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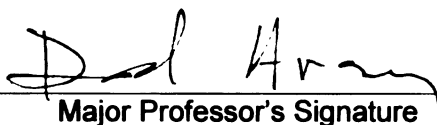
PROVIDING QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
IN MICHIGAN'S LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

presented by

John Brett Deiter

has been accepted towards fulfillment
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Ph.D. degree in Educational Administration


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PROVIDING QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
IN MICHIGAN'S LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

By

John Brett Deiter

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
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ABSTRACT

PROVIDING QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN MICHIGAN'S LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

By

John Brett Deiter

The purpose of this study was threefold as it attempted to: 1) determine to what extent local school districts in Michigan vary in their provision of early childhood education (ECE) services and what factors account for these differences; 2) determine local school district superintendents' perceptions of ECE and explore whether or not these perceptions are related to their knowledge, familiarity with programs and research, and to what extent they view ECE as being important to their students obtaining their achievement goals; and 3) determine the efficacy of the current delivery system for ECE services between the state, ISDs, and local districts by ascertaining the vision that the leaders at these levels have for the provision and coordination of ECE services.

The results of the study were obtained from a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. They show that there is large variance in the ECE services that local districts provide that is related to the needs of the children in a given district and with the knowledge of the superintendents.

Though most Michigan superintendents are not familiar with specific studies on ECE, most believe that an investment in ECE can have a positive impact on student achievement. Programs and training offered by ISDs can be very influential to the attitudes of local superintendents. The experience that superintendents bring to the position, such as experience exclusively at the 9-12 level versus pre-K or K-5 experience

also impacts the knowledge and perception of superintendents

The study also indicates that leaders at the state, ISD, and local level have a similar vision for the provision of ECE that varies slightly from the current alignment and dissemination of services. Leaders at the three levels would like to see an increased role for local districts in the provision of ECE services. These leaders feel that ISDs are in a central position and seem the best equipped to coordinate and enhance ECE services.

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2007

DEDICATION

To my wife, Amy, and my daughters, Madison and Gwentyth

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Under the sweeping federal education reform, *No Child Left Behind* (aka *NCLB*), all schools in the United States have until 2014 to achieve a 100% proficiency rate for students taking their respective state proficiency exams. NCLB, and the potential sanctions that schools face if they fail to reach the necessary levels of proficiency, have the attention of educators at all levels from teachers to superintendents. Most school systems are diligently trying to prepare their students to do well on the exams (Laosa, 2003). Some schools have seen improvements in their test scores, but many others, especially those with high levels of poor and minority students, are in danger of not meeting NCLB's rigorous yearly progress standards for proficiency. Add to this dynamic the budget deficits that many districts are facing, and educational leaders are forced to make very difficult decisions about which of their educational programs to fund. Districts with high levels of at-risk students often face the most difficult decisions because they are not only dealing with low levels of achievement, but are also working with shrinking budgets and decreasing enrollments. Superintendents and other school leaders are looking for effective strategies for increasing student achievement, and one potential strategy that is receiving significant consideration is an investment in early childhood education programs (Laosa, 2003; Schweinhart & Fulcher-Dawson, 2006).

Early childhood education programs received their first major push in 1965 during President Johnson's war on poverty, because it was recognized that at-risk students were entering school academically and socially behind their peers (Hauser-

Cram, 1991; Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000). Poor children were entering kindergarten at a disadvantage, and they typically fell further behind each year. Although many studies have found that most children from lower-income families will make comparable gains to their middle- and upper-class peers during a school year, those children who typically fall behind do so during their preschool ages and over the extended summer vacations (Brooks-Gunn et. al, 2003; Rothstein, 2004).

Early childhood education programs hold promise for disadvantaged children because they are designed to bolster children's capacity to learn and achieve in a school setting before they even cross the threshold of a school. The Head Start Program for preschool children was one of the federal government's main educational strategies during the Johnson era's war on poverty, because the importance of preschool education was recognized as being critical thus making Head Start grant funds available to local community agencies. Thousands of community and school programs across the country took advantage of Head Start funding and programming, and the program continues today. Head Start and Early Head Start currently serve over 900,000 children in centers or in their homes each year (NHSA, 2005; Mitchell, 2003). Head Start has been shown to be effective in preparing children for school, but many feel it still does not reach enough children. Even though Early Head Start has been developed to work with younger children, it too has often been criticized for not reaching children soon enough (Barnett & Masse, 2002).

It has been well-documented that poor and disadvantaged children are the least likely to succeed on standardized tests (Wilens, 2003). In order for children living in poverty to succeed in school and on high-stake tests, many things must happen before

they begin their education. Children reared in low-income, impoverished conditions often start at a disadvantage to their peers, even before they are born, because of poor prenatal care (Rothstein, 2004). Once they are born, they are more likely to be faced with poor nutrition and poor health care. These factors can put children at a disadvantage when it comes to brain development and school readiness. These early risk factors are then more likely to give way to health risks such as asthma or lead poisoning that will negatively affect school attendance and/or performance (Barnett & Masse, 2002). Low-income children also tend to receive less cognitive nourishment during their earliest formative years than do their middle-class peers. For example, middle-class children hear more sophisticated language at home, are read to more frequently, and are asked to process what they read in ways that are more advanced than what is typically the case in a low-income home (Farkus & Beron, 2001). Rothstein (2004) feels that, “Because the gap [between poor and middle class children] is already huge at three years of age, the most important focus of this investment should probably be early childhood programs” (p.142).

Defining Early Childhood Education (ECE)

ECE is officially defined at the national level as encompassing birth through age eight. In Michigan, and in this study, ECE typically refers to birth through age five, unless otherwise stated. There are three main types of childcare in the United States: (1) parental care, (2) informal day care (typically provided in a home setting by someone other than the child’s parent), and (3) center care or preschool (Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2005).

In 2001, 64.3% of mothers, whose youngest children were under six years of age, were in the work force (Kamerman & Gatenio, 2003). This is compared to 53.5% in 1985, and 20.2% in 1960. This translates to over 60% of children being placed in daycare settings (Kamerman & Gatenio, 2003). Most homecare settings focus on basic care and do not emphasize learning. Center-based programs, on the other hand, place learning on an equal level with basic needs such as meals, rest, and play. W. Steven Barnett of the National Institute of Early Education Research (NIEER) at Rutgers University is one of the nation's leading researchers in ECE. He found that 70% of children in daycare were in center-based programs by age four and that 45% were in center-based programs by age three (Barnett et al., 2004). Though the Early Head Start program for three-year-olds is gaining popularity, most Head Start programs focus on four- and five-year-olds. While ECE is important for four-year-olds, it is also very important for children ages birth to three (National Head Start Association, 2005).

Despite the high demand for quality childcare and preschool, as of 2006 only three states, Georgia, Oklahoma, and Florida, have fully implemented programs that make universal preschool available to all four-year-olds. And only Illinois, which passed the legislation in 2006, seeks to provide universal preschool for all three- and four-year-olds. Even when universal care is offered, many families do not participate in the programs. For example, it is estimated that 60% of children take advantage of the programs offered in Georgia and Oklahoma (GOA, 2004; Rand, 2005).

With many well-documented benefits of quality ECE, it is surprising that there are not more publicly funded ECE programs throughout the United States. Perhaps even more intriguing, when considering the demands of NCLB and the impact of ECE on

school readiness and school performance, is that public schools are not more involved in early childhood education. The state of Michigan is a case in point. While local school districts in Michigan have great access to prekindergarten children, most local school districts in the state make their first contact with families at kindergarten round-ups.

This research project focused specifically on the state of Michigan and the efforts of local school districts in Michigan to provide quality ECE to their children. A study of ECE in Michigan makes sense because it has a rich ECE history being the home state of the Perry Preschool Project and the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. Also, Michigan, like most states, has not moved towards universal preschool, but has promoted partnerships with local school districts, intermediate school districts, and other agencies. A partnership in ECE typically means two or more entities working together to fund, provide, or oversee programs. Partnerships are often composed of private sources that provide funding for a public program or two public programs that combine resources.

Early Childhood Education in Michigan

Michigan's Governor Jennifer Granholm and the Michigan Department of Education would like Michigan to be a progressive state in the area of ECE; however, there is considerable room for improvement in programs and services that are offered in the state. In 2004-2005, the National Institute for Early Childhood Education Research (NIEER) ranked Michigan 14th out of 50 states in its ability to provide access to ECE. NIEER ranks Michigan 18th in its ECE resources. Michigan meets five out of ten benchmarks in quality that NIEER has established.

In her first 2003 State of the State address, Governor Granholm introduced her new educational plan with the following commitment to early childhood education:

Perhaps the single most important key to economic development is the one that opens the doors to learning in the minds of our young ones today. In the knowledge economy, business and education are linked; you cannot succeed at the former if you do not excel at the latter. I assure you, educational excellence will be my number one priority. We will begin with Project Great Start (PGS) a broad movement to increase learning in the critical years from birth to age five because education must begin at birth. (2003)

While the goal of PGS is to prepare all of Michigan's children for kindergarten, the state's intermediate and local school districts vary greatly in the ECE programs and services they currently provide. There is little, if any, debate that children benefit greatly from high-quality early childhood education, and this is especially true for children from low-socioeconomic (SES) homes. This section will briefly describe the publicly supported ECE services that are available in the state of Michigan.

The state program that reaches the most children in Michigan is the Michigan School Readiness Program (MSRP), which started in 1985. It is designed to provide childcare to four-year-olds who meet two or more of twenty-five state-identified risk factors. MSRP is generally provided by local school districts that apply for and receive funding based on the needs of their constituents. It is mandated that 50% of the children receiving MSRP services must meet the federal guidelines for poverty. The majority of school districts in Michigan participate in an MSRP program. According to High/Scope,

470 of the state's 536 MRSP programs are run by local school districts. The state of Michigan has budgeted \$78.8 million for MSRP in 2006-07.

Some districts choose to get involved in Head Start, and some will sponsor or provide prekindergarten special education programs, such as Early Childhood Developmental Disability (ECDD) and other state or federal programs, but MSRP is the most common ECE program sponsored by local districts in Michigan.

Other state programs include Even Start, EarlyOn, and a 0-3 prevention collaborative through the Children's Trust Fund. Even Start is a federal program designed for children ages 0 – 7 years, who have a parent who is functionally illiterate or eligible for basic adult education. Services under Early Start are generally provided at the local district level. EarlyOn is a program that is generally provided by intermediate school districts in Michigan. This program is designed to meet the needs of a child 0 - 36 months who has a developmental delay, or has a condition that is likely to cause a developmental delay. The 0-3 prevention program is a grant for community-based collaborative secondary prevention programs for families of children ages 0-3. The grants are designed to develop services that improve parenting skills, strengthen families, and help prepare children for school. The grants will help families gain access to community services and help local communities build capacity so they can better serve at risk families. The grants will also be used to develop programs that discourage alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. The state has set aside \$1.75 million for this program in 2006-07. A 25% local match is required to receive the funds.

With the exception of MSRP, most ECE programs in Michigan are operated without direct input from local school districts. Some local districts have made a

commitment to ECE by providing welcoming school coordinators who reach out to young families by visiting homes or hospitals. Some get involved with other grant-funded programs such as the federal program, Parents as Teachers. Few districts, however, devote extensive funding to ECE services.

The goal of Michigan's latest initiative, Project Great Start (PGS), is for Michigan children to enter kindergarten safe, healthy, and eager to succeed in school and life. The underlying intent of PGS is to provide universal ECE across the state of Michigan. In the same year that PGS was launched, however, Michigan's budget showed a deficit of \$285 million. In order to balance the budget, \$127 million was cut from school aid. These cuts were driven by a struggling economy and a state law that requires a balanced budget, and implicitly by a belief that expenditures on ECE were not as valuable as other priorities.

The most significant ECE program to be affected by budget cuts was an elaborate program known as All Students Achieve Program – Parent Involvement and Education (ASAP-PIE). In 2001, 23 of the 57 Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) in Michigan received funding through this competitive grant program which was designed to service children birth to five years of age. The total award of ASAP-PIE was \$45 million dollars spread out in various amounts across the 23 districts. The original legislation called for three years of funding, but “financial crises” led to the end of funding for the program after only two years (Reed, et al., 2004). Districts were allowed to use their remaining money to continue funding programs that were started in the first two years.

The first program launched under PGS was Great Parents, Great Start (GPGS) which was designed to replace ASAP-PIE at a greatly reduced cost to the state. Like

ASAP-PIE, the responsibility for implementing this program was given to ISDs. While ASAP-PIE was a grant-based program dispersed to only 23 ISDs, it was very generous to those ISD in awarding upwards of \$4.5 million to individual ISDs. Many ISDs used their ASAP-PIE money to develop programs above and beyond what the state's basic mandates for ECE programs. ASAP-PIE was designed to last three years, but its funding was discontinued in 2002. Some ISDs tried to stretch the remaining dollars of ASAP-PIE and raise funds of their own to support their programs. That has proven to be very difficult because GPGS has been supported by only \$3.2 million for the entire project. The state has increased the \$3.2 million to \$5 million for 2006-07 but that total is still dispersed over all 57 ISDs, and it comes with specific and rigorous expectations for how that money is to be spent.

The latest component of Project Great Start is the development of Michigan Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC). This initiative is modeled after similar programs such as North Carolina's Smart Start program. It is designed to bring in a mix of private funds to help with the costs of Project Great Start, of which GPGS is the first initiative. In a highly competitive process, the state granted seven counties funds ranging from \$90,000- \$150,000.00 to build partnerships with local business and community organizations. The total appropriation for the program was originally \$1.24 million and it was approved for \$1 million in 2006-07. There were also capacity-building grants awarded to seven different counties. The plan is to pilot a model of building community relationships in these seven counties and eventually grow the program across the state to help fund ECE programs with private money, as well as public.

Table 1 shows the most common early childhood education programs that are available in Michigan.

Table 1.

Early Childhood Education Programs in Michigan

Program Year Started	Target Population	Funding Source & Amount	Primary Sponsor/Provid er	Availability/ Number Served
Early Head Start (1994)	Birth to 3- year-olds poverty level	*Federally Funded Total 6.8 Billion \$7,062 per child	*Various private and public sources	*National program 399,076 nation- wide
Head Start (1965)	4-year-olds poverty level	*Federally Funded Michigan \$232,214,668.00	*Various private and public sources	*Nation wide 507,916 35,069 Michigan total Early Head Start and Head Start
Michigan School Readiness Program (MSRP) (1985)	At risk 4- year-olds	State Grants \$3,300 per child (based on half day enrollment) **\$78,599,400.0 0	Local districts or ISDs	**23,818 children in 478 districts statewide (536 programs total)
Early On (2004)	Birth – Three with develop- mental delay, disability, or special needs	State of Michigan \$3,900,000.00	ISDs	Statewide Program

Even Start (1965)	Children Birth to 7 years-old w/ illiterate parent	Federal Program *\$7,127,300 allocated to Michigan (Federal budget was cut 56% in 2006)	ISDs	*32 programs in Michigan *1,378 families *2,035 children (1,678 under 5- years-old)
Great Parents/ Great Start (2003)	Universal service to parents of children birth to five	State Grant \$5,000,000 available state wide	ISDs	All 57 ISDs in the state
0-3 Prevention Grants (1996)	High Risk Families including pregnant	State Funded – MDE, Human Services Community Health *\$4,774,000 total budget	Mixed -ISDs -Public Health agencies -Other non profits	*2,756 families *2,695 children 36 programs serving 44/83 counties
Early Childhood Develop- mental Disability (ECCD)	Children with developmen- tal delays	Federally Funded Though IDEA \$500 Million Federally (2002)	Local Districts with ISD involvement	Every county
ASAP-PIE (2001-2002)	High risk parents	State program Funded at \$45 million	ISDs	23 Counties

* Data from 2004-05

** Data from 2006-07

Purpose of the Study

This project examined the role that K-12 school districts play in providing ECE services. The Michigan Association of Intermediate School Districts (MASID)

committee on early childhood education made promoting ECE to local districts and their leaders as their first and foremost strategic goal. The MAISD feels that K-12 schools need to be more active and involved in the ECE effort. With the research so overwhelmingly supportive of ECE, this study explored the level of priority given to ECE services by local school districts.

An obvious roadblock to local district involvement in ECE is that district finances are too limited to provide these services, especially since local districts' primary responsibility is to provide education services for grades K-12 while ISDs and the state have traditionally assumed greater responsibilities for providing Pre-K services. Finances certainly matter, and they were considered. This project sought to discover what other factors, along with funding, influence the commitment of local district leadership to the provision of ECE services.

Local school district superintendents were the focus of the study because they are the policy leaders in local districts. Most superintendents rely on their administrative teams, policy committees, and school boards, but they remain the single most important person in a district's policymaking. Given the prevailing research on the ECE's benefits, one might anticipate that local districts would be willing to incur some of the cost of providing these services. However, in most cases throughout the state, the investment of finances and resources that K-12s make in ECE remains minimal at best.

This study also sought to determine how familiar local leaders are with research regarding the benefits of ECE and assessed whether or not this was correlated with their districts' commitment to providing these services. Three dependent variables were developed that demonstrate a district's level of support for ECE. These were then

compared with a series of explanatory variables that sought to determine local district leaders' knowledge of ECE services and its benefits.

Finally, the study established a clearer picture of what state and ISD leaders have in mind for ECE programs and how their vision of these services can be delivered within the current policy framework. In particular, it established the role they envision for local school districts in the provision of ECE services. The final chapter comments on the efficacy of the current ECE picture in Michigan.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The research on ECE has generally been one of three types. The first type is cost-benefit analysis that examines the monetary return that society as a whole may or may not get from an investment in ECE. The second type has focused on the educational benefits and effects that ECE can have on school readiness and school success. The third area of research has examined the qualities of effective ECE programs. This includes elements such as the curriculum of the program, teacher preparation, and hours per day and week that children are in ECE programs. This section will examine the existing literature in these three areas and discuss the challenges that face states when implementing ECE programs. It will also discuss strategies that states might use to overcome these challenges as they strive to implement high-quality ECE programs.

The Foundations of Early Childhood Education Research: The Big Three

Three studies stand in the forefront of early childhood education research. A plethora of reports and articles that tout the benefits and advantages of ECE reference one or more of these projects. They are: The Perry Preschool Project (Ypsilanti, Michigan), the Abecedarian Early Childhood Intervention (North Carolina), and the Chicago Child-Parent Center Program (Chicago, Illinois). They will be referenced in this chapter as “the big three.” Each of these programs compared children participating in the respective ECE program with a control group of children that did not participate in the program.

Socioeconomic status, IQ, mother's education, and family composition were just a few of the factors for which the researchers controlled.

A good example of a report that relied on the big three is Robert Lynch's report for the San Francisco based non-profit organization WestEd. In his 2005 report entitled, "Early Childhood Investment Yields Big Payoff," Lynch argues that investing in ECE could be a savior to the nation's Social Security system. He argues that Social Security will face financial difficulties by 2018 when most of the baby boom generation will be drawing from the system. He notes that 2018 is when current preschoolers will enter the workforce. Using data drawn from the three studies, Lynch proposes that an investment of \$12,000 per child in 1.6 million of the most poverty-stricken children in the United States would pay off by turning the children into contributing citizens by the time they enter the workforce. Lynch claims that this investment would turn a Social Security shortage into a surplus by 2021.

Of the big three, the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project, which ran from 1962-1967 is the seminal work in ECE and is a logical starting place when examining the benefits of early childhood education programs. Many subsequent studies on the effects and impact of ECE begin with the Perry Project as the basis for the new study. The participants in the Perry project were 123 three- and four-year-old African-American children from low-income homes with IQs below 90. The children were randomly put into two groups with 58 receiving services and the remaining 65 being designated to the control group. The students receiving services participated in a two-and-half hour preschool program five days per week using the High/Scope cognitive developmental

curriculum, which is based on Piagetian “child-centered” principles. Some of the children received two years of services and others received one year.

The earliest results of the Perry study found that the participants’ IQ scores were increased, but that the impact on IQ faded by age eight. They also found many positive effects that lasted for years. For example, the participants obtained a higher grade point average and scored higher on standardized tests than did their peers; they also completed more years of school. By age 27, the participants in the Perry study reported higher income levels than the control group and they were less likely to be on welfare or involved in crime than was the control group. This is equated to a savings of \$105,324 per participant at age 27 in 2001 dollars, which is a cost-benefit ratio of \$7.16 to one dollar (Schweinhart, 2003). An age 40 follow-up study reports a return of \$12.90 for every dollar spent in 2000 dollars (Schweinhart, 2005). The study also concluded that the children who received two years of services were better achievers than those who were only in the program for one year. One feature of the Perry High/Scope Project that has made the study so reliable is that it has only a 6% missing data rate across all of its measures. An astonishing 97 % of the original participants still living were interviewed for the most recent age 40 study (Schweinhart, 2005).

