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What Makes a Good Kindergarten?

Shirley Jean Riel
Central Washington University

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WHAT MAKES A GOOD KINDERGARTEN?

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate Faculty
Central Washington State College

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education

by
Shirley Jean Riel

July 1968

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APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

John A. Schwenker, COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

John E. Davis

Robert Kellman

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITION OF TERMS

Many studies have been done and are being done at the present to point out the importance of kindergarten. Even with all the substantiating evidence many schools still do not have kindergartens. Kindergarten is a necessary part of the school program. (60). Each and every subject pursued in the elementary school is linked in one way or another to the experience which children have in kindergarten. (26:86). There are things to be learned before books are introduced; and a child does not get it all in the home. Kindergarten allows expansion of the experiences that are a necessary prelude to learning. Every student should have equal opportunity to take part in these learning experiences. (52).

The Problem and Purpose of the Study

The problem is to find what constitutes a positive kindergarten program; and the purpose of this study is to analyze the value of kindergarten as a necessary part of every school program. Therefore a review of the literature was undertaken to see whether experts felt kindergarten was important or not. If kindergarten is necessary; what should the program be like? A check list was compiled based on the literature to see if there is any commonality in current kindergarten programs.

Therefore, the two purposes of this paper were to see if experts deemed kindergarten essential and if the program is essential, what are some of the common practices.

Educators have discovered that children can learn more and much earlier than heretofore believed possible. (60). Also, they generally agree that a major purpose of kindergarten is to establish a foundation for learning. (60). The kindergarten year finds the child at a time of major development. He is learning to think, to make judgments, and to create order from a strange complex world. He is learning to test his relationships with a large group of others his own age in daily experiences. He is getting ready to take an important step in language, transition from the spoken to the written word. The five-year-old grows in independence, initiative, and his ability to communicate ideas and feelings. He begins to consider others as well as himself. The five-year-old is the most maligned, misunderstood, and underestimated child in the public school system today. (52:76). As a result, in many schools the five-year-old is being denied the education he deserves. We owe the five-year-old at least one brief year to come to grips with the first two tools of learning: (1) listening and (2) speaking.

Importance of the Study

According to most educators, kindergarten is, more

and more, becoming a necessary part of the school program; yet almost half of the elementary schools in the United States still do not have kindergarten. (60). The main argument against promoting kindergarten is the cost of setting up and maintaining an adequate program. In essence, the question of whether a kindergarten exists depends on the value placed upon it by the community and its educational leadership. Families in the middle and low middle income bracket do not see enough of a need to send their children to kindergarten.

On the other hand, various schools and organizations have taken great strides toward establishing kindergarten in their areas. Operation Headstart, set up by the Federal Government, is aimed at low income communities. This program was established after it became part of President Johnson's Education Bill entitled 'Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965'. Headstart is a federally financed--local action program for helping children of limited opportunity; those who will enter kindergarten or first grade for the first time.

Federal aid also is made available to help schools set up kindergarten, but many of these districts use the money in other areas. (58).

A third factor is competition for preschool education. Montessori classes and other private kindergartens

are full and have waiting lists. Montessori was started in Italy in 1907. It is so designed to help the child achieve a sense of himself.....through the successful execution and repetition of simple tasks.....(44). The pressure for preschooling is greater among the wealthy and overachieving parents in the big cities, as it has become a status symbol to many of them. (48).

Kindergarten is necessary for the development of common background experiences; the basic foundations for future understanding in the classrooms. Or, as Ethyl Vandeberg states, "The happy stimulating environment of the kindergarten should lay the foundation for enjoyment of all his future school experiences". (63:453). William Brownell also commented, "It is the learner's experience with which we work in education, and it is here that we find the means to make learning more meaningful and instruction correspondingly more effective". (45:60).

Delimitations of the Study

There are many volumes of material printed about preschool education or kindergarten. From research available under limitations of time, this check list was compiled to see what important aspects of kindergarten found in the literature are being used today.

This check list was given to kindergarten teachers on Central Washington State College campus during the 1968

summer sessions. No attempt was made to look into the educational background, qualifications, or experiences of those individuals responsible for formulating the conclusions on the check list that was administered.

