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Getting Ready for Kindergarten: a Film Designed to be Shown at an Orientation Meeting for Parents of Kindergarten Children

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GETTING READY FOR KINDERGARTEN: A FILM DESIGNED TO
BE SHOWN AT AN ORIENTATION MEETING FOR PARENTS
OF KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate Faculty
Central Washington State College

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

by
Mary Jane Koontz
August 1964

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APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

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To all the people who helped prove that an amateur can make a film, much appreciation is extended.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
I. THE PROBLEM	1
Statement of the Problem	1
Importance of the Problem	2
II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS	4
Orientation Meeting	4
School Specialists	4
III. POPULATION TO BE USED	4
IV. PROCEDURE	5
V. TOOLS USED	7
VI. LIMITATIONS	7
II. BACKGROUND OF THEORY AND RESEARCH	8
III. THE SCENARIO: GETTING READY FOR KINDERGARTEN	13
IV. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS	21
BIBLIOGRAPHY	24

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Each spring the Wichita, Kansas Public Schools hold orientation meetings for the parents of children who will enter kindergarten in the fall. It has been the practice to allow the school specialists, the principal, and the kindergarten teacher to meet with the parents to inform them of the functions carried out by each. In addition to this, there has been an effort made to help parents understand what they may do during the summer to help their child form an eager attitude and a readiness for coming to school safely and happily.

In the past, this meeting has been scheduled to last an hour, but occasionally has lasted for nearly twice that long. Efforts have been made to have each speaker talk for a briefer time. These efforts have rarely been successful. In order to facilitate these orientation meetings better, new ways of presenting information need to be explored.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The production of a film which would offer several advantages over past procedures of orienting and informing parents of kindergarten children is proposed.

The following assumptions are made:

1. The information would be more concise and coordinated.
2. The various aspects of the kindergarten program can be shown more clearly because the film will show actual activities filmed in the classroom.
3. Children will be used effectively, without exploitation, because filming will be done incidentally during the school day.
4. Presentation of the services given by specialists can be made effectively in less time.
5. Since specialists will not have to appear at the meeting, it will not be necessary to coordinate the meeting time with their schedules.
6. The orientation meeting can be scheduled for a more exact amount of time. This will enable parents to plan their schedules better and will make for better public relations.

Importance of the problem. Often, it is the parents rather than the child who are not yet ready for kindergarten. Because of this, it is important to explain carefully and clearly to the parents what this new experience will mean for their child. It relieves parents' minds when they know that the principal is a friendly person who likes children. If parents know that a nurse is available to check vision and hearing and to take care of minor injuries, that a speech

therapist is available to help with speech problems, and that a counselor is ready to help their child if necessary, they are very likely to feel more secure about sharing their child with the school. If, in addition to this, they observe that the teacher is a pleasant person and that the children in her room seem to be happy, parents should be willing and happy to send their child to school.

In the Wichita Public Schools each specialist is required to serve in several schools. Each spends one day or less per week in each school. Because of this it is often difficult to arrange a time for an orientation meeting when all of the specialists can attend. Use of a film to indicate their services would help the specialists because they would not have to attend an orientation meeting at which they are expected to speak five minutes. Economy of time for both specialists and the meeting would thus be effected by use of a film.

It is not possible to inform parents of exactly what goes on in a kindergarten room by words alone. Seeing the children in action gives parents a good idea of what a teacher is trying to accomplish. It is impossible to arrange a situation whereby parents can actually see the children at work in a normal classroom situation, because as soon as parents appear on the scene, the situation ceases to be normal. By taking the film during the day when no outsiders are present a near-

normal situation can be portrayed. This is infinitely better than a staged program which is very likely to be an abnormal situation.

In the past, the Wichita Public Schools have distributed a pamphlet which pictured children carrying on activities in the kindergarten. In addition to pictures, the pamphlet included text which explained the activities and expected outcomes. Because of a reduced budget, this pamphlet is no longer distributed. This makes a visual means of presenting orientation information even more important.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Orientation meeting. A meeting for parents of incoming kindergarten children. The meeting is usually held in the spring. It is sometimes a get-acquainted type of meeting; it may consist of talks by school personnel; it may give parents information concerning school policies; or, it may be a combination of two or more of these types. The main purpose of the meeting is to make the parents feel more secure.

School specialists. The school specialists include: the librarian, the nurse, the counselor and the speech therapist.

III. POPULATION TO BE USED

The film will be produced at Garrison Elementary School

in Wichita, Kansas. The enrollment of the school is approximately 350. Most of the homes in this school service area have been built during the past eight years.

