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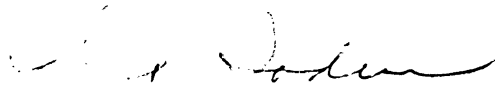
KINDERGARTEN TEACHER PRECEPTIONS
REGARDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG
CHILDREN'S EMERGING LITERACY SKILLS

presented by

PEGGY ANN THELEN

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Ph. D. degree in Family and Child Ecology



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**KINDERGARTEN TEACHER PERCEPTIONS REGARDING THE
DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG CHILDREN'S EMERGING LITERACY SKILLS**

By

Peggy Ann Thelen

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to

Michigan State University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Family and Child Ecology

2004

ABSTRACT

KINDERGARTEN TEACHER PERCEPTIONS REGARDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG CHILDREN'S EMERGING LITERACY SKILLS

By

Peggy Ann Thelen

This study examined kindergarten teacher perceptions regarding the development of young children's emerging literacy skills. Using data from a cross-sectional design sample of 42 kindergarten teachers, the investigation found that many kindergarten teachers did not have a complete understanding relative to the developmental path of emerging literacy skills. Specifically, there seemed to be a lack of awareness as to when certain foundational emerging literacy skills should be developed, and the impact those skills have on the development of future, more abstract skills. A majority of teachers in this study indicated emerging literacy skills such as *recognize rhyming words, understand the difference between pictures and print, and understand that letters are formed in a specific way and are unchanging* should be developed *after* kindergarten entry. Whereas, these teachers also indicated that the more abstract skills *write some letters of the alphabet, write first name, and recognize own name in writing* should be developed *prior* to kindergarten entrance.

Differences in teacher perspectives emerged relating to several personal characteristics including the number of years of teaching experience, preschool teaching experience, early childhood training, and teacher participation in professional activities, as well as contextual characteristics including the type of

program the teacher taught in (i.e. half-day or all day program), classroom size, and children's prior program experience. Teachers with less teaching experience, those with a great deal of preschool teaching experience, teachers with less/no early childhood training, and those who did not participate in professional activities had higher expectations for the development of certain emerging literacy skills than their counterparts. Teachers in all day, every day kindergarten programs, and those with smaller class sizes, expected certain emerging literacy skills to be developed earlier than teachers in half-day programs or those with more students. The salutary effects of comparing expectations of these professionals involved in children's literacy development include implications for preservice and inservice training in the field of education.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is the result of much encouragement and support from many people. I am most grateful for the faith that my family, friends, and the faculty at Michigan State University had that this body of research would be accomplished. Many exceptional people have played a key role in my academic and professional development, in particular my committee members and several professors in the Family and Child Ecology Department.

My advisor and mentor, Dr. Anne Soderman, has played an exceptionally strong part in my growth. She continually offered opportunities to challenge my abilities and increase my knowledge in the areas of child development, early childhood education, and most particularly emerging literacy. Her guidance and faith in me have been invaluable. Dr. Alice Whiren has been a tremendous support and a valuable resource of knowledge. I am forever grateful for her strong encouragement to participate in professional activities, whether I was ready or not. Dr. Robert Griffore has been a tremendous help in guiding me through the statistical process and helping me to realize it does not have to be terrifying. Dr. Nell Duke offered many important suggestions in making this a stronger research study. Her advice and insight have been indispensable.

Significant support for this study has also come from the Ingham County Intermediate School District. Working closely with Michelle Nicholson and her staff made the initiation and implementation of this study achievable.

Other professionals have offered much appreciated support. Christie Freestone and the kindergarten staff at Ithaca South Elementary, and Donnalyn Ingersol and the kindergarten staff at Luce Road Elementary participated in the pilot study. Linda Chard extended help in keeping the statistical process on track. Leslie Thomas lent her expertise in language and continuity. Their collaboration and kindness through these years has been valued beyond words.

Exceptional motivators and supporters include my extended family and friends. They kept me looking forward and staying focused.

Above all, my children, Caitlin and Kelsey, and my husband, Terry, deserve the most recognition for their help and encouragement. Their willingness to help out wherever needed has been a major reason for this accomplishment. I am truly appreciative of their love and support.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The word *literacy*, perhaps more than any other word in education, currently commands much attention and much emotion. While interest in early childhood education as a whole has markedly increased in the last several decades, literacy development has been most vividly in the spotlight. Whereas early reading and writing skills are now established characteristics of early literacy, contemporary literacy education should also include the attainment of listening skills, speaking skills, and viewing skills (Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren, 2004). As the study and articulation of early literacy matures, it is of growing importance that early childhood educators understand early literacy acquisition and the importance it plays in future academic success. The International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), in their joint position statement regarding early literacy development, state that in order for every child to achieve high standards of literacy, the responsibility must be shared by families, early childhood programs, schools, and communities (Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000).

Many studies have determined that there is a direct link between the skills with which children enter school and their later academic performance (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001). It is improbable that children who struggle with reading difficulties early will catch up to their peers. Those children whose academic careers begin with inadequate reading-related

skills are also more likely to be referred for special education services. Most notably, it is children from low-income families who appear to be at considerable risk for reading difficulties (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

Early childhood is therefore a crucial time to ensure that children receive developmentally appropriate early literacy experiences. Given that these important emerging literacy skills need to be taught, the quality of emergent literacy depends on the environmental quality and experiences children encounter at home (Hart & Risley, 1995; Purcell-Gates, 1995; Taylor, 1998; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988), preschool (Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998) and school (Morrow, 1993; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001). Consequently, parents, caregivers, and teachers are responsible for actively supporting children's emergent literacy development by providing opportunities for children to acquire important emerging literacy knowledge and skills (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). It is with the support of parents, caregivers, and teachers, as well as exposure to literacy-rich environments, that children effectively advance from emerging to conventional reading.

It is important to view children's literacy development within the context of the family, educational setting, community, and the larger society. Each of these environments is connected to the others and all influence the developing child (Bronfenbrenner, 1998). In order to work collectively for successful literacy development of children, it is beneficial to understand the literacy beliefs of the adults in charge of children's emerging literacy.

Need for the Study

Perhaps at no other time in history have Americans better understood the importance of early childhood literacy. Brain development research has supported earlier social research in characterizing the links between early learning experiences and subsequent educational success for children. This growing mass of research has produced a foundation of knowledge upon which curricular and best practices decisions can be made (Roskos, Christie, & Richgels, 2003). Organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the International Reading Association (IRA) (see Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000), and the National Research Council (1998) have produced research-based guidelines for education professionals upon which they can base their decisions and practice.

However, it may also be observed that perhaps at no other time in recent history have Americans demanded children be taught certain literacy skills at younger and younger ages. A kindergarten teacher of 30 years notes that over the course of about the last six years, kindergarten teachers have felt the pressure of escalating academic expectations across the country. This same concern is heard from colleagues and friends, "Kindergarteners are now expected to learn what had once been in the domain of a first grade curriculum" (DeVault, 2003, p. 90). The story is related to one child in Virginia who would not be promoted to the first grade until she achieved the required reading level. By emphasizing reading at such an early age, teachers must pack in more and more teaching into the already limited day. Yet, while expectations and standards

have been heightened, children are coming to school with greater and more diverse needs (Dickinson, 1999).

With the increase of public pressure to teach children literacy skills at an earlier age, elementary schools have, accordingly, and as many kindergarten teachers have noted, pushed down first grade curricular expectations. These expectations filter down to the youngest learners. The response to these pressures is constant testing (Dickinson, 1999; Jehlen, 2004; United States Department of Education, 2002). Consequently, particular education theories are once again in a flux. Jehlen (2004) observes that the reaction of some schools to the pressure of raising test scores is to turn away from developmentally based programs in favor of rote, scripted reading programs. Children spend more time sitting and listening to a teacher rather than learning through hands-on, exploration, or experimentation experiences (Dickinson, 1999).

As can be seen, the understanding of literacy acquisition and development has grown, societal pressure to increase early literacy has grown, and certain theoretically based programs may now be discarded. Kindergarten teachers are asked to balance this knowledge and pressure, and turn out children who are able to read. It is, then, reasonable to say that more demands are being placed on kindergarten teachers to be successful in teaching early literacy skills. Therefore, an important question must be addressed: Who do teachers believe is responsible for which components of children's emerging literacy? This study examined those emerging literacy skills kindergarten teachers believed children should acquire prior to kindergarten entrance, those emerging literacy skills that

should be acquired during kindergarten, and those emerging literacy skills that should be acquired at the beginning of first grade.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of kindergarten teachers regarding when young children best acquire emerging literacy skills.

Statement of the Problem

Explicit abilities necessary for reading and writing develop from direct encounters with both oral and written language over a period of time prior to elementary education. Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp (2000) suggest viewing the acquisition of emergent literacy as a developmental continuum rather than as an all-or-nothing proposition. The continuum extends from birth through the primary grades.

By looking at literacy development on a continuum, it is logical that children should learn emerging literacy skills in a smooth and continuous manner. However, there is great diversity in individual children themselves, in children's oral and written language experiences at home, in childcare settings, and in classrooms; as a result, not all children are at the same spot on the continuum at the same age. Yet, "reading and writing are lifted out of context in schools and become the focus of specific, culturally remote pedagogical attention. Literacy becomes an end in itself, reduced to a hierarchy of interrelated skills" (Taylor, 1998, p.90). If literacy skills are acquired over time, in a somewhat sequential

manner, it could be speculated that there would be agreement as to which emerging literacy skills are best acquired before children enter kindergarten, which skills are best acquired in kindergarten, and which skills are best acquired as children transition to first grade. This study attempted to answer the following questions: **Which emerging literacy skills do kindergarten teachers believe should be primarily developed prior to kindergarten entrance? Which skills do they believe they are primarily responsible for teaching to young children? Which skills do they believe should be primarily developed in early first grade?**

Conceptual Framework

This research was set within the framework of ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1998). A brief explanation of the theory is given followed by a general description of why the theory supports the purpose of this study.

Ecological Systems Theory

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1998) blended together ideas from ecological theory and field theory to create ecological systems theory. Bronfenbrenner sees individual human behavior as a consequence of the interaction between the environment and the person. He contends that the child always develops in the context of imbedded relationships and that development is the outcome of the interaction of the child's inherent characteristics with the immediate family and eventually with other elements in the environment.

Children develop within a scheme of relationships affecting and affected by four levels of systems: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1998). The *microsystem* refers to patterns of activities, roles, and interactions of a child in a particular environment with other particular individuals. For example, a child's role in the home is that of son/daughter, sister/brother, etc. The *mesosystem* includes associations between two or more microsystems containing the child, such as the relationship between home and school or the relationship between home and childcare. The *exosystem* describes two or more social settings, at least one of which does not contain the child, but nonetheless influences the child's immediate setting. Parents' workplace and health services are examples of the types of formal

organizations found in exosystems. The *macrosystem* includes the laws, customs, cultural values, and resources of the child's surrounding environment. The precedence that the macrosystem gives to children's needs affects the support they receive at the inner levels of the environment. For example, if a culture places high expectations and standards for childcare and workplace benefits for working parents, children will be more likely to have favorable experiences in their environments.

The environment, according to Bronfenbrenner (1998), is ever changing. Key life events such as beginning school modify existing relationships between children and their environments, thus producing new circumstances. However, changes in the environment are not only imposed on a child, they may also occur within the child. As children get older, they select, modify, and create many of their own settings and experiences. This depends on a child's physical, intellectual, and personality characteristics, as well as the environmental opportunities available to the child. In ecological systems theory, children are both products and producers of their environments in a scheme of mutually supporting outcomes.

Children's development influences and is influenced by their own characteristics and actions, as well as by the characteristics, actions, and expectations of those closest to them. (Bronfenbrenner, 1998). For example, children's literacy development is influenced by the literacy characteristics and expectations of those persons present and involved in the child's immediate environment such as parents, childcare provider, preschool teacher, or

kindergarten teacher. These microsystems are in turn influenced by community, societal, and cultural factors. A conceptual model of these system interactions is depicted in Figure 1.

Process-person-context model

The process-person-context model allows for the study of differences in processes and outcomes as a joint function of the characteristics of the environment and of the person (Bronfenbrenner, 1998). In using this model as a basis for design, this study investigated teacher beliefs as the result of their personal characteristics such as age, ethnicity, number of years teaching kindergarten, and whether they have an early childhood endorsement, among others. Contextual characteristics that may influence kindergarten teachers' perceptions include schools in which they teach, how many children receive free or reduced lunch, and whether the teacher is teaching in a ½ day session or an all day session. Outside sources in the mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem such as assessments used by the school district, in-service training, media sources, professional conferences, and federal legislation may also influence teacher expectations.

For the purpose of this study, the focus was on the expectations of kindergarten teachers as a result of the characteristics of the teachers and of the environment. The model in Figure 2 illustrates the dynamic interaction between the teacher and the context. It is this model that helped in identifying differences in teacher expectations associated with different ecological niches.

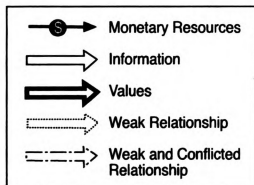
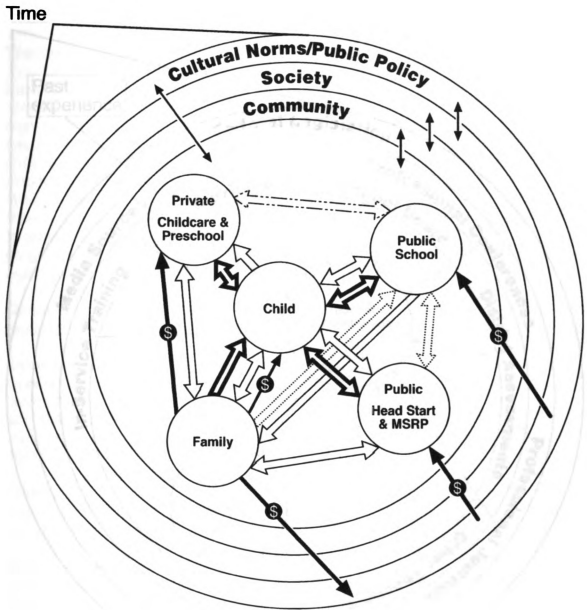


Figure 1. The Relationship Between Microsystems Within the Greater Set of Systems: A Conceptual Model

Time

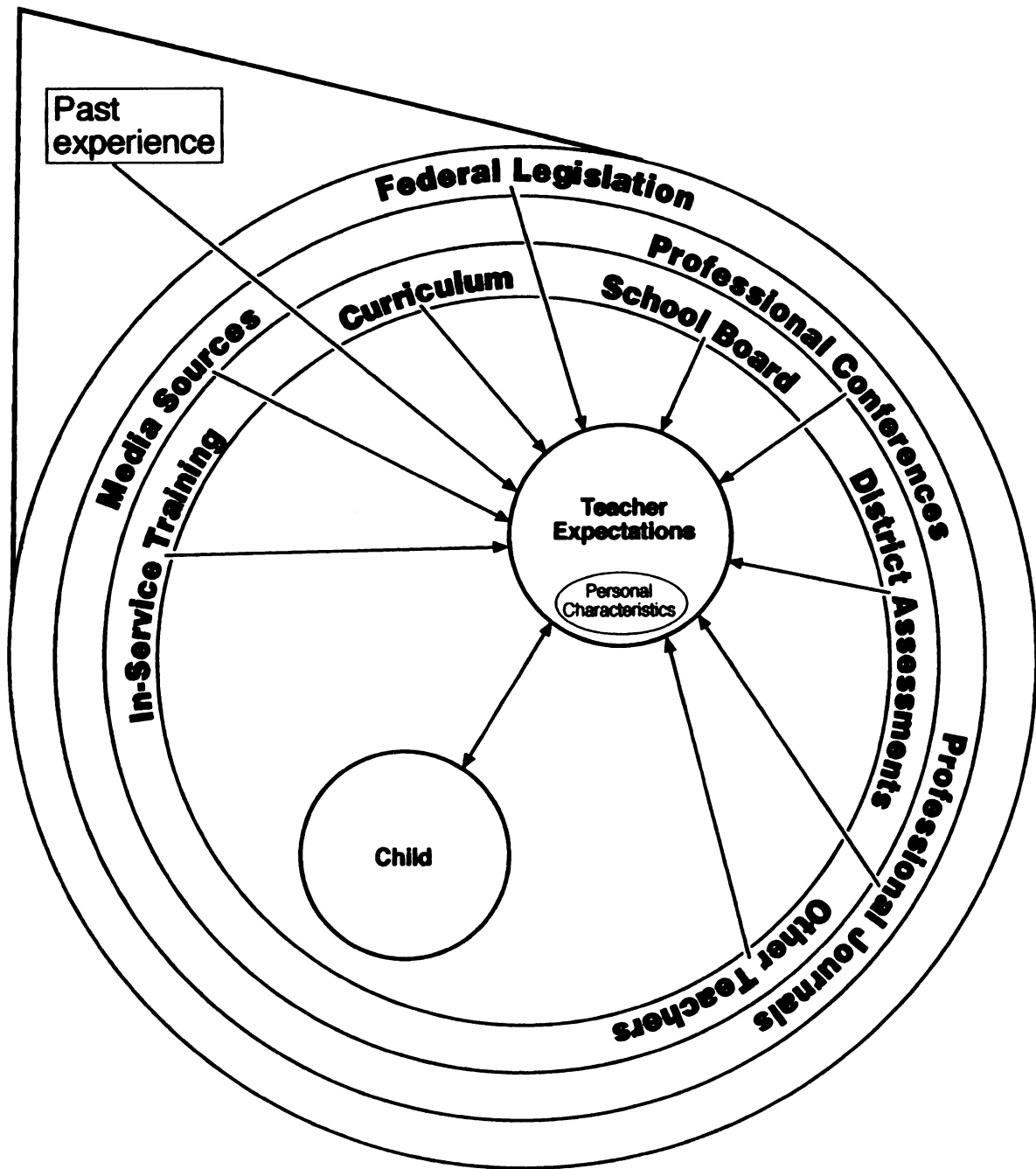


Figure 2. Influences on Teacher Expectations of Emerging Literacy Skills

Conceptual and Operational Definitions

The following are key concepts encountered in this study:

Early Childhood Education

Conceptual definition: Includes group programs providing children from birth to eight years with social, emotional, intellectual, language, and physical development and learning (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Programs in early childhood education include those benefiting infants and toddlers, preschoolers, kindergarteners, and also includes primary programs (Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren, 2004). Programs such as these offer full day or half-day options, they may be public or private, or specifically targeted at low-, middle-, or high-income families, the focus may be enrichment or remediation. Early childhood education programs are conducted by many different types of governmental and community organizations.

Operational definition: For the purpose of this study *early childhood education* regarded the emerging literacy period of ages three-years to six-years old.

Emergent Literacy

Conceptual definition: Describes the complete process of fluent literacy development (Soderman, Gregory, & McCarty, 2005). Children's literacy acquisition is seen on a developmental continuum beginning at birth, and through meaningful oral and written experiences, changes and develops over time (Clay, 1966).

Operational definition: For the purposes of this study, only one phase of *emergent literacy* was considered and that will was the earliest phase (i.e. that of emerging literacy).

Emerging Literacy

Conceptual definition: Describes the earliest phase or stage of the literacy development process (Soderman, Gregory, & McCarty, 2005). It is during this phase that the emergence of literacy skills can be seen.

Operational definition: For the purposes of this study, *emerging literacy* was all of the skills listed on the Emerging Literacy Skills Survey (see Appendix B).

Phonological Awareness

Conceptual definition: Refers to the hearing and understanding of sounds and patterns in spoken language (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Included in phonological awareness are such concepts as blending, segmentation, deletion, elision, and rhyming (Adams, 1990).

Operational definition: For the purposes of this study *phonological awareness* consisted of skill numbers 21 and 43, listed on the Emerging Literacy Skills

Survey (See Appendix B).

Phonemic Awareness

Conceptual definition: Refers to the ability to hear and manipulate distinct individual sounds in spoken language (Peterson, Taylor, & Hansen, n. d.).

Operational definition: For the purposes of this study *phonemic awareness* consisted of skill numbers 23, 28, and 49 listed on the Emerging Literacy Skill Survey (See Appendix B).

Alphabetic Principle

Conceptual definition: Refers to the notion that the letters that make up our printed language represent the individual sounds of our spoken language (Adams 1990).

Operational definition: For the purposes of this study *alphabetic principle* consisted of skill numbers 25, 26, and 31, listed on the Emerging Literacy Skills Survey (See Appendix B).

Concepts of Print

Conceptual definition: Refers to the knowledge that print carries meaning and that the sounds of spoken language can be represented in written form (Peterson, Taylor, & Hansen, n.d.).

Operational definition: For the purposes of this study, *concepts of print* consisted of skill numbers 1, 3, 4, 5, 9, 11, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 29, 30, 33, 36, 37, 38, 41, 44, 45, 46, 48, and 50, on the Emerging Literacy Skills Survey (See Appendix B).

Oral Language

Conceptual definition: Refers to the acquisition of a receptive vocabulary (the number of words a child understands) and the acquisition of an expressive vocabulary (the words a child uses to express himself or herself) (Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren, 2004).

Operational definition: For the purposes of this study, *oral language* consisted of skill numbers 2, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 16, 24, 32, 34, 35, 40, 42, and 47 on the Survey (See Appendix B).

Teacher Perceptions of Emerging Literacy

Conceptual definition: Refers to the idea that teachers' classroom decisions stem from their beliefs about learning (Harste & Burke, 1980).

Operational definition: In terms of this study, teacher perceptions of emerging literacy were their responses on the survey.

Research Questions

- 1. Which specific emerging literacy skills do kindergarten teachers believe they are primarily responsible for teaching?**
- 2. Is there any agreement among kindergarten teachers as to which emerging literacy skills they believe should be primarily developed prior to kindergarten entrance?**
- 3. Is there any agreement among kindergarten teachers as to which emerging literacy skills they believe should be primarily developed after kindergarten entrance?**
- 4. Is there any agreement among kindergarten teachers as to which emerging literacy skills they believe should be primarily developed at the beginning of first grade?**
- 5. Do perceptions of the acquisition of emerging literacy skills vary as a function of the demographics of kindergarten teachers?**
- 6. What sources influence kindergarten teachers' expectations of children's literacy readiness?**
- 7. Are kindergarten teachers' beliefs congruent with others regarding children's literacy capabilities?**
- 8. Which emerging literacy skills do kindergarten teachers believe are the five most essential skills children should acquire by kindergarten entry?**
- 9. Are kindergarten teacher expectations of skills to be developed during the kindergarten year congruent with the State of Michigan Kindergarten Framework of Skills?**

Assumptions

- 1. Kindergarten teachers functioned in ways that were compatible with their beliefs.**
- 2. Teachers' attitudes and beliefs were formulated by their training and experiences.**

Summary

This chapter included an introduction, need for the study, and purpose for the study. Also included in this chapter was the conceptual framework for this study based on the ecological systems theory. Lastly, operational and conceptual definitions, research questions, and assumptions were described. A review of the literature pertinent to this study is presented in Chapter II.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The review of the literature is divided into five main parts. The first part is an overview of emergent literacy. The second section considers the role of parents as related to literacy development. The third part explores sociocultural effects on the development of emerging literacy. This section includes emerging literacy research based on the characteristics of socioeconomic standing and ethnicity. The fourth part looks at readiness education prior to kindergarten entry. Finally, the review examines kindergarten education.

Children's Emergent Literacy: Traditional Versus Contemporary Views

In order to have a more comprehensive understanding of literacy development, it is helpful to look at what literacy research tells us about how young children become literate. Current views of literacy development are dynamic and noteworthy. Much of this research may shape teacher expectations and may also be considered the foundation for current best practices for many teachers.

Contemporary study of children's literacy acquisition is built on the work of John Dewey (1899; 1902), who saw children's learning at school in contrast to children's learning at home. More recently, research by Marie Clay (1966) has supplied the springboard for studying and considering early literacy. Through her work with young children, Clay proposed that children demonstrate *emergent literacy* behaviors when they read or write in the non-conventional sense. She also emphasized the significant relationship between reading and writing in early literacy development. Up until that time, it was thought that children's reading

must occur before they learned to write. Teale and Sulzby (1986) view the acquisition of literacy as a life-long, continuous process that begins early in life; a complex action with linguistic, social, and psychological characteristics; and as a part of a child's natural surroundings, acquired both at home and at school.

This *emergent literacy* approach is in contrast to the more traditional *readiness* approach that views literacy as an all-or-nothing occurrence that starts when children begin school (Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1998). The readiness perspective dichotomizes children's *prereading* behavior and what is thought to be *real* reading that children learn in educational settings; whereas, the emergent literacy point of view sees literacy-related actions occurring before and during the preschool years as critical features of literacy development. Another differentiation between more traditional approaches to literacy development and an emergent literacy viewpoint is the theory that from birth, there is a parallel and mutually dependent development of reading, writing, and oral language. Children's exposure to literacy characteristics and events within their immediate environments provides developmental support in the absence of formal instruction. The focus of more traditional approaches is on formal instruction of a number of discrete, separate literacy skills that children must achieve in order to learn to read and write (Morrow, 1993; Nielsen & Monson, 1996). The traditional approaches often treat writing as secondary to reading.

