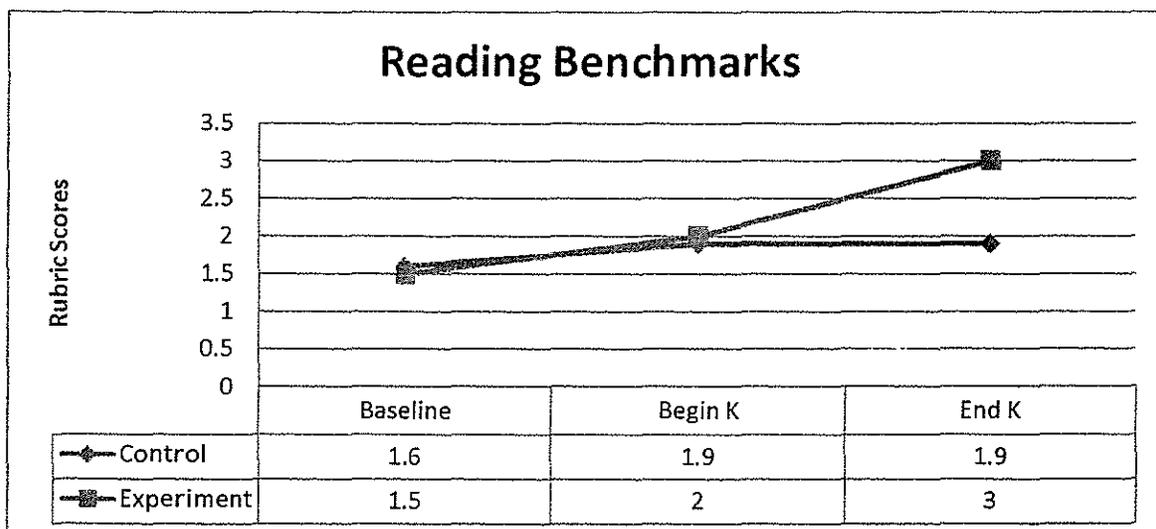


Figure 1. Control group vs. Experiment group with pre-kindergarten entry to end of the year reading rubric score means.

Statistical Analysis

Statistical analysis was used to test the null hypothesis that the change in scores from pretest to posttest would not be greater for the experimental group than the control group. The sample standard deviation was calculated for the control group at .9486 and for the experimental group at .632. Both groups had a standard deviation that was close to 1, therefore a two-sample *t* test for equal standard deviations could be used to test the hypothesis (Larsen, 1975). Also, both standard deviations were determined to be within the lower and upper limits of distribution using the critical values of the F test, .220 and 6.03 respectively. The mean change in scores for the Control group was 0.3 and the mean change in scores for the Experimental group was 1.6. The alpha level .05 was used for the calculation of probability for the statistical tests used for this research. The pooled

standard deviation was .7718 with a distribution of 4.1259 approximated by a Student t curve with 23 degrees of freedom, which indicating that the null hypothesis can be rejected and that there is a statistical significance showing that the mean change in the scores of the experimental group was greater than the mean change in scores of the control group (Larson, 1975).

Survey Results

In addition to the data collected for program efficacy, a one-time survey was given to the parents of students who attended the summer program to determine perceptions of the quality and benefit of the summer pre-kindergarten program. Over the two-year period, 37 students attended the summer program. Surveys were received from 70% of those parents/guardians. Response rates around 70% are considered to be adequate for validity (McMillan, 2004). Surveys were anonymous and no special care was taken to determine which were received from families with children identified as in the at-risk study group. Although much more information can be drawn from the questions that were asked on the survey, this research will focus on the responses to the two questions that align with the questions to be answered by the research:

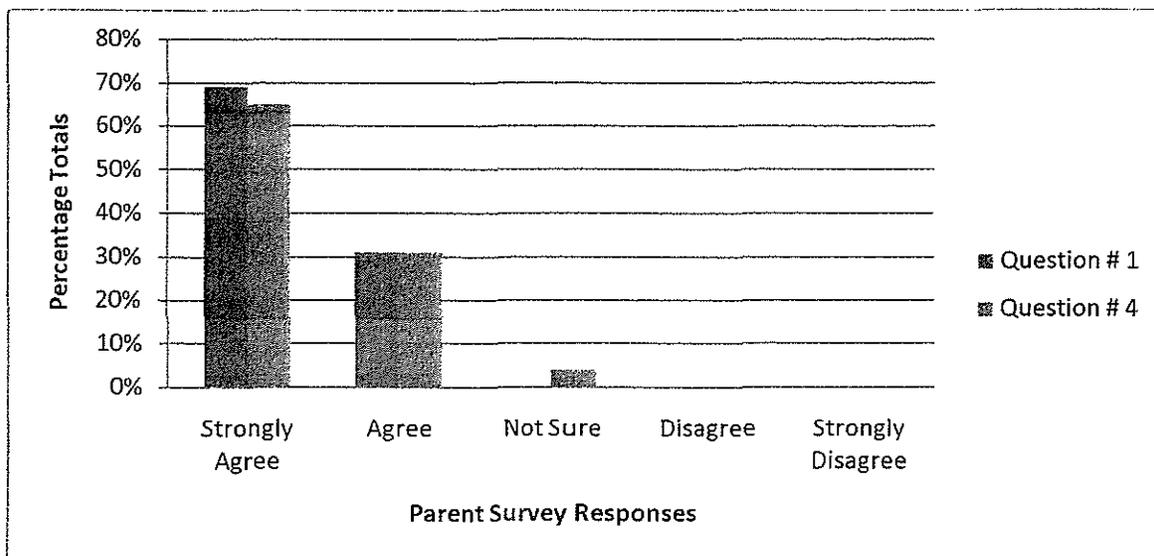
- question #1: “My student benefitted from the Kindergarten Connection program by being more prepared for kindergarten,”; and
- question # 4: “The program helped connect me and my child to the school and/or community.”

These two questions were selected because they address the primary purposes for the creation of the program: One, all prospective kindergarten students will come to their first day of school more academically and socially prepared to benefit from high quality instruction and more able to tolerate a full day of academic and social activity. Two, students and their families who need extra support services will be identified and served, or assisted in finding community resources that will help reduce the barriers to learning for their children. Three, parents will gain valuable information toward building their child's confidence in reading, writing, math, independence, and school behavior and a better understanding of the structure of a school day, thereby creating a positive connection between school and home. The results of the main questions can be seen in Table 4, while the percentages for Questions #1 and #4 can be seen in Figure 2. Question #1 stated "My student benefited from the Kindergarten Connection program by being more prepared for kindergarten." Survey respondents indicated that 69% "strongly agreed" and 31% "agreed." There were none who responded "not sure," "disagreed," or "strongly disagreed." Question # 4 stated "The program helped connect me and my child to the school and/or community." The survey indicated that 65% "strongly agreed," 31% "agreed," and 4% "not sure". Again, there were none who responded with "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed." Overall, the survey indicated very strong positive parent perceptions as to the benefits of the program in preparing their child for kindergarten and connecting them and their child with their child's school.

Table 4

Distribution of Survey Sample Reporting Frequency

Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	18	8	0	0	0
2	16	10	0	0	0
3a	14	10	2	0	0
3b	11	14	1	0	0
4	17	8	1	0	0
5	13	13	0	0	0
6	13	13	0	0	0
7	16	9	1	0	0
8	16	9	1	0	0

*Figure 2.* Percentage of parent responses to survey questions 1 and 4.

Survey Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis of the two selected survey questions, using a chi square test to determine if a statistically significant relationship existed between benefits of the

summer program and parents' perceived effectiveness, was planned. However, a visual analysis of the frequencies and percentages made conducting a statistical analysis seem unnecessary as probability would suggest an equal number of survey participants responding at all five levels of agreement. There were virtually no responses at the negative levels of "disagree" or "strongly disagree," which would have negatively skewed the distribution on a t-curve. The data suggest a strong degree of parental satisfaction with their child's experiences and their own feelings of connectedness to their local school, as a result of the summer program that they and their child attended.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Summary

The early literacy intervention, Kindergarten Connection was developed with a three-fold purpose:

- 1) To identify children at risk for failure in reading prior to kindergarten entrance and provide school and literacy readiness information and activities for parents and pre-kindergarteners to participate in together;
- 2) To provide an opportunity for all pre-kindergarten students to make a smoother transition to kindergarten by becoming familiar with the school facility, school routines, and school expectations in a structured but informal atmosphere of play and parental participation and guidance; and
- 3) To empower parents of kindergarteners to become involved in their school and their child's education by being informed about kindergarten standards, school expectations, and ways they can help their child be successful, and by feeling welcome in their child's classroom and school building.