The 1972 Carolina Abecedarian Early Childhood Intervention Project also has a high retention rate through age 21 for its participants. Researchers were able to gather data from 104 of the 111 original participants. Perhaps the biggest difference in the Abecedarian Project from the Perry Project is that the Abecedarian children began the program when they were between 4 and 18 months old and most participated until they were 5-years-old. Similar to Perry, all of the children in the study were low-income and

the majority of the children were minorities. The program consisted of an intensive, high-quality preschool program that was individualized for each child. The individualization was mostly in the form of “games” or activities that addressed social, emotional, and cognitive development with a very strong emphasis on language.

W. S. Barnett and Masse (2002) used the same essential methods that Barnett used to conduct the Age 27 cost-benefit analysis of the Perry High/Scope Project to study the Abecedarian Project. The Abecedarian Project was considerably more costly than the Perry Project was with an initial cost of about \$13,000 per child (2002 dollars). That is about twice the average Head Start program and twice what the Perry Program was in 2002 dollars. However, the researchers found that even at the cost of \$13,000 per child “the benefits outweighed the costs by a factor of four dollars for every dollar spent” (Masse & Barnett, 2002, p. 34).

The Chicago Child-Parent Center Program also focused on low-income children, but with a large sampling of over 1,539 children, 93% of whom were African-American. The longitudinal study followed children who were enrolled in government-funded kindergarten programs in the Chicago Public Schools in 1985-1986. The children attended the Child-Parent Centers beginning at age 3 and continued in some capacity through age 9. Children typically attended half-day preschool in the centers and later attended kindergarten in the centers as well. The program offered small class size and a structured curriculum that was designed by Chicago Public Schools. As the name of the program indicates, the centers also featured a parent room that stressed parent learning and involvement. Parents were required to attend the centers for at least a half-day per week.

A cost-benefit analysis was conducted on the Chicago study using 1,286 of the original sample of 1,539. The factors considered were: (1) savings in the costs associated with retaining or placing a child in special education, (2) savings that resulted from fewer juvenile and adult arrests and incarcerations, (3) savings from fewer incidents reported to the child welfare system regarding child abuse and neglect, (4) fewer costs associated with victims of potential crimes, and (5) increases in adult earnings and tax revenues as a result of higher educational attainment.

“The present value of program benefits was estimated based on a 3% annual discount rate evaluated at the beginning of preschool participation. The distribution of benefits were calculated separately for society at large (program participants and the general public), the general public, and government savings” (Reynolds et al., 2001, p. 301). Overall, \$7.10 was returned to society for every dollar invested in preschool. Excluding benefits to participants, the ratio of program benefits to costs for the general public was \$3.83 for every dollar invested. The ratio of benefits to costs for government savings alone was \$2.88 per dollar invested (Reynolds et al., 2001).

The cost-benefit analyses conducted on these three programs are particularly helpful for states such as California that are considering whether or not to pursue a universal preschool program. The Rand Corporation (Karoly & Bigelow, 2005), for example, was able to use the Chicago and Perry data, as well as data collected from the universal programs in Georgia and Oklahoma, to determine a potential cost benefit ratio of \$2.62 saved for every dollar spent if the state of California were to adopt a universal program for its 4-year-olds. This is a modest figure that was based largely upon the returns in Georgia and Oklahoma where only 60% of eligible children participated in the

universal programs. The benefit in California would increase if the participation level increased. Additionally, one simple change of factoring in a savings from a potential crime victim's loss, as was done in the Chicago study, would raise the potential savings in California to \$3.93 per dollar spent.

Educational Impact of ECE

While the cost benefit analyses are helpful to state governments and other researchers concerned with long-term impact, a recent study by C. R. Belfield (2004) at Columbia's Teacher College may prove more useful to intermediate and local school districts that are trying to decide whether or not to fund or expand an ECE program. Belfield focused on the medium-term cost savings that districts might see if they invest in ECE. He used the big three as his basis, but he focused on: (1) reductions in special education referrals, (2) reductions in grade retention, and (3) improvements in student learning productivity and school engagement. Reductions in special education and grade retention are rather concrete numbers and relatively easy to gauge in terms of cost. Improvements in student learning productivity and school engagement are more of a gray area, but Belfield explained how districts with more productive and engaged students can save money based on less teacher stress and sick time due to more job satisfaction. Fewer student discipline referrals and better treatment of school materials and facilities are also expected when students are engaged in learning. He explained that this would lead to less maintenance and supervisory expenses for the district.

Another educational outcome that is increasingly important under the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) policy is the need to decrease high school dropouts. Historically,

the dropout rate for minority and low SES students has been much higher than that of middle- and upper-class students. This puts schools in a conundrum because rigorous high-stake testing policies, such as those instituted under NCLB, have been found to increase the dropout rate for at-risk students (Stiggins, 2004). ECE programs hold promise in this area because studies have shown that they can increase test scores and lower dropout rates for students that participate in them.

In order to obtain valid results from a study, the results must be derived by comparing two equivalent groups (control and study group) following the intervention of the ECE program. In the cases of the big three studies, the two groups in each study were quite equivalent. Perry (age 27) and Chicago (age 22) found that 71% and 65%, respectively, of those in their program groups graduated from high school or received their graduation equivalent degree (GED). This is compared to 54%, respectively, in both of their control groups. The completion rate was much lower in the Abecedarian study where the program group had a 35% graduation rate, although that is compared to 14% rate for the control group. ECE programs may prove to be the solution to the NCLB conundrum as school administrators look to raise test scores while decreasing dropout rates.

Other areas that are certain to interest school leaders are special education referrals and grade retention. The Perry study combined the two figures and determined that 17% of the program group were either retained or referred to special education as opposed to 38% in the control group (Barnett, 2002). The Chicago study found that 12% of the students in the program group were referred to special education compared to 22% of the control group (Reynolds et al., 2001). The Abecedarian Project studied grade

retention through age eight and found that children who were in their program for five years were retained at a rate of 38%. Children in the Abecedarian program for three years were retained at a rate of 52% while 57% of the children in the control group were retained for at least one grade (CAP, 2005).

With the emphasis that NCLB puts on standardized testing, it is logical that school officials will be interested in the impact that ECE has, or may have, on test scores. One study, commissioned by the State of Michigan and conducted by the High/Scope Institute, examined the Michigan School Readiness Program (MRSP). The MRSP is designed to provide preschool to at-risk 4-year-olds. Xiang and Schweinhart of High/Scope (2002) found that children who participated in the MRSP program tested higher on the state's standardized test than their peers from similar socioeconomic backgrounds. More specifically, 24% more of the MSRP participants passed the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) English language arts test for grade four and 16% more passed the mathematics test. Additionally, 35% fewer participants of the MRSP program repeated a grade. Xiang and Schweinhart used these numbers to estimate that this program prevents an estimated 1,700 Michigan children from having to repeat a grade each year. Not only is there a large impact on test scores, but it also saves the state (but not local districts) an estimated \$11 million each year.

Validating the Research

W. Steven Barnett (1998) designed an elaborate meta-analysis that examined the long-term effects of ECE on cognitive development and school success. His motivation in this meta-analysis was to address the weak points in many other studies and to address the claim that many of the gains made by children in ECE programs tend to fade away as

children age. He selected studies for his meta-analysis if they met the following four criteria: (1) children entered the program before age five; (2) the program served economically disadvantaged children; (3) at least one measure of school success, socialization, or cognitive development was collected after age eight; and (4) the research design provided a comparable control group or no-treatment group.

In all, Barnett found 38 studies that met these criteria. Of the 38 studies, 15 had developed their own ECE program for the purpose of their study and 23 used either Head Start or a public school model as the basis of the program. Barnett referred to the 15 that developed their own program as “model programs” and considered them to be of higher quality than others because they tended to feature more highly-trained staff and smaller class sizes. Perry, Chicago, and Abecedarian were among the 15 identified as model programs. All but one model program study focused on African-American children and that study focused on Hispanic children.

Barnett found methodological concerns in the other 23 studies. In most cases, there were high attrition rates, and when comparing standardized test scores, there were often no pretests. Some studies had both of those problems. He proceeded, nonetheless, to sift through the studies to make the conclusion that ECE programs can have a tremendous impact on children’s long-term social and emotional development. This impact can lead to a diverse range of social benefits such as reduced crime rates and lower rates of divorce. It can also lead to better achievement in school and higher levels of education.

The studies cited by Barnett are most criticized for their inability to show long-term or lasting results. Even in the case of Perry, the effect on IQ disappeared by age

eight. Darcy Olsen, president and CEO of the Goldwater Institute, which is a conservative think-tank in Arizona, is highly critical of the Perry Project and the Abecedarian Project. Olsen's report, "Early Childhood Education: A Caveat" (2005), was written in response to Arizona governor Janet Napolitano's claim that a universal all-day kindergarten program in Arizona would return \$7 for every dollar spent and raise achievement levels while reducing the state's drop-out rate. Olsen finds fault in Perry and Abecedarian and other studies, claiming that ECE is not as beneficial as many researchers would lead the public to believe. She feels that the Perry study, especially, has too selective a sample and that no one has been able to replicate the results. She also feels that while the study participants had much lower unemployment rates than the control group, those rates and other factors were quite underwhelming when they were compared to the general public.

The Abecedarian Project comes under fire by Olsen for failing to discern which of the many interventions used in the project actually yielded results. She also found fault in the Abecedarian study for grouping the IQ results together as one instead of reporting that two of the four test groups saw no increase in IQ, and for being difficult to replicate based on cost and parent comfort level of releasing their child to such an intensive study.

W. S. Barnett who has conducted cost-effectiveness analyses on both the Perry and the Abecedarian studies frequently cites these studies, and many more, as a staunch supporter of ECE programs. He is aware of the perceived limitations of the model studies and he addresses them thus:

A naïve interpretation of the results of these studies would be to say that most ECE programs have failed to produce long-lasting gains in

achievement for disadvantaged children. . . . However, this conclusion is incorrect and the subsequent search for sources of fade-out in achievement appears to result largely from flaws in research designs and varying attrition rates for achievement-test data, which reduced sample size (thereby decreasing the statistical power to detect effects) and biased estimated effects toward zero. Studies that found no effects or fade-out were vulnerable to selective attrition because they obtained their achievement test data from schools' routine testing programs or they suffered from another design flaw that produced a similar problem even though they administered their own achievement tests. (Barnett and Boocock 1998, p. 128)

Barnett acknowledges that the manner and procedures used to administer mass standardized tests can lead to problems in interpreting the data gathered from them. Tests are not always uniformly administered across each testing location and there is often substantial change in state tests from year-to-year. He also claims that too many low-achieving children are excluded from testing and that children who are retained are not tested with their original grade cohort.

Despite recognizing the shortfalls in some of the studies and in the testing procedures, Barnett, however, remains an avid supporter of ECE. Olsen does identify some legitimate concerns and shortcomings of the studies, yet the model studies that Barnett relies on are quite valid and heavily cited by the research community. Upon reviewing the literature there does appear to be room for further research on the

educational outcomes of ECE, especially in the area of the impact on standardized test scores.

High Quality Early Childhood Education

It is important to emphasize that Barnett and other early childhood experts stress that ECE programs must be high quality in order for the participants to reap significant long-term benefits. (Barnett et al, 2004; Brooks-Gunn et al, 2003; Walker and Barratt, 2000). Barnett and The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) published its 2004 yearbook that rated the efforts of all 50 states in providing early childhood education programs. They developed a 10-item Quality Standards Checklist to compare the quality of prekindergarten programs across the country. The checklist consists of the following benchmarks:

- Curriculum standards – states must have a curriculum that covers the four core areas of math, science, language arts, and social studies, as well as cognitive development and social/emotional skills.
- Teacher degree requirements – lead teachers are expected to have at least a BA degree.
- Specialized training requirement for teachers – lead teachers are expected to have specialized credentials or endorsements that are specific to prekindergarten such as a Child Development Associate (CDA) degree.
- Assistant teacher degree requirement – assistant teachers are expected to hold at least a CDA or have equivalent training.
- Teacher in-service requirement – teachers are expected to attend at least 15 hours of professional development or course work each year.

- Maximum class size – class size must be limited to 20 students for 3- and 4-year olds.
- Staff-child ratio – there must be at least one staff member per 10 children.
- Screening/referral requirements – programs must screen for at least health, vision, and hearing.
- Requiring support services – at least one other type of support service must be made to participants or families. This could include parent conferences, home visits, parenting training, or referrals to social services.
- Meal requirements – all participants must have at least one meal provided per day.

Most of the standards identified by NIEER, are similar to those used by Head Start and other programs and they do not cause much controversy or debate. For example, one is not likely to debate the usefulness or necessity of health screening and providing children with nutritious meals. Curriculum standards and teacher training requirements, however, are two highly debated topics within the realm of ECE that warrant closer examination when creating or even defining a high-quality program.

Curriculum Standards and Instructional Models

Selecting an instructional model can be a contentious decision when developing an ECE program. Many studies have set out to determine if one approach is better than another, but this is a difficult task because not only do different programs have different approaches, they also have different educational goals and outcomes (Frede, 1998). For example, home care and parental childcare can be high quality in terms of the outcomes parents may wish for, but without a specific program or curriculum, most home-based

centers do not fit NIEER's definition of a high-quality program (Brooks-Gunn et al., 2003). This definition is generally reserved for center-based or preschool programs. Three different instructional models have been used and studied most frequently in the field. They are: (1) didactic or Direct Instruction, (2) traditional nursery school, and (3) cognitive developmental curriculum (Frede, 1998; Marcon, 2002).

Direct Instruction is a model for teaching that utilizes a highly structured, behavioral approach that is most commonly associated with drill-and-practice techniques (Frede, 1998; Mills et. al., 2002). Traditional nursery schools rely on children learning through play at their own pace. The teacher's role in the nursery school setting is to provide stimulating materials and to get involved in the learning when the child seems to be at a stop in learning (Highscope, 2005; Frede, 1998; Mills et al., 2002). The cognitive developmental approach relies on the teacher to initiate learning activities that are designed to develop a child's reasoning and problem-solving abilities (Frede, 1998, Mills et. al., 2002). An example of this approach is the High/Scope curriculum, which was used in the Perry Project.

In a heavily cited study, Schweinhart et al. (1986) compared the three models and concluded that students in a Direct Instruction program had much higher delinquency rates and were more likely to be identified as emotionally impaired (Mills et. al., 2002). Sixty-eight students were selected for the Schweinhart study (1986) and randomly assigned to one of the three groups. The initial results showed that over 90% of the students in the Direct Instruction group had IQs of 90 or higher at the time they entered kindergarten. This is compared to 68% in the High/Scope group and 70% in the nursery school group having IQs at 90 or higher. Schweinhart et al. (1986) found, however, that

these results in favor of Direct Instruction did not last long beyond kindergarten. Forty-seven percent of the Direct Instruction group was identified as emotionally impaired by age 15 compared to only 6% in both the High/Scope and nursery school groups.

Schweinhart et al. (1986) also found that by age 23, thirty-nine percent of the Direct Instruction group had a felony arrest record compared to 17% of the nursery school group and 10% of the High/Scope group.

R. Banks of the Clearinghouse on Early Education and Parenting (CEEP), at the University of Illinois, supports Schweinhart et al.'s findings by citing studies conducted by Louisville Head Start and the University of Illinois. The Louisville study and the University of Illinois study found similar results when comparing the three models of ECE programs. In all three of the studies, the Direct Instruction programs showed the most positive results on IQ during, and up to a year after, the preschool program, but not thereafter (Banks, 2004). In the Louisville Head Start study, the children in the nursery program showed higher verbal-social participation and they increased more in their ambition and aggressiveness than did the Direct Instruction children. In the University of Illinois study, 78% of the nursery school group graduated from high school, compared with only 48% of the Direct Instruction group (Banks, 2004).

Schweinhart and Weikart (1997) were able to examine the data from Schweinhart et al. (1986), along with the Illinois and Louisville studies, to conclude that:

Preschool programs based on child-initiated learning activities contribute to children's short- and long-term academic and social development, while preschool programs based on teacher-directed lessons obtain a short-term advantage in children's academic development by sacrificing a long-term

contribution to their social and emotional development. On this basis, research supports the use by preschool programs of a curriculum approach based on child-initiated learning activities rather than on teacher-directed lessons. (p. 63)

A thorough review of the literature related to instructional models shows that many early childhood experts agree with Schweinhart and favor cognitive or constructivist approaches over Direct Instruction. The main reasons cited when designing curriculum are because these programs tend to cause less stress for children and they demonstrate longer lasting effects (Brigman, 1989; Frede, 1998; Henry et al., 2003; Banks, 2004).

Not everyone is convinced about the impact that a curriculum model can have on childhood or adult delinquency. Banks also cites studies that “found no differences in academic achievement related to the type of classroom the children attended” [child-initiated or didactic programs] (2004, p. 3). A 2002 study by Mills et al. provides a great challenge to Schweinhart’s findings. They identified the limitations to Schweinhart’s study, such as the small sample size and sought to replicate the study focusing on the finding that children exposed to a Direct Instruction model were more prone to delinquency. They divided a sample of 171 into a group using the Direct Instruction model and a constructivist model based on constructivist principles of Votgotsky that was similar to the High/Scope model. They modeled their methods on Schweinhart et al.’s 1986 study and distributed a questionnaire to their participants when they turned 15-years-old. Mills sought to avoid many shortcomings of the Schweinhart study. A simple example of Mills’ effort is that while Schweinhart et al. relied on a popular high school

coach who was familiar with the neighborhood where the children lived to help collect their data, the Mills study gathered their data anonymously (Mills et al., 2002).

In the end, the Mills study found no program effect on any form of delinquency. They found few, if any, differences between their constructivist model and the DI model on any standard that they compared. They conclude that Schweinhart et al.'s results were largely gender based, where there were 57% more boys in the DI group than in the High/Scope group. Mills et al. (2002) point out that boys are four times more likely than girls to participate in delinquent behaviors. While Mills et al. raise some legitimate concerns regarding the effect of the instructional model on delinquency, it seems that there is enough evidence to support the long-term educational gains of the cognitive approach.

Teacher Quality

Deciding on a curriculum model can be a contentious decision for ECE programmers and so can establishing standards for teacher qualifications. One hundred percent of public school kindergarten teachers in the United States now have at least a four-year degree while less than 50% of preschool teachers hold such a degree (Barnett, 2003). ECE teachers have a long history of being held to lower educational standards than their elementary peers. This is unfortunate because they will have as much, if not more, impact on child development than will elementary teachers. Numerous studies have found that teacher behavior associated with level of education greatly influences student learning (Barnett, 2003; Whitebook, 2003; Bridgman, 1989). Teachers of prekindergarten children must be in tune to each child's social, emotional, physical, and cognitive needs (Bridgman, 1989). Barnett (2003) and M. Whitebook of UC Berkeley

(2003) cite several studies that have determined that teachers with a four-year degree or higher score higher on the early childhood rating scale and also tend to exhibit more attentiveness and warmth towards the children in their care. Whitebook summarizes her point well:

Throughout the United States, many children are failing to reach their full potential in school. But driven in part by what we have learned about early childhood development, the academic, business and policy communities now recognize that high-quality preschool programs are an important way to rectify this situation. And based on what the research has shown thus far, it appears that teacher preparation at the four-year college degree level is the best way to achieve such quality. (2003, p.8)

Whitebook realizes that it will take a while to arrive at the point of every preschool teacher having a four-year college degree. She suggests that it might be best to work on the goal of having at least one teacher per room in possession of a four-year degree in the area of ECE. Under NIEER standards, this would mean that of at least two teachers per twenty students, one of the two would be the lead teacher with a four-year degree.

While the instructional approach and teacher qualifications are important factors in implementing a high-quality program, there are other factors that have a bearing on program success. It is clear from the big three studies that the earlier a child enters a high-quality program, and the longer he or she participates in the program, the more profound the program benefits will be. For example, the grade retention rate was much lower in the Abecedarian project for children who were in

the program for 5-year-olds or older. The returns were also consistently higher in the Perry project for children that were in the preschool for two years rather than one year (Reynolds, 2001; Walker and Barratt, 2000).

Challenges to Early Childhood Education Programs

In evaluating the 50 states, NIEER found that only Arkansas' ECE initiative meets all 10 of their quality standards. They found that 20 state initiatives meet five or fewer of the 10 standards and 12 states do not even have a state-funded prekindergarten program. Furthermore, they found that only 10% of the nation's 3- and 4-year-olds are served by state funded programs. Of this 10%, three-quarters of the children are from only 10 different states. The good news for ECE is that the number of children in programs is dramatically increasing each year and that many states are in the process of improving their initiatives. It is the goal of most states to provide a high-quality program that serves the highest percentage of children possible. An obvious question then is: why do so many state programs fall short of these standards? This is a difficult question to answer and requires some historical background along with a closer look at a few of the current programs.