Emergent literacy is a phrase that describes the process of becoming literate (Teale & Sulzby, 1989). This perspective acknowledges that children play an active role in the development of their own understanding of the world through

exploration. From both, children progressively become literate through observation and interaction in their environments. Important elements of emergent literacy include the development of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing (Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren, 2004). Children progress through three general stages of literacy development: *emerging, early, and fluent* (Soderman, Gregory, & McCarty, 2005). Emerging literacy includes ages approximately birth to five; early literacy includes ages approximately six to eight; and the fluency phase includes ages approximately eight and up. Children will vary in moving in and out of these phases, depending on experience, gender, and other developmental factors.

A range of perspectives characterizes the examination of emergent literacy. For example, many studies investigating young children's literacy related behaviors have revealed that very young children know a lot about print before they enter formal schooling (Clay, 1966, 1991; Durkin, 1966; Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984; Heath, 1983; Neuman & Roskos, 1997; Purcell-Gates, 1996; Read, 1971; Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Yaden, Rowe, & MacGillivray, 2000). The ground-breaking work of both Clay (1966) and Read (1971) inspired many researchers interested in the field of early childhood education to study print awareness, as well as the reading and writing of young children.

Emergent literacy study has also focused on the effect of *literacy-rich environments* on children's literacy acquisition (Adams, 1990; Baker, Sonnenschein, Serpell, Scher, et al, 1996; Clay, 1976; Dickinson, & DiGisi, 1998; Evans, Shaw, & Bell, 2000; Heath, 1982, 1983; Morrow, 1989; Sonnenschein,

Brody, & Munsterman, 1996; Strickland & Morrow, 1989; Taylor, 1998; Taylor, Blum, & Logsdon, 1986; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). Literacy-rich environments both at home and at school are key in supporting literacy and preventing reading difficulties. When discussed in the literature, the terms *print-rich environment*, *rich literacy environment*, *literacy enriched settings*, and *print environment* usually refer to both the presence of literacy materials and children's engagement.

In literacy-rich homes, parents and caregivers provide children with opportunities for daily reading, extended discourse (talking or writing), language play, experimentation with literacy materials, book talk, and dramatic play (Burns, Griffin, & Snow, 1999; Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 1998). Children who are read to learn to listen to and enjoy stories, as well as coming to learn concepts of literacy (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

Literacy-rich classrooms include those in which teachers incorporate the characteristics of literacy-rich home environments, as well as developmentally appropriate practices and experiences, literacy routines, and classroom designs that encourage reading and writing (McGee & Richgels, 1996). Literacy-rich classrooms also offer a diverse genre of books, including informational texts (Duke & Bennett-Armistead, 2003).

Adams (1990), in a review of research on prereaders and how they develop into readers, summarized that children ready to read come to school with large amounts of exposure to print which has parenthetically (or by parent support) taught them about the form and function of language. Most especially, these

children have learned phonemic and alphabetic skills, which are the best predictors of later reading success. Yet, Adams also says that children, whose early literacy environments were not as supportive, may still learn to read in classrooms that emphasize direct instruction and explicit teaching of the alphabetic code in a print-rich setting.

Taylor, Blum, and Logsdon (1986) agree that children learn best in a language-rich and print-rich environment. They also agree that children from homes that do not offer exposure to literacy events and activities can still develop critical emergent literacy skills if a literacy enriched environment is provided in the classroom.

Interestingly, Dowhower and Beagle (1998), in a review of literature concerning the presence or absence of print in facilitating literacy development, found the research base weak. They note that while education professionals stress the importance of a print-rich classroom environment, there is conversely little research on what specific characteristics make up a print-rich environment in terms of literacy materials and how common these materials are in preschool and elementary classrooms across the country. However, Morrow's (see Dowhower & Beagle, 1998) research is noted as unique in its study of the advantages of creating special places for engaging in literacy activities. With the creation of an inviting atmosphere with well-designed literacy centers, Morrow found a significant increase in an interest in books, an increase in the number of children who voluntarily engaged in literacy activities, and an increase in children's understanding and creations of original stories.

Another course of investigation into emergent literacy includes those studies that focus on the acquisition of the components of literacy. For example, there is growing validation of a developmental order to children's print awareness (see Christie, Enz, & Vukelich, 1997, p.58):

1. General concepts about the purpose and functions of print. Children recognize, and model in their pretend play, home uses of print, often beginning in the preschool years (Hiebert, 1981). Many studies report incidences of preschoolers making a shopping list, taking food orders, and writing notes and letters. Through similar pretend play and book-reading activities, children, often by the age of three, also learn to distinguish print from pictures and discover that print has meaning.
2. Graphic awareness (visually recognizing environmental print, letters, and words.) Many 3- and 4-year olds are able to recognize pictures in a favorite storybook, logos, or labels in their environment such as *McDonalds* or *KMart* signs, *Pepsi*, and *Cheerios* (Goodman, 1986). However, children initially recognize print in full context. It is not until the age of five or six that children have the aptitude to recognize isolated words (Lomax & McGee, 1987). Individual letter recognition may also develop around the same time as environmental print. Some 3-year-olds may recognize one third of the alphabet (Hiebert, 1981) while others will not learn any letters until after kindergarten entrance (Morgan, 1987).
3. Phonemic awareness-the concept that words consists of a sequence of spoken sounds. In acquiring an alphabetic language like English, children

must learn that the component sounds of the language are represented by printed symbols (letters or graphemes). In order to grasp the alphabetic principle, children must develop an awareness that language is made up of individual words, and subsequently, each word is made up of syllables and phonemes within each syllable (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Children develop these skills through language games, most notably rhyming (Soderman, Gregory, & McCarty, 2005). Rhyming skills not only help children with spelling; studies indicate that rhyming ability in preschool is a strong predictor of later reading achievement.

4. Letter-sound relationships. Children as young as three (Harste et al., 1984) have shown skill in letter-sound relationships; however, the development of this skill is not seen in many children until the age of five or six. An indicator of letter-sound knowledge development is the use of invented or temporary spelling in children's writing. While Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp (2000) say that invented spelling will often appear prior to the beginning of kindergarten, Sulzby & Teale (1991) note that invented spelling most often does not start until late kindergarten for some children and not until the end of first grade for other children.

Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) have suggested that there are two interdependent sets of skills and processes that make up emergent and conventional literacy. These information systems are called *outside-in* and *inside-out*. As Figure 3 illustrates, the outside-in skills characterize what sources *outside* the printed word that help children understand the meaning of

print. Included are vocabulary, phonological-processing skill, conceptual knowledge, story schemas, and semantic sense within contexts. Knowledge of the rules for translating the specific writing they are trying to read into meaningful sounds make up the inside-out elements. These include components *within* the print that aid the reader in translating print into meaningful sounds. Inside-out features include phonemic awareness, letter knowledge, and links between letters and sounds, decoding strategies, punctuation and sentence grammar, and memory to organize elements into correct sequences. Other emerging literacy skills, including the *conventions of print* (e.g. directionality, one-to-one correspondence between spoken and written words), the *functions* of print (e.g. print tells a story or gives information), an understanding of environmental print (e.g. recognizing signs and logos such as *McDonalds* or *KMart*), and emerging reading and emerging writing (e.g. pretending to read and write) have been noted in recent research. However, Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) suggest that “although these abilities and behaviors are sometimes associated with later reading when considered in isolation, research either has not generally supported a direct causal link between them and later decoding skills or has found that these behaviors appear to be better conceptualized as proxy measure for letter knowledge, phonological sensitivity, and oral language, and reflect more exposure to print and other literacy-related activities, or both” (p.5).

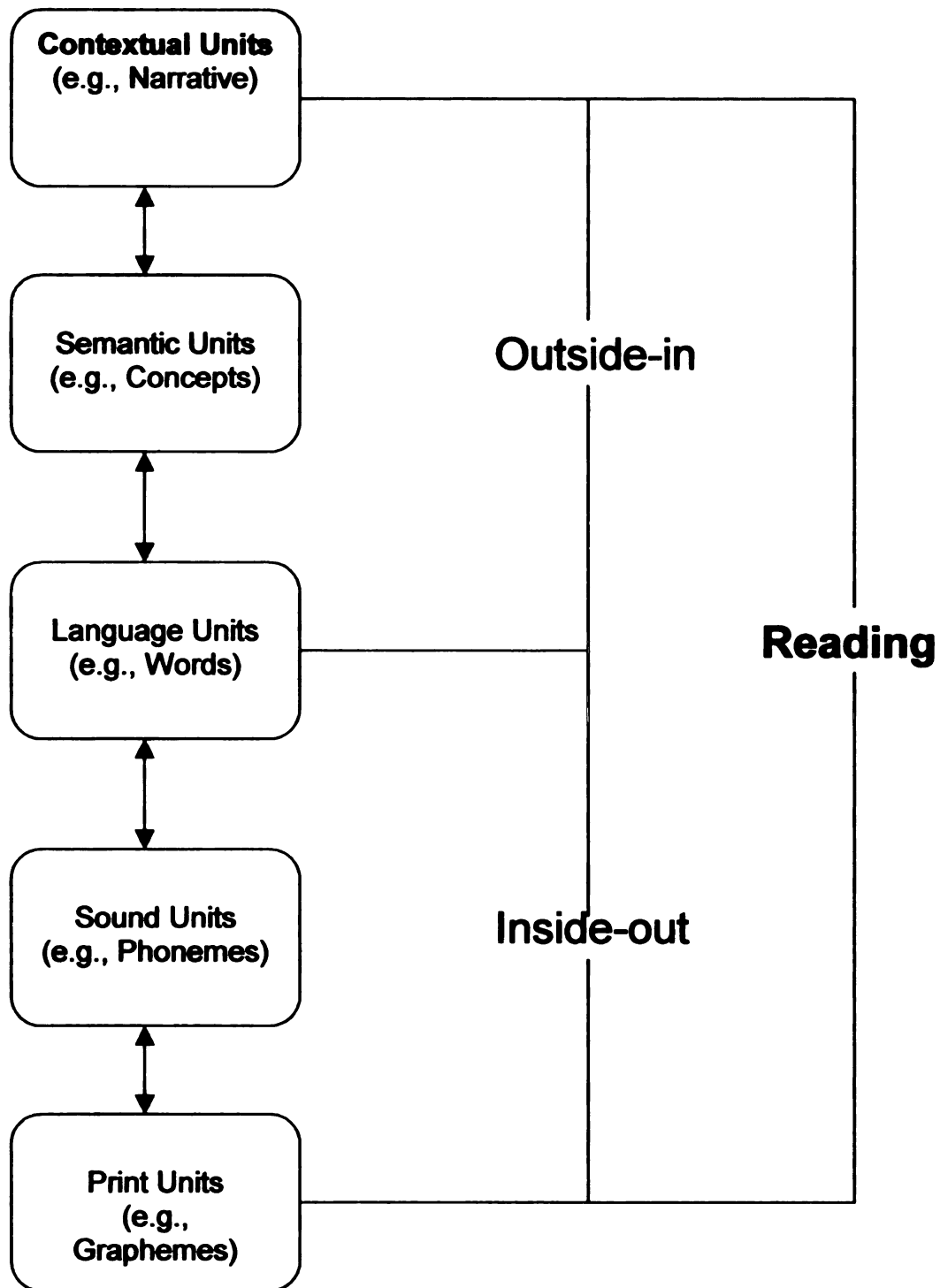


Figure 3. Outside-in and Inside-Out Systems. Emergent and conventional literacy result from children's ability to employ information from two interdependent information systems: *outside-in* and *inside-out* (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998).

As a result of their study of the aforementioned information systems Whitehurst and Lonigan (2001) established three broad categories that appear to have the strongest link to conventional literacy. These categories include one outside-in element (oral language) and two inside-out elements (phonological processing and print awareness). Oral language, while having its greatest impact on children's later ability to read for meaning, almost certainly has some bearing on the development of decoding abilities, as well. An extensive body of research has established positive correlations and longitudinal constancy between individual differences in vocabulary and other oral language skills and later differences in reading (see Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1998). Peterson et al. (n.d.) also agree that young children's skill in oral language will significantly influence their comprehension of the forms and functions of print, their development of a strong reading vocabulary, and their understanding of written material. Hart and Risley (1995) found overwhelming evidence that suggests that children who learn vocabulary more slowly had predictably slower cognitive growth rates, as well. The Hart and Risley study, along with the National Reading Council (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998) emphasize that increasing children's oral language skills could prevent the greater part of reading problems.

One aspect of oral language that must be especially emphasized is that of phonological awareness. An abundance of studies on this subject finds that there is a firm link between phonological awareness and reading achievement (Bradley & Bryant, 1983; Stanovich, Cunningham, & Cramer, 1984; Stahl & Murray, 1994; Winsor & Pearson, 1992). Phonological awareness is viewed as

the perception of sounds, syllables, and words in language and the ability to understand them in spoken language (Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000). This includes the awareness of phonemes, onsets, rimes, and syllables (Stahl & McKenna, 2000). While the connection between reading achievement and phonological awareness has been established, there is less clarity as to the specific role phonological awareness plays in a child learning to read (Stahl & McKenna, 2000). It should be noted that the majority of these studies have been done on phonological awareness and reading. Yet, phonological awareness is also related to spelling. Invented spelling activities, or writing the sounds heard in a word, are shown to be very influential in developing children's phonological awareness and support the connection between letters and sounds (Adams, 1990).

Phonological processing, which refers to activities that call for the use of, the manipulation of, or the sensitivity to the sounds in words, has also been found to play a crucial part of the normal acquisition of reading (Adams, 1990; Wagner & Torgesen, 1987). Three interrelated groups of phonological processing skills have been recognized by prior research: phonological sensitivity, phonological naming, and phonological memory (Wagner & Torgesen, 1987). Lonigan & Whitehurst (1998) note that weak phonological processing skills are a telltale characteristic of poor readers. Examples of important phonological processing skills in the emerging phase include the ability to detect rhyme and supply rhyming words, the ability to immediately recall verbally presented material, and the ability to accomplish serial-naming tasks. Other research has noted that

there is a strong link between these three phonological processes and future decoding ability, and that without sufficient intervention, differences in children's abilities are very consistent from late preschool age onward (see Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001).

A considerable share of emergent literacy research has been in the verification of young children's print knowledge in the preschool years (see Purcell-Gates, 2000). These foundational skills are also critical to children's literacy development. For example, alphabet knowledge upon school entry is one of the strongest single predictors of short- and long-term literacy success (Adams, 1990; Stevenson & Newman, 1986). Children must have an understanding of the alphabetic principle, the understanding that there is a systematic relationship between letters and sounds (Byrne, 1998). A beginning reader who is unable to recognize and distinguish the individual letters of the alphabet will have trouble learning the sounds those letters represent (Chall, 1967). Letter knowledge is not only important in decoding text; it also has a significant responsibility in the development of phonological sensitivity.

Children's abilities to hear and manipulate phonemes are also associated with higher levels of letter knowledge (Stahl & McKenna, 2000; Wagner et al., 1994).

The acquisition of children's literacy is also dependent upon the quality and occurrence of immediate experiences with oral and written language in the early years of life. Children must not only receive these experiences at home, they must also be offered in early education settings. Examples of emergent literacy skills on the continuum of children's literacy acquisition are illustrated in Figure 4.

Emerging Phase (3-5)	Early Phase (6-8)	Fluent Phase (8 and up)
Children: -begin to play with language and participate in rhyming games -enjoy listening to and want to read storybooks -identify some letters and make some letter-sound associations -recognize signs and words in their environment -participate in reading and writing activities -use pictures, known and familiar letters to represent written language -understand concepts of print such as left-to-right and top-to-bottom orientation, punctuation -retell simple or familiar stories	Children: -continue to play with language. Can rhyme, segment words, and blend words -enjoy books -orally read with some fluency -use letter-sound associations, word parts, and context to identify new words -identify an increasing number of words by sight -participate in reading and writing activities for their own enjoyment -knows letter names and sounds for nearly all letters	Children: -read with greater fluency -use comprehension strategies more efficiently -read daily and use reading to research topic -use word identification strategies to decode and figure out words -punctuate simple sentences correctly and proofread their own writing -use common letter patterns and critical features to spell words

Figure 4. Phases of Emergent Literacy. Emergent literacy is seen on a continuum of development. Young children build a foundation of skills upon which more complicated and comprehensive skills are added until reading and writing skills reach a fluent phase. Adapted from Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000.

Children move from the emerging phase, filled with exploration of their environment and foundation building, and through the early phase, which is highlighted with the development of the basic concepts of print and experimentation with reading and writing. Most reach the fluent phase, which is underscored with a greater ability to read and write for meaning and pleasure (Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000).

Parents as Teachers

Teachers may expect children to bring certain, already developed emerging literacy skills directly to the classroom from home. It is therefore important to examine research that looks at home literacy environments conducive to literacy development. As can be seen, this research explains the positive effects a rich home literacy environment may have on children's developing literacy. In contrast, however, this research also shows that children from homes not favorable to literacy development may not bring certain expected emerging literacy skills to school. Children whose literacy skill development differs from teacher expectation may also come from homes where parents have a different view of their role in their children's literacy development.

Emergent literacy research (Clay 1966; Read, 1971; Strickland & Morrow, 1989; Teale & Sulzby, 1986) has changed many educator perspectives on young children's literacy development and the role that parents play in their development (Edwards, 1991; Heath, 1983; Purcell-Gates, 1995; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). Parents, considered to be children's first teachers, are now thought to have the potential to make crucial contributions to children's

developing literacy (Bus, van IJzendoorn, & Pellegrini, 1995; Hart & Risley, 1999; Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994; Teale, 1995). As a result, there is much emphasis focused on the home literacy environment.

Research has shown there are significant correlations between preschool children's language skills, specifically vocabulary development, and the home literacy environment (see Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). While a link between the home literacy environment and the acquisition of other emergent literacy abilities has also been identified (Purcell-Gates, 1996; Teale, 1986), there has been less study of these components.

One of the major focal points of home literacy study is shared book reading. A strong body of research has shown that children's literacy efforts are best supported by adults' interactions with children through shared book reading (also referred to as reading aloud and storybook reading). Early research by Durkin (1966) noted that children who learned to read before school entry were read to by parents, siblings, or other caregivers. It was noted that neither socioeconomic level, ethnicity, race, nor IQ differentiated readers from nonreaders. The distinguishing factors were being read to, access to print, parents valuing education, and early writing. While the strength of the relationship has been recently questioned (Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994), most researchers and practitioners still agree that shared book reading is an important aspect of children's literacy and language development (Bus, van IJzendoorn, & Pellegrini, 1995; Paratore, Melzi, & Krol-Sinclair, 2003).

The following summary offers a list of the many positive findings of contemporary study as regards reading aloud to young children (Galda & Cullinan, 1991; Teale, 1981). The encouraging link between shared reading and literacy development illustrates that reading aloud to children promotes (1) language development in emergent readers (Burns, Griffin, & Snow 1999; Chomsky, 1972; Irwin, 1960; Mackinnon, 1959); (2) vocabulary development (Durkin, 1978; Ninio, 1980; Ninio & Bruner, 1978; Senechal & Cornell, 1993; Senechal, LeFevre, Hudson, & Lawson, 1996); (3) children's motivation to read (Mason & Blanton, 1971); (4) learning to read before school entry (Durkin, 1966; Teale, 1978; (5) early school reading success (Moon & Wells, 1979; Walker & Kuerrbitz, 1979; Durkin, 1978); (6) a familiarity with the conventions of print (Clay, 1979; Taylor, 1983); and (7) a metalinguistic awareness of print (Schickedanz, 1986).

Bus, van IJzendoorn, and Pellegrini (1995) looked at 29 studies of parent-child joint storybook reading and concluded that there are significant effects on children's literacy and language development. It has been reported that reading aloud to children aids development in oral language, cognitive skills, concepts of print, and phonemic awareness, all of which are important precursors to formal reading instruction (Allington & Cunningham, 1996; Hall & Moats, 1999; Holdaway, 1979). Children also become familiar with the reading process by watching how others read, and they develop an understanding of story structure. Shared book reading allows children to build a large vocabulary on a wide range of topics, which will later aid in reading comprehension and the development of

reading strategies. By hearing a story many times, children's understandings are reinforced and extended.

There does not seem to be a direct relationship between shared reading and growth in phonological skills according to recent studies (see Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). However, it has been discovered that growth in preschool phonological sensitivity is related to parental involvement in home literacy activities such as lap reading and vocabulary development (Lonigan, Dyer, & Anthony, 1996). Recently, Senechal et al. (1998) affirmed that kindergarten and first-grade children's knowledge of written language (i.e., print concepts, letter knowledge, invented spelling, and word identification) is linked with parental efforts to teach their children about print, but is not associated with contact to storybooks. They also discovered that children's oral language abilities are linked with shared reading but are not associated with parent's efforts to teach about print. Whitehurst & Lonigan (2001) point out data that suggest that exposing children to alphabet books may increase letter knowledge and phonological processing. They also identify a dichotomy of studies, some of which have found an association between experiences with word games in the home and the development of phonological processing and some of which do not.

Quality parent-child conversation, or extended discourse, has a direct influence on literacy development and also allows for children to be exposed to richer, more complex vocabulary (Hart & Risley, 1995), upon which later reading and vocabulary scores can be predicted (Share et al., 1983). Effective extended

discourse compels the participants to be fairly explicit, meaning focused, and able to extend conversation outside of the present (Dickinson & Tabors, 1991; Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, & Hemphill, 1991). These types of extended discourses can be seen during shared book reading when book topics are extended by discussion, during mealtime conversations with others, and during fantasy toy play (Beals & DeTemple, 1993). Other characteristics of the home literacy environment such as number of books in the home, library visits, and parent's literacy background are found to be related to children's vocabulary skills (Senechal et al., 1996).

There have been many types of studies executed in order to look at parent perceptions of children's developing literacy. Yaden (Yaden, Rowe, & MacGillivray, 2000) and his colleagues reviewed recent research on parents' perceptions noting that most studies were process oriented using interviews (Fitzgerald, Spiegel, & Cunningham, 1991), observation (Goldenberg, Reece, & Gallimore, 1992), focus groups (Neuman, Hagedorn, Celano, & Daly, 1995), and questionnaires (Hiebert & Adams, 1987; Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, & Hemphill, 1991) as methods for gathering data. Gadsden (1998) noted that only a small number of literacy studies concentrate on parents' perceptions of children's literacy knowledge or understanding of their early literacy, as compared to analyses on parents' influences on emergent literacy. Examples of parents' perceptions of literacy use can be gleaned from the Baltimore Early Childhood Project (Baker, Sonnenschein, Serpell, Scher, et al., 1996; Sonnenschein, Brody, & Munsterman, 1996). Three themes emerged from the

findings: (1) Literacy is a source of entertainment, (2) literacy is a set of skills to be purposely developed, and (3) literacy is an essential characteristic of daily life. It is also noted in this study that parents differed in their beliefs of the most effective way of supporting early literacy. While some parents created pleasurable reading opportunities for their young children, others thought that focusing on skills training was best. Parents in Ronald Taylor's (1995) study of Icelandic families discovered that entertainment was the most reported and observed purpose of reading for both urban and non-urban families. Teale's (1986) investigation of children from African American, Mexican American, and White families discovered that literacy served many purposes including entertainment, religious, interpersonal, daily living, and school-related tasks. An ethnographic study by Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) revealed that the five low-income families whose children were successful in school used literacy to gain information in meeting everyday needs, to deal with public agencies, to schedule daily functions, and to learn about activities and events. Reading was also used for educational and recreational purposes. Purcell-Gates (1996) discovered in her study of twenty low-income, diverse families that they, too, used print for many different reasons in their daily lives. She notes, however, that there was a great disparity in the type and frequency of literacy events across homes. Print was not predictably a part of all of the families' lives. Children from homes where more instances of persons reading and writing were included showed more conventional concepts of writing in school.

Neuman et al. (1995) discovered a variety of views on literacy learning within a group of African American adolescent parents. As a result of their research of Hispanic mothers of Spanish speaking kindergarteners, Goldenberg, Reese, and Gallimore (1992) found that some mothers believed learning to read started with learning letters and sounds. In contrast, Yaden et al. (2000) observed that a majority of studies concerning parents' perceptions of literacy acquisition have described findings by cultural groups without further differentiation with regard to individual ability or other factors.

Whitehurst & Lonigan (1998) claim that there are few quantitative studies that focus on home literacy environments and emergent literacy skills other than children's oral language. However, they note that studies by Wells (1985) and Crain-Thoreson and Dale (1992) discovered that the frequency of shared reading was linked to concepts of print measures. They also note that Purcell-Gate's (1996) research found "that families in which there were more higher-level literacy events occurring in the home (i.e., reading and writing texts at the level of connected discourse) had children with a higher level of knowledge about the uses and functions of the written language register, and more conventional concepts about print" (p.856). Children's reading and writing at home, as well as shared book reading, were found by Mason (1992) to be linked with children's capacities to label environmental print.

As a result of these studies, the powerful role that parents play in the development of children's emergent literacy can be seen, not only through their interactions with their children but also in creating amenable home conditions for

literacy achievement, and through their beliefs regarding the uses and acquisition of literacy. While there has been much attention given to the important role the home, as well as school settings, play in terms of shared reading, reading instruction, and availability of reading materials, there has been much less concentration on seeking information about whether home or school experiences are more vital to literacy development, how literacy beliefs at home and school vary, or how young children carry information from one setting to another. It is important to sort out children's literacy learning needs at home and at school, and equally important to understand which of these needs teachers believe they are responsible for supporting. By creating a link between home and school beliefs, young children's literacy needs may be met in a continuous, and more developmentally, socially, and culturally appropriate manner.