The research that was conducted was aligned to test each of the premises set forth by the program using a quasi-experimental mixed method design.

The literature concerning foundational literacy skills was reviewed in conjunction with literature concerning each of the barriers to learning present in public school

classrooms. Literature related to early interventions and school-based interventions was examined, as there were few studies that could be located describing pre-kindergarten summer programs such as Kindergarten Connection.

The summer program was conducted using the curriculum and format of Kindergarten Connection for a two-year pilot at one elementary school. These data were collected for the experimental groups and compared to the data that was collected from a control group that did not have the opportunity to attend a program prior to kindergarten entrance. The results have been studied and analyzed. Statistical analysis tests were applied to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the reading gains of the control group and the reading gains of the experimental groups. A parent survey, from the population of students who attended the summer program was examined to determine parent perceptions of the effectiveness of the program.

Conclusion

In conclusion, through Kindergarten Connection, prekindergarten children who needed extra help to be ready for a full day of kindergarten were identified and intervention was provided for those families and their children. Based on the findings of this study, Kindergarten Connection has been shown to have a statistically significant, positive impact on reading growth for kindergarten students. Of the children whose families received intervention, 75% reached standard based on end-of-the-year kindergarten reading benchmarks, as compared to the 40% who reached standard by the end of the year in the control group. According to this study, Kindergarten Connection provided a service to all the pre-kindergarten students that parents felt was beneficial to

their child and helped them connect to their child's school. The parent survey indicated that parents felt that the program helped prepare their child for kindergarten and that the program helped them and their child connect to their child's school. It is understood that this study was conducted with a sample of the population, even within the school used for this study. The study was limited to students whose parents gave consent for participation in the treatment and data collection. Within that group the study was again limited to those students identified as at-risk according to the study's criteria.

Additional Research

This program shows great potential. However, more research is needed to corroborate its apparent success. It is recommended that this program be continued and piloted or adopted in additional schools in order to increase the sample size for further study. With a larger sample size and more diverse subject demographics, a better analysis of efficacy can be ascertained.

Although this researcher was able to complete the data analysis with the data gained from the assessments available, use of a more sophisticated data collection tool, like DIBELS (University of Oregon, 2009) or Reading Inventory Test (RIT) (Pearson, 2009), would be recommended in order to examine and monitor changes between data points more closely. A similar study is recommended to analyze the change scores from the baseline data to the beginning of kindergarten to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between the control group and the experimental group from the effects of just the summer program.

In addition, it is recommended that a longitudinal study be conducted following students who attended the summer program to determine if the early intervention had a lasting effect, and if academic momentum was maintained as the child progressed to more difficult reading tasks.

Additional studies could be conducted using the data that has already been collected from this study. Records of attendance during the summer sessions were kept along with records for the number of homework charts each student turned in. The hypothesis that the number of summer sessions each student attended positively affected reading scores should be tested along with a correlational study of the number of summer homework charts turned in and reading success. The number of homework charts turned in could suggest greater parental involvement, because those parents followed through on the at-home activities recommended by the program teacher. (NB: The number of actual homework charts completed could have been more than the number of those turned in. Parents and subjects frequently mentioned that they had forgotten to bring them.)

Also, each subject was coded with the type of barrier to learning that was identified, (See Tables 1-3). Given a larger sample size, data could be disaggregated for different at-risk populations to determine if this intervention is helpful for a particular sub-population or not.

Additional studies could also be conducted on the relationship between those students who had attended an academically based pre-school before kindergarten. These analyses were not included at this time in order to maintain the focus of this study, but

may be of interest to other researchers. (The tables containing attendance, homework, and preschool data are included in Appendix H.)

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Parent Meeting Agenda
Kindergarten Connection Flyer
Program Overview

Kindergarten Parent Meeting Agenda

Principal: Welcome

Introduction of Kindergarten Staff and School Staff

Kindergarten teacher: Schedule

Kindergarten teacher: Math and Science

Handouts

Kindergarten teacher: Video presentation and Literacy

Intervention Specialist: Kindergarten Connection Presentation

Parent/Reading Specialist: Parent perspective and Screening

Sign up for summer program and screening

Question and Answer: Principal

Tour of School

Refreshments and Socialization

Sunnyslope Elementary Presents

Kindergarten Connection



Bringing Kindergarteners, Families, School, and
Community Together

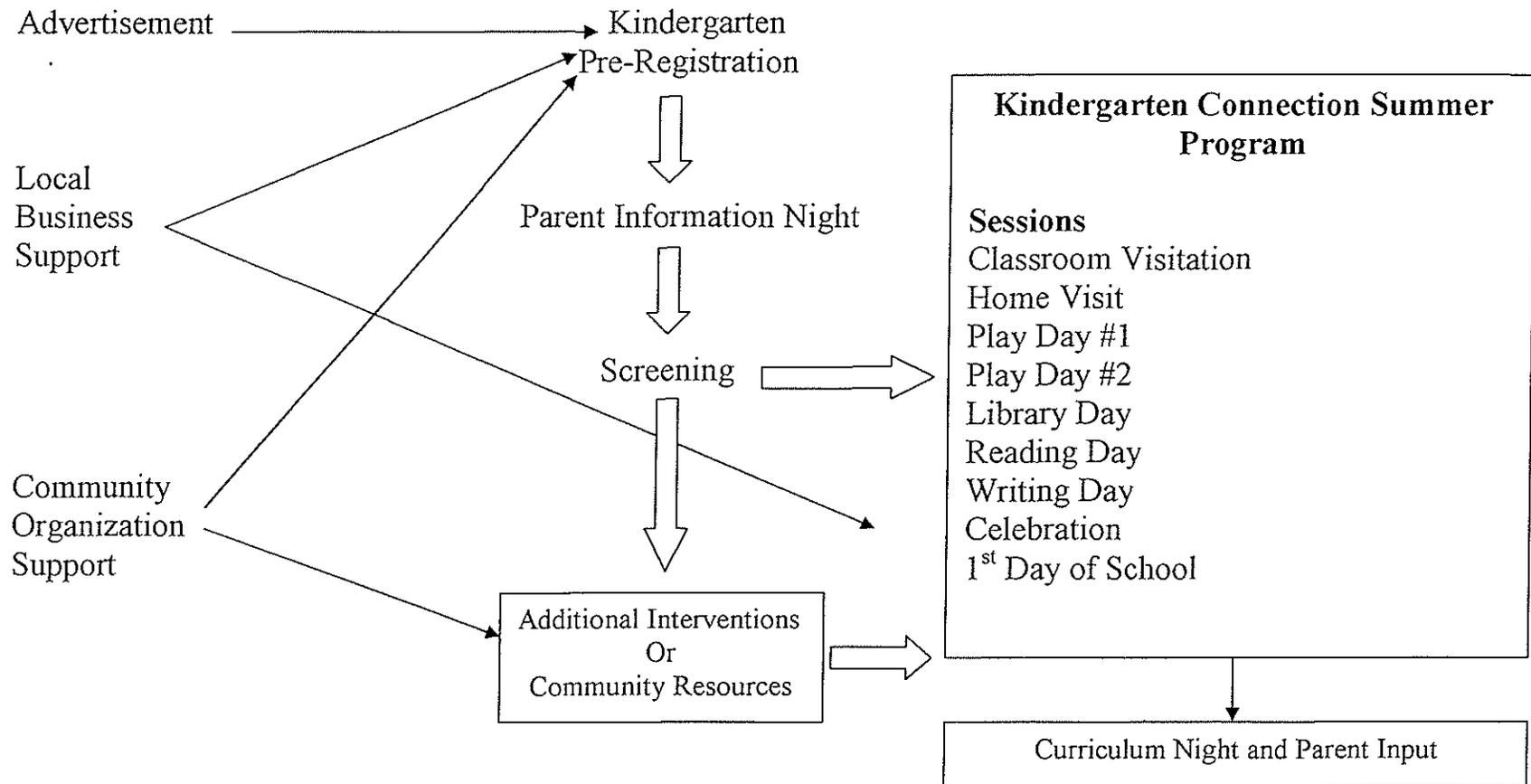
Pre-kindergarten Summer Program

- 7 sessions throughout the summer
- learn how to teach pre-reading skills
- learn how to teach pre-writing skills
- successful start to school years
- valuable coupons and gifts from local business
- valuable information
- community support and activities
- meet other families
- make kindergarten friends
- get a 5th grade buddy to help learn the ropes

