A Preschool Needs Assessment Research Project

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A PRESCHOOL NEEDS

ASSESSMENT RESEARCH PROJECT

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Abstract

This needs assessment research project concerns itself with the lack of parental involvement in preschool programs. The lack of communication between educators and parents is examined in relation to its effects on the child and the community. One possible way to begin to solve this problem is presented through the use of a survey questionnaire for parents and teachers concerning what each group feels are the primary considerations, or needs, for quality preschool educational programs. The considerations surveyed resulted from an in depth review of the literature pertaining to major early childhood concerns. This research examined five areas of review: the relationship of parents to preschools, the background of early childhood education and philosophies, the curriculum objectives in the affective domain, the curriculum objectives in the cognitive domain, and the curriculum objectives in the psychomotor domain. The resulting questionnaires consisted of twelve questions with three different types of responses. Three hundred parental questionnaires were distributed to four private nursery-kindergarten schools in a middle to upper-middle
class section of a large Southern city. Fifty teachers, half who taught in the same schools surveyed and half who taught in the same area of the city, were surveyed. The resulting responses were tabulated individually and percentages totaled for each response. A large percentage of the parents—55.3%— and all the teachers responded to the questionnaire. Both groups were in agreement on most of the questions. The parents expressed the same basic concerns for their children's preschool education as did the teachers themselves. Parental apathy, misplaced values, and ignorance were ruled out as possible reasons for their lack of involvement. Instead, the major cause for lack of parental involvement in preschool programs was determined to be a feeling of intimidation on the part of the parents. In order to remedy this situation, it is suggested that the educators involved need to be the ones to actively structure parental involvement in their educational programs. Several suggestions for this structuring are presented in the conclusions section of this project.
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Chapter 1  
Introduction, Rationale, and Limitations

Interest in the field of early childhood education has grown considerably in the last decade. Educators and parents alike have become much more aware of the rapid growth that occurs from birth through the sixth year of life. This growth occurs not only in physical development, but also in motor coordination, affective characteristics, and intellectual functioning. Most educators would generally agree that the environment of the young child affects all areas of his or her development. In this sense, then, the future adult is a product, to a large extent, of his early experiences and surroundings.

Much research has been done to document the fact that the intellectual ability of children is greatly influenced by the environment surrounding them. This environment includes both the home and the preschool.

The value of quality preschool programs cannot be stressed too strongly. Surely, children's most formative years can be enhanced greatly by good educational programs, led by trained teachers. For this education
to be most effective, the nursery school and kindergarten should be a functioning part of the community, and as such, should integrate themselves with all persons concerned in the care and raising of young children. According to Auerbach (1977), a good school for young children should have a child growth and development philosophy, a well planned and comprehensive curriculum, and a qualified staff. The design and environment of the facility, both interior and exterior, should reflect a feeling of quality. Nothing should be considered unimportant, whether it involves the snacks served or the amount of parent involvement in the program.

Much of the education of the young takes place at home, with the parents. Regardless of the quality of a child's school, the majority of his or her time is usually spent at home. Denenberg (1970) states that "parents should be recognized as the most influential educators of their young children" (pp. 78 & 79). Because the early years are the most crucial in a young person's life, and parents have such a strong influence on their own children's development during these early years, it seems desirable that parents involve them-
selves in the early schooling of their youngsters. If parents are to be actively involved, they should be listened to and made to feel a part of the school environment. They should be helping to plan programs, acting as resource persons, and serving as classroom helpers. An international study of objectives and issues in early childhood care and education, as reported by Heron (1977), suggests one way that parents can become involved; it concluded that parent and community roles must be integrated in planning early childhood care services. There should be a complementary relationship between the care and education provided in the home and that provided in the school, and that the "living link in that complementary relationship is the parents" (Heron, 1977, p. 61).

In contrast, parents are seldom actively involved in preschool and kindergarten programs. Some schools do not allow parental visitations and observation, let alone, involvement. Many parents send their young children to schools on word of mouth, without ever having observed the classroom environment or without having
spoken to their child's teacher. The White House Conference on Children (1970) found that "parents in general are looking for supplementary care that is flexible in hours, reasonable in cost, convenient in location, and often last, dependable in quality" (p. 161). All too often, the parents seem to be sitting on the sidelines, either out of apathy, ignorance, misplaced values, or intimidation. Too few parents ever become involved in early childhood education programs, even though the home influence and atmosphere have been shown to be so important in the life of the young child.

This communication problem between parents and educators needs to be looked at more closely. If parents are to become more involved, educators may need to take the lead in structuring this involvement. They need to make a concerted effort to draw parents into the school programs.

One way to make contact with parents, if only at the initial stages, is to question and survey them on what they feel the educational needs of their young children are. The responses could then be considered and incorporated into the needs that the educators feel
are most pertinent. Such a survey would also serve to clarify the discrepancies, or lack of them, between parental concerns and teacher concerns. Based on this clarification, the nature of the communication problem that exists, as mentioned earlier, would be easier to understand and ultimately remedy.

Therefore, this project will attempt to survey a sample population of parents and teachers involved in nursery school and kindergarten programs. The survey will concern itself with educational needs derived from major curriculum areas, class size and environment, nutrition, outdoor facilities, and major goals of preschool programs.

Before developing the questions needed for such a survey, it seems appropriate to first look at the research done on the parent's relationship to preschool education. It then would be useful to briefly review the history and major philosophies in the field of early childhood education in order to clarify the educational concepts involved that are traditionally viewed as early childhood concerns. These concepts will include an in-
depth review of recent research in the three curriculum areas of early childhood education--affective, cognitive, and psychomotor. The resulting survey will base its questions on these three areas.
Definition of Terms

1. Affective Curriculum - those studies and activities relating to or influencing feelings or emotions.

2. Cognitive Curriculum - those studies and activities relating to empirical factual knowledge.

3. Psychomotor Curriculum - those studies and activities relating to motor action directly proceeding from mental activity.
Limitations

Limitations in this needs assessment are in the author's choice of survey questions and the sample population to be surveyed. There are a vast number of curriculum and environmental concerns found in the following research. However, for purposes of brevity, the resulting questionnaire is made up of only twelve items, and those items are ones that the author feels to be most pertinent. Secondly, the sample population is composed of middle to upper middle class parents and is therefore not a true cross section of the total community.

Summary

Because of the rapid physical and intellectual growth that takes place during the years before a child reaches six, the surrounding environment of the young child should be a major concern of both educators and parents. Educators need to plan and implement quality preschool programs. Parents need to take an active interest in their children's education and early schooling environment.
Unfortunately, parents are seldom actively involved in their child's preschool education. Whatever the reasons for this lack of involvement, the communication existing between a child's school and his or her home needs to be improved. Perhaps the educators themselves need to make a more concerted effort to involve parents in early childhood programs.

One way to begin to solve this problem is to develop a questionnaire for parents and teachers concerning what each group feels are the primary considerations for quality preschool educational programs. The considerations surveyed will result from an in depth review of the literature pertaining to major early childhood concerns. The answers obtained from the questionnaire should help to clarify the nature of the problem.