Definition of Terms

Kindergarten.....It is a school for young children, a halfway place between the home education that they have had for four or five years and the school education that they will be required, legally, to have for the next twelve or thirteen years. (15).

Montessori.....In the Montessori classroom a child is the center of a world in which the 'teacher' plays an almost impassive role. The 'teacher' however is a directress, a perceiver of the child's needs; the preparer of his environment; the programmer of his materials and lessons. The child occupies himself with a series of graded tasks

that he himself chooses; he is guided into wanting to learn. (26).

Operation Headstart...A kindergarten federally financed to help children in low income communities.

Summary

One quality of man is intelligence. Its development is of great importance, not only to the individual, but to the world as well. For many years, educators have decried the waste of human potential due to lack of concern in parents and others for the intellectual development of the preschool child. By the time a child gets to school, he has already formed many patterns and attitudes which will greatly affect his interests throughout life. Most children have more natural ability than is ever realized. What most preschool educators are trying to do is lay a broad and firm foundation for further learning by nurturing curiosity and open-mindedness, developing self-assurance, and showing children how to learn. This foundation for future learning should be available for all students throughout the United States. This is the only way to get equal educational opportunity for all.

Chapter II will be concerned with literature related to the study and a review of research on kindergarten pro-

grams. Chapter III will deal with the preparation and administration of a check list to kindergarten teachers on campus during the 1968 summer session to discover how the programs of today compare to those mentioned in the literature. Chapter IV will cover the summary, conclusions, and implications of the study on kindergarten.

CHAPTER II

The researcher of the paper will be concerned with literature related to the study and review of research on kindergarten programs. The literature will be reviewed to find out what constitutes a positive kindergarten program. The chapter was constructed to build a check list that was used as a guide line for the kindergarten teacher responses. This review was conducted in a chronological sequence, commencing with Rousseau and ending with modern experts in kindergarten education in America. (91). Gertrude Hildreth summarizes the ideal readiness program when she says, "A broad preparatory program is more successful than narrow techniques in developing readiness for learning. The activity program.....with emphasis on functional learning and meaningful experiences, is the best preparation for later progress in learning skills. The activity program affords children natural opportunity for language development, manipulating materials, sensory meanings and relationships, developing work habits, and attaining social maturity". (27).

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The idea of education for the young child is not new. Until the eighteenth century, early childhood education was generally the responsibility of home and parents. Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) shocked educators of France

and Europe with his view of child care and training. (41). He advocated a "negative training"---discipline by nature was considered sufficient. (41). In the expressions of Rousseau, certain ideas current in kindergarten practice can be noted. Controlled freedom for growth and development; child study by teachers and parents as an integral part of the sound kindergarten program; the child's abilities considered in relation to his tender years, are some of these. (41:60). In 1774, Jean Frederic Oberlin established the first school for very young children in France. (41:61). One of his chief concerns was for the physical well-being of the children. Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) deserves mention in kindergarten history because of his introduction of object teaching, the belief that learning was more effective if children could see and feel objects rather than hear about them in words alone. (41:61). Pestalozzi's methods were a major influence in the later educational development of the United States.

Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852) is popularly known as the "Father of the Kindergarten". (32:5). He opened the first kindergarten in Germany in 1837. (26). He was the first to form a comprehensive theory of preschool education, and to work out techniques for making his theories operational. Comprehensive teaching included block play, nature study, music, art expression, stories, rhymes, and learning

through doing are important contributions of this German educator.

Mrs. Carl Schurz started the first kindergarten in America in 1855 using methods of Froebel. Here are the underlying principles of Froebel's education:

1. The conception of God as the source and essence of the world as a whole and of each several organic thing in the world.
2. Development as the universal law whereby the divine essence makes manifest and explicit what was from the first implicit.
3. The similarity and parallelism of all instances of development wherever found.
4. The doctrine of "correspondences" or the analogy everywhere subsisting between "spirit" and body.
5. The scheme of connections which run throughout the world as a result of the foregoing.
6. The doctrine of the member-whole, that the whole works in each part.
7. The law of opposites as the method by which the development everywhere takes place. (30:16-17).