* For more information please contact Laurie Card-Roley or Mark Goveia @ 662-8803

The Wenatchee School District complies with all federal and state rules and regulations and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, sex, sexual orientation, including gender identity, disability, family status or age. This holds true for all staff and students who are interested in participating in educational programs and/or extracurricular school activities. Inquires regarding compliance and/or grievance procedures may be directed to RCW Officer and ADA coordinator Dr. Joan Wright. Issues related to 504 should be directed to Mr. Mike Franza, Administrator for Student and Support Services.

Kindergarten Connection Program Overview



Appendix B

Screening Tool
Parent Information Form

Sunnyslope Pre Kindergarten Assessment

Name _____ Date _____

Age _____ Birthdate _____

1. Knows first name _____ 2. Knows last name _____

3. Knows age _____ 4. Knows birthday _____

5. Can count to _____

6. Can name numerals: 2__ 5__ 3__ 1__ 4__ 7__ 9__ 8__ 6__ 10__

7. Can name colors:

red__ blue__ green__ yellow__ orange__ purple__ black__ brown__ white

8. Can give a reasonable estimate (15) _____ counts crayons (15) to _____

9. Can name shapes: circle__ square__ triangle__ rectangle__

10. Letter ID

M__ S__ C__ R__ T__ V__ G__ W__ Z__ I__ B__ J__ D__ K__

F__ L__ H__ O__ A__ N__ P__ X__ E__ Q__ U__ Y__

11. Has right to left directionality _____ Identifies Top __ Middle __ Bottom __

12. Has top to bottom directionality _____ Follows 3-step directions _____

13. Reading Readiness: turns pages __ looks at pictures __ looks at words __
makes up story __ follows story pattern __ reads story independently __

13. Pencil grip (R, L) _____

14. Attending and behavior _____

15. Communication _____

16. Comments _____

Pre-Kinder Parent Questionnaire

Name _____ Student's Name _____

Date _____

1. Did you have a normal pregnancy and birth with this child?

Yes No, Please explain _____

2. Did your child progress through normal developmental stages (crawling, walking, talking, etc)?

Yes No, Please explain _____

3. Did your child have numerous ear infections or tubes

Yes No

4. Does your child have any siblings that live in the home? How many

Older _____ Younger _____

5. Has your child been to preschool, Headstart, ECAP, developmental kindergarten or a daycare that provides structured activities? If so, which one?

6. Does your child play with other children?

_____ Cooperatively, shares toys with other children

_____ Side-by-side, with other children, but doing his/her own thing

_____ Prefers to play by himself/herself

7. Does your child pick up his/her toys at home or in other settings?

Yes No

8. Does your child have any chores or responsibilities?

Yes No

9. Does your child get dressed independently?

Yes No

Circle all that apply:

Puts on shoes, pulls up pants, puts on shirt/coat, buttons, zips, ties shoes

10. Does your child eat independently?

Yes No

Circle all that apply:

Uses fork, spoon, cup, straw, wipes face, washes hands, throws away trash, take dishes to the sink, helps clean up messes

11. Do you read with your child daily?

Yes Yes, but not daily No

Explain how you see your child's strengths:

Please write any additional information you would like us to know:

Appendix C

Fifth Grade Buddy Permission Form

**Sunnyslope Elementary School
Kindergarten Connection
5th Grade Buddies**

I would like to be a buddy for a kindergartener.

I know that I will need to come to school on the Tuesday before school starts (August 26th at 10:00) to meet my buddy.

I will also need to bring a book to share and give to my buddy to keep.

I will be a good role model by listening to the teacher and following Make Your Day guidelines and helping my buddy to learn them, too.

.....

Name _____

Date _____ Phone _____

Address _____

My T-shirt size: small medium large

Parent's Signature _____

Appendix D

Kindergarten Connection Calendar of Events and Lessons

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

*All events are 90 minutes, unless otherwise indicated

March -June

Kindergarten Pre-Registration and School Visitation

Fill out Pre-registration forms

Parent Information Night

Visit Kindergarten classroom

Screen Students

Home Visit

T-shirt & kit #1 presentation

Get to know the family

Present Community Resources

Answer Questions about Program participation

Consent Forms

Play Day (School/Playground)

Shapes & Pattern Blocks

Name Game: name recognition, circle spots, mailboxes, & lockers

Locker and Lines: line up, walk in a line, where to go after school

Independence: Getting dressed game & Shoe Pile Game

Playground rules: Poster & Puppet

Taking turns: Number Match/Shape Match

Book: Mary Wore A Red Dress

Kit #2 presentation

Play Day (School)

Puzzles

Sharing toys, tools, and talking: My 3 Favorite Things Activity

Using the toilet & washing hands: poster & practice

Illness and Injuries: Office & Health room Tour

Eating Lunch at School

Classroom Behavior Discussion w/sequencing activity

Book: The Hungry Caterpillar

Kit #3 presentation

Library Day (School Library)

Unifix Cubes and making patterns

Rhyming & Rhythm (syllabication): Phonemic Awareness activities

Listening in a group
 Care of books: where will you keep your library books?
 Concepts of Print: teaching tracking & parts of a book
 Responding to a story: comprehension questions parents can ask
 Parents read with kindergarteners
 Book: Is Your Mama A Llama?
 Kit #4 presentation

Reading (School)

Sorting: Bugs, Sea Creatures, Buttons
 Visual Discrimination: Magnetic letters
 Alphabetic Principle: Sing & sign video
 Blending: Slide poster
 Word Families: Rhyming Fun
 Sight Words: Letter/Word I Spy & Bingo
 Book: Chica Chica Boom Boom
 Kit #5 presentation

Writing (School)

Clay Play
 Large motor skills: gym activity
 Fine motor skills & Centers: fruit loops, cut/color/paste, shaving cream, sand, stamping, feed the monster, macaroni letters, etc.
 Pencil grip and letter formation: write the room
 Telling stories: tell about something smart your pet did
 Writing stories: Sticker stories
 Book: Good Dog Carl
 Kit #6 presentation

Celebrate (School)

Meet your teacher & fifth grade buddies
 Pattern books
 Buddy reading & book presentation
 Make Flowers for Teacher
 Marshmallow and toothpick creations
 Presentation of flowers to teachers
 Teachers take students to their "real" classroom, read and talk
 Kit #7

First day of school

Buddies welcome students and meet for recess & lunch

PLAY DAY #1

Lesson Plan

Topic

Name recognition
Getting Dressed
Hanging up and putting away
Playground rules
Taking turns

Time Needed

90 minutes

Objectives of the Lesson

Parents will become familiar with appropriate independence skills for kindergarteners, playground rules, and turn taking.

Students will practice getting dressed, hanging up, putting away, turn taking, and safe playground play.

Materials

Nametags
Attention getter (rain stick, xylophone, etc.)
Sentence strips with each of the day's activities written on them
Alphabet chart
Number Flash Cards, 1-15 (two sets)
Coats with zippers
Shape matching game (like Memory)
Numbers 1-10
Timer
Card decks
Pattern blocks and Pattern block templates
Poster paper and markers
Playground Poster (optional)
Recommended Book List: Alliteration & Rhyme Books
Book: Mary Wore A Red Dress

Process

1. Before parents arrive place children's name necklaces at tables with pattern blocks and pattern block templates.
2. Parents sign in and make nametags. Children look for their name necklace and sit at the table where they find their name. Parent visit and assist children with pattern block

activity. Teacher circulates and introduces parents and children to shapes that are new to them and encourages parents to talk to their child about shape names. Encourage parents and children to get to know each other.

