Parental Perspectives on Kindergarten Readiness

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Abstract

This qualitative dissertation explored the perspectives of parents and caregivers on kindergarten readiness within an urban charter school context. As early childhood education continues to evolve amid shifting societal, political, and economic landscapes, understanding parental views on how to prepare children for kindergarten is essential. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory grounded this study and framed it through an interpretivist lens, recognizing that complex, interconnected systems shape parental beliefs and actions. Focusing on families from a Title I, tuition-free public charter school serving predominantly African American students in a low-income urban community, the research examined two key questions: (1) How do parents and caregivers view kindergarten readiness in urban education? and (2) What are parents/caregivers doing to support early childhood experiences related to readiness? Through semi-structured interviews with purposefully selected participants whose children completed kindergarten between 2016 and 2022 data were gathered and thematically analyzed. Findings revealed that parents valued academic and socio-emotional skills in defining kindergarten readiness, with emphasis placed on communication, child development, learning engagement, and emotional preparedness. The COVID-19 pandemic emerged as a critical contextual factor, intensifying parental involvement and revealing disparities in access to early learning opportunities. Parents expressed both confidence and concern in their ability to prepare children for school amid systemic and structural challenges. It contributed to the limited body of research on parental perspectives of kindergarten readiness, particularly in underrepresented urban contexts. It offered practical implications for educators, policymakers, and early childhood programs to align support systems with parental expectations and realities. This study aimed to

bridge the gap between policy, practice, and family experience in preparing children for a successful start in school.

Key Words: *Kindergarten Readiness, Parental Perspectives, Preschool and Prekindergarten Education, Qualitative Research, Urban Education*

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the Early Childhood Education Teachers that work tirelessly to ensure that our youngest scholars receive a high-quality education and experience during their preschool and pre-kindergarten years. I dedicate this work to all Kindergarten teachers who get the best surprise party every year of not knowing what the school year will hold but continues to build relationships, spread joy and ensure the safety and education of the five year olds we teach each day. Lastly, I dedicate this work to real heroes, the parents! Parents are an essential part of the education system, their voices should be heard and their opinions matter. I want to encourage more parents to seek the resources and knowledge they need to advocate for their child. Parents, you hold so much knowledge and experience, share it with the world!

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Table of Contents

List of Tables xiii

Chapter I: Introduction 1

Introduction to the Chapter 1

Background of the Study 2

Research Problem 12

Research Questions 14

Context of the Study 14

Rationale and Significance of the Study 14

Definitions of Terms 15

Chapter II: Literature Review 19

History of Kindergarten 19

Charter Schools 20

Kindergarten Preparation 22

Curriculum and Assessment 23

Early Childhood Education Programs 24

Parental Perspectives on Kindergarten 33

Education Legislation 37

Kindergarten Readiness 39

Summary 43

Chapter III: Methodology 45

Qualitative Research Design 45

Theoretical Framework Perspective of the Research 45

Rationale 46

Background of the Setting 48

Participants 48

Data Collection 49

Methods 49

Data Analysis 49

Protection of Participants' Rights 50

Trustworthiness Criteria 51

Timeline of Research Events 51

Timeline 52

Conclusion 52

Chapter IV: Findings 54

Introduction 54

Participant Demographics 54

Methodology 55

Interview Data 57

Themes 58

Education 58

Parenting 65

Social Interactions 77

Conclusion 79

Chapter V: Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations 80

Introduction 80

Major Themes 81

Critical Educational Engagement 81

Sub-Themes 82

Building on Prior Knowledge: Learning as a Continuum 82

Meaningful Engagement Beyond the Classroom 82

Early Learning Foundations through Structured Environments 83

Engaged Communication: Building Trust through Dialogue 83

Holistic Engagement through Supportive Structure 84

Emotional Engagement: Navigating the Transition Together 84

Discussion of the Findings in Relation to the Literature 84

Implications for Practice 89

Limitations 92

Recommendations for Future Research 94

Conclusion 96

References 99

Appendix A 114

Appendix B 116

Appendix C 118

Appendix D 119

Appendix E 124

Appendix F 126

Appendix G 127

Appendix H 130

List of Tables

Table 1. Participant Information 54

Chapter I: Introduction

Introduction to the Chapter

Each year, about 4 million children enter kindergarten in the United States, according to the U.S. Department of Education (Rohan, 2019). This magical time of entering a new school, learning new things, and meeting new friends and teachers is an essential part of childhood. Many parents recall kindergarten as a time of finger painting, playing with blocks, and eating graham crackers. While these activities still have a place in the kindergarten classroom, significant changes have occurred over the years (Morin, 2019). In a child's life, the transition to kindergarten is regarded as a pivotal marker because patterns of achievement and behavior established in kindergarten can have a profound impact on children's developmental trajectories (Puccioni, 2015).

Parents' involvement in their child's development and education is an important ingredient for continued success (Basile & Henry, 1996). Parental involvement in the education of students begins at home, where parents provide a safe and healthy environment, offer appropriate learning experiences, offer support, and maintain a positive attitude about school (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017). They (parents) see that Pre-K provides not only the opportunity to prepare children for future academic success, but also teaches children other skills that are essential for healthy, normal development, such as learning social skills and making friends (Basile & Henry, 1996). A wealth of scholarship demonstrates that parental involvement during early childhood has a strong, positive influence on a range of child outcomes during the transition to kindergarten (Booth & Crouter, 2008; Huat See & Gorard, 2015; Van Voorhis et al., 2013). Van Voorhis et al.'s (2013) review of over 95 studies provided a clear link between parents' engagement in cognitively stimulating literacy and mathematics activities and young

children's early learning and socio-emotional development (Puccioni et al., 2020). Parental transition practices refer to specific parent-child interactions designed to prepare children for school, and have been operationalized through actions such as reading to the child, reciting the alphabet, and practicing counting (Barnett & Taylor, 2009; Puccioni, 2015; Taylor et al., 2004). All parents hope their child will start school ready for success. And many parents turn that hope into action, seeking out supportive and high-quality early learning opportunities (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Parental perspectives should encourage researchers to dive deeper into what kindergarten readiness is and how it has evolved.

Background of the Study

Kindergarten readiness is a multifaceted concept encompassing multiple meanings and factors. Chronological age, developmental stage, specific academic and social skills, and home/school connections are associated with readiness (Hatcher et al., 2012). According to one early childhood expert, kindergarten readiness is an interactive concept. Parents' and teachers' beliefs about kindergarten readiness influence their decisions regarding kindergarten enrollment, their curriculum choices, and their overall perceptions of both preschools and kindergarten (Hatcher et al., 2012). Across the nation, 59 percent of four-year-olds, or six out of every ten children, are not enrolled in publicly funded preschool programs through state preschool, Head Start, and special education preschool services. Even fewer are enrolled in the highest-quality programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Yet just 54 percent of three and four-year-olds in the United States participate in any preschool; just 35 percent of eligible children participate in Head Start; and only a small fraction of eligible infants and toddlers receive subsidized, licensed child care (Learning Policy Institute, 2021).

Kindergarten itself is a German invention. The United States adopted the ideas of educational theorist Friedrich Froebel, who opened the first kindergarten in the world in 1837 in Blankenburg, Germany (Eschner, 2017). A kindergarten was a space where children aged between three and seven could learn through play, with great freedom of movement and good hygiene conditions that would promote their healthy development (Marín Murcia & Martínez Ruiz-Funes, 2020). Froebel's theory was that play should be shaped and encouraged, with the kindergarten day starting with songs and continuing with play, for children who were not yet ready for traditional schoolwork (Eschner, 2017). The first English-language kindergarten in the United States was established in the 1870s in St. Louis by Elizabeth Palmer Peabody (Eschner, 2017).

The federal government plays a crucial role in making high-quality programs accessible by subsidizing or covering the full tuition for Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs for children from low-income families (Learning Policy Institute, 2021). High-quality programs have several key components, including rich interactions between children and adults that are supported by small class sizes and low student-to-teacher ratios; a developmentally appropriate system of standards, curriculum, and assessment; and a well-qualified workforce, among others (Learning Policy Institute, 2021). Children who attend high-quality preschool programs are less likely to require special education services or be retained in their grade, and are more likely to graduate from high school, attend college, and succeed in their careers than those who have not attended high-quality preschool programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Children who enter kindergarten without all the necessary skills often fall behind and struggle in school (PA Department of Education, 2022).

The Constitution does not mention education. The original Department of Education was established in 1867 to collect information on schools and teaching that would help states establish effective school systems (U.S. Department of Education, June 15, 2021). The U.S. Department of Education is the federal agency responsible for establishing policy, administering, and coordinating most federal education assistance (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Responsibility for education, therefore, lies with the states, which have the authority to determine the scope and organization of their educational systems (Heise, 1994; U.S. Department of Education, June 15, 2021). The Learning Policy Institute (2021) stated that "the federal government and states have established a range of ECE programs to support the development of young children, but many of these programs are uncoordinated, insufficient in scope, inaccessible, and of variable quality". While both states and the federal government invest in early learning, these efforts have fallen short of what is needed to ensure that all children can access a high-quality early education that will prepare them for success (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

As a result, many children do not receive any formal early learning opportunities before the age of 5, creating a structural disadvantage from the outset that even the best K-12 public schools will struggle to address (Learning Policy Institute, 2021). Compulsory education is defined and referred to by I. Dulger (2012) as "to be the most crucial period of formal education required by law for all children between certain ages in a given country." States such as Pennsylvania and California have made the "compulsory attendance requirements from age 6 to age 18" (U.S. Department of Education, F2020; Gutierrez & Manwaring, 2004). Kindergarten is not compulsory. The local school board established the district's minimum age for beginners; a child who enters a school district's lowest elementary school grade above kindergarten must be

at least five years and seven months old before September 1 (U.S. Department of Education, 2021).

These struggles must be addressed by legislation at all levels; however, it is left to local and state governments to address these issues properly. Heise (1994) stated,

> Traditionally, state and local governments, particularly local school boards, developed and implemented educational policies. After all, state and local governments bear the constitutional duty to educate their citizens; they provide most of the school funding, and presumably, state and local governments know more than Congress does about the specific needs of the students they serve.

States began to grant local districts power to fund school budgets through taxation as early as the end of the eighteenth century (Heise, 1994). An example of this can be seen in cities like Philadelphia, PA, which has implemented a tax on sugary drinks to fund schools. Peterson (2021) stated these facts about this program,

> On June 16, 2016, Philadelphia City Council passed the Philadelphia Beverage Tax proposed by Mayor Kenney. Its focus has been on three transformational programs, one being, PHLpreK: free, quality pre-k for 3- and 4- year old children across Philadelphia. Since beginning in 2017, PHLpreK has grown from serving up to 2,000 children annually to 3,300. Next school year the program will expand to 4,000 seats, doubling its original size. Across multiple annual surveys, more than 90 percent of caregivers reported that their children are better prepared for kindergarten because of PHLpreK.

Lahr et al. (2021) continued to state,

> High-quality pre-K programs also have been shown to support parents' efforts to enter into and thrive in the workforce. The benefits ripple through the workforce, economy, and

> community. Yet in 2016 only one in three of Philadelphia's 42,500 three- and four-year-olds could access affordable, high quality pre-K.

It is States and communities, as well as public and private organizations of all kinds, that establish schools and colleges, develop curricula, and determine requirements for enrollment and graduation (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). States like Pennsylvania do not require children to attend school before the age of 8, and students can drop out at age 17 without parental consent (Hupka, 2019). This was the age at which children were required to start school, until recent legislative changes were made. Changing the compulsory attendance age was part of the state budget proposed by Governor Tom Wolf (Hupka, 2019). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2020), "specifically, a child who has attained the age of 6 on or before September 1 must enroll and attend school or begin a homeschool program that year". Greenfield (2019) stated,

> Starting in the 2020-21 school year, children in Pennsylvania will be required to enter school by the age of 6. Pennsylvania is just one of two states in the nation (the other being Washington state) that permits children to wait until age 8 to enter school. The state board of education contends that lowering the compulsory school age helps improve language and literacy skills, enhances social and emotional skill development, and decreases the need for remediation in later years.

This new law made it even more important for young children to attend preschool. Morgan stated that, "too many children currently do not participate in preschool in the United States. In comparison with other industrialized nations, a low percentage of American children enroll in preschool" (2019).

The United States Government, Office of Child Care, stated that "the annual income for a family to be eligible to receive a subsidy is 200 percent or less of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines" (Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 2025). For example, based on the U.S. Federal Poverty Guidelines used to determine financial eligibility for Certain Programs for 2024, for the average family size of 3 according to the U.S. Census 2023, per year, for 48 states, not including Alaska and Hawaii, was $49,720; Alaska at $62,140 per year and Hawaii at $57,180 per year (Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, 2024). The Office of Child Care stated that "paying for quality child care can be a struggle for many families in the United States"(Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 2025). Every state and territory has a child care financial assistance program to help families with low incomes pay for child care. Each state and territory also has its own guidelines for who is eligible for this assistance (Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 2025).

The argument was that children from low-income families enter the K-12 educational system with less developed academic skills that are then acted upon by formal and informal processes of schooling (e.g., ability grouping, teacher expectations) to create larger end-of-school disparities that undermine their ultimate socioeconomic attainment (Alexander et al., 2014; Crosnoe et al., 2016; R. C. Pianta et al., 2007). There are also many children whose families earn just over the income eligibility threshold yet cannot afford the cost of high-quality ECE, which in many states costs more than college tuition (Learning Policy Institute, 2021). For instance, children from low-income families are not only less likely to enroll in preschool but also more likely to attend lower-quality early education programs (Morgan, 2019). Financial barriers can significantly impact a family's ability to afford to enroll their child in a high-quality preschool or prekindergarten program.

The primary focus of preschool education has shifted in recent years from experiential, play-based programs to a more academic model (Hatcher et al., 2012). With increasing numbers of children attending preschool and schools across the nation instituting pre-K and full-day kindergarten programs, students are not only entering kindergarten more prepared to learn but also have more time in which to do so (Morin, 2019). The changing culture of kindergarten has given rise to significant questions about how preschool fits into children's overall school careers, and states have begun to create learning standards for preschool-age children (Hatcher et al., 2012). Little et al. (2016) further explained,

> The ability of students to fully engage in and benefit from their kindergarten experiences has been shown to depend on the degree to which they successfully transition into kindergarten, and the success of that transition is at least partially predicated on their home and early educational background.

These learning experiences and standards have been deeply uncovered as the COVID-19 Pandemic shut down the world in the spring of 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the fragile state of our ECE programs (Learning Policy Institute, 2021). As of July 2020, 98.6% of learners worldwide were affected by the pandemic, representing 1.725 billion children and youth, from pre-primary to higher education, in 200 countries (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). Therefore, making learning possible and available through homeschooling has been the need of the hour (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). Around the height of government closures and stay-at-home orders in May 2020, one-in-five parents reported high stress, while three-in-four parents reported increased parenting-specific stress (Adams et al., 2021). Prime et al. (2020) stated that,

There has been a dramatic shift in the routines of family life during the COVID-19 pandemic on a magnitude likely not seen since World War II. Social (or physical) distancing has resulted in virtually all children in the world staying home from school, alongside many parents who have either been laid off or are working from home. In the event that parents are still working, routines are similarly disrupted in that children are staying home while parents are away and alternative childcare arrangements are required. Whatever the case, the basic mechanics of daily life have been seriously disrupted. The shutdown of the world made learning and teaching difficult for all stakeholders involved, which put parents at the forefront of enforcing most of the learning and teaching at home.

Both the quantitative and qualitative data indicated that young children were missing many aspects of their lives during lockdown, including their ECEC setting, their school, their friends, and playing with other children (Egan et al., 2021). Parents highlighted several concerns regarding the academic impacts of remote teaching and learning, including their lack of professional training, difficulties in engaging their children, and the impact on their children's academic progress (Timmons et al., 2021). A high percentage of parents also reported that their worry and anxiety around COVID-19 and demands related to children's online schooling at home impacted their parenting during the pandemic (Adams et al., 2021). Teachers and parents reported concerns about inequitable access to technology and the absence of essential resources (Timmons et al., 2021).

The most common factors that influenced parenting were changes in children's daily structure and routines, worry and anxiety around COVID-19, and demands related to children's online schooling at home (Adams et al., 2021).

One of the key questions raised by governmental agencies and healthcare workers was to what extent the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated distancing measures affected families' well-being and parenting behaviors (Janssen et al., 2020). A recent nationwide poll found that US parents were experiencing higher levels of stress during the COVID-19 pandemic compared to adults without children, given the added challenges of managing children's at-home schooling, halts to extracurricular activities, and navigating children's emotions around uncertainty and change (Adams et al., 2021). Some parents expressed concerns that the quality of teaching had diminished due to the transition to remote teaching and learning. One way that the diminished quality manifested was through a lack of differentiated instruction (Timmons et al., 2021). Psychological distress related to the COVID-19 pandemic may influence parenting behaviors, with parents being more emotionally withdrawn, critical, and irritated, rather than supportive, sensitive, and encouraging to their children (Janssen et al., 2020). Despite attempts to frame COVID-19 as a "great equalizer," it was becoming increasingly clear that historically marginalized communities were being disproportionately impacted by this crisis (Aquliera & Nightengale-Lee, 2020; Casey, 2020; Owoseje, 2020). The hardships and stresses of the COVID-19 pandemic affected the normal routines of people living in all parts of the world. However, a very important key to all success within a school came from the communication of all stakeholders, especially between educators and parents.

Educators and parents play major roles in the educational success of students (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017). Parents' and teachers' beliefs about kindergarten readiness influence their decisions regarding kindergarten enrollment, their curriculum choices, and their overall perceptions of both preschools and kindergarten (Hatcher et al., 2012). In fact, teachers rely on parents to reinforce newly learned skills as a way to promote ongoing scholastic success (Morin,

2019). Teacher beliefs are a crucial factor in determining practice; however, empirical studies linking teacher beliefs to parent beliefs in the same settings are limited (Hatcher et al., 2012). What a child knew was all related to what they were exposed to at home and in the world with their parents. Parental beliefs are pivotal opinions of how a child will begin their educational journey. Consistent with most child development experts, parents recognize the important developmental gains that children can acquire during the preschool years (Basile & Henry, 1996).

American psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner developed an Ecological Systems theory that explains how the "developmental-ecological perspective provides a conceptual framework for understanding the importance of cooperation and mutual understanding between all the stakeholders who play a role in raising and educating the child" (Sverdlov & Aram, 2016). Researcher Guy-Evans (2024) stated that Bronfenbrenner's theory

> views child development as a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment. He divided the environment into five systems: microsystem, mesosystem, ecosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. Because the five systems are interrelated, the influence of one system on a child's development depends on its relationship with the others.

Researchers Barnett et al. (2020) conducted a study guided by Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of development. The researchers stated that "home and early childhood education settings (ECE) constitute critical microsystems within which children engage in proximal processes with parents and teachers". These proximal processes were the primary environmental drivers of development. Parent engagement in the ECE setting, including interactions with the ECE provider and interactions with the child within the ECE setting, constitutes a critical mesosystem

that is an interaction between two microsystems, uniquely impacting child development. When parents are involved in ECE centers, they may build relationships with teachers that, in turn, help children and parents feel connected to the classroom, and help teachers feel connected to children and parents (p. 261). The world around us influences the decisions we make, particularly regarding our children and their education.

Research Problem

Across the country, we must expand access to high-quality early learning to ensure that all children graduate from high school prepared to succeed in college, careers, and life (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Overall, parents whose children were in Pre-K programs at local school systems saw more benefits to their children than parents with children in programs at other types of organizations (Basile & Henry, 1996). Bassok et al. (2016) stated that,

> In 2009, a report titled "Crisis in the Kindergarten in the United States" had radically changed over the past two decades and that "developmentally appropriate learning practices" centered on play, exploration, and social interactions had been replaced with highly prescriptive curricula, test preparation, and an explicit focus on academic skill building.

These changes hindered the opinions and beliefs of families who did not want their children to experience this type of school setting, forcing them to make other decisions or find a place that would embody all of the statements from this section.

The role of parental involvement in ECE was often presumed to be important. Yet, little research exists on how to engage parents in their young child's pre-primary education successfully, how parents perceive their role in their child's development, or how parent-teacher relationships may influence children's educational experiences (Wolf, 2020). Although parental

involvement is recognized as being of significant importance in children's education, considerable diversity remains in parental involvement (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017). Researching parent perspectives allowed educators and researchers to understand their viewpoints on the importance of their child experiencing and learning kindergarten readiness skills from either a preschool setting or a home setting. These different perspectives could enable lawmakers, educators, researchers, and community members to understand how best to support parents in their decisions.

Furthermore, very few studies investigated the relationship between kindergarten readiness and parental perspective. Parents decided whether and where their children attend programs, and their opinions were important to consider when making decisions about program improvement (Basile & Henry, 1996). A handful of experimental studies conducted in the United States that focused on parent support for learning during the preschool years suggested a causal role for engaging parents in this age group. These programs generally focused on engaging parents with children at home, as opposed to engaging in school (Wolf, 2020).

Today's parents are often preoccupied with the distractions and demands of daily life. Burdened by low incomes, inflexible work hours, and language barriers, some parents were unable to attend school activities or regularly participate in their children's education (Ho, 2009). Through research gathered from parents, it was possible to identify key strategies that influence why parents choose to send their children to preschool or pre-kindergarten settings. These results enabled researchers to identify misconceptions about what kindergarten readiness entails and how parents perceive it, thereby informing their approach to educating their children for kindergarten.

Research Questions

This qualitative study addressed the following research questions:

1. How do parents and caregivers view kindergarten readiness in Urban Education?
2. What are parents/caregivers doing to help support early childhood experiences related to kindergarten readiness?

Context of the Study

This qualitative study took place in an urban school district at a Title I, K-8, tuition-free, public charter school serving approximately 950 students who receive free or reduced lunch across two campuses. This study focused on one of the campuses that serves a little over 450 students, with the same criteria applying to those who receive free or reduced lunch. The school had a 98% African American student population, with an overall split of 51% female and 49% male students, with a majority of 48% from low-income families. The percentage of students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) was at 22%, with the two primary diagnoses of students with specific learning disabilities and speech and language impairments.

Admissions were citywide, with specific criteria, and the school did not offer a pre-kindergarten program. It was not a community school. The biggest enrollment group each year was through the lottery system for Kindergarten students. Most students who were accepted were either selected based on sibling/family preference or randomly selected through a lottery system. Participants were selected through purposeful sampling from families of students who had completed a full year of kindergarten within the school years of 2016-2017 through 2021-2022.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

This study was significant because it contributed to the understanding of the misunderstanding and misalignment of kindergarten readiness from a parental perspective. Parents were an important source of information, as they gained direct and indirect knowledge about the program and their children (Basile & Henry, 1996). It was commonly assumed that parents views on school readiness were likely to influence their practices; however research examining the degree to which parents' school readiness beliefs and transition practices influence young children's early outcomes during the transition to elementary school has received little attention (Barbarin et al., 2008; Barnett & Taylor, 2009; Puccioni, 2015; Taylor et al., 2004). Yet, very little is known about either how parents prepare their children for school or what they think such preparation should entail (Barbarin et al., 2008; Belfield & Garcia, 2014; Diamond et al., 2000).

Definitions of Terms

The following terms were used throughout this investigation:

Parental Involvement. Refers to the collaboration between the parents and the school to improve children's education experience and academic performance (Li, 2023).

Pre-Kindergarten. Children in pre-kindergarten are around 4 or 5 years old because pre-kindergarten is meant to take place the year before kindergarten to prepare children for the social and academic challenges ahead. Children in pre-kindergarten participate in more structured activities and delve deeper into certain subjects (MECK Pre-K, 2024).

Pre-School. Relating to, or constituting the period in a child's life that ordinarily precede attendance at elementary school (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). In preschool, the students are between 2 and 4 years old (MECK Pre-K, 2024).

Early Childhood Education. The goal is to improve academic and social behavioral outcomes for children from birth through third grade (Institute of Education Sciences).

Kindergarten. A school or class for children usually from five to six years old (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Kindergarten Readiness. Nationwide, there is no common understanding or definition of "kindergarten readiness." Many states have developed their own definitions of kindergarten readiness. (Pierson, 2018).

Head Start. The Head Start program is the largest federally funded early childhood compensatory program in the United States, serving nearly 1 million low-income children and families (Administration for Children and Families [ACF], 2014). Its goal has been to boost the school readiness of low-income children (Puma et al., 2005).

High-Quality Preschool. Gives children a strong start on the path that leads to college or a career; it includes appropriate child assessments, professional knowledge and skill of staff and teachers; ongoing support for teachers; support for diverse learners; meaningful family engagement; sufficient learning time; appropriate class size and teacher-student ratio, comprehensive program assessments and quality rating and improvement systems (Wechsler et al., 2016).

Compulsory Education. Through the enactment of Act 16, the definition of compulsory school age was changed to "the period of a child's life from the time the child's parents elect to have the child enter school and which shall be no later than 6 years of age until the child reaches 18 years of age. 24 P.S. §13-1326. (U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

Learning Standards. Concise, written descriptions of what students are expected to know and be able to do at a specific stage of their education. The standards describe educational objectives but they do not describe any particular teaching practice, curriculum or assessment method (Great Schools Partnership, 2014).

Urban Education. A method of schooling that takes place in larger, densely populated (large metropolitan) areas with diverse populations (National Center for Education Statistics).

Urban Schools. Schools located in cities that serve diverse student populations, often with high concentrations of low-income students, students of color, and English language learners (Top Hat Glossary, n.d.).

Education is a vessel for many opportunities in this world. Starting your educational journey on the right foot, leading a child towards success, is important. This qualitative, interview-based study analyzed parent perspectives through interviews to interpret how parents perceived and viewed kindergarten readiness and preparation during their child's early childhood experiences. Having the perspectives of the adults who prepare these children for the real world, but most importantly, kindergarten, was important research to digest. This research on parental perspectives had the potential to enrich, enhance, and develop this line of thinking by hearing directly from the sources of the challenges, successes, and mindsets of the individuals who were

preparing our youngest scholars for the real world and the rest of their lives. This study expanded the existing research on parental perspectives by exploring the origins, evolution, and changes of preschool, pre-kindergarten, and kindergarten education, while focusing on parents as one of the main resources for early childhood education.

Chapter II: Literature Review

History of Kindergarten

The development of the concept of an educational garden started with the kindergartens created by the educationalist Friedrich Froebel at the beginning of the nineteenth century, although there had been previous proposals (Marín Murcia & Martínez Ruiz-Funes, 2020). But kindergarten has only been a part of the American experience for a little over 150 years. That's thanks in large part to Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, born on this day in 1804, who opened the first English-language kindergarten in the United States and popularized the concept among English-speaking Americans (Eschner, 2017). This rich history of the origins of kindergarten provides insight into how education, especially urban education, is deemed an important factor in understanding the differences between how and what students learn.

Urban Education

According to the United States Census Bureau, as of October 2021, there are over three million people in the United States, making it the third-highest population in the world (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). There were 128,961 public and private K-12 schools in the U.S., according to 2019-2020 data from the National Center for Education Statistics, with 88,909 attending either a prekindergarten, elementary, or middle school (Riser-Kositsky, 2024). In the fall of 2021, approximately 49.4 million students were enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools; of these public school students, 1.4 million attended prekindergarten (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). Based upon the population of the United States during this time, about three percent of children were attending a prekindergarten program. According to 2022 data, a plurality of public school students attended suburban schools. Still, enrollment in urban schools was not far behind, with attendance rates for public school students

at Suburban schools at 38.9%, City schools at 29.7%, Rural schools at 20.3%, and Town schools at 10.8% (Riser-Kositsky, 2024). Costanzo (2020) stated, “in the 20 largest urban school districts in the U.S., an average 80 percent of students are non-white, according to the National Center for Education statistics, meaning urban classrooms are more likely to have a diverse mix of students.”

In an urban classroom, you often encounter multiple languages, cultural norms, and racial biases. To meet the needs of each learner, it’s essential to acknowledge diversity and employ culturally relevant strategies in the classroom (Carleton, 2020). Urban education has been a widespread phenomenon that has been an integral part of the education system for many decades. Another phenomenon that supported the educational journeys of children and their families is charter schools. Schools located in or near urban centers primarily serve students from low-income and ethnically diverse backgrounds in densely populated areas. Urban schools were often characterized by lower academic achievement compared to suburban schools and high rates of student mobility (Steinke & Bryan, 2013). The research and understanding of the importance and different perspectives that charter schools bring to children and urban education enriched and enhanced this particular study, demonstrating the importance of parental perspectives, specifically in school selection for their children.

Charter Schools

Charter Schools were often the topic of debate; they comprised only a small portion of all schools, with an attendance number of 7,998 during the 2022-2023 school year. In Cohodes and Parham's (2021) and National Bureau of Economic Research research, they defined charter schools as “publicly funded and regulated, but privately run schools, that operate as autonomous schools governed by contracts with authorizers that set the accountability requirements for the

schools they oversee (p. 2). Charters were still public schools, receiving public funding, but they differed from traditional public schools in their accountability mechanisms, admissions processes, and contracting arrangements with teachers (p. 2). Charter schools were established in the United States when Minnesota became the first state to pass charter school legislation in June 1991. As of 2020, 44 states permitted charter schools (p. 2). Each state in the U.S. had its own laws governing the entities that were allowed to authorize charter schools, which might include local school boards, state boards of education, universities, or other educational entities (p. 2). Charter schools operated within a systemic structure of laws, authorizers, and networks (p. 19).

Many charter schools operated on a lottery-based entrance system. Cohodes and Parham (2021) stated that,

> Lottery-based studies are the most credible methodology available for determining the impacts of charter schools on the students who attend them. However, lottery studies are only possible for oversubscribed charter schools with good records. The lotteries generated by charter school natural experiments consist of students randomly assigned to the treatment group (offer of charter admission) or the control group (no offer of a seat) (p. 5).

As most oversubscribed charter schools were located in urban areas, there were fewer lottery-based estimates from rural and suburban settings (p. 6). Second, lottery-based studies might not generalize even within their specific contexts, as the students who applied to charter schools might be very different from those in traditional public schools in the same area (p. 6). Lottery-based studies of urban charter schools consistently show that charters improve students' academic achievement and some longer-term outcomes, particularly among Black and Latinx students, students with disabilities, and low-performing students (p. 28). With most charter

schools starting with kindergarten education, what were some other ways parents and families prepare their children for kindergarten?

Kindergarten Preparation

Kindergarten preparation starts before entering kindergarten. The first five years of a child's life are a time of tremendous physical, emotional, social, and cognitive growth (Lehr & Osborn, 2005). The researchers, Durisic and Bunijevac (2017), stated that "with the increasing demands on the family, parental support in the education of students extends beyond the school building" (p.139). Educators and parents played major roles in the educational success of students. Students need a positive learning experience to succeed in school, one that provides support, motivation, and quality instruction (p. 139). Parental involvement in the education of students began at home, where parents provided a safe and healthy environment, appropriate learning experiences, support, and a positive attitude about school (p. 140). Involvement of parents is related to their position at home (monitoring the learning of children), as well as participation in activities organized at school (parent-teacher conferences, volunteer activities, various forms of parental activism, workshops, and seminars for parents (p. 144). Having high-quality preschool and prekindergarten programs available to families supported students in their growth and development, helping them start their educational careers on a successful footing. Although preschool, pre-kindergarten, and Head Start programs supported a child's development and readiness for kindergarten, the significance of how a parent prepares their child for kindergarten could shift as curriculum and assessments change from state to state or focus on specific skills that are unknown to the parents.

Curriculum and Assessment

Early childhood educators developed formal and informal assessment tools to evaluate readiness (Hatcher et al., 2012). Readiness assessments were required in 27 states, and most districts and schools used them even in states where they were not required (Stipek, 2019). In addition to learning the alphabet and the sounds of the letters, your child learnt to recognize core ("sight") words, read books with repetitive themes, and even write down their thoughts (Morin, 2019). Experts from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning conducted a review of state standards in 2013. They found that 49 states have specific standards for social and emotional development in preschool, while only 3 have specific standards in K-12 (Snow & Pizzolongo, 2014).

More than half of states have a definition for kindergarten readiness, and at least 25 states require kindergarten entry assessments (KEAs) to help educators better understand what students know upon entering kindergarten (Pierson, 2018). Most states use Kindergarten Entry Assessments (KEAs) for at least one of the following purposes, to inform classroom instruction, curriculum planning, and professional development needs; to identify students in need of specialized supports or interventions; and to provide a statewide snapshot of what children know when they enter kindergarten, monitor changes over subsequent kindergarten cohorts, and inform public policy and public investments in early childhood (Pierson, 2018). However, nationwide, there is no common understanding or definition of "kindergarten readiness" or "school readiness," which KEAs are intended to measure (Pierson, 2018). Furthermore, Pierson (2018) stated, “as these assessments have become more prominent and prevalent over the past five years, many states have developed their own definitions of kindergarten readiness.”

The importance of assessment was to have a snapshot of a child's knowledge before, during, and after learning about specific content, or a specific grade. All of these assessments and data were collected, with some being sent home or discussed with parents and guardians at specific times throughout the school year. Deepening the understanding of what parents deem as kindergarten readiness is important in this stage of growth and development, especially when it comes to assessments. However, parents were not asked to share their views on the topic of kindergarten readiness.

This study continued the notion of enhancing pre-kindergarten skills and knowledge, enabling parents to understand better what was expected of their children in kindergarten and what they should prepare them for. This study uncovered what parents were doing and possibly correlated it with what parents should be doing. These assessments needed to be connected to the standards and curricula being taught in preschool and pre-kindergarten programs. The next sections delve deeper into what preschool and pre-kindergarten programs were, how they were established, and their importance in enhancing a child's learning before entering kindergarten.

Early Childhood Education Programs

Preschool v. Prekindergarten.

When young children were provided with an environment rich in language and literacy interactions and full of opportunities to listen to and use language constantly, they could begin to acquire the essential building blocks for learning how to read (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Essentially, preschool and pre-k are the same thing: education before kindergarten (Cappetta, 2017). Studies have also revealed that participating in high-quality early learning can boost children's educational attainment and earnings later in life (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Preschool factors positively affecting later home and school involvement include the

existence, amount, and number of years of preschool, as well as follow-on activities once children reach school age (Kreider, 2002).

Overall, parents whose children were in Pre-K programs at local school systems saw more benefits to their children than parents with children in programs at other types of organizations (Basile & Henry, 1996). Quality pre-kindergarten prepares children for reading and math, but also for paying attention, following directions, and getting along with others (PA Department of Education, 2024). The ultimate benefits of children attending preschool or pre-kindergarten programs include preparing them academically for kindergarten, providing structure, teaching social interaction, promoting independence, and increasing physical activity (Cappetta, 2017; Stanford, 2023). A child entering school without these skills runs a significant risk of starting behind and staying behind (Lehr & Osborn, 2005). In the end, the goal was the same: to get your preschool or pre-k age child ready for kindergarten (Cappetta, 2017). One of the largest and most successful federal programs is the Head Start program.

Head Start.

The Head Start program is the largest federally funded early childhood compensatory program in the United States, serving nearly 1 million low-income children and families (Administration for Children and Families [ACF], 2014). Since its beginning in 1965, Head Start's goal has been to boost the school readiness of low-income children (Puma et al., 2005). The program "was founded as a two-generation program that provides early education for children and encourages parents to participate in the program and learn skills that can extend beyond the classroom" (Zigler & Muenchow, 1992). With its two-generation emphasis, Head Start serves as an ideal setting for examining the role of parents' involvement in promoting

children's early school success. Yet, there have been limited attempts to understand the extent to which Head Start programs are successful at involving parents (Ansari & Gershoff, 2016).

Family engagement is a collaborative and strengths-based process through which early childhood professionals, families, and children build positive and goal-oriented relationships (Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center, 2024). The authors from the Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center (2024) further described family engagement as,

> An interactive process through which program staff and families, family members, and their children build positive and goal-oriented relationships. It is a shared responsibility of families and professionals that requires mutual respect for the roles and strengths each has to offer. Family engagement means doing with—not doing to or for—families.

Head Start and Early Head Start staff created authentic partnerships with parents when they conveyed their eagerness to welcome parents' expertise and their readiness to share the care (Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center, 2024). Family engagement focused on culturally and linguistically responsive relationship-building with key family members in a child's life. It also honored and supported the parent-child relationships that were central to a child's healthy development, school readiness, and well-being (Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center, 2024).