Pestalozzi, on the other hand, formed the background of Maria Montessori's educational philosophy. The following are some of the underlying principles of the Montessori method:

1. The belief that the child nature is essentially good.
2. The belief that the educational process is fundamentally an unfolding of what was given at birth.
3. A consequent belief in liberty as the necessary condition of this development.
4. The utilization of sense-experiences as means to bringing about the development.
5. A tendency to accept the faculty psychology.
6. The consequent tendency to emphasize the disciplinary aspect of sense-training.
7. The emphasis upon nomenclature in connection with sense-experiences.

8. The true nature of an ideal early education was largely self-education.
9. He must be allowed the freedom of opportunity to gain self-discipline through work and concentration.
10. The role of the teacher as programmer so to provide the learner with the opportunity to immerse himself in activities of sequential interest and challenge.
11. The individual literally builds himself through experiences on the environment. (31:62).

After the two basic kindergartens, Montessori and Froebel's principles; many educators pioneered kindergarten in America. (29). Miss Susan Blow was one of Froebel's greatest interpreters and expanded and demonstrated his ideas in new ways in preschool education in the United States. (29:184-203). Some of the kindergartens of today have combined the two methods, Montessorism and Froebelism, attempting to achieve the best results possible in their programs. In addition to its inheritance from Froebel and Montessori, the American kindergarten has been greatly influenced by the thinking, teaching, writing, and research done in our own country. G. Stanley Hall helped educators appreciate the significance of play in education. (25:42). From the opposing philosophies of kindergarten education represented by Susan Blow and Patty Smith Hill came the beginning of our present scientific outlook on kindergarten education. (25:43).

It goes almost without saying that the philosophy and teaching of John Dewey are reflected in one way or another in almost every phase of the current kindergarten

program. It was John Dewey who helped educators and others sense the importance of the practical--the here-and-now--in education; and it is he who continues to support kindergarten teachers by reminding them through his writings (1) that only life educates, (2) that education should involve both the hands and the minds of children, (3) that the aim of education is to teach children how--not what--to think, and (4) that education involves a continuous reconstruction of living experiences that go beyond the four walls of the classroom. (26:9).

As a result of the teachings of John Dewey and Mark Van Doren, educators have come to recognize that the present as well as the future is of vital importance to the young child's development. Mark Van Doren states, "In education we want to establish a desire so deep, so endless, so infinitely important that it can never be satisfied." (34:79). Education is not only preparation for what is to come; it is the enrichment and interpretation of the present. (25:43). William Heard Kilpatrick, through both his teaching and his writing, did much to bring new dignity to the profession of kindergarten teaching. He helped educators and the public in general appreciate the fact that young children deserve and need teachers who can find educational implications in everyday experiences, and who can challenge children to make good use of the knowledge and understanding they al-

ready have. From the 1920's on, research in child development and education has contributed richly to our awareness of the needs and capabilities of the kindergarten-aged child. (25:2). We are aware that past, present, and future must be taken into consideration in developing a good educational program for children.

The National Education Association established a Kindergarten Department in 1874. Before the turn of the century, the Association recommended that kindergarten should be a part of the school system. (41:65).

The International Kindergarten Union came into existence in 1893. The expressed aims of the newly formed organization were:

1. To assist in the establishment of the highest standards of training for those who were to undertake the education of the young children.
2. To bring into active cooperation all who were working in this direction.
3. To gather and disseminate throughout the world knowledge of the kindergarten movement.

Since this time, the idea of kindergarten has been steadily growing. Many states and communities who are recognized nationally for their educational leadership consider kindergarten the first step on their school ladder today and look forward to downward extension to include nursery schools in the near future. (41:66). The figures which follow are proof of the vigorous growth in kinder-

garten enrollment. (26:27).

1944.....	734,000	1954.....	1,479,000
1948.....	1,016,200	1958.....	1,771,753
1951.....	1,272,150	1962.....	2,098,913
		1964.....	2,131,473

"Nevertheless some 1,500,000 of our five-year-olds are even now being deprived of kindergarten experience; many more urban than rural children have the opportunity to attend kindergarten; and some kindergarten units have far too many children enrolled for the good of the children." (26:29). Some states and communities remain unconvinced as to the value of kindergartens.

