

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN KINDERGARTEN ACHIEVEMENT AND
PRESCHOOL EXPERIENCE

By

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models of quality preschool programs were reported. In addition, kindergarten readiness was also discussed.

The purpose of the study was to determine whether students who attend the Medford district preschool program have a higher success rate in kindergarten academic skills at the completion of the first semester than students who do not attend the district preschool program. The hypothesis that was tested is that preschool experience is positively related to kindergarten achievement. The hypothesis was proven to be correct when referring to tables comparing percentages and averages between the Medford preschool attendees and non-Medford preschool attendees. Utilizing the chi-square format with a .05 confidence level, it was determined that there is a minimal statistical significance between preschool experience and kindergarten success in regards to the Medford preschool group and the control group.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Bredenkamp (cited in Lunenburg, 2000) stated that the first of eight education goals established by The Goals 2000: Education America Act of 1994 and the position statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children provide evidence of the belief in the importance of early childhood education. Currently, government funding is supporting research about the kinds of programs that are the most beneficial for the early childhood years (Lord, 1999). Lord's (1999) article also stated that a Washington-based advocacy group noted that twenty-one states funded preschool programs.

One of the themes of the 2000 elections was educational reform. One candidate felt that educational improvement needed more teacher accountability and that test scores should be the determining factor of quality education. The other candidate wanted to put more money toward early education programs and tax deductions for families that are putting their children through college. Each candidate promised these educational reforms if elected. What is the best answer for a quality education? An article published by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (Cotton & Conklin, n.d., n.p.) stated that an increased interest in structured early education programs has strengthened the belief that "education is a race to be won and those who start first are more likely to finish ahead."

The qualifications necessary to become a teacher have increased and teachers are increasingly held accountable for students' performance on standardized tests. The requirements and recommendations found in state standards have increased, which puts teachers in a position to push students to achieve tasks that they may not be developmentally ready to master. The increased emphasis on testing appears to have resulted in a parallel emphasis on higher but oftentimes unrealistic expectations for student achievement. The assumption that more money produces better schools has been criticized. Teacher education has also come under scrutiny.

Due to the rise in educational standards, kindergarten enrollment has become increasingly common over the past 10 years. "Kindergarten is nearly a universal experience for children in the United States, with 98% of all children attending kindergarten prior to entering first grade (Zill, Collins, & West, & Germino Hauskin, 1995, n.p.). Full-time kindergarten has become popular, partially due to pressure to achieve the competencies needed for first grade. Teachers have reported that part-time kindergarten was not sufficient to fit in all the skills needed so children can move on to first grade and be successful. "Kindergarten, alas, is ceasing to be kindergarten. It is becoming first grade and more. Recent studies in the Washington Post make kindergarten sound less like a children's garden and more like boot camp" (Bracey, 2000, p. 712). Parents want developmentally appropriate practices that allow children to be children. School districts encourage sending children to school when they are five years old no

matter what their maturity level or skills. “When a child turns five, they are the schools’ responsibility and they are ‘our’ children,” say school districts. Is it any wonder why one of the presidential candidates promised money for quality early education programs with the recent increase in full-time kindergarten and the rise in kindergarten enrollment?

The next concern is if early education programs make a difference in students’ kindergarten performance. Do children who attend “quality” education programs benefit in kindergarten and their early educational years? Lunenburg (2000) stated that interest in children’s younger years has mushroomed as studies have shown that appropriate programs for young children can make a difference in the academic, economic, and social arenas. There is also evidence that neurological connections need to be made in the early years or the window of opportunity closes (Jones, 1999). Most research on early intervention has concluded that preschool is beneficial, however, Horn (2000) feels that preschool is not essential for kindergarten success as long as the children are coming from a supportive and enriched home setting. However, some question whether a home with both parents working can be supportive and enriching enough for the challenges of kindergarten.

The purpose of this research was to look at the benefits a child receives by attending an early education program in an educational setting. It is important for children to have a good start because, as stated by Jencks (cited in Entwisle,

1995), a child's learning rate in first grade is about ten times what it is in high school.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine whether students who have attended the Medford School District preschool program have a higher success rate in kindergarten academic skills upon completion of the first semester than students who did not attend the Medford School District preschool program.

Hypothesis

Students who attend the district preschool program prior to kindergarten will score higher on kindergarten academic skills than do students without the district preschool program as measured by kindergarten progress reports completed by their kindergarten teachers at the conclusion of the first semester.

Definition of Terms

The terms listed below will clarify any misunderstandings within the study:

Full-time kindergarten- children attend kindergarten in an elementary school five days a week for five to seven hours a day.