Parent and family engagement in Head Start/Early Head Start (HS/EHS) involves building relationships with families that support their well-being, fostering strong relationships between parents and their children, and promoting ongoing learning and development for both parents and children (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2011). The Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework builds on many years of parent involvement in Head Start. For example, parent decision-making has always been an important part of parent

involvement in Head Start (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2011). The authors went on to state that "parent, family, and community engagement practices cross into different service areas, PFCE goals, plans, and activities must be systemic, integrated, and comprehensive across the entire HS/EHS organization." Breaking down the approaches as follows,

> By systemic, we mean that parent, family, and community engagement is anchored in leadership priorities, program management, continuous improvement systems, and staff development. By integrated, we mean that by carrying out PFCE activities throughout the entire organization, programs are much more likely to make the kind of family engagement progress that best supports child outcomes. For example, directors, teachers, assistant teachers, family support staff, home visitors, and health and disabilities staff, all play a role in engaging families and supporting school readiness. By comprehensive, we mean that staff consider the strengths, interests and needs of each child and family, and connect families with services and resources to achieve their goals.

To make an impact in engaging families as equal partners in children's learning and development, staff and families work together to build strong relationships that support the sharing of information about children's learning and developmental progress (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2011).

The authors continued to discuss that the "foundations for successful parent and family engagement include the following: Program Leadership, Continuous Improvement and Professional Development of all staff" (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2011). Within program leadership, the leadership team "outlines strategic plans that bring systems, people, and activities together in a way that values staff and enhances parent and family engagement in the program". The continuous improvement involved "a strategic PFCE vision

and goals set by program leadership, programs can conduct staff and parent surveys and use data from surveys, intakes, assessments and family partnership processes to set benchmarks" (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2011). Lastly, professional development "to have a solid foundation for achieving family engagement outcomes, professional development plans should be comprehensive and include training, supervision, recognition, and information about career options" (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2011). Integrating parents and families into the learning environment was crucial for a child's development during their time in programs such as Head Start and Early Head Start. These types of supportive plans underscore the importance of parent involvement during a child's attendance in an early childhood education program, such as preschool.

High Quality Preschool.

As a nation, we must ensure that all children, regardless of income or race, have access to high-quality preschool opportunities (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Having a qualified teacher with specialized knowledge and skills is associated with stronger outcomes for children. However, ECE programs across the nation struggle to recruit and retain qualified educators due to low wages and challenging working conditions (Learning Policy Institute, 2021). With preschools being very popular, it also comes with an age limit that does not support kindergarten readiness. Around 61% of 3-to-5-year-olds in the U.S. are enrolled in some preschool. Because these are critical years for brain development, attending a high-quality learning program is essential (Negussie, 2022). Many families had to find high-quality preschool programs to enroll their children in or find a pre-kindergarten program that their children could attend. There were two programs from which parents could choose: preschool and prekindergarten. Although many

similarities existed, there were huge differences in academic support, curriculum, assessment, quality, and, most importantly, age.

The U.S Department of Education issued research on "A Matter of Equity: Preschool in America" (U.S. Department of Education, 2015), stating facts such as,

> Children who attend high-quality preschool programs are less likely to utilize special education services or be retained in their grade, and are more likely to graduate from high school, go to college and succeed in their careers than those who have not attended high-quality preschool programs (p. 2).

The report further stated that "advances in neuroscience and research have helped to demonstrate the benefits of quality early education for young children and that the early years are a critical period in children's learning and development, providing the necessary foundation for more advanced skills" (p.1). Studies also revealed that participating in quality early learning could boost children's educational attainment and earnings later in life (p. 2). Racial and socioeconomic disparities in access to high-quality early education contributed to achievement gaps that were noticeable by the time children enter kindergarten (p. 5). While most children who have access to preschool attend moderate-quality programs, African-American children and children from low-income families are the most likely to attend low-quality preschool programs and the least likely to attend high-quality preschool programs (p. 5).

Prekindergarten.

Before 1980, only two states funded pre-k programs; currently, 43 states fund such programs (Durkin et al., 2022). There is overwhelming evidence that access to high-quality pre-kindergarten (pre-K) programs makes a significant difference in the lives of young children and provides multi-generational benefits, both academically, socially, and economically

(Stanford, 2023). In states like Pennsylvania, prekindergarten programs such as Pre-K Counts offer quality half-day and full-day pre-kindergarten to eligible three- and four-year-olds (PA Department of Education, 2024). The document further stated that,

> The program is designed for children who: are between age 3 and until the entry age for kindergarten; and are at risk of school failure and living in families earning up to 300 percent of the federal income poverty level who may also be English language learners or have special needs.

Pre-K Counts classrooms have qualified teachers, a curriculum that supports student growth, and regularly review student progress. They also support transition to kindergarten and offer small class sizes, with 20 students per teacher and one aide (PA Department of Education, 2024).

Author Libby Stanford defined universal pre-k as any state-funded preschool program in which age is the only criterion for eligibility (Stanford, 2023). Universal pre-k became a significant part of President Biden's Build Back Better framework, where states were encouraged to expand pre-k to all 3- and 4-year-olds with federal funding support. The author further states (Stanford, 2023),

> The Build Back Better plan laid out an investment strategy to help states expand their current infrastructure to serve all children of interested families. The plan called for a mixed-delivery system, a strength of Pennsylvania's current pre-k programming, to provide high-quality program options that best suit each family's needs. This may include delivering pre-k through school districts, child care centers, family-based child care programs, Head Start, Early Head Start, and private academic nursery schools.

Furthermore, investing in early childhood education at the onset of a child's life reduces the need for special education placements and grade retention while increasing workforce participation (Stanford, 2023).

Limits on funding and caps on enrollment curb the number of 4-year-olds who can participate. Out of 50 states, only 17 have universal pre-K policies in place, as of the 2019-2020 school year. Moreover, author Stanford (2023) continued to affirm that states with large metropolitan areas, such as Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Texas, also have a large percentage of 4-year-old enrollment ranging from 22-47% with no universal pre-k policy in the 2019-2020 school year. Expanding access to free, high-quality pre-k for all 3- and 4-year-olds regardless of income or other eligibility requirements would prepare more of Pennsylvania's early learners for their academic career by providing them with foundational skills, both educational and social, to ensure they are ready to succeed (Stanford, 2023). In Georgia, which has a state lottery-funded pre-K program to which all 4-year-olds are eligible. While the program is theoretically open to every preschooler, it's often difficult for children to participate because funding levels depend on fluctuations in state lottery revenue (Stanford, 2023).

In a study presented by the researchers, Clifford et al. (2005, data from the National Center for Early Development and Learning (NCEDL) Multi-State Study of Pre-Kindergarten, the first major comprehensive study of pre-k across multiple states (p. 127). The goals of this article and study were twofold,

> First, it describes the children and families served by pre-k, the quality (process and structural) of pre-k programs, the attributes of pre-k teachers and basic policy decisions guiding the implementation of the program. The second goal is to examine the relation of

structural features to other attributes of pre-k and the population of children and families served.

Six states were selected for their "well-established pre-k programs and having different approaches to program standards" (p. 129). They were purposefully selected to be diverse concerning (a) length of program day, (b) teacher credentialing requirements, c) program locales (in school vs. in nonschool settings), and (d) geography (p. 129). In each state, a stratified random sample of 40 state-funded pre-k sites was selected to participate. This was done to maximize within-state diversity about (a) programs in versus outside of school buildings, (b) full-day versus part-day classrooms, and (c) teachers with and without a bachelor's degree (p. 129). Due to budget and time constraints, researchers were limited in site and program selection, leaving them with four children who were randomly selected from each of the 240 randomly selected classrooms (p. 129). Only one classroom was selected to maximize variation in full-day versus part-day classrooms and lead teachers with and without a bachelor's degree (p. 130).

The data collection stages, from researchers Clifford et al. (2005), included extensive and thorough methods to receive a clear picture of understanding between the child selected, their parents, the type of prekindergarten setting they attended, and the curriculum taught, using observational measures of process quality to measure all sites (pp. 130 - 133). The results of this study, as reported by Clifford et al. (2005), were organized and presented in response to five key questions. Overall, the results concluded that, based on differences in state criteria boys are more likely to attend than girls; most children are in some out-of-home care, with 47% of these programs located in public school buildings, but nearly a third were cared for exclusively at home; more than half operating for less than 15 hours per week; ages ranges from 2 years, 10 months to 7 years, 7 months with 6% of children in the class had an Individualized Education

Plan at the start of the pre-k year (p. 133). Furthermore, the researchers concluded that a combination of 57% of the using curriculum programs, High/Scope and Creative Curriculum, while 4% have no standard curriculum (p. 133); nearly 70% of teachers had at least a bachelor's degree, and almost 30% held a master's degree (p. 136).

The final question in the study was geared towards the literacy and numeracy skills that pre-kindergarteners have at the beginning of pre-kindergarten. The researchers, Clifford et al. (2005), stated that "because the majority of states in the study target children based on some measure of risk for school failure, it is not surprising that these pre-kindergartners scored below age norms" (p. 137). In particular, the two language measures (PPVT-III and OWLS) were about half a standard deviation below the national means. Numeracy scores were only slightly below the national average (p. 137). Although national norms were not available for the skills of naming letters, numbers, colors, or counting, children showed quite a range on these tasks (p. 137). On average, they could name eight letters, four numbers, and nearly all of the colors. In addition, on average, they could count to 13 with one-to-one correspondence (p. 137). Outside of school, children should be learning daily academic, behavioral, and social skills, all of which were set up for success by their parents. Understanding parental perspectives was crucial within the early childhood realm of knowledge, as parents equipped their children with skills and tools used daily in schools and classrooms.

Parental Perspectives on Kindergarten

Studies have also shown that parental involvement at school could have a positive impact on children's academic achievement; however, the evidence was mixed (Puccioni et al., 2020). By examining the perceptions of parents and teachers, educators and parents could gain a better understanding of effective parental involvement practices in promoting student achievement

(Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017). Parents' degree of involvement was likely to be affected by the school itself (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017). Research has shown that parental involvement is more important to children's academic success than their family's socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, or educational background (Amatea & West, 2007; Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017; Henderson & Berla, 1994).

Children whose parents were actively involved in their schooling benefit more than children whose parents were passively involved (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017). Studies indicated that when parents were involved in their children's schooling, children achieved higher grades and better school attendance, they had more positive attitudes and behaviors, higher graduation rates, and greater enrollment in higher education (Bohan-Baker & Little, 2002; Henderson & Berla, 1994). Several studies indicated increased academic achievement with students who had involved parents (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017; Epstein, 2009; Greenwood & Hickman, 1991; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Rumberger et al., 1990; Swap, 1993; Whitaker & Fiore, 2001). Studies also indicated that parental involvement was most effective when viewed as a partnership between educators and parents (Davies, 1996; Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017; Emeagwali, 2009; Epstein, 2009).

Researchers Hatcher et al. (2012) conducted a qualitative, interview-based study examining parental and teacher beliefs about readiness and preschool roles in readiness across three programs in the northeastern and southwestern United States (p. 2). Researchers explored research questions based on the beliefs of parents and preschool teachers concerning meanings of kindergarten readiness; the beliefs of parents and teachers about the role of preschool in preparing their children/students for kindergarten; and what sources of information do parents and teachers use to inform their beliefs and practices about children’s readiness for kindergarten

(p. 2). This study was conducted in five play-based programs accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in an urban area of the southwestern United States (p. 3). Volunteers (parents and teachers) from the three programs participated in open-ended, qualitative interviews and completed brief demographic questionnaires (p. 5).

In this research study, Hatcher et al. (2012) identified six themes that informed the research questions. The first three themes reflected participants' beliefs about readiness, informing Research Question 1. Theme 4 included preschool roles as preparation for kindergarten, related to Research Question 2. Theme 5 included descriptions of sources of readiness information, informing Research Question 3. A sixth theme also emerged in both teacher and parent interviews, cutting across all the research questions: a general feeling of anxiety about kindergarten expectations and children's readiness (p. 5). Participants indicated that preschool goals should be consistent with those of kindergarten. This finding suggested that parents and teachers viewed preschool experiences as precursors or "preparatory" programs, rather than as programs with intrinsic value for children, regardless of their links to formal schooling (p. 12). Parents from all programs relied on preschool-based assessment information to determine their children's readiness for preschool, in contrast to Hatcher and Engelbrecht (2006), who found that parents relied on informal sources (p. 13).

Furthermore, Hatcher et al. (2012) stated that "

> parents expected their children's teachers to provide them with information upon which to base readiness for kindergarten. While the participating preschool teachers indicated that they considered assessments to be important, they did not report an understanding of the weight that parents give to teachers' assessments of school readiness" (p. 13).

With the growth of participation in preschools in the United States, identifying and clarifying

teachers' and parents' beliefs about kindergarten readiness can help inform contemporary preschool programming (p. 14). Parents' and teachers' perspectives continued to be relevant in local settings even as national education goals, priorities, and policies affect what was expected and required of children entering school (p. 14).

Research suggests that parents' involvement in school depends in part on how welcome they feel at the school (Kreider, 2002; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1997). In our study, parents whose children participated in preschool or Head Start report knowing significantly more parents in their child's kindergarten classroom than parents whose children did not attend any early childhood care, or attended day care (nursery, family day care, or center-based daycare) (Kreider, 2002). These initial findings suggested that early childhood programs might help establish a foundation for strong partnerships between families and schools (p. 2). Recognizing their child as smart, curious, or able to interact well with other children, parents happily saw kindergarten as another opportunity for their child to flourish as a learner. This was especially true if the parents felt confident in the quality of the teacher and the school (p. 3). Yet less was known about the experience of kindergarten transition from parents' perspective and the ways that children's early childhood education might promote their parents' involvement throughout children's schooling (Kreider, 2002).

In a study conducted by the Harvard Family Research Project, through the lens of researcher, Kreider (2002), interviews of 23 parents, all of whom had children in an early childhood education or care setting, however, this study did not interview parents of children who did not attend early childhood settings, stated that overall parents expressed the main feelings of happiness, sadness and worry. This study continued to state that parents "felt

confident in the quality of the teacher and the school" as it pertained to kindergarten readiness in the preschool setting.

The lack of research on this topic made it difficult to uncover what parents actually considered kindergarten readiness and how they prepared their children for kindergarten. Parents were identified as important sources of knowledge regarding their children's transitions, learning, and aptitudes (Brink, 2002; Dickinson & De Temple, 1998; R. Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 1999; Recchia & Bentley, 2013). Given the important role parents play in contributing to children's early learning and transition to school (Booth & Crouter, 2008), it is important to recognize that parental involvement may vary by one's race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status (Cheadle & Amato, 2011; Phillips, 2011; Puccioni, 2018; Puccioni et al., 2020).

Parents' perspective on quality is shaped by the influence of the society in which they live, as well as by their personal experiences and implicit pedagogies, and therefore can be distinguished from the perspectives of researchers, practitioners, and experts in the field of education (Malovic & Malovic, 2017). Beliefs about and perceptions of readiness form within the context of local communities surrounding children, schools, and families (Hatcher et al., 2012). Parent perspectives were important to hear and understand. This led to the acknowledgment that parent perspectives were formulated based on their experiences within the education system, which stems from the laws and policies given to school districts through educational legislation.

Education Legislation

Title IV of Goals 2000 awards grants to nonprofit organizations that provide training and support to parents of students. Title IV endeavors "to increase parents' knowledge of and confidence in child-rearing activities...and strengthen partnerships between parents and

professionals in meeting the educational needs of children. (Heise, 1994). As restated above, in the report from The U.S Department of Education, issued research on "A Matter of Equity: Preschool in America" (U.S. Department of Education, 2015), stated that,

> Fifty years ago, President Lyndon Baines Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act into law. President Johnson believed that "full educational opportunity" should be "our first national goal." Without a deliberate focus on children's preschool experiences in our nation's education law, we run the risk of limiting opportunity for a generation of children by allowing educational gaps to take root before kindergarten. As a nation, we must commit to ensuring that all young people, particularly our most vulnerable, are prepared for a future where they can fulfill their greatest potential through a strong education (p.12).

The U.S. Department of Education (2015) further stated that "during the last Congress, members supported bipartisan legislation, the Strong Start for America's Children Act" (p. 12). This legislation would complement other federal investments by significantly expanding access to high-quality preschool so that every child from low- and moderate-income families could enter kindergarten ready to learn (p. 12). The proposal, if passed, would support the meaningful implementation of high-quality preschool programs aligned with our nation's elementary and secondary school systems (p. 12).

In 2015, Nichols stated that "The Strong Start for America's Children Act proposes a 10-year Federal-state partnership to increase access and expand quality early learning opportunities for children ages birth to five." Research has proven that children who attend these programs are more likely to graduate from high school and succeed in their adult lives (Nichols, 2015). The legislation would fund preschool for families of four-year-old children earning below

200% of the Federal Poverty Line, and encourage states to use their own funds to support preschool for young children with family incomes above that level (Nichols, 2015). Nichols (2015) further stated,

> Some highlights of this act will include, requiring alignment of early learning standards with the State's K-12 system; implementing performance measures and targets designed to increase school readiness, quality programs available, and children in those programs; prekindergarten development grants for states not currently eligible for the formulaic preschool grants; developing a process for converting Head Start programs (that currently serve four-year olds) to Early Head Start programs serving three-year olds and infants/toddlers.

The Department's mission was to serve America's students, promoting student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). With this mission in the forefront and parent perspectives deemed a vital component of a child's educational success, children should be over-qualified and highly prepared for kindergarten through the preparation they receive before entering school. Being considered school-ready has been a philosophy discussed for many decades.

Kindergarten Readiness

Graue (1993) explained that the meanings of "school readiness" were locally constructed and thus constantly shifting (Recchia & Bentley, 2013). As of June 2016, 26 states had a definition of kindergarten readiness that was either formally adopted or promoted throughout the state (Pierson, 2018). As of 2018, states such as Alaska, Michigan, Montana, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and South Dakota did not have a definition of kindergarten

readiness (Pierson, 2018). However, nationwide, there was no common understanding or definition of "kindergarten readiness" or "school readiness," which KEAs were intended to measure (Pierson, 2018). More than half of states have a definition for kindergarten readiness, and at least 25 states require kindergarten entry assessments (KEAs) to help educators better understand what students know upon entering kindergarten (Pierson, 2018).