One reason kindergartens are becoming more popular is the establishment of nursery schools, especially in poverty areas. According to a study made in New York, the problems of most of these four-year-olds start at home--homes so crowded that nobody has the time to answer questions. (62). The basic assumption in most preschools in deprived areas of cities is that early, enriched programs will counteract significantly any negative influence of social environment. (64:44-45). Noting the needs of young children in today's world, delegates to the 1960 White House Conference on Children and Youth stressed that nursery schools, kindergartens, day care centers and other children's groups be opened to children of all socio-economic levels, creeds, and national origins. (33:8).

In the United States, kindergarten has played a leading role in developing new theories of childhood education. One of the new theories was developed by Dr. Kephart. He uses six activities to develop motor perceptual development. They are: (1) Angels-in-the-Snow, (2) Walking Board, (3) Balance Board, (4) Chalk Board, (5) Peg Board, and (6) Ball Games. He advocates a child cannot learn if he lacks basic perceptual skills. The following authors have offered considerable evidence that more emphasis needs to be placed on developing basic skills to assist and improve the rate of learning in first grade.

- (1) R. W. Kephart, The Slow Learner in the Classroom
- (2) G. N. Getman, How to Develop Your Child's Intelligence
- (3) Dr. Newell C. Kephart, Success Through Play

Kindergarten has grown from a little-understood institution to one which is scientifically grounded in research. The modern kindergarten is "progressive" to the extent that it applies the findings of modern biological and psychological science to the education of children so that they can more effectively develop their potentialities as individuals and as responsible members of our society.

Chapter III will deal with the preparation of a check list compiled from educational authorities basis of a good kindergarten. Kindergarten teachers on Central

Washington State College campus during the 1968 summer session will be interviewed to discover how the programs in their schools compare to those mentioned in the literature and to find if there are common practices in kindergarten classrooms.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE OF THE STUDY

Overview

The researcher of the paper compiled a check list from publications by educational authorities of kindergarten experiences considered to be of value in the curriculum. A frequency check was made from eight books discussing kindergarten curriculum. This was done to see if there were any major differences in kindergarten programs as set up by the experts. The researcher then interviewed a group of experienced kindergarten teachers on Central Washington State College campus during the 1968 summer session to determine how local programs in their individual school systems compared to those mentioned in the literature, and to determine if there are common practices in kindergarten classrooms.

Preparation of a Check List

The entire kindergarten program is identified as a period of getting ready for richer living and learning. Through varied learning experiences in social living, language arts, numbers, science, art, music and health, the child will be furnished with a background for many future learnings. Through all of these many and varied experiences, the teacher will be teaching skills, attitudes and understandings.

The check list was compiled from various curriculum suggestions found in the following books:

- (1) Kindergarten-The Key to Child Growth, Helen Peterson
- (2) Curriculum Guides, Ruth Andrus
- (3) Teaching the Kindergarten Child, Hazel M. Lambert
- (4) Good Schools for Young Children, Sarah Hammond
- (5) Education in the Kindergarten, Foster and Headley
- (6) Living in the Kindergarten, Willis and Stegeman
- (7) Teaching in the Kindergarten, Helen Bartelt Hurd
- (8) Reading Readiness in Kindergarten, Lawrence Carrillo

A frequency count was taken to see how often each experience or activity was mentioned in the eight books. This was done to see if there were any major differences in kindergarten programs set up by the experts. Carrillo's book was used to set up the nine basic areas used in this study.

TABLE I

KINDERGARTEN CHECK LIST

<u>Item</u>	<u>References Used</u>	<u>Authorities Who Commented</u>	<u>Percent</u>
I. Auditory Experiences			
A. Read stories orally	8	8	100 %
B. Ear-training games	8	7	87½%
C. Identifying beginning sounds	8	1	12½%
D. Counting	8	8	100 %
E. Audio-Visual material	8	5	62½%
II. Visual Experiences			
A. Work with color recognition	8	5	62½%
B. Left - right	8	3	37½%
C. Visual discrimination	8	6	75 %
D. Library center	8	8	100 %
III. Vocabulary Experiences			
A. Dramatize stories	8	8	100 %
B. Show and Tell	8	7	87½%
C. Story Telling	8	7	87½%
D. Nursery rhymes or poetry	8	8	100 %
E. Finger plays	8	5	62½%