Preschool program- (also referred to as early education programs) children attend an educational program four days a week, with a minimum of three hours a day and are taught by a licensed teacher.

Quality – throughout the paper quality will be used and defined as programs containing school and family partnerships, well-trained staff, continuity and promotes social and academic skills.

Readiness- children’s general social and intellectual preparedness for school.

Assumptions

There were several assumptions pertinent to this research. The researcher assumed that each kindergarten teacher objectively evaluate each student’s academic progress and was not influenced by whether or not students attended the district preschool program. It was assumed that the Medford kindergarten teachers use the same criteria to evaluate each student’s level of criteria when completing the records of assessment.

Limitations

The researcher identified some limitations:

1. There are other factors beyond preschool experience that affects academic success. Children’s school success is affected by parental views on education, parental participation, and social-economic status. These factors cannot be controlled in this study.

2. The study consisted of students that attended the school district that the researcher chose. The dynamics of the area in regards with size and geographic location played a factor in the results of the study.

3. The size of the population that was included in the study hindered generalization to larger or smaller schools and therefore the results are not generalizable.

4. The comparison of the two groups was not significant due to the fact that students that did not attend the Medford preschool program may have attended a different quality preschool program prior to his/her kindergarten experience, however it was not reported as such.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter will define kindergarten “readiness” and discuss the areas of development in which children need to be ready for kindergarten. Characteristics of “quality” preschool programs capable of long-term effects on students will be described. Exemplary programs will be reviewed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the benefits of quality preschool programs.

Kindergarten Readiness

Ever since the National Education Goals Panel established as its first goal that ‘By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn’ (Kelly, 1999, p. 5) educators have been struggling to define readiness. Defining “readiness” has been difficult due to the variety of early education programs offered and the diversity of children attending preschool programs. “Kindergarten readiness is not a function of chronological age, but of developmental readiness” (Kindergarten readiness, n.d., n.p.). A student’s readiness for kindergarten has been questioned throughout the years due to the lack of agreement regarding characteristics that teachers, parents, and states expect kindergarten students to possess when entering school. Nurss (1987) defined school readiness as preparation for what comes next, which would not just include the student, but also the instructional situation. In an article written

by Katz (1991), readiness was broken down into two different areas: social and intellectual.

Social readiness is facilitated by children having a positive outlook on experiences they have had outside the home and with non-familiar people. The ability to engage in successful social interactions is also a way for children to demonstrate social readiness. Turn taking, a willingness to try unfamiliar things with new peers, as well as making compromises are all skills that help children transition into kindergarten easily and prepares them to learn new skills.

Intellectual readiness relates to children feeling confident in their ability to use and understand language while at school. The ability to relate to new ideas and topics also demonstrate students' intellectual readiness for school as well. Gaining intellectual and social readiness warrants a curriculum that places emphasis on informal work and play, a wide variety of activities related to the child, ample opportunity to apply emerging skills in meaningful contexts, and a wide variety of teaching methods (Katz, 1991).

Kindergarten Success

Kindergarten entry is a transitional time for children. They are expected to have some prior academic readiness such as, being able to count, label colors, and state personal information. Socially they need to be able to interact appropriately with others, as well as carry on conversations with adults. Writing their name and drawing recognizable pictures are skills kindergarten teachers feel are necessary, along with some motor skills such as jumping, hopping, and

skipping. As stated in the Goals 2000: Education America Act of 1994, “all children will start school ready to learn” (Lunenborg, 2000, n.p.). Many kindergarten teachers assume that children have had prior experiences with academic and social skills. The time when kindergarten’s main focus was the development of children’s social skills has come and gone. There are many things that children must do to prepare themselves for the world of full-time school. Creating a self-image as a student and discovering the norms and mores of school, as well as learning how to get along with peers and authoritarian figures, are just a few of these things required (Entwisle, 1995). The ability to know when to apply strategies for being successful in achieving skills is all included in becoming a successful student (Entwisle, 1995). If a child is able to achieve these goals, he/she will be better able to make the transition to kindergarten and accomplish set standards.

Characteristics of Quality Preschools

Quality preschool programs prepare children for kindergarten. Many professionals have defined what a “quality” preschool program should contain. Jones (1999) stated that only 14% of early childhood education programs are high quality.