Kagan (1990) referred to the latter as the conception of “readiness for school,” which was a construct built on children’s acquisition of skills or basic concepts such as letters or numbers, and which did not represent actual preparedness to fully enter into and succeed in learning in the kindergarten classroom (Recchia & Bentley, 2013). In this constructivist theoretical framework study, researchers interviewed the families of five children for over two years, both when students attended preschool and kindergarten, who all attended the same ECE program RGC (full name of program never disclosed), guided by two research questions of how do families describe the ways that their children demonstrated forms of “readiness: within their kindergarten environments and from the parents’ perspectives, what do individual children bring from the child-centered, emergent preschool classroom to shape their experiences in kindergarten; what habits of mind do they see as continuous across the transition?

From the interviews, researchers Recchia and Bentley (2013) discovered three overarching themes of engagement of self, social adeptness and flexibility, and reading and navigating environments. Within the theme of self-engagement, “a common thread in the parent interviews was a focus on the cultivation of individual children’s strengths, which parents saw as a by-product of the emergent, child-centered curriculum at RGC” (p. 5). The researchers, Recchia and Bentley (2013), go on to state,

> It became evident that the children's social empathy helped them to make meaningful connections with peers in both preschool and kindergarten. Ku et al. (2010) refers to "perspective taking", which can help children in relationships with peers in addition to enabling them to take the teachers' perspective. As preschoolers, the children took the lead in developing play themes and ideas, but they could also step back so that other children's ideas could be integrated or others could take the lead. These traits seemed to carry over into the kindergarten settings (p. 6).

At RGC, the children had experienced a curriculum in which the development of social empathy was central (p. 6). It was evident that the children had become strong social participants in their kindergarten environments (p. 6). According to teachers' assessments and parents' reflections, in both preschool and kindergarten, the children showed high levels of social adeptness and flexibility, beyond typical notions of social competence (p. 6). Lastly, "all of the parents reported that their children transitioned fluidly, constantly wanting to go to school" (p. 7). The researchers, Recchia and Bentley (2013), further stated that "all of the children whose parents participated in the study seemed to align their classroom behaviors according to their understandings of their kindergarten environments" (p. 7). Overall, researchers, Recchia and Bentley (2013) stated that "the participating parents described their children as having positive transitions to the academic and social contexts of kindergarten" (p. 8). It appears that habits of mind fostered by RGC's child-centered environment and emergent curriculum positioned these children as ready to learn what they were expected to learn in kindergarten (Recchia & Bentley, 2013).

In her book, "Ready for What? Constructing Meanings of Readiness for Kindergarten," author M. Elizabeth Graue (1993) conducted a study at three elementary schools in the Midwest

region of the United States, with the basis of researching the meaning of kindergarten readiness, in terms of how it was communicated and constructed during the kindergarten transition. Looking specifically at the "parents' interpretation of their role in kindergarten readiness" chart, it concluded that schools and parents had separate roles and responsibilities when it came to kindergarten readiness; however, this study further explained that the school had more say in what kindergarten readiness was and how it was implemented throughout the course of a child's kindergarten experience. The author further explained that Kindergarten readiness was explained differently in each school, making the term kindergarten readiness subjective to the location and administration of the school.

In the study by Barnett et al. (2020), the authors stated that the "home and ECE settings constitute critical microsystems with which children engage in proximal processes with parents and teachers; these proximal processes were the primary environmental drivers of development" (p. 261). In the present study, we aimed to identify first, how ECE engagement practices were simultaneously linked to parent engagement in ECE and home settings, and second, how parent engagement in those two settings was linked to children's kindergarten readiness in a nationally representative sample of children attending preschool center-based ECE programs (p. 261).

> This study examined how practices used by early childhood education (ECE) providers to engage parents (e.g., sending home information about the child), parent school involvement in ECE centers (e.g., volunteering, attending meetings) and parent engagement in home learning activities (e.g., reading, stimulating cognitive development) were linked to children's kindergarten academic readiness. (p. 260).

This study presented three research questions, which all pertained to the ECE practices and their engagement of parents that linked to parent school involvement in the ECE settings, at-home

learning activities, and all of their relations to children's academic kindergarten readiness skills, in addition to how these factors vary for families who are of low-income status. The findings from this study indicated that practices used by ECE providers to engage parents were indirectly linked to children's school readiness outcomes through parents' home-based behaviors, as well as parents reporting greater increases in kindergarten readiness scores in language and reading (p. 269).

A central goal of this study was to "understand if parent school involvement in ECE settings was linked to parent engagement in home setting and children's school readiness skills" (p. 269). Our results point to the relevance of one particular type of parent school involvement in ECE settings, volunteering in the classroom, for both engagement in home learning and children's kindergarten readiness for all families, regardless of income (p. 269). In summary, this study stated that "parents who reported that they volunteered in the ECE classroom, also reported doing more learning activities at home, and in turn, their children scored higher on language and reading assessments" (p. 269). These results "demonstrate that there are meaningful links between parent school engagement, parent home engagement, and children's kindergarten readiness" (p. 269). All of the studies presented in this section provide a firm foundation for why kindergarten readiness is important. Still, they also concluded that further research on parental perspectives was necessary to advance this conversation and expand the existing literature. This study built more understanding of this perspective.

Summary

This study analyzed parent perspectives through interviews to interpret how kindergarten readiness and preparation were perceived and viewed by parents during their child's early childhood experiences, which was a major gap in research based on the research stated above.

Understanding parent perspectives on this matter, as major stakeholders in educational institutions, enabled further research in understanding the importance of early childhood education as it pertained to the growth of young children entering kindergarten. This qualitative study analyzed parental perspectives through the lens of parents who have prepared their children for kindergarten in urban educational settings and charter school placements. Through interviewing, this study explored the role that parents had in preparing their children for their educational journey and what tools and resources they sought out to enhance their child's kindergarten experience.

Chapter III: Methodology

This qualitative interview-based study analyzed parent perspectives through interviews to interpret how kindergarten readiness and preparation were perceived and viewed by parents during their child's early childhood experiences. The following research questions guided the research study:

1. How do parents and caregivers view kindergarten readiness in Urban Education?
2. What are parents/caregivers doing to help support early childhood experiences related to kindergarten readiness?

Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible (N. K. Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). Qualitative research draws heavily on interpretation by researchers and also on interpretation by the people they study and by the readers of the research reports (Stake, 2010). Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Researchers Hammarberg et al. (2016) stated that "qualitative methods are used to answer questions about experience, meaning and perspective, most often from the standpoint of the participant" (p. 499). This type of research, within the educational realm, generally addresses the "how" and "why" research questions that seek to deepen the understanding of experiences, phenomena, and social constructs.

Theoretical Framework Perspective of the Research

The theoretical framework that guided this qualitative study was interpretivism. As an interpretivist, the researcher strived to uncover truths about how parents view kindergarten

readiness in relation to how parents support their children with early education experiences by acquiring an understanding of why parents believe what they do about kindergarten readiness and identify what influences their beliefs. Alharahsheh and Pius (2020, p. 41) stated that,

> Interpretivism is more concerned with in depth variables and factors related to a context, it considers humans as different from physical phenomena as they create further depth in meanings with the assumption that human beings cannot be explored in a similar way to physical phenomena.

Furthermore, Stake (2010) and N. Denzin (2001) stated that it endeavored to capture and represent the voices, emotions, and actions of those studied. The focus of interpretive research is on those life experiences that radically alter and shape the meanings persons give to themselves and their experiences (Stake, p. 37, and N. Denzin, p.1). Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory supported this framework by expanding the thinking of how "peers provide a sense of belonging and validation in the microsystem, and when they engage in certain behaviors or hold certain beliefs," (Guy-Evans, 2024), parents have influences that support the creation of why and how they parent their children. Through the interview process, the researcher included subjective opinions, emotions, and views that could not be counted or observed. These opinions, emotions, and views were interpreted through the eyes of the researcher. This resulted in a phenomenon that was not generalized to the entire population.

Rationale

The rationale for using interpretivism as the theoretical framework was supported by the semi-structured interviews that the researcher conducted to gain insight into the assembled understanding about kindergarten readiness of the participants. A phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or

a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 75). Interpretive phenomenological analysis involves a double hermeneutic as it integrates not only the participant's sense of their lived experience but also the researchers' attempt to understand how the participant makes sense of their personal and social world (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Smith et al., 2009). The inquirer then collects data from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon and develops a composite description of the essence of the experience for all of them (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For this study, the researcher conducted interviews to allow the participants to articulate their opinions, beliefs, experiences, perspectives, and knowledge. This allowed the researcher to understand the mind of the individual further. As one of the most common methods for data collection in qualitative research, interviews could be used to explore ideas, beliefs, and perspectives about specific subject matters, resulting in a deeper understanding of the phenomena even more so than a solely quantitative study would provide (Gill et al., 2008; Goralczyk, A. B., 2021; McGrath et al., 2019).

There have been numerous research studies focused on teacher perspectives about kindergarten readiness, but few research studies have investigated kindergarten readiness through the lens of parent perspectives (Hatcher et al., 2012). Despite the abundance of theoretical literature highlighting the importance of collaboration and coordination of families and teachers during the transition period, few studies of kindergarten transition have examined the perspectives and involvement of multiple stakeholders (Welchons & McIntyre, 2015). The lack of research on the topic of kindergarten readiness and parent perspectives was the charge of this study, which used semi-structured interviews with parents to gain a genuine understanding of their thoughts, perceptions, and assumptions about kindergarten readiness.

Background of the Setting

The setting for this study was a charter school, a public, Title I elementary school located in the northeastern United States. This particular charter school has two campuses that serve approximately 970 students enrolled in kindergarten through eighth grades. The researcher only conducted their research at one campus, based on the researcher's current professional relationship with this institution, which has approximately 480 students enrolled. Both campuses have almost the entire student population identified as African American descent as their primary nationality, with 64% in poverty and 22% identified as students with disabilities, through the special education programs. The participating school ranks in the twentieth percentile for the highest number of students eligible for free or reduced lunch in its state. The CEO and principal of the school granted the researcher permission to conduct interviews via Zoom with participants.

Participants

An informative letter (Appendix B) explaining this research study was sent to each student's parent(s). Then a letter invitation (Appendix C) was sent out inviting willing parents to participate in a semi-structured interview. Only families with students who were present at this particular charter school since kindergarten, from the school years 2016-2017 through 2021-2022, were invited to participate in the study. When the names of all willing participants were received, the researcher used the purposeful sampling method to choose 12 to 15 participants. Many of the participants might have been prior students of the researcher's, which made these interviews very relaxed, and participants spoke freely during the interviews.

Participants signed up for a date and time for their individual interview; the researcher sent reminders and confirmations for the selected date and time to each participant. Each

participant agreed, either verbally or in writing, to the release form (Appendix D) and completed the demographic questions (Appendix F) before answering the interview questions. A number was assigned to each participant, and their names remained anonymous during the data collection and analysis processes.

Data Collection

Methods

The primary method of data collection was semi-structured interviews conducted by the researcher. Data collection took place over four weeks, during which each participant had an in-depth, one-on-one semi-structured interview with the researcher. Interviews were projected to last approximately 30 to 45 minutes, as each participant was asked the same 10 questions (Appendix G). Each participant signed up for their interview, which was conducted via Zoom, on a selected date and time provided by the researcher. Before the interview started, each participant was given a detailed explanation of participant risks, benefits, and their right to withdraw from the research study at any time (Appendix G). In addition, each participant was given a demographic questionnaire that described each participant's gender, race, age, highest level of school completed, and primary language spoken at home. Each interview was recorded using the record feature via Zoom, and then each interview was transcribed into a written transcript by the researcher.

Data Analysis

Interpretive phenomenological analysis involves a double hermeneutic, as it integrates not only the participant's sense of their lived experience but also the researcher's attempt to understand how the participant makes sense of their personal and social world (Smith et al., 2009). Before transcribing each interview via Zoom, the researcher listened to it to familiarize

themselves with the participant's responses. The researcher used a qualitative research tool called ATLAS, which was used primarily for coding and analyzing transcripts. Next, the interviews were transcribed, and the researcher analyzed the transcripts line by line. During this process of transcribing and analyzing the interview transcripts, the researcher performed a task of coding. Elliott (2018) stated that,

> Coding is a fundamental aspect of the analytical process and the ways in which researchers break down their data to make something new. It is a way of doing this, of essentially indexing or mapping data, to provide an overview of disparate data that allows the researcher to make sense of them in relation to their research questions.

Qualitative coding of this data involved multiple cycles of reading and examining the data. The initial steps of coding involved extracting themes from the data, comparing themes across different data types (e.g., interviews) and between participants (Mackey & Gass, 2011). There were multiple cycles of coding for the researcher to get a clear picture of the themes to translate into meaningful findings. During each cycle, the researcher used pattern coding to identify categories, concepts, and relationships that transpired within the responses of the participants. In the final coding process, the researcher employed focused coding methods to begin narrowing down themes, yielding more meaningful findings.

Protection of Participants' Rights

For this research study, after participants were identified, they were provided with an explanation of the study and given an informed consent form to be completed. In this study, participants provided voluntary and informed consent, and privacy protections were established before the collection of data. All data collected were transcribed and retained by the researcher to protect the confidentiality and identity of the participants.

Trustworthiness Criteria

One possible limitation was the researcher's relationship with some of the participants, as the researcher had previously taught their students. Another limitation was the length of time between the actual interview and when the participant's child was in kindergarten.
Lastly, a limitation could include the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which could skew some participants' thoughts and opinions on how to prepare their child for kindergarten.

Timeline of Research Events

In March 2024, the researcher finished writing and editing the first three chapters to prepare for the proposal defense. The researcher completed and submitted their application to the IRB committee to set up a date for the proposal defense. While finishing their edits and finalizing a proposal defense date, the researcher set a time and date to meet with the Principal and CEO of the selected school to give them an overview of the study. Once the IRB committee approved the proposal, the researcher sent invitations to families to participate in the study. During this time, the researcher scheduled interviews and distributed questionnaires, consent forms, and other necessary forms to be completed before the interview process began.

After this task, the researcher began interviews with all participants. When all interviews were conducted and completed, the researcher began the first of many rounds of data analysis, which included transcribing the interviews and identifying the first round of themes. The researcher repeated this data analysis cycle multiple times throughout the process, which enabled them to finalize themes for their findings and write the final two chapters of this study. Soon after, the researcher completed a few rounds of writing and editing, then prepared to defend their study.

Timeline

Date	Action
February - March 2024	Finish and clean up first 3 chapters; prepare for proposal defense
March - April 2024	Meet with the Principal and CEO of the selected school - review study, consent forms, participant selection, interview process, etc.
May 2024	Defend Proposal
July 2024	IRB Application and Modifications
August 2024	IRB Approval
August - September 2024	Send families invitation to interview; consent forms; schedule interviews; distribute and complete questionnaires;
September 2024	Data Collection - Begin & Complete Interviews
December 2024	Begin Data Analysis - Transcriptions, member checks, coding, finding themes
January 2025	Finalize themes - Write Chapters 4 & 5
March 2025	Edits for Chapters 4 & 5
April 2025	Defend Dissertation

Conclusion

Despite the abundance of theoretical literature highlighting the importance of collaboration and coordination of families and teachers during the transition period, few studies of kindergarten transition examined the perspectives and involvement of multiple stakeholders (Welchons & McIntyre, 2015). To enhance this research and introduce a new perspective, it was essential to build on parental perspectives regarding kindergarten readiness by interviewing parents whose young children were entering kindergarten. Interviews are an appropriate

qualitative method to use when the researcher is attempting to understand a participant's perspective about an identified subject (McGrath et al., 2019). In this particular study, the researcher analyzed parent perspectives through interviews to interpret how kindergarten readiness and preparation were perceived and viewed by parents during their child's early childhood experiences.

Chapter IV: Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, interview-based study was to analyze parental perspectives on how parents perceived kindergarten readiness and how they supported their children during their early childhood experiences. The guiding questions for this study were:

1. How do parents and caregivers view kindergarten readiness in Urban Education?
2. What are parents/caregivers doing to help support early childhood experiences related to kindergarten readiness?

Participant Demographics

The study included eight participants, who were referred to as Participants (P) henceforth. The research sample only included families with students who have been present at the selected charter school since kindergarten, from the school years 2016-2017 through 2021-2022. Participants shared demographic information via a Google Form after scheduling but before the start of the interview, which is captured in Table 1 below.

Table 1.

Participant Information

Participant (P) Number	Participant Ethnicity	Participant Gender	Participant Pronouns	Participant Child's Ethnicity	Participant Child's Gender	Number of children Participant has at selected school	Age of Participant's child(ren) *at the time of the study
1	African American	F	She/her/hers	African American	F	1	12
2	African American	F	She/her/hers	African American	M	1	12
3	African American	F	She/her/hers	African American	F	1	8
4	African American	F	She/her/hers	African American	M	1	9
5	African American	F	She/her/hers	African American	M	1	8

6	African American	F	She/her/hers	African American	F	1	12
7	African American	F	She/her/hers	African American	F	1	8
8	African American	F	She/her/hers	African American	M	1	10

***M = Male F = Female**

Methodology

Qualitative coding of this data involved multiple cycles of reading and examining the data. Initial steps of coding involved extracting themes from the data, comparing themes from one data type (e.g., interviews) to another (e.g., class observations), and between participants (Mackey & Gass, 2011). Each participant was chosen through purposeful sampling and interviewed using the same thirteen questions via Zoom. The eight participants participated in one expected 60-minute semi-structured interview in September 2024; however, the interviews lasted approximately 30-45 minutes. Each participant was sent a Google Form to select the best time and date for their interview within a four-week span, which included two Saturday slots for the convenience of both the researcher and the participant. After each participant completed the form, the researcher selected a date and time from the participants' availability, amongst the other participants, to create an interview schedule that worked for both the participant and the researcher. Interview emails and reminders were sent to the participants, asking for confirmation of email and interview time and date.

During each interview, the researcher jotted down notes in their researcher journal of anything that stood out to them. Through Zoom's technology, the researcher was able to transcribe and audio-record each interview. The researcher transferred and saved each interview's audio recording and transcription into the ATLAS.ti software. This software is primarily used for coding and analyzing transcripts to find themes, patterns, and relationships

within the data. The researcher engaged in three analytical coding cycles; during each cycle, new themes emerged from the data as well as answers to the guiding research questions. This chapter summarizes the research study's findings, providing insights, thoughts, and understandings about kindergarten readiness from the perspectives of parents, as interpreted by the researcher through participant responses.