3. Walk around the room quietly repeating “If you can hear my voice, clap your hands,” until entire class is following along with your directions. Talk to parents and children about different ways teachers get everyone’s attention when they have something important to say or it is time to change activities, and demonstrate. If you know the particular ones kindergarten teachers in your building favor, those would be especially good to use.

4. **Name Game** (10 min)

Put up the day’s activities on the board or in a pocket chart, discussing the ones they have already done: sign in and free choice. Then put up “The Name Game” and explain to parents and children that they will need to know what their name looks like, because there are important places around the room where their name is written.

Talk to parents and children about listening area/carpet/reading circle (or whatever your kindergarten teachers say) and floor spots.

Tell students to look carefully at the first, or beginning, letter in their name and tell their parent what it is, and when they hear it called, they will need to come forward and sit on their name spot on the carpet. Put up an ABC chart and sing “If your name begins with A, find your spot...” Parents and teachers assist students as needed to find their name on the carpet in the reading area and sit down.

When all are seated, say “There is another important place to find your name...you each have a mailbox where you put the papers that you will need to take home.” Have a parent stand at the mail center to help children as needed and wave to indicate to children where the mailboxes are located, so they will know where to go with their “mail.” Pass out homework and home information calling each child by name, one at a time, to take their “mail” to their mailbox with instructions to come right back to their spot after doing so.

“Another important place you’ll find your name is on your locker.” Explain what they will keep in their locker and that they will need to bring a backpack to school to carry their things.

4. **Lockers and Lines** (10 min.)

Talk about when children at school need to go from their classroom to somewhere else in the building they need to line up and stay in a nice line until they get to where they are going. Have numbers taped to the floor in a line at the door. Hand each child a number, dismissing them to pretend to hang up their backpack in their locker and then line up at the door by standing on their number. Sing this is the way I go to school forming a line at the door. When the line is formed tell them to pretend the bell just rang and it is time to

go home. Say, "Where will you go when it is time to go home?" Sing the "Are you Ready for Hall," song. Follow the leader down the hall making a stop at the bus line, then the parent pick-up area, then the after-school daycare area to show children where they will go after school. When ready to return to the classroom, explain that children will pretend to put away their backpack in their locker and go directly to their floor spot on the carpet, just like if we were first getting to school in the morning.

5. Shoe Pile Game (10 min.)

Explain to parents the importance of independence skills for kindergarteners and when they might need to be able to put on their own shoes and jackets. Children take off one shoe and put it in the shoe pile, then give their other shoe to their parent. Start the music. Children look for their missing shoe, while parent cheers from a chair in the sidelines. Child returns to parent with shoe and puts both shoes back on independently (or with help if needed).

6. Jacket Relay (15 min.)

Explain again the importance of getting dressed skills. Put two jackets in each locker with two children paired per locker. Have children sit with their partner and determine which child has the longest hair. The child with the longest hair gets to go to the locker first. Each child puts on a jacket and zips, (can seek help from parent, if needed). Once jacket is zipped, unzip, and remove jacket and carefully hangs the jacket in the locker.

7. Taking Turns and Putting Away (15 min.)

Excuse children to tables by shapes. Pass out numbers and have children put the numbers in order from 1-10. Explain that taking turns is a very important skill for getting along socially in a classroom. Pass out deck of cards. Child and parent take turns placing numbers that match together. Explain that an ordinary deck of cards can be a great way for their child to practice numbers and counting. Put away. Then, pass out shape cards. Children and parents put the cards face down on the table and take turns playing like concentration. Encourage parents and children to name the shapes as they match them. Parents and children play the game taking turns. When timer goes off, sing a pick up and put away song. Parents encourage children to help put things away.

8. Playground rules (10 min.)

Invite children to find their spot at the carpet by colors they are wearing. Show poster of playground. Interactively discuss what is on the playground and what might not be safe and what would be safe using examples and non-examples with a puppet or drawing. Discuss taking turns. Encourage parents and children to spend some time on the playground practicing safe play.

9. Going home (5 min.)

Tell parents and children what they will find in this week's gift bag. Read "Mary Wore a Red Dress", explaining to parents the importance of children hearing the rhymes and rhythms of language and reading along with a pattern book. Dismiss one at a time to go

to their mailboxes and get their homework and line up at the door. Line-walk out to the playground or say “good bye.”

10. Talk with parents while children play on the playground. (20 min.)

Assessment

Observe parents with children.

Make note of children that need additional instruction.

Talk with parents.

Answer questions.

PLAY DAY #2
Lesson Plan

Topic

Staying Well At School: Using the toilet & washing hands
Staying Well At School: Illness and Injuries
Sharing: Tools, Toys, and Talk Time
Eating Lunch at School
Citizenship and Classroom Behavior

Time Needed

90 minutes

Objectives of the Lesson

Parents will become familiar with appropriate independence skills for kindergarteners, classroom rules, teaching sharing and turn taking and Make Your Day Citizenship Program (Brown 1975).

Students will practice flushing, washing, drying, coughing, sneezing, magic soap, sharing, listening, turn taking, safe classroom play and lunch routines.

Materials

Name tags
Attention getter (rain stick, xylophone, etc.)
Timer
Puzzles
3 Favorite Things Worksheet
Active Listening Poster
Handwashing Poster
Cover Your Cough & Wipe Your Nose Posters
Germs
Hand sanitizer
Band-aids
Name Cards/Lunch Cards
Lunch Trays
Spork Packets
Applesauce/Pudding
Pictures of children playing safe and not playing safe
Classroom rules: poster paper and markers
Make Your Day Information Flyer
Safety Sequence Activity
Crayons
Scissors

Glue Stix
Book: The Very Hungry Caterpillar

Process

1. Place puzzles and student name tags strategically at tables. Play music: Mary Wore A Red Dress.

2. Parents sign in, make name tags and put away backpacks. Children find their name tags on the tables, sit where they find their name tag, and begin working puzzles (10 min.)

3. Sharing: Tools, Toys, and Talk Time (15 min.)

Talk to parents and children about the day's objectives and pass out 3 Favorite Things Worksheet. Parents and children draw and visit. Get attention and explain the importance of active listening when someone else is talking about his or her ideas. Demonstrate how to take turns sharing one of the favorite things they drew on their paper with the others in their table group. Then, encourage parents and children to exchange phone numbers to arrange play dates during the summer break.

4. Staying well at School: toileting and washing (5 min.)

Invite children to the reading circle by table shape. Explain the importance of proper hand washing using the poster and demonstrate. Have children contribute ideas of when it would be important to wash their hands. Explain the toilet signal and that it is used, so you don't have to interrupt the teacher each time you need to use the bathroom. Suggest that children take turns with a parent in the bathroom throughout today's workshop, particularly if they might be afraid of the automatic flush.

5. Staying well at School: coughs, colds, injuries and accidents (15 min.)

Explain the importance of covering and complete wiping of your nose when sneezing or blowing. Use cotton balls or mini kush balls as little "germs" that can go all over everyone as you pretend to sneeze. Hand out tissues and have all children practice. Then talk about what to do with your dirty tissue using non-examples to encourage participation. Have children throw it away and wash their hands, then return to the reading circle. Explain the importance of covering a cough using the same technique and having children practice. Talk to parents about when a child should not come to school and bringing extra clothes, particularly if their child has occasional accidents. Talk with children about when they are really sick, have a bleeding injury, or lose a tooth. Have children line up and take a walking tour of the office and health room, showing them the tooth necklaces, cold packs, and handing out bandaids. Return to the classroom

6. Eating Lunch at School (snack) (15 min.)

Pass out "lunch cards."