Perhaps the discrepancy between states in educational programs can be traced to the Tenth Amendment of the United States Constitution, which leaves education largely in the hands of the states. For 40 years, however, the federal government has played a role in providing ECE with the Head Start program (GOA, 2004). The federal government is also indirectly involved in ECE through Title I funding, which is designed to improve schooling for children at-risk of failing and the Child Care

and Development Fund (CCDF) which also supports low-income families (Mitchell, 2003). NCLB is a federal initiative focused on K-12 education, but outside of Head Start and the funding programs, ECE remains largely in the hands of the states.

The Big Debate

The Head Start program provides grants to local public and private agencies to fund comprehensive child development services to children and families. In 2005, Head Start provided childcare/preschool for approximately 906,993 children. The average Head Start program provides partial-day services for eight or nine months out of the year at an average cost of \$ 7,287 per child (NHSA). Included in these costs are comprehensive health services providing immunizations, physical and dental exams and treatment, and nutritional services. An estimated 225,000 children, however, are being served in full- day, full-year programs to help meet the childcare needs of parents who are either working or in job training (GOA, 2004). In fiscal year 2005, Head Start was funded at \$6.8 billion. Head Start remains a vibrant and beneficial program that has been reaffirmed and supported by every president's administration including George W. Bush's, but it is only designed to meet the needs of a small percentage of the children in our society.

The most common criticism of Head Start is that it is a targeted program that is only designed to meet the needs of preschoolers from families that fall below the strict federal poverty line. To qualify for Head Start, a family unit of three people must earn less than \$17,170 annually or less than \$20,650 for a unit of four in 2007-08 dollars. This means that children from families that do not meet these requirements are often left without quality childcare. One of the most heated debates in ECE is whether programs

should be targeted to children who are in the most need or if they should be offered universally to all families who wish to take part in the programs.

There are three main arguments for targeted childcare programs. The first is that they are less expensive and more efficient than widespread universal programs. Many studies have shown that ECE has a larger impact on at-risk children than on middle-class and upper-class children (Barnett, Brown, & Shore, 2004; Shulman & Barnett, 2005). Proponents then argue that it would be more cost-effective to target children who need it the most with publicly-funded programs while having parents, who can afford the programs, pay for their own. The second argument is that targeted programs are implemented on a smaller scale and are therefore of a higher quality than universal programs. The rationale behind that argument is that targeted programs can do a better job of channeling resources and attention towards the children that need it the most rather than trying to spread resources too thin to meet the needs of more children. Finally, there tends to be more public support when people know that tax revenue is going to people who cannot otherwise afford high-quality childcare. There is also lingering sentiment that children are better off at home in the care of their mothers and that daycare should only be used for those who have no other options (GOA, 2003; Lascarides, 2000). This belief makes some conservative lawmakers reluctant to advocate for programs that would take children out of their own homes (Lascarides, 2000).

While targeted programs are less expensive and administered on a smaller scale, they are not favored by most experts (Barnett et al., 2004). In a 2004 NIEER publication, Barnett et al. rebutted the three arguments in favor of targeted programs. First, targeted programs can still leave a lot of children without care (Barnett et al., 2004; GOA, 2003).

Barnett et al. (2004) maintain that, “the need for preschool education does not cease when family incomes exceed the income thresholds for targeted state and federal programs” (p.6). Also, recent research indicates that children from all income level can benefit from high-quality programs (Schulman & Barnett, 2005). Using the cost-benefit argument, Barnett et al. (2004) argue that the cost of failing to serve children is much higher than the savings incurred by targeting the program in the first place. They find fault in the second argument by contending that programs for the poor “tend to be poor programs” (p. 4) because many people take the stance that ‘beggars can’t be choosers’. Universal programs also offer a better potential for a positive peer effect because children are more likely to be grouped heterogeneously when programs are universal than when they are targeted. Finally, Barnett et al. (2004) feel that public support will be greater for universal programs once the public begins to reap the benefits of children being served by high-quality programs.

Addressing the Funding Elephant

Early childhood education is a hot button issue in the United States. One would be hard pressed to find a politician or public school educator who will speak out against ECE. Yet, this begs the question: why is there such a small percentage of high-quality programs in existence? The answer to that question may be largely attributable to funding.

Prior to 1970, it was estimated that less than \$25 million was spent annually by a total of only seven states on ECE. By 1988, those numbers rose to \$190 million spent by 28 states. In 2002, the numbers jumped to \$2 billion spent by 45 states (Mitchell, 2003). The increase in spending corresponds well with the increase in

knowledge about the benefits of ECE. Despite this dramatic rise in spending, however, funding is still the biggest obstacle in reaching at-risk children with high-quality ECE programs. Funding shortages affect vital ECE program variables such as transportation, hours and days of services, and teacher salaries (AFT, 2002).

There is great disparity in how states fund their ECE programs. Some of the more common funding sources include the lottery, sales tax, gambling proceeds, sin taxes, and federal grants, such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) (Mitchell, 2003).

More recently, however, states are turning to partnerships with business and industry to fund their programs. The model state for this type of funding is North Carolina and its North Carolina Partnership for Children, also known as Smart Start. The program was launched in 1993 by Governor Jim Hunt as a means to provide high-quality childcare to the children in North Carolina for children age birth to five. The main purpose of Smart Start was to improve the quality and the availability of childcare for the families of North Carolina. Each of the 100 counties in North Carolina offers different Smart Start programs and services, depending on the needs of that county. Smart Start resources are used to improve the quality of childcare, make childcare more affordable and accessible, provide access to health services, and offer family support. They began with a \$20 million investment in 1993 and they peaked with an investment of \$235 million in 2001. The investment in 2003 was \$200 million and included a mix of public and private financing.

In addition to funding, the partnerships provide technical assistance on program development, administration, organizational development, communications, fiscal

management, technology, contracts management, and fundraising. They also set statewide goals for the ECE programs and services (Fu, 2003). Eight states and large cities including Michigan, Alabama, Colorado, Memphis, and Vermont have visited North Carolina and have begun to build programs similar to Start Smart in their state. Private sources may hold more promise than public funding for many ECE programs at this time when public budgets are being cut.

Experience with Four Public Programs

The United States Government Accountability Office (GOA) conducted a study of four state prekindergarten programs that was published in 2004. The programs in Georgia, Oklahoma, New York, and New Jersey were a mix of universal and targeted programs selected because of some important similarities and differences. A similarity they shared was that each program offered services to families regardless of income. Another similarity was that they all made use of community partnerships with Head Start or other large childcare providers. The biggest difference was that Georgia and Oklahoma had statewide programs made available to all 4-year-olds. The programs in New York and New Jersey were targeted to certain communities with the highest concentration of poverty. There were also some differences in all-day versus half-day programs, teacher qualifications, and funding methods.

The study was conducted by interviewing state and local agency officials; providers of prekindergarten services; federal, state, and local Head Start staff. The GOA also reviewed and analyzed selected data on childcare availability in the four states and across the nation. Finally, they reviewed a study on a school district in Oklahoma and a

statewide study in Georgia and determined that the two studies would provide valid information. The most important finding in the GOA (2003) study was the benefit of collaboration between school districts and community-based organizations when providing childcare and preschool services. States are limited in their resources and collaboration allows for the sharing of resources. It also helps to alleviate fears that state programs would eliminate the existing community programs that people have come to know and trust.

The study also found that there are many trade-offs in the decisions that policy makers must make when implementing programs. For example, half-day programs can service a larger number of children at a lower cost, but they are less effective in preparing children for school. Half-day programs also present a problem to parents who work full-time and will have trouble transporting children or finding care for the remainder of the day.

Transportation was a large barrier that many families faced in the states with these programs. It was not universally provided in any of the programs, even in New Jersey where there was a court order to provide a program for the state's neediest children. In Oklahoma, one district with a 45% free and reduced lunch rate found that only 29% of the children in its ECE program qualified it. Similarly, another Oklahoma district found that 84% of its student population qualified for free and reduced lunch but only 60% of the children participating in ECE qualified for it. This shows that while the programs are universally available, they are still not universally accessible to the neediest families.

The GOA study did not set out to compare the virtues of a targeted versus universal program, but it does echo some of the same findings as Barnett et al. (2004).

The GOA find this to be the biggest “trade-off” issue for states to decide because targeted programs can be more focused and provide more intensive remediation, but they can also exclude children that need services. The GOA study concludes that the targeted versus universal debate, much like the half-day or full-day argument, is one that will have to be decided based on the individual needs of the states.

Conclusion

While there remain some areas within the field of ECE, such as curriculum and the debate between targeted or universal programs, there is little if any doubt that high quality ECE helps tremendously to prepare children for school. There is strong evidence that society, as a whole and not just educational systems, can and will benefit by providing ECE services. It is also clear that some populations, such as children in single parent and low-income households, have much to gain from participation in ECE programs. What is not very clear is why more state and local educational systems have not put a stronger emphasis on ECE. In the state of Michigan, for example, the budget for ECE programs has been tremendously reduced in the past five years while the state legislature has increased the budget for K-12 institutions. The state has put such an emphasis on raising high school graduation standards and the development of high stake tests that any budget increases have been quickly allocated to K-12 programs. While high standards for graduation and increased spending are important priorities, it seems that one of the most obvious means for obtaining high standards has been almost entirely overlooked in most strategic plans across the state. That vehicle is high quality ECE which has been proven to help obtain the goals that local districts are striving to obtain.

It is not clear why these programs are not more greatly emphasized at the state, ISD, and local levels.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

The educational benefits and cost-effectiveness of high-quality ECE have been well established. The state of Michigan and the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA) has made the provision of quality ECE a high priority in their respective strategic goals. At a time when the state is advocating collaboration and partnerships between agencies and even private sources, an important partner seems to be missing from the equation. That partner is local school districts and their absence is conspicuous because they are the institutions with the best access to children and arguably the most to gain by sponsoring or providing high-quality ECE programs. This study has focused on the efforts of the state, ISDs, and local districts in Michigan to provide early childhood education to children throughout the state.

It is easy to say that the reason local districts are not more involved in ECE is that the funding does not exist for districts to provide these services. While the availability of state funding is a large factor, it is certainly not the only one in determining whether or not a district provides ECE services. Local districts can also take a proactive role in raising funds for these services or they can seek partnerships with other organizations to help provide these programs for their future students. Many of the cooperative efforts would come with little or no cost to the district. Every district in the state has to make decisions regarding budget and staffing priorities and the key person in this decision-making process is typically the school superintendent. While a school superintendent is not the only relevant decision maker in a local district, s/he is the single most important policy setter. School

superintendents bring unique backgrounds and experiences to their positions that influence how they perceive early childhood education. A greater understanding is needed regarding how superintendents perceive early childhood education and the implications that their perceptions have on the programs that may or may not be offered in their districts.

A key objective of this study has been to determine how K-12 leaders perceive ECE and what impact, if any, these perceptions have on their willingness to provide or help provide ECE for preschool-aged children in their districts. Factors that influence these perceptions were assessed. The study analyzed what role state and ISD leaders envision for local school districts in the provision of ECE services and evaluate whether this is consistent with district leaders' perceptions of their organizations' role. Finally, it sought to assess changes in state and ISD policy or practices that local district leaders regard as most critical in order for their districts to assume a larger or more effective role in the provision of ECE services. The research questions are as follow:

Research Questions

Research Question 1

To what extent do local school districts vary in their participation in the provision of ECE services to local children, and what factors account for these inter-district variations?

- a. To what extent does district involvement in ECE services correspond to features of the local community (urbanicity, poverty level), school district (enrollment size, per-pupil funding, staff, leadership), or ISD operations?

- b. What relationship, if any, is there between the knowledge level of superintendents' about ECE programs and the level of service that their districts provide for ECE?

Research Question 2

What are local school district superintendents' perceptions of ECE programs?

- a. How knowledgeable are they about ECE programs?
- b. How familiar are they with past research on the educational benefits of ECE? How familiar are they with various state and federal ECE policies
- c. How familiar are they with the ECE services available to families in their local district?
- d. What factors have most influenced local district superintendents' views of ECE?
- e. To what extent do they view ECE programs as important in attaining their districts' achievement goals for K-12 students?

Research Question 3

Are the roles for state, ISDs, and local districts in the provision of ECE services in Michigan properly aligned?

- a. What role do state and ISD leaders envision for local school districts in the provision of ECE services to Michigan children? How has this role evolved over time?
- b. Are the roles envisioned by state and ISD leaders for local districts consistent with local district leaders' perceptions of their role or responsibilities?

- c. What support do local school district administrators want and need from the state and their ISD in order to provide ECE services in their district?

This research project utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods to address the research questions. A survey of approximately 30 local school district superintendents gathered data that assessed perceptions and gauged knowledge. The survey was the key instrument that addressed the three main research questions and many of the sub-questions. Interviews with two state officials, two ISD superintendents and two ISD early childhood education coordinators provided an understanding of what these agencies expect from local leaders and how they feel the various levels should work together to provide services. Interviews with four local school district superintendents provided in-depth information regarding superintendent knowledge and their perceptions of ECE, and an online data review provided such information as district demographics, funding, and spending.

Methods of Data Collection

Survey of Local School District Superintendents

Local school district superintendents were a crucial component of this study because of the prominent role they play in setting policy for their school districts. Specifically, the survey of local school superintendents helped address Research Question 1, which focused on the knowledge and perceptions that local school district superintendents have regarding ECE in a consistent and precise manner. The survey also provided important insight into Research Question 2b regarding the level of knowledge

that superintendents have about ECE services offered by the district, and helped with Research Question 3c that sought to determine what support local districts need in order to offer ECE programs. The survey was an efficient and accurate means of gathering data because it was easily disseminated to a large number of participants and the form remained consistent each time it was used.

ISD Survey Sampling

Superintendents are responsible for overseeing nearly every aspect of their district's operation from staffing and budgeting to transportation and facilities management. Superintendents in small districts without a large central office staff will often wear many hats and do the job of finance director, human resource director, curriculum director, and discipline officer, to name a few. In districts with large central office staffs, superintendents may not be as hands-on with the various roles, but they will have the responsibility to oversee all of the aforementioned positions. The common thread between all superintendents is the pressure they face for their students to perform and achieve at the highest possible level.

With there being such a difference in the actual duties of superintendents, it is important to gauge many of those duties in order to determine how ECE fits into the operation and vision of a school district. To get the most accurate measure of the knowledge and perceptions of local superintendents a sample from districts of all sizes was purposely selected for this study. Specifically, four ISDs that contain local districts of various sizes were selected for the survey portion of the study. Within these four ISDs, surveys were distributed to every local superintendent. Many factors, such as size and location of a district, can influence a superintendent's knowledge and perceptions.

An effort was made to gather a sample that included superintendents from urban districts, rural districts, and suburban districts of various enrollment size and demographic composition. To ensure this variety Michigan's two most populated ISDs, Wayne and Oakland, were selected along with two rural ISDs, Allegan and Ionia. Wayne and Oakland are comprised of diverse large, medium, and small sized urban districts while Allegan and Ionia are comprised of small and medium rural and small city districts. Wayne and Oakland helped ensure that the sample would be large enough. Allegan County, which refers to its ISD as an Educational Service Agency (ESA), was purposely selected for its rural districts in part, but mostly because it is known throughout Michigan for its ECE programs. Ionia ISD provides a comparable sample to Allegan County.

It is important to stay within the same ISDs because of the central and crucial role that ISDs play. ISDs provide and coordinate important services to their constituent local school districts that facilitate learning and teaching. They may operate their own programs or they may contract with local districts to facilitate the formation of consortia that provides career-technical education, special education, or other academic programs. An ISD with a strong ECE program can have strong impact on the services provided by the local districts.

Instrumentation

The survey was generated and disseminated with the SurveySelect ASP Advanced program that disseminated the survey online and helped to collect, sort, and tally the data. The survey was an efficient means for collecting background information and gauging the knowledge and perceptions of local superintendents. It complemented the more in-

depth interview process by providing data in a concise and uniform manner. It was a self-designed tool with each survey item prepared with the research questions in mind and incorporating data from the literature review and the interview responses of state and ISD leaders. The survey included closed-form items, open-form items, and ordinal scale form items.

- Closed-form items direct participants to provide responses to questions from predetermined answers. By responding to these items, the researcher was able to determine such information as educational background, years of experience, and the training of superintendents. The answers also helped gather information on funding, spending priorities, and ISD policy. Closed-form items gather data in a very clear, concise, and consistent manner that also allows the researcher to make comparisons and conclusions from the data.
- Open-form items allowed participants to make any response they desired. This method is similar to questions asked in an interview, but with the survey the questions can be answered at the respondent's leisure with ample time to construct or even research a thoughtful response. Open-form items on the survey provided insight to superintendent's perceptions on issues relating to ECE, their district and state, and ISD policy.
- Ordinal scale items were a critical component of the survey. Scale items asked the respondents to rank or rate questions of opinion on a scale of 1 to 10. The scale items provided data assessing knowledge and perceptions

regarding the role and impact that ECE can have in a K-12 school setting. Scale items asked superintendents to rank such things as their satisfaction with the state's policy on ECE, as well as their own district's policy on ECE. Scale items were used to make comparisons and conclusions among participants by asking the same question in the same manner to different participants.

The closed-form items with the limited response options and the ordinal scale items on the survey provided demographic and background information that could not be obtained through archetypal responses. The closed-form items helped to paint a picture of the educational background of superintendents in relation to ECE while the scale items helped to determine the level of knowledge the superintendents have as well as their feelings towards it and the role that it plays in their district. The scale questions also helped gauge the level of satisfaction that the three levels of state, ISD, and local school leadership have regarding their own role in providing ECE services and the role that the other levels are currently playing in providing services.

Procedures

Surveys were e-mailed to approximately 75 local school superintendents from within the four selected ISDs. A total of 30 surveys were completed and submitted online. An e-mail (see appendix F) that introduced the study was sent to each superintendent in the four selected ISDs. A link to the surveys was included so the participants could respond at their leisure and in a comfortable setting. They were allowed to access the survey as many times as they chose during the 30-day period that

the survey was available online. Data was collected and later reviewed using the SelectSurvey ASP Advanced software package. A brief e-mail reminder was sent to those superintendents who did not respond to the more elaborate initial e-mail request

Interviews with State, ISD, and Local School Leaders

The researcher personally contacted the ISD superintendents in the four selected counties to ask for their support and help in encouraging the local superintendents to participate in the survey. The interviews were important methods for collecting data in this study. As Rubin & Rubin 1996 state, “qualitative interviewing is a way of finding out what others feel and think about their worlds” (Rubin & Rubin, 1996 p. 10). A qualitative approach was crucial to this study because it allowed the researcher to determine and assess perceptions and attitudes. Qualitative methods, such as interviews, can answer simple questions, but they also help elicit feelings and attitudes. The interview approach can aid the researcher “in search of opinions, perceptions, and attitudes toward some topic” (Glesne, 1999 p. 67).

Research Question 1 was designed to determine the attitudes and perceptions of local school superintendents towards ECE. The interviews allowed the researcher to assess attitudes and perceptions on a deeper level than the survey because they were conducted face-to-face which allowed for nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, hand gestures, and tone of voice to be assessed. The interview responses, which were given orally, were more detailed than the responses to the open questions on the survey. The interviewer’s style was important when gathering data to answer Research Question 3 which dealt with the vision that state, ISD, and leaders have for the provision of ECE.

The participants had to feel at ease and not lead into answers that they thought the interviewer wanted to hear. Surveys were conducted solely with local superintendents so interviews were the tool used to assess the perceptions of ISD and state leaders.

Interview Sampling

While surveys were distributed to each local school district superintendent in four ISDs, two of the ISDs were selected for a closer examination of the ISD leaders' thoughts and perceptions regarding ECE. Specifically, two local school superintendents from each of the two ISDs were interviewed for a total of four interviews with local superintendents. The ISD superintendents and the ECE coordinators from the two ISDs selected for deeper study were also interviewed. To complete the picture, the director of ECE for the Michigan Department of Education and her top coordinator were interviewed as well. In all, 10 interviews with state, ISD, and local educational leaders were conducted.

Two medium-sized ISDs and four medium-sized local school districts were purposely selected for deeper study. The medium-sized districts were purposely selected because they typically have budgets large enough to include some discretionary funds that could conceivably go to ECE, but they are not big enough to have enough resources to delegate funds without making it a high priority. The same logic extends to ISDs where medium-sized districts are large enough to employ an ECE director, but small enough where the ISD superintendent is more likely to be directly involved in decisions regarding the ECE services that the district provides.