The researcher referred to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which suggested "the child's environment is a nested arrangement of structures, each contained within the next. He organized them in order of how much of an impact they have on a child (Guy-Evans, 2024). Bronfenbrenner identified these structures as five interrelated systems, each influencing a child's development through its relationship with the others (Guy-Evans, 2024). The interrelationship of these systems start with a child's most immediate relationships and environments (microsystem); to the involvement of interactions between different microsystems in a child's life, such as how active a parent is in a child's life (mesosystem); to the formal and informal social structures such as local government, friends of the family and mass media, which influence the microsystems, such as how a parent's workplace policies affect a child (exosystem); to beliefs about gender roles, individualism, family structures and social issues that establish a child's norms and values that permeate a child's microsystem (macrosystem); to finally the shifts and transitions over a child's lifetime that include changes in family life and social interactions (chronosystem) (Guy-Evans, 2024). While theorist Bronfenbrenner focused his theory on a child's perspective of how life develops, the researcher of this study used this theory to highlight it within the parental perspective of kindergarten readiness of children.

Interview Data

The researcher used the qualitative data analysis program ATLAS.ti. The AI coding feature supported the identification of codes and themes that emerged from participant data. This program scanned the interview transcripts and then conducted automated inductive coding. The researcher reviewed the transcripts and interview audio to confirm that the analysis was accurate and did not contain repetitive or indescribable language. After reviewing the authenticity of the participant transcripts and audio recordings, the researcher uploaded the transcripts and audio recordings of all the participants into ATLAS.ti. Once the uploads were completed, the researcher clicked all the audio recording documents and clicked “AI coding” to begin coding all the participants' audio recordings at once.

ATLAS.ti coding began by dividing the text into paragraphs, from which quotations were extracted. Inductive codes were then applied to each quotation. Once coding was completed, ATLAS.ti identified the codes based on the interview questions posed by the researcher. The program processed the transcript data by breaking it into smaller segments and creating quotations for coding. In this study, 402 codes were generated using ATLAS.ti. After the coding phase, ATLAS.ti provided an overview of the results and organized the codes into categories that reflected emerging themes. The researcher then applied these codes and received a summary of the coding. The analysis focused on identifying patterns and trends within the themes generated by ATLAS.ti. The time required for analysis varies, depending on the number of documents analyzed.

The researcher then employed ATLAS.ti's thematic analysis, using the codes generated in the initial analysis. This process involved organizing themes within the dataset to assess their frequency and identify patterns in the data gathered from the study participants. Three key

themes were revealed through an analysis of all the participants' interview data: (1) education, (2) parenting, and (3) social interactions.

Themes

Education

The main purpose of this study centered on education, specifically kindergarten readiness and experiences before, during, and after the program. The first theme of education was the main point of origin for the study's participants. The researcher asked the participants questions about how they would define kindergarten readiness and how they would describe kindergarten in three words. In terms of how each participant defines the term kindergarten readiness for themselves, all participants agreed that it "is the preparation for kindergarten." Specifically, P1 stated that a child should "know your name" and "be ready to excel and do well in all learning areas." P3 was in agreement with P1 by stating that children should know "a basic understanding of letters and numbers, shapes, and colors." P4 expanded P3's explanation by stating, "they should know their letters and numbers, but can they identify and write them?" P5, P6, and P8 all agreed that it meant to "prepare a child for kindergarten." P7 stated that it was preparing a child to be "school ready, meaning academically and structurally."

Beyond the academic preparation aspect, P3 & P6 both agreed that kindergarten readiness involved social-emotional learning as well. P3 stated that it also involved "relationships with friends, knowing how to share, potty training." P6 stated,

> not just education wise, but socially or mentally, a little bit too. Having a basic understanding of certain items or terms; being able to be separated from your parents; and no need for naps. I think Kindergarten readiness is literally like just being prepared to be in a school setting versus daycare or preschool.

P2 also agreed that kindergarten readiness was “how prepared your child is to enter an organized classroom setting and being able to talk, answer questions, and communicate effectively as a 5-year-old would in a new environment.” P4 & P8 also agreed that this term included “a new environment to adjust to; social emotional skills; preparing them for a structured environment.” P8 regards their child’s time in preschool as a success in his transition to kindergarten. The researcher captured her thoughts below,

> It was more like Montessori learning, but then they focused on academics as well, and I felt like he was thriving there. But then, when he got to kindergarten, none of it really showed because in the Montessori setting, you know, they do a lot of hands-on experiences, and the kids will have different stations, and I think of the areas he struggled with was having to sit down in the classroom for a long period of time. They did not have to do that at all, only for circle time, when they did stories or a lesson, but it was a lot of fun because they learned new languages, math, reading and then they also did individual assessments, similar to what you all do now. They focused on a lot of things; they made it fun; so they did a lot of things in song, for the learning aspect of it which makes it easier for kids to retain because it seemed like it’s fun.

These definitions ultimately showed how participants viewed kindergarten readiness, which, in the next section, they were asked to describe in their own words.

The researcher asked each participant to name three adjectives to describe what kindergarten is. All participants had positive words or terms to describe what kindergarten is. Three out of the eight agreed that it is fun. Two out of the eight agreed to describe it as learning, new, and exploratory. The other participants said words such as playful, invigorating, youthful, discover, joyful, exciting, safe, busy, eye-opening, enjoyable, and skills. P5 described it as “the

beginning", which was the only term this participant used to describe what kindergarten is. P7 used the term "prep year" to describe what kindergarten is. Within education, the terms' learning' and 'engagement' strike anyone as two of the most important aspects of education. The data recovered by this researcher revealed a high level of commonality among parents discussing their child's kindergarten experience.

Learning & Engagement

Learning & engagement were combined sub-themes that emerged from data collection under the education theme. Learning is defined by the process of acquiring new knowledge, skills, or understanding, or changing beliefs, behaviors, or attitudes. Engagement is defined as the level of interest, curiosity, and motivation students show while learning. These sub-themes were grouped as participants shared what skills and behaviors a child needs to enter kindergarten, as well as which skills and behaviors parents expect their child to have upon leaving kindergarten. The data collected from participants indicated how important these two terms were during a child's kindergarten experience. When entering kindergarten, six out of eight participants stated that children should know their letters; five out of eight participants said that children should know their numbers (up to 10 or 20); five out of eight participants noted that children should know some social skills, including talking to others to convey information, talking about their feelings, and making friends.

Three out of eight participants stated that children should understand and be able to function in a structured classroom environment, interacting with both children and adults. Two out of the eight participants noted that following directions was important, and three out of the eight participants conveyed that children should be familiar with some basic vocabulary. P2 specifically stated that children should know "small words that they could recognize and

understand in their books." P1 agreed with P2 regarding the importance of knowing their letters, but P1 emphasized that "I don't think you have to necessarily be able to read." P3 also agreed with P2 about knowing some words to enter; however, after entering Kindergarten, pushes the notion of "building on those skills but, can you read this sentence. I know you know these words, but, how does the sentence flow? I wanted to make sure that we were focused on that before she went to kindergarten." Other highlights from this question included P1 stating that children should know some letter sounds, their name, their parents' government names, phone numbers, and be able to verbally state things they need, specifically when going to the bathroom. P3 stated that children should know their colors. P4 stated that children should become accustomed to routines at home. This led to the identification of the skills and behaviors that parents expected their children to possess when leaving Kindergarten.

By the end of kindergarten, most parents expect to see progress in their children, both academically and behaviorally. When leaving kindergarten, all participants expected their child to know how to read. Specifically, P1 stated, "My child came in already knowing a lot. My expectation for her was just to kind of build on what she already knew, solidify like she could read, build on sight words, and addition." P3 and P4 had the same sentiments for their children. P7 also agreed with the above statement but added that she expected her child to "be able to follow the structured class routines." P5 also agreed with all participants, but stated that "I really didn't know what to expect. I piggybacked off what the teacher was already teaching and added to it." P6 agreed to "reinforcing what was being taught at school". P2 emphasized that she wanted her child to "have a bigger vocabulary, to read and be on reading grade level." P8 wanted their child to "become a fluent reader and have legible handwriting." Engagement shows up

differently for each child, it goes hand and hand with learning and is needed, especially in kindergarten, for the acceleration of success for children.

Engagement is essential to teaching and learning in the classroom. Some dialogue about engagement was included in their answers from interview question 4, which asked participants to share a story about their child's experience in kindergarten. While all eight participants answered this question, three out of the eight participants spoke about how engagement was a key experience for their child. P4 noted similar experiences with their child experiencing kindergarten during the COVID-19 pandemic. She stated,

> My kid went to kindergarten during Covid. I honestly was blown away by y'all's creativity. How you were able to do things with them and make it interactive. You know, I never had been to kindergarten, but I've worked in preschools, and I feel like that was similar; it's like all that hands on stuff, you know, How are they gonna do that? And I was also amazed that all the kids were given this whole box of stuff, too, like wow okay! You and Ms. Haley keep it interactive, keep it interesting, even though they were on zoom. I loved how you taught them how to use zoom, you know, the same way you would teach a kid to raise their hand, right? I was just really impressed by your flexibility, even through schedule changes. I thought his experience was, but I mean to me, it was weird. I don't know that it was weird to him. I mean he did go to preschool, more like a daycare and operated like a preschool, but he seemed to really adjust to it.

P3 stated that,

> I didn't even know my child was an outdoorsy kid until she came to kindergarten, and she will look forward to forest school, and as much as, the weather maybe cold, and she would come home and tell me 'Mommy, my hands were like icicles, but I filled the birds

> nest and we were doing this and that with the sticks, and we made a pile of leaves into a pie.' And I mean, just always stopping walking down the street picking up worms. I would say 'I didn't even know you like these things until she went to kindergarten.

In this same vein, P3 stated that the reason she chose the selected school was due to its curriculum. She stated,

> I've been in education for 15 years, and I was just like I never wanted to work at a place where I did not feel comfortable sending my own child. If I'm here it is because I believe in the curriculum, the programming that they're providing for our children and it has to be good enough that I will send my own kid.

Engagement is viewed in many ways, and the data shows how it is displayed with different families. The next section examined the child development of children as they transitioned and completed kindergarten.

Child Development

The next sub-theme, child development, refers to the process of a child's physical, cognitive, social, and emotional growth from birth through adolescence. Before entering kindergarten, most children attend some form of preschool or pre-kindergarten program to prepare them for kindergarten. In this study, the researcher asked participants to describe the preschool program their children attended and what that experience was like, or if not, what was the reason that drove their decision not to send their children to preschool. All eight participants sent their children to some preschool program. Two participants described their child's preschool setting as a daycare facility. Still, they indicated that the directors of these facilities ran these programs like a "real school environment with a structured schedule and routines, and had a curriculum that included giving students homework."

Two other participants' children attended preschools, either at a community center or a public school. They both agreed that the preschool program was ideal for them because it was "close to home." P1's child attended a community center, continued to state further that her child "started as an infant and grew with each class and loved that there was an outdoor area." P6's child attended preschool in a public school building, and stated that,

> I went through this program with my first child, so I kept my second child here too! It was perfect, five days a week with veteran teachers. The atmosphere was different from the school it was housed in, but because of my child's age, she had to do two years in the program.

The participants indicated that their child had a positive experience in preschool, which they could recall. P3 loved their preschool program because "it was bi-lingual, free, provided summer camp, and the director recommended parent tips to do at home for students who would be entering kindergarten." Only one participant described their child's experience in preschool as not a pleasant experience. P5 stated that the

> lack of communication about my child's academics was non-existent; my child was not grasping nor retaining knowledge. None of his teachers expressed anything to me, I had to address them before realizing that he probably needed more support so I sought our early intervention services for him.

P7 stated that her child's preschool curriculum was "more exploratory than academics; in which I didn't realize until he transitioned into kindergarten." P8 stated that their child's preschool had "a Montessori learning approach, which encouraged more hands-on learning for students." Before entering kindergarten, most children attend some form of preschool or pre-kindergarten program to prepare them for their kindergarten experience. These decisions about whether to send your

child to preschool or pre-kindergarten were what drove this study for the researcher. The next theme is highlighted in the next section, which dives deeper into why these decisions were made.

Parenting

The next theme was parenting. In the interview process, participants were asked if they attended kindergarten and what their experience was like. Seven out of the eight participants attended kindergarten. P4 stated that "I did not. I went straight to first grade when I was 5." Participants 1 and 7 did not remember anything from their kindergarten experience. P2 stated, "I remember Kindergarten being a fun experience. I made new friends because I did not go to pre-k when I was a kid, it was called Get Set, but it was not in my neighborhood." P3 explained that "kindergarten was fun. It was colorful. I remember all the different arts and crafts projects. I remember sitting on a rug." P5 said, "I don't remember much, but I can, for whatever reason, remember my first day, or my parents, and having my uniform on."

Participant 6 had a slightly different experience of attending kindergarten, based on their location growing up as a child. They stated,

> I went to kindergarten in Baltimore, where I'm from. My local school, my local neighborhood school, my whole family went to the same school, had the same teacher that everybody had, from what I remember it seemed like it felt comfortable, but I also went to pre-k, so I felt like that probably was like a big help. Yeah, I went to the same school from kindergarten to 8th grade.

Participant 8 had a different experience, one that they claimed was not pleasant. "I went to a private school for kindergarten and it was a horrible experience. The school I went to was just like, so strict. I remember I had to learn French at 5 years old like that's not fun." P8 went on to say, "Yes, I was glad when my mom switched my school after the first year. She put me in public

school for my elementary years." The researcher asked a follow-up question, "Was that better, like the public setting? P8 explained,

> So the public setting was very different, only because there were a whole lot more students. So for kindergarten, for me, it was trying to prepare me to be an adult. It wasn't even trying to prepare me to be a kid. I remember we had to learn from encyclopedias. This is for kindergarten! So I feel like it helped me be more advanced as a student because when I went to public school a lot of the things that they were teaching I already knew.

While each participant reminisced about their experiences in kindergarten, they were later asked to recall experiences they had as parents when their own children were in kindergarten.

Here is what the participants shared as a story about their child's experience in kindergarten. All participants agreed that their child performed well in kindergarten, and their experiences varied significantly based on their child. P7 generally stated, "I think his experience in kindergarten was good. I was able to see him change and evolve as a student, meaning like being able to meet expectations from teachers." P2 stated, "A highlight memory of kindergarten is remembering he was above. He was above his expected reading level." While each participant described their child's performance, some stories stood out as particularly important experiences regarding student behavior, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the effects of the kindergarten transition on parents.

Participant P1 discussed how the transition into kindergarten, highlighting the slow structural schedule of kindergarten, was a major strength in their child's successful transition into kindergarten. She stated that,

> (the selected school) did well, as far as having, like a "pre" school time, so kind of like that I think was an A/B. You went one day, a half day or 2 days later. I thought that was kind of a great way to enter kindergarten just being able to kind of have. I think it was like 14 kids in the class versus like the full 27. So she got a chance to kind of come in and see the kindergarten classroom, see the teachers, and be able to experience it, you know, kind of lowkey and then got the full blast of kindergarten. So I think that was a great way to get the kindergarteners into the school to see the physical building as well as to also get used to their teachers and their environment. That was kind of like an ease into it.

The transition period began slowly, but as time passed, students had to adapt their prior school setting knowledge and abilities to their current situation. Participant P2's kindergarten story highlighted their child's transition of behavioral support. P2 stated,

> I feel like you (the researcher) were very instrumental, of course, because you were a teacher, but you were very instrumental in making it a good transition for him. He has been in daycare since he was 7 weeks old. So he was already in a classroom environment. He did 2 years of Pre-K, so he was well prepared, I believe, for kindergarten experience.

Five out of the eight participants' children experienced kindergarten during the COVID-19 pandemic, giving this study enriched and insightful data on a child's kindergarten experience.

Two participants discussed how COVID-19 and online learning affected their child's transition into kindergarten. P3 stated that

> being in kindergarten was a little different, because part of her kindergarten year was on Zoom. I remember her being in my living room, and me trying to set up her little number blocks and whiteboard and making sure she had headphones on, so she wasn't distracted.

> But I also remember her being in the building and her experience, with recess and forest school.

P8 stated,

> So you know, kindergarten was a little different because during kindergarten half of that year we went into the pandemic. But I think at the beginning, like for kindergarten, for my child, he wanted it to be about fun, but he was quickly learning that you know, you also had to have instruction time. I think the good thing that you all did, I think there was a little area where y'all would sit them out like if they were being too active. I also feel the kindergarten at the time because of the pandemic, it kind of set, not just my child, but a lot of students back, because where they would have had that in-class instruction and really learning how to do other things. The problem was that you all weren't acclimated to doing zoom and they had to figure it out. But then we had them in their home environments which made it a little difficult to be like, okay, this is school. This is going to be your space to sit. And here he is, hanging upside down on a chair like while y'all trying to do a lesson. The first half, I think he did okay, like I feel like it was more like the behavioral thing.

Uncovering how parents viewed their children's kindergarten experience through storytelling enlightened the data collection and interview experience.

Again, making decisions is an essential part of parenting. Next, participants were asked if they had taken any parent education courses or read any books about preparing their child for kindergarten. If they did, they were asked to share what they read and what they learned. All eight participants answered no to this question. All the participants provided good reasons, which are captured in this section. P1 responded by saying she only took "parenting classes in the

hospital for birthing." P2 stated that she "read more parenting books, however, I helped to raise my younger siblings and my Bachelor's degree is in human ecology which supported my knowledge on raising my child." The researcher asked P2 a follow-up question: Do you find that there's more information for parents, for the parenting aspect of raising children, as opposed to the educational side of children's lives? Or do you think there's a mixture? P2 answered the follow-up question with the following statement,

> I think it definitely is geared towards the parenting side more than preparing your child for kindergarten. I don't think there's enough books out there, especially in a post covid world. I think the research you're doing is very important because so many parents have taken their children out of school. These kids are missing a social and emotional, an important part of their development, by not being in school.

P5 agreed with P2, as she stated,

> To be honest, there's no book that I think could prepare you for kindergarten. It's always a new challenge. It's just a new thing, especially if your kid hasn't been involved in school prior to. But no, I didn't read any books. I didn't have a pamphlet or a template to prepare me.

P4 & P7 both stated that their profession or prior education classes supported them in knowing what their children needed to be prepared for kindergarten. P8 stated, "I reached out to experts I know, like my mom and grandmother." P3 stated that

> I did not take any courses or read any books. However, my child's preschool provided parents with packets and checklists for kindergarten readiness. They were trying to elaborate on what we could do at home to support what was being taught in the classroom.