The children in the writer's two kindergarten classes will appear in the film. The children, for the most part, represent families from the middle class. Some of the children come from high-income homes; several come from homes where all of the necessities of life are not always provided; two of the children live in a church-sponsored children's home. All of the children are Caucasian except for one Mexican boy.

Fathers of the children are doctors, salesmen, policemen, servicemen, and skilled laborers. About one-third of the mothers are employed outside the home.

Specialists who will appear in the film are those who serve the Garrison Elementary School. Each of them serves in several other elementary schools.

IV. PROCEDURE

After obtaining permission to make the film during school time, securing the necessary equipment and becoming familiar with its operation, it will be necessary to write the script. From the script the estimated footage required for each sequence can be determined.

After ascertaining the approximate footage needed for each scene, it will then be possible to decide which scenes

may be taken first. Some shots of the children early in the year, such as entering the room for the first time, will be desirable. Since the school situation is very new to these children they should not have any additional cause for disturbance on the first day. Shots of this nature will have to be staged later in the year when the children feel more secure.

After about a month, the camera will be used in the room without film so that the children will become used to the sound of it running and to having their teacher look at them through it. In a week or two, or whenever it is determined that the children are ready for this new experience, actual filming will begin. Probably not more than one or two sequences can be filmed on any one day without interfering with the normal kindergarten program. It is possible, even probable, that the entire year will be required for filming all of the sequences.

When the filming is completed and the film has been processed, it will be necessary to time the script with the film. This can be done by speaking the script into a tape-recorder as the film is viewed. While timing the script, it will be necessary to re-write and refine it.

When the script has been properly timed with the film, the film must be sent to the Kodak Company for the addition of a sound stripe. On this magnetic stripe the writer will

be able to record the script by speaking into a microphone connected to a movie projector.

V. TOOLS USED

The tools used in making this film will include:

1. Cine-Kodak 16 mm. camera and tripod
2. Light bar of four lights and tripod
3. Sekonic light meter
4. Type A Kodachrome film
5. Type A Kodachrome filter for daylight
6. Film editor and splicer
7. Tape-recorder
8. R.C.A. 400 movie projector

VI. LIMITATIONS

The proposed film will not attempt to cover the information which is usually presented by the principal during an orientation meeting. Such things as school policy, an invitation to join the P.T.A. organization, forms which need to be filled out and explaining the requirements for birth certificates and physical examinations are more easily and better explained by a personal presentation made by the principal.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND OF THEORY AND RESEARCH

A survey of the literature indicates that the practice of having an orientation meeting has become rather general during the past ten years. These meetings are usually held in the spring.

Purposes of these meetings are:

1. Registering children prior to school entrance.
2. Telling parents about the organization and operation of the school system.
3. Informing parents regarding the instructional program.
4. Explaining requirements for physical examinations of children prior to school entrance.
5. Extending an invitation for P.T.A. membership.
6. Setting the pace for understanding and cooperation between home and school (5:24).

Sometimes the meeting consists of a tea and gives the parents of incoming children a chance to get acquainted with one another (14:350). At some meetings an attempt is made, by use of speeches by various people involved, to introduce parents to the school and its set-up; show kindergarten activities; and explain school policies concerning safety, health check-ups, attendance, fees, and forms to be filled out (15:34).

One school sets aside three Friday mornings for meetings which are held under the leadership of the guidance counselor.

Topics which are covered during these meetings are: the purposes of kindergarten; how parents can help a child make a good start in school; school policies on parent-teacher conferences, reporting and bus safety; and the health program. Staff participants included the principal, guidance counselor, nurse, kindergarten teacher, district curriculum director, and the community relations director (9:56-57).

In addition to verbal methods of disseminating information, most schools distribute pamphlets which explain the kindergarten program. Most of the pamphlets are published by local school systems. One, "Happy Journey," is published by the N.E.A. These pamphlets include a welcome, admission requirements, a list of things that kindergarten children should know before they come to school, and a description of what they will learn in kindergarten. In addition, some pamphlets tell about health services and communicable diseases, tell the parents what to expect from their child of five or six, and urge parents to train their children to observe safety rules to and from school (5:23).

Occasionally a film, such as "Frustrating Fours and Fascinating Fives" or "Skippy and the Three Rs" is shown (5:25). The first is a study of four- and five-year old behavior patterns at home and kindergarten. The second is a film which concerns a boy's adjustment to first grade and would be a good one to show later in the year rather than at an orientation meeting.

A survey of practices in the writer's school system indicates that some schools rely solely on talks by teachers and specialists; others add slides, pupil demonstrations, and films to their presentations. Parent interest is high when visual materials are used, but the time of the meeting is necessarily lengthened.