Interview Instrumentation

The face-to-face interviews with state leaders, ISD leaders, and local district superintendents were semi-structured. This means that there was a list of predetermined questions, but there was room to deviate from these questions as dictated by the circumstance of each individual interview. This is one of the strengths of the interview technique of research. “It provides the researcher with an opportunity to explore at a depth and degree of detail aspects such as motivation governing the behaviors of the interviewee that are far beyond the scope of the survey” (Verma and Mallik, 1999 p. 10.) All of the questions were written out in advance; however, there were times when the questions were revised and amended during the course of the interview. It followed the format suggested by Verma and Mallik (1999):

The opening question will be followed by a number of supplementary questions acting as a reminder to the researcher to ensure that all the foreseen aspects of the issues are covered. Of course, and this is the beauty of interviews, interviewees do not respond in foreseeable ways and the researcher will have to be ready to invent further questions as the interview process proceeds to explore in depth the issue of interest. (p.13)

The researcher deviated from the scripted interviews on the occasion that a response to a question was essentially given in the course of answering an earlier question. The researcher also asked deeper, more probing questions when he felt that the respondent had more to say on the topic or was going in a direction that was pertinent to the study, but not anticipated when the questions were scripted.

Procedure

Requests to arrange a 60-minute face-to-face interview with selected local and ISD superintendents as well as state and ISD coordinators, were made via the telephone or e-mail. The interviews took place at a time and location convenient to the participant. Each interview took approximately 60 minutes to complete. Care was taken to ensure that there would be no interruptions during the course of the interview. One participant chose to be interviewed in a restaurant, another at his district's ISD; the other interviews were conducted in the participant's own office.

All interviews were audio digitally recorded and notes taken. Two tape recorders were used for transcription purposes. The digital recordings were downloaded and saved to a password-protected computer. Two recorders offered insurance that the interviews were recorded. The notes served as a backup to the recordings, but more importantly they were a means of denoting facial expressions, postures, hand gestures, and other indicators that were telling of the participant's feelings and opinions of the matters being discussed.

Figure 1 on the proceeding page shows how the sample for the surveys and interviews was broken down. It also shows a total of how many interviews and surveys were distributed.

ISD 1 (28 local districts)

- Survey all Local Superintendents

ISD 2 (35 local districts)

- Survey all Local Superintendents

ISD 3 (7 local districts)

- Survey all Local Superintendents
- Interview 2 Local Superintendents
- Interview ISD Superintendent
- Interview ISD ECE Coordinator

ISD 4 (6 local districts)

- Survey all Local Superintendents
- Interview 2 Local Superintendents
- Interview ISD Superintendent
- Interview ISD ECE Coordinator

Michigan Department of Education:

- Director of Early Childhood Education
- Coordinator of Early Childhood Education

TOTALS

- Local Superintendents Surveys Distributed: 76
- Local Superintendent Interviews: 4
- ISD Superintendent Interviews: 2
- ISD ECE Coordinator Interviews: 2
- State Level ECE Director/Coordinator: 2

Figure 1. State, ISD, and Local Educational Leader Survey and Interview Sample

Obtaining Financial and Demographic Information

Financial and demographic information from ISDs and local school districts was an important component needed to answer Research Question 1a regarding factors that influence local superintendents' view of ECE. It was also needed to answer Research Question 2a regarding features of the local community. Information such as enrollment, community demographics, per pupil funding, and spending was gathered on the districts whose superintendents responded to the survey. This information was available online

from the Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI) and most easily ascertained through their Schoolmatters.com web site.

Table 2 on the proceeding page shows how interview and survey items corresponded to the research questions. The study centered on three research questions which were broken down into several sub-questions. The Table shows which research question is being addressed by which item on the participant interview questions in Appendixes A-D. The number in the column labeled “research question” corresponds directly with the item number on the interview and surveys which are listed in their respective columns. The instruments were designed in a way to elicit information that required a more thoughtful and prolonged response from the participant. The survey was designed so that the participant could provide factual information in an easy and concise manner.

Table 2.

Description of Research Survey Items

Research Questions	Interview Questions for Superintendents	Interview Questions for State Leaders	Interview Questions for ISD Superintendents	Interview Questions for ISD Coordinators	Survey Item/ Number	Demo-graphic Information
1) To what extent do local school districts vary in their participation in the provision of ECE services to local children, and what factors account for these inter-district variations?						
1a	4,6,9	9	4,8,10,11			CEPI Data
1b		9		13	19,20	CEPI Data
2) What are local school district superintendents’ perceptions of ECE programs?						
2a	7,10,11	9			5,6,10,12, 13,20	

2b	7,10,11				11,12,20	
2c	5,6,10				5,6,10,16, 19	
2d	7,8				7,8,9	CEPI Data
2e	17		13		20,21	
3) Are the roles for state, ISDs, and local districts in the provision of ECE services in Michigan properly aligned?						
3a	15	3,5,6,12	5,6,10, 12,14,15	5,6,7,10,11		
3b		3,5,6,7, 10,11	5,6,10,13, 15	5,6,7,10,11	18,24,25, 26	
3c		5,7	12,14,15	5,11	18,24,25, 26	

The Pilot Study

To help ensure the validity of the interview process, the interview questions were administered in a pilot study in advance of the actual interviews. Pilot interviews were conducted with three superintendents and one ISD coordinator. These pilot interviews allowed the researcher to use and revise the questions as needed, checking for clarity, ease of completion, and degree of information. As a result of the pilot study, the decision was made to provide local superintendents with a copy of the interview questions and for one of the questions, the local superintendents were asked to rank priorities using a pen and paper. Some of the questions were modified as a result of the pilot study because they were too leading or they did not elicit a response that helped to clarify the research questions. The pilot interviews also helped the researcher become more familiar with the qualitative interview process which helped the questions go beyond a surface level when needed.

Methods of Data Analysis

As depicted in Table 1, data in this study were gathered from a combination of surveys, interviews, and artifacts. These methods of data collection were used to answer the three research questions and their sub-questions. Research Question 1, which was addressed using the survey primarily and the interviews to a lesser extent, seeks to determine the perception and knowledge of superintendents regarding ECE. This information was useful in addressing Research Question 2, which seeks to determine to what extent local districts vary in their participation in ECE and what factors influence these variations. Research Question 2 also seeks to determine what ECE currently looks like in local districts and why it looks the way it does. Data for this question was gathered through surveys, interviews, and artifacts. Research Question 3 addresses the vision that the three levels of local, ISD, and state education have for ECE and it was addressed with the open-ended survey questions and with interviews of the leaders at the three levels.

Research Questions 2 and 3 seek to determine perceptions and opinions of state, ISD, and local leaders, while Research Question 1 seeks to determine local districts' involvement and commitment to ECE. This involvement is measurable with dependent and independent variables. The dependent variables in this study are measures that indicate local involvement in ECE. There are many ways that a district can be involved in ECE and there is more than one potential indicator of this involvement. The study originally called for three indicators or dependent variables to be used. Once the data was gathered however, it proved troublesome to discern how much money districts spent on ECE because there is not a separate data entry line for ECE on the CEPI system.

CEPI does collect numbers for MSRP, but this too proved troublesome for districts that are served through the ISD. MSRP participation and spending numbers were not reflected on CEPI for many districts that participated in it through their ISD.

Dependent Variable 1

One way a local district's involvement and commitment to ECE will be gauged is by the amount of money they devote to these services, adjusted for district enrollment numbers. The district's overall income and expenditures, including ECE expenditures*, can be readily found on schoolmatters.com or through CEPI data.

*The data available on ECE spending was not consistent or reliable.

Dependent Variable 2

A second measure of district involvement and commitment to ECE is the number of children that received ECE services through district sponsored or supported programs such as MSRP. This variable extends beyond financial commitments and looks at other ways districts can be involved in efforts to provide ECE to the children in the district. CEPI reports the number of children receiving MSRP services and the superintendent survey also asks superintendents to indicate which programs are available in their district and how many students are collectively served by those services.

Dependent Variable 3

The final variable is a measure of a district's time spent on the deliberation over the implementation of ECE. This variable is measured in two ways. One way it is

measured is by considering how often ECE has been on leadership agendas and school board agendas. The other way is to consider the role that ECE directors/coordinators play in the district. For example, some ECE directors are members of the district's administrative team which would give a voice for the program at strategic meetings. Some districts have ECE directors that are also elementary principals or special education directors. Others have ECE directors whose main responsibility is the oversight of ECE programs which would be more likely to bring an element of expertise and attention to the position. These data were collected from the superintendent surveys.

Once data were gathered on the independent and explanatory variables, an index was created for this study that assessed each district's level of commitment. The determination of the level of commitment a local school district has towards ECE came from the survey tool and from artifacts gathered from the districts' web sites and CEPI data. A district with a strong commitment to ECE will likely participate in, or provide, numerous prekindergarten programs for the children in its district. In Michigan, most ECE programs are grant funded, but it takes commitment to obtain and sustain a grant. Most districts take advantage of Michigan School Readiness (MSRP) grants, but there are many other programs such as tuition-based programs like Even Start, Welcoming Schools, and Parents as Teachers should the district receive a grant or choose to pay for them. Superintendents were asked to indicate on the survey the programs in which their districts participated. They were given several choices to select from a category. They were also asked to tell how many children were served in the various programs. In cases where the data provided by the superintendent is not comprehensive, the gaps were filled in by determining which programs are listed on the district's web sites.

Districts that have made a strong commitment to ECE will give the leadership role for ECE positions important consideration. The survey inquired if the district's ECE coordinator was part of the district's administrative team. It also asked if he or she is certified in ECE, and if the oversight of ECE programs is his or her main job responsibility. It is more difficult for smaller districts to keep ECE supervision duties separate from other positions. For example, some smaller districts may not be able to afford a person whose only job is to supervise ECE. However, some small districts have employed a person who is certified in ECE to oversee the programs and they have hired him/her on a part-time basis or perhaps given him/her teaching duties as well. This person may or may not be part of the district's administrative team; that is typically a no-cost decision. Additionally, districts with less commitment to providing quality programs may simply appoint a person as supervisor who is not an expert in the area and ask him or her to supervise the programs in addition to their other duties. Often this person is an elementary principal or special education supervisor who has numerous other duties. However, one benefit to this is if the person in charge of ECE is the administrator for another program, it is more likely that he/she will attend administrative meetings.

Administrative team meetings are very important in most districts because they keep the superintendent informed about issues in the various programs and schools in the district. They also allow the superintendent and other key decision makers in the district a chance to discuss important issues. Appointing the ECE supervisor to this team gives him or her voice at that table. Board of education meetings are also important forums to discuss issues in the district. Funding decisions, staffing issues, service provisions, and many other items that may pertain to ECE programs can be discussed at administrative

team or board of education meetings. Superintendents were asked to indicate how many times ECE items were a part of these agendas in the past two years. Discussing these issues is an important step in the deciding whether or not to fund or support them.

A final indicator of a district's commitment to ECE comes directly from the district's superintendent via the survey. Item 19 asked superintendents to rate their district's effort to make ECE available to children in their districts. They were asked to mark the effort as poor, fair, good, or excellent. The opinion of the superintendent in this issue was very important. While this measure was more subjective than those that were previously mentioned, it was important to consider the input of the superintendent. This rating was used on the index in place of the districts financial commitment to ECE.

Table 3 shows how the ECE Provision Index score was calculated. The point values listed in the second column of Table 3 were added together to get an ECE Provision Index score for districts in the sample that provided enough information.

Table 3.

Calculation of ECE Provision Index Scores

Question/Factor	Index Point Value
Is the ECE coordinator a member of the ad team?	2 pts yes; 0 no
Is the ECE coordinator certified in ECE?	2 pts yes; 0 no
Is the ECE oversight the coordinator's main responsibility?	2 pts yes; 0 no
How many times on the ad team agenda?	1-2 1 pt; 3-4 2pts; 5-6 3 pts
How many times has ECE been on the board agenda?	1-2 1 pt; 3-4 2pts; 5-6 3 pts
Which programs are offered?	3 pts for each program offered
How do you rate your district's efforts?	Poor = 0 pts; Fair = 3 good = 6 excellent =9

Explanatory Variables

There are many potential factors or variables that can influence a district's commitment to ECE. The explanatory variables from this study fall into the following categories:

Superintendent Knowledge and Perceptions

While they typically rely on their school board and administrative staff for guidance in the decision making process, superintendents are the single most important decision-makers in a local school district. The knowledge and perceptions of the superintendent was determined through the surveys and interviews.

District Size

Another key variable in determining a local district's commitment and involvement in ECE is the size of the district. The larger a district's population, the greater their capacity to establish and fund ECE programs.

Enrollment Change

Tied into district enrollment is another important variable of enrollment change. Districts that are facing declining enrollments are likely to be facing budget cuts. This makes them a lot less likely to be creating new programs, especially if the programs are not for grades K-12.

Per Pupil Funding

School funding is no longer solely reliant on local property values and tax revenue as it once was in Michigan. However, there is still consideration for local revenues which does create a discrepancy in funding between districts in affluent areas and districts receiving the minimum foundation allowance set by the state. Districts with

large numbers of low-income and at-risk students are eligible for additional funding through federal entitlements, such as Title I and Title 31a.

Urban Location

The location of a district can also be an important variable in ECE programming. Urban districts are typically characterized by high minority populations, higher poverty levels than in most suburban and many rural locations, and higher enrollments. While there are exceptions to these urban characteristics, there is typically a greater need for the remediation that ECE can provide in urban settings than there is in other settings.

Areas of High Need

Deficits in school readiness skills are more often found in areas with high levels of poverty because quality childcare can be expensive and difficult to find. Poverty exists in all school districts in Michigan, but higher rates are usually found in urban or rural settings. It would make sense that districts with a greater need would put more of a premium on ECE than would districts with a less needy population.

ISD Policy

A final variable considered were ISD policies and initiatives. Selecting school districts from within the same ISD to participate in the study was important because ISDs play a crucial role in providing ECE services. The ISD policy was ascertained through the interviews with ISD leaders and local superintendents from within the ISD. ISDs with superintendents and directors that put a high premium on ECE were more likely to have an impact on local districts because ISDs are a direct source of information and professional development. There are also some ECE programs that are run by the ISD within the local district boundaries.

Data Analysis

Data was collected via quantitative and qualitative methods, which means that the data was analyzed differently based on the methods used to collect it. Survey, interview, and demographic data were processed to address the research questions.

Analysis of Survey Data

The SelectSurveyASP Advanced software tallied all closed and scale items on the survey. This program allows participants to respond electronically at their leisure and it tallies results both individually and collectively. For example, each superintendent was asked how long he/she has served in his/her current position. The SurveySelectASP program allowed the researcher to see each individual response regarding how many years of service each participant has, and it also calculated the average tenure of participating superintendents. The tallied results identified trends in the responses and allowed the researcher to determine relationships between the demographic and district financial data and the survey responses.

The data collected from the survey was tallied and each local school district was evaluated according to the dependent variables. Once the dependent variables were assessed, the explanatory variables were closely examined and cross-referenced with the dependent variables. Trends or similarities that exist in the dependent variables from districts with superintendents who are well informed about ECE programs and research were examined and compared to trends and data from districts with superintendents that are not well informed.

Analysis of Interview Data

Each interview was tape recorded and transcribed in its entirety. The transcriptions were closely reviewed and coded. The coding process consisted of sorting the responses into the categories of the explanatory variables. Within these categories themes and common trends were examined that related to the dependent variables.

Units of relevant meaning were separately identified, clustered along similar lines, and then grouped into larger themes. This method has been advocated by many qualitative researchers who use a phenomenological approach to interviewing (Seidman, 2006; Glesne 1999). A clear break from the phenomenological method is that most of the categories used for coding were determined prior to the interviews. The categories were based upon the explanatory variables, for example, because ISD policy, district demographics and enrollment, and personal background of the superintendent are all pertinent to the study, these categories were developed prior to the interviews. Other categories were developed as the interviews were transcribed.

There was a difference in the interviews conducted with state and ISD leaders and the interviews conducted with superintendents. The state and ISD leader interviews were primarily designed to address Research Question 2 which has a more narrow focus than Research Question 1, which is designed to determine superintendents' perceptions and Research Question 2 which is designed to assess the vision of the three levels of state education.

The interpretation of the interview began during the interview as the researcher noted interesting statements and made notes during the interview process. Any additional probing questions asked during the course of the interview became a form of

interpretation (Sediman, 2006). Lastly, a qualitative data analysis tool assisted in the coding process. All interview transcriptions were loaded into the program and notes and were made in the margins of the documents that were created by the program. This program made the data more manageable and the themes more readily identified.

The superintendent surveys were used in conjunction with the interviews and CEPI data review to establish triangulation of the data. Once the themes and categories were created, the researcher checked for consistency with the interviews and surveys. For example, if during the course of an interview a participant mentioned that his/her district has made a commitment to providing ECE to the children in their district, there was expected to be evidence of this commitment reflected on the survey.

Analysis of Artifact Data

The demographic and budgetary data from each local district was gathered from www.schoolmatters.com and from the CEPI website. These data came in a straightforward format that was broken down and put into a table (see appendix F) that displayed such information as district size, per-pupil funding, constituent demographics, and enrollment change. The table separated schools by county and then was further broken down into categories of explanatory variables. Once this information was organized into a table it was compared to the dependent variables to determine whether or not relations could be found between dependent variables and the explanatory variables.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The previous chapters presented three main questions that guided this study. The first question sought to determine the extent to which local school districts vary their early childhood education services and what factors account for these inter-district variations. The second question focused on the perceptions that local school superintendents have regarding ECE. The third question sought to determine if the roles of the state, ISD, and local districts are properly aligned. Chapter 4 discusses the study sample and presents the findings and results of the study. The survey results were tabulated and cross-referenced where applicable to the artifact data. The personal interviews were transcribed in their entirety and coded. The interview results were also cross-referenced where applicable to the survey and artifact data, but more importantly, the results from all three instruments were collectively considered to generate answers to the research questions in the clearest and most reliable manner possible.

School District Sample

The superintendents surveyed and interviewed for this study were purposefully selected from four intermediate school districts (ISDs) in Michigan. There are a total of 553 local K-12 public school districts in Michigan and there are 57 ISDs. Some ISDs are known as regional educational service agencies (RESA) or simply as educational service agencies (ESAs). For the purpose of this study, the more common acronym ISD was used in reference to intermediate school districts and educational service agencies

alike. Four ISDs, Wayne, Oakland, Ionia, and Allegan were selected for this study to provide a manageable, yet diverse sample.

Two of the selected intermediate school districts are located in southeast Michigan and they serve the state's two most populated counties. Both of these large and diverse intermediate districts are comprised of over 30 local districts that range in size from 1200 students to 141,000 students. The districts within the ISDs also represent a wide range in terms of their student racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic compositions. For example, some districts in Wayne RESA have a total minority enrollment percentage over 95% and others have a total minority enrollment under 3%. Wayne and Oakland are comprised of urban and suburban districts. The suburban districts in these counties serve some of Michigan's most affluent communities and some of the urban districts in these counties serve some of the state's poorest communities.

The other two counties in the sample, Ionia and Allegan, are located in western Michigan and are comprised mostly of rural districts that draw from small cities or villages. The enrollment of the public school districts in these counties ranges from 38 students to 3300. These counties are among the poorest in Michigan as measured by average household income. There is a range, however, in free and reduced lunch count from 19% to 72%. The local districts in these west Michigan counties are mostly racially homogenous with only one district in the two counties having a combined minority population over 10%.

Wayne and Oakland counties are similar to one another in terms of size and composition; Ionia and Allegan counties are also similar to one another in terms of size and composition. While Wayne and Oakland were selected because of their size and

diversity, Allegan was purposely selected for the study because it is widely recognized throughout the state for its progressive approach to ECE. Ionia was selected as Allegan's counterpart because it is very similar to Allegan in the number and composition of the local school districts and they both bring rural districts into the study.

Surveys were sent to a total of 74 local superintendents; 29 were completed and returned. The percentage of return was much higher in Allegan and Ionia than it was in Wayne and Oakland, but as indicated in Table 4, the sample represents the diversity in terms of enrollment numbers and demographics that the researcher sought when selecting the sample sites. When the averages in key demographic and financial categories in the participating districts were compared to the county averages in the same categories, it is clear that the participating districts do provide a representative sample of their ISDs. The county with the largest disparity is Wayne County, and much of that disparity could be attributed to Detroit Public Schools with their large enrollment numbers, high minority percentages, and free and reduced lunch percentages skewing the county averages. Detroit Public Schools are not represented in this study.

Table 4 on the proceeding page shows the averages in each of the four selected counties in enrollment, enrollment change percent, per pupil spending, Title I money received, free and reduced lunch percentage, and minority enrollment percentage.

Table 4.