While learning how to be a parent, many go to those around them or close to them for advice and support.

In this section, the data show how participants answered the question, “Can you state things they did not do prior to their child entering kindergarten that they think they should have done.” Five out of the eight participants answered no or that they did not know what they should have done. One of these participants stated, “She was my second child and attended pre-k for 2 years because of her age, I felt she was prepared”. The other four participants stated different things they would have done before their child entered Kindergarten. P1 stated, “preparing my child to know the little things, like in case of emergencies, I wish I would have taught her my phone number.” P5 said, “I wish I would’ve had a more stern schedule; just being redundant on a structured routine.” P7 & P8 had very similar literacy related suggestions, “practicing handwriting and it being neat” (P7) and “Work on spelling! Big Time!” (P8). Many more decisions have to be made, especially where your child will attend school, and a person’s reasoning can be different to meet the needs of those involved.

The next section discussed why the participants sent their child to the selected school for their kindergarten experience. Participants were asked why they chose the selected school to send their child to for kindergarten. Three out of the eight participants said that word of mouth was the main reason they chose the selected school. P1 said,

> I didn’t want her in a regular public school. Charter schools do a better job and I looked at the test scores and parent reviews. The high data influenced me to keep at this school for more than one year. Plus the school had an outdoor environment, small class size, she could make friends with it being 2 classes in one grade and it wasn’t too far from home.

P2 & P7 agreed with statements such as, “the school had good reviews; a K-8 school; I already heard this was a good academic school.” Participants P4 & P8 were both recommended to the selected school by the director of the preschool program their child attended before entering kindergarten. P8 stated,

> I only applied to charter schools and this was a newly built school.” P4 says, “I never heard a negative experience from the school; my friend’s child also attended and they highly recommended it as well. There was an emphasis on social-emotional learning which was important to me. There were very few incidents at the school, it was close to home and a new facility with air-conditioning.

P3 had a slightly different viewpoint as they are also an employee of the selected school. She stated,

> I’ve been in education for 15 years, and I was just like I never wanted to work at a place where I did not feel comfortable sending my own child. If I’m here it is because I believe in the curriculum, the programming that they’re providing for our children and it has to be good enough that I will send my own kid.

P5 prioritized, “needing something close to my support system. I couldn’t risk sending him to school and not being able to get out of work to get him if necessary.” Lastly, P6 chose this school because their first child was already attending. She stated, “My daughter got in through sibling preference. When my son first came, I liked that this was a new facility and I didn’t want him going to a public school, so it was this school or catholic school.” After all the decisions made so far within this parenting section, we came down to our final two decisions and questions: would you do it over again the same or differently and how well did their child do in kindergarten?

When asked if the participants would do it over again the same way or differently?. All eight participants answered 'no' or stated that they would not do anything differently. P4 stated, " I would definitely prepare him the same way again. It was important to his father and I that he got a good education, so sending him to preschool and getting him prepared for kindergarten was very important to us." P6 agreed by stating, " I don't think so. I think pre-k is vital and I would recommend that for everybody." P8 said, "I would still put him in pre-k but I would have started handwriting with him earlier."

Similarly, participants were asked in their opinion, how well their child did in kindergarten. All eight participants agreed that their child did a great job in kindergarten. P1 stated,

> "she did great in kindergarten. The kindergarten teacher was great. School was great. It was a good fit for her. Having those routines, patterns and opportunity of discovery and being able to go outside was a great, wonderful, meaningful way for her to learn, especially outside of sitting down and learning in a classroom."

P3 continued her positive sentiments with her comments, "I think she did great. Kindergarten was memorable for her, it gave her the confidence she needed to be successful in other grades. It was a great foundation for introducing her to elementary school." P7 reiterated that her child "did good, but I wish handwriting was more of a focus point in kindergarten." P8 said that her child "overall, did good but the classroom to pandemic situation was a little difficult." While decision-making can be complex and involve numerous factors, our first sub-theme in this section enlightened readers about the research findings on communication in education.

Communication

Communication is an imperative skill to have within education. Everything that is done in education is through some form of communication. Previously, participants shared their thoughts on their child's kindergarten experience through storytelling. Within some of their experiences and stories, this sub-theme of communication regarding parents was discussed by one participant. Here were their thoughts, P4 noted experiences with their child experiencing kindergarten during the COVID-19 pandemic. She stated,

> My kid went to kindergarten during Covid. I honestly was blown away by y'all's creativity. How you were able to do things with them and make it interactive. You know, I never had been to kindergarten, but I've worked in preschools, and I feel like that was similar; it's like all that hands on stuff, you know, How are they gonna do that? And I was also amazed that all the kids were given this whole box of stuff, too, like wow okay! You and Ms. Haley kept it interactive, kept it interesting, even though they were on zoom. I loved how you taught them how to use zoom, you know, the same way you would teach a kid to raise their hand, right? I was just really impressed by your flexibility, even through schedule changes. I thought his experience was, but I mean to me, it was weird. I don't know that it was weird to him. I mean he did go to preschool, more like a daycare and operated like a preschool, but he seemed to really adjust to it.

Participants were asked to state their feelings about how they felt when their child entered kindergarten. P1 stated, "teacher communication about how she was settling in was important to ease my nerves too." P1 clearly appreciated getting communication about her child's transition into kindergarten from their child's teacher. Communication is a skill that can make the biggest

difference in any experience someone is involved in. Along with communication, parental support was crucial in educating children.

Support

Support of any kind is important for parents to have during the transition of their child into any grade or school, but especially kindergarten. Participants were asked two questions: one to share a story about their child's experience in kindergarten, and the other to describe their child's preschool experience. From these stories, various types of support were identified. Participants P3 and P6 did not state anything in their answers that could support this theme. The first was structural support with specifics to the kindergarten schedule that made parents feel comfortable. P1 recalled a story about the transition into kindergarten,

> I appreciated the transition into kindergarten with the A/B schedule, where it was a half day for half the class. It gave my child a chance to experience kindergarten before it was fully functioning. She got to know the classroom and physical building since it was a new environment.

In regard to structural support in preschool, participants P1, P2, P4, and P6 agreed that they appreciated "a formalized school environment, with routines, and a 5 day schedule."

Next, teacher support made two participants feel supported when discussing their child's experience in kindergarten or preschool. P3 stated, "I appreciated that the preschool director recommended parent tips to do at home to help us support our child and know the skills she needed to enter kindergarten." P2 recalled this kindergarten story,

> You were very instrumental in making it a good transition for him. He did two years of Pre-K. So he was well prepared, I believe, for kindergarten, besides, my son and his sound behaviors! But the memory that I have has nothing to do with academics. The

> funniest memory is on a day when you called me and told me he was acting up and I came to the school and sat in your chair and surprised him when he came back in from recess.

The combination of teacher support and the structural support of the schedule made one parent feel supported by teachers showing compassion and being flexible. Participant P4 described this supportive feeling during a story she shared with the researcher about her child's experience of entering kindergarten in a virtual learning environment, when the COVID-19 pandemic shut down schools. P4 stated,

> My kid went to kindergarten during COVID. I was blown away by the teacher's creativity and how you were able to do things with them to make it interactive, even on Zoom. I loved how you taught them how to use Zoom, in the same way you would teach a child to raise their hand in class but had to do it through the Zoom features. The schedule was flexible, his teacher was super responsive with my concerns. It was different for me. I didn't know what to expect, but I appreciated the experience.

Support manifests in various ways and can make people feel seen and heard. For parents, understanding their thoughts, feelings, and opinions is crucial when collaborating with teachers.

Parental understanding can make or break a relationship between parents and school. Parental understanding was shown to participant P7 as they stated, "I was able to see him change and evolve as a student. Kindergarten helped set the tone for him and it gave me an overview of what type of learner he was going to be." Participants P7 and P8 both felt that the curriculum and learning support were good during their child's preschool experience. Both participants stated that an "exploratory or Montessori learning" supported their child's academic growth during those years. For parents to see the growth and development in their child can make their school

experience smooth. Parental understanding helps when the transition is tough for either the parent or child.

Separation and emotional support were shown to parents who experienced a hard time letting go during their child's transition into kindergarten. Participant P5 recalled this kindergarten memory,

> I have several memories, but overall he had a great kindergarten year. It was a good transition, though a hard one. Most importantly, it was the separation for us being on his own, without my assistance or aiding him. And then, his old meltdowns, the crying spells, wanting to go back to preschool and still wanting to be a baby. It also gave me the opportunity to learn more about my son, some of his barriers and everything else. I definitely appreciate kindergarten a lot.

Separation and emotional support can also lead to feelings of a lack of support. Two of the eight participants felt a lack of support in their child's kindergarten or preschool experience. Participant P8 discussed how her child's transition to virtual learning during the middle of his kindergarten experience had to shift quickly and felt a lack of support in managing the new setup. P8 stated,

> Kindergarten was a little different because half of that year we went into the pandemic. The beginning he had to learn to balance having fun with getting his learning and work done. I feel like the pandemic set, not only my child back, but other students back as well because where they would have had that in-class instruction and really learned how to do other things, they couldn't. The problem was that the teachers weren't acclimated to doing zoom and they had to figure it out. The home environment was difficult too because now

you're saying this is school and it was a struggle. It caused more behavioral issues for him, like talking.

P5 recalled her child's preschool experience, "the lack of communication about my child's academics, he was not grasping or retaining knowledge but none of his teachers communicated that to me. It was so frustrating!" The data in this section enlightened the notable perspectives from parents regarding kindergarten readiness. This sub-theme of support led to the next section of social interactions, regarding students' social and emotional skills in kindergarten.

Social Interactions

Social interactions frequently arose during the data collection and interview process. Participants viewed social skills and behavior as essential skills children need before entering kindergarten. When asked for their opinions about what these skills and behaviors should be for children before entering kindergarten, these were their responses as they pertain to social interactions. One participant did not state anything related to social interaction in their response. P1 and P3 both agreed that "behavior is different for each kid and every kid is different." P3 further said that children should know how to "regulate and explain their emotions" before entering kindergarten. Participants P3, P5, and P6 all agreed that having social skills was important before entering kindergarten, such as making friends, learning boundaries, being around, and interacting with other children. Participants P7 and P8 agreed that "following directions, attention span, patience, being a good listener and taking direction" were skills children should have before entering kindergarten. P4 was the only participant who stated "academic and structural skills" were important skills for children to have before entering kindergarten. However, she made a statement that tied all of the research and data collection together by saying, "I do think that there's a huge benefit to them being able to socialize with

other children because you're going to have to do that in school." Within social interactions come positive and negative feelings, emotions run high in many situations, and next is the sub-theme of emotions that stood out within the data collection.

Emotions

Emotions are inherently embedded within us. Capturing the emotions of parental perspectives when their child transitioned into kindergarten was essential for the researcher to represent. Participants were asked how they felt when their child entered kindergarten. Nervous and excited were the two main emotions all the participants felt when their child entered kindergarten. P2 was purely excited, while participant P5 stated,

> I cried like a baby. The nerves of everything, such as, letting go, her child getting older, questioning how he would interact with other children, and wondering if his teacher would be mean to him. I had so many fears because that's my baby. One day at drop off, maybe the 2nd or 3rd day, he was reaching out to me to stay but they told me that I had to let him go and they said he had a meltdown and he was crying so bad. It was a hard transition.

P1 had a similar point of view, stating,

> I had a range of emotions. She was my first child; I was full of anxiety, nervousness, excitement and apprehensiveness. When she started saying, 'I want to go back to school and not stay at home' my nerves settled down.

P3 & P6 agreed that they both were "excited, but nervous that their children were growing up and attending school/setting." In conjunction with students starting school in a new setting, Participant P4 recalled her emotions as follows,

> Before covid, I was nervous especially because he would be away for the full day and slightly farther away from home. When COVID-19 hit, I was curious and concerned asking myself, “how am I going to handle zoom kindergarten? I don’t see my child sitting in front of a screen all day. I couldn’t picture it. I’ve never been to kindergarten and now I have to go to kindergarten too! I didn’t know what to expect. How is this going to work? What will it look like? How much support is he going to need from me?

Participants P7 & P8 recalled their emotions concerning their child’s behavior. P7 stated, “I was nervous because he struggled with a structured setting because his pre-k was more of play.” P8 stated, “I was excited but nervous because he was a talker and when he’s dis-engaged he can be a disruptor and I did not want him to be penalized for that.” The data indicated that emotions and social interactions played a significant role in parents' perspectives on kindergarten readiness.

Conclusion

The data revealed the views on kindergarten readiness and how parents/caregivers support their child in relation to their early childhood experiences that contribute to kindergarten readiness. Education was the central focus of this study, as it has evolved and enhanced experiences over the years. Kindergarten readiness was the most important factor to parents as they prepared their children for real school, as many of the participants stated. The parenting decisions and emotions behind these important factors were highlighted in this chapter as major influences on child development, preparing children for kindergarten readiness. The data showed that kindergarten readiness was essential for the upbringing and education of preschool-aged children.

Chapter V: Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, interview-based study was to analyze parental perspectives on how parents perceive kindergarten readiness and how they support their children during their early childhood experiences. The guiding questions for this study were:

1. How do parents and caregivers view kindergarten readiness in Urban Education?
2. What are parents/caregivers doing to help support early childhood experiences related to kindergarten readiness?

The study included eight participants whose children have been present at the selected charter school since kindergarten, from the school years 2016-2017 through 2021-2022. Data analysis revealed three major themes and five sub-themes, as identified through the qualitative data analysis program ATLAS.ti, which participants discussed during their interviews. The first major theme was Critical Educational Engagement, with the sub-themes: (1) Building on Prior Knowledge: Learning as a Continuum, (2) Meaningful Engagement Beyond the Classroom, (3) Early Learning Foundations through Structured Environments. The second major theme was Pivotal Parental Experiences in Early Childhood Education, with the sub-themes: (1) Engaged Communication: Building Trust through Dialogue and (2) Holistic Engagement through Supportive Structures. The last major theme was "Essential Social, Emotional, and Interaction Skills Needed for Kindergarten Success," with the sub-theme "Emotional Engagement: Navigating the Transition Together."

Major Themes

Critical Educational Engagement

Education was the primary focus of this study, examining how parents prepared their children for kindergarten. The data revealed that kindergarten readiness is defined as how prepared a child is for school, specifically, being able to identify and recognize letters and numbers, and write their name. Furthermore, the importance of a structured day, understanding social-emotional skills within oneself, and having basic communication skills, was highlighted as what kindergarten readiness is. The data revealed that kindergarten is described as being fun, learning/new, exploratory, playful, invigorating, youthful, discovering, joyful, exciting, safe, busy, eye-opening, enjoyable, and a prep year.

Pivotal Parental Experiences in Early Childhood Education

As the second major theme, the data revealed that the participants' experiences through parenting varied but were very similar nonetheless, as all declared their children had good kindergarten experiences, though some experienced online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Other major data highlights include how structural school decisions impacted parental decisions; no parenting courses were taken to prepare participants for their child's kindergarten year; all participants would not do anything differently, as their children all had good academic kindergarten years, and word of mouth or referrals led them to the selected school.

Essential Social, Emotional, and Interaction Skills Needed for Kindergarten Success

The last major theme from this study was social, emotional, and interaction skills that participants deemed as needed and imperative for kindergarten success. The data revealed that while behavior and social skills might look different in each child, they were still considered

important to have when attending school. Some skills mentioned included self-regulation, effective communication, making friends, learning boundaries, and having patience.

Sub-Themes

Building on Prior Knowledge: Learning as a Continuum

Learning is a key element of education that was highlighted as a major factor in a child's pre-kindergarten and kindergarten experience. This sub-theme captured participants sharing the skills and behaviors a child needs to enter kindergarten, as well as the skills and behaviors parents expect their child to have after leaving kindergarten. The data revealed that learning, which is defined as the process of acquiring new knowledge, skills or understanding, or changing beliefs, behaviors, or attitudes, before entering into kindergarten is a child has some background knowledge of basic academic skills such as identifying letters, numbers, shapes and colors; acquiring basic social skills, such as, following directions, talking about their feelings and making new friends; understanding how to be in a structured classroom environment. In the same regard, when leaving kindergarten, the data revealed that parents expected their children to build on the things they already knew coming into kindergarten, both academically and behaviorally, such as how to read, having a bigger vocabulary, and understanding basic addition.

Meaningful Engagement Beyond the Classroom

The sub-theme of engagement was discussed throughout the interview process as a high-level piece of information that was important to the participants throughout their child's kindergarten experience. The data revealed that engagement, which was captured in the storytelling portion about their child's kindergarten experience during interview questioning, indicated that engagement did not have to be based in a physical classroom. Engagement through

online learning during COVID-19, combined with environmental exploration aligned with the school's mission, enriched and made the kindergarten experience of a few children exceptional.

Early Learning Foundations through Structured Environments

This sub-theme could be conveyed through the term' child development,' which refers to the process of a child's physical, cognitive, social, and emotional growth from the prenatal period through adolescence (Berk, 2015). The participants described the early learning foundations of their child's preschool/pre-kindergarten experience. The data revealed that all eight participants sent their child to some preschool/pre-kindergarten program. Data analysis revealed that participants' children attended facilities or schools designed to simulate a real school environment, complete with structured schedules, routines, and curriculum. Some highlights reported were that many schools were close to home, provided different kinds of learning styles, and provided parents with extra support for students.

Engaged Communication: Building Trust through Dialogue

Communication could be summarized as the passing of ideas, information, and attitudes from person to person (Williams, 2016). Strobel Education (2023) stated that "communication holds a fundamental role in shaping school climate; it is the backbone of a successful, positive school environment." This sub-theme was highlighted through interview questions regarding retelling stories from participants' children's experiences in kindergarten; data collection showed how important it was for parents to have this clear and direct communication. In this study, the data revealed that teacher communication through both online learning and traditional learning made a big difference in how a child transitioned into kindergarten, and how parents felt about their child's kindergarten experience.

Holistic Engagement through Supportive Structure

Support in education is just as important as communication, but can be lacking in some ways based on different viewpoints or situations. In this study, the data displayed that participants had different kinds of support that made their child's experience in kindergarten better. The types of support revealed were structural support through flexible transitions into kindergarten; teacher support from preschool that helped to decision making for their child's kindergarten experience; a combination of structural and teacher support with making online-learning flexible for parents; parent understanding in the form of support helped with academic support for parents and children; separation and emotional support made parents feel better about leaving their child in a new space.