TABLE II (continued)

<u>Item</u>	<u>References Used</u>	<u>Authorities Who Commented</u>	<u>Percent</u>
IV. Gaining Usable Knowledge			
A. Hand - eye coordination	8	8	100 %
1. Cutting and pasting	8	7	87½ %
2. Drawing	8	8	100 %
3. Coloring	8	8	100 %
4. Modeling with clay	8	8	100 %
5. Painting (finger and brush)	8	8	100 %
6. Manipulate puzzles, blocks, etc.	8	8	100 %
B. Writing			
1. Own name	8	3	37½ %
2. Numbers or Alphabet	8	0	0 %
V. Health Experience			
A. Milk break	8	7	87½ %
B. Rest period	8	8	100 %
C. Health inspection	8	7	87½ %
D. Caring for personal needs	8	8	100 %
VI. Self-Discipline Experiences			
A. Helping clean up	8	7	87½ %
B. Getting along with others	8	8	100 %

TABLE III (continued)

<u>Item</u>	<u>References Used</u>	<u>Authorities Who Commented</u>	<u>Percent</u>
VII. General Experiences			
A. Field trips	8	8	100 %
B. Self-chosen activity time	8	7	87½ %
C. Art	8	8	100 %
D. Interest centers	8	8	100 %
E. Science experiments	8	8	100 %
F. Organized games played with others	8	8	100 %
VIII. Music Experiences			
A. Rhythm	8	8	100 %
B. Carrying a tune	8	8	100 %
C. Operating a record player	8	4	50 %
D. Using instruments	8	6	75 %
E. Picking out tunes	8	3	37½ %
IX. Evaluation Experiences			
A. Working with parents			
1. Conferences	8	6	75 %
2. Records or Notes	8	5	62½ %
3. Report cards or Rating charts	8	1	12½ %
B. Evaluation with the class	8	6	75 %

Interviews of Kindergarten Teachers

A group of experienced kindergarten teachers on Central Washington State College Campus during the 1968 summer session were interviewed to determine how local programs in their individual school systems compared to those mentioned in the literature, and to determine if there are common practices in kindergarten classrooms. In order to contact these kindergarten teachers, a flyer was put in the mail boxes of the professors teaching on campus. This flyer asked them to please list the names of students in their classrooms who are experienced kindergarten teachers. A very limited response was received in this manner. Various classrooms were then visited to secure the balance of the experienced kindergarten teachers needed to complete this study.

The teachers used in this study represent a random sampling of kindergarten teachers from the State of Washington and one teacher from California. A nonstructured approach was used in interviewing these teachers to draw their own ideas and conclusions rather than the pre-determined conclusions and ideas of the interviewer. Each kindergarten teacher interviewed was asked to list the ten activities or experiences they thought were the most important in teaching kindergarten. Their replies were then put into a check list like the one compiled from the publica-

tions by educational authorities. The results of the responses of the kindergarten teachers interviewed are listed on tables in Chapter IV, pages 26, 27, 28, and 29.

CHAPTER IV

THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Overview

The purpose of this chapter was to compare the results of the interviews with the kindergarten teachers to determine what practices were common in kindergarten classrooms. The results of the interviews were also used to see how local programs in their individual school systems compared to those mentioned in the literature studied.

Results

The results were compiled from the check list completed after the teacher interviews. The charts were constructed to show the frequency count on each item. This was done to see if there were any major differences in kindergarten programs by local kindergarten teachers.

The same nine areas were used as established earlier in the study by the educational authorities. A tenth area was established, that of the content fields, because this coincided with teachers' opinions about basic kindergarten programs.

Through all the varied experiences, each kindergarten program seemed to be aiming at a common end, assistance to the individual students in development as far as their potentialities will allow during their kindergarten year of

school.

According to the check list compiled from the kindergarten teachers interviewed the following experience areas were noted most often: auditory, visual, vocabulary, music, and general experiences. The areas listed least often were writing, health and evaluation. In the area of auditory experience, most often mentioned were ear-training games, reading stories orally, and oral counting. The use of audiovisual equipment was checked least often. All teachers interviewed, however, considered auditory experiences important.