The limitations of the project are the author's choice of survey questions and the limited population surveyed.
Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Relationship of Parents to Preschools

In order to better understand parent's relationship to preschools, it seems appropriate to examine how parents select preschools and what parents should be looking for in a preschool program. Leeper, Dales, Skipper and Witherspoon (1971) mention in their book a study done by Forbes, entitled, Parental Selection of Schools for Preschool Children (p. 95). The study found that most parents had selected their children's schools through a friend and that those parents whose children were enrolled in part-time sessions felt that the main objectives of the program were the art, music and character training activities, with the convenience of the school their second consideration. Those parents whose children attended full-day schools selected them primarily for their convenience. Only half the parents in the study had visited the school while it was in session. The rest had either visited the school when the children were not there or had not met the teacher or seen the school at all. Those
mothers who were working outside the home sent their children to full-day schools out of necessity, while those children enrolled in half-day sessions were attending, according to their parents, primarily in preparation for first grade.

It seems advisable that parents closely examine schools for many considerations. The Princeton Center for Infancy, (1977), list several such considerations: a program that does not conflict greatly with the parent's own philosophy of child rearing; the number of children in the class; the child-adult ratio; the content of the curriculum; the amount of pre-planning; the amount of new projects each semester; how many field trips are taken; how many special events are planned; the number of visitors and resource persons at the school; the music program; a formal or informal class environment; how much group interaction; dramatic and social play; what values are stressed; parent involvement; disciplinary measures; and physical equipment and surroundings (p.468). They suggest that parents would do well to visit prospective preschools with a checklist in hand.
Davies (1971) has done a research project on a parent initiated and directed school for young children. The school was begun in 1969 in Palo Alto, California, by parents who could not afford the private nursery schools in the area, yet realized the importance of preschool programs for emotional and intellectual growth. In establishing their own school, they stressed the development of a positive self-image and self-respect, as well as respect for others. The parents felt that the "learning of concepts which will enable the child to deal with the world, using positive reinforcement in the learning process to enhance the awareness of individual worth" (p. 11) were the second major consideration. They included in their program language development, concept formation, in regard to numbers, letters, and spatial relations, following directions, physical activity, positive self-concept, emotional control, and getting along with people who are different from oneself (pp. 12 &13). Several fathers are actively involved in the school as observers and helpers. Weekly meetings between teachers and parents are held.
Adult education classes are sponsored by the school. Mothers are involved assisting teachers in classes, cleaning, preparing educational materials, and attending community meeting and workshops. Numerous trips, special events and outside visitors are an important part of the school program. Apparently, this community was effectively able to ascertain needs and objectives for the education of their young children. Their school could serve as a model for other communities. Unfortunately, their concerns and active involvement is the exception, not the rule.
Background of Early Childhood Education

The field of education is rich and varied in its philosophies. There are numerous schools of thought concerning young children. Generally though, there are basic needs for the education of the young that have been identified by educators in the field. In order to understand these needs it would be helpful to look briefly at the history of early childhood education.

Leeper, Dales, Skipper, and Witherspoon (1968, pp. 6 & 7) give a brief history of childhood education in their book, *Good Schools for Young Children*. In the early nineteen hundreds, Friedrick Froebel started the first schools for young children in Germany. He was the first educator to realize the capabilities of the young to engage in active learning, and he tried to enhance these capabilities in a formal school setting. Play was considered to be of major importance and games, musical instruments, and geometric blocks contained the thrust of the curriculum. Nature study and creative expression was also a part of the program. Mrs.
Carl Schurz was perhaps the first person to bring Foebels' kindergarten to this country. She started her kindergarten in her home for her own children and children of her friends. In Boston, shortly thereafter, Elizabeth Peabody opened the first English speaking kindergarten. She publicized her school widely and started the first teacher training center. Another person who was active in this early movement was Susan Blow, who followed Froebellian theory and experimented with early education practices in Missouri. Shortly after her experiments, in 1874, the first public school kindergarten was established in St. Louis by the National Education Association. By the late nineteenth hundreds, kindergartens had become an important part of the education community.

But, as the spread of kindergartens grew, so did the spread of philosophies. In the beginning of the twentieth century, conflicting opinions were raised and debated by educators. John Dewey advocated a more pragmatic approach to education which involved a more scientific bent to the study of children. Patty Smith Hill directed herself to a respect for individu-
uals, arguing for freedom and initiative for children, along with a more relevant curriculum. She pioneered much of the large muscle equipment and climbing apparatus used today. The Montessori system also came into wide practice at this time, emphasizing the learning process and the importance of the environment on young children.

After the educational debates during the early part of this century calmed down, the preschool was left to educate its children in relative quiet until the nineteen sixties. At this time, the idea that mental growth and intelligence depend in part on early intellectual stimulation led to an increased cognitive emphasis in early childhood education. The kindergartens with curriculums based on play became the "traditional" schools. The British infant schools greatly influenced the "open" education concept found in this country with their informal methods. Going one step further there is the new "free" school movement which lacks any structure at all. As Cohen and Rudolph (1977) state, "Montessori schools, British
infant schools, Bereiter-Engelmann, behavior modification approaches, and a host of other 'innovative' experiments, all differ from each other, but have claimed to hold the key to formal school success" (p. 8).

It becomes apparent that there is much discrepancy about the best environment and technique for the teaching of young children. Some in the field perceive the basic needs of children to be on one end of the see-saw, while others perceive it to be on the opposite end.

An interesting overview of the opinions and approaches by the educators involved in preschool and kindergarten education today was done by George Sheperd (1976). Among the educators he mentions are Pitcher, Hynes, and Sponberg who advocate the open learning concept of curiosity, activity, and self-discovery. This concept stresses the nurturance of the child's "selfhood," through the affective curriculum. These educators feel that the school environment should be geared to meet individual needs and that
the child should be free to choose his own activities. Sheperd also notes the opinions of Wann, Ayers, Karnes, Hodgins, Teska, Bereiter, and Engelmann, who stress cognitive, essential skill learning. These educators place major emphasis on science, mathematics, language abilities, and acquisition of basic readiness skills. The educators obviously do not agree on the instructional content in education. Sheperd describes "three major types of approaches to the education of young children: self-instructional, social-psychological, and direct instruction" (p.14). The self instruction approach dictates that the child select the content of instruction himself. The social-psychological approach concerns itself with attitudes, self-concepts, and behavior. Sheperd states that some educators have "taken the position that there is a disparity between the 'three R's' approach and a realistic view of the needs and interests of young children" (p.15). The direct instruction method stresses the cognitive task components of the curriculum. The optimum learning environment could be said to be a combination of
all three of these instructional approaches, with some intelligent curriculum development in each of the three major areas of concern: affective, cognitive, and psychomotor.
Curriculum Objectives in the Affective Domain

The affective domain, or social-psychological approach, relates to feelings and emotions. Before the emphasis on cognitive concepts arose in the early nineteen sixties, the affective area in early childhood education was the focal point of the curriculum. This concern was implicit in the original early childhood education movement.