Emotional Engagement: Navigating the Transition Together

The last sub-theme was the emotional engagement, where participants explained how they felt when their child entered kindergarten. The data showed that all participants were nervous and excited, as the two main emotions expressed were related to their children entering kindergarten. Other data points included participants feeling anxious and apprehensive about what their child would experience in kindergarten, as well as being in a larger space.

Discussion of the Findings in Relation to the Literature

The primary focus of this study was to identify how parents and caretakers prepared their children for kindergarten readiness, which aligned with the major topics during the interview process. The literature has pinpointed that "the first five years of a child's life are a time of tremendous physical, emotional, social, and cognitive growth" (Lehr & Osborn, 2005), although very few studies have investigated the relationship between kindergarten readiness and parental perspective. Parents decided as to whether and where their children attend programs, and their

opinions were important to consider when making decisions about program improvement (Basile & Henry, 1996). This study captured both the parents' perspective of their own kindergarten experience as well as their perspective of their child's kindergarten experience.

In this study, participants recognized the importance of providing their children with extra support and learning opportunities outside the classroom to enhance their knowledge and skill set. Participants viewed their role as the supporter and reinforcement of their children's education, with responses such as "whatever the teacher was teaching in class, I was reinforcing at home." The researchers, Durisic and Bunijevac (2017), stated that "children whose parents are actively involved in their schooling benefit better than children whose parents are passively involved" and "one way that parents can contribute positively to their children's education is to assist them with their academic work at home." The data and literature aligned to support the implications of parents and families as partners in education. Participants understood the importance of reinforcing behaviors and skills that were taught in school at home.

The importance of preschool education and experience, the transition into kindergarten, and the sub-themes of learning and engagement were highlighted points in the data collection from this study. The study concluded that participants felt it necessary to send their children to preschool or pre-kindergarten programs to support their academic growth in kindergarten. The lens of this study was the ecological systems presented by theorist Urie Bronfenbrenner, which explained how human development was shaped by various interconnected environmental systems (Guy-Evans, 2024). In the article entitled, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems, writer Guy-Evans (2024) explained that Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems' second level, the mesosystem, involved interactions between different microsystems in the child's life, which could have significant impacts on the child's development, for example, a child whose parents

were actively involved in their school life (Guy-Evans, 2024). This second level involved the connection between parents and the decision-making they make for their children (Guy-Evans, 2024). The ultimate benefits of children attending preschool or pre-kindergarten programs include preparing them academically for kindergarten, providing structure, teaching social interaction, promoting independence, and increasing physical activity (Cappetta, 2017; Stanford, 2023). The alignment of the data and research highlighted the importance of implication between families, educators, and policymakers, deeming preschool education an imperative first step in educating young children.

Parental perspectives were one of the important topics in this study. Understanding that the participants recognized their child as smart, curious, or able to interact well with other children, parents happily viewed kindergarten as another opportunity for their child to flourish as a learner, which was an important data point in this study. The data collected displayed the significance of research and expert advice from those close to the participants, which led to the success of the children of the participants in their kindergarten year. Research has shown that parental perspectives and involvement have increased a child's academic and behavioral achievement. Parents have been identified as important sources of knowledge regarding their children's transitions, learning, and aptitudes (Brink, 2002; Dickinson & De Temple, 1998; R. Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 1999; Recchia & Bentley, 2013). Several studies have indicated that students with involved parents tend to exhibit increased academic achievement (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017; Epstein, 2009; Greenwood & Hickman, 1991; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Rumberger et al., 1990; Swap, 1993; Whitaker & Fiore, 2001). Research suggests that parents' involvement in school depends in part on how welcome they feel at the school (Kreider, 2002; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1997).

Parents' perspective on the quality of kindergarten is shaped by the influence of the society in which they live, as well as by their personal experiences and implicit pedagogies, and therefore can be distinguished from the perspective of researchers, practitioners, and experts in the field of education (Malovic & Malovic, 2017). These alignments between data and research prove again that the implications of partnerships with families, educators, researchers, and policymakers are imperative in the growth of young children's academic and behavioral support during their early childhood educational experiences.

Social-emotional learning was a major theme that rose from the data in this study. Throughout the entire interview process, participants acknowledged the importance of social-emotional learning and skills that young children needed to display to succeed in kindergarten. Some skills mentioned included making friends, learning boundaries, following directions, patience, and being a good listener. Possessing these skills inside and outside of the classroom or school was imperative to child development, as children learn from watching and doing. The researchers, Morris et al. (2017), explained that "one of the most influential forces in the development of emotion regulation is children's parents." In 2017, Morris et al. published a tripartite model on the impact of the family on children's emotion regulation and adjustment. According to the model, parents influence children's emotion regulation through three mechanisms: children's observation of parents' emotion regulation (e.g., modeling, social referencing, emotion contagion), emotion-related parenting practices (e.g., emotion coaching, reactions to emotions), and the emotional climate of the family (e.g., attachment, parenting style, emotional expressivity, family relationships) (Morris et al., 2017). Children's ability to regulate emotions effectively is a developmental skill essential for maintaining successful relationships with peers and family, academic success, and mental health (Morris et al., 2017). The positive

alignment between data and research highlighted the importance and underscored the need for high-quality social-emotional curricula in preschool and prekindergarten settings. This implication was correlated directly to educators and policymakers, who should deem this as one of the curricula taught daily to children, with examples and role-playing to support all learners.

Child development, became a major theme in this study, as defined above as the process of a child's physical, cognitive, social and emotional growth (Berk, 2015), syncs to education through the learning and engagement of children, meaning how a child learns to master a skill is through teaching them how to do it engagingly; based on the child's age, is how someone would classify how to teach the child said skill. Data collected linked communication and support through the kindergarten experiences of both the participants and their children. In a Blog post by the School of Education, American University (2023), it stated that,

> Effective parent-teacher communication can also benefit parents. Since parents are not always directly involved in the classroom, regular conversations with teachers can help them understand which subject areas their children are doing well in, and which ones they are struggling with. It can also help them feel valued and more confident in engaging in the learning process. Parents who want to be involved can develop a greater role in their child's education by supplementing lessons at home and explaining complicated homework problems.

Executive Director of the National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement, Vito Borrello, stated that

> Parent involvement gives teachers the tools to better support their students (Stanford, 2023). As an expert teacher, I have learned throughout my tenure that open

communication and support from parents allows children to trust their teacher during instructional and non-instructional learning moments.

The connection and relationship between teacher and parent support the classroom environment and create a sense of unity and assurance that the child's well-being is secure at all times during the school day. This implication directly impacts families and educators, as it is imperative to bridge the gap with parent perspectives and kindergarten readiness. As researchers continue to investigate this relationship, they can improve the impact that kindergarten readiness has on young children.

Implications for Practice

This study's data highlight the importance of preschool/pre-kindergarten education for young children, as well as the key role of parental perspectives and involvement in implementing successful kindergarten readiness skills and behaviors. The implications of practice for this study are geared toward families, educators, policymakers, and researchers, as these are the vital stakeholders who will enable young children to grow and prosper in their early childhood educational years. These branches should work together to ensure the fruit of their labor is nurtured toward the higher calling of educational success. The data demonstrate the benefits of parents being involved in their children's early education experiences. Incorporating educators, policymakers, and researchers to the forefront of kindergarten readiness and preschool programs will support the growth of every child during these significant years.

The first to focus on are the families. Parents are their child's advocate for the things they need, and the data collected from this study supports that parents can bridge the gap between home and school to make kindergarten experiences enjoyable for all. Studies indicate that when parents are involved in their children's schooling, children achieve higher grades and better

school attendance, they have more positive attitudes and behaviors, higher graduation rates, and greater enrollment in higher education (Bohan-Baker & Little, 2002; Henderson & Berla, 1994). Based on the findings from this study, families should foster strong relationships with their child's school and teachers, creating a sense of community, promoting consistent communication, and supporting learning at home. This can be achieved by parents and families having the opportunity to volunteer in the classroom, participate in, or facilitate school events and workshops, thereby gaining a better understanding of the school environment.

Secondly, the implications of practice should focus on the educators and administrators of schools. Educators should create high-quality and engaging learning environments, foster positive social-emotional development, utilize effective teaching practices, engage families in the learning process, and provide professional development for teachers, staff, and administrators. The findings of this study suggested that when educators connect with their students and families, it brings joy to the learning and engagement of the classroom and spills over into home life. More research on how successful schools and educators implement positive behavior reinforcements, effective social-emotional learning, engage in two-way communication, differentiate instruction, provide resources, and engage in on-going professional development for teachers and staff supported in proving why the findings of this study which indicate that having all of these running smoothly in a school environment will enable the achievement of kindergarten transition and readiness. Implementing these strategies can help educators foster the development of essential skills and contribute to expanding access to and improving the quality of prekindergarten education, which will correlate with the high-quality need for kindergarten readiness.

Thirdly, policymakers create the foundation of what high-quality preschool and prekindergarten programs should look like and how they are run. Providing high-quality preschool and prekindergarten programs to families will support students in their growth and development, enabling them to establish a successful educational foundation (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017). There several steps that policymakers can do to increase and expand access to integrated and inclusive programs, ensure these programs are high-quality, support and increase the education of teachers through higher education programs, coordinate and invest in comprehensive and federal Early Childhood Education programs, expand Early Head Start programs, target specific populations and locations with a high-need for better programs, consider potential funding sources, and implementing mixed-delivery universal preschool programs. These recommendations aim to create a cohesive, high-quality, and accessible early childhood education system that benefits all children, particularly those from low-income families, those in urban educational settings, and those from underrepresented backgrounds.

Lastly, researchers play a vital role in increasing high-quality prekindergarten education through their research. Researchers help to spread their findings to the public, informing others of why their study has importance and supports the increase of knowledge of their topic. By advancing research on preschool and prekindergarten education, it supports program design by investigating effective strategies, providing evidence-based guidance to policymakers by collaborating with policymakers and analyzing existing data, developing tools and resources for practitioners, designing effective professional development, developing high-quality curricula, and communicating the importance of high-quality prekindergarten to the public by advocating and sharing the benefits of prekindergarten education. Actively engaging in these areas,

researchers can significantly contribute to expanding access to high-quality prekindergarten programs and ultimately improve outcomes for young children.

Limitations

This study successfully achieved its purpose of identifying how parents and caregivers prepare their children for kindergarten and the support they provide during those early childhood experiences, as it relates to kindergarten readiness. These experiences and decisions provided more opportunities for parental perspectives to be incorporated into research studies, informing educators, administrators, and lawmakers about the beliefs surrounding kindergarten readiness. However, there were some limitations to this study.

First, data were collected from parents who enrolled their children in a charter school. The data revealed that the participants were adamant about sending their children to either a charter school or a private school; a public school was the last resort. Discussions on why participants preferred these types of schools over public schools centered on major focal points, including high academic performance, projections for college and professional success, and student experiences. This limitation has undoubtedly influenced the data collected, as participants considered charter schools to be the best educational option for their child to receive an exceptional elementary and middle school education, which increases their likelihood of excelling in the future. Future research can build upon this study by investigating other charter schools in urban educational settings or by comparing charter schools to public and/or private schools. This will allow the data to be more enriched with differences in location, curriculum, and school operations.

The next limitation is the COVID-19 pandemic, which impacted more than half of the participants' kindergarten experiences, whether their child’s kindergarten year was shut down due

to the pandemic or if their child experienced a hybrid method of online and in-person learning during their kindergarten year. This limitation of the pandemic could have a long-lasting impact on children's learning and how the school functions during this time. The shift from in-person learning to online learning definitely skewed how teachers implemented curriculum and eliminated the hands-on learning experience for students. This pandemic has altered the outcome of kindergarten for those involved, resulting in a difference in their developmental and educational experiences that will have a lasting impact on their academic careers. Future studies may choose to select participants who attended kindergarten specifically during the 2020-2021 school year and follow them throughout their elementary grades, seeking trends that would be different than before the pandemic. Some studies might choose participants whose children had no impact on their kindergarten experience as the pandemic ceased and schools started to operate as they normally would before the pandemic. Lastly, some studies might focus on children in their later educational years, but focus on students who experienced kindergarten during the pandemic and take a deeper dive into their post-pandemic academic experiences, such as looking at their third, fifth, and seventh grade experiences and noting the impact of the pandemic on later academic learning.

Another limitation is the timing of kindergarten attendance of the participants and their children. This study focused on participants who had children in kindergarten from the school years 2016-2017 through 2021-2022, meaning that during the time of this study, the participants' children were in grades third through seventh grade. This significantly impacted the data because the data collection was based on reflective information from each participant, with the caveat that a small fraction of these students experienced kindergarten with no restrictions or impacts from a global pandemic, while the majority did. Other studies can choose different school years

to focus on for kindergarten experiences or select participants whose child is currently in kindergarten to get a fresh perspective.

The last limitation of this study was the researcher-participant relationship. The researcher was the kindergarten teacher for five out of the eight children in this study. During data collection, the researcher knew specific experiences being discussed by participants because she encountered them with them and was an integral part of their experience. The relationships between these participants and the researcher did not skew the data or knowledge provided. Still, they facilitated the recruitment and interview processes, allowing all parties to speak more freely. This was particularly beneficial, as all participants shared what they wanted to share and answered all interview questions. For future studies, researchers can find participants they do not know, select a school they do not work at, or specifically ask for participants with whom they have never taught their child.

Recommendations for Future Research

For future research, the researcher recommends interviewing parents who did not send their children to preschool or pre-kindergarten and uncovering their kindergarten readiness and kindergarten schooling experiences. In this case, the researcher would recommend interviewing these parents during the kindergarten school year and possibly a few years later. This supports the research that states attending kindergarten has a high trajectory of future academic success. The next recommendation for future research is to look at the relationship between parent perspectives and kindergarten readiness within the dynamics of the different types of school charters, public, and private. Researching the different types of schools would support further investigation of the relationship between parent perspectives and kindergarten readiness by understanding the decisions parents make regarding their child's future academic success and/or

pre-kindergarten experience. This research would help support any existing research on parents and the types of schools they send their children to. Specifically, charter schools add more options and different models of schools to the system, which usually gives parents more choice (Fischler & Claybourn, 2023). “Charter schools are given more freedom than traditional public schools” (Fischler & Claybourn, 2023), which relates to the differences in curriculum, social-emotional learning, structural systems, and projected educational outcomes.

Another recommendation for future research would be to investigate the partnership between preschools and pre-kindergarten programs, focusing on their relationships, specifically examining the curriculum and structural logistics of K-12 schools. It would be interesting to see how these relationships coincide with each other and how they do not. The primary purpose is to assess the alignment of the institutional system between the two educational venues. Combined with the previous recommendation, the researcher would recommend researching the success of high-level preschool programs such as Head Start and comparing their successful transition of students into K-12 schools to understand the alignment that has been working for decades at hand. Specifically, looking at how they involve parents in their programs and how this involvement supports their students' success.

Lastly, the researcher recommends a study of social-emotional curricula and instruction within preschool and pre-kindergarten programs, specifically in urban education institutions. Students in an urban educational setting need more support with identifying their emotions, learning self-regulation, and self-soothing tools to support them best when they are having big feelings in a kindergarten setting. The researcher believes in their experience that many children, specifically African American children, need the most support in this. Looking into these

programs and curricula will support the social-emotional growth of young children who will be entering kindergarten, and make that transition smooth for them.

This chapter encompasses many thoughts, opinions, and beliefs from the researcher, as both an expert teacher and investigator. The findings of this study highlight the importance and potential for future improvement of parent perspectives regarding kindergarten readiness. The participants and researchers have enriched the literature with new insights and perspectives on the importance of preschool and pre-kindergarten learning and engagement in facilitating the transition to kindergarten for children. Emphasizing the importance of child development as a key factor in how children learn and grow. Having open communication with parents supports the research of parents being key stakeholders and partners with schools, which includes the support parents desire to feel connected to their children's school environment. Creating the space in preschool and pre-kindergarten settings to provide parents with the tools and strategies they need to support their children's social-emotional learning was a key focus within the data collection of this study. All of these together will bring more awareness to researchers and investigators to seek the opinions, beliefs, and understandings of the parents' perspective regarding kindergarten readiness.

Conclusion

Kindergarten marks a pivotal milestone in a child's development, and parents play a vital role in preparing their children for this transition. This study examined parental perspectives on kindergarten readiness to uncover their beliefs, understandings, and perspectives, and offered valuable insights often overlooked in research that tends to focus on educators' viewpoints (Hatcher et al., 2012; Izzo et al., 1999; Welchons & McIntyre, 2015; Wolf, 2020). Through qualitative analysis using ATLAS.ti, three major themes emerged: Critical Educational

Engagement, Pivotal Parental Experiences in Early Childhood Education, and Essential Social Emotional and Interaction Skills needed for Kindergarten Success, supported by five sub-themes: Building on Prior Knowledge: Learning as a Continuum, Meaningful Engagement Beyond the Classroom, Early Learning Foundations through Structured Environments, Engaged Communication: Building Trust through Dialogue, Holistic Engagement through Supportive Structures, and Emotional Engagement: Navigating the Transition Together. These themes reflected a comprehensive understanding of how parents perceived and contributed to their child's readiness for kindergarten.

Participants made it clear: fostering academic, social, and behavioral skills must begin early, and parents were not just participants in this process, but essential partners. Their candid reflections offer more than insight; they issue a call to action for educators to listen, learn, and lead with families at the center. By sharing their knowledge, parents encourage teachers, researchers, administrators, and experts to grow in their knowledge on how to support parents and children through these early educational years. Kindergarten readiness should be at the forefront of early educational planning, experiences, and academic structure to best support the academic success of all children. Kindergarten readiness and preparation must begin as early as the womb, remain consistent throughout the child's development, and be supported throughout the early childhood years.

The endeavors, sacrifices, and commitments that parents make for their children significantly impact their children's academic success and should be emphasized in research and literature on kindergarten readiness, as parents strive to prepare their children for their future. Parental engagement in early childhood isn't a supplement to readiness; it's the foundation. If we are serious about closing opportunity gaps and building inclusive, high-performing school

systems, we must start by valuing the voices of those who know children best: their parents. By elevating parental perspectives from the margins to the mainstream, educators and policymakers can transform not only kindergarten readiness but also the trajectory of a child's entire educational journey.