Films which would be appropriate to show during an orientation meeting include:

Children's Emotions (McGraw-Hill, 1950)

Depicts the major emotions of childhood: fear, anger, jealousy, curiosity, and joy. Mentions major causes of fear at different ages, with the caution that fear is natural, but must not become a habit.

A Day in the Life of a Five Year Old (Columbia University, 1949)

Experiences of children during a typical day in kindergarten. How five year olds learn to work and play together by meeting real problems under the skillful guidance of a teacher.

The First Days of School (AMA, no date)

This drama presents babyishness, truancy, aggressiveness, jealousy, dishonesty, dislike of school all as symptoms of insecurity.

Frustrating Fours and Fascinating Fives (McGraw-Hill, 1953)

Study of four and five-year old behavior patterns at home and at kindergarten. A change to independence is evident.

Good Speech for Gary (McGraw-Hill, 1953)

A well-organized speech program as it is carried out in California schools and elsewhere, today.

Impressionable Years (U.S.D.S., 1952)

A little girl's first experience in a library. Emphasizes the permissive atmosphere of the library, individual learning experiences of the children, and democratic relationships of the library.

Long Time to Grow, Part II (New York University, 1954)
Four- and five-year olds in nursery schools. Fours in a world of activities and interests. Five-year-olds beginning to enter the world of other children.

Ready for School (Michigan Health, 1959)
Discusses the problem of bringing up a child so that he is ready for school - physically, mentally, and emotionally.

A Touch in Time (Mary Rodgers, C.W.S.C., 1962)
Depicts the major activities of the school health nurse in a modern elementary school.

Each of these films depicts an important area which would be of interest to parents. No single film was found which showed kindergarten activities, indicated the work of available specialists, and informed the parents of ways in which they might help their child get ready for the first step away from home.

There are some filmstrips which have been designed for use in an orientation meeting. Four are especially appropriate:

Day in the Kindergarten (Elkins, 1957, 40 frames)
Shows the typical activities of a kindergarten class at a well-organized and well-equipped school.

Kindergarten and Your Child (Wayne University, 1951, 40 frames)
Intended primarily for use with parents preparing to send children to school for the first time. Explains how the kindergarten program works and helps parents see how they can work best with the school to make a child's adjustment to kindergarten happy and successful.

Kindergarten Way is to Learn Each Day (Books That Talk Programs, 1956, 65 frames with recording)
Presents actual classroom activities to show the value of dramatic play, manipulative activities, show and tell, educational trips, and storytelling.

Tommy Goes to Kindergarten (Eye Gate House, Inc.,
1954, 38 frames)

Designed to assist in forming good home-school relationships. Tommy visits school for a day and observes activities.

CHAPTER III.

THE SCENARIO: GETTING READY FOR KINDERGARTEN

Scene

Narration

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| 1. Getting Ready for Kindergarten | Music

This is a thesis film presented to the Graduate Faculty of Central Washington State College. |
| 2. Produced by Mary Jane Koontz | The sequences were filmed at Garrison Elementary School in Wichita, Kansas. |
| 3. Front of Garrison Elementary School. | To an adult, this looks like a very ordinary, not-too-large elementary school. |
| 4. Pan shot of the front of Garrison Elementary School. | To a young child, accustomed to home, the school building may appear enormous. |
| 5. The school door as part of the front of the building. | To an adult, this appears to be an ordinary door. |
| 6. The school door almost filling the screen. | To a child, the large door may appear inviting or forbidding depending upon preparation for this first big step away from home. |
| 7. Kindergarten child and her brother walking toward the school. | If a child has practiced going to school the route is familiar. |
| 8. Kindergarten child going up to the door and gaining entrance at the home of a friend. | If a child has spent a few hours away from home without anyone in the family along with her, both child and mother will have become used to being separated. |

<u>Scene</u>	<u>Narration</u>
9. Family of kindergarten child at breakfast, happily discussing the first day of school.	A child's father can help to reinforce his child's eagerness for going to school.
10. Front of Garrison Elementary School.	
11. Mother and kindergarten child coming up the walk to school. Mother is carrying a big brown paper sack which she hands to her child as she kisses her.	When the day arrives and the child is on her way at last, both child and mother will be happy and ready for this new experience.
12. Child is greeted by her teacher at the entrance to the kindergarten room.	A cheerful greeting from her teacher helps to reinforce the child's confidence.
13. Child removes materials from the sack.	Notice that the sack is clearly marked as the child's name will be printed at school. These are the materials which each child needs.
14. Cupboards where children's personal belongings are kept.	Each child has a cupboard for personal belongings. Names and pictures help each child recognize his own.
15. Children coloring right-handed.	Children are eager to use their big new crayons. Large crayons are easy to grasp and break less easily than small ones.
16. A child coloring left-handed.	Some children use their left hands. No effort is made to dissuade the child from using the favored hand.