Have children line up and explain lunchtime routines and choices. Have children practice choosing hot lunch or cold lunch. Explain hand sanitizer and give each a squirt. Children walk down the hall to the lunch room. Children practice waiting in a lunch line, getting their lunch card scanned, making a snack choice, carrying a lunch tray, opening food containers, and eating using cafeteria ware (sporks) and napkins. Talk to parents about eating independence skills and healthy snack/food choices, especially when sending an old lunch to school for their child, while children are enjoying a snack. Demonstrate dumping/throwing away. Children practice dumping/throwing away, then line up and return to the classroom.

7. Citizenship and Classroom Behavior (15 min.)

Interactively discuss and demonstrate safe and unsafe behaviors in a classroom. Follow the leader around the classroom, being careful not to step on pretend children or the toys and books that they are using. Show pictures of children playing safely and unsafely. Demonstrate “Make Your Day,” “step one,” and when it might be used in kindergarten (or whatever your school uses for citizenship or discipline for kindergarteners) Children color, cut, & paste Safety Sequence Activity while parents and teacher discuss Make Your Day questions and concerns.

8. Reading (10 min.)

Introduce today’s book: The Hungry Caterpillar. Talk to parents about the rich after reading discussions they can have with their child and how those discussions can inspire a trip to the library to look for more great related books.

- Healthy eating, thinking about what we ate today
- Days of the week, look at the calendar
- The life cycle of butterflies,

Discuss the importance of rereading books:

- Repeated patterns, our brains look for patterns;
- Confidence, sense of “reading”; Fun to read together
- Memorization

9. Going home (5 min.)

Go over what will be in today’s kit: Book, healthy eating information & suggestions, Make Your Day pamphlet, library and story time information. Then, dismiss one at a time to go to the lockers and get backpacks and line up at the door.

Assessment

Observe parents with children.

Make note of children that need additional instruction.

Talk with parents.

Answer questions.

LIBRARY DAY

Lesson Plan

Topic

Listening in a group
Responding to a story
Care of books
Concepts of Print
Phonemic Awareness

Time Needed

90 minutes

Objectives of the Lesson

Parents will be introduced to phonemic awareness activities, the concepts of print, the importance of reading to children, asking questions following reading, and proper care of books.

Students will practice sitting in a group, listening to a story, responding to a story, how books work, and proper care of books.

Materials

Nametags
Attention getter (rain stick, xylophone, etc.)
Unifix cubes and pattern builder cards
“What Beginning Readers Need to Know?” handout
“Rhyme Away” activity sheet (Hall, 1997)
“Draw a Rhyme” activity sheet (Hall, 1997)
“Phonemic Awareness Activities,” handout (Hall, 1997)
“Questions Parents Can Ask,” handout
Rhyme matching cards
Nursery Rhyme books
A variety of books with rhyming words (Brown Bear, Brown Bear, etc.)

Process

1. Before children arrive, place student nametags at tables, leaving space in between children for parents to sit beside their child. Place a handful of unifix cubes and a pattern building card at each child’s spot and a tub of unifix cubes in the center of the table. Have tubbies of rhyming books placed on tables in the library.
2. Parents sign in, make nametags, and help children make patterns using the unifix cubes (5 min.). Circulate talking with children about what a pattern is and showing them with

the cubes. Encourage student to build their own patterns using two colors first, then more if they are doing well.

Phonemic Awareness: Rhyme (20 min.)

3. Pass out “What do beginning readers need to know?” to parents while children are putting away unifix cubes. Talk with them about Phonemic Awareness.

4. Demonstrate “first” to children using beanie babies, then spoken words, then have children say their name to their parent listening to the first sound they hear. Parents can help. Then sing “If your name begins with /?/ find your spot,” and invite children to the circle area to sit on their name spot.

5. When all children have arrived, explain to parents that you will demonstrate a rhyming activity because rhyming is the first stage in phonemic awareness development, and that is the stage where their child should be right now. The brain loves patterns and hearing the patterns in the words we speak and will help them to become good readers and writers. So, if they hear their child having difficulty in this area they should practice some rhyming activities, read rhyming poems and books, and sing/listen to rhyming songs, at home.

6. Draw a picture of a house according to the “Rhyme Away” script. Kids can guess what you’re drawing or you could have it pre-drawn before starting the activity. Demonstrate for children what a rhyme sounds like (example: toe, go, show, grow, snow, flow, hoe, row) Go through script having children guess the rhyming word at the end of each verse. If they have difficulty, provide them with plenty of examples, then, tell them the answer.

7. Next, pass out the parent copy of “erase a rhyme and draw a rhyme” with two sheets of white paper, so parent and children can both draw a rhyme monster. Explain to parents what to do to help their child practice rhyming referencing the modeling that you did for them.

Making Friends (5 min)

8. When most have finished their monsters, talk with the group about how to make new friends giving examples of what words you might use. Then have them use their monsters to make new friends around the table.

Rhythm (15 min)

9. Get attention. Tell parents that another important element of stage one, in phonemic awareness development, is hearing the rhythm of language. Begin snapping a regular beat, invite group to join in, encouraging them to clap or slap knees if they can’t snap. Say, “The words we say have a beat or rhythm, too. These are called syllables. Listen. Tiger, li-on, el-e-phant (clapping the syllables).” Have them join you in more examples showing them that big words have more syllables than small words. Then, clap out the syllables for each child’s name in the class.

10. From here you can easily transition to stage two phonemic awareness by providing two word parts and having the children guess the whole word using your hands to demonstrate the two word parts (put your hands out in front of you in fists, turn and open hands one at a time in correlation with the word parts) (example: butter-fly is butterfly, camp-ground is campground). Then have the group put their hands in front of them and join in.

11. Switch to giving the two-part word and having the group break it into the two parts using the same two hand method. Example: backpack is back-pack, crayon is cray-on.

12. Pass out rhyming match cards for children to practice while you give examples of the rest of the stages of phonemic awareness development with parents. Tell parents that many studies have shown that children who have difficulty learning to read often have difficulty with phonemic awareness, or hearing the individual sounds in words. So, it is important to spend time playing phonemic awareness games at home. Emphasize that these activities should be fun and not frustrating and that children will continue to work through the stages until they are reading fluently, which may take until the first or even second grade for the final stage.

Library (10 min)

13. Get attention. Have children put away rhyming cards. Choose a line leader to stand by the door, then, call tables one at a time to put their rhyming cards in their mailbox and line up behind the line leader to go to the library.

14. Children explain rules for going to another part of the school. Sing, "Are You Ready for the Hall?" Walk children to the library stopping the line along the wall in front of the library to talk about the library teacher and library expectations. Tell them that since we won't be checking out books today, they can look at the books in the tubbies on the tables (have a variety of story books with rhyme in tubbies on the tables). Let children go in and explore the library.

Concepts of Print (15 min)

15. Get attention. Invite children to the library listening area. Draw parents' attention to the concepts of print portion of their handout. Remind students to be active listeners and go through the "Active Listening" poster with them, telling them that today you want them to be listening for words that rhyme, sound the same on the end, and making predictions about what word will come next by using their thinking and wondering skills.

16. Tell children that before I read my book, I check my hands. Why? And when I take my library books home do I put them on the floor? Explain that having a basket or box to keep in your living room or car to put your books in will help them stay clean and not get torn or broken. Hold the book upside down and ask, "Now am I ready to read?" Why

not? Start from the back and ask, “Am I doing it right?” Talk about the direction of reading and print. Talk about the cover, the author, the illustrator, and the pictures.

17. Read “Is Your Mama a Llama?”

Reading Comprehension (15 min)

18. Draw parents’ attention to “The Grand Conversation” poster and tell them about the importance of talking with your child about books and getting to those deeper levels of thinking for comprehension. Go through the types of questions giving examples of each using the “Is Your Mama a Llama?” book, and asking the children to respond.

19. Send children to the book tubbies to pick out a book for their parents to read to them.

20. Pass out “The Grand Conversation: Questions Parents Can Ask,” to parents. Teacher circulates encouraging parents to talk with their child about the pictures and story.

Going Home (5 min)

21. Get attention. Line up and walk back to class having children go directly to their spot in the reading area. Pass out homework and go over, remind students to get their mail and their backpacks. Dismiss students one at a time to line up at the door, where you will pass out gift bags.