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Appendix A

Permission to Recruit

This is an informative letter describing a research study I, Alyssa Pinder (the researcher), am currently involved with as a doctoral student at Arcadia University. I am sending you this formal invitation inviting you to allow the researcher to recruit and interview parents/families of a child who has attended kindergarten between the school years of 2016-2017 and 2021-2022, from your institution, Wissahickon Charter School Awbury Campus, to be a part of this study.

The following is what will be stated to participants during the recruitment and interview stages of the study:

Purpose of the study: This qualitative study seeks to interview parents of elementary school aged students to find out their thoughts, ideas, and expectations about kindergarten readiness as it relates to their child. This study seeks to investigate kindergarten readiness through the lens of parent perspective.

Research Questions:

1. How do parents and caregivers view kindergarten readiness in Urban Education?
2. What are parents/caregivers doing to help support early childhood experiences related to kindergarten readiness?

Participation: Your participation in this research study is voluntary. The interview will be video and voice recorded via Zoom and then the audio will be transcribed into a written transcript. Once the written transcription is complete, the audio recording will be deleted. Interviews will be conducted by Alyssa Pinder, the researcher, and the only ones present for the interview will be you (the participant) and me (the researcher).

Confidentiality: Your identity will be kept confidential throughout the entire study. You will be identified as a participant number such as participant #1, participant #2, etc. Your confidentiality will be protected in compliance with Arcadia University's research using human participants policies, procedures, and safeguards.

Compensation: There will not be any compensation paid to participants as participation is strictly voluntary.

Each interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and your participation, please contact me via email at apinder@arcadia.edu.

I grant the researcher, Alyssa Pinder, permission to recruit and interview parents from the institution, Wissahickon Charter School Awbury Campus, for their research study.

Please write your name below to consent to this study.

My signature means that I agree to the above statement:

I do not grant the researcher, Alyssa Pinder, permission to recruit and interview parents from the institution, Wissahickon Charter School Awbury Campus, for their research study.

Please write your name below to consent to this study.

My signature means that I agree to the above statement:

Appendix B

Parent Information/Recruitment Letter

Dear Wissahickon Charter School (WCS), Awbury Campus parents,

Dean Kristi Littell, CEO, and Lower School Principal, Kate O'Shea, have graciously granted me permission to send this information letter about a research project in which I am currently involved.

I am currently a doctoral candidate at Arcadia University and am currently involved in a research study looking at kindergarten readiness through a parent or caregiver's perspective. For this research study, I will need to interview parents of students here at WCS to help me better understand what parents and caregivers believe kindergarten readiness really means.

The interview will be approximately 45-60 minutes long, and I will conduct the interviews via Zoom (video conference). I have designed open-ended questions that ask you to respond on the topic of kindergarten readiness, but there are no definitive right and wrong answers. The interviews will be recorded and then transcribed into written transcripts. The recordings will be deleted after they are transcribed. If you are chosen to participate, your identity will remain confidential during the acts of data collection, data analysis, and in the publication of my findings. All recordings and written transcriptions will be kept completely confidential. Participation is completely voluntary.

Your input, opinions and thoughts are valuable to the relation of kindergarten readiness, even though your child is no longer in kindergarten. I am seeking families whose child has attended WCS since Kindergarten from the years 2016-2017 through 2021-2022. If you are interested in participating, please complete this Willingness to Participate form and return by August 31, 2024 (If form does not work, please email the researcher at apinder@arcadia.edu). All responses will be delivered straight to the researcher where I will randomly select 8-10 people/families to interview. If selected, you will be given the opportunity to read, accept, and sign a participation consent form before proceeding with interviews. There will be other forms for you to complete such as a Demographic Questionnaire and Scheduling Sign Up. You, as the participant, will have the chance to select an interview time slot that is convenient for you.

I appreciate your consideration of my request. If you need any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Alyssa Pinder
Doctoral Candidate
Arcadia University
apinder@arcadia.edu

Appendix C

Willingness to Participate Form

The interview will be approximately 45-60 minutes long, and I will conduct the interviews via Zoom (video conference). I have designed open-ended questions that ask you to respond on the topic of kindergarten readiness, but there are no definitive right and wrong answers. The interviews will be recorded and then transcribed into written transcripts. The recordings will be deleted after they are transcribed. If you are chosen to participate, your identity will remain confidential during the acts of data collection, data analysis, and in the publication of my findings. All recordings and written transcriptions will be kept completely confidential. Participation is completely voluntary.

Your input, opinions and thoughts are valuable to the relation of kindergarten readiness, even though your child is no longer in kindergarten. I am seeking families whose child has attended WCS since Kindergarten from the years 2016-2017 through 2021-2022. Please complete this Willingness to Participate form and return by August 31, 2024. Once all willing participants have responded, I will randomly select 8-10 people/families to interview. If selected, you will be given the opportunity to read, accept, and sign a participation consent form before I proceed with interviews. You, as the participant, will have the chance to select an interview time slot that is convenient for you.

Write Your Name*_____

Your Child's Name*_____

What year did your child attend Kindergarten?* _____

I consent for the school to release this information to the researcher, Alyssa Pinder, for the purpose of this study.*

___ I agree

___ I disagree

Appendix D

Semi-Structured Informed Consent Form

Protocol Title: Parental Perspectives on Kindergarten Readiness

Principal Researcher: Alyssa C. Pinder, Arcadia University

215-913-4026, apinder@arcadia.edu

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a semi-structured interview for the research study, Parental Perspectives on Kindergarten Readiness. You qualify to take part in this research study because you had a child enrolled in Kindergarten at the selected school during the school years of 2016-2017 and 2021-2022. Your participation in this study will take two hours total and span between July 2024 - May 2025. If you consent to this study a Sign-up Genius link will be provided for you to choose an interview slot.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?

The purpose of this study will analyze parent perspectives through interviewing to interpret how kindergarten readiness and preparation is perceived and viewed by parents during their child's early childhood experiences. The goal is to develop an overall understanding and definition of kindergarten readiness from a parental perspective and how the early childhood experiences of parents shape their help and support to their children to prepare for kindergarten. The findings from this study may be useful to those that seek to improve the research on parental perspectives on how to prepare children for kindergarten. Analyzing different methods and strategies will support the importance of what kindergarten readiness is and how to better teach kindergarten skills before entering the kindergarten.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to participate in a semi-structured interview. During the semi-structured interview, the researcher will ask you to discuss your experience as a parent/guardian to discuss how you prepared your child for kindergarten for the selected school. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted using the online platform Zoom. Semi-structured interviews will be audio and video recorded and transcribed by Zoom. All recordings will be erased after they are transcribed by zoom and reviewed by the researcher. If you do not wish to be audio and video recorded, you will not be able to participate in this study. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted remotely using the platform Zoom that involves audio and video, the researcher will notify the participant when they plan to start and stop the recording. All recordings will be erased after they are transcribed. The interview will take

approximately sixty minutes. Arcadia University, the selected school and you will be given a pseudonym in order to keep identities confidential**.** The researcher will take necessary steps to ensure that potential identifying information about participants will be removed from all notes and transcripts. Participation or refusal to participate in this research study will not affect your relationship with the selected school or researcher. All recordings, data and interviews will be erased if you choose to withdraw from the study.

WHAT POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

This is a minimal risk study, which means the harms or discomforts that you may experience are not greater than you would ordinarily encounter in daily life while taking routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. However, there are some risks to consider. You might feel embarrassed to discuss problems or failures during the specific time of the experience that the researcher wants to talk about. You do not have to answer any questions or share anything you do not want to talk about. You can stop participating in the study at any time without penalty. All recordings, data and interviews will be erased if you choose to withdraw from the study.

The researcher is taking precautions to keep your information confidential and prevent anyone from discovering or guessing your identity, such as using a pseudonym instead of your name. The researcher will take necessary steps to ensure that potential identifying information about participants will be removed from all notes and transcripts. All recordings will be erased after they are transcribed.

DATA COLLECTION

This study will utilize sixty-minute semi-structured interviews with 8-10 participants. Interviews will be conducted remotely through Zoom that involves audio and video. A sign-up genius link will be provided to participants to be complete.

Participants only include a parent/guardian that had a child enrolled in Kindergarten at the selected school during the school years of 2016-2017 and 2021-2022.

WHAT POSSIBLE BENEFITS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The greatest benefit is reflecting on all the hard work the parents have put into their child(ren) and watching them flourish based off of their sacrifice. Another benefit could be how the interviews from these parents will help the research of answering some questions about the importance of preschool/pre-k programs and helping to define what kindergarten readiness is. Lastly, this study benefits the support of other children in the participants' households that can benefit from what has been taught or experienced with the first child.

WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY?

You will not be paid to participate. There are no costs to you for taking part in this study.

WHEN IS THE STUDY OVER? CAN I LEAVE THE STUDY BEFORE IT ENDS?

The study is over when you have completed the semi-structured interview and any follow-up questions. However, you can stop participating in the study at any time without penalty. All recordings, data and interviews will be erased if you choose to withdraw from the study.

PROTECTION OF YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY

The researcher will keep all written materials locked in a locked box. Any electronic or digital information (including audio and video recordings) will be stored on a computer that is password protected. What is on the recordings will be transcribed. All recordings will be erased after they are transcribed by the researcher.

There will be no record matching your real name with your pseudonym. The researcher will take necessary steps to ensure that potential identifying information about participants will be removed from all notes and transcripts. All recordings will be erased after they are transcribed.

HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED?

The results of this study will help to improve the research and define what kindergarten readiness is and how students can be prepared for kindergarten. The results of this study may also be published in journals and presented at academic conferences. In an effort to protect participant privacy, your identity will be removed from any data you provide before publication or use for educational purposes. Your name or any identifying information about you will not be published.

CONSENT FOR AUDIO AND VIDEO RECORDING

Audio and Video recording is part of this research study. The audio and video recording will be stored for 6 months after the interview and deleted at that time. If you decide that you don't wish to be recorded, you will not be able to participate in this research study.

____I give my consent to be recorded

____ I do not give my consent to be recorded

OPTIONAL CONSENT FOR FUTURE CONTACT

The researcher may wish to contact you in the future. This contact will be via email from the researcher.

The researcher may contact me in the future for other research opportunities:

____Yes ____No

The researcher may contact me in the future for information relating to this current study:

This contact will be via email from the researcher.

____Yes ____No

WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?

If you have any questions about taking part in this research study, you should contact the primary researcher, Alyssa C. Pinder, at 215-913-4026 or apinder@arcadia.edu. You can also contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Priscilla Jeter-Iles at JeterIlesp@arcadia.edu.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at:

2059 Church Rd., Glenside, PA 19038

267-620-4111

IRB_IACUC@arcadia.edu

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS

I have read the Informed Consent Form and have been offered the opportunity to discuss the form with the researcher.

I have had ample opportunity to ask questions about the purposes, procedures, risks, and benefits regarding this research study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw participation at any time without penalty.

I understand that my participation or refusal to participate in this research study will not affect my relationship with the selected school or researcher.

The researcher may withdraw me from the research at the researcher's professional discretion.

If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue my participation, the researcher will provide this information to me.

Any information derived from the research study that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.

Identifiers may be removed from the data. De-identified data may be used for future research studies or distributed to another researcher for future research without additional informed consent from you (the research participant or the research participant's representative).

I should receive a copy of the Informed Consent Form document.

Please write your name below to consent to this study.

My signature means that I agree to participate in this study:

_____

Appendix E

Scheduling Semi-Structured Interview Sign Up Form

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research study, Parental Perspectives on Kindergarten Readiness. I have received your consent to participate in this study.

The purpose of this study will analyze parent perspectives through interviewing to interpret how kindergarten readiness and preparation is perceived and viewed by parents during their child's early childhood experiences. The goal is to develop an overall understanding and definition of kindergarten readiness from a parental perspective and how the early childhood experiences of parents shape their help and support to their children to prepare for kindergarten. The findings from this study may be useful to those that seek to improve the research on parental perspectives on how to prepare children for kindergarten. Analyzing different methods and strategies will support the importance of what kindergarten readiness is and how to better teach kindergarten skills before entering the kindergarten.

Participation in this study is voluntary and will not provide compensation. You may refuse to participate or withdraw participation at any time without penalty. Participation or refusal to participate in this research study will not affect my relationship with the selected school or researcher.

Please select your preferred Interview Date and Time (Week 1)

___September 9th at 5:00 pm

___September 10th at 5:00 pm

___September 12th at 5:00 pm

___September 9th at 6:30 pm

___September 10th at 6:30 pm

___September 12th at 6:30 pm

___None of these dates or times work for me

Please select your preferred Interview Date and Time (Week 2)

___September 16th at 5:00 pm

___September 17th at 5:00 pm

___September 19th at 5:00 pm

___September 16th at 6:30 pm

___September 17th at 6:30 pm

___September 19th at 6:30 pm

___None of these dates and times work for me

Please select your preferred Interview Date and Time (Week 3)

___September 23rd at 5:00 pm

___September 24th at 5:00 pm

___September 26th at 5:00 pm

___September 23rd at 6:30 pm

___September 24th at 6:30 pm

___September 26th at 6:30 pm

___None of these dates and times work for me

Please select your preferred Interview Date and Time (Week 4)

___September 30th at 5:00 pm

___October 1st at 5:00 pm

___October 3rd at 5:00 pm

___September 30th at 6:30 pm

___October 1st at 6:30 pm

___October 3rd at 6:30 pm

Please select your preferred Interview Date and Time (Saturdays Only)

___September 21st at 11:00 am

___September 21st at 1:00 pm

___September 28th at 11:00 am

___September 28th at 1:00 pm

___None of these dates and times work for me

Appendix F

Participant Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your ethnicity?

    ____Black or African American

    ____White or Caucasian

    ____American Indian or Alaskan Native

    ____Asian

    ____Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

    Other:_____

2. What is your gender? ____Female _____Male _____Prefer not to say
3. Do you use pronouns? If so, what are they? ___She/her/hers____He/him/his ____They/them/theirs
4. What is your child(ren) ethnicity?

    ____Black or African American

    ____White or Caucasian

    ____American Indian or Alaskan Native

    ____Asian

    ____Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

    Other:_____

What is your child(ren) gender? ____Female_____Male _____Prefer not to say

How many children do you have enrolled in the selected school? _____

How old is your child(ren)? _____

Appendix G

Semi-Structured Interview

For the purpose of this study Arcadia University will be known as East University and the selected school, Wissahickon Charter School, Awbury Campus, will be known as Leaf Charter School in the dissertation.

Interview Date: _____
Time: _____
Location: _ZOOM___
Interview Length: 60 minutes
Participants: Families of children enrolled in Charter School from 2016-2017 and 2021-2022.
Participant Name: _____

Introduction

- Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I am interviewing you to gain understanding and knowledge of parental perspectives on how parents prepare their child(ren) for kindergarten. This study will help strengthen the why and how children are prepared for kindergarten. The success of this research can help in adding to the lack of research of parental perspectives on kindergarten readiness.
- There are no right or wrong answers to any of my questions, I am interested in your own experiences. Participation in this study is voluntary and your decision to participate, or not participate, will not affect your relationships with Arcadia University or the selected school. The interview should take approximately one hour depending on how much information you would like to share. With your permission, I would like to audio record the interview because I don't want to miss any of your comments. All responses will be kept confidential. This means that your de-identified interview responses will only be shared with research team members, and we will ensure that any information we include in our report does not identify you as the respondent. You may decline to answer any question or stop the interview at any time and for any reason. You may also want to answer a question without it being recorded. At any time if you should want the recorder to be turned off, please let me know.
- Participation or refusal to participate in this research study will not affect my relationship with the selected school or researcher.
- Are there any questions about what I have just explained?
- Your Participant Identification Number is _.
- May I turn on the Zoom recorder?

Demographics Questions (completed previously in Google Form)

- What is your ethnicity? (White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, or some other race)

- What is your gender?
- Do you use pronouns? If so, what are they?
- What is your children's Ethnicity? (White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, or some other race)
- What is your child's gender?
- How many children do you have enrolled in Leaf Charter School?
- How old are your children?

Interview Questions

Your experience as a kindergartener:

1. What does the term kindergarten readiness mean to you?
2. Did you attend kindergarten? Tell me about your experiences in kindergarten.
3. Can you give me three adjectives to describe what kindergarten is?
4. Can you tell me a story about your child's experience in Kindergarten?

Parental Choices

5. Did you have any parent education courses or have you read any books about preparing your child for kindergarten? If so, what did you read and what did you learn?
6. What were some things you did not do prior to your child entering kindergarten that you think you should have done?
7. What kind of preschool program did your child attend? If so, what was that experience like for you and your child? If not, what was the reason that drove that decision.
8. What influenced your decision to enroll your child in kindergarten at the selected school?

Parental Thoughts & Feelings

9. When your child was entering kindergarten, how did you feel? What excited you or made you nervous or apprehensive about the experience?
10. What are some specific skills and behaviors you think a child needs to enter kindergarten?
11. What skills did you expect your child to have after leaving kindergarten?
12. Looking back, would you do it again? Would you do it differently?

Final Question

13. In your opinion, how well did your child do in kindergarten? Why?

Debrief

- The purpose of this study will analyze parent perspectives through interviewing to interpret how kindergarten readiness and preparation is perceived and viewed by parents during their child's early childhood experiences. The goal is to develop an overall understanding and definition of kindergarten readiness from a parental perspective and how the early childhood experiences of parents shape their help and support to their children to prepare for kindergarten. The findings from this study may be useful to those that seek to improve the research on parental perspectives on how to prepare children for kindergarten. Analyzing different methods and strategies will support the importance of

what kindergarten readiness is and how to better teach kindergarten skills before entering kindergarten.

Closing

- I may need to contact you for further information, is it okay to email you?
- Thank you very much for your time and the information you shared today. I also want to remind you that you will be given a pseudonym in order to keep your identity confidential.

Appendix H

AP Research Permission



Kate O'Shea, Principal
Wissahickon Charter School
815 E Washington Lane
Philadelphia, PA 19138
oshea@wissahickoncharter.org
8-26-24

I am writing to formally grant permission to Alyssa Pinder, a PhD researcher from Arcadia University, to recruit and interview parents at Wissahickon Charter School for her research study. After reviewing the study's objectives and methodologies, we believe that this research will provide valuable insights that align with our school's mission and values.

Alyssa Pinder is authorized to approach parents at our school and conduct interviews as outlined in her research proposal. We have ensured that her study complies with all relevant ethical guidelines and respects the privacy and confidentiality of our students and their families.

Please feel free to contact me if you require any further information or have any questions regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Kate O'Shea
Principal
Wissahickon Charter School