SceneNarration

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| 17. Two girls painting at the easel. | These girls are wearing their fathers' old shirts which cover and protect their clothing. The washable paint used in kindergarten does not wash out easily. |
| 18. Three children painting while sitting on the floor. | Some children like to paint while sitting on the floor. |
| 19. Children working with wet clay. | Clay work can be a little messy, but it is a lot of fun! |
| 20. Two boys cutting and pasting. | Creating with scissors, paste and paper requires imagination and manipulative skill. Pointed scissors cut well. Before using scissors, the children are taught how to use them safely. |
| 21. Two boys looking at books. | Kindergarten children enjoy looking at books and reading the pictures. When parents read stories and poems to children it helps build a background of experience for first grade reading. |
| 22. Children playing with large blocks. | Children in the block-building area learn to cooperate with others, develop creative ideas, and become more coordinated. These values hold whether large or small blocks are used. |
| 23. Children playing with small blocks. | |
| 24. Two children in the playhouse. | In the playhouse, children relive their home-life experiences. |
| 25. Children working with puzzles. | When a child completes a puzzle, he feels a sense of accomplishment in a job well done. |

SceneNarration

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| 26. Children working at a chalkboard. | Because it allows for large-muscle movement, a chalkboard is ideal for use in the kindergarten. Children enjoy the freedom allowed in this medium. |
| 27. Children cleaning the easel and the floor. | Clean-up time is seldom a problem in a kindergarten. If cleaning supplies are made available, children are eager to help. |
| 28. Two boys washing brushes. | All children like to wash brushes. |
| 29. Children sitting in a circle with their pictures in front of them on the floor. | After the work period, the children show and tell about their work. This helps to build confidence and skill in talking in front of a group and gives recognition to each child. |
| 30. Children on their way to the lavatory. | Children are allowed to toilet when necessary, but there is a scheduled period prior to playtime. A visit to the lavatory with his mother or an older child before school begins in the fall will help to lessen the fear that this strange place may excite. |
| 31. Children playing on outdoor equipment: slide, jungle-gym, merry-go-round, swings, and teeters. | Outdoors, the children can have a great deal of fun. Before using the equipment, proper use of each piece is explained and demonstrated. The combination of fresh air, sunshine, and the chance to use nearly every muscle combined with the opportunity for using excess energy by making as much noise as he likes makes this period an exceptionally valuable one. |

SceneNarration

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| 32. Children playing a game outdoors. | Kindergarten classes go outside whenever the weather is dry and above freezing. Unless a child is too ill to be at school, he will usually profit from outdoor play. |
| 33. Party time: Valentine's Day. | Twice a year the kindergarten has a real party at lunch time. Room mothers bring cookies or cupcakes, a drink, and sometimes other treats. |
| 34. Children lying on rugs in a darkened room. | Small bodies need an opportunity for rest even though young minds rarely believe it. The rug should be marked in only one place. |
| 35. "Fairy" awakening the other children. | When a child has his turn as "fairy" and gets to awaken the other children, that day is really special. |
| 36. Children singing around their Christmas tree. | Children's faces show their pleasure at music time. These children are singing around a Christmas tree which they have made from newspapers. |
| 37. Children skipping. | Rhythms are fun and help in body development. Cowboy boots can cause difficulty in performing the various movements which are easily done in real shoes. |
| 38. Children doing rhythms with scarves. | The addition of a scarf to express rhythmic movement is a pleasant variation. |
| 39. The teacher reading a story to the children. | Story-and-poem time is a happy time for children. |
| 40. Three girls putting on rain boots. | Each child is expected to be able to put on all of his outer clothing. Boots are no |