Assessment

Observe parents with children.

Make note of children that need additional instruction.

Talk with parents.

Answer questions.

READING DAY Lesson Plan

Topic: Reading

How do kids learn to read?

Left to Right/Top to Bottom/Cover to cover

Letter/Word spy

Time Needed

90 minutes

Objectives of the Lesson

Parents will become familiar with pre-reading teaching techniques (visual, syntax, semantic).

Students will practice singing and signing the alphabet, practice holding a book, left to right tracking, top to bottom, and cover to cover, looking at pictures and discussing the contents of a book.

Materials

Nametags

Attention getter (rain stick, xylophone, etc.)

Plastic bugs, sea creatures, buttons, (etc) for sorting

“Learning to Read” handout

Lg. Writing paper

Alphabet Chart

Small alphabet cards

Cereal Box

Name cards with children’s names printed on them

Nellie Edge, singing and signing CD (2006)

Blending Slide Poster

Magnetic Letters

Visual Tracking Booklets

Sight Words list

Stickers, pictures, or stampers

Book: Chicka, Chicka, Boom, Boom

A variety of ABC books and alliteration books

Process

1. Place children’s nametags, a handful of plastic bugs, and a sorting mat at places around the tables leaving space between children for parents. Place boxes of magnetic alphabet letters, children’s name cards, and alphabet cards in the center of the table.

2. Parents sign in and make nametags. Children find their nametags and look carefully at the bugs discussing with parent how they are alike and how they are different and finding others that they can place together in groups on the sorting cards. (5 min)

3. Explain visual discrimination to parents, it means looking closely at something to determine if they are the same or different. Some letters look similar, children need practice looking closely at them. While children are putting away bugs, pass out the "Learning to Read" handout for parents.

Visual Discrimination (10 min.)

4. Next, invite children to find their name card and dump out the magnetic letters and look for the letters that make their name. Those who finish easily can look for other letters using the alphabet cards. Encourage children to say the names of each of the letters in their name and other names if time allows.

5. While children are putting away letters, discuss the purpose of knowing the letter names. Then sing the familiar abc song encouraging children to join in.

Alphabetic Principal (10 min)

6. Now introduce the importance of learning the sounds of the letters and how using different modalities: visual, auditory, tactile helps children learn and remember alphabet letter names and sounds. Children watch, sing and sign the alphabet song with Nellie Edge CD, while teacher points to letters on the alphabet chart.

7. Invite the children to the reading center by having them locate the last letter in their name and come when that letter is named.

8. Talk to the parents about the different ways children learn to read. Explain that most parents teach their children to sound out words. While it is important to know that every letter makes a sound, and sounding out is an important reading strategy, sounding out every letter can be tedious and can slow a reader down in learning to read.

Blending Slide (10 min)

9. Demonstrate the blending slide, by, first, having children tell about how they use a slide. Then, using the letters for the word can place the "c" at the top. Have the children help with the /c/ at the top of the slide. Practice the /a/ by stretching it out as long as you can (vowels are made with the mouth open and can be held a long time). Then, have the children help say the /n/ at the bottom of the slide where we put our feet down and stop. Demonstrate sliding the sounds going faster and faster until the children can hear the word "can."

Word Families (10 min)

7. Say, “A faster and easier way to read is by learning word families. The brain loves patters and that’s why learning to rhyme is so important.” Tell parents that learning word chunks is easier for children than sounding out each letter. Remind children about rhyming words. Then, demonstrate a word family on a big sheet of paper using can and making ‘an’ family rhyming words with the children helping.

Sight Words (20 min)

7. Some words are best learned whole. Hold up a box of popular cereal and ask children what the word is on the box. The kindergarten sight words are listed in the parent handout. Explain that the most commonly used words often don’t follow simple sounding out rules. They are best learned whole.

8. Demonstrate environmental print by playing alphabet “I spy.” Chose a magnetic letter and demonstrate looking for that letter in the classroom. Give each child a magnetic letter and have the parent and child look for two of those letters somewhere in the classroom. When two are found, they return the letter, and sit at their table.

9. Pass out Bingo papers for practicing sight words. Parents help their child cut and paste or write the sight words in the boxes on the bingo paper. Explain that you can only win once. Demonstrate putting an unifix cube on the free space and demonstrate playing by writing a sight word on a big sheet of paper and putting a unifix cube on it. Continue through all of the sight words giving small candies or prizes to each person as they call out a Bingo. Keep playing until everyone gets a Bingo.

Reading (15 min)**10. Tracking**

Pass out visual tracking booklets and demonstrate reading the picture and letters. Children can “read” books by naming pictures and letters using left to right, and top to down, page to page tracking.

11 Explain that a more natural way of learning to read is reading together. Show ABC books and talk about alliteration books for learning the alphabet. Show parents the different levels of beginning books that their child will be bringing home and reading in kindergarten.

Invite children to the reading circle.

Read Chicka, Chicka, Boom Boom, then send children to their parents to read the book to their parents.

11. Talk to parents about books that will help their child learn letter names and sounds, like books with alliteration. Pass out new book, Chicka, Chicka, Boom, Boom.

9. Going home (5 min.)

Pass out homework, go over. Have children line up to go home. Remind them about next week class and completing and returning homework.

Assessment

Observe parents with children.

Make note of children that need additional instruction.

Talk with parents.

Answer questions.

WRITING DAY Lesson Plan

Topic: Writing

How do kids learn to write?

Gross Motor Skills

Fine Motor Skills

Pencil Grip

Scissor Grip

Telling a Story

Time Needed

90 minutes

Objectives of the Lesson

Parents will become familiar with pre-writing teaching techniques and how to help their child develop gross and fine motor skills.

Students will practice developmentally appropriate gross and fine motor task including writing their name.

Students will interactively write a story, then tell their own story

Materials

Name tags

Attention getter (rain stick, xylophone, etc.)

Crayons

Pencils

Scissors

Pencil grips (various kinds)

Beans or rice

Monster (mini trash can)

Children's chopsticks

Shaving cream

Messy Mats

Paint

Q-tips

Yarn

Fruit Loops or macaroni

Glue sticks

Stickers

Sand

Cookie sheets

Sidewalk chalk
Clock Face Poster
Small tablets of paper for each child
Bingo papers

Process

1. Place student nametags around the tables leaving space in between students for parents to sit. Place a tub of playdough at each child's spot and various playdough tools in the center of the table.

2. Parents sign in and children find their name at a table, sit down and play with playdough.

3. While children are playing with playdough, talk to parents and children about writing and centers and the day's objectives. Have children put away playdough, put in their mailbox, then sit on their nametag in the reading circle (5 min.).

4. Messy, But Fun! Fine Motor Skills – Center Activities (45 min)

When all children have arrived at the reading circle, explain how to move through the centers when they hear the timer. Using a color wheel, place student names in even groups on different colors of the color wheel. Identify the color of each center activity (using colored paper on the tables or a sheet of construction paper in the center of each table) and demonstrate what to do at each center in a guided tour type format.

- Cutting and gluing activity
- Painting with Q tips
- Stringing cereal to make yarn necklaces
- using tools to grasp in sensory table
- sand writing
- shaving cream drawing

Call names of students for each group and have them go to their first center activity table, begin time for 7 min. Change centers every 7 min., re-reading through names for each group.

5. Gross Motor Skills (10 min)

While children are cleaning up, explain the importance of building large muscle to support writing. Have children line up after they have cleaned up their final center. Take the children to the gym. In the gym, have children line up along the wall on one end of the gym. Demonstrate a variety of animal walks and have students choose an animal walk and do it all the way to the other end of the gym and back. Line up and return to class. Children should go directly to the reading circle.

6. Fine Motor Skills – Writing (5 min)

Pass out writing handouts and developmental writing and kindergarten writing expectations to parents. Hand out pencils to students and demonstrate correct pencil grasp and correct letter formation (use the clock face poster). Pass out small tablets of paper and send children to find one thing in the classroom to write. While they are doing this, talk to parents about creating a play school or office with all kinds of paper, envelopes, all kinds of writing utensils, crayons, markers, and other things for having fun with writing at home. Children return to reading center.