Demographic and Financial Averages of Participating Districts and ISDs

	Enrollmen t	% Enrollme nt Change 2001- 2005	Per Pupil Spendin g	Title I Per Pupil	% Free and Reduce d Lunch	% Minorit y Enroll- ment *
Ionia Co. Average	2364	3.8	7735	196	34.2	6.7
Ionia Co. Participating	2346	3.1	7411	201	32.2	6.7
Allegan Co. Average	1895	4.7	7463	109	27.9	9.8
Allegan Co. Participating	1850	6	7390	121	33.4	11.26
Oakland Co.	6877	4.7	9754	105	18.7	24.3
Oakland Co. Participating	6451	8.4	9871	53	16.4	15.9
Wayne Co. Average	9480	7.5	9818	480	48	54.3
Wayne Co. Participating	7454	9.4	8761	138	33	13.1

* Combined percentage of non-white students

Artifact collection for this study consisted of gathering financial and demographic information from the participating school districts. Schoolmatters.com, which presents CEPI data, was the source for this information. This data was tabulated and is displayed in Table 5, which shows the raw demographic and financial data of the participating districts along with county averages. This information was very helpful in responding to Research Question 1 which seeks to explain differences in the provision of ECE by local districts in the state.

Table 5.

<i>District Financial and Demographic Information</i>						
	2005 Enroll- ment Size	2001-05 Enroll- ment Change Percent	2004 Per Pupil Spending	2004 Title I Funds Per Student	2005 Free & Reduced Lunch Percent	2005 Combined Minority Enrollmen t
District						
Ionia Co. Ave	2364		\$7735	\$196	34.2%	6.7%
Ionia	3380	+4.2	9764	221	42%	9.3%
Portland	2112	+14.7	7031	93	15%	2.6%
Belding	2463	+1.6	7202	360	48%	8.5%
Lakewood	2504	-8.1	7447	133	30%	6.4%
<u>Allegan Co. Ave</u>	1895	7.5	9754	109	27%	9.8%
Hopkins	1495	+8	7463	105	25%	2.2%
Glenn	38	+3	7880	0	0%	0.0%
Allegan	2975	-1%	7530	160	34%	7.6%
Plainwell	2845	2.4%	7138	69	20%	3.3%
Fennville	1481	-12%	7750	162	61%	40.3%
Otsego	2269	-7%	7417	110	27%	2.9%
<u>Oakland Co. Ave</u>	6877	+4.7	9754	105	18.7%	24.3%
Berkley	4604	+7.7	8709	90	12%	20.5%
Bloomfield Hills	6075	+3.3	14414	14	4%	20%
Clarenceville	2000	+4.3	8871	89	51%	19.5%
Clawson	1463	+2.9%	9928	23	18%	6.3%
Holly	4322	+3.4%	8145	106	23%	7.1%
Lake Orion	8117	+21%	8290	37	10%	8.2%
Lamphere	2518	+3.6%	13708	102	27%	10.9%
South Lyon	6918	+14.4%	7256	35	11%	5.4%
Troy	12805	+5%	10295	19	4%	27%
Walled Lake	15162	+5.4	9505	34	10%	12.2%
West Bloomfield	6977	+10.5%	9470	35	11%	30%

<u>Wayne Co. Ave</u>	9480	+7.5	9818	480	48%	54.3%
Allen Park	3635	+9.2%	7466	6	14%	6.7%
Dearborn	17,659	+5.4%	9707	245	48%	7.3%
Huron	2255	+12.7%	8202	55	19%	5.1%
Lincoln Park	5197	+4.4%	9298	138	41%	14.8%
Plymouth Canton	18608	+13.9%	7479	28	8%	18.8%
Redford Union	4635	+9.8%	9338	152	35%	27.2%
Westwood	2339	+6%	8748	373	73%	19.4%
Wyandotte	4944	+14%	9855	112	26%	6.1%

To help clarify and expand the information collected on the surveys, personal interviews were conducted with two local school district superintendents in Allegan and Ionia respectively and with the superintendents of both ISDs. Interviews were also conducted with the director of early childhood education in each of the rural ISDs. The sample included ISD superintendents and ECE supervisors because the study seeks to clarify the role that ISDs play in the provision of ECE in Michigan. To complete the picture for the delivery of services, the Director of the Office of Early Childhood Education and Family Services and the Supervisor of Infant and Toddler and Family Services in the Office of Early Childhood Education and Family Service for the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) were interviewed as well.

Sample Local School District Superintendent Characteristics

The superintendents who responded to the survey were as diverse in their backgrounds as the districts they supervise. The survey asked superintendents to indicate how many years they have been in their current positions, what credentials they hold, and what teaching experience and administrative experience they brought to their positions.

As indicated in Table 6, the superintendents who responded to the survey provided a good mix in terms of years of experience, credentials, and previous experiences. Many of the superintendents were new to their positions within the past two years, but an equal number had been in their positions for over seven years. The credentials the participating superintendents held varied greatly between the two rural counties to the large districts in the southeast. The highest degree obtained by a superintendent in the rural counties was an Educational Specialist (Ed.S.), while several of the respondents in the larger counties held doctorate degrees. The previous experiences and positions held were also diverse, but no obvious patterns appeared within or across counties in this regard.

Table 6 shows the number of superintendents that apply to each category and the percentage for that response. This provides an overview of the background of the superintendents who responded to the survey.

Table 6.

Superintendent Characteristics

Years in Current Position		
	Response Total	Response Percent
1-2 years	10	34%
3-4 years	3	10%
5-6 years (Median)	6	21%
7 years or more	10	34%
Highest Degree Held		
	Response Total	Response Percent
Masters Degree	10	34%
Ed.S.	8	28%
Ph.D. or Ed.D.	11	38%

Grades Levels Taught/Administered		
	Response Total	Response Percent
Pre-K	4	18%
K-5	14	50%
6-8	17	61%
9-12	25	89%
College	3	11%

Variables and Index Score

As explained in Chapter 3, Research Question 1 seeks to determine to what extent local districts vary in their participation in the provision of ECE services and what factors account for these inter-district variations. Chapter 3 proposed three variables to represent the extent of a local district's involvement with and provision of ECE services. We take these as dependent variables. Chapter 3 also proposed a series of independent variables that may account for observed variations across districts in their provision of ECE services.

Dependent Variables

The first measure of ECE service provision was the amount of money that a district spends on ECE. Determining the exact amount that districts spend on ECE proved to be very difficult. Often the amounts were not available, and when they were found, they were often misleading. This information was essentially substituted with the superintendent's own rating when the index score was calculated. The second measure of ECE services is the number of programs that a district offers or supports. The third measure indicates the amount of time spent on deliberation regarding ECE services and the voice given to the district's ECE directors in this deliberation.

These variables were used to create an ECE Provision Index Score. Table 7 below lists the data that were collected to determine the ECE Provision Index score, along with the final Index score. The number of programs offered is reported in the first column of the table. The yes or no questions about the district's ECE director are reported with a "0" for a "no" response and a "1" for a "yes" response. The survey response for the number of times ECE has been on a school board or administrative team meeting called for a range. If ECE had not been on the agenda the column shows a zero. If ECE had been on the agenda 1-2 times there is a one in the column; if it had been on 3-4 times there is a 2; if had been on 5 or more times there is a three in the column. The self-rating column shows the response to the survey question that asked superintendents to rate their district's efforts to provide ECE to the children that need it. The range for this response was poor (0), fair (3), good (6), or excellent (9).

Table 7.

ECE Provision Index Score and Data

	# of Pgms Offrd	ECE Dir/Ad Team Mbr	ECE Dir Cert/En d in ECE	ECE Dir's Main Duty	Occur. of ECE on Ad Team Agnda	Occur. Of ECE on Bd Agnda	Spr's Ratin g of Dist's ECE	Dist's Prov. Index Score
Scale	0-5+	Yes (1) /No(0)	Yes (1) /No(0)	Yes (1) /No(0)	0; 1-2; 3-4, 5+	0; 1-2; 3-4, 5+	0,3,6, 9	
Ionia Co.								
Ionia	3	0	1	1	2	1	6	22
Portland	3	1	0	0	3	1	9	23
Belding	5	1	0	0	0	1	6	23
Lakewood	3	0	0	0	1	1	6	19
County								21.75

<u>Ave.</u>								
<u>Allegan Co.</u>								
Allegan	5	0	0	0	2	1	9	27
Glenn	4	1	1	0				
Hopkins	16	0	1	0	3	2	6	31
Plainwell	6	1	0	0	3	2	6	31
Fennville	7	1	0	0	1	2	9	33
Otsego	5	0	0	1	1	1	6	26
County Ave								29.6
<u>Oakland Co.</u>								
Berkley	5	1	1		1	1	9	30
Blmfld Hills	2	1	0	0	2	1	9	20
Clarencvllle	3	1	0	0	1	1	6	30
Clawson	5	1	1	1	2	2	9	34
Holly	2	1	1	0	3	3	6	24
Lake Orion	5	1	0	0	3	2	6	28
Lamphere	4	0	1	1	3	3	9	31
South Lyon	3	1	0	1	3	2	3	23
Walled Lake	3	1	0	0	1	3	6	21
W. Blmfld	2	1	0	0	2	1	9	26
County Ave.								26.7
<u>Wayne Co.</u>								
Allen Park	2	1	0	0	2	1	3	15
Dearborn	5	1	1	0	2	1	6	28
Huron	3	1	1	0	2	0	6	21
Lincoln Park	5	1	1	1	2	1	6	30
Plymth/Cant	2	1	1	1	2	2	6	26
Redford Union	4	1	1	0	3	2	6	27
Westwood	8	1	1	0	2	1	3	34
Wyandotte	4	1	0	1	3	3	9	31

Note: Data missing for Glenn and Troy Schools. Please see Table 3 for the Index scoring rubric.

Explanatory Variables

Several explanatory variables were identified that helped to explain inter-district variations in the Index scores. Some of these variables proved to be much more significant to a district's score than others. Each of the variables from Chapter 3 will be discussed.

Superintendent Characteristics and Perceptions

The first explanatory variable identified in the study pertains to the knowledge and perceptions that local superintendents have regarding ECE. This is an important variable in the study because it is also the crux of Research Question 2. The findings for Research Question 2 will be discussed as this variable is addressed.

As shown in Table 7, there is a difference in the services that local districts provide. Likewise Table 8 reveals many differences in backgrounds and perceptions of local superintendents. The knowledge and perception of local superintendents was gathered from the survey tool and personal interviews. A second index was created to help quantify the knowledge of superintendents. This index is the Combined Knowledge Index for superintendents which considers the knowledge about the most common ECE programs in Michigan, four of the most commonly cited research studies in ECE, and the superintendent's self rating of his/her knowledge of ECE.

Only four superintendents indicated that they have experience in teaching or administering early childhood programs. Perhaps not surprisingly, these superintendents

put a high priority on providing ECE services and have greater knowledge about ECE than their peers do. Conversely, seven superintendents indicated that their previous experience was isolated to the high school or college level. When asked to rate their knowledge of ECE programs, the mean score on a scale of 1 through 10 for these seven superintendents was a 5.5 out of 10. This is compared to an overall mean of 6.4 for all superintendents and a mean of 9.6 for those with pre-k experience.

The local superintendents were also asked to rate their knowledge of ECE research studies. The knowledge that superintendents had of programs varied based on the programs, who sponsored them, and the efforts made by the ISD to educate the superintendents. For example, all of the superintendents in Ionia and Allegan counties were familiar with the Dolly Parton Imagination Library because their ISDs have championed that program, a program which provides free books in the mail to children ages 0-5-years-old. Conversely, only one superintendent in Wayne or Oakland County was “somewhat familiar” with the Dolly Parton Imagination Library.

None of the superintendents in Allegan or Ionia claimed to be more than “somewhat familiar” with the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC), and not surprisingly that program is not currently offered in their counties. The ECIC is a state grant that is offered at the county level; it has been awarded to both Wayne and Oakland counties. Even though the ECIC grants are in these counties, only 30% of the responding superintendents in those counties were familiar with the program.

All four of the counties have Parents as Teacher (PAT) programs and one of PATs subsidiary programs, Early On, but only 35% of the superintendents in the study were familiar with these ISD level programs. Conversely, 93% of the superintendents

were familiar with MSRP, which is granted directly to local districts. All but two of the participating local districts offer MSRP. One of the districts that does not offer MSRP has only a 4% free and reduced lunch rate which indicates little need for the program. The other district that does not offer MSRP has a 73% free and reduced rate which likely indicates that most of the families qualify for Head Start and would not need the services of the MSRP program.

Only a small percentage of the superintendents were familiar with any of the big three research projects that were discussed in Chapter 2. The Perry High Scope Preschool Project that originated in southeast Michigan was most familiar to the superintendents. Thirty-nine percent of the superintendents were familiar with the Perry study; most of those came from nearby Wayne and Oakland counties. Only 11% and 7% respectively of the superintendents were familiar with the Abecedarian or Chicago Parent Center Program. The Meaningful Differences study was heavily cited by the former ECE director in Allegan County when he was first raising awareness of ECE in Allegan and it was familiar to all but one of the local superintendents in Allegan County.

Table 8 shows the Combined Knowledge Index score for the superintendents in the participating districts. This figure is derived by totaling the three previous columns of knowledge of ECE programs, knowledge of ECE research, and the superintendents self-rating of his or her knowledge. The scores reported for the knowledge of ECE programs and knowledge of research studies comes from survey items 10 and 11 respectively which asks superintendents if they are *very familiar*, *familiar*, *a little familiar*, or *not at all familiar* with a program or study. There were 10 possible programs listed and 4

possible research studies. The self-rating asks superintendents to rank their own knowledge level on a scale of 1-10.

Table 8.

Local Superintendent Background and Knowledge

	Yrs in Posit ion	Highest Degree	Pre-K Exp	Supt. Priorit y for ECE	Know. of ECE Prgms	Know. of ECE Researc h Studies	Self rating of ECE Know.	Combn d Know. Index Score
Scale			Yes/no	1-10	0-10 +	0-4 +	1-10 =	1-24 +
<u>Ionia Co.</u>								
Ionia	3-4	Ed.S	Yes	10	7	0	6	13
Portland	7+	Ed.S	No	2	5	0	3	8
Belding	3-4	MA	No	8	5	3	6	14
Lakewood	1-2	MA	No	8	2	1	2	5
County Ave.								10
<u>Allegan Cnty</u>								
Hopkins	3-4	MA	No	10	7	1	8	16
Allegan	1-2	MA	No	10	4	0	7	11
Glenn	7+	-	No	-	9	4	-	13
Plainwell	1-2	MA	No	10	7	2	8	15
Fennville	5-6	MA	No	10	4	1	10	15
Otsego	5-6	MA	No	9	8	1	8	17
County Ave								14.5
<u>Oakland Co.</u>								
Berkley	7+	PH.D./E D.D.	No	10	7	1	6	13
Blfld Hills	5-6	PH.D./E D.D.	No	10	4	1	6	11
Clarenceville	5-6	MA	No	8	8	2	8	18
Clawson	-	Ed.S	No	10	8	2	9	19
Holly	7+	MA	Yes	9	4	0	8	12

Lake Orion	1-2	MA	No	10	3	3	5	11
Lamphere	1-2	PH.D./E D.D.	No	10	4	2	7	13
South Lyon	7+	PH.D./E D.D.	No	10	1	1	7	9
Troy	1-2	PH.D./E D.D.	No	-	0	0	-	-
Walled Lake	1-2	PH.D./E D.D.	No	8	2	0	7	9
W. Blmfld	5-6	PH.D./ ED.D.	No	10	4	1	6	11
County Ave.								12.6
<u>Wayne Co.</u>								
Allen Park	1-2	PH.D./ ED.D.	No	2	5	1	3	9
Dearborn	5-6	PH.D./ ED.D.	Yes	10	8	2	6	16
Huron	7+	Ed.S	No	5	5	2	6	13
Lincoln Park	7+	Ed.S	No	8	7	2	8	17
Plymouth Canton	5-6	PH.D./ ED.D.	No	9	7	3	8	14
Redford Union	1-2	Ed.S	No	10	4	4	8	16
Westwood	7+	PH.D./ ED.D.	No	8	6	3	8	17
Wyandotte	7+	PH.D./ ED.D.	No	10	2	1	8	11
County Ave.								14.1

Note: Data missing for Troy and Glenn Schools.

A commonality among most of the superintendents in the study was the level of priority and importance they put on providing ECE. Figure 2 on the next page is a scatterplot that shows the relationship between the Superintendents' Knowledge Index

and their district's ECE Provision Index score. The higher the Knowledge Index score, the higher the ECE Provision Index Score is likely to be.

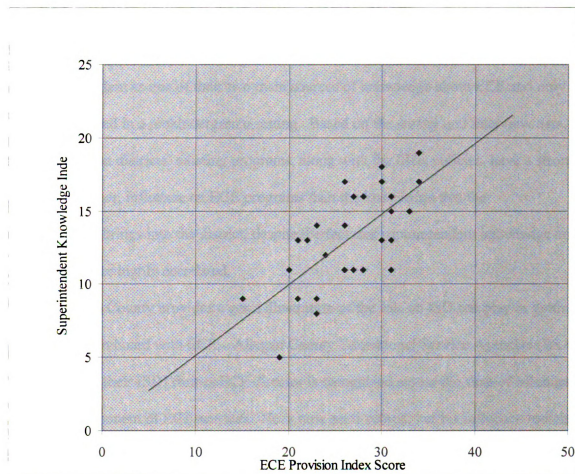


Figure 2. Superintendents' Knowledge and ECE Provision Index Scores

ISD Policy

While Figure 2 shows a clear positive relationship between superintendents' ECE knowledge and their districts' ECE Provision Index Scores, the direction of causation between these variables is not entirely unambiguous. Both the quantitative and the qualitative data in the study show that ISDs can play a large role in influencing ECE

programs and the emphasis that their local districts place on providing services. This role may also influence a superintendent's knowledge and perception of ECE services.

Most superintendents are not bringing a wealth of ECE knowledge into their positions. Eight-six percent of the superintendents cited on-the-job training while serving as a superintendent as one of their two main sources of knowledge about ECE and only four have worked in a prekindergarten setting. Based on the survey and interview data, it seems likely that districts' existing programs, along with the ISDs policies, have a strong, probably stronger, influence on ECE programs than the knowledge that the superintendent brings into the district, despite the fact that superintendent knowledge and ECE services are highly correlated.

Allegan County provides a good illustration of the role an ISD can play in getting local districts on board with ECE. Allegan County Educational Service Agencies (ESA) [what they call their ISD] former ECE director is recognized across the state of Michigan as a strong proponent of ECE services. He is now semi-retired, but his influence remains even though the ISD superintendent and many of the local superintendents in Allegan started their positions since he retired. Allegan ESA superintendent cites the former director's knowledge and passion as being a crucial part of getting local superintendents on board with ECE.

The superintendent whose district has the highest index score in Allegan County is a prime example of one who was influenced heavily by policies of the ISD.

You know I didn't know anything about it [ECE] before I came to Allegan County . . . but when we came to Allegan County we had an extensive amount of in-service on it as superintendents here in the county and the

value of it and you know lots of data for us on a regular basis. . . .It's becoming more and more of a subject of discussion at our state's superintendents meetings and it's becoming more and more of a discussion in national journals and that sort of thing so we have had an extensive amount of training and I think we know more about it in Allegan County than most superintendents throughout the state - that and literacy" (Superintendent 4).

A fellow Allegan superintendent adds, "One of the things that we do every summer is that the ISD provides us with a literacy retreat and that's where I got my indoctrination into the whole EES [Early Education Services] and then I inherited [from the superintendent he replaced] a position on the board of the EES" (Superintendent 8). The comments of these superintendents does raise a chicken versus the egg question concerning the impact of the superintendent's knowledge and perception of ECE on the district's ECE programs. These districts had strong ECE programs prior to the arrival of these superintendents. Both of these superintendents are strong supporters of ECE, yet they would not be nearly as knowledgeable on the subject if they had not come to Allegan County. So "superintendent ECE knowledge" is not an exogenous attribute of the sample superintendents, but rather is likely influenced by ISD policy. This points to an important potential role for ISD in creating the conditions that could further the provision of ECE services.

The ISD superintendent and the current ECE director in Allegan County find it very important to continue to educate the leaders in Allegan County. The ISD superintendent puts ECE on the agenda of every monthly countywide superintendent

meeting and he has the director give the superintendents a monthly report. Allegan's ECE coordinator explains that they have also presented to local school boards and other administrators in addition to district superintendents:

We have done presentations for school board members and we provide them with information literature on what our programs are doing and the results that we are seeing from our programs. It just helps them understand that there are things that they can have an impact on. I think the average person really doesn't fully understand the importance of those early years. And I think schools also see themselves as starting at kindergarten - we're kindergarten through 12th grade and that is what we do, and they just don't always see themselves as having had anything to do with what happened before kids get to kindergarten. So I think that by providing that kind of education we can start to say - yeah, we really do have the potential to have an impact earlier and that impact can have long term positive benefits" (ISD ECE Coordinator 1).