Throughout the research there were characteristics that overlapped in many of the studies and articles. Increasing parental involvement by empowering, forming partnerships, and giving parents information as well as expecting their participation was stated in a variety of articles and studies

(Schweinhart, 1994; Allen, Weiss, & Weiss R., n.d.; Frede, 1995). Another characteristic listed in many of the articles and studies is teacher in-service training, which would include training on updated research about how children learn and different program models (Schweinhart, 1994; Cotton & Conklin, n.d.). Numerous studies included a strong language enriched program to be beneficial in facilitating a quality preschool program (Allen, Weiss, & Weiss R, n.d.; Cotton and Conklin, n.d.). Studies from Allen, Weiss, & Weiss R. (n.d.) and Frede (1995) stated that program continuity through grade levels play an important factor in program success. Finally, a consistent characteristic listed in a variety of research is an appropriate proportional teacher/student ratio for early childhood students (Frede, 1995; Cotton & Conklin, n.d.). Professors from New York University also stated that creating parent partnerships, promoting academic and social competence proved to be important factors in high quality four year-old programs (Allen, Weiss, & Weiss R., n.d.). Consistent routines provided children with “scripts” which increased learning of new information. Students did not have to concern themselves with organizing each activity or thought if the routine stayed consistent (Frede, 1995). Frede (1995) reviewed a study that was conducted to show preschool experience effectiveness. The review included the aspects that were studied to ensure the quality of the program. Teachers’ ability to reflect on their work, program intensity and duration, in addition to traditional curriculum content, were all stated in the article as important factors to successful early education programs. Frede (1995) reinforced the above characteristics by

stating that programs were influenced by program structure, which consisted of student/teacher ratio and class size. The process in which teachers responded to individual needs and curriculum that facilitated a positive connection in the transition from school to home also played a factor in program reliability.

In summary, parental participation and involvement, a strong language base program, teacher in-servicing, and an appropriate teacher/student ratio are key elements that need to be included in quality preschool program.

A program, Bright Beginnings, was started to demonstrate the effectiveness of preschool programs and the benefits. Bright Beginnings is a program that was started in North Carolina to help prepare their younger population for kindergarten and beyond. The program contained characteristics of a quality preschool program by emphasizing literacy, language development, and reaching students who may not otherwise learn the basics needed for a successful kindergarten experience. The article stated that the school district already sees the gap closing on their goal, which is 85% of third graders reading on or above grade level (McClure, 2000). Some examples of the results are as follows: for decoding/word recognition participants scored 33.0 whereas non-participants scored 29.44. In the area of literacy, 66.1% of Bright Beginning's students' performed at or above grade level with their counterparts only having 53.1% performing at grade level. Even though parent participation was not a goal, it became an added benefit to the Bright Beginning's Program.

Preschool Program Models

While professionals agree on many of the characteristics of “quality” early education programs they disagree on the most appropriate program models. Lubeck (1990) proposed that three models of preschool programs benefit children: traditional, academic, and hybrid.

The traditional approach consists of a part day program emphasizing self paced learning in an environment that is carefully planned out. The teacher takes an indirect approach to teaching and there is emphasis on developmentally appropriate activities. A Montessori classroom would be an example of this program model.

Geared more towards at risk children, the academic preschool model is teacher directed with clear goals and expectations. Structure and academic readiness is emphasized. The daily classroom routine would be filled with teacher directed activities and limited time for children to explore the classroom environment and materials or learn through play and peers. Children in this setting would learn the teachers “set of truths” when learning new ideas and concepts.

The hybrid form connects the two programs with a mixture of unstructured and structured activities to help children gain desired skills. The environment would be set up for children to explore and learn independently and through others during play. Certain times of the day would include teacher

directed activities, but students input and points of view would be part of the activities.

It is difficult to determine which of the above three models is most effective because of the variety of children's learning styles. Being able to determine when and with what type of students to use a particular model would appear to be the most beneficial with students.

Programs that have relied on changing parents and having the changes trickle down to the child have not been successful, due to the above statement, it was suggested that programs should not rely heavily on parents changing in hopes that children will make the same changes (Gomby et al., 1995).

"Success for All" based out of Baltimore, is another model for high quality preschool programs. The program was designed for elementary students that have a difficult time learning concepts, however; "Success for All" has expanded to early childhood and kindergarten programs with a list of characteristics that coincide with characteristics of a quality preschool program. The curriculum emphasizes language and a mix of academic readiness and music, art, and movement to help children learn. The program includes parental development, program facilitators, and teacher training. Instruction consisted of one on one tutoring and phonics along with an assessment every eight weeks. The preschool aspect of the model had a heavy emphasis on language using integrated thematic units, STAR (students retell stories read by the teacher), and the Peabody Language Development Kit. Reading achievements have been the

most prevalent successes. The principles of the program are prevention and immediate, intensive intervention (Slavin & Madden, 1994). It was reported that, compared with the controlled counterparts, an increase of $+0.34$ was found in first graders (Slavin & Madden, 1994).