7. Telling a Story (15 min)

Ask students if they have any pets at home and let them raise a finger to tell how many they have. Draw a simple picture of your pet on Tell a story about something clever your pet does. Write it in simple language on the large easel tablet. Then, students return to their seats to draw a picture of what their favorite pet does that funny or smart. Parents write the words. Explain gradual release of responsibility.

8. Write: Sticker stories (5 min)

Pass out half-sheet of paper booklets with about 6 pages. Demonstrate how to make an “I like ...” pattern book with stickers on the end of each sentence. Students write I like on each page and place a sticker at the end of each sentence. If time is running out, encourage them to finish at home.

9. Going home (5 min.)

Pass out Good Dog Carl and talk to parents about having their child practice telling a story by looking at the pictures in the book and telling what happens in the story. Pass out homework and go over. Dismiss one at a time to go to the lockers and get backpacks and line up at the door.

Assessment

Observe parents with children.

Make note of children that need additional instruction.

Talk with parents.

Answer questions.

CELEBRATION Lesson Plan

Topic:

Celebration

Time Needed

90 minutes

Objectives of the Lesson

Parents and students will meet the kindergarten teachers.

Students will read with a fifth grader.

Students will make flowers and notes to present to their new teacher.

Materials

Name tags

Attention getter (rain stick, xylophone, etc.)

Pattern Blocks

Crayons

Pencils

Scissors

Paper

Tape

Glue Stix

Flowers

Pipe cleaners

Bouquets of real flowers (1 for each kindergarten teacher)

Marshmallows

Toothpicks

Plastic baggies

Process

1. Fifth graders arrive before kindergartens. They should sign in and make nametags for themselves. Take a few minutes to remind the students of their responsibilities, how to begin conversations with kindergarteners, how to help them feel safe and comfortable, and how to read with them. Make sure each of them have a book to present to their kinder buddy. Explain the order of events and how they will be assigned to their buddy.

2. Place student nametags around the tables leaving space in between students for parents to sit. Place pattern blocks on the tables

3. Parents sign in and children find their name at a table, sit down and play with the pattern blocks. Fifth graders join in playing with pattern blocks.

4. While children are playing with pattern blocks, talk to parents and children about the day's objectives and introduce fifth grade students and their role as buddies to the kindergarteners during the first few days of school. (10 min.).

Fifth Grade Buddy Reading (10 min)

5. Children put away blocks and names are called pairing fifth graders with kindergarteners. They, they are dismissed to find a quiet spot to read together. Parents can join them or just observe and talk with other parents.

Award Ceremony (10 min)

6. When children are done reading and talking, invite them back to the table where they were sitting before. Then, have an award ceremony calling children one at a time to receive their certificate of completion of the summer program.

7. Set a tubbie in the center of each table that contains: flowers, pipe cleaners, paper, scissors, glue sticks, pencils, and paper.

Making Flowers (30 min)

8. Demonstrate how to make flowers with a message using the supplies in the tubbies. Let them know that they will be able to give their flowers and note to their new teacher. If you have a large group, center can be set up using some of last week's materials, and have children rotate through the centers making sure that each child has had a chance to make a flower and note if they want to. When children are finished with their flowers they can make marshmallow and toothpick creations with the fifth graders, parents, and K-teachers. Kindergarten Teachers should have entered while children were making marshmallow creations and begun to get to know families and kids.

Introduce K- Teachers (30 min)

9. Get attention. Introduce each kindergarten teacher, telling a little about them and presenting them each with a bouquet of flowers.

Kindergarten teachers call the names of their students, the students join their teacher and present him/her with the flower and note they made.

Then, the K-teachers take their group of students to their own classroom reading circle to read them a story, talk to children and parents, answer questions, and dismiss them when finished.

Assessment

Observe parents with children.

Make note of children that need additional instruction.

Talk with parents.

Answer questions.

Appendix E

Homework Chart

Reading Day
Things to practice at home.

Name _____

	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Read Book: Chicka Chicka Boom Boom						
Picture walk						
Right to left finger tracking						
Top to bottom finger tracking						
Letter eye spy						
Word eye spy						
Make letters with clay						
Play letter games/flashcards						
Practice letter names						
Practice letter sounds						

- I can find letters in my world
- I can "read" words in my world (like the name on the cereal box, or the McDonalds sign)
- I can tell a story from the pictures in a book
- I can point to the words in a book
- I know the letter names
- I know some letter sounds

Parent Signature _____

Appendix F

Program Evaluation Cover Letter and Survey

June 8, 2008

Dear Parents,

Your help is needed to evaluate and improve our prekindergarten summer program called Kindergarten Connection. Your child was one of the first to attend such a program here at Sunnyslope. As we look toward getting next year's kindergarteners and their parents connected to the Sunnyslope staff, school, and community, we would like to hear your comments and advice regarding Kindergarten Connection summer program. Please, take a few minutes to fill out the Parent Survey and return to your classroom teacher before the final day of school.

Thank you for your time and help.

Laurie Card-Roley
Intervention Specialist

Parent Program Evaluation Survey

Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. My student benefited from the Kindergarten Connection program by being more prepared for kindergarten.					
2. The program offered a service that was beneficial to me and my family.					
3. a. The program reduced stress for my child.					
b. The program reduced stress for me.					
4. The program helped connect me and my child to the school and/or community.					
5. I had confidence in the knowledge of the session presenters.					
6. The information was clear and easy to understand and use.					
7. The staff was caring, professional, and confidential.					
8. The T-shirts, books, and other gifts were helpful.					

9. a. The number of sessions was: too many just right, not enough

b. Would you prefer the sessions be: throughout the summer just the month before school starts

10. What materials did you find most helpful?

11. What did you like best about the Kindergarten Connection program?

12. What, if any, information was new to you?

13. What can we do to improve the program for next year?

Appendix G

Kindergarten Connection Scoring Rubrics
Wenatchee School Kindergarten Report Card

Kindergarten Connection Scoring Rubrics

Pre-Kindergarten Screening Reading Rubric

0	Student cannot identify any capital letter of the alphabet
1	Student can identify 1 to 10 capital letters of the alphabet
2	Student can identify 11-22 capital letters of the alphabet
3	Student can identify 23-26 capital letters of the alphabet

Beginning of Kindergarten Reading Benchmarks Rubric

1	Student can identify 1 to 20 capital and lower case letters of the alphabet Student can produce the sounds for 0 to 1 letters of the alphabet Student can read 0 to 1 high frequency words
2	Student can identify 21 to 45 capital and lower case letters of the alphabet Student can produce the sounds for 2 to 5 letters of the alphabet Student scores 1-2 on the phonemic awareness assessment Student can read 2 to 3 high frequency words
3	Student can identify 46 to 52 capital and lower case letters of the alphabet Student can produce the sounds for 6 out of 26 letters of the alphabet Student scores 3 out of 15 on the phonemic awareness assessment Student can read 4 out of 20 high frequency words

End of Kindergarten Reading Benchmarks Rubric

1	Student can identify 1 to 20 capital and lower case letters of the alphabet Student can produce the sounds for 1 to 9 letters of the alphabet Student scores 1 to 7 on the phonemic awareness assessment Student reads text at a Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) level A to 1 Student can read 1 to 15 high frequency words
2	Student can identify 21-45 capital and lower case letters of the alphabet Student can produce the sounds for 10 to 21 letters of the alphabet Student scores 8 to 10 on the phonemic awareness assessment Student reads text at a Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) level 2 Student can read 16-19 high frequency words
3	Student can identify 46-52 capital and lower case letters of the alphabet Student can produce the sounds for 22 to 26 letters of the alphabet Student scores 11 to 15 on the phonemic awareness assessment Student reads text at a Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) level 3 Student can read 20 high frequency words

A score of 3 is standard. Students with skills above standard are given a score of 4.