Considering the focus that Allegan has put on educating the superintendents and administrators in their county, it is not surprising that they have the highest average score (29.6) on the Superintendent Knowledge Index of the four ISDs in the study. These scores have then helped Allegan to have the highest ECE Provision Index average of the four counties. Allegan is particularly high in these indexes compared to its closest counterpart in the study, Ionia County.

The ECE coordinator for Ionia ISD is helping to raise awareness of the benefits of ECE with Ionia County's local superintendents. She sees the superintendents in Ionia

County making strides in their learning and acceptance of ECE, but she still feels that there is still a need to educate superintendents about the value of ECE to get them to buy into it. Ionia has the lowest average ECE provision index score of the four counties at 21.75.

They're kind of being told something that is different than their background and knowledge and they're trying to digest it and they know it's the right thing to do because they see the research but they're really not grasping is that this is what I am going to make my decisions around."

(ISD ECE Coordinator 2)

The experiences in Allegan and Ionia Counties show that the ISD can have a strong impact on the knowledge and perception of the superintendent. If the ISD has a strong program, it does tend to impact the perception and priorities for the local superintendents in that county.

Areas of High Need

Another key explanatory variable is the need for high quality ECE. As indicated in Chapter 2, children who grow up in poverty typically enter school less prepared to learn than their middle- and upper-class peers. Districts that have high poverty rates, as indicated by their free and reduced lunch count, stand to gain the most by having their future students receive quality ECE. The district ECE Provision Index score is one way to determine whether or not children are receiving services.

When the index scores were tabulated, the lowest score was 15 and the highest score was 34. As indicated in Figure 3, there was a relationship between the index score

and the district's free and reduced lunch percentage. This shows that districts with the highest needs are typically the ones that are providing the most services.

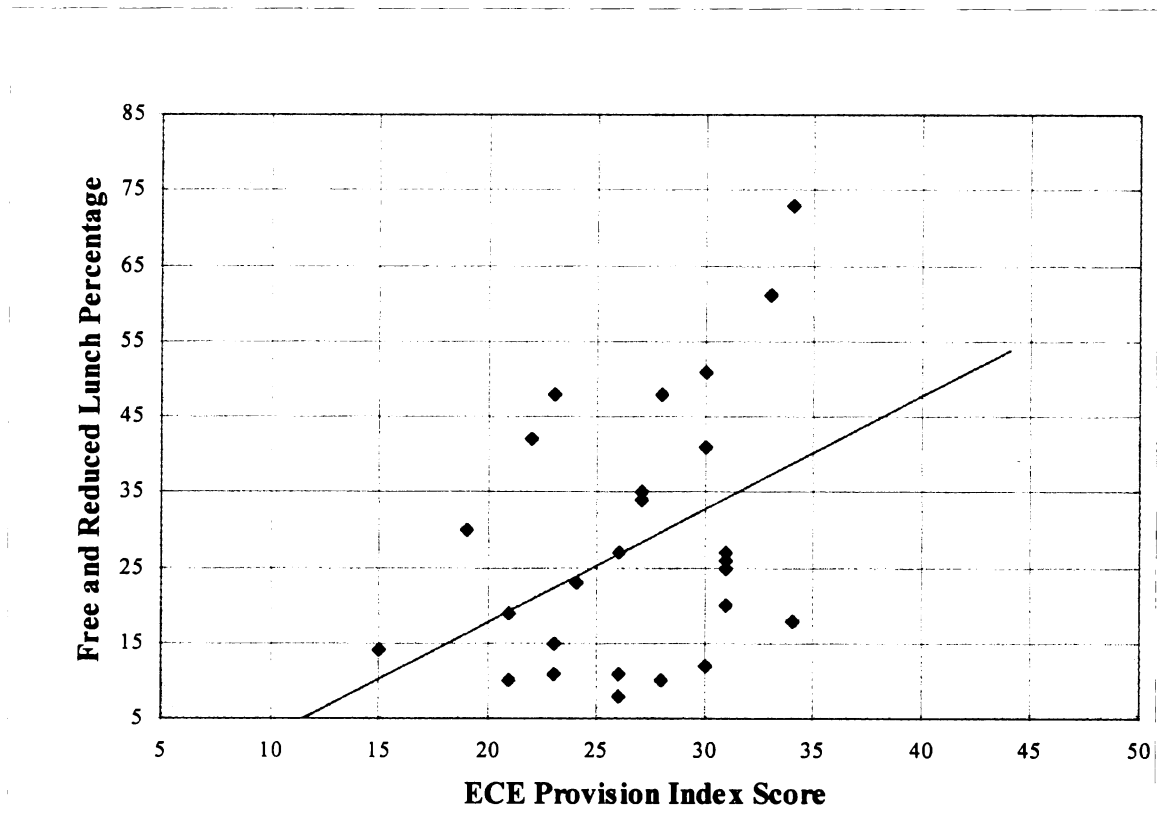


Figure 3. Free and Reduced Lunch Rate and ECE Provision Index Scores

District Size, Enrollment Change, Per Pupil Funding, and Urban Location

While the knowledge and perceptions of superintendents regarding ECE turned out to be a key explanatory variable, some of the others were not nearly as significant. For example, there was no relationship found between a district's ECE provision and either its enrollment size or enrollment change. The thought behind the potential relationship between enrollment numbers and the ECE index score was that the larger a

district is the more capacity it may have to offer programs. When these data were plotted, however, there was no clear relationship.

When a district faces declining enrollments, they typically have to make expenditure cuts. Since districts are not bound to provide ECE services, these services may be among the first programs cut when a district faces financial difficulties. However, the districts in Michigan that provide the most services are typically those with the highest poverty rates. The sample in this study actually shows that many of the districts with the highest index scores also have the highest negative enrollment change from 2001-2005.

There was no relationship between a district's foundation grant and their ECE index score. Additionally these variables did not emerge as themes the way superintendent knowledge and need did when the interview data when the interviews were transcribed and coded.

Alignment of Services

Research Question 3 focused on the alignment of ECE services between the MDE, ISDs, and local school districts. With ECE services and funding emanating from each of these levels, it seems logical to find a way to coordinate these services and funds. Many people see the ISD as being the 'middleman' between the state and local districts. That is true with some special education, general education, and ECE programs, but not all. The ISD does coordinate some programs such as Great Parents, Great Start, but many other programs, including MSRP are typically funded directly by the state to the local districts. The final section of Chapter 4 will examine the current roles of the three

levels and discuss how the players at these levels feel about these roles and the level of efficiency and efficacy. Some of the data for this section was gathered from the survey, but the most of it came from the personal interviews with local and ISD superintendents, ISD coordinators, and MDE officials.

Local District Dilemmas

Given the emphasis on ECE by Michigan's governor and the MDE in recent years, it is not surprising that local superintendents have at least a general understanding of the benefits of early childhood education. In this study, 88% of the superintendents indicated on the survey that they think local districts need to make ECE a priority. Even if they cannot cite specific studies, local superintendents believe that quality ECE is crucial to the success of children. This was clearly demonstrated on the survey and in the interviews. Despite strong beliefs in the benefits of ECE, tight budgets make it very difficult for local districts to put substantial amounts of money into ECE programs. However, as indicated in the ECE Provision Index scores, there are many other factors that go into a district's level of service for their pre-kindergarten populations.

ECE Responsibilities

It is important to clarify the distinction between the "state" and the MDE when referring to the "state level" in ECE. Educators often use the term "the state" which includes the MDE but it also encompasses the legislature and governor's office which is responsible for funding the ISDs, locals and the MDE. The MDE has some say in allocating and directing funds, but they rely on the legislature to allocate money to go to programs they supervise and support such as MSRP and Great Parent, Great Start. When

describing the different levels that provide services “the state” is a broad term that references the legislature, the governor’s office, and the MDE.

All but a few local school districts in Michigan are K-12 institutions. This means that they are responsible for providing services K-12; they are not bound to provide pre-kindergarten services. The Coordinator of Early Childhood Services for the MDE helped to frame the picture of ECE services in the state of Michigan. She states that though the definition of ECE is geared towards children 0 – 8-years-old, the MDE has traditionally focused on prekindergarten because local districts have emphasized K-12 education. Many superintendents expressed concern about having the capacity to support ECE in addition to their other responsibilities. Said one Oakland County superintendent:

With everything else that we are being asked to do, I would like to see the responsibility shifted somewhere else. While it makes good sense and is the logical solution to place pre-school programs under the organization of the local school district I am not sure all districts are capable of delivering the goods” (Response 3, Question 26).

Despite not being bound to provide services, most local superintendents expressed a desire to become more involved in the provision of ECE. However, like the Oakland County superintendent, many did express some concerns about being able to provide ECE and still meet all of their other expectations. When asked if she thought she would see a return on money spent on early childhood education, one Ionia County superintendent indicated that she felt it would be wise to invest in ECE, but just could not justify that investment to the community if it came at the expense of other programs that are currently being funded.

While I would really like to and I really think that would be a benefit to our students and to our community. I think they [the community] would have a problem with me taking money away from other programs of students who are attending - that's where the funding comes from are from students in the classrooms and giving it to other groups of students that may or may not ever generate funding for the school district.

(Superintendent 5)

The students "that may never generate funding" references a highly transient population in her district and concern for whether or not the children whom her district would serve with ECE would be in the district long enough for the district to reap the benefits of its investment. She feels that knowing that the child will most likely be served by another district in Michigan is a compelling reason for the state to assume the cost of providing ECE directly rather than channeling it through the local districts.

The issue of responsibility for ECE arose in many of the interviews and not just with local superintendents. For example, one ISD superintendent feels that the local districts in his ISD are doing a good job of providing ECE, but he does believe that there is room for them to do more with financial support.

Well, it's always a matter of setting priorities, but one of the biggest problems that we are faced in Michigan in right now is the financial situation. What are you going to take away from to make a higher priority for preschool? Our focus in Michigan has always been K-12. So it's hard to take K-12 dollars and . . . reprioritize and say that now we are going to add another four years of youth and use the same dollars - I don't think

that is very responsible. I don't think any of our districts have a lot of fluff in [Our] County - I don't see a lot of programs that we could look at and say, lets eliminate this program because it's kind of fluff - shift that money to a four year old program for example. (ISD Superintendent 2)

Table 9 shows the responses to the open-ended survey question that asks superintendents to describe the role they would like their district to play in providing ECE to preschool children in their district. Twenty superintendents responded to this survey question. Table 9 is designed to give a general overview of the superintendent's thoughts rather than linking the responses to a particular district.

Table 9.

Local Superintendent Responses to Survey Item 26

Random District Number	Response to Survey Question 26 Considering the role that you described for the state and ISDs in the two previous questions, what role would you like your district to play in providing ECE to preschool children in your district?
1.	It is a given.
2.	I would love to be able to have early childhood education available for every child in our district.
3.	With everything else that we being asked to do, I would like to see the responsibility shifted somewhere else. While it makes good sense and is the logical solution to place pre-school programs under the organization of the local school district I am not sure all districts are capable of delivering the goods.
4.	Having a way to reach every preschooler with something to offer them
5.	I would love for our district to be able to offer a wide variety of programming that meets the needs of students 0-5 and the needs of their families. This programming might be in the district, a district nearby or in their homes. Funding should come from the state to the ISD or LSD.

6. The district has programs for pre-school students. It also provides services at no charge for our daycare programs. I would like the district to take on a more active role in providing Direct Instruction to pre-school students and assist families with how to serve as a teacher for their child.
 7. Service provider.
 8. To continue to support all efforts at every level to provide early education.
 9. I would like to be able to offer free of charge preschool for all 3 and 4 year olds.
 10. Identification of population, staffing, buildings, and funding
 11. I would like to see us step up to provide free preschool to all. We currently provide all day every day kindergarten, but we should front load even more.
 12. Providing facilities and locating the children who need the services the most.
 13. We should continue to be the people implementing the program and be the contact for the student and his/her parent.
 14. I would like to see districts across the state working with children 0-5 and their families. In order for this to happen, programs have to be funded at the state level.
 15. Local districts should provide the service.
 16. With appropriate and direct funding we would have the ability to service more families. Staff development and parent awareness/training are two essential components for local districts.
 17. I feel our district does a great job of providing ECE to the children in our district. We make an effort to seek out families and provide for all of them. We have several options and make an effort to meet the needs of our community.
 18. Providing safe buildings and qualified staff.
 19. Our district has provided and will continue to train other districts regarding best practices in developmentally appropriate practices.
 20. Expanding 2-5 year old programs
-

Financial Concerns

Most local superintendents seem comfortable with their district taking on the responsibilities of ECE if there is funding from the state that will accompany these duties.

“The key is funding. We are large enough we can provide the rest of the needs,” says one Oakland County Superintendent (Superintendent 2). Superintendents say there is simply no room left in the budgets to fund the programs. In Allegan County, each local district sends \$5.00 per child to the ISD for ECE services. In Ionia County, each district sends \$1.00 per child. The ISDs in Allegan and Ionia use this money to provide the required matching funds for Great Parents, Great Start and other services that offer assistance to children and parents. Very few Michigan districts use their general fund or their federal Title I money for ECE programs, so most of the ECE programs offered or supported by local districts are grant funded. When asked in the personal interview how much influence they have over the budgets in their districts, the local superintendents said that they have plenty of influence; however, they quickly stated that the budgetary constraints they face leave them with little money to use at their discretion.

Two of the local superintendents felt restricted from spending more on ECE without a funding increase because so much of their current K-12 operational budget goes to employee benefits and salary. One superintendent offers this response to the question of how much influence he has in setting funding priorities: “I can say that yeah, I control the funding, [but] honestly we are under contract with our employees so 80-85 percent of our budget deals with salary” (Superintendent 1). Another superintendent also referenced employee salaries when asked the same question, “That is an interesting [question]...when you factor in that 83 to 85 percent of your budget is salaries and benefits. How much influence can you have over the other 15 percent?” (Superintendent 8) Considering that an increase in funding from the state that was spent on ECE services would still result in 85% of that budget being spent on salary and benefits, it is likely that

these superintendents are expressing frustration that they would have to eliminate current positions to add ECE positions if there was not additional funding.

A local superintendent whose district had a very high index score, indicated that he would like to see even more services offered. Like the other superintendents, he feels that he has substantial influence over an insubstantial amount of money. He referenced the particularly difficult economic time that Michigan is having and the effect that it is having on districts and their budgets. (During the course of conducting interviews for this study, the state of Michigan was deliberating budget cuts as high as \$200.00 dollars per pupil).

I used to think that I was a lot more influential than what I am now with the budget crisis. I think that I have a lot of input into directing resources for early childhood. I mean adding all-day every day kindergarten was something that I said from day one and you know putting a higher quality teacher into the cooperative preschool, so it's just that the budget has made that such a difficult part in maintaining that unfortunately.

(Superintendent 4)

Superintendent 1 elaborated on the role that finances play in his district's ability to provide quality ECE and the importance that he places in it. He too references the state's economic troubles but he feels that the economic troubles are even more reason to support ECE.

It comes down to dollars and cents. In terms of all things that have to be done it would take a major shift of finances in order for us to do that [offer more ECE programs]. When there are not finances to shift . . . that is why

we keep looking to the state to help us out. The governor talked about throwing several million more into it. She loses track that we have a socioeconomic disadvantaged population here as well and as I said we have the highest unemployment rate . . . we have to have some help for these kids. I think not everyone, but a lot of people, understand that those are the formative years. (Superintendent 1).

These views on funding are certainly not limited to the superintendents from the Allegan and Ionia ISDs. Budget constraints were mentioned on every survey response as an inhibitor for providing services. One Oakland superintendent included this open-ended response on the survey.

Although I firmly believe in the education of the 0-5 population I am also well aware of the lack of funds in our district to provide that education with K-12 funding. We struggle to meet the needs of the K-12 population and provide as much as possible for the 0-5 group with grants and tuition based programs. (Response 2, question 23)

Supporting ECE Without Spending

State and ISD officials would like to see local districts become more involved in providing ECE services. However, as stated above, these leaders also understand that local districts have their hands full with their K-12 responsibilities. Throughout the course of the interviews, several no-cost or low-cost means of supporting ECE were discussed. For example, some suggested that the local districts could invite other ECE providers in the community to use the resources that the locals already have such as classroom space, in-service training, and even high school students or senior citizens as

volunteers. The ECE coordinator for MDE would be happy just to see local superintendents champion the cause for ECE.

There is leadership at the local levels that has read the research and do understand how important the early years are and even though funding might not follow, they remember to talk about it when they are in public settings and I think that is exemplified here also. . . . Raising the awareness of the superintendents - at least mention[ing] it periodically leads to a greater awareness of the importance across the district and the populous with the citizens of that district. And the more that they say it aloud, the more likely their reflecting on well what does that mean to what we do here and look for ways to lead to an increase in programming - whether it be just making sure that they are aware of all of the early childhood program that is going on in their community, that their kindergarten teachers are aware of what is occurring. I guess for me the bottom line is if you have a local district superintendent who understands and appreciates and periodically says out loud how important it is, you have come a long way. (MDE ECE Coordinator)

The MDE director and the coordinator both pointed out that there are many ECE providers and that local school districts are not the major provider in most areas. There is Head Start, MSRP, for the children with risk factors, but there are also many other daycare providers in homes, churches, or private centers. Head Start and MSRP programs are well funded with their federal or state dollars, but the other programs are usually tuition based or subsidized with funds from agencies such as the Family

Independence Agency (FIA) and its grant program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). These independent providers are servicing a large number of children who will someday attend public schools, so the MDE Director would like to see the children and their families invited into schools.

Sometimes I think that it isn't a matter of providing the programs themselves, but perhaps doing some outreach with the community of early childhood providers that already exist to offer support and training and things that the school can offer to bring people in. For instance, if you are having something in a district that kindergarten teachers get to go to - maybe you can bring in the preschool teachers in your community as well. It wouldn't cost you - if you had a speaker, it wouldn't cost you that much more to buy another package of cookies. You know - there's things that you can do to influence quality for the kids that are coming into your school . . . I'm not sure if your schools have to provide the programs all of the time, but sometimes they can provide some organizing, some professional development, they can allow kindergarten teachers to talk to parent nights at preschools. There are some things that they can do to promote that that aren't so expensive. (MDE ECE Director)

ISD Superintendent 2 agreed that there are resources in the local schools and in the local communities that can be used to help promote ECE provision and awareness. Local schools have a great deal of resources already at their disposal that they could allocate to or share with ECE programs in their communities.

I think more can be done through collaboration and partnerships with your community and your school for that zero to five. For example, maybe our libraries, our elementary libraries, maybe there could be one or two days a week where that is set up that young mothers that have children from zero to five bring their children to the school library and the old story library concept. We have a lot of school buildings that have declining enrollment that might have a room that is empty in a building and we can get volunteers from the community of senior citizens or other parents to come in for a few hours to help out with some of these younger families. So I think there are more things that we could do that wouldn't cost a lot of money, but it takes a volunteer or organization or community leader to step forward to do that. (ISD Superintendent 2)

An interesting point raised by the MDE coordinator was that he would like to see the schools and agencies reach out to parents in settings other than schools because many parents with at-risk children do not feel comfortable in the school setting. This lack of comfort may very well keep a lot of parents from accessing services that are currently available.

I am state coordinator and I go to state meetings across the nation and those kinds of things and Even Start families are those who are low income and low literacy, so they have two big strikes against them and Even Start has this comprehensive look at improving children's outcomes by addressing the adult literacy and early childhood education parenting

education and then giving them opportunities to practice literacy activities together. What made me think of that is so many of our parents in Even Start are afraid to walk into a school because of the very, very negative experiences that they had as learners. So, when a community - a school district is looking at - oh yeah, lets open the doors and they all come in - that might be the right thing for the upper-middle class parents who were successful and they are taking some time off and being at home with their children and things like that and it may be that the library or the local churches or other venues are the place where these other folks that have these feelings might gather. (ECE Coordinator)

ISD superintendent 2 shared a similar concern about parents feeling welcome in schools, but he would rather make the schools more inviting than host events elsewhere.

I don't know if we make people feel welcome into our schools anymore and again, I guess that is a time of our society because we have lock downs and we have to have the doors locked and you go to the large intercity schools and you have to metal detectors to get in the front door and you have police guards in the buildings and the middle schools even and in some of the larger districts. Fortunately, we don't have that in [our] County, but we have some of those things. We have doors locked that never used to be locked. Signs all over of what you have to do when you come to your building just because of our society we don't have quite the same things we used to have. (ISD Superintendent 2)

Opening the doors of the schools to parents of young children could be a “win, win” situation for both schools and families. Local school districts often do not know who is coming through their doors until they host a kindergarten round up in the spring to enroll children for the next fall.