SceneNarration

- problem if they are at least a size larger than the child's shoes.
41. Six boys, all in yellow raincoats. Similarity in outer clothing can cause problems of identification. Names should be put on coats, caps, sweaters, and boots.
42. The principal thanking a boy for sharing a birthday treat with her. On their birthdays, many children bring a treat to share with their friends. A fine way for a child to get acquainted with his principal is to take a treat in to her.
43. The librarian reading to the children. Kindergarten children love books. They look forward to their weekly visit with the librarian.
44. Sign on door: NURSE. Specialists on the school staff are helpful in a variety of ways. Our school nurse records all the health information which each child is required to bring.
45. Nurse opens the door. She also checks each child's vision and hearing. If sight or hearing loss is detected, the nurse notifies the parents who may then take their child to their family doctor.
46. Nurse and child doing a hearing check. She also checks each child's vision and hearing. If sight or hearing loss is detected, the nurse notifies the parents who may then take their child to their family doctor.
47. Sign on door: COUNSELOR. The school counselor may or may not see a child during the kindergarten year. Occasionally the counselor tests for verification of a suspected high or low I.Q.. She also talks with children who have learning, social and emotional problems.
48. Counselor testing a child. The school counselor may or may not see a child during the kindergarten year. Occasionally the counselor tests for verification of a suspected high or low I.Q.. She also talks with children who have learning, social and emotional problems.
49. Sign on door: SPEECH THERAPIST. Many children in kindergarten have difficulty in making one

SceneNarration

50. Speech therapist working with a child. or two sounds which are necessary for good speech. If a child appears to have a greater than average speech difficulty, he is referred to the speech therapist.
51. Mother and the teacher at a table looking at pictures in a child's folder. Conference time is a time for finding out for both parents and teacher. The child's progress is discussed and parents are shown a group of their child's paintings and other art work.
52. Pictures on bulletin board showing six stages of development in picture making. Kindergarten children can neither read nor write, nor are they expected to. However they can communicate with others by painting their ideas. When first viewing a child's paintings, an adult's safest comment is, "Tell me about it."
53. A first picture - just experimenting with the paint. First pictures show little thought or organization. The child is simply experimenting.
54. Second step - a design. Later, he paints and decides after he is finished what it is that he has made.
55. Third step - several unrelated objects. Still later, he decides ahead of time what he wants to make, but paints a number of unrelated objects in random fashion.
56. Fourth step - person with legs attached to head. His people are not always as realistic as an adult might expect them to be.
57. Fifth step - person with body, but with arms fastened to the head. As the child's art develops he will add a body, but he may still have the arms sprouting from the head.

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SceneNarration

58. Sixth step - picture of the old woman who lived in a shoe, done quite realistically.

But finally, his pictures show that he has thought about what he wants to paint, has decided how he wants it to look, and has painted a fairly realistic picture. Not all kindergarten children reach this stage of development.

59. Mother and teacher at conference table.

Yes, your first conference with your child's teacher will be a pleasant experience if your child has been carefully prepared for entrance into kindergarten.

60. Overall shot of children at work during activity period.

His days will have been happy, creative, and growth-producing. He will have grown in ability to talk in front of others, sit quietly when necessary, follow directions, and to work and play in harmony with others.

THE END

Music

CHAPTER IV.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A film has been produced which was designed for the purpose of orienting the parents of incoming kindergarten children. In a twenty minute period, it was possible to present materials that had heretofore taken about forty-five to fifty minutes to present. The information usually given by five people was presented concisely during this period in a coordinated manner.

The film showed various aspects of the kindergarten by presenting the children in action in the kindergarten room on color film. Actually seeing the action brings meaning to a verbal presentation.

Children were used in the film, but were not exploited as they would have been had they been performing in person for the parents. Filming was done incidentally and during class periods so that the children reacted naturally and unself-consciously.

Presentation of the services offered by specialists was made in a short time, but with clarity. The nurse was shown giving a hearing test. She was pictured with a pleasant smile; the child taking the test seemed at ease with the nurse. The librarian was pictured reading to an attentive audience of kindergarten boys and girls. The speech therapist

was shown helping a child learn to make a sound more clearly. Specialists were not required to be at the meeting. This enabled them to carry on their normal activities without interruption, and allowed the time of the meeting to be reduced.

The orientation meeting, scheduled for an hour, was concluded within the designated time. Because the meeting did not go overtime, parent attention was not diverted by worrying about an extended absence from home.

Recommendations. Possibilities for future studies are:

1. Study, in a different school, the reactions of parents to the film in an effort to determine:
 - a. Parents' interest in and enjoyment of the film as a means of presentation.
 - b. Parents' retention of the information presented in the film as compared to their retention of similar material presented verbally without the use of film.
2. Study the efficiency of the film as it relates to time consumed in an orientation meeting. Does use of the film actually lessen the time of the meeting consistently, or are other forms of presentation used in addition to the film?
3. Produce a film depicting the more unusual, but used, activities in kindergarten. These might

include fingerpainting; woodworking; making of mobiles, May baskets and Easter hats; showing films and film strips.

4. Produce a film depicting various games used in readiness activities.

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