Sociocultural Effects on the Development of Emerging Literacy

A peek into most kindergarten classrooms in America will show children from homes of many different cultures and differing socio-economic status (SES). Yet, there is an expectation that these children should have many of the same emerging literacy skills when they enter school. Contemporary literacy research notes that children may enter schools with differing emerging literacy skills as a result of the differences in home literacy practices as related to cultural and/or economic influences in the home.

Guided by the principals of the Vygotskian perspective, the sociocultural perspective on literacy acquisition recognizes that literacy is culturally and socially entrenched (Xu, 2003). Literacy learning is contextual because children

learn literacy through activities and events within their unique environment (Goodman, 1985; Heath, 1983; Luke & Kale, 1997; Purcell-Gates, 1995; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). Xu (2003) explains that children acquire knowledge about language and literacy, by observing how literate people use language and literacy, through everyday interactions with print, including environmental print, and by means of regular literacy practices, such as shared book reading.

Literacy systems may vastly differ from one community to another. For example, Heath (1983) reported how children in Roadville, a European American working-class community, children in Trackton, an African American working-class community, and the children of Townspeople, a middle-class, African American and European American community, differed in literacy practices. The Townspeople trained their children to be conversationalists by asking questions requiring specific information. Children were taught to act like readers and writers using an assortment of literacy materials. The homes in Roadville were full of reading material such as newspapers, magazines, church-related material, and children's books. Parents read bedtime stories to children and extended discourse by asking them questions. Kindergarten-aged children were encouraged to do worksheets and to listen to stories. Children also learned to passively listen and respond to questions in Sunday school. The Trackton children learned literacy as a process of social negotiation with group members. Literacy activities were the responsibility of the whole group, not just one member. Literacy events were full of conversation and information sharing among community members. In short, Heath found children in each town had

acquired the literacy skills necessary for involvement in that particular community. However, the acquired skills were not necessarily harmonious with schools.

Mismatches between children's home and school literacy experiences are often the result of differences in literacy practices in different communities. Contemporary research focusing on African American (Heath, 1983), Asian American (Schmidt, 1998; Xu, 1999), Hawaiian (Au & Manson 1981), Hispanic (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1997; Volk, 1997), and Native American (Philips, 1983) children suggests that home literacy traditions are often dissimilar to those of the classroom and often go unsupported within the classroom environment. For example, Michaels (1981) noted that first-grade African American girls' narratives were more apt to be focused on subjects imbedded by a theme or event. In contrast, European American girls' narratives were more topic centered or focused on one subject or event. Since the teacher did not understand or value the narrative style of the African American girls, nor did the girls understand the teacher's discussion approach, the end result was a mismatch of communication styles and fewer chances for the student to practice literate-style discourse.

Au (1981; 1993) noticed differences in discourse style between the home and school environments of Hawaiian children. The Hawaiian children jointly executed personal narratives filled with humor and joking, which was quite the reverse of traditional classroom discourse that highlighted individual discourse.

The Paratore, Melzi, and Krol-Sinclair (1999) study observed that when parents and teachers shared linguistic and social backgrounds, parents visited with teachers more frequently, asked questions, and sought clarification. Parents whose backgrounds differed from teachers were found to attend formal school meetings and check homework, but rarely initiated contact with the school. It was also noted that when Spanish-speaking parents attended meetings with English-speaking parents, personal contact was again reduced.

An ethnographic study by Valdes (1996) of ten immigrant families from Mexico discovered that parents and teachers made assumptions about one another that were factors in the home-school barrier. For instance, the Mexican mothers felt that they were responsible for the moral rearing of their children while it was the teacher's job to impart school-type knowledge to the children. Teachers assumed that the mothers had only modest interest in the children's education because the children went to school lacking certain skills such as knowing the alphabet, colors, or numbers. Another point of difference was when the American teachers expected the Mexican mothers to help the children with homework. The mothers would help their children, however they were more likely to focus on aspects of the homework that were different than the teachers.

Literacy is a complex, yet essential set of skills for all children living in the United States to acquire in order to achieve success. However, the process is even more difficult for children whose oral and written language at home differs from that of the school. While Spanish speakers are the largest single language minority in the United States (U. S. Census Bureau, 2001), data propose that

children whose first language is Spanish are at risk for less than proficient literacy achievement in U. S. schools (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). For instance, Spanish-speaking children are two times more likely than non-Hispanic Whites to read below age level in English, and are more likely to drop out of high school than Blacks and non-Hispanic Whites (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2002).

While a broad base of literature concerning children's home literacy encounters exists, it is intriguing that most research seems to have dichotomized literacy study by either looking at White upper- to middle-socioeconomic status (SES) families or low SES families (Gadsden, 1998; Sulzby & Edwards, 1993). Children from lower economic backgrounds are apt to be viewed as a homogeneous group (Hammer, Miccio, & Wagstaff, 2003). It is noted, however, that besides cultural differences, economic differences exist in the functions of literacy, (Heath, 1983; Purcell-Gates 1995; Teale, 1986), the quality of literacy interactions (Heath, 1983; Philips, 1983), and the incidence of literacy events (Ortiz, 1986). In 1966, Durkin's work in Chicago with African American families proved to be a springboard for subsequent studies that focused on the ways low-SES parents interact and work with their children to support literacy and they contribute to their children's literacy development.

In her work with eight families from diverse backgrounds, McCarthy (1997) discovered differences between middle-class and working-class families in the quantity and kinds of literacy materials, as well as the purposes of literacy. Despite having fewer resources to obtain information about their children's

classrooms, working-class parents' knowledge about their children's classrooms was no different than that of middle-class parents' knowledge. Parents of both classes placed much importance on literacy activities.

Lareau (1989) found that teachers and parents from differing economic groups might have dissimilar beliefs regarding their roles in educating children. This study suggested that while the working-class families frequently stayed away from schools, middle- and upper-class parents made a strong effort to be involved and to communicate with their children's teachers. Lareau also notes that the middle-class parents were more inclined to believe education is a shared responsibility; whereas, working-class parents believed that education was the teacher's responsibility.

Data from the Early Childhood Project (Baker, et al., 1996), which studied a mix of low-income African American and European American families, and a mix of middle-income African American and European American families, showed that low-income families engaged in fewer print-related activities. Of the activities that these families did participate in, most were intended to develop certain literacy skills. Activities reported by low-income parents included such structured activities as alphabet recitation and flashcards. Yet, some of the low-income families also stressed the entertainment value of literacy and the encouragement of intrinsic motivation. In contrast, middle-income parents preferred to have literacy materials readily available in order to give their children opportunities for forming their own insights into literacy. Entertainment-type literacy activities such as shared reading were also highly encouraged by middle-

income parents. This study noted that children who performed better on measures of story understanding and knowledge about print (e.g. letter identification, concepts of print, functions of print) were those children in homes in which there was a greater emphasis on literacy as a source of entertainment rather than a greater emphasis on skills.

The Carnegie Foundation, in their 1991 report (as discussed in Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998), revealed that 35 percent of children beginning school in the United States enter with skills and motivation so low as to be at risk for academic struggle. This disclosure signifies a striking “mismatch between what many children bring to their first school experience and what schools expect of them if they are to succeed” (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998, p.857). In their analysis of social class differences in emergent literacy, Lonigan and Whitehurst (1998) found that a study by White (1982) revealed that the socioeconomic status (SES) of students’ families correlates .68 with academic achievement when schools are ranked by the median SES. The authors also observed that a National Assessment of Educational Progress (1991) study detailed important differences in the reading and writing skills of children as a result of their parents’ income level.

Recent literacy studies (see Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1998) have also reported that children from low-income families are more apt to (1) be at risk for reading difficulties, (2) be behind in the development of oral language skills, (3) lag in letter knowledge, and (4) be delayed in phonological processing skills before starting school. Social class differences have also been noted in the amount and

types of experiences children are exposed to that might support emergent literacy. For example, Ninio (1980) reported that mothers from middle-SES groups tended to engage in more teaching behaviors during shared reading than mothers from low-SES groups.

Hart & Risley (1995), in their landmark study regarding the development of vocabulary in young children, found that socioeconomic status of the children's families accounted for 42 percent of the variance in the children's rate of vocabulary growth ($r = .65$), 40 percent of the variance in children's vocabulary use ($r = .63$), and 29 percent of the variance in their IQ test scores ($r = .54$) when they were three years old. Family SES made a tremendous difference in the amount of talking in the family as noted in early studies (see Hart & Risley, 1995). For example, when comparing the average number of utterance per hour that the parents spoke to the child, the authors found the utterances for the high-SES parents was 487 per hour, for the middle-SES parents was 301 per hour, and for the lower SES parents is was 178 utterances to the child per hour. The Hart & Risley study proposed that parents "who provide more of the fundamentals, larger amounts of diverse language experience and more encouragement to learn, tend to also add nuances" (p.158), such as listening and encouraging children to expand on their thoughts. These parents are more apt to promote independence by asking for acquiescence rather than demanding it, as well as naming and explaining everything despite the attention or development of the child.

Caution must, however, be taken when an attempt is made to portray the homes of poor children as lacking in literacy (Sulzby & Edwards, 1993). It has been noted that *hidden literacy*, or literacy that doesn't match the expectations of schools, can be found in the daily lives of children and families. For example, Anderson and Stokes (1984), in their cross-cultural study of low-SES families found that because the majority of educators are more apt to look for activities such as shared reading and homework assistance rather than the many other incidences of literacy in poor homes, literacy support was misjudged.

Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) also discovered that being a poor young child does not necessarily mean living in an environment totally lacking in literacy opportunities. Despite personal and economic challenges, the families of Black, urban six-year-olds in their study provided literacy activities that in fact supported the successful development of reading and writing skills. It was noted that the literacy experiences in these homes were actually very similar to those Black and White higher SES families studied by Heath (1983).

Children are also exposed to literacy in other hidden ways. For example, the Schieffelin and Cochran-Smith (1984) study of Asian refugee families noted that children were successful in reading and writing despite the fact that there was no regularity of exposure to reading or other print materials. However, literacy in the tradition of these families included functional and consequential types of tasks such as personal correspondence through letter writing and filling out forms. Despite parents neither reading to their children nor providing printed material for

them, the children still developed the necessary emergent skills for successfully literacy development.

Along with the concern that children of differing SES levels may not be offered the same literacy-rich environments and experiences at home, there is also apprehension regarding the divergence in literacy-rich environments between low- and high-SES classrooms. In her recent study, Duke (2000) found considerable discrepancies in print experiences and environments when comparing very low- and very high-SES first-grade classrooms. The data showed important differences in the amount of print experience, the type of print children experienced, and the nature of the print experience offered to students. For example, Duke found that first-grade classroom libraries in low-SES classrooms were about 40 percent smaller than those in high-SES classrooms with fewer books on display, and the high-SES classrooms presented more printed material in the classroom environment. These findings raised high concern regarding the importance of looking at the link between classroom settings and socioeconomic status. If the literacy environments for students in low-SES districts are lacking when children first enter school, this might be another negative contribution to the widening achievement gap among low- and high-SES students.

The strong link between emerging literacy and later literacy is well recognized. There appears to be strong evidence indicating that children from low-SES homes have relatively lower levels of emerging literacy skills compared to children from middle- and upper-SES families. However, discretion must be

used in literacy analyses for the reason that various examinations of home factors as related to literacy development provides evidence that economic levels *alone* do not determine school success or failure (e.g., Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988).

Readiness Education Prior to Kindergarten Entry

A look at readiness education prior to kindergarten entry shows an evolution over the past century. Not only have the institutions of readiness education changed, readiness expectations have changed, as well. Progressive study shows that as these programs have expanded, so have the expectations for children. Kindergarten teachers' expectations for children's emerging literacy skills may be influenced by the fact that most children now have some group experience before starting kindergarten.

Historically, early childhood education programs meant nursery school or center-based care (Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren, 2004). The term *early childhood* was used in regard to children five years old and younger. Because first grade was usually a child's first primary school experience, the distinction between early and later childhood was delineated as such. In recent times, we have realized that significant changes in children's cognitive, social, and physical development are more likely to take place round seven- or eight-years of age. Early childhood is currently identified as birth to age eight. Current programs serve children with disabilities, as well as children and families from diverse cultural, linguistic, and economic backgrounds (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). A variety of federal, state, and local early childhood programs are offered as half-

day or full-day programs. Table 1 illustrates an approximate historical timeframe of readiness thinking.

Table 1

Approximate Historical Timeframe

Historical Context	Prevailing Thought on Readiness	Prevailing Thought on Literacy	Influential Education Leaders
1900-1920	3-, 4-, and 5-year olds (all of whom were originally eligible for kindergarten) are not ready for intellectual activity. Primary emphasis for early learning was from play and activity, not symbols.	Teaching reading to young children through direct group instruction is seen as inappropriate and perhaps even harmful.	John Watson Friedrich Froebel John Dewey Maria Montessori
1920-1950	As 3- and 4-year olds moved out of kindergarten and into early childhood classes, kindergarten focused on preparing children for first grade. The concept of <i>maturat</i> ion prevailed. Curricula focused on readiness activities that supported children's social and emotional growth rather than stressing cognitive skills	Reading readiness is seen as the product of maturation (i.e., children must be 6-years old in order to learn to read).	Arnold Gesell Sigmund Freud
1950-1980	A thrust toward earlier education is tied to infant research that shows that preschoolers know more than had generally been thought. Early intervention is the key to preparing young children for formal schooling, resulting in the creation of the Head Start program. Also seen is the rapid development of center based care for children.	There is a shift away from reading readiness as a product of maturation to readiness as the product of experience. Many kindergarten and first grade teachers take a reading readiness approach. Kindergartens increasingly engage in formal reading instructions. A "pushing down" effect of the first grade curriculum into the kindergarten can be seen.	Erik Erikson Jean Piaget B. F. Skinner Charles Reed Marie Clay

Table 1 (cont'd).

1980-1990	Readiness is based on development, which in turn is influenced by many environmental factors, most importantly the home.	Emergent literacy replaces reading readiness. Research shows that young children demonstrate early reading skills before formal schooling.	William Teale Elizabeth Sulzby
1985-Present	Two viewpoints compete for attention. One view continues to observe that readiness is developmental. The competing view sees readiness as a maturational process as can be seen in the delay of sending children to kindergarten with the goal of making sure children are ready for tasks formerly found in first grade. Readiness is seen as preparation for kindergarten. In most states, readiness is determined by age.	Early literacy instruction is embedded in age appropriate activities. Children's early literacy learning is embedded in a system of oral communication and story reading. Emergent literacy is still a dominant influence in research, education, and policy-making.	Bredekamp Copple Neuman Lonigan Whitehurst Morrow
2001-Present		The Federal government legislates the No Child Left Behind Act, within which literacy programs for preschool-age (Early Reading First) and kindergarten through third grade (Reading First) children, are created to enhance reading readiness. These programs influence the types of reading programs and assessments that will be used by local school districts.	Snow Burns Griffin Soderman Whiren Kostelnik Gregory

The current increased demand for early childhood programs can be attributed to an expanding recognition that experiences in the early years have a profound effect on young children's development (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Past decades of research confirm that both short- and long-term positive effects on children's cognitive and social development are gained from high-quality developmentally appropriate early childhood programs (Barnett, 1995, as found in Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). A second reason for the jump in demand, and perhaps the most important reason, is the increase in employed families. Approximately 70 percent of mothers with children under the age of six are employed (U. S. Census Bureau, 2003). Children of employed parents attend any number of different settings that vary in goal and quality. The National Center for Education Statistics (2002) notes that in the year 2001, almost 88 percent of children ages 3, 4, and 5 were enrolled in programs, most of which are not in the public sector. While kindergarten attendance is not yet compulsory in all states, about 95 percent of eligible children attended a kindergarten program in the year 2000 (U. S. Department of Commerce, 2001). As a result of the rise in need for child care, and the growing demand for early childhood education programs, most children now enter first grade with some previous experience in group education (Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren, 2004).

With the spotlight on early education more now than ever before, there is an increased need to understand the diverse, as well as the shared roles and goals of early education programs. The history of early childhood programs illustrates

the attempt to create a balance between family and society and also a struggle to meet the increasing demands for both education and physical care.

Child Care

Until only the last several decades, childcare was not considered in the realm of either early childhood education or child development (Caldwell & Freyer, 1982). Social reformers and welfare groups first established childcare in large cities for the physical care of infants of working mothers (Read & Patterson, 1980). Interest in young children was on the upswing in the nineteenth century due to the increase demand for outside care from working mothers, the medical findings that health was related to sanitary conditions, and the discovery that the death rate for infants whose mothers work was higher than that for infants whose mothers did not work.

According to Read & Patterson (1980), the first day nursery to open in the United States was the Nursery and Child's Hospital in New York City in 1854. Nurses cared for children of patients who were now employed. By the turn of the century there were about 175 nurseries for children of immigrant and poor working mothers, most of which were located in settlement houses. Many facilities grew to include toddlers and preschool-age children in their programs. However, with this growth came overcrowding and a drop in good physical care. In order to raise the standards of care, the National Federation of Day Nurseries was created in 1898.

The idea of locating programs in public schools was beginning to take hold in the United States early in the twentieth century. While children's physical health

and safety were still the primary goals, attention was being given to the notion that children could also be taught tidiness, good manners, and other social values (Read & Patterson, 1980). It was during this time that the child-study movement encouraged nurseries to be opened in private schools, colleges, and universities. The educational programs of these nursery schools also had an influence on childcare. Read & Patterson (1980) note that early childcare and nursery schools were alike in structure and program in that both focused on health, nutrition, and social and emotional development using nursery school trained teachers in both settings. However, unlike nurseries, which were meant as a supplement to the upper-middle and upper-class families, childcare was an essential service to immigrants and poor working mothers.

While the 1920's and 1930's saw a reduction in the number of childcare programs, there was resurgence in the 1940's at the onset of World War II. Once again, women were needed in the work force for war industries. Federal money was issued through the Lanham Act in 1941 as a support for new group services for families in war impacted areas (Edwards, 2000). The operation of these centers until after the war provided jobs for the considerable number of unemployed teachers, social workers, and nurses. However, most Lanham money was withdrawn by 1946 with no support for children in group settings until the 1960's. Government sponsored daycare continued from the 1960's through the 1990's as a social welfare system designed to support the family life of the poor and as a means to help people move from welfare to work. Edwards (2000)

noted that, in contrast, more costly private early education programs stressed educational support for children.

Preschool

While literacy instruction was not traditionally a priority of early preschools, decades of longitudinal research have now established the advantages preschool education can give to children's literacy learning. At the time, many parents responded to the nineteenth century challenge of early childhood education by sending their young children along with their older children to the *common school*. This may have been out of concern for the children's educational development or simply as a relief from caring for the children (Kaestle & Vinovskis, 1978). The practice of sending young children to the district school with their older siblings revealed the belief that there were no age distinctions and no differentiation of educational needs from older children.

As more and more young children attended the common school, two sources of opposition emerged to doom the practice of sending young children to district schools. The first concern was that of finances. Many people felt that it was the parents' job to educate young children, and including them in the district schools stretched the budget (Strickland, 1982). Another concern was discipline. As the focus and attention of the young children is much shorter than that of the older students, their disruptions were a challenge to district teachers. As a result, many district schools created rules excluding children under the age of five or six, especially in urban and industrialized areas (Strickland, 1982). Consequently, if

young children were to be educated outside the home, it would have to be beyond the traditional classrooms of the public school.

In contrast to sending children to district schools to be educated, Englishman Robert Owen, an industrialist and social reformer influenced by Pestalozzi's educational reforms, created a whole new approach to early childhood education. For the concerns of young children, Owen proposed a program to support the unique nature and needs of young children, and thus the *infant school* was born (Strickland, 1982). It was Owen's contention that education was a cradle to grave proposition. Young children should not only receive custodial care if needed, but also education that fit the special character of the young. Owen brought his ideas to the United States in the early part of the nineteenth century. However, infant schools faded in the 1930s, partially due to the still popular opinion that young children should be educated at home. By the 1920s, a number of teachers who had worked with the Macmillan sisters in England and Maria Montessori in Italy, among others, brought early childhood education ideas and program models to the United States (Read & Patterson, 1980). A survey in 1931(see Read & Patterson, 1980) noted 203 nursery schools in the United States. Many of these first schools were opened in colleges and universities due to the child-study movement. However, during the economic depression, the Federal Relief Emergency Administration sanctioned the creation of nursery schools to provide unemployed people with work. Unemployed teachers from primary and high schools, social workers, and others were trained at universities and colleges that had laboratory schools. The

creation of free nursery schools brought hope that these types of schools would become enduring organizations in the United States. Unfortunately, funding from the WPA for nursery schools stopped in 1943 (Read & Patterson, 1980).

As the importance of early education became more and more apparent, parents, as well as education advocates, were anxious to secure early foundations of social and educational success for their children. Thus, the early part of the twentieth century also saw the creation of cooperative nursery schools. Besides wanting to ensure an early education program for their children, mothers also sought parent education and child-free time to participate in volunteer work. The 1920s saw the spread of cooperative nurseries to various states. Parent participation in the early education of children was an exciting and growing idea. By mid-century the cooperative approach had spread internationally (Read & Patterson, 1980).

The growth in cooperatives through the 1950s contributed to the overall rise in the number of nursery schools in the United States (Read & Patterson, 1980). Despite this rise, there was concern that children in the United States were falling behind children in other countries. There was also increase concern regarding the establishment of preschool programs to the exclusion of poor and mental or physically handicapped children (Almy, 1975).

In order to address the rising inequity in early childhood opportunities, the federally funded project Head Start was created in 1965. This program intended to expand opportunities for young children from low income families (Administration for Children and Families, 2002). The purpose was to create a

comprehensive program to meet the health, emotional, social, nutritional, and psychological needs of young children aged three- to five-years-old. The program initially served approximately 500,000 children (Read & Patterson, 1980). Current Head Start statistics state that almost one million children are currently enrolled. Thirteen percent of those enrolled are children with disabilities, including physical, mental, visual, health, hearing, emotional, speech and language, orthopedic, and learning impairments (Administration for Children and Families, 2003).

While the establishment of the Head Start program is an attempt to fill the early education gap for children from poor families, there is still no assurance that all families are able to have access to affordable, high-quality early childhood programs. Neuman et al. (2000) notes that preschool attendance hinges on family income. About 50 percent of American four-year-old children whose family income is less than \$20,000 per year attend preschool, as compared to 80 percent of four-year-old children whose family income is more than \$50,000 per year. Additionally observed is the fact that the quality of preschool and childcare programs differs to a large extent as a result of insufficient funding. Most programs were found to offer only average quality with about 15 percent of programs rated as good quality (see Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000).

Characteristics of Early Childhood Programs and Teachers

The characteristics and quality of programs for young children are of critical importance today due to the fact that more and more children are attending preprimary programs in the United States. Almost 88 percent of 3-, 4-, and 5-

year-old children are enrolled in programs in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). The status of these programs can be either for-profit or non-profit (Saluja, Early, & Clifford, 2002). For-profit programs may operate independently or by a national or local chain. Non-profit programs may be affiliated with a public school, a religious organization, or another type of non-profit program such as the YMCA. In their 1997 nationwide survey, Saluja, et al. (2002) found that approximately 8 percent of the programs were Head Start programs, 16 percent were in public schools, 25 percent were independent non-profit or other public agency programs, 22 percent were associated with a religious organization, and 29 percent were for-profit programs. While the majority of young children attend a program in the United States, public funding for these programs is lacking.

An international comparison of public spending reveals that the United States provides fewer early childhood education programs despite having more resources than similarly developed countries (see Edwards, 2000). For example, 95 percent of 3-year-olds and all 4-year-olds in Belgium are in public schools or in publicly funded programs; France provides free schooling for children ages three and older, with preschool teachers having the equivalent of a master's degree in Early Childhood Development, and students of preschool education receiving a stipend and free college education if they agree to teach for five years; 87 percent of Italian 3- to 5-year olds are in school; and the government in Denmark subsidizes childcare for children from six months to age seven, with professional teachers and low child-to-teacher ratios in each classroom.

It is agreed that high-quality early childhood programs have potential positive effects. Several significant studies of childcare and preschool programs (see Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) point out that high-quality experiences are not the standard. Only 15 percent of programs offered the good quality that was necessary for children's health, social, and cognitive development. In fact, 12 to 20 percent of children were found to be in settings thought to be detrimental to their social and cognitive development, as well as dangerous to their health and safety. Even more disturbing is the finding that 30 to 40 percent of infants and toddlers were placed in unsafe environments (Cost, Quality, & Child Outcomes Study Team, 1995).

Varied levels of classroom quality are found not only in childcare and preschool, but also in children's early elementary school experience (Bryant, Clifford, & Peisner, 1991; Durkin, 1987). In a statewide observational study of kindergartens, Durkin (1987) remarked that there is disparate quality of kindergarten classrooms. For example, he found teachers tended to rely on whole-group phonics instruction as their sole teaching strategy despite assessment results that pointed to a variety of individual differences in children's literacy skills. Instead of using different teaching strategies such as small-group or individual work to support children's development, the teachers viewed children who could not learn well with the one method as unready for first grade.