We don’t even know who in our community right now is going to kindergarten next year. We’re going to do kindergarten round up in May and we don’t know whether we are going to have 200 or 250 kids show up. . . . The community thinks that we know that they have children and where they are located. We don’t. We, for the most part, don’t know where our young children are. So there’s no real structure there which I think the schools could get involved in that, but if you are going to get involved in that then you have to have something for them.

(Superintendent 5)

Kindergarten round-up traditionally consisted of meeting and assessing children from the district prior to placing them in a classroom for the next fall. With schools of choice becoming increasingly popular, districts now use kindergarten round-up, and even the kindergarten program, as a way to recruit families. Districts not only publicize the dates and times of round-up, they advertise it along with advertising their district and programs. Full-day, everyday kindergarten is much more costly for districts since they are funded at the same level as half-day kindergarten, but it is a draw for many families since it reduces their need for daycare.

The Changing Role

Research Question 3 seeks to determine how the role that local districts play in the provision of ECE has changed in recent years. While there are many roles that the local districts could play in providing ECE services, it does not seem that the role that local districts play in the provision of ECE has changed a great deal in the past several years beyond the addition of all day everyday kindergarten programs and more MSRP programs. One ISD superintendent, along with the MDE director, mentioned that MSRP has become more prevalent in recent years and there are more requirements and standards in the program. Beyond these expectations the study participants could not identify major changes to the role. When asked: “To the best of your knowledge, how have the expectations for the role local districts in the provision of ECE changed over the last several years?” the MDE ECE coordinator could point to few if any major changes, but she does feel that districts are understanding better the importance of the MSRP program and are accepting the role of ambassador of the program.

Our biggest program that we have in the office is the Michigan School Readiness program. Over the last several years, that program has gotten good at providing more clear guidance about expectations, districts have recognized the importance - I think the districts have recognized the importance of the program to impact the children next steps - like will those kids meet grade level content expectations in kindergarten, 1st and 2nd. The four-year-old years are really important. Some of the role has not changed whatsoever - part of your job at the local district job - whoever is coordinating the school readiness is always got to answer the

constituents to say how come I can't get in, why is it that I have to put my tax dollars into these other kids and my kid can't get in the door that kind of thing. So that role has been consistent - being the public liaison to the importance of high quality education and care for kids at-risk and how research shows that for them interventions are really important. (ECE Coordinator)

ISD superintendent 1 also did not see a large change but he, too, mentioned the pressure of the pending tests as a potential catalyst for change. "I don't know if there is an expectation for early childhood yet. I think that the pressure of testing started in 3rd grade is weighting districts to the massive differential of students entering kindergarten. So, I think they are awakening to it, but again, there is no funding for it."

The Envisioned Roles

The roles that locals envision for themselves and the roles that ISD and state leaders envision for the locals are fairly similar. Leaders at all levels feel that locals could play a larger role in the provision of ECE services. The leaders also agree that it would be best to build the locals' capacity to do this with funding and direction from both the state and the ISDs. Local superintendents were asked to rate the state's effort to make early childhood available to the children who most need it. They were told that effort could encompass funding, training, or other resources. The superintendents had to choose from excellent, good, fair, or poor. Table 10 shows that most superintendents did not think that the state was making a good effort to provide ECE.

Table 10.

Local Superintendent's Rating of Each Level's Effort to Provide ECE

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Level				
State	29%	46%	25%	0%
ISD	1%	35%	35%	29%
Local	0	15%	58%	27%

Increasing funding was an obvious way cited by superintendents that the state could increase support for local districts ECE efforts. Another type of support both local and ISD superintendents would like to see from the state is the coordination of programs. A common trend in the interviews, especially with ISD officials, was that there are many agencies and levels providing ECE services that are not coordinated with one another.

People are responding to the research - people are saying yes we know that early childhood development - we know brain development - all of this kind of stuff - we are accepting all of that now and we don't have to convince people to believe that. So people are now trying to get on their soapbox to say why it's important, but it's from their perspective instead of really looking at it collaboratively and say we all believe this, but is the message that the business and the schools and the health organizations and everybody can get together and promote and to me that's what's kind of missing because we keep sending messages out to the public. (ISD ECE Coordinator 1)

The logical starting point for this coordination is at the state level. Local superintendents were asked this open-ended survey question, "In the provision of ECE,

what role(s) is/are appropriate for the State? Please consider funding, capacity building, staff training, and the provision of ECE.” Again the overwhelming response was funding, but coordination of services, and better utilization of ISD, was frequently mentioned in the surveys and interviews. Two superintendents referenced how the state currently utilizes ISDs to help coordinate and provide special education services. When asked the following question: “Please describe your vision of how these levels [state, ISDs, locals] can work together to best provide these services. A vision of how they can work together with funding and programming resources.” Allegan superintendent 1 responded:

State funding followed by ISDs to provide the support necessary for the locals to get it done. I don’t think the idea - the whole special ed model is not a bad model. I mean we’re getting what we need with that model. Because if I need services and I don’t have enough kids to provide those for, I can send them to the other campus in Martin where they have 58 kids in the EI program in the county. Alright - so if I’m providing - let’s use the analogy - I have my own resource rooms in my district and I send the really tough cases to Allegan then why couldn’t use that same model for early childhood education from the standpoint that we’re offer the regular mainstream special ed services, but some of these other things that really need attention so these other needs of students - may be we could center them up and get - you see what I mean we can service all kids that way.

An Oakland County superintendent who supported ECE also stated on the survey,

Our state provides 0-5 education for all Special Education students so I believe it would be appropriate to offer programs to all students 0-5. Funding, capacity building and training could be done through the ISD's. We already have MSRP in place for 4 year olds. This model would meet the needs of many 3-5 year olds whether they meet the at-risk requirements or not.

Putting the ISDs into the center of services was a common thought of many of the interviewees. The ECE coordinator of Allegan County agrees that the role of ISD needs to be expanded more into that of the middle level provider.

I really think that the ISDs have the potential to play a centralizing role in the school system as a whole. I think it would be very challenging for individual school districts to really develop the expertise and the leadership to provide quality early education experience at the district level. I'm not saying that it's impossible. I think that ISDs have the potential to get people on board that have that kind of expertise. Also ISDs, I think, have a little more sense of connection to communities. So, I think there is more collaborative role played by an ISD between the schools and agencies. Where the schools themselves - I think they have more challenges with making those kind of community connections. (ISD ECE Director 1)

The director went on to say that she felt the Allegan ESA currently does play this role, but it is mostly of his or her own accord, and it is not done that way everywhere.

Ionia ISD's ECE coordinator anticipates a greater role for ISDs, but she also points out that not all ISDs have made strides in that direction.

I think that the role of the ISD has definitely grown with the Granholm administration because she is centering more responsibility there. The Department of Education is now providing more responsibility there and a perfect example is these outcomes with the early childhood special education programs. Most of them are locally run, but it's the ISD that is responsible for assuring that all of that data is collected and things like that. I think they [ISDs] are embracing it [the increased role].

The local superintendents seem quick to volunteer the services of the ISDs, but this is welcomed by the ISD leadership. When the ISD superintendents were asked what role they envision for the state they both felt that the state needs to provide the direction, but to give the ISDs and local the oversight responsibilities.

[During the governor's] Last term here we're going to see some movement towards funding early childhood and then I think once they start the funding, it's up to the MDE to set the standards and get out of the way, and the ISDs, the RESAs, and ESAs need to coordinate within the locals and get to what the standards are. You cannot cop down how to do it. (ISD Superintendent 1)

ISD Superintendent 2 explains the role that he sees for the state in the provision of ECE:

Well I wish the state didn't have to mandate it or be the major player, but I am afraid in order for it to happen it will have to be that way. I wish that it

didn't have to be. Ideally, I would like to see parents, community and schools step up, work together, and make those things happen. But sadly it hasn't happened. Statistics show that. So, as a result we probably need more help or more support and some direction and guidance and guess that could come from the state or from the intermediate school districts to the schools. (ISD Superintendent 2)

The state director was also asked to define the role that the MDE currently plays in the provision of ECE services. In the course of her response she mentioned that she would like to see an increased role for ISDs. It seems that ISD officials and local superintendents alike would also like to see the role of ISDs expanded. ISDs are usually seen as the liaison between the state and the local districts, but that is not really the case. According to the MDE officials, the 57 ISDs in the state operate independently from one another and with very little oversight from the MDE. The state director for ECE explains the current role of the MDE and ISDs in the provision of ECE and she explains the arrangement she would like to see in the future.

The current role -- we put out the money. We are kind of a middle man for both state and federal money, but we are also charged with developing the standards assuring the accountability, and I think we're also seeing a somewhat of a think tank like we kind of figure out what a work - now we never do that alone - we have all kinds of committees and people that help, you know - it's always collaborative, but we come out with what it should be and we either give the money to the ISDs or locals. Originally, when I first started, we gave most of the money to locals and that school district's

and individual childcare center's and programs. And when you have just a few things around the state that's an okay way to do it. When you get big and you starting to give it to everybody, it's not good for us to be giving it directly to local districts and dealing with 600 grantees for programs. It would be better if we worked through the ISDs. So currently, we are just starting to use the ISDs as local collaboratives and organizers. I see that has a big future. Because there are too many different entities, too much to check on, too much accountability. I think we should - the ISDs were set up to provide some of that - that should be their natural reason to be. Currently, we do deal with - we started to deal with ISDs on a number of grants starting with the 2000 ASAP-PIE grant went to ISDs and the mechanism of giving it out to the ISDs is pretty successful. So, I see more of that.

ISDs do provide a lot of direct services in their counties. For example, the districts in Allegan County have elected to have the ISD serve as the fiduciary for the MSRP programs. This is the case for all Allegan County districts except for Fennville, which with a 73% free and reduced count runs their own program. ISD coordinators and local superintendents like this model in general. They see ISDs as being very helpful in areas with smaller populations because there is more bang for buck by having a central provider. For example, in Ionia County all of the MSRP programs were housed at the ISD. This made sense because they were only enough kids in the county participating to fill one classroom. This way each district did not have to pay for a teacher and director for the program. However, as the district saw the demand increase, they were able to

start their own programs which were closer to the families they served. Being closer kept kids off the busses for long periods and made it more convenient for the parents they serve.

Conclusion

The role that local districts play in providing ECE in the state of Michigan is diverse and there are many factors that contribute to this diversity. As established by the survey and reflected on the ECE Provision Index scores, the good news is that many of the children in Michigan with the greatest need for ECE appear to be getting ECE services. These services are most likely to be provided by Head Start or MSRP. MSRP is most likely to be provided by the local school district, but Head Start is more likely to be provided by an entity other than the local school district.

Another factor that seems to have the biggest influence on the provision of ECE is the role of the ISD the knowledge of the superintendents. Since most superintendents indicated on the survey that they have learned the most about ECE while serving as a superintendent, it seems that the ISD has a large influence on the knowledge of superintendents. As seen in Allegan County, if the ISD makes a point to educate superintendents about ECE, the superintendents gain knowledge about ECE, and knowledge also equates to better provision of services.

Another key finding is that locals, ISDs, and the MDE would like to see ISDs play a larger role in the provision of services. Local superintendents are interested in ECE services and they are receptive to the idea of providing these services with the organizational support of ISDs and the financial backing of the state on the MDE.

Funding issues were frequently cited by superintendents on the survey and in the interviews as the main reason for not providing more ECE services in their district.

Funding issues are a large concern for all three levels, but there were several suggestions made for ways that local districts can support ECE and other providers without spending large amounts of money.

The message about the benefits to ECE has perforated the various service levels and the people in the supervisory positions at these levels are ready and willing to provide ECE service. It appears that all levels are very willing to coordinate services and that is seen in such programs as the ECIC and Great Parents, Great Start that are making use of ISDs as the middle level provider that can help for the present time.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was threefold as it attempted to: 1) determine to what extent local school districts in Michigan vary in their provision of ECE services and what factors, such as superintendent knowledge and community characteristics, account for these differences; 2) determine local school district superintendents' perceptions of ECE and explore whether or not these perceptions are related to their knowledge, familiarity with programs and research, and to what extent they view ECE as being important to their students obtaining their achievement goals; and 3) determine the efficacy of the current delivery system for ECE services between the state, ISDs, and local districts by ascertaining the vision that the leaders at these levels have for the provision of ECE services.

The results of the study were obtained from a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitatively, a 26-item survey that asked closed, open, and scale questions was delivered to local school district superintendents in four Michigan counties. Quantitative data was also gathered from databases and web sites that report funding information, enrollment numbers and other pertinent information. The qualitative method was personal interviews conducted with four local superintendents, two ISD superintendents, two ISD ECE coordinators, and two MDE directors responsible for ECE.

The results of this study show that there is large variance in the ECE services that local districts provide that is related to the needs of the children in a given district.

Michigan districts that have a higher need for ECE services are more likely to provide them than districts without a high need for services. There is a relationship between the superintendent's knowledge and their district's ECE Provision Index score. Most of the knowledge that local superintendents have about ECE was acquired on the job as a superintendent. Some have brought ECE experience with them into superintendent positions, but many more have been informed of ECE benefits while in their position as superintendent.

Though most Michigan superintendents are not familiar with specific studies on ECE, most believe that an investment in ECE can have a positive impact on student achievement. Programs and training offered by ISDs can be very influential to the attitudes of local superintendents. The experience that superintendents bring to the position, such as experience exclusively at the 9-12 level versus pre-K or K-5 experience also impacts the knowledge and perception of superintendents; those with pre-K and K-5 experience being more knowledgeable and supportive of ECE.

The study also indicates that leaders at the state, ISD, and local level have a similar vision for the provision of ECE that varies slightly from the current alignment and dissemination of services. Leaders at the three levels would like to see an increased role for ISDs in the provision of services. As will be further discussed, ISDs are in a central position and seem the best equipped to coordinate ECE services.

In the course of the study several themes became apparent that helped to explain the findings.

Informing Superintendents

When analyzing the data collected from the survey and the interviews, it became

clear that superintendents are familiar, at least on a surface level, with the research that indicates lasting benefits for children who receive quality ECE. They know that children would enter school better prepared which would translate to higher levels of achievement on standardized tests. Many also feel there is the potential for an ECE investment to have long-term financial benefits for their district as well.

There is a difference between superintendents with secondary experience and those with primary experience. Superintendents that have worked with the younger populations tend to put a greater priority on ECE than do those with only secondary experience. However, as seen in Allegan County, superintendents that are informed and in-serviced on the benefits of ECE, tend to become strong supporters of it. Most superintendents claim that much of their learning about ECE has come on the job. This means that public school administrators, such as secondary principals and assistant superintendents, are not as aware of the benefits of ECE.

Raising awareness of the benefits of ECE among other administrators, school boards, and the general public is important. Local superintendents are in a good place to help raise this awareness because they are the key policy setters and decision makers in a school community. The ECE message need to reach legislators and superintendents can certainly help in this cause.

Funding Issues

Local superintendents are very supportive of ECE, but many feel that their hands are tied in terms of being able to offer more ECE programs in their districts. The issue of funding came up repeatedly in the surveys and interviews with many superintendents stating that they feel a lot pressure to spend money on programs that benefit children in

grades K-12. Even superintendents that believe strongly in ECE have difficulty justifying using their general funds to serve the Pre-K population. They feel that providing ECE services is beyond their scope.

Though superintendents see themselves as the main policy makers in a district, they feel that they do not have the ability to institute a program that steps outside the realm of K-12. Many superintendents feel marginalized by policies such as Proposal A. Proposal A passed in 1994 and it equalized school funding amongst local districts in Michigan. While it equalized funding, it took away a great deal of local control by shifting the schools' main revenue source away from local property taxes to the state through an increase in sale tax. Many superintendents expressed concerns that their constituents would not support providing ECE programs if it meant cutting existing programs that serve K-12 students.

ISD and state leaders are sympathetic to these concerns and do not expect superintendents to use their general fund dollars to fund ECE. These leaders do, however, have ideas about ways that the local districts can support ECE without spending a large amount of money. In addition to raising awareness about ECE at public forums, local districts could involve other providers in their in-services and they could do more with families. Local districts have facilities and capacity to invite parents and other providers into the school to teach or at least facilitate classes on parenting and care skills. The Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA) made educating superintendents a top priority for a reason. Educating superintendents can lead them to advocate for programs. Allegan County provides a good example of what educating superintendents and the kind of momentum that can be created by getting them

on board with ECE. Alone superintendents do not have the political influence to make the type of change that would be needed to get more funding and state support for ECE. Together, however, their professional associations and local influence with state representatives has greater potential to initiate change.

Coordinating Efforts

This study focused on the role that local school districts play in providing ECE and how this role coordinates with the ISD and state level. In the course of interviewing ISD and state ECE coordinators the need for collaboration and coordination of services was frequently referenced. There are ECE programs administered at all levels ranging from the federal Head Start program, through state and local programs down to small day care centers and private homes with family care. There are also agencies such as Children's Trust Fund, the Department of Human Services, and the Department of Community Health and State School Aid that provide ECE programming or funding. Additionally, there are non-profit organizations, such as the United Way and private endowments from the private sector, which are getting involved in ECE through partnerships such as the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC).

There has been a push to get these organizations to work together. Recently a guide for assisting in community collaborations was published by a joint effort of the Office of Governor Jennifer Granholm, The Michigan Department of Education, the Michigan Family Independence Agency, The Michigan Business Leaders for Educational Excellence, the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, and the AT& T Foundation. This guide is designed to help coordinate many efforts including Project Great Start. Among the key community stakeholders that the guide recommends that organizations work with

are ISDs and school principals. The guide is a great start, but knowledge of these partnerships has yet to perforate the ECE community, let alone local districts. The ECIC is a major effort, but only 25% of the superintendents who responded to the survey were familiar with the program.

Provision of ECE is a disjointed effort, at best, in the state of Michigan. This was particularly apparent in discussions with the ISD and MDE ECE coordinators. The state and especially the coordinators have the most first-hand knowledge and they have a good understanding of how the various agencies work within the state and within their own counties.

Role of the ISD

When asked on the survey what role they would like to see ISDs play in the provision of ECE, many of the superintendents mentioned training, support, and leadership. Some superintendents felt that ECE should originate from ISD since local districts already so many responsibilities in K-12, but most wanted a support role from the ISD.

As many of the interview participants pointed out, ISD can make efficient use of resources, especially in areas with many small local districts. One superintendent pointed out that poverty “doesn’t have any district boundaries” (Superintendent 1). The superintendents and ISD coordinators interviewed felt that it would make sense to provide and coordinate services for smaller districts where it makes sense to pool resources. Many superintendents stated in their interviews or survey that they would like to see money funneled through the ISDs from the state to the locals.

ISDs are beginning to play an increased role in the provision of ECE, but it could

still be greater. Great Parents, Great Start and the ECIC are programs that have been recently placed in the hands of ISDs. Increasing the role of ISDs makes sense because they are in a good position to coordinate programs. Special education programs are a potential role model for ECE programs. Many ISDs offer center programs for special education services and they employ experts such as those who specialize in autism spectrum disorders. In many cases single local districts do not have the need or the resources to hire autism spectrum experts, school psychologists, or speech pathologists. ISDs can centralize these services and make sure that they reach the children who need them. Many ISDs have passed special education millages to support services and they could ask voters to approve them for ECE programming as well. Both the state director and coordinator of ECE for the MDE mentioned an initiative called, Darkening the Dotted Lines, where the MDE is working with ISDs to clarify the role of ISDs in teacher education and certification issues. Darkening the Dotted Lines helps formalize and firm-up many of the roles that ISD currently play as a liaison between the state and local districts. This partnership with the MDE and ISDs could help ISDs move into a more centralized role in providing services to local districts.

Implications

As indicated in Chapter 2, there are numerous benefits to providing quality ECE. When children receive a quality early childhood education, they are more likely to achieve higher and behave better in school. A solid performance in school is then more likely to lead to greater success as an adult. As indicated in the Perry High Scope Preschool Project, this benefits society as a whole. Public schools have much to gain

from participating in ECE. However, their current role is much smaller than it could be or should be. Public schools are interested in ECE, and they believe in ECE. Moreover, they are ready to become more involved, but they are lacking in the capacity to provide as many services as they would like.

Public schools are labeled as K-12 institutions. They do not receive state funding for preschool children unless these children have risk factors. Even then, not all children who need the services are receiving them. Public schools currently serve all children in grades K-12. Every community is served by a local school district which means that an infrastructure already exists in every community to serve children. Local districts are good at providing services, but they need funding and support from the state and their ISD to provide quality programs. ISDs are also in place and they too have the ability to serve their local districts. A recent report entitled, *Tough Choices*, calls for restructuring the American education system. One of the proposals in the report calls for reframing public schools to serve children beginning at three-years-old until they complete the 10th grade. While this study on ECE is not designed to comment on secondary education, it will support adding 3-year-olds to public school's range of service.