In the area of visual experiences, discrimination was mentioned most often while classification and definitions with materials were listed least often. Again all teachers interviewed considered visual experiences necessary.

Varied vocabulary experiences were listed by all teachers interviewed. Show and tell, dramatizing, and story telling were listed most often. The use of nursery rhymes and discussions were listed least often.

Another area almost all the teachers interviewed listed was music. Rhythm was mentioned most in this area, while the ability to carry a tune was mentioned by only one teacher.

Field trips, art, and organized games were listed most often under the area of general experiences. Outside visitors and units of study were mentioned least often.

TABLE IV

TEACHERS KINDERGARTEN CHECK LIST

<u>Item</u>	<u>Teachers Interviewed</u>	<u>Teachers Who Listed</u>	<u>Percent</u>
I. Auditory Experiences	12	2	16.68%
A. Read stories orally	12	5	41.70%
B. Ear-training games	12	5	41.70%
C. Identifying beginning sounds	12	4	33.36%
D. Counting	12	5	41.70%
E. Audio-Visual equipment	12	1	8.34%
II. Visual Experiences	12	3	25 %
A. Work with color recognition	12	4	33.36%
B. Left - right	12	4	33.36%
C. Visual discrimination	12	8	66.72%
D. Library center	12	4	33.36%
E. Classification	12	1	8.34%
F. Definitions with materials	12	1	8.34%
III. Vocabulary Experiences	12	6	50 %
A. Dramatizing & role playing	12	5	41.70%
B. Show and Tell	12	6	50 %
C. Story Telling	12	6	50 %
D. Nursery rhymes & poetry	12	1	8.34%
E. Finger plays	12	4	33.36%
F. Discussions	12	2	16.68%

TABLE V (continued)

<u>Item</u>	<u>Teachers Interviewed</u>	<u>Teachers Who Listed</u>	<u>Percent</u>
IV. Gaining Usable Knowledge			
A. Hand - eye coordination			
1. Cutting & pasting	12	5	41.70%
2. Drawing & tracing	12	3	25 %
3. Coloring	12	5	41.70%
4. Modeling with clay	12	2	16.68%
5. Painting (finger & brush)	12	5	41.70%
6. Manipulates blocks	12	4	33.36%
B. Writing			
1. Own name	12	1	8.34%
2. Numbers or alphabet	12	0	0 %
V. Health Experiences			
A. Milk break	12	0	0 %
B. Rest period	12	0	0 %
C. Health inspection	12	0	0 %
D. Caring for personal needs	12	4	33.36%
E. Good manners	12	2	16.68%
VI. Self-Discipline Experiences	12	2	16.68%
A. Helping clean up	12	5	41.70%
B. Getting along with others	12	7	58.38%

TABLE VI (continued)

<u>Item</u>	<u>Teachers Interviewed</u>	<u>Teachers Who Listed</u>	<u>Percent</u>
VII. General Experiences	12	1	8.34%
A. Field trips	12	6	50 %
B. Self-chosen activity time	12	3	25 %
C. Art	12	8	66.72%
D. Interest centers & units	12	3	25 %
E. Science experiments	12	4	33.36%
F. Organized games	12	6	50 %
G. Outside visitors	12	1	8.34%
H. Motor perception & exercises	12	5	41.70%
VIII. Music Experiences	12	7	58.38%
A. Rhythm	12	5	41.70%
B. Carrying a tune	12	1	8.34%
C. Operating a record player	12	0	0 %
D. Using instruments	12	0	0 %
E. Picking out tunes	12	0	0 %
IX. Evaluation Experiences			
A. Working with parents			
1. Conferences	12	0	0 %
2. Records or Notes	12	0	0 %
3. Report cards	12	0	0 %
B. Evaluation with the class	12	1	8.34%

TABLE VII (continued)

<u>Item</u>	<u>Teachers Interviewed</u>	<u>Teachers Who Listed</u>	<u>Percent</u>
X. Solid Content Areas			
A. Reading	12	4	33.36%
B. Arithmetic	12	4	33.36%
C. Writing	12	3	25 %

Conclusions

A nonstructured approach was used to interview the kindergarten teachers. The areas not mentioned frequently does not necessarily mean these teachers are not using these techniques. It could be that these were not considered to be in the top ten in importance in their classrooms.