In order to improve the quality of early childhood education programs, exceptional training and adequate compensation for teachers is necessary (Katz, 1997). Despite the fact that there is a positive relationship between the

education and consistency of staff and the quality of care, only a small percentage of childcare teachers have four-year or advanced degrees, and the staff turnover rate is as high as 25 to 50 percent per year (National Center for Early Development and Learning, 1997). In most states, certification for preschool teachers includes an early childhood teaching certificate or endorsement when the preschool programs are located in the public school. The 1990 Profile of Child Care Settings (Kisker, Hofferth, Phillips, & Farquhar, 1991) found that 47 percent of teachers had four-year college degrees, 13 percent had an associate's degree, 26 percent had some college, 13 percent had graduated from high school, and 1 percent had less than a high school degree. The data also showed that 88 percent of teachers in public schools had a college degree or graduate degree, whereas 50 percent of teachers in religious settings and 45 percent of teachers in Head Start had college degrees. Saluja, et al. (2002) found similar data in their study. They also note that many states are in the process of creating new policies pertaining to teacher education requirements which they hope will lead to a more highly educated early childhood staff. It could, therefore, be suggested that preschool teachers may not be aptly equipped educationally to support children's needs for early literacy learning.

Head Start classroom teacher qualifications for the state of Michigan (under Head Start Act Sec. 648A) include a minimum of an associate degree in Early Childhood Education or a field related to Early Childhood Education with experience in teaching preschool children (Administration for Children and Families, n.d.). However, there is alternative credentialing for classrooms that do

not have a teacher that meets the minimum degree requirements; one teacher must have a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential that is appropriate to the children being served; or a state-awarded certificate for preschool teachers that meets or exceeds the requirements for a CDA credential; or a related child development degree and a state-awarded certificate to teach in a preschool program. General elementary school certification in the state of Michigan, including early childhood teachers, requires a minimum of a bachelor degree, the passing of the basic skills examination, the elementary certification examination, and an exam in early childhood (Legislative Counsel, 2003).

However, not all states require teachers to pass certification exams. As of 1997, six states did not require an exam for teacher licensure (National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification, 1998). Those states that do require teacher testing for certification vary in exam and licensure standards. Each state is responsible for establishing individual standards for licensure test passing cutoff points, their choice of tests or no test at all, a re-take policy, and which states' teacher licensures they recognize (Gitomer, Latham, & Ziomek, 1999). It is a challenge for higher education to offer teacher training models that will prepare students to pass teacher certification tests, teach students the skills necessary to cultivate appropriate development in young children, and, develop collaborative programs with local early childhood programs to enhance quality of care of children and support the development of early childhood teachers as professionals.

It should also be noted that historically, the majority of early childhood teachers have been White females. This characteristic seems to still be prevalent in the early childhood setting. For example, a study of teachers of 3- and 4-year-olds by Saluja, Early, & Clifford (2002) found that 78 percent of teachers were White, 10 percent were Black or African American, 5.7 percent were Hispanic or Latino, 3.8 percent of mixed race, 1.1 percent Asian or Pacific Islander, and .9 percent American Indian or Native Alaskan. They also found a smaller percentage of White teachers in Head Start programs than other types, and a higher percentage of Hispanic or Latino teachers in the public schools than in other programs. The average age of these same teachers was 39 years, with 99 percent of teachers across programs being female.

Today, a largely White, female population, most of whom have a four-year or advanced degree, characterizes kindergarten teaching in the public school system. Teachers in the public schools most likely have to pass a teacher certification exam, for which they may or may not be adequately prepared. Certification of preprimary teachers is not required. However, financial compensation is low in nonpublic early education settings, job turnover rates are greater, and teachers' academic skills are more dubious than in public school settings (Edwards, 2000).

Kindergarten Education: Yesterday and Today

By looking at kindergarten education over time, an understanding of the current position of kindergarten teachers may be gained. Historical thought and research gives way to current thinking and societal pressure resulting in the

downward push of the elementary curriculum. These pressures may perhaps shape teacher expectations for children's literacy development.

Friedrich Froebel's late nineteenth-century idea to create a *children's garden*, or kindergarten, specifically addressed the educational needs of young children based on their level of development (Downs, 1978; Morrow, 1993). Froebel, a student of Pestalozzi, based his educational system on the notion that mankind was the physical personification of God's reason. Because Froebel believed that all things unfolded their nature according to a divine prepatterned plan, in order to best educate a child one need only discover the connection between the child's outer and inner worlds (Shapiro, 1983).

Froebel saw the need to divide the process of early education between birth and age six into separate stages of mental and physical development: infancy, early childhood, and childhood. The development at each stage determines educational responsibilities. It was the early childhood years of 4 to 6 that most interested Froebel. He searched for a program that would serve as a link between the loving, yet permissive home environment, and the submissive atmosphere that the school discipline required (Shapiro, 1983). Unhappy with the current offerings of the time, he created the *kindergarten*. The idea of the kindergarten was to allow children of like age to learn together outside the influence of the family and school. Children would be able to explore their worlds naturally through a curriculum based on *games and occupations*. Formal reading instruction was never a part of the curriculum (Froebel, 1889).

Believing educated teachers to be an integral part of the kindergarten program, Froebel insisted that the teachers or *kindergartners* be particularly trained in child development and care. The *kindergartner* (i.e. the teacher) was responsible for children's social, physical, and spiritual development in a community of peers (Palmer, 2001). The fundamental nature of teaching was adjusting the topics to be learned to the child's present stage of development. The term *child-centered* originated with Froebel and continues to be an important theme in early childhood education (Froebel, 1889). Froebel's emphasis on play has also had a great impact on practice. It is play, Froebel argued, that is the child's primary method of gaining knowledge about the world.

Initially, kindergarten served both a philanthropic and religious purpose in the United States (Hill, 1996). Most kindergartens were set up in the most run-down parts of cities where many poor and immigrant children lived. Cultured and eager women, trained in philanthropy, supported normal schools, taught in the morning and spent afternoons as social-welfare agents assisting parents in finding employment, medical services, and even dental services for the poor families they served. As a result of their financially overburdened state, philanthropic boards resorted to pleading with the public schools to integrate the kindergarten as the foundation grade into the public school system.

However, the kindergarten classroom did not acclimate smoothly into the public school system. After the financially troubled philanthropic agencies convinced the public school system to take over the burden of kindergarten financing and administration, kindergarten teachers discovered that there was no

longer time to play the important role of social-welfare agent. Teachers no longer had time to play the role of medical inspector, social caseworker, or visiting teacher (Hill, 1996). The kindergarten classroom also saw a considerable increase in the number of students per classroom with the introduction of the double session. Gone were the opportunities for parent guidance and assistance in the afternoons. There was also much resistance by first grade teachers to accept the new role kindergarten played as the child's first school experience.

By the mid-1920s approximately 12 percent of American five-year-olds were enrolled in kindergartens. While the adoption of kindergarten into the public school system saw a profound change in the education of young children, so too did the upsurge of professionalization of early childhood education (Shapiro, 1983). A steady rise in important early childhood research and education centers by influential American universities gave way to the emergence of new voices concerning early childhood education. Many prominent institutions of higher education including the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station, the Yale Clinic of Child Development, and the Child Welfare Institute at Teachers college, Columbia University were now centers of child study.

About this same time, the child-centered theories of John Dewey and William Kilpatrick were developing in contrast to the behavior theories of John B. Watson and Edward L. Thorndike at Columbia University. Dewey (1990) and those with similar theories emphasized the importance of social interaction and how each in his own way is a part of the social whole. To have a democracy, children must be taught to interact with others in society. This was in contrast to

the behaviorist view of planned goals and instruction. In order to reconcile the two schools of thought, Patty Smith Hill (Shapiro, 1983) created the *conduct curriculum*, which combined Dewey's social goals with Thorndike's learning objectives. This integrated curriculum was well accepted by the preservice teacher graduates of the time.

The 1930s brought a new, emerging leader in child development theory. Arnold Gesell, a psychologist who began as a student of G. Stanley Hall, believing intelligence to be fixed and development to be predetermined, proposed to ascertain a pattern of normal growth in young children (Shapiro, 1983). Gesell developed his theory through observational studies of growth and behavior of children from *good* homes or of high-socioeconomic status. The basic tenet of his theory says that as long the infant or child is properly cared for, maturation advances in an orderly fixed rate. Thus, he supported the notion that maturation is the most important factor in learning to read. Children should not learn to read until they are deemed developmentally ready, usually around the age of six. However, Gesell was criticized for not including individual differences among children in his studies, as well as making over-generalized statements about development (Thomas, 2000). While Gesell's innovative child-study methods still play an important role in the observation of children, his theories generally lost favor late in the twentieth century to more comprehensive theories.

The concept of maturational readiness remained popular through the mid-twentieth century. Curricula were based on the developmental norms for the age ranges in question. The emotional well-being of children was of emphasis during

this time as a result of Freud's discernment that childhood education might assist in the prevention of mental illness, as well as Dewey's continued influence on the concentration of allowing children opportunities to interact socially and strengthen their emotional well-being (Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren, 2004).

The end of World War II brought another change in early childhood education. The biggest trigger in reassessment of early education in the mid-twentieth century came with the launch of a Russian sputnik in 1957. This put the American space program embarrassingly well behind the Russian program. Many blamed education as the cause. American education was now under the microscope and early childhood education was the focus. Parents feared that kindergarten was lacking in intellectual stimulation. "The shift toward preparation in the kindergarten for later academic skill, foreshadowed in the 'reading readiness' programs of the 1920s, was accelerated" (Shapiro, 1983, p. 194).

Progressive kindergarten education continued to characterize curriculum development in the light of encouragement of growth and development, as well as the realization of specific learning. Yet, as the progressive education movement faded, less emphasis was put on development and more concern focused on achieving specific learning outcomes (Spodek, 1996). The *readiness* notion of the kindergarten of the time is well illustrated by Gans, Stendler, and Almy (1952) as the *3R's Curriculum*:

The 3R's approach has not only prevailed in the primary grades, but it has reached down into the five-year-old kindergarten. Counting, some writing and reading readiness activities chiefly in the form of workbook exercises have been typical experiences in kindergarten where this curriculum has been in operation. Under such a setup the kindergarten is seen as a year of settling down for children, of adjusting to sitting still and following directions, so that they will be better prepared for a more rigorous attack on the 3Rs during first grade (p.80-81).

As a result of this turn in focus, educators began to seek out updated theory and methods that could answer not only the call for preparation in the kindergarten for later academic skills, but that could also provide solutions to the widening gap between the educational opportunities of rich and poor children in America.

The work of Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget, while previously recognized, now came under close consideration of psychologists and educators (Spodek, 1996). In the tradition of Dewey, Piaget's focused on cognitive development, and his understanding that children are capable of only certain types of intellectual tasks at certain stages, helped create an early childhood curriculum that focuses on decision making, problem solving, self-discipline, goal setting, planning one's own activities, and cooperating with teachers and peers in evaluating learning (Morrow, 1993). He also stressed that learning takes place when the child interacts with peers and adults in a social setting as they act upon the environment. Especially useful in the classroom were the distinctions Piaget made between imitation (the child accommodating to the external world) and play (the child assimilating new information into the existing frameworks) (Shapiro, 1983).

As Piaget developed only a theory of development and not a program of education, early childhood advocates had to create their own programs using Piaget's hypotheses of early learning and development (Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren, 2004). As a result, mid-century early childhood programs were based on a variety of adaptations. These included strictly following Piagetian theory, but also incorporated theories focusing on the interaction between both

environmental and biological influences such as Erikson's emotional development theory, Bandura's social learning theory, Dewey's theory of play, and Vygotsky's theory of language and culture. This incorporation of theories and practices established what is now recognized as the interactionist approach (Kostelnik, et al., 1999).

The spread of the interactionist approach inspired early educators to rethink their role in the classroom, as well as take a new look at the use of materials in the classroom, and the goal of early education (Kostelnik, et al., 2004).

However, there was also a growing trend evident in many early childhood classes and particularly in kindergartens that put excessive importance on rote learning and whole group instruction of a specific set of academic skills (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Considerable thought was also being given to the methods used to test, place, and retain young children. Because young children were being subjected to readiness and screening methods based on the same narrow academic goals that typified the elementary curricula, a growing number of children were distinguished as not ready for kindergarten or first grade and were subsequently referred to transition classes, retained, or denied entry.

As a result of this growing multiplicity of programs, and an expanding movement toward more formal, academic instruction of young children, as seen in the downward push of the elementary curriculum, position statements on developmentally appropriate practices were published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (Bredekamp, 1987). The key position was that programs intended for young children should be based

on what is known about the development of young children (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). The guidelines for developmentally appropriate practices set by the NAEYC were helpful not only for daily program decisions nationally and internationally, many state departments of education in the United States have used the guidelines to augment policy and program evaluation choices, as well (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

A joint position statement from the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) was adopted in 1998 (Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000). This important document was intended to guide the establishment of developmentally appropriate settings and practices that best contribute to the development of children's literacy. The statement was aimed at not only teachers of young children in schools and early childhood programs, but also anyone who works with or can contribute to the development of children from birth through age eight.

It is through these position statements that a call was made for educators, families, and caring communities to come together to share the responsibility in educating young children in ways that are developmentally appropriate. Developmentally appropriate practices (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) in literacy education take into account what is known about children's development and learning, individual children's progress along the continuum of literacy development, and the social and cultural contexts in which children live (Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000).

Today, kindergarten expectations are incurring changes in the United States based on legislation passed in 2002 called the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) (U. S. Department of Education, 2002). This legislation is meant to make states, school districts, and schools accountable for the accomplishments of individual students. It calls for states to create immediate standards in math reading, and science by the 2005-2006 school year. Students are to be assessed based on those standards, and in turn, school districts and schools will be assessed on the performance of their students on these standardized tests. While Michigan has already implemented the Michigan Curriculum Framework (Michigan Department of Education, 1996) as a guide for curricular standards, the twelve English Language Arts Content Standards found are broad curriculum statements that describe what students should know and be able to do by the time they graduate from high school. In order to comply more comprehensively with the NCLB act, the Michigan Department of Education sponsored the development of the Grade Level Content Expectations (GLCE). Aligned with the state content standards and benchmarks, these expectations are more concrete expectations for each grade level and aid teachers in preparing students for grade level assessments. Appendix A shows the Grade Level Content Expectations for Kindergarten English Language Arts (Michigan Department of Education, 2004).

Within the NCLB act are the Early Reading First (ages 3 to 5) and the Reading First (grades K to 3) initiatives. These programs focus on reading readiness, professional development for teachers, as well as guide school

decisions on which reading and assessment programs to purchase. Schools must supply programs that are based on proven scientific research or *scientifically based reading research* (SBRR). The National Reading Panel was asked by Congress to establish which scientifically proven principles help children learn to read (Berger & Gunn, 2003). As a result, the panel suggested that instruction, assessment, and professional development should concentrate on phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Most notably, the panel supported explicit instruction in phonics and phonemic awareness. Reading First has thus reenergized phonics instruction, much to the dismay of whole language advocates.

Yatvin, Weaver, and Garan (2003), in their review of the Reading First initiative, say that this plan comes from an "incomplete and flawed research base, the National Reading Panel Reports, and from government documents and regulations that substantially misrepresent the Report's findings" (p. 28). For example, they cite that there is no evidence in the National Reading Panel Report, or anywhere else, that children must develop phonemic awareness or phonics before they begin to read print. Nor was it confirmed that there is scientific research to support the use of commercial reading programs, which may even have disadvantageous effects on children's literacy development. Interestingly, the National Reading Panel does not even recommend any commercial programs. Yet, as a consequence of this deficient research and a rush to implementation, there is widespread use of scripted, cookie-cutter type commercial reading programs in schools.

Another concern with NCLB is the mandated assessment component (Goertz & Duffy, 2003). There is great concern and controversy about the tests themselves and the use of the results. While most states have begun restructuring efforts that comply with the performance standards and mandated assessments, too frequently the assessment outcome becomes the end rather than the means used to improve instructional programs. Gilmore (2003), in her comparison of literacy assessment and IQ scores, reasons that the move to mandate standardized testing relegates literacy to a numbers game that includes reading scores, percentiles, and grade levels, just as IQ scores do. She surmises that literacy assessment of this type, just like IQ scoring, inhibits access to literacy and creates another barrier to literacy for certain social groups.

The NCLB legislation has also raised questions about how to deal with the literacy assessment programs schools already have in place (Berger & Gunn, 2003). Changing programs can have a less than positive effect with schools and teachers. For example, Berger & Gunn (2003) discuss that a reading researcher at the University of Michigan has found that in Michigan, 20,000 teachers have been trained to use a literacy assessment program called the Michigan Literacy Progress Profile (MLPP). This particular program was created and researched in Michigan. However, the program cannot be used in Reading First programs in Michigan because it is not an (U. S.) Education Department endorsed program. This has caused much resentment among teachers who must now go through another training process with a new Reading First plan, one that they view as an unrelated addition, not linked to the MLPP. It should be noted that group-

administered, norm-referenced standardized testing is inappropriate for young children.

It is recommended that this type of conventional assessment be done no sooner than the fourth grade. Recommendations call for more feasible assessment of children's literacy development should be done using a variety of indicators across a continuum of time (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

The success or failure of the recent NCLB initiative hangs in the balance. Kindergarten curricula may seemingly undergo more changes in the coming years as a result. However, despite changes in education mandates, children's literacy will still be found to develop along a certain continuum. Teachers will still teach literacy skills to children who come to school with a variety of emerging literacy skill levels. Therefore, it is important for kindergarten teachers to be aware of the progress of children's literacy development. A survey of kindergarten teacher perceptions of when certain literacy skills should be developed will contribute to our understanding of how aware kindergarten teachers are of literacy's developmental continuum.

Summary

The development of emergent literacy skills is a continuous process that begins at birth and continues throughout life. In order to ensure the reasonable and appropriate development of these important skills, children must be immersed in a world of language and print in their immediate environment.

Contemporary research has helped unfold an understanding of literacy development. Studies have shown that an environment in children's homes and early childhood education settings that is rich in print and language is of the utmost importance for the development of early reading and writing skills. Focus has been given to the important role the home, as well as the preprimary environment play in terms of shared reading, reading instruction, and availability of reading materials. Yet, much less consideration has been given to seeking information about whether home or school experiences are more vital to literacy development, how literacy beliefs at home and school vary, and how young children carry information from one setting to another.

Many social and cultural factors play important roles in both reading and writing development. Teachers should be aware of how these factors augment the level of opportunity, the richness of the environment, and quality of care offered to young children, all of which in turn have a critical impact on literacy development. Because literacy systems vastly differ from one community to another, teachers of children age's three to five, as well as teachers of children in kindergarten through third grades, must be especially sensitive to the literacy expectations in their communities.

Early childhood education programs, philosophies, and teachers have all seen change over the last century. Numerous studies have helped create a better understanding of how young children develop, which have subsequently aided in the formation and establishment of more appropriate approaches to teaching and learning. Nonetheless, there are still no set standards for early childhood teacher

preparation. Given that teacher knowledge and practice varies with both teacher training and personal beliefs, further study is necessary to discover which emerging literacy skills early childhood education teachers believe they are primarily responsible for teaching. The next chapter describes the methodology to achieve the study of kindergarten teacher beliefs.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perception of kindergarten teachers regarding when children best acquire emerging literacy skills.

Research Design

The design of this study was survey research. This study was a cross-sectional design taken during the spring of 2004 from the population of kindergarten teachers in Ingham County

Variables

The dependent variable in this study was **kindergarten teacher perceptions about emerging literacy skills**. The independent variables included **personal demographics, teaching background, teacher education background, professional activities, and classroom characteristics**.

Subjects

The study population was comprised of all 131-kindergarten teachers in the twelve school districts that make up the Ingham Intermediate School District in mid-Michigan. These public school districts included the rural districts of Dansville Schools, Leslie Public Schools, Stockbridge Community Schools, and Webberville Community Schools; and the urban school districts of East Lansing Public Schools, the Lansing Public Schools, Haslett Public Schools, Holt Public

Schools, Mason Public Schools, Okemos Public Schools, Waverly Community Schools, and Williamston Community Schools. The designation of rural and urban is taken from the United States Census Bureau 1995 definition, which states that "urban" consists of places of 2,500 or more persons (United States Census Bureau, 1995).

The sample population was comprised of 42 kindergarten teachers from nine school districts, two rural districts and seven urban districts. Ninety-eight percent of the sample were female teachers of whom 92.9 percent were White, five percent were African-American, and two percent were Hispanic. This composition is similar to national characterizations of kindergarten classrooms (Edwards, 2000).

This put the actual response rate of the surveys at 32 percent. According to Baruch (1999), a response rate of 55.6 with a standard deviation of 19.7 was found to be the average response rate in academic studies. Three school districts, Haslett, Leslie, and Webberville had no kindergarten teachers return the survey. Surveys in these districts may not have been returned due to possible principal interference, poor timing of the survey, or lack of interest in participation by the teacher (Baruch, 1999).

The Ingham County Intermediate School District (IISD) area was chosen for this study as it included diverse groups of teachers and students among and within the schools in the IISD. As the IISD showed an early interest in the formation of this project, the Supervisor of Early Childhood Education-School Development Services was contacted by telephone to confirm the IISD's

continued interest. Upon confirmation of the IISD's willingness to participate in this study, a list of all of the kindergartens in each of the participating schools was created.

An initial contact with the superintendent of each district was made by the IISD as a means of obtaining consent to implement the project in the district. Upon district approval, the principal of each elementary building was sent a letter confirming the consent. Each principal received a copy of the survey and letter that will was sent to the teachers (See Appendix D for a copy of the principal letter).

Teachers who participated were eligible for one of four gift certificates to be given away. The consent letter attached to the returned survey was separated from the survey and put into a container from which the four winners of the gift certificates were drawn.

Instrumentation

One instrument was used to collect data. The Emerging Literacy Skills Survey was designed specifically for this study. The questionnaire was divided into four sections. The first section collected demographic information such as personal demographics, teaching background, teacher education background, professional activities, and classroom characteristics. The second section asked teachers to indicate the sources that have been most influential in forming their expectations for children's readiness for kindergarten and whether their expectations of what children are capable of doing are congruent with other people and standards. The third section asked the teachers to list which five

emerging literacy skills they thought were the most important for children to have upon entry into kindergarten. The fourth section asked teachers to choose which emerging literacy skills they thought children should primarily develop prior to kindergarten entry, which emerging literacy skills they thought children should primarily develop during the kindergarten year, which emerging literacy skills should be primarily developed during first grade, and whether this belief was consistent with district demand. The variables were selected from the Michigan Department of Education, Michigan State Board of Education, Head Start Child Outcomes Framework, High/Scope Child Observation Record, National Association for the Education of Young Children, Lansing School District Curriculum Benchmarks for Kindergarten, and Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren, 2004.

The emerging literacy skills listed in the fourth section of the survey clustered into six groups: phonological awareness (2 skills including *recognize rhyming words* and *breaking words into syllables*); alphabetic principle (2 skills including *identify letters in the alphabet* and *associate letter names to their sounds*); phonemic awareness (3 skills including *identify beginning/middle/end sounds*); oral language (15 skills including *retell story details* and *use descriptive language*); concepts of print (24 skills including *recognize own name in writing* and *understand print contains a message*); and communication abilities (3 skills including *develop interest in literacy experiences* and *listen attentively to stories*). The skills in this section were listed in random order. Each skill was written on an individual piece of paper and drawn out of a container one at a time by a third

party. The random listing of the skills was meant to have the teachers consider each skill individually and not influence the teacher by the order in which it was presented. A reliability analysis was run yielding an alpha coefficient of .8916. The full survey can be seen in Appendix B.

The tool has construct validity as it was based on emergent literacy theory, particularly the works of Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp (2000), Clay (1966), Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren (2004), Whitehurst & Lonigan (1998), and (Teale and Sulzby (1986). The foundation of this theory notes that children's reading and writing abilities develop concurrently and interactively through experiences in reading and writing. Emergent literacy theorists believe oral language plays a key role in the development of emerging literacy skills of young children. Many children begin to learn to read and write well before they enter formal schooling by, among other things, vocabulary development, listening to stories being read aloud, noticing signs and labels in their environment, and experimenting with writing tools (Clay, 1966; Teale & Sulzby, 1989). Many children exhibit emergent literacy behaviors such as pretending to read a favorite story to a teddy bear or scribbling a letter to Grandma. Each survey item and its source can be seen in Table 2.

The present survey was adapted from a previous survey constructed by the researcher. The original survey was used in an investigation of kindergarten teacher perceptions in the Lansing School District in Lansing, Michigan (Thelen, 2002). Prior to the current study, the present survey was tested for usability and validity in a pilot study. Five kindergarten teachers from Gratiot County

completed the survey. It took an average of approximately fifteen minutes for teachers to finish the survey. When the teachers were done with the survey, there was discussion as to the ease of taking the survey. The teachers noted that the directions were understandable and easy to follow. Some teachers thought that the percentages in the demographics section were difficult to specifically ascertain. As a result, the word "estimate" was added to the directions in this section. In regards to whether there were any emerging literacy skills not listed that the teachers' thought should be listed, there were none suggested. It should be noted that there was an opportunity for teachers to state what they believe are the five most important emerging literacy skills a child should have upon kindergarten entry. This section allowed for teachers to note any skill(s) that might be important to literacy development, but that were not listed on the survey. There were no clarifications asked for, nor were there any further suggestions.