Many people in preschool and kindergarten education today still feel strongly that the development of positive self-concepts, social interaction patterns and self-confidence is the major objective of any early childhood program. The idea that achieving a positive self-image as a person of worth and importance and a sense of self-direction in regard to learning is central to a preschool, kindergarten program. Young children need to learn to deal effectively with their environment around them, to develop creative thoughts and expressions, and to learn to cooperate and empathize with those around them. All these characteristics are part of the affective domain.
Open or informal schools for young children stress the importance of feelings and positive self-concepts, both in regard to themselves and their school surroundings. Recently, Glasser, Ginott, and Purkey have been concerned with methods to teach positive health attitudes and beliefs. Evans (1971) acknowledges this by saying that:

Most early childhood educators long have maintained that a child's self-concept—one's self-knowledge and the evaluative tendencies that accompany one's beliefs about one's self—must carefully be nurtured during the early years if zestful and confident school training is to occur. (p. 318)

Evans also mentions the work of Smith (1973), author of *Young Children*, who has developed a "model" for implementing a program for development of "self-awareness and human relation skills." He suggests five general themes: "(1) aggression, violence and conflict resolution; (2) fantasy and feeling; (3) self-esteem and kind behavior; (4) sensory awareness and body image; and (5) social interdependence" (p. 318).

The Oregon State Department of Education (1976), in developing a prekindergarten public school program
for four year olds, emphasized the child's self-concept, self-confidence and communication skills as the primary objectives of their curriculum. Their program also stresses the importance of teacher-parent cooperation in implementing this type of curriculum.

The school has an important responsibility here, for, like the Pygmalion effect, children will respond to the expectations of those around them. Children strive to attain a positive self-image, which is impossible without positive reinforcement from their surroundings. A study done by the National Swedish Board of Education (1976) on the "self-perception of children starting school," found that "the importance to the child of the people around him and the way in which those people judge the child's actions are crucial determinants of the value which the child attaches to himself" (p. 4). They further state that "apart from being crucial to learning, self-perception is probably the most important component of creative, independent and critical thought and also of the ability to feel solidarity, responsibility and consideration" (p. 5). They found that when a child begins school,
either at three, four, or five, he is initially faced with being one of many in a group, being interrupted or postponed in certain desired activities, having to concentrate with distractions around him, and being compared to others around him. All these considerations can be detrimental to a child's feeling of self-worth if not appropriately recognized as such by those around him, particularly the teacher.

One specific curriculum program for children's self-development is the "Human Development Program," commonly referred to as "magic circle," developed by two child psychologists, H. Bessell and Palomares. Their belief is that affective education is to "help children develop a sound emotional outlook which will cumulatively increase their resistance to society's many pestilent features," (Evans, 1971, p. 319). Major objectives of the program are to help children assume responsibility and build self-confidence. Bessell and Ball (1972) stress the importance of understanding feelings, acceptance of others, and listening skills. They have designed activities to be used during "magic circle" time that relate to one of the
following areas of personal development: awareness, self-confidence (also called mastery), or social interaction.

Parts of the preschool and kindergarten curriculum frequently included in the affective domain are art and music. These two areas encourage creative expression and enable the child to express and act out feelings and emotions. Art is an especially useful medium for the young child who is limited in his ability to handle feelings and impressions verbally. He may need nonverbal forms to relate his feelings and perceptions. Freedom to experiment with crayons, paints, clay, collage, finger paint, play-doh, etc., is vital. Children need to be free from adult standards and expectations in this area, as well as free to select their own art medium and subject. Children gain social skills from art experiences as well. They learn to share, make decisions, take turns, respect the rights and feelings of others, acquire cooperation and self-control. Leeper, Dales, Skipper and Witherspoon (1968) state that "as [the student] works with materials, he assumes responsibility for choosing and shaping them,"
uses judgement and control, and gains success experiences which aid in establishing a self-concept of worth as an individual" (p. 338).

In a study done by Britain (1973) concerning artistic behavior in young children, it was found that the importance of the teacher as a catalyst in the drawing process is very important. The teacher should be an encouraging, yet non-interfering presence. Another interesting finding of the study was that the "process is more important to the children that the product itself" (p. 16). Children are more fascinated by the colors involved and scissor manipulation than any later display of art work. It was also found that "little can be done to speed up or change the drawing ability or developmental level in artistic expression" (p. 17). It appears that the art process in early education needs to be left to grow without adult interference and that the affective aspect of art can be better achieved within a child-directed atmosphere.

As in art, music experiences can allow a child to grow socially and to express feelings and emotions he
would otherwise be unable to express. Leeper, Dales, Skipper and Witherspoon (1968) state that through music the "child experiences pleasure, joy, and creative expression, develops listening skills and auditory discrimination, gains in physical development and use of his body, and increases the range and flexibility of his voice" (p. 360). Music is a large part of the child's world. For him, music is one of the most natural means of communication and self-expression. Children delight in sound, rhythm, and movement. This can easily lead into a preschool and kindergarten program of self-expression and creativity. Cohen (1974) believes that the focus of the music program should be to nurture music as a creative, self-expressive medium. She states that "those of us who are fortunate enough to have retained some avenue for expressing and communicating our inner life know how crucially important these acts of self-expression are--this creation of something from within one's self" (p.3).

In addition to these curriculum areas concerned with the affective domain, the aspects of physical en-
vironment, non-sexism in education and nutrition should also be mentioned here. They all pertain to one's feelings and emotions and can influence affective behaviors in the classroom.

Research concerning the effects of physical environment in relation to density, partitioning, and social relations, is relatively new in education, but gaining wide importance. The classroom should be arranged for young children. In order for a child to feel confidence in himself and his ability to deal effectively with the environment surrounding him, many educators have stressed the necessity for the child to be able to function independently at his own eye-level. This would include child-sized lavatory facilities, sinks, drinking fountains, tables, chairs, coat racks, and storage cabinets. Montessori was perhaps the first educator to stress the importance of this. The preschool/Kindergarten environment should not be too different from a home environment. Prescott and David (1977) have listed some variables to be considered in the physical environment: "softness (the responsiveness of the environment, especially on a sen-
sual-tactile level); privacy, density, size of facility, and quality of space (degree of complexity and variety and amount to do per child)" (p. 1). The presence or absence of these variables is shown to be important to children's development.

Loo states that there are significant effects of density on children's behavior. Class size can definitely play a positive or negative role in the classroom. Loo (1976) found that:

Children demonstrate different behavior styles in coping with or adapting to spatial conditions. Where space is limited, they become more aggressive and interact less positively; they become vigilant onlookers who stand rather than run, walk, or sit; they use various methods of escape and avoidance; and their social play or toy play activities are more unstable and interrupted more frequently. Prolonged toy play, thought to be an important part of child development, is difficult to achieve in crowded conditions. (p. 6)

Another study on density done by Rohe and Nuffer (1977) found that "density may act to inhibit social development" and that "high density, therefore, appears to affect the ability of the child to attend to tasks with clearly defined goals" (p. 5). They suggest that one possible remedy for high density is the use of parti-
tions in the classroom to minimize noise and distraction. It appears from this research that parents and educators need to address themselves more to class size. The number of children in any three, four, or five year old program should be limited regardless of the number of teachers found in the classroom.