Limitations

This study was limited by the following conditions:

1. The sample locations were purposely selected. Though the participating sample was shown to be representative of the other school districts in the sample counties, the study was limited to four counties in two Michigan regions. This made the study manageable, but it may not be representative of all local Michigan

school districts and intermediate school districts.

2. The analysis of data came from only those leaders who agreed to participate.

Some superintendents were clearly more informed about the ECE programs than were some of their colleagues. For example, some superintendents misreported or underreported their districts participation in ECE programs. The researcher referenced each participating district's web site to compare this information, and did make a few adjustments the number of programs reported in the tables used to calculate the ECE Provision Index score.

3. The subjective factors used in the index scores, such as superintendent's perception of their district's efforts to provide ECE programs and the assessment of the superintendents' own knowledge. There were many other factors considered in the index score to minimize the effect of superintendent overestimating or underestimating his/her district's efforts to provide ECE.

4. The inability to ascertain the amount that local districts spend on ECE. Many superintendents, especially those in large districts, are not able to recite specific financial information. Ascertaining the amount spent on ECE would require a lot of work from the districts' finance directors. The design of this study would have to have been changed to include finance directors as well as superintendents if exact financial figures were to be included.

Recommendations for Future Research

Efforts to enhance ECE in Michigan would benefit from gaining a clearer understanding of who, exactly, is receiving quality ECE and who is providing those services. This study

sought to gain a general understanding of the scope of ECE service and it did show that local communities with the greatest need are most active in the provision of ECE services. It did not address the growing need to provide for families that earn more than the limits for Head Start or MSRP, but cannot afford quality private care. It is possible that children from lower middle class families are not receiving the same level of ECE as children from families below the poverty lines or in the upper middle class.

It may be beneficial for future studies to examine the cost of universal ECE programs in Michigan. While many local school districts and ISDs would be receptive to providing ECE services, they would need help from the state legislature for funding and the MDE for capacity building. There is growing number of states moving towards universal preschool and they may help researchers determine the feasibility and cost of using public schools as they main service provider.

Implications for Professional Practice

Nationally recognized research conducted in Michigan shows the return the state would receive on an investment in ECE. The ECIC is a movement towards having private sources help pay for this investment. The governor of Michigan has made ECE a priority in her speeches and in many of her actions and initiatives. People are listening, but the word is still not being spread far enough or wide enough. Many local school district superintendents have received this message, but it has stopped there because local districts do not have the funding or capacity to provide the services they know would help. Local and intermediate districts do have a lot on their plates, but with increased

funding and support, they will be able to provide ECE for the children they will eventually serve in grades K-12.

A start in this direction would be to coordinate the programs and funding that is currently in place. The MDE has started in this direction with the Darkening the Dotted Lines initiative and with the guide for assisting community collaboratives. These efforts should be supported and completed to set the stage for an even more comprehensive ECE provision plan that could ultimately culminate in a universal ECE plan for Michigan.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Local District Superintendent Interview Questions

Name _____ District _____ Date _____

Baseline/Background Questions

- 1) How long have you been in your current position?
- 2) What positions did you hold prior to becoming a superintendent?
- 3) Please describe the demographic and socioeconomic composition of your district?
- 4) What are some unique characteristics of your district and unique challenges that you face?
- 5) How does your district stand in terms of AYP? Where do you think you will be in 5-6 years in regard to AYP?

ECE Knowledge

- 6) What early childhood programs are available to children in your district?
 - Which of these services are offered by your district?
 - What other organizations provide ECE services?
 - How would you rate the quality of these different programs?
 - Are there additional programs that you would like to see your district participate in?
- 7) What opportunities have you had in the past to learn about ECE?
 - Professional Conferences
 - Trade Journals
 - County Meetings
 - District In-services
 - College classes
 - Other

Please summarize what you were able to take away from these opportunities.

- 8) Please tell me about the person who is in charge of ECE programs in your district by answering the following questions.
 - What is this person's title?
 - How long has this person been in this position?
 - How long has the position been in place?
 - What credentials does this person hold that makes them qualified for this position?
- 9) To the best of your knowledge, are the preschool children in your district who most need ECE services receiving them?

Perception Questions:

- 10) Research on the Perry High Scope Preschool Program has found a \$13.00 return to society for every dollar spent on children in that program. Some studies have suggested that children who participate in quality ECE programs are less likely to need special education services, are less likely to be retained, will score higher on standardized test, and are less likely to drop out. On a smaller scale, do you think there would be long-term financial benefits for money that your district spends on ECE? In other words, would you see the return on your investment?
- 11) How important do you think high-quality ECE is for a child's success in school?
- 12) Do you think a higher percentage of children participating in ECE would positively impact MEAP scores or adequate yearly progress in your district? Please explain.
- 13) If the goal is to provide high quality ECE services to the children that need it the most, how important is it to have K-12 districts involved in providing these ECE services? Is this something that the ISD or the state could or should provide without the local district being involved?
- 14) Overall, how satisfied are you with the ECE services that are offered in your district? Please Explain.

Policy Implication Questions:

- 15) How influential is the superintendent in setting spending priorities in your district?
- 16) How do you think your board would feel about spending additional money on ECE?
- 17) Please rank in order the priority you would like to see given to the following programs by the state and federal governments.

- ____ Middle School Math (99c)
- ____ High School Reform
- ____ Reading Recovery
- ____ Class size reduction (Title IIa)
- ____ At-risk funding (31a)
- ____ Early Childhood Education
- ____ Before/After school programs for grades k-8
- ____ Gifted and Talented

- 18) Currently the state, ISDs, and many local school districts all provide funding

and/or programming for ECE. The goal that the state and most ISDs strive for is to provide quality ECE for every child who needs it. Please describe your vision for how these levels can work together to best provide these services.

Appendix B

ISD Superintendent Interview Questions

Name_____ District_____ Date_____

- 1) How long have you been in your current position?
- 2) What positions did you hold prior to becoming the ISD superintendent?
- 3) Will you please describe the demographic and socioeconomic composition of the communities in your county?
- 4) What are some unique characteristics of your district and unique challenges that your intermediate district faces?
- 5) Please rank in order 1-8 the priority you would like to see given to the following programs by the state and federal governments.

- _____ Middle School Math (99c)
- _____ High School Reform
- _____ Reading Recovery
- _____ Class size reduction (Title IIa)
- _____ At-risk funding (31a)
- _____ Early Childhood Education
- _____ Before/After school programs for grades k-8
- _____ Gifted and Talented

- 6) How familiar are you with early education (ECE) programs such as Head Start, Michigan School Readiness Program, and Parents as Teachers that are available for preschool children? Do you feel as familiar as with these programs as you are with programs available to children in grades K-12?
- 7) What are some of the early childhood programs available to children in your ISD? How are these programs funded?
- 8) How important do you think high-quality ECE is for a child's success in school?
- 9) Overall, how satisfied are you with the ECE services that are offered in your district? Please Explain. (Are there new ECE programs you would like to see started in your district? If so, what would they look like?)
- 10) Do you think a higher percentage of children participating in ECE would positively impact MEAP scores or adequate yearly progress for the local districts in your county? Please explain.

11) To the best of your knowledge, are the children in your ISD who most need ECE services receiving them? Please Explain.

12) Research on the Perry High Scope Preschool Program has found a \$13.00 return to society for every dollar spent on children in that program. Some studies have suggested that children who participate in quality ECE programs are less likely to need special education services, are less likely to be retained, will score higher on standardized test, and are less likely to drop out. On a smaller scale, do you think there would be long-term financial benefits for money that your ISD spends on ECE? In other words, would you see the return on your investment before the kids graduate?

13) Is early childhood education a priority for the local superintendents in your county? Should it be?

14) A feeling among some is that local districts could do more to provide ECE if they made it a larger priority. How do you react to these feelings?)

15) In the provision of ECE, what role(s) is/are appropriate for the state? Please consider funding, capacity building, staff training, and the provision of ECE.

Appendix C

ISD Coordinator Interview

Name _____ District _____ Date _____

- 1) What is your job title?
- 2) What are your job responsibilities as they relate to ECE? Is oversight of ECE your major responsibility?
- 3) How did you become interested in ECE?
- 4) How important do you think high-quality ECE is for a child's success in school? (Can a child be successful in school without having been in a quality childcare program or in a nurturing home?)
- 5) How do you interpret or define the role that ISDs play in providing ECE in the state of Michigan?
- 6) The Early Childhood Committee of the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA) set 4 goals for the 2005-06 school year. The first of these goals was to: quote "develop a compelling message for the public education system that motivates them to understand and accept the importance of ECEC." This was to be done in part by promoting and making presentations at (Michigan Association of School Administrators (MASA) and Michigan Association of School Board (MASB) conferences. Why is it important to educate the public education system and its administrators? What can be gained by doing so?
- 7) In general, how supportive do you feel LEA or K-12 superintendents are in terms of providing quality ECE to the children in their districts?
- 8) In your opinion, are K-12s doing enough to support and provide ECE? Are some better than others? How do you account for these differences?
- 9) Should K-12 districts be responsible for funding ECE programs? Please explain your thoughts on this. Do you feel that there is room in most current K-12 budgets to better provide services should the superintendents choose to allocate the funds?
- 10) Should K-12 Districts provide their own programs or should ISDs be responsible for providing most if not all ECE services.

- 11) What (more) would you like the following levels to do to support ECE?
- State
- ISDs
- Local districts
- 12) There has been some talk of making public education span from age three to grade twelve or even birth to grade twelve. How do feel about having local districts having responsibility for providing services beginning at these early ages?
- 13) What are some research studies that you would recommend to local leaders to help inform them understand and accept the importance of ECE?

Appendix D

Interview with State Directors

Name_____ District_____ Date_____

Background Questions

- 1) Will you please give me a brief description of your job responsibilities?
- 2) What training and past experiences led you into this position?

Current Picture

- 3) How does early childhood education (ECE) currently fit into the K-12 public education system?
- 4) How satisfied are you with the current ECE programs in Michigan? Please talk about a few specific programs.
- 5) Please describe the role that the MDE has in providing ECE to children in Michigan.
 - a. Please describe the role that you see ISDs currently play in providing ECE?
 - b. Please describe the role that you see local districts currently play in providing ECE?
- 6) The Early Childhood Committee of the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA) set 4 goals for the 2005-06 school year. The first of these goals was to: quote “develop a compelling message for the public education system that motivates them to understand and accept the importance of ECEC.” This was to be done in part by promoting and making presentations at the Michigan Association of School Administrators (MASA) and the Michigan Association of School Board (MASB) conferences. Do you think educating local leaders will lead to better programs? Will it lead to more programs?
- 7) Are some local districts within the same ISD more effective in providing high-quality ECE than others? If so what accounts for these differences?
- 8) To the best of your knowledge, how have the expectations for the role local districts in the provision of ECE changed over the last several years?

Future Picture

- 9) How much influence do you feel a local superintendent and ISD superintendent can have in their respective districts to provide quality ECE programs that reach a large number of children in need of the services? Please explain your answer.
- 10) Budget constraints are often cited by local leaders as the main obstacle in providing quality ECE in their districts. How do you respond to this concern?
- 11) Will you please describe your vision of how the State, ISDs, and local districts could best work together to provide ECE to the children who need it the most? Please comment on the role you would like to see each level play.
- 12) What can be done to see this vision become reality?

Appendix E

Letter to District Superintendents for Interview

PROVIDING QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN MICHIGAN'S LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

02-12-2007

Dear Interview Participant:

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate K-12 superintendents' perceptions of early childhood education programs and policy. I will be asking questions regarding your knowledge of and experiences with early childhood education, and solicit your views on alternative state and local initiatives to promote the deliver early childhood education services

This study is non-invasive and participating in the study is not expected to cause discomfort. The study will be of value to the Michigan Department of Education, intermediate school districts, and K-12 leaders. The goal of the study is to help specify an appropriate alignment of the roles for actors at each of these levels of Michigan's education system in the provision of early childhood education services.

The interview should take approximately 45 minutes in a face-to-face setting. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions or discontinue your participation at any time.

Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. Data collected will be kept strictly confidential and that the reports generated from this study will not contain details that can be readily used to identify participants. The tapes and notes from the interview, along with the data gathered from the corresponding questionnaire, will be kept by the researcher and will only be used for the purpose of completing this study. Participants may request to see a copy of the results and discussion section of the dissertation before it is officially submitted.

You are under no obligation to participate in this study and may discontinue your participation if you so desire. You may contact John Deiter at (616) 794-1796 or his academic advisor, David D. Arsen, Ph.D. for more information regarding this study. David Arsen, Department of Educational Administration, 418 Erickson Hall, East Lansing-48824. Phone: (517) 432-2276 email: arsen@msu.edu

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., Director of the Human Subject Protection Programs at

Michigan State University, by phone: (517) 355-2180, fax: (517) 432-4503, email: irb@msu.edu, or regular mail: 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

I voluntarily agree to participate in the study.

_____ Signature of Respondent	_____ Date
_____ Signature of Investigator	_____ Date

Appendix F

Survey of Local School District Superintendents

1. Please provide your name and school district.

No names will be used in the final report. District names are essential for data disaggregation. You may contact John Deiter at (616) 794-1796 or his academic advisor, David D. Arsen for more information regarding this study. David Arsen, Department of Educational Administration, 418 Erickson Hall, East Lansing-48824. Phone: (517) 432-2276 email: arsen@msu.edu 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., Director of the Human Subject Protection Programs at Michigan State University, by phone: (517) 355-2180, fax: (517) 432-4503, email: irb@msu.edu, or regular mail: 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

2. How many years have you served in your current position?

1-2 years 3-4 years 5-6 years 7 years or more

3. Which credentials do you hold?

Check all that apply

BS/BA in Education

MA in Administration

MA in Teaching or Counselling

Ed.S.

Ph.D or Ed.D.

Other, please specify

4. What grade levels have you taught or administered in prior to becoming superintendent?

Pre-k

K-5

6-8

9-12

Other, please specify

5. What preschool programs are available to children in your district?

Michigan School Readiness Program (MSRP)

Head Start

Tuition based program

Other subsidized program at reduced or no cost to parents

None

Other, please specify

6. What preschool programs are provided by your district?

Michigan School Readiness Program (MSRP)

HeadStart

Tuition based program

Other subsidized program at reduced or no cost to parents

None

Other, please specify

7. If your district provides ECE programs, is the person who oversees your district's early childhood education program a member of your district's administrative team?

Yes No

8. If your district provides ECE programs, is the person in charge of your district's early childhood education program certified and/or endorsed in early childhood education?

Yes

No

Not sure

9. If there is a person in charge of your district's early childhood education program, what is his/her job title?

Early Childhood Program Coordinator

Elementary Principal

Special Education Director

Lead Teacher

Other, please specify

10. Please rate your level of knowledge about the following programs

Not at all Familiar = I do not know who receives or provides services for this program. Somewhat Familiar = I know who receives and provides services for this program. Fairly Familiar = I know who receives and provides services and I have an idea of the costs and benefits of the programs. I have solid working knowledge of the program. Very Familiar = I can discuss the intricacies of the program or study in detail.

Not at all
Familiar

Somewhat
Familiar

Fairly
Familiar

Very Familiar

No Child Left
Behind

Michigan School

Readiness Program
(MSRP)
Head Start
Early Head Start
Michigan's Project
Great Start
Parents as Teachers
Early On
Early Childhood
Developmental
Disability (ECDD)
Programs
Michigan Early
Childhood
Investment
Corporation (ECIC)

11. Please rate your knowledge of the following studies of early childhood education
Not at all Familiar = I do not know who receives or provides services for this
program. Somewhat Familiar = I know who receives and provides services for
this program. Fairly Familiar = I know who receives and provides services and
I have an idea of the costs and benefits of the programs. I have solid working
knowledge of the program. Very Familiar = I can discuss the intricacies
of the program or study in detail.

Not at all Familiar	Somewhat Familiar	Fairly Familiar	Very Familiar
------------------------	----------------------	--------------------	---------------

Abecedarian
Project - North
Carolina
Chicago Child-
Parent Center
Program
High/Scope Perry
Preschool Project

12. At what point in your schooling or career did you learn the most about early
childhood education?
Undergraduate studies
Graduate studies
On the Job -- As an administrator or teacher
On the Job -- As a superintendent
Other, please specify

13. What have been your two main sources of knowledge about early childhood education? Select at least 0 responses and no more than 2 responses.
- College coursework
 - Trade journals
 - Workshops/in-services
 - Colleagues
 - On the job experience
 - Other, please specify
14. To the best of your knowledge, how many times has the provision of early childhood education been on the agenda of your administrative team meetings in the last two years?
- Never
 - 1 or 2
 - 3 or 4
 - 5 or more
 - N/A Do not meet as an administrative team
15. To the best of your knowledge, how many times has the provision of early childhood education been on the school board agenda in the two years?
- Never
 - 1 or 2
 - 3 or 4
 - 5 or more
16. To the best of your knowledge, how many preschool children in your district receive one of the following services?
- | | 1-20 | 21-40 | 41-60 | 61+ | Not Sure | Not provided |
|---|------|-------|-------|-----|----------|--------------|
| Head Start (District Sponsored) | | | | | | |
| MSRP Michigan School Readiness | | | | | | |
| ECDD Early Childhood Developmental Disability Program | | | | | | |
| Even Start | | | | | | |
| Parents as Teachers | | | | | | |
| Welcoming Families (Home visits) | | | | | | |

Other Publicly
funded Program
Tuition Program
(District Provided)

17. How would you rate the State of Michigan's efforts to make early childhood education available to children who need it?

Efforts can encompass funding, training, or other resources

Poor Fair Good Excellent

Rate the state's
effort to provide
ECE services to
the children who
need them the
most

18. How would you rate your ISD's efforts to make early childhood education available to children in your county?

Poor Fair Good Excellent

Rate your ISDs
efforts to provide
ECE to the children
in your county

19. How would you rate your district's efforts to make early childhood education available to children in your district?

Poor Fair Good Excellent

Rate your district's
efforts to provide
ECE to the children
in your district

20. Using a scale of one to ten with one being the lowest and ten the highest, how well informed do you feel about early childhood education in terms of the programs available and research in the field? One is little or no knowledge and 10 is extremely knowledgeable?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Your level of
knowledge
regarding ECE

21. If your schools are to make AYP in the coming years, and given the characteristics and demographics of your district, how important is it to have quality ECE programs available in your district? One is not at all important and 10 is very important.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How important is
ECE for AYP (and
grade level
progress) for
schools with
grades K-5?

How important is
ECE for AYP for
schools with
grades 6-8?

How important is
ECE for AYP for
schools with
grades 9-12?

22. Using a scale of one to ten with one being the lowest level and ten the highest, how much do you agree that educating the preschool population should be a priority for K-12 districts?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Educating the 0-5
population should be
a priority for K-12
districts

23. Optional Comments on any of the scale questions in the previous questions
24. In the provision of ECE, what role(s) is/are appropriate for the State? Please consider funding, capacity building, staff training, and the provision of ECE.
25. In the provision of ECE, what role(s) is/are appropriate for the ISD? Please consider funding, capacity building, staff training, and the provision of ECE.
26. Considering the roles that you described for the state and ISDs in the two previous questions, what role would you like your district to play in providing ECE to preschool children in your district?

Appendix G

Glossary of Terms

ASAP-PIE	A discontinued state program that granted \$45 million to 23 ISDs in unequal amounts. It was designed to provide parent education.
Darkening the Dotted Lines	A partnership with the MDE and ISDs designed to improve teacher education and the certification process. ECE officials with the MDE hope it will offer clarity to other relationships as well.
EarlyOn	A state program designed to serve children with developmental delays or special needs.
ECCD	The Early Childhood Developmental Disability program is a federal program designed to serve 4 & 5-year-olds.
ECE	Early childhood education typically refers to children in pre-kindergarten programs. It can encompass birth through age 8.
Even Start	A federal program designed to educate children with an illiterate parent.
GPGS	Great Parents Great Start is a state program that is run through ISDs designed to provide universal programs for parent education. It is funded at \$5 million for all ISDs in the state in equal amounts and it requires a local matching funds. It replaced ASAP-PIE.
Head Start	The federal government's ECE program designed to provide quality ECE for 4 & 5 year-olds living in poverty.
MSRP	Michigan School Readiness Program is the state's largest ECE program. It is designed to serve 4-year-olds with economic and learning risk factors.
NCLB	No Child Left Behind is a national initiative designed to increase Student performance by requiring all students to be proficient on their state's standard assessment.
PGS	Project Great Start is Michigan governor Granholm's umbrella program that is designed to improve and increase ECE services

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