Table 2

Instrument item literacy categories and item source

Skill	Source
Phonological Awareness	
Break words into syllables	Head Start Child Outcomes Framework
Recognize rhyming words	Head Start Child Outcomes Framework
Phonemic Awareness	
Identify beginning sounds	Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren (2004)
Identify middle sounds	Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren (2004)
Identify end sounds	Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren (2004)
Alphabetic Principle	
Associate letter names with their sounds	Michigan Department of Education
Understand that letters are formed in a specific way and are unchanging	Michigan Department of Education
Identify letters of the alphabet	Head Start Child Outcomes Framework
Oral Language	
Engage in conversation with peers with multiple exchanges	Head Start Child Outcomes Framework
Engage in conversation with adults with multiple exchanges	Head Start Child Outcomes Framework
Retell story details	National Association for the Education of Young Children
Pretend to read a book by telling a story from the pictures on the cover or in the book	Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren (2004)
Identify common objects (e.g., vehicles)	Lansing School District Curriculum Benchmarks for Kindergarten
Use descriptive language (e.g., I want to play with the small, red truck)	National Association for the Education of Young Children
Respond to oral language with relevant comments and questions	Michigan Department of Education
Repeat songs, fingerplays, and movement activities	High/Scope Child Observation Record
Articulate intents, emotions, and desires	Head Start Child Outcomes Framework
Follow simple directions	Head Start Child Outcomes Framework
Formulate simple questions	Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren (2004)
Speak clearly enough to be understood by others	Head Start Child Outcomes Framework
Use appropriate expressive vocabulary	Michigan Department of Education
Recognize common nouns and verbs typical of daily life	Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren (2004)
Retell a familiar story	Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren (2004)
Concepts of Print	
Use left-to-right, top-to-bottom orientation	National Association for the Education of Young Children
Recognize own name in writing	Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren (2004)
Understand where to begin reading	Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren (2004)
Identify title of a book	Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren (2004)

Table 2 (cont'd).

Understand that print contains a message	Head Start Child Outcomes Framework
Follow the print on a page, moving eyes in the correct direction	High/Scope Child Observation Record
Understand the difference between pictures and print	Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren (2004)
Develop a concept of punctuation	Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren (2004)
Understand the difference between letters and words	Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren (2004)
Recognize logographic print (e.g., McDonald's, Kmart)	Head Start Child Outcomes Framework
Understand that words are separated by spaces	Head Start Child Outcomes Framework
Write letters of the alphabet	High/Scope Child Observation Record
Develop a sight vocabulary	Michigan Department of Education
Write some words	Michigan Department of Education
Distinguish between real and make-believe	Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren (2004)
Write a sentence	Michigan Department of Education
Use invented/temporary spelling	Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren (2004)
Exhibit reading-like behavior (e.g., turn pages correctly, moving from front to back)	High/Scope Child Observation Record
Write first name	High/Scope Child Observation Record
Write last name	High/Scope Child Observation Record
Draw a recognizable picture (self, family, objects)	Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren (2004)
Recognize lower case letters	Michigan Department of Education
Recognize upper case letters	Michigan Department of Education
Match spoken words with written ones	National Association for the Education of Young Children
Developmental Communication Abilities	
Listen attentively to stories	Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren (2004)
Select literacy experiences when given a choice	National Association for the Education of Young Children
Read others' facial and body expressions	Michigan State Board of Education

Data Collection Procedure

Upon committee approval of the proposal, approval was sought from Michigan State University's Institutional Research Board, the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS). In order to achieve UCRIHS approval for this study, a letter of consent to the kindergarten teachers was submitted (See Appendix C), and a letter of notification to the principals (See Appendix D), as well as assurances of complete confidentiality and privacy, and fulfillment of all other procedures as directed by UCRIHS. As soon as University approval was given see Appendix E), the researcher worked in cooperation with the IISD to distribute copies of the survey to the kindergarten teachers in Ingham County.

Building principals at each school received a notification letter and a packet of surveys in individual envelopes via interdistrict mail. Teachers each received a copy of the survey along with a stamped return envelope via interdistrict mail, as well. Upon receiving the survey, kindergarten teachers had three weeks to fill it out and return it directly to the researcher. A reminder postcard was mailed to those teachers whose surveys had not been returned within the first two weeks. If there was difficulty achieving a 40 percent response rate, individual schools whose response rates are low were phoned to encourage the return of the surveys with additional surveys being sent via interdistrict mail if necessary.

Teachers had an opportunity to participate in a drawing to win one of four \$50.00 gift certificates to a local bookstore. As surveys were returned, the consent form with the teacher's name, school name, and district on it was

separated from the survey and put in a secure container. Once the deadline for the return of surveys had passed, four teachers names were drawn from the returned consent forms. The winners were contacted via public mail and sent one of the four gift certificates. Winners were from the Lansing (2), Mason (1), and Holt (1) School Districts.

The information gathered from the surveys was kept in strict confidence. An identification code was given to each survey upon receipt in order better manage the data. However, the privacy of individual survey results was always protected. Only the researcher had access to the collected data.

Analyses

Before data were entered into an SPSS program, a statistician double-checked the database set up to ensure accuracy and consistency. The analyses for this study looked at the differences in teacher perceptions, as well as the differences inherent in child situations, teacher situations, and contexts. For example, there are differences inherent in child situations such as SES and ethnicity. There are inherent differences in teacher situations such a length of employment and professional affiliation. As well, there are differences inherent in contexts such as all day or half-day kindergarten programs or low SES as compared to high SES contexts. This study also looked at the sources teachers believe have been most influential in forming their expectations for children's readiness for kindergarten, along with whether teachers believed their expectations were congruent with other education specialists, perceptions, and standards.

A summary of the study questions, hypotheses, analysis methods for each question, and the survey questions specifically related to each hypothesis can be found in Table 3. The independent variables listed on the Emerging Literacy Skill Survey (See Appendix B) are purposefully unfactored. An alpha level of .05 was chosen, meaning that the probability of a type I error is 5 times (or less) in 100.

Table 3

Summary of Research Questions, Hypotheses, and Analyses

Research Question	Hypothesis	Survey question(s) corresponding to hypothesis	Analysis
1. Which specific emerging literacy skills do kindergarten teachers believe they are primarily responsible for teaching?		24	Frequencies, Percentages
2. Is there any agreement among kindergarten teachers as to which emerging literacy skills they believe should be primarily developed prior to kindergarten entrance?		24	Frequencies, Percentages
3. Is there any agreement among kindergarten teachers as to which emerging literacy skills they believe should be primarily developed prior to kindergarten entrance.		24	Frequencies, Percentages
4. Is there any agreement among kindergarten teachers as to which emerging literacy skills they believe should be primarily developed at the beginning of first grade?		24	Frequencies, Percentages

Table 3 (cont'd).

5. Do perceptions of the acquisition of emerging literacy skills vary as a function of the demographics of kindergarten teachers?			
	<i>Hypothesis #5A</i> There is no relationship between kindergarten teachers' personal demographics and beliefs about the acquisition of emerging literacy skills	1, 2	Frequencies, Crosstabs, Chi Square
	<i>Hypothesis #5B</i> There is no relationship between kindergarten teachers' teaching background and beliefs about the acquisition of emerging literacy skills.	3, 4, 5	Frequencies, Crosstabs, Chi Square
	<i>Hypothesis #5C</i> There is no relationship between kindergarten teachers' education background and beliefs about the acquisition of emerging literacy skills.	6, 7, 8	Frequencies, Crosstabs, Chi Square

Table 3 (cont'd).

	<i>Hypothesis #5D</i> There is no relationship between kindergarten teachers' participation in professional activities and beliefs about the acquisition of emerging literacy skills	9, 10, 11, 12	Frequencies, Crosstabs, Chi Square
	<i>Hypothesis #5E</i> There is no relationship between kindergarten teachers' classroom characteristics and beliefs about the acquisition of emerging literacy skills	13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19	Frequencies, Crosstabs, Chi Square
6. What sources influence kindergarten teachers' expectations of children's literacy readiness?			
	<i>Hypothesis #6A</i> There is no agreement among kindergarten teachers as to which sources most influence their expectations of children's literacy readiness.	20	Frequencies, Crosstabs, Chi Square, Means

Table 3 (cont'd).

7. Are kindergarten teachers' beliefs congruent with others regarding children's literacy capabilities?			
	<i>Hypothesis #7A</i> There is no agreement among kindergarten teachers' expectations and their perceived expectations of others regarding children's literacy capabilities.	21	Frequencies, Crosstabs, Chi Square, Means
8. Which literacy skills do kindergarten teachers believe are the five most essential skills children should acquire by kindergarten entry?			
	<i>Hypothesis #8A</i> There is no agreement among kindergarten teachers as to which skills they think are the five most essential literacy skills children should acquire by kindergarten entry.	23	Frequencies, Crosstabs, Chi Square

Table 3 (cont'd).

9. Are kindergarten teacher expectations of skills to be developed during the kindergarten year congruent with the Stat of Michigan Kindergarten Framework of Skills?			
	Hypothesis #9A Kindergarten teacher expectations of skills to be developed during the kindergarten year are not congruent with the State of Michigan Framework of Skills.	24	Percentages

Limitations

1. The study was limited due to the reliability of the instrument. However, the internal consistency was tested by a pilot study.
2. The return rate of the surveys was less than 50 percent (actual rate of return was 32%). However, every effort was made to elicit the most returns possible.
3. There may have been differences between counties in Michigan that may mitigate generalizabilities to the state, as well as state differences between Michigan and other states in the United States.
4. As with other types of self-reported data, the data in this study may have differed from expressive behavior that is objectively measured. Therefore, the accuracy of this data may have been a limitation.
5. The unequal representation of ethnic groups of the respondents may have caused limitations of comparisons of certain demographics in this study (92.9% of respondents were White, 4.8% of respondents were African-American, and 2.4% of respondents were Hispanic).

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Summary

This chapter reviewed the methods to be used in this study. The independent and dependent variables were described along with the population under study. A description of the instrument to be used was detailed along with a description of the data collection procedures. Nine research questions were proposed with corresponding hypotheses and the types of analyses to be used. Also noted were the limitations the study presented. A complete analysis of the data is presented in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This chapter presents demographic characteristics of the sample, followed by the results of the statistical analyses. These analyses are presented in order of the nine research questions. Results are presented in table form followed by an exploration of the findings.

Frequencies were used to analyze research questions one through eight. Percentages were used in questions one, two, and nine. Crosstabs and Chi Square tests were run for questions five, six, and seven. Frequencies and percentages are reported in descending order of agreement.

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Demographic data were collected on the sample. Table 4 displays a comparison of the respondents on various demographic characteristics.

Table 4
Comparison of Demographics (N=42)

Variable	f	%
Age		
21-30 yrs old	12	28.6
36-50 yrs old	15	35.7
51-65 yrs old	15	35.7
Ethnicity		
White	39	92.9
African-American	2	4.8
Hispanic	1	2.4
Years in Education		
1-10	13	31.0
11-20	15	35.7
21-30	10	23.8
31-40	4	9.5
Years Teaching Kindergarten		
1-5	12	28.6
6-10	18	42.9
11-35	12	28.6
Years Teaching Preschool		
0	23	54.8
1-10	16	38.1
11-25	3	7.1
Major area of BA Study		
Elementary Education	20	47.6
Early Childhood	14	33.3
Other	8	19.0

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Table 4 (cont'd)

Variable	f	%
Highest Degree Earned		
Bachelor	11	26.2
Master	29	69.0
Specialist	2	4.8
Early Childhood Endorsement		
No	21	50.0
Yes	21	50.0
Member of National Association for the Education of Young Children		
No	36	85.7
Yes	6	14.3
Subscribes to Professional Journals		
No	19	45.2
Yes	23	54.8
Attend Professional Conferences		
No	12	28.6
Yes	30	71.4
Conferences Attended		
Does not attend conferences	12	28.6
ACEI	1	2.4
MIAEYC	5	11.9
NAEYC	7	16.7
MRA	6	14.3
OTHER	11	26.2
Hours of Professional Development in the Last Year		
0-15	8	19.0
16-39	10	23.8
40-60	14	33.3
61-200	9	21.4
Location of School		
Rural	4	9.5
Urban	38	90.5

Table 4 (cont'd).

Variable	f	%
Type of Program This Year		
½ day	16	38.1
all day, every day	24	57.1
all day, every other day	2	4.8
Number of Students in Classroom (Ave.)		
15-20	22	52.4
21-27	20	47.6
Age of Students in Classroom		
Age 5		
0-9 students age 5	22	52.4
10-21 students age 5	18	42.9
Age 6		
0-9 students age 6	20	47.6
10-23 students age 6	20	47.6
Age 7		
0 students age 7	31	73.8
1-5 students age 7	10	23.8
Classroom Make-Up (%)		
African American children		
0-10	16	38.1
11-25	7	16.7
26-50	11	26.2
>50	8	19.0
Asian children		
0-10	37	88.1
11-25	4	9.5
26-50	1	2.4
Hispanic children		
0-10	29	69.0
11-25	9	21.4
26-50	3	7.1
>50	1	2.4
White children		
0-10	6	14.3
11-25	5	11.9
26-50	11	26.2
>50	20	47.6
11-25	2	4.8

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Table 4 (cont'd).

Variable	f	%
Other ethnicities of children		
0-10	40	95.2
Students Receiving Free/Reduced Lunch (%)		
0-10	15	35.7
11-25	2	4.8
26-50	5	11.9
<50	20	47.6

Forty-two kindergarten teachers took part in this study. The ages of the participants were fairly evenly distributed as was the number of years teachers have taught kindergarten. Most teachers had between one and thirty years of teaching experience. The majority of teachers in this study were White (92.9%). Most teachers had obtained a Master Degree (69.0%) with half receiving an Early Childhood Endorsement. Interestingly, very few kindergarten teachers were members of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, although, in general, most do attend professional conferences (71.4%) and subscribe to professional journals (54.8%).

The majority of kindergarten teachers in this study taught in an all day, every day program (57.1%). Classroom sizes ranged from 15 to 27 students with most students being 5 or 6 years of age. Ethnicity in classrooms was not often evenly distributed with many classrooms having either a majority of White students (47.6%) or predominately African-American (19.0%). About forty-seven percent of classrooms had at least half of the students receiving free or reduced lunch.

Question One

Which specific emerging literacy skills do kindergarten teachers believe they are primarily responsible for teaching?

Table 5 presents the list of emerging literacy skills kindergarten teachers were to consider in the survey. Results are listed in descending order of agreement. A majority indication will be where 50 percent or more of kindergarten teachers specified they were primarily responsible for teaching a certain emerging literacy skill. Also presented in this table are the data that indicate what percentage of kindergarten teachers supposed that their expectations for the acquisition of literacy skills were consistent with the perceived expectations of the school district in which they work.

Table 5
Literacy Skills Teachers Believe They Are Primarily Responsible for Teaching
(N=42)

Emerging Literacy Skill	f	%	Is consistent with district demand
Write some words	39	92.9	88.1
Understand the difference between letters and words	39	92.9	85.7
Associate letter names with their sounds	38	90.5	85.7
Understand that words are separated by spaces	38	90.5	83.3
Identify title of book	37	88.1	90.5
Identify beginning sounds	37	88.1	83.3
Write last name	36	85.7	88.1
Develop a sight vocabulary	36	85.7	90.5
Use left-to-right orientation	35	83.3	83.3
Use invented/temporary spelling	35	83.3	85.7
Understand where to begin reading	35	83.3	81.0
Recognize rhyming words	35	83.3	85.7
Follow the print on a page moving eyes in the correct direction	34	81.0	85.7
Match spoken words with written ones	33	78.6	90.5
Understand that letters are formed in a specific way and are unchanging	33	78.6	83.3
Write a sentence	31	73.8	83.3
Retell story details	31	73.8	83.3
Recognize lower case letters	31	73.8	76.2
Retell a familiar story	29	69.0	90.5
Identify end sounds	29	69.0	78.6
Develop a concept of punctuation	28	66.7	81.0
Understand that print contains a message	27	64.3	76.2
Recognize upper case letters	27	64.3	78.6
Identify letters of the alphabet	25	59.5	76.2
Understand the difference between pictures and print	25	59.5	78.6
Formulate simple questions	25	59.5	81.0
Break words into syllables	23	54.8	88.1
Choose literacy experiences when given a choice	21	50.0	78.6
Respond to oral language with relevant comments and questions	19	45.2	78.6
Identify middle sounds	19	45.2	85.7
Recognize logographic print	18	42.9	81.0
Use descriptive language	17	40.5	71.4
Distinguish between real and make-believe	16	38.1	81.0
Articulate intents, emotions, and desires	15	35.7	73.8
Write some letters	15	35.7	76.2

Table 5 (cont'd).

Emerging Literacy Skill	f	%	Is consistent with district demand
Read others' facial and body expressions	15	35.7	71.4
Use appropriate expressive language	12	28.6	73.8
Pretend to read a book by telling a story from the pictures	12	28.6	66.7
Engage in conversation with peers with multiple exchanges	12	28.6	76.2
Write first name	10	23.8	69.0
Draw a recognizable picture	10	23.8	64.3
Exhibit reading-like behavior	10	23.8	64.3
Recognize own name in writing	9	21.4	73.8
Recognize common nouns and verbs typical of everyday life	8	19.0	83.3
Listen attentively to stories	8	19.0	69.0
Identify common objects	8	19.0	71.4
Repeat songs, fingerplays and movement activities	7	16.7	64.3
Speak clearly enough to be understood by others	6	14.3	73.8
Engage in conversation with adults with multiple exchanges	3	7.1	71.4
Follow simple directions	3	7.1	69.0

Of the fifty emerging literacy skills offered, the majority (over 50%) of kindergarten teachers indicated that they believe they are responsible for teaching twenty-eight of them. The majority of teachers also indicated that they thought their beliefs were consistent with district demand for those skills that they believed they are responsible for teaching, as well as for those skills they did not think they were responsible for teaching.

Question Two

Is there any agreement among kindergarten teachers as to which emerging literacy skills they believe should be primarily developed prior to kindergarten entrance?

Table 6 presents those emerging literacy skills for which a majority (50% or more) of kindergarten teachers agreed should be primarily developed prior to kindergarten entrance. Results are reported in descending order.

Table 6
Emerging Literacy Skills Kindergarten Teachers Believe Children Should
Primarily Develop Prior to Kindergarten Entrance (N= 42)

Emerging Literacy Skill	f	%
Engage in conversation with adults with multiple exchanges	39	92.9
Follow simple directions	39	92.9
Speak clearly enough to be understood by others	36	85.7
Repeat songs, fingerplays, movement activities	35	83.3
Listen attentively to stories	34	81.0
Identify common objects	34	81.0
Recognize own name in writing	33	78.6
Write first name	32	76.2
Exhibit reading like behavior telling a story from the picture	32	76.2
Pretend to read a book by telling a story from the pictures	30	71.4
Write some letters of the alphabet	27	64.3
Draw a recognizable picture	26	61.9
Distinguish between real and make believe	26	61.9
Articulate intents, emotions, and desires	25	59.5
Engage in conversation with peers with multiple exchanges	25	59.5
Use appropriate expressive vocabulary	24	57.1
Recognize logographic print	22	52.4
Uses descriptive language	22	52.4
Read others facial and body expressions	22	52.4
Respond to oral language with relevant comments, questions	21	50.0

Of the 50 emerging literacy skills offered, kindergarten teachers indicated that they thought 20 of them should be primarily developed prior to kindergarten entrance. Two-thirds of the teachers agreed that 8 of these skills should be developed prior to kindergarten entrance. At least half of all teachers agreed the remaining 12 skills should be developed prior to kindergarten entrance. Ten of these skills were oral language skills, 8 were concept of print skills, and 2 were developmental communication skills.

Question Three

Is there any agreement among kindergarten teachers as to which emerging literacy skills they believe should be primarily developed after kindergarten entrance?

Table 7 presents those emerging literacy skills for which a majority (50% or more) of kindergarten teachers agreed should be primarily developed after kindergarten entrance.

Table 7
Emerging Literacy Skills Teachers Believe Should Be Primarily Developed After
Kindergarten Entrance (N=42)

Emerging Literacy Skill	f	%
Write some words	39	92.9
Understand the difference between letters and words	39	92.9
Associate letter names with their sounds	38	90.5
Understand that words are separated by spaces	38	90.5
Identify title of book	37	88.1
Identify beginning sounds	37	88.1
Write last name	36	85.7
Develop a sight vocabulary	36	85.7
Use left-to-right orientation	35	83.3
Use invented/temporary spelling	35	83.3
Understand where to begin reading	35	83.3
Recognize rhyming words	35	83.3
Follow the print on a page moving eyes in the correct direction	34	81.0
Match spoken words with written ones	33	78.6
Understand that letters are formed in a specific way and are unchanging	33	78.6
Write a sentence	31	73.8
Retell story details	31	73.8
Recognize lower case letters	31	73.8
Retell a familiar story	29	69.0
Identify end sounds	29	69.0
Develop a concept of punctuation	28	66.7
Understand that print contains a message	27	64.3
Recognize upper case letters	27	64.3
Identify letters of the alphabet	25	59.5
Understand the difference between pictures and print	25	59.5
Formulate simple questions	25	59.5
Break words into syllables	23	54.8
Choose literacy experiences when given a choice	21	50.0

Of the 50 emerging literacy skills offered, kindergarten teachers specified that 28 of the skills should be developed after kindergarten entrance. Two-thirds of the teachers agreed on 15 of these skills, whereas at least 50 percent of teachers agreed that the remaining thirteen emerging literacy skills should be developed after kindergarten entrance. Of those skills, 17 are concept of print skills, 3 are oral language skills, 3 are alphabetic principle skills, 2 are phonological awareness skills, 2 are phonemic awareness skills, and 1 is a developmental communication skill.

Question Four

Is there any agreement among kindergarten teachers as to which emerging literacy skills they believe should be primarily developed during the first grade?

Table 8 presents those emerging literacy skills for which a majority (50% or more) of kindergarten teachers agreed should be primarily developed during early first grade.

Table 8
Emerging Literacy Skills Kindergarten Teachers Believe Should Be Primarily
Developed During Early First Grade (N= 42)

Emerging Literacy Skill	f	%
Identify middle sounds	23	54.8
Recognize common nouns and verbs typical of daily life	22	52.4

Of the 50 emerging literacy skills listed, over 50 percent of kindergarten teachers agreed that only 2 of them should be primarily be developed during early first grade. One of the skills was a phonemic awareness skill and the other was an oral language skill.

Question Five

Do perceptions of the acquisition of emerging literacy skills vary as a function of the demographics of kindergarten teachers?

Table 9 gives a Chi-Square summary of the acquisition of emerging literacy skills as a function of teaching background.

Table 9
Chi-Square Summary of Perceptions of the Acquisition of Emerging Literacy Skills as a Function of Teaching Background (N= 42)

Variable	df	X²	p
Years in education and Use invented/temporary spelling	6	12.597	.050
Years in education and Understand that words are separated by spaces	6	15.418	.017
Years in education and Write a sentence	6	14.865	.012
Years teaching preschool and Identify title of book	4	17.607	.001^b
Years teaching preschool and Understand where to begin reading	2	8.713	.013
Years teaching preschool and Follow print on page, moving eyes in the correct direction	4	14.596	.006
Years teaching preschool and Writes some letters of the alphabet	4	17.607	.001

Significant experience differences were found regarding how many *years in education* and *use invented/temporary spelling* [$X^2(6, N=42)= 12.597, p=.050$. *After kindergarten entrance* had a higher than expected count by teachers with 1-10 years in education and a lower than expected count by teachers with 21-30 years in education. *During early first grade* a higher than expected count by teachers with 21-30 years in education.

Significant experience differences were found regarding *years in education* and *understand that words are separated by spaces* [$X^2(6, N=42)= 15.418, p=.017$. *After kindergarten entrance* had a higher than expected count by

teachers with 1-10 years in education and 21-30 years in education, and a lower than expected count by teachers with 11-20 years in education. *During early first grade* had a higher than expected count by teachers with 11-20 years in education.

Significant experience differences were found in terms of *years in education* and *write a sentence* [X^2](6, N=42)= 14.865, $p=.012$. *After kindergarten entrance* had a higher than expected count by teachers with 1-10 years in education and a lower than expected count by teachers with 21-30 years in education. *During early first grade* had a higher than expected count by teachers with 21-30 years in education and a lower than expected count by teachers with 1-10 and 31-40 years in education.

As shown in Table 9, significant differences were found in terms of *years teaching preschool* and *identify title of a book* [X^2](4, N=42)= 17.607, $p=.001$. *After kindergarten entrance* had a lower than expected count by teachers with 11-25 years of preschool teaching. *During early first grade* had a lower than expected count by teachers with 1-10 years of preschool teaching experience.

Significant differences were found in terms of *years teaching preschool* and *understand where to begin reading* [X^2] (2, N=42)= 8.713, $p=.013$. Fewer than expected teachers with no preschool teaching experience said *prior to kindergarten*, while more than the expected amount of teachers with 1-10 years of preschool teaching and kindergarten teachers with 11-25 years of preschool teaching experience said *prior to kindergarten*. As could be expected then, more than the expected number of kindergarten teachers with no preschool

teaching experience said *after kindergarten entrance* and fewer than expected kindergarten teachers with 11-25 years of preschool teaching experience said the same.