A concern with nonsexist education, as with the physical environment concerns, has just recently been recognized by some educators. Many of women's life choices have been narrowed by factors in their early school environments. Greenberg, in her book entitled *Right from the Start: A Guide to Nonsexist Child Rearing*, says that by the time boys and girls first enter school, they have been trained differently for the intellectual and behavioral demands placed upon them. They have developed different skills and abilities. Once in school, because certain traits are considered masculine and others feminine, teachers often unknowingly limit their opportunities for exploration and discovery. Creativity and self-expression are often sacrificed in order to maintain expected sex
roles. Greenberg (1978) believes that schools have "chosen to ignore the gaps in the girl's background and to fill the gaps in the boy's experience" (p. 164). She points out that it is now considered acceptable for young boys to play in the housekeeping area, to play with dolls, to cook and to engage in the arts. However, young girls have not been consciously encouraged to build with blocks or erector sets, or play with vehicles, all important toys for the development of math and science concepts.

It is important that action be taken to strengthen the self-concepts, motivations, interests and abilities of all children. Greenberg states: "experiencing a full range of play opportunities while young not only helps to build children's academic, social, and physical skills, but allows them to retain a wide choice of interests and activities as they grow up" (p. 186). Henslee and Jones (1977) have developed a handbook of ideas for nonsexist early childhood education. In it, they stress the importance of teachers in effectively changing the existing conditions be-
cause of their daily impact in the school setting on
their students. They believe that:

Sexism puts boys and girls in their place ac-
cording to other people's judgments—turning
their fates in predetermined directions. Non-
sexist education offers these youngsters freedom
of choice—it helps give them control of their
own destinies. It also adds two more R's to the
basic skills—human rights and responsibilities.
Early childhood is the time when all people can
be created equal. Nonsexist early childhood
education can provide learners with the founda-
tions of logic and clarity of identity to de-
velop that equality. (p. 4)

The handbook includes specific activities to enhance
self-concepts and other affective characteristics for
all children. The physical environment of the school,
the nature of the school curriculum, the type of ad-
ministrative structure, and the behavior of the staff
are mentioned as the four areas to focus on in the
school setting for positive change toward eliminating
sexist conditions. 

Finally, in the area of affective education, at-
tention needs to be directed toward the field of nutri-
tion. The world around us is becoming more and more
polluted and the soil raped of precious nutrients
through continual years of farming. Conscientious at-
tention must be paid to food preparation and proper diet, particularly in regard to children, who are rapidly growing and developing future life patterns of nutrition. The harmful effects of food additives, processed flour and sugar, fast, junk foods, synthetic food colorings and flavorings, have recently been much publicized. Ben Feingold, a pediatrician, has been a pioneer in this field with his studies and research on children's behavior in relation to their diet. He has found direct correlations between a child's diet and his hyperactive behavior. In his book, *Why Your Child is Hyperactive* (1974), he discusses the influence of harmful chemical substances in food on children's behavior. He states: "with a steadily growing population, planning for the future food supply—which depends more and more upon the vast group of synthetics—must take into account the total well-being of man, which most certainly includes his behavior" (p. 168). Educators and parents alike must also take into account the "total well-being" of their children by insisting upon nutritious snacks—fruits and pure juice, instead of cookies
and kool-aid, for example—and sound instruction about proper diet and health.
Curriculum Concerns in the 
Cognitive Domain

The cognitive domain deals with the intellect and acquisition of factual knowledge. It involves the realm of thought and concept formation. Recently, the cognitive area in early childhood education has received more attention than in the past partly due to the research done concerning the importance of environmental influence. Kohlberg (1968) implies that the recent concern stems from the "growing awareness among educators that differences in early academic achievement among children are due less to formal schooling functions than to children's general background of preschool experience and the personal characteristics they develop during the early years of life (Evans, 1971, p. 34). Many preschool programs are becoming more structured now as a result of the emphasis on cognitive development. Leeper, Dales, Skipper and Witherspoon (1968) state that "considered modifications of the more permissive, relatively unstructured, programs of the past, placing more emphasis on learning
and intellectual development, do result in better educational experiences for young children" (p. 51).

School failures among poor children noted in the early sixties, also encouraged more emphasis upon the cognitive training of young children. Lysiak and Evans (1976) studied seven kindergarten curricula and concluded that "structured programs produce greater cognitive gains for disadvantaged children" (p. 35), and that such school programs may be more beneficial for high socioeconomic children as well. However, many educators have reminded the profession that the education of the "whole" child consists of many developmental concerns, not any single one. To ensure quality educational programs for the young, undue stress should not be placed on cognitive learning alone.

Piaget has done much to show the effects of environment on a child's cognitive development. He identified four sequential stages in cognitive growth. The preschool/kindergarten child is involved in the second of these stages, the preoperational stage. It is during this period that the child masters symbols
and concepts. Evans (1971) states that "Piaget's primary interest has been the quality (kind) of children's cognitive operations which culminate in action, not whether a given action is successful or correct from the standpoint of adult criteria" (p. 244). This implies that Piaget himself placed less emphasis on a structured cognitive program than on a well planned, self-directed, child-centered atmosphere.

The importance of play, self discovery, and self-centered natural learning was part of Piaget's teachings. Yawkey and Silvern (1977) reviewed Piaget's stages of play in relation to early childhood education. They identified three stages of play and discussed their relation to the child's cognitive growth. They state that "significant processes fundamental to play relate to and form the basis of intellectual development" (p. 26). Lockette (1977) studied the relationship between play and the development of language arts. She found that many different play activities are necessary before children can learn to read. She believes that:

Children must have the opportunity to learn through concrete experiences before they can be expected
to learn from reading books. Children are not ready to cope with the abstractions and symbols of reading and writing until they have that readiness which comes from many varied play experiences. This readiness will come through the manipulation of many play materials and things in the child's social and physical world. (p. 2)

It seems that play is an essential part of intellectual development and therefore should be a vital part of any early childhood program.

Perhaps the biggest thrust recently in any cognitive preschool/kinderparten program has been in the area of reading and language arts. This is especially true of those who feel that the major concern of early education is to prepare the children for first grade. It is generally accepted that the first step toward reading involves a child's language skills. He or she needs to be able to communicate with others and to understand the meaning of words. Activities such as storytelling, poetryreading, and dramatic play all contribute to this development. Cohen and Rudolph (1977) state that "music, rhythms, running, jumping, creeping, painting, blocks, manipulative materials, woodworking, and dramatic play require growth in left-
right understanding, directionality, occular pattern scanning, hand-eye coordination, and manipulative skill, all required in reading" (p. 309). They quote Tinker, an authority on reading, who believes that a:

Kindergarten program that supports reading should provide experiences in verbal facility, concept building, word recognition skills, left-right orientation, auditory discrimination, comprehension and interpretation, elementary study skills. and widening of interests, all to be embedded in content that is interesting and offers challenges to young children. (p. 311)

All of these skills are what are commonly referred to as reading readiness skills.