Evaluation was listed least often by the teachers interviewed. Possibly this area was neglected because teachers were considering experiences that directly relate to activities that benefit the student, rather than recording performance.

Health experiences such as a milk break, rest period, caring for personal needs and good manners are probably part of all kindergarten programs. When asked to list ten activities or experiences most important in their classrooms this area was so automatic that it was extremely neglected in the check list.

The teachers who did not mention work in the content areas such as reading, writing, and arithmetic may again not consider these to be in the top ten experiences in their kindergarten programs or they may not consider solid content a part of the kindergarten experiences.

Since many teachers have activities and experiences in reading and arithmetic in their classrooms, it might be

concluded that a new trend is developing in the kindergarten curriculum. Numerous studies are being done in the area of reading in the kindergarten. One such project was done in the Denver, Colorado Public Schools. Their study began in 1960 and they followed the students through grade five. Some of the results of this study are:

1. The students who had this program from kindergarten on had significantly higher levels of reading comprehension.
2. The students who had this program had the best reading vocabularies.
3. These students could also read faster.
4. There was no evidence that beginning instruction in kindergarten affected eyesight, caused emotional difficulties or created any resistance to reading.
5. This program is now standard in the Denver Public Schools. (46).

In the curriculums studied no attempt was made to teach the three R's in the kindergarten. Most concern was with the formation of desirable habits and skills. Hildreth states, "Let's not permit the desecration of the kindergarten through the introduction of irksome lessons that have no place in a five-year-old's education. This is a year for socializing and developmental readiness training that will prepare the child for later learning experiences." (27:37).

Summary

This paper states the value of kindergarten as a necessary part of every school program and what educational

authorities consider to construct a good kindergarten program. "There are no findings which even suggest that the kindergarten experience could have a negative effect." (26:34).

A check list was compiled from the findings in the literature based on important aspects of kindergarten. Another check list was compiled from the kindergarten teachers interviewed. The check list developed from the literature and the check list developed from the teacher interviews were comparable, proving that kindergarten programs are up to educational standards. There were many positive relationships between the check list from the literature and the check list from the teacher interviews. The positive relationships were in experiences in the following areas: auditory, visual, vocabulary, general, gaining usable knowledge, self-discipline, and music.

The aims of kindergarten today, as in Froebel's time, included child development as a major aspect. Ways whereby this aim is realized have changed greatly. Readiness is a composite of many things and so it has to be measured in many different ways. "Readiness is a slow process built on many experiences over a long period of time". (28:150). In recent years the concept of readiness is very prominent in educational circles.

The ultimate goal for the kindergarten child and all

individuals is the acquiring of self-discipline. A young child needs to move toward independent thinking, for as he matures, he moves away from the parental home to the school, to his peers, and to a larger society. He will no longer have an adult always beside him to make his choices for him. It will be easier for him to know which path to take as he approaches adolescence and adulthood if he has begun to make appropriate decisions in his early years. (33:64).

Implications

The kindergarten today is the product of its own rich past as well as the modern expression of a culture's determination and concern to provide its young with the best. Kindergarten is a year well spent, even though we may not be able to measure results directly. The kindergarten believes in growth; therefore, it prepares the way for growth to proceed. The kindergarten begins the all-important development of the basic attitudes a child will have toward school and its educational program. The value of the kindergarten program for the child in terms of his future success in school may be summed up as follows:

1. Teamwork between home and school is encouraged which makes this transition easier.
2. A good year in kindergarten provides a good foundation upon which to build later experiences.
3. The encouragement of the child's total development is an aid to his further growth.
4. The readiness activities stressed are helpful in the transition.

5. Personality development and social adjustment are furthered by experiences and guidance in group living. (66:297-303).

The child's years in the elementary school should continue this upward and outward extension of his interests, appreciations, understandings, and skills begun in the kindergarten.

"A school without a kindergarten is like a house without a stairway; inconvenient, wasteful, showing the builders to be men without vision". (1).

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