As seen in Table 9, significant differences were found regarding *years teaching preschool* and *follow print on page, moving eyes in the correct direction* [X^2](4, N=42)= 14.596, $p=.006$. *Prior to kindergarten* a higher than expected count by teachers with 1-10 years of preschool teaching. *After kindergarten entrance* had a higher than expected count by teachers with no preschool teaching experience and a lower than expected count by teachers with 1-10 years of preschool teaching experience.

Significant differences were found regarding *years teaching preschool* and *writes some letters* [X^2] (4, N=42)= 17.607, $p=.001$. *Prior to kindergarten* had a lower than expected count by kindergarten teachers with no preschool teaching experience and a higher than expected count by teachers with 1-10 years and 11-25 years of preschool teaching experience. *After kindergarten entrance* had a higher than expected count by kindergarten teachers with no preschool teaching experience and a lower than expected count by kindergarten teachers with 1-10 and 11-25 years of preschool teaching experience.

Table 10 presents a Chi-square summary of the perceptions of the acquisition of emerging literacy skills as a function of kindergarten teachers' education background.

Table 10
Chi-Square Summary of Perceptions of the Acquisition of Emerging Literacy Skills as a Function of Education Background (N= 42)

Variable	df	X²	p
Major area of BA and Listen attentively to stories	2	13.140	.001
Highest degree earned and Follow simple directions	2	9.790	.007
Highest degree earned and Use invented/temporary spelling	4	20.706	.000
Highest degree earned and Understand that words are separated by spaces	4	20.588	.000
Highest degree earned and Develop a concept of punctuation	4	10.161	.038
Highest degree earned and Write a sentence	4	21.053	.000
Highest degree earned and Identify middle sounds	2	6.164	.046
Early childhood endorsement and Retell story details	2	8.251	.016
Early childhood endorsement and Listen attentively to stories	1	9.882	.002
Early childhood endorsement and Articulate intents, emotions, and desires	2	8.507	.014

Three areas of teachers' education background were significant: *major area of BA, highest degree earned, and early childhood endorsement*. Significant differences were found in regard to *major area of BA and listen attentively to stories*, $[X^2](2, N=42)= 13.140, p=.001$. *Prior to kindergarten* had a higher than expected count by kindergarten teachers whose major area of study was

elementary education and “other” area, while a lower than expected count by those kindergarten teachers with an early childhood major was found. *After kindergarten entrance* had a higher than expected count by early childhood majors and a lower than expected count by elementary education and “other” majors.

Significant differences were found regarding *highest degree earned* and *follow simple directions* [X^2](2, N=42)=9.790, $p=.007$. *Prior to kindergarten* had a higher than expected count by kindergarten teachers who had earned a Master’s degree and a lower than expected count by kindergarten teachers whose highest degree was a Bachelor’s degree. *After kindergarten entrance* had a higher than expected count by kindergarten teachers with a Bachelor’s degree and a lower than expected count by kindergarten teachers with a Master’s degree.

One significant difference was found with *highest degree* and *write a sentence* [X^2](4, N=42)= 21.053, $p= .000$. *During early first grade* had a greater than expected count by kindergarten teachers with a Master’s degree.

Significant differences were discovered concerning *highest degree earned* and *identify middle sounds* [X^2](2, N=42)= 6.164, $p=.046$. *After kindergarten entrance* had a greater than expected count by kindergarten teachers with a Master’s degree and a lower than expected count by kindergarten teachers with a Bachelor’s degree. *During early first grade* had a higher than expected count by teachers with a Bachelor’s degree and a lower than expected count by teachers with a Master’s degree.

Significant differences were found as regards *highest degree earned* and *use invented/temporary spelling* [X^2](4, N=42)=20.706, $p=.000$, *understand that words are separated by spaces* [X^2](4, N=42)=20.588, $p=.000$, and *develop a concept of punctuation* [X^2](4, N=42)= 10.161, $p=.038$. However, no clear pattern of distribution emerged.

As shown in Table 10, significant differences were found concerning *early childhood endorsement* and *retell story details* [X^2](2, N=42)= 8.251, $p=.016$, *articulate intents, emotions, and desires* [X^2](2, N=42)=8.507, $p=.014$, and *listen attentively to stories* [X^2](2, N=42)=9.882, $p=.002$. In all of these cases: *prior to kindergarten* had higher expected counts by kindergarten teachers who did not have an early childhood endorsement and lower than expected counts by kindergarten teachers who did have an early childhood endorsement; *after kindergarten entrance* had higher than expected counts by kindergarten teachers who did have an early childhood endorsement and lower than expected counts by those who did not.

Table 11 shows a Chi-square summary of perceptions of the acquisition of emerging literacy skills as a function of kindergarten teachers' participation in professional activities.

Table 11

Chi-Square Summary of Perceptions of the Acquisition of Emerging Literacy Skills as a Function of Teacher Participation in Professional Activities (N= 42)

Variable	df	X²	p
Member of NAEYC and Follow print on page, moving eyes in the correct direction	2	7.172	.028
Subscribe to professional journals and Identify middle sounds	1	4.497	.034
Attend professional conferences and Exhibit reading-like behavior	1	6.353	.012
Conferences attended and Recognize lower case letters	5	11.174	.048
Conferences attended and Understand the difference between pictures and print	5	16.490	.006
Hours of professional development and Recognize upper case letters	3	8.076	.044

Four areas of teacher participation in professional activities were significant: *member of NAEYC, subscribe to professional journals, attend professional conferences, and hours of professional development.* A significant difference was found regarding membership in the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and *follow print on page, moving eyes in the correct direction* [$X^2(2, N=42)=7.172$, $p=.028$]. Those teachers who were not NAEYC members had a higher than expected count in *prior to kindergarten*, while those kindergarten teachers who were members of NAEYC had a lower than expected count.

Significant differences were found concerning *subscribe to professional journals* and *identify middle sounds* [X^2](1, N=42)=4.497, $p=.034$. Teachers who did not subscribe to professional journals had a higher than expected count in *after kindergarten entrance* and a lower than expected count in *during early first grade*, while teachers who did subscribe to professional journals had a lower than expected count in *after kindergarten entrance* and a higher than expected count in *during early first grade*.

Significant differences were found regarding *attend professional conferences* and *exhibit reading like behavior* [X^2](1, N=42)=6.353, $p=.012$. Kindergarten teachers who do not attend professional conferences had a lower than expected count and those who did attend conferences had a higher than expected count in *prior to kindergarten*, whereas the opposite was true in *after kindergarten entrance*.

Significant differences were found related to *conferences attended* and *recognize lower case letters* [X^2](5, N=42)=11.174, $p=.048$. Counts in *prior to kindergarten* were higher than expected in teachers who do not attend conferences and lower than expected in teachers who attend NAEYC and "other" conferences. Counts in *after kindergarten entrance* were higher than expected in teachers who attend NAEYC and "other" conferences and lower in teachers who do not attend professional conferences.

Significant differences were also found related to *conferences attended* and *understand the difference between pictures and print* [X^2](5, N=42)=16.490, $p=.006$. Counts in *prior to kindergarten* were higher than expected by those who

attend NAEYC and MRA conferences and lower than expected by those who do attend MIAEYC and “other” conferences, and by those who do not attend professional conferences. Counts in *after kindergarten entrance* were lower than expected by those who attend MRA and NAEYC conferences and higher than expected by those who attend MIAEYC, “other” conferences, and by those who do not attend conferences.

In the chi square test, significant differences were found concerning *hours of development and recognize upper case letters* [X^2](3, N=42)=8.076, $p=.044$. *Prior to kindergarten* counts were higher than expected for teachers with 40-60 hours of professional development last year and lower than expected for teachers with 61-200 hours of professional development last year. Counts in *after kindergarten entrance* were the reverse.

Table 12 shows a Chi-square summary of perceptions of the acquisition of emerging literacy skills as a function of teachers’ classroom characteristics.

Table 12
Chi-Square Summary of Perceptions of the Acquisition of Emerging Literacy
Skills as a Function of Classroom Characteristics (N= 42)

Variable	df	X²	p
Type of program this year and Distinguish between real and make-believe	2	6.398	.041
Type of program this year and Write first name	2	7.547	.023
Type of program this year and Write last name	4	20.562	.000
Number of students in classroom and Write first name	1	4.041	.045
Number of students in classroom and Draw a recognizable picture	1	4.627	.031
Number of students in classroom and Responds to oral language with relevant comments and questions	2	6.355	.042
Number of students in classroom and Retell story details	2	7.657	.022
Number of students in classroom and Understand that letters are formed in a specific way and are unchanging	2	7.740	.021
Number of children 5 years old and Writes some letters of the alphabet	1	8.210	.004
Number of children 5 years old and Exhibit reading-like behavior	1	4.268	.039
Number of children 5 years old and Break words into syllables	1	6.861	.009

Table 12 (cont'd).

Variable	df	X²	p
Number of children 5 years old and Recognize own name in writing	1	9.501	.002
Number of children 6 years old and Exhibit reading-like behavior	1	10.000	.002
Number of children 7 years old and Retell story details	2	6.536	.038
Percent of students who are African-American and Distinguish between real and make-believe	3	13.223	.004
Percent of students who are Asian and Understand that letters are formed in a specific way and are unchanging	6	14.344	.006
Percent of students who are Asian and Follow print on page, moving eyes in the correct direction	4	15.477	.004 ^b
Percent of students who are Asian and Identify end sounds	4	14.962	.005
Percent of students who are Asian and Identify beginning sounds	4	10.140	.038
Percent of students who are Hispanic and Recognize rhyming words	6	13.980	.030
Percent of students who are Hispanic and Retell story details	6	20.941	.002
Percent of students who are Hispanic and Identify end sounds	6	14.966	.021
Percent of students who are White and Recognize logographic print	3	7.842	.049

Table 12 (cont'd).

Variable	df	X²	p
Percent of students receiving free and reduced lunch and Write some letters of the alphabet	3	9.406	.024
Percent of students with childcare experience and Write last name	6	13.607	.034
Percent of students with developmental kindergarten experience and Write some words	4	11.939	.018
Percent of students with developmental kindergarten experience and Engage in conversation with adults with multiple exchanges	2	8.947	.011
Percent of students with developmental kindergarten experience and Recognize common nouns and verbs typical of everyday life	4	11.505	.021
Percent of students with developmental kindergarten experience and Write some words	4	11.939	.018
Percent of students with Head Start or MSRP experience and Formulate simple questions	8	16.864	.032
Percent of students with private preschool experience and Recognize logographic print	3	11.820	.008
Percent of students with private preschool experience and Identify middle sounds	3	7.946	.047

Table 12 (cont'd).

Variable	df	X ²	p
Percent of students with private preschool experience and Understand the difference between letters and words	6	16.389	.012
Percent of students with no preschool experience and Identify common objects (e.g. vehicles)	4	12.977	.011

Thirty-seven significant variables are noted as a function of 16 different classroom characteristics. As seen in Table 12, significant differences were discovered regarding the type of program the teacher taught and *distinguish between real and make-believe* [$X^2(2, N=42)=6.398, p=.041$], *write first name* [$X^2(2, N=42)=7.547, p=.023$], and *write last name* [$X^2(4, N=42)=20.562, p=.000$]. *Distinguish between real and make-believe* had a higher than expected count in *prior to kindergarten entrance* by teachers who taught a ½ day program as compared to teacher who taught in an all day, every day program who had a lower than expected count. Conversely, the counts for *after kindergarten entrance* were lower than expected for teachers in a ½ day program and higher than expected for teachers in an all day, every day program. Counts for *prior to kindergarten entrance* and *write first name* were higher than expected for teachers in a ½ day program and lower than expected by teachers in all day, every other day programs. The counts for *after kindergarten entrance* were lower than expected in the ½ day program and higher than expected in the all

day, every other day program. While significance is noted for program type and *write last name*, no clear tendency in the distribution of the variable was noted.

Significant differences were found concerning *number of students in the classroom* and *write first name* [χ^2](1, N=42)=4.014, $p=.045$. *Prior to kindergarten* had a higher than expected count in classrooms with 21-27 students whereas a lower than expected count was found in classrooms with 15-20 students. The reverse was found for *after kindergarten entrance*.

The number of students in the classroom was found to be significant regarding *respond to oral language with relevant comments and questions* [χ^2](2, N=42)=6.355, $p=.042$. The *prior to kindergarten* count in classrooms with 15-20 students was higher than expected while the count in the 21-27 student classroom was lower than expected. Again, the opposite counts were found with the *after kindergarten entrance* variable.

As shown in Table 12, the number of students in the classroom is significant in terms of *retell story details* [χ^2](2, N=42)=7.657, $p=.022$. Classrooms with 15-20 students were significantly overrepresented while classrooms with 21-27 students were significantly underrepresented *prior to kindergarten entry*. *After kindergarten entrance* counts were lower than expected in classrooms with 15-20 students and overrepresented in classrooms with 21-27 students. The counts in *during early first grade* were underrepresented for both sizes of classrooms.

Significance was also found for *number of students in classroom* and *understand that letters are formed in a specific and unchanging way* [χ^2](2, N=42)=7.740, $p=.021$. Counts in *after kindergarten entrance* were higher than

expected in classrooms with 15-20 students and lower than expected in classrooms with 21-27 students. Counts in *during early first grade* were significantly lower than expected in classrooms with 15-20 students and significantly higher in classrooms with 21-27 students.

Significant differences were uncovered for *number of children 5-years-old* and *write some letters of the alphabet* [X^2](1, N=42)=8.210, $p=.004$, *exhibit reading-like behavior* [X^2](1, N=42)=4.286, $p=.039$, and *recognize own name in writing*, [X^2](1, N=42)=9.501, $p=.002$. Prior to kindergarten counts for each variable were significantly lower than expected in classrooms with 0-9 students at age 5 and significantly higher in classrooms with 10-21 students age 5. After kindergarten entrance counts were the reverse for each. Significant findings for *number of children 5-years-olds* and; *break words into syllables* [X^2](1, N=42)=6.861, $p=.009$ note that counts for *after kindergarten entrance* are significantly lower than expected in classrooms with 0-9 students age 5 and significantly higher for classrooms with 10-21 students age 5. Counts for *during early first grade* were the opposite. Significant differences were found as regards the *number of 6-year-olds* in the classroom and *exhibit reading-like behavior* [X^2](1, N=40)=10.001, $p=.002$. Significantly higher counts than expected in *prior to kindergarten* were found in classrooms with 0-9 children 6-years-old and significantly lower than expected in classrooms with 10-23 students 6-years-old. The counts in *after kindergarten entrance* were found to be the reverse. One significant finding was noted for classrooms with children 7-years-old, *retell story details* [X^2](2, N=41)=6.536, $p=.038$. The count in *after kindergarten entrance*

was overrepresented in classrooms where there were no children 7-years-old and underrepresented in classrooms with 1-5 children who were 7-years-old. The reverse held true for *during early first grade*.

As shown in Table 12, significant differences are found in the *percentage of students who are African-American and distinguish between real and make-believe* [X^2](3, N=42)=13.223, $p=.004$. Discrepancies in expected count and actual count in *prior to kindergarten* include a higher than expected count in classrooms where 0-10 percent of students are African-American and lower than expected counts in classrooms that were 11-25 percent and 26-50 percent African-American. Conversely, in *after kindergarten entrance* there is a significantly lower expected count in classrooms that were 0-10 percent African-American and significantly higher counts in classrooms that were 11-25 and 26-50 percent African-American.

Chi-square testing uncovered significant differences in *percent of students who are Asian and identify end sounds* [X^2](4, N=42)=14.962, $p=.005$. The *after kindergarten entrance* count for classrooms with 0-10 percent of students who are Asian was higher than expected while there was also a higher than expected count *during first grade* in classrooms with 11-25 percent of students who are Asian. Significant findings were also seen regarding *percent of students who are Asian and follow print on page, moving eyes in the correct direction* [X^2](4, N=42)=15.477, $p=.004$. Counts were found to be higher than expected in *after kindergarten entrance* in classrooms with 0-10 percent of students who are Asian. *Prior to kindergarten entrance* had lower than expected counts in

classrooms with 0-10 and higher than expected counts in classrooms with 11-25 percent of students who are Asian. Two other significant findings regarding *percent of students who are Asian, identify beginning sounds* [X^2](4, N=42)=10.140, $p=.038$ and *understand that letters are formed in a specific and unchanging way* [X^2](4, N=42)=14.344, $p=.006$, gave no obvious tendency of distribution.

Significant differences were found in classrooms with Hispanic students and *identify end sounds* [X^2](4, N=42)=14.966, $p=.021$. The count in *prior to kindergarten* in classrooms with 0-10 percent Hispanic students was lower than expected. *After kindergarten entrance* had a lower than expected in count in classrooms with 11-25 percent of students who are Hispanic. *During early first grade* found a higher than expected count in classrooms with 0-10 percent of students who are Hispanic. Two other variables, *retell story details* [X^2](6, N=42)=20.941, $p=.002$ and *recognize rhyming words* [X^2](6, N=42)=13.980, $p=.030$, while significant showed no evident tendency in the distribution.

The study analyses showed a significance in the percent of students who are White and *recognize logographic print* [X^2](3, N=42)=7.842, $p=.049$. *Prior to kindergarten* had higher than expected counts in classrooms with 0-10, 11-25, and 26-50 percent of students who are White. A lower than expected count was found in classrooms with more than 50 percent of students who are White. *After kindergarten entrance* had lower than expected counts in 0-10, 11-25, and 26-50 percent of students who are White, and a higher than expected count in classrooms with more than 50 percent of students who are White.

Significant differences were found in the percent of students receiving free/reduced lunch and *write some letters of the alphabet* [X^2](3, N=42)=9.406, $p=.024$. *Prior to kindergarten* had higher than expected counts in classrooms with 26-50 and more than 50 percent of students receiving free/reduced lunch, and lower than expected counts in classrooms with 0-10 and 11-25 percent of students receiving free/reduced lunch. *After kindergarten entrance* had inverse findings.

Significant differences were uncovered in relation to students and program experiences before kindergarten entry. The skill, *write last name* [X^2](6, N=41)=13.607, $p=.034$) showed higher than expected counts by teachers who had 51-75 percent of students with childcare experience. There appeared to be significant differences in perspective for teachers with children who had developmental kindergarten experience and *engage in conversation with adults with multiple exchanges* [X^2](2, N=42)=8.947, $p=.011$). Teachers with no children coming from developmental kindergarten had a higher than expected count in *prior to kindergarten*. Teachers with 1-25 percent of students with developmental kindergarten experience had a higher than expected count in *after kindergarten entrance*. Significant differences were noted for teachers with students with developmental kindergarten experience and *recognize common nouns and verbs typical of daily life* [X^2](4, N=42)=11.505, $p=.021$). Teachers with 1-25 percent of students with developmental kindergarten experience showed a higher than expected count in *prior to kindergarten* and a lower than expected count in *after kindergarten entrance* and *during early first grade*. Teachers with students who

had no students with developmental kindergarten experience had lower than expected counts in *prior to kindergarten* and *after kindergarten entrance* and a higher than expected count in *during early first grade*. Teacher with 26-50 percent of students with developmental kindergarten experience had a higher than expected count in *during early first grade*. Teacher perceptions were found to be significant in regard to the concept of print skill, *write some words* [χ^2](4, N=42)=11.939, $p=.018$), however no clear tendency of distribution is noted.

A significant teacher perspective differences was found regarding the percent of students with Head Start or Michigan School Readiness Program (MSRP) experience and *formulate simple questions* [χ^2](8, N=42)=16.864, $p=.032$).

Teacher with no students experiencing Head Start or MSRP programs had a higher than expected count in *prior to kindergarten* and a lower than expected count in *after kindergarten entrance*. Teachers with 1-25 percent of students with Head Start or MSRP program experience had a higher expected count in *after kindergarten entrance* and a lower than expected count in *prior to kindergarten*.

A significant difference was found concerning teachers who had students with private preschool experience and *recognize logographic print* [χ^2](3, N=42)=11.820, $p=.008$). Teachers with no children having private preschool experience had a higher than expected count in *prior to kindergarten* and a lower than expected count in *after kindergarten entrance*. Teachers with 26-50 percent of students with private preschool experience showed a higher than expected count in *after kindergarten entrance* and a lower than expected count in *prior to kindergarten*. Those teachers with 51-75 percent of students

with private preschool experience had a higher than expected count in *after kindergarten entrance* and a lower than expected count in *prior to kindergarten*. A similar pattern is found for teacher perceptions with students who had private preschool experience and *identify middle sounds* [χ^2](3, N=42)=7.946, $p=.047$). Kindergarten teachers who had no children with private preschool experience had a higher than expected count in *after kindergarten entrance* and a lower than expected count in *during early first grade*. Teachers with from 1-75 percent of students who had private preschool experience had higher than expected counts in *during early first grade* and lower than expected counts in *after kindergarten entrance*. Another point of significance for kindergarten teacher perceptions when looking at the percent of students with private preschool experience is *understand the difference between letters and words* [χ^2](6, N=42)=16.389, $p=.012$. Teachers who had no children with private preschool experience had a higher than expected count in *after kindergarten entrance* and a lower than expected count in *prior to kindergarten*. Teachers with 51-75 percent of children with private preschool experience had a higher than expected count in *prior to kindergarten* and a lower than expected count in *after kindergarten entrance*. A significant difference in teacher perceptions regarding the percent of students with no preschool experience and *identify common objects* [χ^2](4, N=42)=12.977, $p=.011$) was found. Teachers with students who had either no preschool experience or teachers with 1-25 percent of students with no preschool experience had higher than expected counts in *prior to kindergarten* and lower than expected counts in *after kindergarten entrance*. Teachers with 26-50 and

51-75 percent of students with no preschool experience had higher than expected counts in *after kindergarten entrance* and lower than expected counts in *prior to kindergarten*.

Question Six

What sources influence kindergarten teachers' expectations of children's literacy readiness for kindergarten?

Table 13 shows the sources of influence, the frequency and percent of agreement for each degree of influence, as well as, in descending order, the mean score for each source as to the degree of influence it has on teacher expectations (where, 1= not at all influential, 3= somewhat influential, and 5= very influential).

Table 13
Influential Sources on Kindergarten Teacher Expectations of Children's Literacy
Readiness (N= 42)

Source	f	%	m	SD
Past teaching experience			4.40	.86
2	1	2.4		
3	7	16.7		
4	8	19.0		
5	26	61.9		
Professional conferences			4.29	.86
1	1	2.4		
2	1	2.4		
3	2	4.8		
4	19	45.2		
5	19	45.2		
School district curriculum			4.17	.91
2	1	2.4		
3	11	26.2		
4	10	23.8		
5	20	47.6		
State curriculum framework			4.02	.78
3	12	28.6		
4	17	40.5		
5	13	31.0		
Other kindergarten teachers			4.00	.99
1	1	2.4		
2	1	2.4		
3	11	26.2		
4	13	31.0		
5	16	38.1		
In-service training			4.00	.86
2	2	4.8		
3	9	21.4		
4	18	42.9		
5	13	31.0		
Expectations of first grade teachers			3.60	.96
1	1	2.4		
2	4	9.5		
3	13	31.0		
4	17	40.5		
5	7	16.7		

Table 13 (cont'd).

Source	f	%	m	SD
Assessment used by the district			3.33	1.26
1	5	11.9		
2	5	11.9		
3	11	26.2		
4	13	31.0		
5	8	19.0		
Professional journals			3.31	1.22
1	7	16.7		
3	13	31.0		
4	17	40.5		
5	5	11.9		
Federal legislation			3.05	1.41
1	8	19.0		
2	7	16.7		
3	11	26.2		
4	7	16.7		
5	9	21.4		
How I was taught as a child			2.21	1.30
1	17	40.5		
2	10	23.8		
3	7	16.7		
4	5	11.9		
5	3	7.1		
Local school board			2.21	1.22
1	17	40.5		
2	7	16.7		
3	12	28.6		
4	4	9.5		
5	2	4.8		
Media sources			1.76	2.00
1	20	47.6		
2	14	33.3		
3	7	16.7		
5	1	2.4		

Of the 13 possible sources of influence, kindergarten teachers indicated 10 of them are *somewhat influential* to *very influential*. The most influential source indicated was *past teaching experience* with about 62 percent of teachers

agreeing that it was *very influential* (5, $m = 4.40$) on their expectations of children's literacy readiness. *Media sources* was the least influential with about 48 percent of teachers agreeing that they are *not influential at all* (1, $m = 1.76$).

While the data did not reflect any other points of majority agreement, teachers indicated that they were also quite influenced by *professional conferences* ($m = 4.29$), *school district curriculum* (4.17), *the state curriculum framework* (4.02), *other kindergarten teachers* (4.00), and *in-service training* (4.00).

Interestingly, teachers were strongly divided in their reports of the influence of federal legislation as about 36% of teachers said that *federal legislation is not at all influential* on their expectations. In contrast, 38% of teachers indicated that *federal legislation was very influential* on their expectations ($m = 3.05$). About 41 percent of teachers said that the *local school board was not at all influential*, whereas about 30 percent noted that it is *somewhat influential*.

Table 14 gives a Chi-square summary of the most influential sources of kindergarten teachers' expectations of children's literacy readiness for kindergarten. Emerging literacy skills were grouped by type: oral language, concept of print, phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, and developmental communication. Scores of respondents were then added and assigned an overall score for analysis. Only significant results at the 5% and 1% level are presented.