Mason (1971) studied children's knowledge of printed words and letters in order to achieve a definition of reading readiness activities. She found that middle class children showed a uniformly similar order of acquisition of words and letters, that is recognition of their own names, the ability to print upper and lower case letters, the recognition of commonly appearing signs, labels and some two to three letter nouns and propositions (p. 31). These skills can easily be learned through play activities and everyday experiences. Mason concluded that "reading readiness can be explicitly defined and ordered into a naturally
occurring hierarchy, and that in a favorable environ-
mental setting, even four year old children can ac-
quire an extensive background. . . for formal reading" (p. 33). Even with the thrust on early reading and the demand for more structured cognitive programs in this area, it appears that young children need to nurture their readiness abilities long before they should be taught actual reading skills.

A second important cognitive concern in early childhood schooling is in the area of mathematics. Young children come to school with numerous number experiences. They may already be familiar with the numbers on the telephone, the clock, the television, and items found at stores. They can often count and order their possessions. Through numerous experiences children become acquainted with various quantitative ideas. The early school years should supplement and extend the experiences that children bring to school in order to help them learn about numbers and their application to daily living. "The main concern should be with the development of concepts" (Leeper, Dales,
Much of this learning can be accomplished through game activities, block play and active self-initiated learning.

In a study done by Chinn (1967) concerning appropriate preschool activities to develop mathematical concepts, fifteen units of study were formulated as most relevant for young children. They were; sets, equal sets, subsets, a set with one member and the empty set, one-to-one correspondence, more than and fewer than, ordering of sets, number property of a set, comparison of numbers, operation with sets, elements of geometry, simple closed curves, figures in three dimensions, the number line, and arithmetic operations.

Most educators agree that science is another academic discipline that should be a part of early childhood schooling. Children are naturally curious and curiosity is the basis of a scientific attitude. They have a strong exploratory drive which motivates them to satisfy their curiosity and manipulate the objects in their environment. This would seem to indicate a readiness to find out about their surroundings,
a natural scientific approach. Cohen and Rudolph (1977) sight a study done by the American Association for the Advancement of Science that concluded that the "early school years are a time of building scientific readi-
ness and that 'pre-science' is a more appropriate de-
scription of the activities of young children than science" (p. 181). Ferguson and Repasse (1975) state that "science on this [kindergarten] level is basically an informal observation and investigation of the various phenomena of the environment and makes use of a child's most outstanding characteristics--his or her curiosity and interest in asking questions" (p. 4). They suggest five major areas that would be appropriate for an early childhood science program: animals (zoo, pets, farm, forest, prehistoric); nature studies (sea-
sons, plants, sun, rocks, walks, trees); ourselves (five senses, self-awareness); wood, sand, and water (mea-
surement, sensory experiences, manipulation skills, eye-
hand coordination); objects and materials (magnifying lenses, blocks, magnets, sorting materials and bal-
ances). This seems to provide a basis for an appropriate
science curriculum that should be a part of early education programs.

Finally, the area of social studies needs to be included in the cognitive domain. Leeper, Dales, Skipper and Witherspoon (1968) define social studies as those "studies that provide understanding of the physical environment and its effect upon man's ways of living, of the basic needs of man and the activities in which he engages to meet his needs, and of the institutions man has developed to perpetuate his way of life" (p. 237). Social studies concerns itself with certain behaviors, values, and goals that young children need to be aware of. Because of the varied economic and social backgrounds of children first entering school, it is important that they be exposed to the life styles, values, and attitudes of people different from themselves. In order to broaden their own experience, Marksberry (1977) believes that social studies is important in developing critical and creative thought among preschool children, but only if it is purposefully guided by appropriate experiences.
She states that the "nursery school and kindergarten teacher has just as much responsibility for furthering these aims . . . as does the senior high school history teacher" (p. 2). The early years are indeed a period of rapid growth during which environmental influences can have lasting effects. Therefore, the realm of social studies, with its emphasis on values, attitudes, and behaviors, should be a crucial component of a preschool/kindergarten curriculum.
Curriculum Objectives in the Psychomotor Domain

The psychomotor domain concerns itself with both large and small muscle development. The large, or gross, muscle activities include running, hopping, skipping, throwing, catching, climbing, and balancing. These activities usually take place outside the classroom on the playground. The small, or fine, muscle activities include tracing, drawing, cutting, pasting, copying shape patterns, and the abilities to snap, zip, button, lace and tie shoes and clothes. The majority of these latter activities occur inside the classroom during art activities, woodworking, writing practice, block building and construction, and self-dressing. Educators have, almost unknowingly, promoted the small muscle development of children as an inherent part of the school program.

This is not necessarily the case with the large muscle development. Greenberg (1978) believes that:

While early childhood educators vaguely consider vigorous play to be healthy, although they do little to encourage it, they view regular, structured exercise as insufficiently free and crea -
tive, and frown on sports as leading to competitiveness. (p. 196)

Too often, the only physical education part of the preschool/kindergarten day is an "airing" outside on the playground, rarely organized or structured to promote active involvement in physical exercise.

Cohen and Rudolph (1977) note the importance of exercise for growing muscles by saying that:

Children must have the opportunity to develop coordination and mastery of a variety of activities and skills, because the confidence and satisfaction that follow mastery of one's own body give a child a feeling of mastery as a coping person. (p. 326)

Planned programs to help children develop their large muscles and coordination need to be implemented by early childhood educators. Perhaps all early childhood schools should employ teachers trained in physical education along with their other resource teachers. An interesting study concerning parental attitudes toward the motor development of young children was done by Schnabel-Dickey (1977). Parents expressed underlying attitudes that motor skills are learned behaviors important in total development, that young-
sters should become proficient performers, and that participation in vigorous activity should not be limited by risk of injury.

In addition to stressing movement education and specific physical activity, attention should also be drawn to the outdoor facilities themselves, the playgrounds. Besides developing muscles and coordination, children learn to interact with others, take turns, to share and cooperate. They can imitate adults, learn about adult habits and real life through imitation in play. They can develop self-direction, independence, and creativity. However, most playgrounds for young children contain expensive and limited equipment, such as slides, swings, see-saws, and jungle-gyms. Hafer (1978) has reported on a creative playground developed by a school in New York in conjunction with parents that used all second hand materials and volunteer labor. The cost of the playground was kept under $300.00. Safety was the primary objective. Secondly, the facility was designed to allow "creativity and pupil imagination while at the same time provide some
basic skill development in the area of visual perception, coordination, body awareness, and cooperation" (p. 4). A by-product of the project was its ability to bring the "parents together for a constructive long range project that they can visibly associate with and share with others" (p. 6). It seems that educators and parents can effect change and work together "on the playground" to improve the affective education of their young children.

Summary

Research indicates that parents often send their children to preschool for the convenience of it, without observing the school program. Instead, educators suggest that parents examine schools for several important considerations. If good schools are unavailable or too costly, concerned parents can effect change by working together, and can implement their own quality preschool programs. Such a quality parent initiated school is reviewed in the literature.

The field of education is rich and varied in its philosophies. As kindergartens grew and spread, in
the late nineteen hundreds, so did the spread of educational philosophies. Now, preschool and kindergarten programs are varied, from "traditional" schools, stressing cognitive concerns, to "open" schools, stressing affective concerns. Educational approaches can be divided into three types; self-instructional, social-psychological, and direct instruction. The optimum learning environment can be said to be a combination of all three major areas of concern; affective, cognitive, and psychomotor.