Wenatchee School District
Kindergarten Report Card

Student:	
School Year:	Teacher:
Next Years Assignment	

Attendance	1 st	2 nd	3 rd
Days Present			
Days Absent			
Days Tardy			

Evaluation Score:	
4	Exceeds Standard Consistently goes beyond requirement
3	Meets Standard Applies skills in a variety of situations
2	Progressing Toward Standard Is showing progress over time
1	Not Progressing Needs more time and/or effort
X	Not Evaluated at the time

Observation score for effort/participation
(O) Outstanding, (S) Satisfactory, (N) Needs Improvement

Reading	1 st	2 nd	3 rd
Recognizes alphabet letters: _____ (16/52) _____ (32/52) _____ (48/52)			
Knows letter sounds _____ (6/26) _____ (13/26) _____ (22/26)			
Reads a core of high frequency words _____ (4/20) _____ (8/20) _____ (16/20)			
Phonemic Awareness: Recognizes words that rhyme, Sequences sounds in words, Blends sounds in word _____ (3/15) _____ (6/15) _____ (11/15)			
DRA Reading Level _____ (2/3) _____ (3/3)	X		
Tracks words left to right			
Participates in the reading of songs and poems			
Understand format of books, pages, title, author/illustrator			

Writing

1st 2nd 3rd

Writing rubric level: _____ (1/3) _____ (2/3) _____ (3/3)			
Correctly writes some sight words: _____ (4/20) _____ (8/20) _____ (16/20)			
Writes first name			
Writes last name	X	X	
Writes legibly			
Writes lists, stories, labels pictures with teacher guidance			

Communication

1st 2nd 3rd

Listening – Follows directions			
Listening – Focuses attention while others are talking			
Speaks clearly, conveying ideas in group discussions			

Math

1st 2nd 3rd

Number Sense	Identifies numbers in random order: _____ (3/10) _____ (6/10) _____ (10/10)			
	Counts objects to 31 _____ (10/31) _____ (20/31) _____ (31/31)			
	Numeral writing by 1s to 31			
Measurement	Measures using non-standard objects	X	X	
	Estimates and compares objects by length, weight			
Geometry	Identifies basic shapes 			
Algebra	Sorts and classifies objects			
	Copies and extends patterns			
	Solves simple story problems using pictures/numbers/words	X	X	

Appendix H

Additional Student Information Tables

**Sunnyslope Kindergarten Connection Summer Program
2007**

Student ID	Letter ID	Sounds	Reading Ready	Counts orally	Count 1-1	Shapes	Colors	Writing	Scissors	Drawing	Pre-school
101	26/26		+	13		4/4	9/9	1 (L)	1 (L)	3	N/Y
102	26/26		+	39	16/15	4/4	9/9	2 (R)	3 (R)	2	N/Y
103	24/26		+	23	+	4/4	9/9	3 (R)	1 (R)	3	N/Y
104	24/26		+	30	+	2/4	9/9	2 (R)	3 (R)	* 2	Y
105	25/26	NA	+	20	NA	NA	8/8	1 (R)	1(R)	1	Y
106	26/26	21/26	4	50+	+	3/4	9/9	3 (R)	*1(L/	1	Y
107	0/26			12	12	3/4	9/9	1 (R)	1 (R)	1	Y
108	26/26	NA	4	43+	+	3/4	8/8	3 (R)	3 (R)	1	Y
110	24/26		+	40	+	4/4	9/9	3 (R)	3 (R)	1	Y
111	26/26		+	20	+	1/4	9/9	2 (R)	2 (R)	2	Y
112	*19/26		+/-	12	+/-	3/4	9/9	4 (R)	3 (R)	3	Y
113	0/26		+	* 0	*	0/4	4/9	1 (R)	1(R)	1	N
114	8/26		-	10	14/15	1/4	8/8	1 (R)	1(R)	1	Y
115	25/26		-	14	+	3/4	8/8	3 (L)	3 (R)	2	Y
116	6/26		+	19	16/15	3/4	9/9	4 (R)	1 (R)	3	Y
117	25/26		+	109	+	4/4	9/9	3 (R)	3 (R)	1	Y
118	22/26			18	* +	4/4	8/8	2 (L)	2 (L)	2	Y
119	11/26		+	25	+	3/4	9/9	3 (R)	3(R)	2	Y

1 needs improvement

2 working toward

3 standard

4 above

Sunnyslope Kindergarten Connection Summer Program 2008

Student ID	Letter ID	Sounds	Reading Ready	Count orally	Count 1-1	Shapes	Colors	Writing	Scissors	Drawing	Pre-school
201	26/26	24/26	3	1-50	3	4/4	9/9	3	3	2	Y
202	26/26	16/26	4	1-50+	3	4/4	9/9	3	3	3	Y
203	25/26	N/A	3	1-11	2	4/4	8/9	3	3	3	Y
204	1/26	-	2	1-10	2	3/4	7/9	1	1	1	N
205	24/26	N/A	3	1-14	2	4/4	8/9	3	2	3	Y
206	9/26	-	2	1-16	3	4/4	8/9	2	2	3	Y
207	1/26	-	2	1-12	2	4/4	8/9	3	3	2	?
208	16/26	-	3	1-14	2	4/4	8/9	2	3	2	Y
209	26/26	21/26	3	1-23	3	4/4	9/9	3	3	2	Y
210	26/26	21/26	3	1-28	3	1/4	9/9	3	3	3	Y
211	26/26	22/26	3	1-49+	3	4/4	9/9	3	3	3	Y
212	26/26	17/26	4	1-20	3	3/4	9/9	3	3	2	N
213	26/26	23/26	4	1-40	3	4/4	9/9	3	3	3	Y
214	23/26	N/A	1	1-10	2	4/4	8/9	1	1	2	Y
215	4/26	-	3	1-15	3	1/4	8/9	3	2	2	N
216	26/26	15/26	2	1-25	3	3/4	8/9	3	3	4	Y
217	3/26	-	3	1-10	1	3/4	8/9	1	2	1	N
218	26/26	24/26	4	1-16	3	4/4	9/9	3	3	3	Y
219	0	-	1	1-9	1	3/4	6/9	1	3	1	N

1 needs improvement

2 working toward

3 standard

4 above

Sunnyslope Kindergarten Connection
Summer Program 2007
 E-1(Research Group)

Student ID	Concerns	KC Attendance (6)	Homework	Preschool
101	none	100%	67%	N
102	none	83%	80%	N
103	none	83%	80%	N
104	none	67%	0%	Y
105	none	50%	100%	Y
106	none	67%	50%	Y
107	Academic: low	100%	33%	Y
108	none	50%	66%	Y
109		50%	100%	?
110	Behavior:	67%	50%	Y
111	none	100%	50%	Y
112	None	50%	0%	Y
113	Bilingual: no English	50%	33%	N
114	Academic: low Speech	83%	60%	Y
115	none	67%	75%	Y
116	Academic: low Behavior: immature	33%	0%	Y
117		67%	25%	Y
118	Behavior:	67%	75%	Y
119	Academic: low	33%	0%	Y

Sunnyslope Kindergarten Connection
Summer Program 2008
 E-2(Research Group)

Student ID	Concerns	KC Attendance (6)	Homework	Preschool
2-1	none	83%	20%	Y
2-2	none	0		Y
2-3	Behavior: high energy	0		Y
2-4	Academic: low Behavior: immature, sensitive	83%	40%	N
2-5	Behavior: immature, short attention	100%	67%	Y
2-6	none	100%	33%	Y
2-7	Academic: low Behavior: distractibility, high energy, difficulty focusing	0%	0%	?
2-8	Behavior: short attention, distractibility, energetic	50%	0%	Y
2-9	none	50%	0%	y
2-10	none	50%	0%	Y
2-11	none	50%	0%	Y
2-12	none	67%	50%	N
2-13	none	33%	0%	Y
2-14	Special Education: Down Syndrome Behavior: strong willed, refusals Health & Communication	100%	0%	Y
2-15	Academic: low Behavior: strong willed	100%	67%	N
2-16	none	67%	25%	Y
2-17	Academic: low Behavior: immature, sensitive	67%	25%	N
2-18	Behavior: opinionated, head strong	50%	0%	Y
2-19	Academic: low Behavior: "I can't do it, you do it", refusals, immature	33%	0%	N