Table 14
Chi-Square Summary of The Most Influential Sources of Kindergarten Teachers' Expectations of Children's Literacy Readiness for Kindergarten (N= 42)

Variable	df	X²	p
Past teaching experiences			
Concept of print skills	51	71.360	.031
Past teaching experience			
Phonological awareness skills	9	43.675	.000

Past teaching experience was found to be the only influential source of teacher expectations that was significant. While significance was found regarding concept of print differences [X^2](51, N=42)=71.360, $p=.031$ and phonological awareness [X^2](9, N=42)=43.675, $p=.000$ and *past teaching experience*, no obvious distribution tendency was found.

Question Seven

Are kindergarten teachers' beliefs congruent with others' beliefs regarding children's literacy capabilities?

Table 15 notes the degree to which teachers think that their beliefs about children's literacy capabilities are congruent with preschool teachers' expectations, other kindergarten teachers' expectations, first grade teachers' expectations, parents' expectations, standards set by their school district, the state curriculum framework, and the standards set by Federal legislation (where, 1= not at all congruent, 3= somewhat congruent, and 5= highly congruent; non-marked values were left off). This table also indicates the mean score for each variable.

Table 15
Congruency of Kindergarten Teacher Beliefs of Children's Literacy Readiness
with Others (N=41)

Source	f	%	m	SD
Other kindergarten teachers			4.12	.95
1	1	2.4		
2	1	2.4		
3	7	17.1		
4	15	36.6		
5	17	41.5		
First grade teachers			3.90	.77
2	1	2.4		
3	11	26.8		
4	20	48.8		
5	9	21.4		
Standards set by my school district			3.85	.88
2	2	4.9		
3	13	31.7		
4	15	36.6		
5	11	26.8		
State curriculum framework			3.80	.98
2	4	9.8		
3	12	29.3		
4	13	31.7		
5	12	29.3		
Parents' expectation			3.51	.87
1	1	2.4		
2	3	7.3		
3	15	36.6		
4	18	43.9		
5	5	9.8		
Standards set by Federal legislation*			3.41	1.00
1	1	9.5		
2	6	14.3		
3	15	36.6		
4	13	31.7		
5	6	14.6		
Preschool teacher expectations			3.39	.95
1	1	2.4		
2	6	14.6		
3	14	34.1		
4	16	39.0		
5	4	9.8		

***Standards may be based on previous set of expectations or *No Child Left Behind* Standards of 2000.**

Kindergarten teachers indicated that they think that their beliefs about children's literacy capabilities are most congruent with *other kindergarten teachers* and least congruent with *preschool teachers*.

Notably, there was no majority of agreement regarding the degree of congruency for any of the choices among kindergarten teachers. However, about 77 percent of teachers did indicate that they thought their beliefs were *congruent (4) to highly congruent (5) with first grade teachers*. More than half of all kindergarten teachers said that their beliefs are *congruent (4) to highly congruent (5) with standards set by my school district (63.4%), state curriculum framework (61%), and parent expectations (53.7%)*.

Table 16 shows a Chi-square summary of kindergarten teachers' expectations and their perceptions of the expectations of others. Emerging literacy skills were grouped by type: oral language, concept of print, phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, and developmental communication. Scores of respondents were then added and assigned an overall score for analysis. Only significant results at the 5% and 1% level are presented.

Table 16
Chi-Square Summary of Kindergarten Teachers' Expectations and Their
Perceived Expectations of Others (N= 42)

Variable	df	X²	p
Standards set by my school district			
Oral language skills	42	62.830	.020

Significant differences were only found in regard to oral language differences and *standards set by my school district* [X^2](42, N=41)=62.830. There was no distribution tendency noted.

Question Eight

Which literacy skills do kindergarten teachers believe are the five most essential skills children should acquire by kindergarten entry?

Table 17 indicates those skills kindergarten teachers believed to be top five emerging literacy skills children should have upon kindergarten entry. The skills are listed in descending order. There were 197 hits out of a possible 250.

Table 17
Most Important Emerging Literacy Skills Children Should Have Upon
Kindergarten Entry (N= 42) (Total count= 197)

Literacy Skill	f	% of responses
Follow simple directions	20	10.2
Listen attentively to stories	18	9.1
Repeat songs, fingerplays, and movement activities	18	9.1
Exhibit reading-like behavior	12	6.1
Identify letters of the alphabet	12	6.1
Engage in conversations with peers/adults	11	5.6
Draw a recognizable picture	10	5.1
Write first name	9	4.6
Pretend to read a book by telling a story from the pictures	9	4.6
Speak clearly enough to be understood by others	8	4.1
Recognize own name in writing	8	4.1
Recognize lower case letters	8	4.1
Articulate intents, emotions, and desires	6	3.0
Identify common objects	6	3.0
Understand that print contains a message	5	2.5
Use descriptive language	5	2.5
Recognize logographic print	4	2.0
Use appropriate expressive vocabulary	4	2.0
Retell story details	4	2.0

Table 17 (cont'd).

Literacy Skill	f	% of responses
Recognize upper case letters	3	1.5
Write some letters of the alphabet	3	1.5
Pretend to read a book	2	1.0
Distinguish between real and make-believe	2	1.0
Read others' facial/body expressions	2	1.0
Recognize rhyming words	2	1.0
Respond to oral language with relevant comments and questions	2	1.0
Follow print on the page, moving eyes in the correct direction	2	1.0
Understand the difference between pictures and print	1	0.5
Use invented/temporary spelling	1	0.5

The majority of teachers did not agree on the top five emerging literacy skills children should have upon kindergarten entry. The highest percentage of teachers indicated that *follow simple directions* (10.2%) was the most important emerging literacy skill children should have upon kindergarten entry. This was followed by *listen attentively to stories* (9.1%). The emerging literacy skills indicated by the teachers were mostly oral language and concept of print skills.

Question Nine

Are kindergarten teacher expectations of emerging literacy skills to be developed during the kindergarten year congruent with the State of Michigan Framework of Skills in the kindergarten year?

The percentage of teacher agreement with the Michigan Curriculum Framework: Kindergarten Expectations (These standards are based on the Kindergarten English Language Arts Grade Level Content Expectations found in the Michigan Curricular Framework, Michigan Department of Education, 2004) is presented in Table 18 in descending order.

Table 18
Teacher Agreement With the Michigan Curriculum Framework:
Kindergarten Expectations (N= 42)

Framework Expectation	% of teacher agreement
Write some words	92.9
Understand the difference between letters and words	92.9
Associate letter names with their sounds	90.5
Understand that words are separated by spaces	90.5
Identify beginning sounds	88.1
Write last name	85.7
Develop a sight vocabulary	85.7
Use invented/temporary spelling	83.3
Understand where to begin reading	83.3
Follow the print on a page moving eyes in the right direction	81.0
Match spoken words with written ones	78.6
Understand that letters are formed in a specific way and are unchanging	78.6
Write a sentence	73.8
Retell story details	73.8
Recognize lower case letters	73.8
Retell a familiar story	69.0
Identify end sounds	69.0
Develop a concept of punctuation	66.7
Understand that print contains a message	64.3
Recognize upper case letters	64.3
Choose literary experiences when given a choice	50.0
Respond to oral language with relevant comments and questions	45.2
Use descriptive language	40.5
Articulate intents, emotions, and desires	35.7
Use appropriate expressive language	28.6
Engage in conversation with peers with multiple exchanges	28.6
Listen attentively to stories	19.0
Speak clearly enough to be understood by others	14.3
Engage in conversation with adults with multiple exchanges	7.1
Follow simple directions	7.1

Teachers agree that the majority of emerging literacy skills in the Michigan Curriculum Framework: Kindergarten Expectations should be developed in kindergarten. However, there are nine skills that less than 50 percent of teachers agreed should be developed in kindergarten. As was seen earlier, teachers indicated that they believe these skills should be developed prior to kindergarten entry.

Additional Findings

A majority of kindergarten teachers (78.6%) in this sample believed that boys and girls have equal emerging literacy skills. Of those who did not think this was true, about 24 percent thought that girls' emerging literacy skill development surpassed boys' and about 2 percent of teachers believed boys' literacy skill development surpassed girls'.

Another finding of this study is that the majority of kindergarten teachers (90.5%) have had no contact with childcare programs, developmental kindergarten programs (73.8%), or private preschool programs (83.3%). Many have, however, been in contact with Head Start or MSRP programs (52.4%). In a related finding, the majority of kindergarten teachers reported that they never asked for student portfolios and, as expected, reported that they did not receive them from the majority of programs. According to these kindergarten teachers, 45 percent of Head Start or MSRP programs sent portfolios, about 17 percent of developmental kindergarten programs sent portfolios, about 10 percent of private preschools sent portfolios, and no childcare program sent a portfolio to teachers whether they asked or not.

Summary

In this section, the results were presented according to each question. The research questions in this study examined the beliefs of kindergarten teachers in regard to when they thought certain emerging literacy skills should be developed in young children. As a result of the analysis, it appears that kindergarten teachers agree on the timing of development as regards many of the emerging literacy skills, however teachers may not have a complete understanding of the continuum of literacy development. The next chapter discusses the results of the study, as well as implications for classroom practice, implications for in-service and preservice teaching, and implications for research.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

This study investigated kindergarten teachers' perceptions about when young children should best acquire emerging literacy skills. Teachers were asked to base their answers on when 75–80 percent of children are likely to develop each emerging literacy skill. Four underlying principles guided this study: a) emerging literacy skills are developed on a continuum over time (Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000); b) explicit abilities necessary for reading and writing develop from direct encounters with both oral and written language (Sulzby & Teale, 1991); c) certain emerging literacy skills must be taught explicitly (Soderman, Gregory, & McCarty, 2005); and d) children's literacy development is influenced by the literacy characteristics and expectations of those persons present and involved in the child's immediate environment such as parents, childcare provider, preschool teacher, or kindergarten teacher who in turn are influenced by community, societal, and cultural factors (Bronfenbrenner, 1998).

Discussion in this chapter centers on the three major sets of findings in this study: foundational skill recognition by kindergarten teachers; patterns of expectation of emerging literacy beliefs; and some additional factors investigated for teacher perspectives. Also considered in this chapter are the findings in relation to ecological perspectives. The chapter is concluded with implications for classroom practice, implications for in-service and preservice teaching, implications for future research, and the summary.

Foundational Skill Recognition

The process of becoming literate begins well before children enter formal schooling. Children do not become “real” readers until they have gained functional knowledge of the individual parts and pieces of literacy. These early skills, or foundational skills, include: language skills such as the ability to follow simple directions, repeat songs and fingerplays, follow movement activities, use appropriate expressive language; concept of print skills such as the ability to draw a recognizable picture, pretend to read a book, understand the difference between pictures and print, and understand that print carries a message; alphabetic skills such as the ability to identify letters of the alphabet and understand that letters are formed in a specific way and are unchanging; and phonological awareness skills, such as an ability to recognize rhyming words. The acquisition of these foundational skills falls in the emerging phase of the developmental continuum (Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000; Soderman, Gregory, & McCarty, 2005) (see Figure 4).

By indicating that 75-80 percent of children are likely to enter kindergarten with certain foundational oral language skills, the kindergarten teachers in this study showed an understanding that language is a crucial element in the development of emerging literacy (Hart & Risley, 1995). For example, over 90 percent of teachers indicated that children should be able to *follow simple directions*, about 83 percent said children should be able to *repeat songs, fingerplays, and movement activities*, and about 57 percent noted children should be able to *use appropriate expressive language* prior to kindergarten entry.

Teachers also indicated an understanding of the importance of drawing in the emerging literacy process as about 63 percent of teachers thought children should be able to *draw a recognizable picture* prior to kindergarten entry. However, kindergarten teachers in this sample appeared to have an incomplete understanding of which emerging literacy skills are foundational and the approximate timing of their development as explained below.

Phonological Awareness

About 83 percent of kindergarten teachers indicated they thought *recognize rhyming words* is a skill that should be developed after kindergarten entrance. Rhyming is a phonological skill that should be developed prior to kindergarten entry by way of nursery rhymes, rhyming games, poetry, and so on. Teachers may not understand that rhyming is a root of phonological awareness and must be developed as a basis for the development of more abstract phonological knowledge and emerging reading skills (Anthony, Lonigan, & Driscoll, 2003; MacLean, Bryant, & Bradley, 1987). The Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998) specifically recommends that home and preschool activities include songs, poems, and games that focus on rhyming.

Concept of Print

In another finding, about 60 percent of teachers noted that *understanding the difference between pictures and print* is a skill to be developed after kindergarten entrance, and 64 percent of teachers believed that learning that *print contains a message* is a skill to be developed after kindergarten entrance. In contrast,

Christie et al. (1997) found that *recognizing the difference between pictures and print*, as well as the awareness that *print has meaning* are two of the initial discoveries that many children as young as three make about written language. Shared book reading from a very early age encourages verbal interaction that not only builds vocabulary, but also develops these types of concept of print skills.

Alphabet

Children's alphabet knowledge upon school entry is one of the single strongest predictors of both short- and long-term literacy achievement (Adams, 1990; Stevenson & Newman, 1986). However, before children learn to *identify letters of the alphabet*, they must *understand that letters are formed in a specific way and are unchanging*. Yet, almost 79 percent of kindergarten teachers in this study indicated that this was a skill they believed should be developed after kindergarten entry. It is possible that teachers misunderstood the item, as more teachers reported that they should teach children that letters don't change form than teach children to identify letters of the alphabet.

Teachers in this study were asked to list the five most essential skills children should have developed prior to kindergarten entry. While it should be acknowledged that this was a difficult task, as there were numerous emerging skills to choose from, and so many of these skills are very important, it must also be noted that several of the foundational skills were missing from the compiled list. Absent from the top ten most commonly listed skills were foundational skills such as *recognize rhyming words*, *understand that letters are formed in a specific and unchanging way*, and *understand the difference between print and pictures*.

It should also be noted that the frequency of response for certain other foundational skills was very low. For example, only one percent of teachers said that *pretend to read a book* was one of the most important literacy skills children should have upon kindergarten entry. The low frequency of response for this and other skills may be due to the fact that there were so many skills to choose from and the obvious diversity in teacher thinking.

Patterns of Expectations

Analyses of the data uncovered several patterns of expectations of emerging literacy beliefs. In this study, teaching background, education background, and certain classroom characteristics were related to teacher perceptions of the development of emerging literacy skills.

Teaching Background

One pattern noted pertains to differences in kindergarten teacher background in education and emerging literacy beliefs. For example, teachers with less than ten years of teaching experience had higher expectations for the development of certain concept of print skills as compared to teachers with 21 or more years in education. The data revealed that veteran teachers in this study thought that such skills as *understand that words are separated by spaces* and *write a sentence* should be developed in first grade, whereas the less experienced teachers said these skills should be developed after kindergarten entry. It may be that teachers' views vary depending upon the particular curriculum supplied by the school (Snow, et al., 1998) or simply their past experience.

The data in this study also uncovered the fact that kindergarten teachers with 1-25 years of preschool teaching experience reported holding higher expectations regarding the development of certain concept of print skills as compared to those kindergarten teachers with no preschool teaching experience. For instance, it was reported that kindergarten teachers with preschool teaching experience expected skills such as *understand where to begin reading, write some letters, and follow the print on a page, moving the eyes in the correct direction* to be developed prior to kindergarten entry. In contrast, kindergarten teachers with no preschool teaching experience expect these same skills to be developed after kindergarten entry. This may indicate that kindergarten teachers who have taught in preschool hold higher expectations for young children, as compared to kindergarten teachers who have never taught preschool, perhaps as a result of working with preschool children and observing the development of these skills at the preschool level.

Education Background

Another pattern found in the data pertained to kindergarten teachers with early childhood training. Specifically, those teachers with early childhood training (e.g. early childhood major, early childhood endorsement), were more likely to expect certain oral language skills to be developed later. Kindergarten teachers who had a background in early childhood were more likely to say that the oral language skills *retell story details, articulate intents, emotions, and desires, and listen attentively to stories* should be developed after kindergarten entry, whereas those teachers without an early childhood background were more likely to say

that these skills should be developed prior to kindergarten. The discrepancy may be due to teachers having a different understanding of the degree of difficulty of the skill. Some teachers may have perceived *listen “attentively”* to be a somewhat similar skill as “listen,” whereas teachers with an early childhood background may see *listen “attentively”* as being a more concentrated type of listening than “listen.” Notably, Snow, Burns, & Griffin (1998) specify that three-year-old children should be able to *listen* to stories while kindergartners should be able to *listen attentively* to books.

A somewhat similar pattern was found regarding kindergarten teachers who participate in professional activities and those who do not. For example, those teachers who were members of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), attended NAEYC or other conferences, and subscribed to professional journals indicated they were more likely to believe children should develop the ability to *follow print on a page, move eyes in the correct direction, identify middle sounds, and recognize lower case letters* later than those teachers who were not members or subscribers. For example, those teachers who attended professional conferences were more likely to say that *recognize lower case letters* is a skill that should be developed after kindergarten entrance as compared to those who did not attend conferences, who indicated this skill should be developed prior to kindergarten entry. It should be noted that the majority of teachers in this study (71.4%) attend conferences, and a large majority of those who attend (90.4%) say that professional conferences are an influential or highly influential source of their expectations for children’s emerging

literacy. It appears from this study that teachers who attend conferences and/or belong to professional organizations have different understandings of how children's emerging literacy skills should be appropriately supported than those who do not.

Classroom Characteristics

A few classroom characteristics were noted as being associated with certain patterns of teacher perceptions. For instance, teachers who taught in a half-day program had higher expectations for the development of certain concept of print skills as compared to those teachers who taught in all day, every day programs. Teachers in the all day, every day programs were more likely to expect such skills as *distinguish between real and make-believe* and *write first name* to be developed after kindergarten entry, whereas the teachers in the half-day programs were more likely to say these skills should be developed prior to kindergarten entry. It is important to keep in mind that the all day, every day programs in this study were mainly from urban areas, so it could be that, rather than the length of day, that explains the discrepancy in perceptions.

Another classroom characteristic of some significance in this study is class size. Class size has recently been at the forefront of the list of possible solutions to closing the literacy-learning gap between groups of diverse children. In this study, the number of students in the classroom affected teachers' perspectives on the development of certain oral language and concept of print skills. Kindergarten teachers with smaller class sizes (15-20 students) were more likely to say that certain oral language and concept of print skills should be developed

sooner than teachers with larger class sizes (21-27 students). A steady decline in the average number of students in elementary school classrooms is seen nationally; however, the average number of students in poor urban classrooms is still above those of any other type (NCES, 2002). According to Snow et al. (1998), though, the effects of reduced class size are mixed. Several studies have found that a reduction in class size did not necessarily result in increased sustained reading achievement effects. Perhaps the differences found here are not necessarily strictly from a class size variation. There may be other, unidentified factors related to teachers with different class sizes that influence teacher perspectives.

This study found differences in teacher perceptions of the development of emerging literacy skills as a function of children's prior program experience. For instance, kindergarten teachers who thought that none of their students had prior private preschool experience were more likely to say that children should develop the emerging literacy skills *recognize logographic print* and *identify common objects* prior to kindergarten, whereas those kindergarten teachers who said they had at least 25 percent or more students who attended a private preschool indicated these skills should be developed after kindergarten entrance. Teachers having children with no private preschool experience indicated that the skill *identify middle sounds* should be developed after kindergarten entry, as opposed to those teachers with 1-75 percent of students with private preschool experience who said that was a skill that should be developed during early first grade. Teachers may have varied expectations for students with different program

experiences because they are unaware of the experiences that children have during those programs. Kindergarten teachers with little or no communication with children's preschool programs probably do not know what curricula are offered. In this study, 83 percent of kindergarten teachers indicated they had no contact with any private preschools.

Additional Factors Investigated for Teacher Perspectives

Additional factors investigated in this study proving to have some agreement among kindergarten teachers are: sources of teacher influence on expectations of children's literacy readiness, congruency of kindergarten teacher beliefs of children's literacy readiness with others, congruency of kindergarten teacher beliefs with their school district standards and demands, and the Michigan Curriculum Framework of kindergarten expectations.

Influences on Teacher's Expectations

Teachers reported that there are many fairly influential sources for kindergarten teachers' expectations of children's literacy readiness. However, only one source, past teaching experience, was indicated by a majority of teachers as a very influential source. Research has indicated that as teachers become more experienced, they tend to use, among other things, what has worked in the past, accordingly building a belief system for making classroom decisions (Stephens & Clyde, 1995).

Attendance at professional conferences was the second most commonly reported influence on teachers' expectations of children's literacy skills. About 71 percent of kindergarten teachers in this study attended conferences. Therefore,

this may be an important finding with implications for delivering educative information to teachers. In a similar vein, teachers indicated that in-service training was a fairly influential source for their expectations, as well. Again, if teachers are using these modes of information delivery as influential sources, more attention should be paid to the quality and quantity of information that is delivered to teachers. These are two obviously powerful methods of conveying what teachers need for professional development around literacy expectations.

Teachers also indicated that the (Michigan) state curriculum framework, as a source of expectations of children's literacy development, was fairly influential. In addition, teachers identified Federal legislation as a somewhat influential source for kindergarten teachers' expectations of children's literacy readiness. This may not be the case in the future as the impact of the NCLB Act is felt more deeply.

Congruency of Beliefs Regarding Children's Literacy Capabilities

This study also looked at congruency of teacher beliefs regarding children's literacy capabilities as compared to others' beliefs. The data found that these particular kindergarten teachers supposed their beliefs to be mostly congruent with other kindergarten teachers' beliefs about children's literacy capabilities. The data indicated that teachers thought their beliefs were somewhat congruent with first grade teachers' beliefs, standards set by the school district, the state curriculum framework, parents' beliefs, standards set by Federal legislation, and preschool teachers' beliefs about children's literacy capabilities.

Notably, kindergarten teachers said their beliefs about children's literacy capabilities were somewhat congruent with parents' expectations. Much current literature has shown that there exist discontinuities of literacy practices and expectations among different social and cultural groups, as well as between home and school (e.g., Au & Manson, 1981; Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1997; Heath, 1983; Paratore, Melzi, & Krol-Sinclair, 1999; Philips, 1983; Schmidt, 1998; Volk; 1997; Xu, 1999). Teachers are not necessarily knowledgeable about differences in family literacy practices, often presuming the practices in middle-class homes to be the norm. Teachers in this study indicated that their beliefs are in somewhat of an agreement with parents, perhaps acknowledging some discontinuity does exist between teachers and parents.

Congruency of Beliefs with Local School District

About 63 percent of teachers indicated that their beliefs about children's literacy capabilities were congruent to highly congruent with the standards set by the school district. Eighty percent or more of teachers indicated that their beliefs regarding 21 out of the 28 emerging literacy skills they are responsible for teaching were consistent with district demand. Note that these two questions ask different things of teachers—in one case about congruence of their beliefs as a whole and in the other case congruence of beliefs on individual skills. We can generalize across the two that for many teachers there is continuity on many or all items, but for some teachers, and some items, discontinuity exists.

Michigan Curriculum Framework of Expectations

Kindergarten teacher beliefs were compared regarding when emerging literacy skills should be developed against the Michigan Curriculum Framework: Kindergarten Expectations (Michigan Department of Education, 2004). It is important to note that these expectations had come out shortly before this survey was administered. The kindergarten teachers in this sample agreed with the state expectations on 21 out of the 30 skills—that they should be developed after kindergarten entrance. The majority of these skills are concept of print skills. The eight skills for which the teachers did not agree with the state expectations are mostly oral language skills with teachers expecting these skills to be developed before kindergarten entry. However, it is important for teachers to understand that they must continue to support oral language skill development. Some children come to kindergarten well behind in oral language skills (Hart & Risley, 1995). Where kindergarten teachers in this study indicated the majority of skills they were responsible for teaching are concept of print skills, they must also continue to support oral language skill development.

Ecological Perspectives

The person-process-context design of this study guided an investigation of contextual and personal characteristics that might possibly influence kindergarten teacher beliefs about emerging literacy (Bronfenbrenner, 1998). The kindergarten teachers in this study reported that aspects of the microsystem such as past experience, education background, and teaching background; aspects of the mesosystem such as in-service training and certain classroom

characteristics; aspects of the exosystem, such as professional conferences and state standards; and aspects of the macrosystem such as federal legislation were influential in forming their emerging literacy beliefs (see Figure 2). From an ecological viewpoint, this study substantiated that different ecological niches can be influential in teacher perspectives regarding emerging literacy skills.

Implications for Classroom Practice

This section includes several suggestions for classroom and teacher support to enhance young children's literacy learning.

1. While this study showed that teachers in general did not ask for, nor receive, portfolios, they are a method of authentic assessment that would give kindergarten teachers insight as to where children's literacy development falls on the continuum even before school starts in the fall. By communicating with preschool, and even childcare programs that feed into the school district, the goal of expecting and receiving portfolios for children could be arranged. Kindergarten teachers would then be able to further plan for the developmental levels of the incoming students. However, teachers must also be trained in creating and using portfolios as a means of learning about children and their developmental levels.
2. Communication across kindergarten classrooms, and also with first grade classrooms, concerning constancy of expectations for students would aid in continuing teacher perspectives along the same path. Kindergarten teachers must have time to meet, not only among themselves but with preschool and first grade teachers as well, and not only as a group in a

school, but also as a group within the district. Of course, meetings should be focused on research-based expectations of literacy development.