The affective domain relates to feelings and emotions. The importance of the child's self-concept is paramount. The affective curriculum includes art and music education. Also included in the affective domain is a discussion of the importance of the physical environment on the child, the nutrition of the child, and the need for non-sexist education.

The cognitive domain deals with the intellect and involves the realm of thought and concept formation. Piaget, through his studies showing the effects of environment on cognitive learning and the importance
of play for intellectual development, emphasized the need for cognitive objectives in early childhood education. Since the early nineteen-sixties, there has been a stress on cognitive learning. The cognitive curriculum now includes reading and language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.

The psychomotor domain concerns itself with both large and small muscle development. In the classroom, fine motor coordination is achieved through art activities, writing exercises, and numerous free play activities. The gross muscle development is achieved through physical education instruction and playground activities. The benefit of creative, imaginative, outdoor play materials is discussed.
Chapter III

Procedures

The parental and teacher questionnaires used in this study were developed after a review of related literature had been conducted. The two questionnaires were based upon the material found in the literature. All the questions are directly related to concerns found in three curriculum areas—affective, cognitive, and psychomotor. These three curriculum areas include all the major objectives inherent in early childhood education. Development of the affective domain, feelings and emotions, focuses on self-concept, art, and music. The relationship of the physical environment, non-sexist education, and nutrition to the education of the "whole" child is included as part of the affective domain. Development in the cognitive domain, thought and concept formation, consists of free play, reading and language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Development in the psychomotor domain, large and small muscle development, concerns itself with movement education and movement activity, as well as
playground facilities. Each one of these specific curriculum objectives included in the three major educational domains is found somewhere on the questionnaire, either in regard to a specific question or as a possible response to a question.

The survey questionnaire consists of twelve questions. The parental questionnaire was developed so as to parallel the teacher questionnaire. The only differences are the phrasing of the questions. The author felt it necessary to limit the length of the questionnaire in order to encourage more individuals to respond. The responses to the questions were of three types: yes, no, or no opinion or preference; a numbered rating scale based on preference of choice, and; the selection of one choice from a multiple choice response. The multiple choice response questions were not designed with one correct response in mind.

The questionnaire was distributed to four private nursery schools and kindergartens in the same geographical area of the city—middle to upper-middle class, suburban children. Three hundred parental surveys were distributed. Each questionnaire was enclosed in
an envelope which was sent home with the child attend­
ing the school. The questionnaire was returned to
the classroom teacher by the child in the envelope to
insure greater privacy. A brief explanatory note ex­
plaining the questionnaire was taped to the outside
of the envelope. The explanatory note mentioned that
the responses would remain confidential and that there
was no need for parents to sign their names.

The schools surveyed were made up of middle to
upper-middle class children. By concentrating on one,
specific socioeconomic group, the author felt that the
subsequent results and conclusions would be more
accurately ascertained. Although the economic back­
grounds of the children were similiar, the religious
affiliations were varied: approximately 50% Protestant;
30% Jewish, and; 20% Catholic. Three of the schools
had morning only programs, while one had full day care
services.

Fifty teacher questionnaires were distributed.
All of the teachers employed at the four schools sur­
veyed were given questionnaires to fill out and return
to their supervisor. However, the four schools surveyed employed a total of twenty-four teachers. In order to survey a larger group of teachers than twenty-four, the remaining twenty-six teacher questionnaires were distributed to other private nursery school teachers in the same area of the city. These teachers worked with children from the same socio-economic backgrounds as the other teachers surveyed.

Once the surveys were returned, the responses to each question were tabulated individually on a master sheet, one for parental responses and one for teacher responses. The tabulations were then totaled and the percentages recorded for each response. (See figures A and B)

Summary

Questions asked in the parental and teacher questionnaire used in this study were based on the three areas of the preschool curriculum as found in the review of the literature. These curriculum areas included the affective, cognitive, and psychomotor domains. The questionnaire consisted of twelve questions with three
1. Which of the following do you feel is the one, most important reason for sending your child to preschool? Circle one.
   a. preparation and readiness for first grade
   b. to learn to interact with others in a social setting
   c. to stimulate his or her intellectual ability
   d. for child care during hours that mother works outside the home

2. Which of the following do you feel is the most important attribute your child should develop before he or she enters first grade? Circle one.
   a. a large, active vocabulary
   b. a positive self-concept
   c. an ability to read
   d. a strong, well-coordinated body
   e. acquisition of basic readiness skills

3. Do you feel that it is important to have a reading readiness program in preschool, resulting with your child learning to read in kindergarten?
   Yes__________  No___________  No Opinion__________

4. If your child's school were to employ three resource teachers in the following areas, please rate them in order of your preference (1, 2, or 3, with 1 being your first choice)
   _____ art teacher
   _____ physical education teacher
   _____ music teacher

5. Would you prefer that your child brought home materials that are (circle one)
   a. a result of teacher directed projects
   b. original, creative child's work
   c. no opinion

6. Please rate the following seven curriculum areas in order of importance (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, with 1 being your first choice)
   _____ science
   _____ music
   _____ art
   _____ reading readiness
   _____ mathematics
   _____ social studies
   _____ physical education

7. Do you feel that free play is an important part of the preschool program?
   Yes__________  No___________  No Opinion__________

8. Do you feel it is important to encourage both boys and girls to be involved in a wide range of home and school activities regardless of sex roles?
   Yes__________  No___________  No Opinion__________

9. What do you feel is the ideal class size, regardless of number of teachers, for a preschool classroom (circle one)
   a. 10 to 12
   b. 13 to 16
   c. 17 to 20
   d. 21 to 26

10. Would you prefer a (circle one)
    a. small class with one teacher
    b. large class with a teacher and an aide
    c. no preference

11. Which of the following would you most prefer that your child ate for snack? (circle one)
    a. cookie and juice
    b. assorted fruit
    c. pretzels or potato chips
    d. no preference

12. Would you prefer that your child's playground consist of (circle one)
    a. swings, slides, jungle-gym, and other commercial products
    b. tires, railroad ties, sand, ropes, and other "homemade" products
    c. no preference

Please feel free to add any comments you so desire on the reverse side.
1. Which of the following do you feel is the one, most important reason for children to attend preschool? (circle one)
   a. preparation and readiness for first grade
   b. to learn to interact with others in a social setting
   c. to stimulate intellectual ability
   d. for child care for working mothers

2. Which of the following do you feel is the one most important attribute a child should develop before he or she enters first grade? (circle one)
   a. a large, active vocabulary
   b. positive self-concept
   c. an ability to read
   d. a strong, well-coordinated body
   e. acquisition of basic readiness skills

3. Do you stress a strong reading readiness program in your class, that hopefully will result in pupils reading before first grade?
   Yes__ No____

4. If you could have the following three resource teachers for your classroom, how would you rate them in order of importance (1,2, or 3, with 1 being your first choice)
   music teacher
   art teacher
   physical education teacher

5. Do you prefer to send your pupils home with (circle one)
   a. teacher directed materials
   b. creative, child directed work
   c. a combination of both a and b

6. Please rate the following seven curriculum areas in order of importance (1,2,3,4,5,6, and 7, with 1 being most important)
   mathematics
   social studies
   art
   music
   physical education
   science
   reading readiness