Implications for In-Service and Preservice Education

As a result of this study, it can be noted that kindergarten teachers might have an incomplete understanding of the development of young children's literacy. A large part of teacher education comes from in-service and preservice learning. Therefore, those accountable for teacher training should be proactive in ensuring emerging literacy awareness. This section includes several suggestions for in-service and preservice teacher support to enhance young children's literacy learning.

1. It is important that teachers be well versed regarding the development of literacy skills. As children with very divergent skills characterize today's kindergarten classes, teachers must be prepared to support children regardless of their literacy skill development level. It is crucial that teachers understand where children are developmentally, and they must realize it is their responsibility to support the development of those essential skills that must be present in order for children to progress along a somewhat sequential literacy continuum. In-service training regarding the developmental progression of emerging literacy skill development would be beneficial for teachers to review their understanding of this pattern and would also to help avoid

inappropriate teaching practices. Teachers also need the support of administration for continuous support of appropriate practices.

2. The majority of teachers in this study indicated that they attend professional conferences and that that these conferences are influential sources on their expectations. Professional early education organizations such as the NAEYC and IRA have an important responsibility to disseminate information about the developmental continuum of reading and writing. These organizations can also play an important role in developing teachers' competence in a range of strategies needed to support and assess children's emerging literacy (IRA & NAEYC, 2000).
3. Educators responsible for preservice training must ensure that prospective teachers understand developmental progressions of children's literacy, beginning particularly with language development. Knowledge of the foundational emerging literacy skills that are necessary for the development of more abstract skills is essential for all teachers. Knowing ways in which children might vary in the order of literacy skills development is also important. By ensuring that novice teachers start out with strong preservice preparation in this area, there is a greater likelihood teachers will use appropriate practices and children will have appropriate experiences.

4. Portfolio use should be introduced by both in-service and preservice educators. Practicing and preservice teachers ought to be made aware of the many benefits of a portfolio program. Portfolios can be used as an on-going assessment of the learning process, as a means of collaboration and communication between teachers, students, and parents, and as a showcase of a child's individual accomplishments, learning progress, and skills (Soderman, Gregory, & McCarty, 2005). Portfolios should be used and passed along across grade levels. For this to happen there must be communication among preschools, kindergarten, and first grades at the classroom, building, and district level.

Implications for Future Research

This section includes several suggestions for future research related to teacher perceptions of children's emerging literacy skills.

1. The sample for this study did not have an equal number of teachers from rural, urban, and suburban areas. Because of the limits of representation, some significant teacher perspectives may not have been discovered. This study should be replicated using a larger and more diverse sample.
2. The sample for this study was made up of kindergarten teachers who chose to fill out the survey and mail it back. Self-selection for this study may have limited responses, and therefore a replication of this study using a compelled sample or interview protocol may result in differing data.

3. The discussion of the results of this study is based on teacher self-report. A study using teacher observation and interview would illuminate whether and/or how emerging literacy perspectives of kindergarten teachers are put into practice.
4. A study comparing expectations of preschool teachers, kindergarten teachers, and first grade teachers who serve the same children over time would illuminate similarities and differences in teacher perceptions across different age groups served, and provide some insight into some issues children may face in moving through these different settings.
5. In this sample, a majority of teachers said that their beliefs concerning when individual emerging literacy skills should be developed were congruent with their district's demands. Future study might look at whether teachers' beliefs really are congruent with district demand. It is not known whether the teachers' view of district demand is really congruent with their school district. It is only known that teachers think it is. This type of study would be particularly helpful for district in-services, as well as lesson continuity.
6. Because parents and childcare providers are also important influences on children's literacy development (Snow, et al., 1998), discovering the perspectives of parents and childcare providers concerning emerging literacy skill development would aid in identifying expectation similarities and differences.

7. With the passing of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*(NCLB), states, and subsequently school districts, have had to start changing policies and practices to meet NCLB guidelines. Future research could investigate changes in teacher perspectives regarding emerging literacy skills over the course of time as more states and school districts come into compliance with Federal mandates.

Summary

This investigation determined that the responding kindergarten teachers had some but not a complete understanding of the developmental path of emerging literacy skills. There seemed to be a lack of awareness as to when certain foundational emerging literacy skills should be developed and the impact of those skills on the development of other, more abstract literacy skills. This presents implications for both experienced teachers and preservice teachers in assuring their understanding of when and how emerging literacy skills develop in young children.

Findings from the present study indicate that kindergarten teachers agreed on when many of young children's emerging literacy skills should be developed. The teachers in this study agreed that most of the skills that they were responsible for teaching are concept of print skills, as well as some alphabetic principle skills, phonological awareness skills, phonemic awareness skills, and a few developmental communication skills. The majority of skills that they

expected 75–80 percent of children to develop prior to kindergarten entry were oral language skills.

While the teachers in this study agreed on many items of emerging literacy development, there was also noted disagreement among specific subgroups of teachers regarding the development of certain emerging literacy skills.

Particularly, differences among teacher perspectives relating to several personal characteristics, as well as contextual characteristics, emerged. These include: teaching background; education background; and certain classroom characteristics including program type, class size, and children's prior program experience.

Finally, several factors surfaced that had teacher agreement including: sources of teacher influence on expectations of children's literacy readiness, congruency of kindergarten teacher beliefs of children's literacy readiness with others, congruency of kindergarten teacher beliefs with their school district standards and demands, and the Michigan Curriculum Framework of kindergarten expectations.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Grade Level Content Expectations: Kindergarten English Language Arts

Grade Level Content Expectations: Kindergarten English Language Arts

SECTION OF EXPECTATION	SKILL DEVELOPMENT EXPECTATION
READING	
Word Recognition	Students will recognize that words are composed of sounds blended together, and can do tasks that demonstrate phonemic awareness. Students understand the alphabetic principle-that the sounds in words are expressed by the letters of the alphabet.
	Students will use grapho-phonemic (letter-sound) cues to recognize a few one-syllable words and have begun to associate letters and sounds, particularly initial and final consonants.
	Students will recognize frequently encountered words in print automatically. Students should be beginning to learn the 220 Dolch basic sight vocabulary.
	Students will know the meaning of words encountered frequently in kindergarten in oral language contexts.
	Student will follow written text while pointing to matching words: notice when simple sentences fail to make sense; make predictions based on illustrations or portions of stories; and use picture clues, patterns of language, or initial letters/sounds to narrow possibilities in predicting words.
	Students will apply the following aspects of fluency: retelling familiar text and recognizing grade level specific words.
	Students will determine the meaning of words and phrases (e.g., objects, actions, concepts, and content and English language arts vocabulary) in context using strategies and resources (picture clues, prediction, and other people).

Narrative Text	Students will identify and describe a variety of genre (e.g., nursery rhymes, poetry, songs).
	Students will discuss simple story elements (e.g., setting, character, events) in narrative text.
	Students will identify how authors use pictures, illustrations to support the understanding of settings and characters.
Informational Text	Students will identify and describe a variety of informational genre (e.g., environmental text, concept books, picture books).
	Students will discuss information text patterns (e.g., sequential, descriptive).
	Students will explain how authors use picture, drawings, and icons to enhance the understanding of supporting and key ideas present in descriptive (i.e. definitions, enumeration) and sequential (directions, steps, procedures) organizational patterns.
Comprehension	Students will connect personal knowledge and experience to ideas in texts.
	Students will retell in sequence from books and stories they have encountered often, from simple oral and/or written narrative and informational text (i.e., no more than three events in the sequence of reading), using their own words or phrasing.
	Students will begin to make comparisons and connections across oral and written text and personal experience.
	Students will acquire and use significant knowledge from what has been read and experienced in kindergarten, including grade-level appropriate science and social studies knowledge, and uses this knowledge to make connections to new texts.
Metacognition	Students will self-monitor comprehension when reading grade-level texts (i.e., be aware if one is understanding what is being read) and show some use of simple strategies to increase comprehension (e.g., make credible predictions about the content of a reading based on a preview of the reading, including the cover of a book and its pictures).

	Students will plan, monitor, regulate and evaluate skills, strategies and processes to construct and convey meaning (e.g., notice when sentences fail to make sense), use story grammar to identify author's perspective and begin to sort and order information with extensive teacher guidance.
Critical Standards	Students will recognize how to assess personal works and the work of others with teacher supervision.
Reading Attitude	Students are enthusiastic about reading and learning how to read.
	Students choose books, book activities, word play and writing on their own, that is, during free time in school and at home.
WRITING	
Writing Genres	Students will write brief narrative pieces (e.g., fairy tales, nursery rhymes or songs) using pictures and/or illustrations, and words or work-like clusters as support; brief informational pieces (e.g., a page for a class writing assignment) using text, pictures, drawings, and/or illustrations; and contribute to a class research project by restating the class research question in their own words, selecting appropriate teacher-supplied texts for support, organizing gathered information in a correct sequence, using steps in the writing process to produce a final discourse, and presenting the finished research project.
Process	Students will consider audience needs as they plan their writing, including brainstorming to help them generate and structure ideas for writing narrative as well as informational text, with teacher assistance as needed.
	Students will use phonetic spelling to represent narrative and informational text when drafting, incorporating pictures, drawings and illustrations.
	Students will revise writing by reading their own aloud and requesting additions or clarifications that support meaning.

	Both individually and in groups, students will attempt to edit their writing by reading aloud their writing/picture and use a grade 1 list.
Personal Style	Students will display originality in oral, written and visual messages (e.g., in narrative text; natural language, expressed sentiment, original ideas; in informational text: listing, naming, describing).
Spelling	Students will spell frequently encountered one-syllable words correctly. For less frequently encountered words, students will rely more on structural clues (i.e., letter/sound) than environmental sources such as words walls or words lists. For such lower frequency words, students will strategically focus on beginning and some of the simpler ending sounds more than on sounds in the middle.
Handwriting	Students will form upper and lower case letters, use known or copied words in writing, leave space between words and word-like clusters of letters, write from left to right and top to bottom, and experiment with representing ideas and information using written symbols.
Writing Attitude	Students are enthused about writing and learning how to write.
SPEAKING	
Conventions	Students will use language to communicate with a variety of audiences and for different purposes (e.g., courtesies, daily conversations, playground/classroom interactions).
	Students will speak clearly and audibly in complete coherent sentences, use sound effects, and use illustrations when presenting spoken informational and narrative text.
	Students make presentations or reports in standard American English.

	Students will be aware that language differs from playground and classroom as a function of linguistic and cultural group membership. They can provide examples of language differences on the playground and in the classroom.
Spoken Discourse	Students will tell/retell brief familiar experiences or interests, covering the main story grammar points emphasizing elaborated setting and character information while speaking clearly and audibly in complete sentences.
	Students will respond to multiple text types by discussing, drawing, and/or writing in order to reflect, make meaning and make connections.
	Students will plan and deliver presentations or reports using informational organizational pattern (e.g., descriptive) and appropriate text features (e.g., pictures, illustrations), providing several facts and details to make their point while speaking clearly and audibly in complete sentences.
LISTENING/VIEWING	
Conventions (Interpersonal Processes)	Students will understand and follow one- and two-step directions.
	Students will ask appropriate questions during a presentation or report.
	Students will listen to each other and interact appropriately.
	Students will use effective listening and viewing behaviors.
	Students will begin to evaluate messages they experience, learning to differentiate between sender and receiver.
Response	Students will listen to or view and discuss a variety of genres.
	Students will listen to, view and respond thoughtfully to both classic and contemporary texts recognized for quality and literary merit.

APPENDIX B

Emergent Literacy Skills Survey

EMERGING LITERACY SKILLS SURVEY

Thank you for participating in this survey. Please be as candid as possible. All of your answers will be anonymous and confidential. Your honesty and thoroughness will ensure a more valid study.

Demographic Information:

Please complete the following:

1. Your age _____
2. Your ethnicity/race ☐ African-American ☐ American Indian ☐ Asian-Pacific
 ☐ Hispanic ☐ White ☐ Other
3. Total number of years in education _____
4. Number of years teaching kindergarten _____
5. Number of years teaching preschool children _____
6. The major area of concentration of your BA/BS _____
7. Highest degree earned _____
8. Do you have an Early Childhood endorsement? ☐ Yes ☐ No
9. Are you a member of the National Association for the Education of Young Children? ☐ Yes ☐ No
10. Do you subscribe to one or more professional education journals? ☐ Yes ☐ No
11. Do you attend professional education conferences? (Check all that apply) ☐ Yes ☐ No
 ☐ ACEI ☐ IRA ☐ MiAECY ☐ NAEYC ☐ MRA ☐ Other
12. How many hours of professional development have you had in the last year? _____
13. Location of your current school ☐ Rural ☐ Suburban ☐ Urban
14. What type of program do you have this year?
 ☐ 1/2 day ☐ all day, every day ☐ all day, every other day
15. How many children are in your classroom this year? (on ave., if you have more than one class) _____
16. How many children in your classroom this year are _____ 5-years-old? _____ 6-years-old? _____ 7-years-old?
17. Please estimate the percentage of children making up your classroom this year
 ☐ % African American ☐ % Asian ☐ % Hispanic ☐ % White/Caucasian ☐ % Other
18. Approximately what percentage of children receives free or reduced lunch in your classroom this year? _____

19. Please fill out the following chart:

	Childcare experience	Developmental kindergarten	Head Start or Michigan School Readiness Program	Private preschool	No preschool experience	Do not know
Estimated % of children in your classroom this year that have had a program experience prior to kindergarten entry						
Have you had contact with the program that your students may have experienced?	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No		
Have you asked for any portfolios from the following programs?	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No		
Have you received any portfolios from the following programs?	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No		

20. How influential have each of the following been in informing you of expectations of children's literacy readiness?

	Not at all influential	Somewhat influential		Very influential	
	1	2	3	4	5
Assessment used by the district	1	2	3	4	5
Expectations of first grade teachers	1	2	3	4	5
Federal legislation	1	2	3	4	5
How I was taught as a child	1	2	3	4	5
In-service training	1	2	3	4	5
Local school board	1	2	3	4	5
Media sources (e.g., TV, radio, newspapers)	1	2	3	4	5
Other kindergarten teachers	1	2	3	4	5
Past teaching experience	1	2	3	4	5
Professional conferences	1	2	3	4	5
Professional journals	1	2	3	4	5
School district curriculum	1	2	3	4	5
State Curriculum Framework	1	2	3	4	5

21. To what degree are your beliefs about children's literacy capabilities congruent with each of the following?

	Not at all congruent		Somewhat congruent		Highly congruent
	1	2	3	4	5
Preschool teachers' expectations	1	2	3	4	5
Other kindergarten teachers' expectations	1	2	3	4	5
First grade teachers' expectations	1	2	3	4	5
Parents' expectations	1	2	3	4	5
Standards set by my school district	1	2	3	4	5
State Curriculum Framework	1	2	3	4	5
Standards set by Federal legislation	1	2	3	4	5

22. Please check which one of the following statements you believe to be true:

_____ Boys and girls have equal emerging literacy skill development

_____ Girls' emerging literacy skill development surpasses boys'

_____ Boys' emerging literacy skill development surpasses girl

23. Please list below the five most important emerging literacy skills children should have upon kindergarten entry (with #1 being the most important, etc. You may refer to question 24, if you wish):

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

24. Following are emerging literacy skills that develop in children between the ages of 3 and 6 years of age. Some may be considered "readiness" skills that should be primarily developed by the time a child reaches kindergarten. Others may be considered skills that develop primarily after kindergarten entrance or in early first grade.

Please designate the period in which, based on your experience, 75% to 80% of children will likely have these skills, by placing a check mark in that column only. For example:

Emerging Literacy Skills	Skill should be primarily developed prior to kindergarten entrance	Skill should be primarily developed after kindergarten entrance	Skill should be primarily developed during first grade	Is this consistent with district demand Yes/No
1. Write a story			x	No

Emerging Literacy Skills	Skill should be primarily developed prior to kindergarten entrance	Skill should be primarily developed after kindergarten entrance	Skill should be primarily developed during first grade	Is this consistent with district demand Yes/No
1. Recognize lower case letters				
2. Engage in conversation with adults with multiple exchanges				
3. Draw recognizable picture (self, family, objects, events)				
4. Exhibit reading-like behavior (e.g., turn pages correctly, moving from front to back)				
5. Distinguish between real and make-believe				
6. Pretend to read a book by telling a story from the pictures on the cover or in the book				
7. Repeat songs, fingerplays, and movement activities				
8. Follow simple directions				
9. Understand that print contains a message				
10. Use descriptive language (e.g., I want to play with the small, red truck)				
11. Follow the print on a page, moving eyes in the correct direction				
12. Respond to oral language with relevant comments and questions				
13. Retell story details				
14. Use invented/temporary spelling				
15. Understand where to begin reading				
16. Use appropriate expressive vocabulary				
17. Understand that words are separated by spaces				
18. Recognize upper case letters				
19. Develop a concept of punctuation				

Emerging Literacy Skills	Skill should be primarily developed <i>prior</i> to kindergarten entrance	Skill should be primarily developed <i>after</i> kindergarten entrance	Skill should be primarily developed <i>during</i> first grade	Is this consistent with district demand Yes/No
20. Write first name				
21. Recognize rhyming words				
22. Listen attentively to stories				
23. Identify end sounds				
24. Articulate intents, emotions, and desires				
25. Identify letters of the alphabet				
26. Understand that letters are formed in a specific way and are unchanging				
27. Choose literacy experiences when given a choice				
28. Identify beginning sounds				
29. Write a sentence				
30. Recognize logographic print (e.g., McDonalds, Kmart)				
31. Associate letter names with their sounds				
32. Recognize common nouns and verbs typical of daily life				
33. Understand the difference between pictures and print				
34. Speak clearly enough to be understood by others				
35. Retell a familiar story				
36. Understand the difference between letters and words				
37. Match spoken words with written ones				
38. Write last name				
39. Read others' facial and body expressions				
40. Formulate simple questions				
41. Write some letters of the alphabet				
42. Engage in conversation with peers with multiple exchanges				
43. Break words into syllables				
44. Develop a sight vocabulary				
45. Write some words				
46. Use right-to-left, top-to-bottom, and front-to-back orientation in book reading				
47. Identify common objects (e.g., vehicles)				
48. Recognize own name in writing				
49. Identify middle sounds				
50. Identify title of a book				

APPENDIX C

Letter of Teacher Consent

KINDERGARTEN TEACHER PERCEPTIONS REGARDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG CHILDREN'S
EMERGENT LITERACY SKILLS

Dear Kindergarten Teacher,

In order to work collectively for the successful literacy development of children, it is beneficial to understand the literacy beliefs of the adults in charge of children's emerging literacy. Kindergarten teachers play an important role in the development of children's literacy. Therefore, it is crucial that their beliefs be recognized and discussed. As a kindergarten teacher in Ingham County, you have been selected to participate in this study, which investigates the perception of kindergarten teachers regarding whom they believe is primarily responsible for teaching specific emerging literacy skills to children 3 to 6 years of age.

The attached survey takes approximately 15 minutes to fill out. A self-addressed stamped envelope is provided as a means of returning the survey to the researchers. Participation is voluntary. There will be no penalty or consequences if you choose not to answer all of the questions or if you choose not to participate at all.

The information gathered from the surveys will be treated with strict confidence. You will not be identifiable in any report of research findings. *Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.* Only the researchers will have access to the collected data. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, please contact the investigators at: Dr. Anne Soderman, e-mail: soderman@msu.edu, phone: (517) 432-0692, Peggy Thelen, e-mail: thelenpe@msu.edu, phone: (989) 463-6041 or Michelle Nicholson, at the IISD, e-mail: mnichols@inghamisd.org, phone: (517) 244-1384.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact-anonymously, if you wish-Peter Vasilenko, Ph.D., Chair of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) by phone: (517) 355-2180, fax: (517) 432-4503, e-mail: ucrihs@msu.edu, or regular mail: 202 Olds hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

As a gesture of appreciation for your consent to fill out the attached survey, you will have the opportunity to participate in a drawing for one of four \$50.00 gift certificates from a local bookstore. *You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by completing and returning this questionnaire.* Once received, the investigator will separate the consent letter from the survey. All consent letters will be put in a secure container. Four names will be drawn from those participating teachers to receive a gift certificate. If you wish to participate in the drawing, please indicate your name, school, and school district below and return this letter with your survey. If you choose not to participate in the drawing, simply return only the survey. Please return the survey to me by April , 2004.

Your participation is greatly appreciated. Findings will be used to discern what impact experience and training have on literacy beliefs, as well as to plan professional development activities for preschool and kindergarten teachers.

Sincerely,

Peggy Thelen
Ph. D. Candidate
Michigan State University

Name _____
School _____ District _____

APPENDIX D

Principal Letter

Dear Principal,

In an effort to better understand literacy perceptions of kindergarten teachers in Ingham County, Peggy Thelen, a graduate student at Michigan State University, in cooperation with the Ingham Intermediate School District (IISD) is facilitating a literacy study in Ingham County. This study will ascertain those emerging literacy skills kindergarten teachers think should be primarily developed prior to kindergarten entry, during kindergarten, and during early first grade.

Every kindergarten teacher in Ingham County will receive a survey by mail. The surveys will be returned to the investigator by mail. The IISD will receive data gathered from the surveys, which then may be used to design personnel development.

The information gathered from the surveys will be treated with strict confidence. Teachers will not be identifiable in any report of research findings. *Their privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.* Only the researchers will have access to the collected data. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, please contact the investigators at: Dr. Anne Soderman, e-mail: soderman@msu.edu, phone: (517) 432-0692, Peggy Thelen, e-mail: thelenpe@msu.edu, phone: (989) 463-6041 or Michelle Nicholson, at the Ingham ISD, e-mail: mnichols@inghamisd.org, phone: (517) 244-1384.

In order to make this study more successful, we are asking principals to support our efforts to have as many kindergarten teachers as possible fill out and return the survey. Your efforts to support this project, by gently reminding teachers to fill out the survey and return them in a timely manner, would be greatly appreciated. Teachers who return the surveys will have an opportunity to win a gift certificate to a local bookstore. The return date is April , 2004.

If you have any questions or concerns, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact-anonymously, if you wish-Peter Vasilenko, Ph.D., Chair of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) by phone: (517) 355-2180, fax: (517) 432-4503, e-mail: ucrihs@msu.edu, or regular mail: 202 Olds hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Your assistance in supporting this project is greatly appreciated. Please contact either Peggy Thelen or Michelle Nicholson if you have any specific questions about this study. The IISD will contact you regarding the distribution of the appropriate data for your district/school as soon as it is available.

Sincerely,

Peggy Thelen
Graduate Student
College of Human Ecology
Michigan State University
(989) 463-6041
thelenpe@msu.edu

Dr. Anne K. Soderman
Professor of Family and Child Ecology
College of Human Ecology
Michigan State University
(517) 432-0692
soderman@msu.edu

Michelle Nicholson
Supervisor of Early Childhood Education-School Development Services
Ingham Intermediate School District
(517) 244-1384
mnichols@inghamisd.org

APPENDIX E

University Letter of Consent for Research

**MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY**

April 22, 2004

TO: Anne SODERMAN
13-H Human Ecology
MSU

RE: IRB# 04-260 CATEGORY: EXEMPT 1-1, 1-2

APPROVAL DATE: April 20, 2004

EXPIRATION DATE March 20, 2005

TITLE: Kindergarten Teacher Perceptions Regarding the Development of Young
Children's Emerging Literacy Skills

The University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects' (UCRIHS) review of this project is complete and I am pleased to advise that the rights and welfare of the human subjects appear to be adequately protected and methods to obtain informed consent are appropriate. Therefore, the UCRIHS approved this project.

RENEWALS: UCRIHS approval is valid until the expiration date listed above. Projects continuing beyond this date must be renewed with the renewal form. A maximum of four such expedited renewals are possible. Investigators wishing to continue a project beyond that time need to submit a 5-year application for a complete review.

REVISIONS: UCRIHS must review any changes in procedures involving human subjects, prior to initiation of the change. If this is done at the time of renewal, please include a revision form with the renewal. To revise an approved protocol at any other time during the year, send your written request with an attached revision cover sheet to the UCRIHS Chair, requesting revised approval and referencing the project's IRB# and title. Include in your request a description of the change and any revised instruments, consent forms or advertisements that are applicable.

PROBLEMS/CHANGES: Should either of the following arise during the course of the work, notify UCRIHS promptly: 1) problems (unexpected side effects, complaints, etc.) involving human subjects or 2) changes in the research environment or new information indicating greater risk to the human subjects than existed when the protocol was previously reviewed and approved.

If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at (517) 355-2180 or via email: UCRIHS@msu.edu. Please note that all UCRIHS forms are located on the web: <http://www.humanresearch.msu.edu>

Sincerely,



Peter Vasilenko, Ph.D.
UCRIHS Chair



OFFICE OF
**RESEARCH
ETHICS AND
STANDARDS**

University Committee on
Research Involving
Human Subjects

Michigan State University
202 Olds Hall
East Lansing, MI
48824

517/355-2180
FAX: 517/432-4503

www.msu.edu/user/ucris
E-Mail: ucris@msu.edu

PV: rt

CC: Peggy Thelen
4286 W. Jackson Rd.
Alma, MI 48801

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