7. Do you feel that free play is an important part of the preschool program?
   Yes____ No____

8. Do you feel it is important to encourage both boys and girls to be involved in a wide range of home and school activities, regardless of sex roles?
   Yes____ No____
   No Opinion____

9. What do you feel is an ideal class size, regardless of number of teachers, for a preschool classroom? (circle one)
   a. 10 to 12
   b. 13 to 16
   c. 17 to 20
   d. 21 to 26

10. Would you prefer a (circle one)
    a. small class with you as the only teacher
    b. large class with yourself and an aide
    c. large class with yourself and another teacher

11. Which of the following would you most prefer to serve your class for snack? (circle one)
    a. cookies and juice
    b. assorted fruit
    c. pretzels and potato chips
    d. no preference

12. Would you prefer that your school's playground consist of (circle one)
    a. swings, slides, jungle gym, and other commercial products
    b. tires, sans, railroad ties, ropes, and other "homemade" materials
    c. no preference

Please feel free to add any comments you so desire to the reverse side.
different types of responses. Three hundred parental questionnaires and fifty teacher questionnaires were distributed. The parental questionnaires were enclosed in individual envelopes and sent home with their children from school. The schools distributing the surveys were located in a middle class area of a large Southern city, and were made up of middle to upper-middle class families. The teachers surveyed taught in the same schools, or in the same socio-economic area of the city. The resulting responses were tabulated individually and percentages totaled for each response.
Chapter IV

Results of Survey Questionnaire

The most apparent, as well as significant, result of the parent's survey was the number of parents who responded to the questionnaire. A twenty percent return was anticipated. A 55.3% return was achieved. Out of 300 parent surveys distributed, 166 of them were completed and sent back to school with the children. Several of them had lengthy comments written on the reverse side. Not only did the parents express interest in their child's preschool environment, they also indicated their appreciation for being asked to contribute their opinions. As far as the teacher survey is concerned, the responses were as expected. Fifty teacher surveys were distributed and all fifty were returned.

In response to the first question, 52.4% of the parents surveyed said that their one, most important reason for sending their child to preschool was to learn to interact with other children in a social setting. The remaining responses were evenly divided--20.5% in
both cases--between a and c--preparation and readiness for first grade and for enhancement of intellectual stimulation. Only five parents circled d, child care during hours mother works outside the home. Of those five, three wrote on the questionnaire that even if they were not employed full time, they would be sending their child to preschool, primarily for social interaction. The teacher's responses to the same question were similar in that the majority--73%--listed social interaction as the primary reason for attending preschool. Only 11.5% responded with preparation and readiness for first grade, while 15.3% believed intellectual stimulation to be the primary reason for children to attend preschool.

Parents and teachers were most in agreement on the second question, the most important attribute a child should develop before first grade. A positive self-concept was favored by 63.8% of the parents and by 69.2% of the teachers. Acquisition of basic readiness skills was the second most favored response, circled by 32.5% of the parents and by 30.7% of the teachers. Only one parent circled a large, active vocabulary, two, an
ability to read, and one, a strong well-coordinated body. None of these alternative responses were circled by the teachers.

Only 6% of the parents responding had no opinion concerning question number three--the importance of a strong reading readiness program in preschool, resulting with children reading before first grade. Parents were most verbal on this question, writing their feelings down on the reverse side of the questionnaire. While 60.2% responded to the question with a "yes" response, and 30.1% responded with a "no" response, the primary concerns were written in favor of a strong reading readiness program, but not necessarily resulting in their child reading before first grade. The teachers were more evenly divided on this issue. The "yes" responses accounted for 46.2% of those surveyed, while the "no" responses accounted for 53.8% of those surveyed.

Both groups were evenly divided on their choice of preference for resource teachers in question number four. Although all three resource teachers were con-
sidered important by both parents and teachers, parents showed a slight preference for a physical education teacher, a music teacher second, and an art teacher third. The teachers themselves showed a slight preference for a music teacher, an art teacher second, and a physical education teacher third.

In answer to the fifth question, 55.4% of the parents preferred that their child brought home original, creative work. Approximately 30.1% preferred teacher directed projects, while only 9.6% had no opinion on the subject. The teachers surveyed chose a combination of both and responded with that answer in 57.7% of the responses. The remaining teachers--38.5%--chose creative, child directed projects.

In response to question number six, both parents and teachers overwhelmingly chose reading readiness as the most important curriculum area for preschool, and mathematics as the second most important area. The five remaining curriculum areas were more difficult for both groups to separate. Although the responses were very close for the remaining five, parents generally
considered them in the following order of importance—physical education, art, science, music, and social studies. Teachers listed them in the following order of importance—art, music, social studies, physical education, and science.

Question number eight concerned non-sexist education. Here again, as in question number seven, the "yes" responses were overwhelming in both groups. The importance of encouraging both boys and girls to take part in a wide range of home and school activities regardless of sex was considered important by 92.7% of the parents and by 92.3% of the teachers.

Every one of the teachers surveyed felt that free play is an important part of the preschool program. Likewise, the vast majority of parents surveyed, 94.5%, responded positively to this question. Only three parents answered "no," while one parent responded with no opinion.

The two groups surveyed were in some disagreement as to the ideal class size, questions nine and ten. The majority of parents, or 54.2%, chose the smallest
class possible, ten to twelve students. Their second choice, chosen by 31.3% of the parents, was the next largest group of students, thirteen to sixteen. The remaining 10.2% chose seventeen to twenty pupils as the ideal class size. None of the parents selected the largest group, twenty-one to twenty-six students as the ideal class size. A large majority of parents, or 72.8% preferred a small class with just one teacher to a large class with one teacher and one aide.

While most of the parents selected the smallest class size available, 50% of the teachers surveyed chose the second smallest class size, thirteen to sixteen students. Their second choice, selected by 30.8%, was a class of seventeen to twenty pupils. Only 19.2% of the teachers chose ten to twelve students as the ideal class size. Half the teachers preferred a small class with themselves as the only teacher, while 34.6% preferred a large class with themselves and an aide. Only 15.4% of the teachers questioned chose a large class with themselves and another teacher.

Parents felt strongly about question number eleven, dealing with nutrition. They were vocal on this issue
Often writing comments expressing their concern over the sugar cookies and juice so often found in preschools. A large percentage, 73.5%, chose the nutritious snack, assorted fruit. Only 13.2% preferred cookies and juice, while 10.2% indicated no preference. The teachers also chose the nutritious snack, but only by 53.8%. Their second choice was cookies and juice, chosen by 23% of the teachers, and 19.2% of them indicated no preference.

No strong preferences were indicated by the parents surveyed concerning their child's preschool playground equipment, question number twelve. Instead, their main concern was the safety of the materials. However, 35.5% did select response b, "homemade" materials, 34.3% indicated no preference, and 26.5% selected a playground made up of commercial products. The teachers were more strongly in favor of the "homemade" materials on playgrounds, selecting that response in 50% of the surveys. Approximately 38.5% of the teachers chose the commercial playground equipment, while 11.5% indicated no preference. (See Figure 1)
## Figure 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
<th>Responses</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Sending child to preschool</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. preparation &amp; readiness for 1st grade</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. social interaction</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
<td>73.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. stimulation of intellectual ability</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. child care</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Most important attribute</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. large vocabulary</td>
<td>.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. positive self-concept</td>
<td>63.8%</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. ability to read</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. well-coordinated body</td>
<td>.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. readiness skills</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
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<td><strong>3. Reading readiness</strong></td>
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<td>yes</td>
<td>60.2%</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
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<td>no opinion</td>
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<td><strong>4. Preference for resource teachers</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Physical Education</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5. Child's work</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>a. teacher directed</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
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<td>b. creative, child directed</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. no opinion (parents)</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>57.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>a combination of a &amp; b (teachers)</td>
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6. Rating of 7 curr. areas

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7. Free play

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8. Non-sexist education

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>92.7%</td>
<td>92.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Ideal class size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
<th>10-12</th>
<th>13-16</th>
<th>17-20</th>
<th>21-26</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opinion</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. Class size preference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preference</th>
<th>1 teacher</th>
<th>1 teacher &amp; 1 aide</th>
<th>2 teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. small class w/ 1 teacher</td>
<td>72.8%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. large class w/ 1 teacher &amp;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 aide</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. large class w/ 2 teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. Snack preference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Snack preference</th>
<th>10-12</th>
<th>13-16</th>
<th>17-20</th>
<th>21-26</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. cookies &amp; juice</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>73.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. fruit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. pretzels &amp; potato chips</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. no preference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

63
12. Playground

   a. commercial products          26.5%  38.5%
   b. "homemade" products          35.5%  50.0%
   c. no preference                34.3%  11.5%
Summary

The most apparent and significant result of the survey was the large response—55.3%—of the parents to the questionnaire. This was more than twice the anticipated return. As expected, all of the teachers surveyed completed the questionnaire.

The majority of parents and teachers surveyed felt that social interaction is the most important reason for children to attend preschool. A positive self-concept was chosen by both groups to be the most important attribute a child should develop before entering first grade. Both groups felt strongly about the importance of a reading readiness program in preschool, but not necessarily resulting in a child reading before first grade. Concerning resource teachers, parents selected a physical education teacher first, a music teacher second, and an art teacher third. Teachers chose a music teacher first, an art teacher second, and a physical education teacher third. Parents showed a preference for original, creative work being brought home by their children, while teachers
preferred a combination of that and teacher directed work. Both groups chose reading readiness as the most important curriculum area, with mathematics as the second most important area. Parents and teachers overwhelmingly agreed that free play is a vital part of a preschool program and that both boys and girls should be taught in a non-sexist manner. The smallest class size possible, preferably with just one teacher, was chosen by most of the parents. The teachers also preferred a small class with themselves as the only teacher, but preferred a little larger class than the parents did. Parents and teachers alike selected the assorted fruit as the best snack. Parents expressed safety concern first for their child's preschool playground, but indicated a slight preference for a playground made up of "homemade" materials. Teachers, by more of a majority, selected this "homemade" playground as well.
Chapter V

Conclusions

Four possible reasons were given in the introductory section of this project for the lack of parental involvement in preschool programs. They were: apathy, misplaced values, ignorance, and intimidation. Because of the large response to the survey questionnaire, it seems that the possibility of apathy or misplaced values can be ruled out. The majority of parents surveyed responded quickly and enthusiastically. They often expressed their appreciation for being asked to contribute their opinions. Many indicated that they were curious to know how the results turned out.

Not only were the parents eager to respond to the questionnaire, their responses were well thought out and, on the whole, very intelligent. This negates the third possible reason for parental lack of involvement--ignorance. Many of the parent's responses were in accord with the teacher's responses. Both groups agreed on the importance of developing a positive self-concept during the preschool years. Both
groups felt that social interaction is the primary reason for sending children to preschool. The parents were also in agreement with the teachers concerning the importance of all three resource teachers—music, art, and physical education. The importance of free play, non-sexist education, small class size, and nutritious snacks was recognized by both groups.

Although a sizeable group of the parents—41%—believed that preparation and readiness for first grade and stimulation of intellectual ability were the primary reasons for sending children to preschool, the majority of the parental responses indicated more support for the affective curriculum concerns than the cognitive curriculum concerns. The stress on cognitive learning in preschool programs was not as evident as had been expected. Parents were more concerned with basic readiness skills than actual reading ability. They also felt that the curriculum areas of physical education, art, and music, were just as important, if not more important, in a preschool program than the curriculum areas of science and social
studies. In light of these results, educators should not feel pressured to stress the cognitive concerns over the affective and psychomotor concerns.

The lack of parental involvement in preschool programs, at least as it relates to the specific socio-economic group surveyed, appears to be caused by a feeling of intimidation on the parent's part. Perhaps they have felt uncomfortable visiting their child's school or offering assistance to the teachers. The educators need to be the ones to actively involve the parents in the schools. They need to take the lead in structuring this involvement. Indeed, the state of Florida has passed into law Senate Bill No. 958 (1978), which now allocates funds for schools to do exactly that—involve more of the community with the schools. The Educational Improvement Projects Act, Section 229.59, Florida Statutes, provides funds for district and school advisory committee improvement, school volunteers, and any other educational areas which would be improved through a closer working relationship between school and community. It is anticipated that these
grants will bring the community and the schools closer together by strengthening community involvement in our educational system and afford participating individuals with an inside view of the educational process. In this way, perhaps, the gaps which have long existed between the home, the school, and the community may be effectively closed.

This project suggests several areas for development of parental involvement. Because of the concerned response of the parents to the question of school snacks, this appears to be one possible area for parents to work on. A parent's group could be established to find ways to shop for and serve nutritious snacks without having to increase the cost to the school. If parents prefer the smallest class size possible, which means more individualized instruction, the school could set up a planned program for "mother's helpers" to insure more small group activities and individual attention. Maybe some of the parents themselves could act as resource teachers if they had knowledge and specific skills in certain curriculum areas. Because
parents feel strongly about non-sexist education, a committee could be formed to determine just what this means and formulate guidelines for implementing non-sexist activities for use in the classroom. Finally, the playground project, as reported by Hafer (1978), could be used as an example of a parent involvement project. Such a playground would be inexpensive, safe, and would serve to bring the school together with the community for work on a constructive project.

Summary

Four possible reasons for the lack of parental involvement in preschool programs were given in the introductory section of this project--apathy, misplaced values, ignorance, or intimidation. The survey results seem to negate the first three. The conclusion then appears to be a feeling of intimidation on the part of the parents. With this in mind, the educators themselves need to take the lead in structuring the parental involvement. The state of Florida has now passed into law Senate Bill No. 958, which allocates funds for schools to plan programs to bring the home and the com-
munity closer together through committees, school volunteers, and any other areas which would improve a closer working relationship.

This project suggests several ways to involve parents in schools: by forming a group to bring more nutritious snacks into the classroom; by implementing a "mother's helper" program in the school; by calling upon qualified parents to act as resource teachers; by forming a committee to establish guidelines and activities for non-sexist instruction; and, by working on an inexpensive playground project.
References