The High-Scope Curriculum and Head Start programs have also been used as examples of a high quality programs. The High-Scope Curriculum and Head Start Program was designed to help at-risk students prior to kindergarten and each program has specific requirements. Head Start Programs receive federal funding if the requirements are implemented and recorded. Head Start has been a beneficial program for qualifying families (economical status) since 1975. The High Scope Curriculum has not been as widely used or implemented in Wisconsin.

Benefits of Preschool

There are positive benefits schools and students gain by being enrolled in a quality preschool program prior to kindergarten.

Because attending preschool boosts children's performance, even temporarily, it can ease their transition into first grade and reduce their exposure to negative tracking by the school and to low expectations on the part of their parents and teachers. The link between preschool and first grade is key to understanding and explaining the long-term effects of preschool. (Entwisle, 1995, n.p.)

Numerous studies have demonstrated that children who attend preschool score higher on standardized math and reading tests. Maraschiello (1978) found that higher reading and mathematic achievements were noted from students who had preschool experience.

Studies have found that good preschool programs benefit schools and children. This is achieved in the following by cutting later special education placement rates in half, reducing retention rates, lasting achievement test scores through fifth grade, and preschool experience improving motivation and behavior during elementary school (Austin Independent School District, 1984). A study done in 1992 to determine the effects of preschool programs and determine whether the program prevents later school problems acquired information by individual testing of the students, teacher ratings of the students, and school records. The study showed significant results in all areas of development in favor of preschool programs (Seawell & Ross, 1992). Nieman and Gastright (1975) presented evidence of higher performance levels in the areas of I.Q. scores, readiness, and achievement at the end of kindergarten, first, and second grades for students who had spent time in a preschool program. They reported that the relationship existed independent of a wide range of teaching styles, materials, and methodologies. Five different standardized tests and four years of observations were used to determine the findings. Programs like “Success for All” reduces students receiving special education services because assistance is given before special education is suggested (Slavine and Maddem, 1994).

In Cotton and Conklin's (n.d.) article, researchers stated that the majority of differences between preschoolers and non-preschoolers disappear by the middle of the primary years. A study by Warden (1998) concluded, "Developmental preschool serves as an early intervention strategy resulting in improved school readiness skills and kindergarten achievement." The study tested two control groups and two experimental groups. The results found significant differences in kindergarten readiness and achievement between children who attended and did not attend preschool. The study chose to test kindergarteners in order to compare academic levels of preschoolers and students who had not attended preschool.

Another study had two experimental groups consisting of kindergarteners that had attended preschool and two control groups, which had no preschool experience. The control group's academic performance was not as positive as the experimental group. The findings concluded that preschool experience benefited the students in the areas of mathematic performance, readiness skills, and overall achievement (Perry, 1999).

Bronson et.al. (cited in Cotton & Conklin, n.d.) stated that the kindergarteners who had attended preschool demonstrated better task completion and more cooperative interaction with peers. Longitudinal studies from the Cotton and Conklin's (n.d.) article have followed early education students into adulthood and found significant benefits. Fewer referrals for remedial classes or special education, less failing class grades, greater social and emotional maturity,

and more frequent high school graduation completion are all results found from the study. It was also noted that preschool graduates have greater academic motivation, on-task behavior, a greater capacity for independent work, and time spent on homework. Lower incidence of absenteeism/detention, better attitudes toward school, and a better self-esteem were seen in the upper grades of previous early education students. In addition to the above list, lower incidence of unplanned pregnancy, drug abuse and delinquent acts, more sports participation and higher future aspirations, and more post-secondary education seem to be the benefits of preschool attendees up to high school graduation. Once out of school, Cotton and Conklin (n.d.) wrote that the benefits are higher employment rates and better earning with lower incidence of dependence on welfare, fewer arrests, and better relationships with family members.

In comparing early childhood attendees and non-attendees through their parental years, the attendees displayed better attitudes toward their children's schooling, higher expectations for their children's learning and more contact between teacher and parent (Cotton & Conklin, n.d., n.p.).

Gomby et.al. (1995) stated that preschool could improve the way children think and reason, which enables them to learn more in elementary school. The cycle is a continuum in which learning accumulates and success occurs frequently. The continuum included parental and teacher support, which helps the child increase his/her confidence in self and learning. Cotton and Conklin's (n.d.) report also stated that students with preschool experience had lower retention

rates and a higher senior high school graduation rates. In an evaluation based on three studies that followed 192 preschool attendees through adolescence, Colton & Conklin found that 66% who had no retentions and graduated from high school were employed. This was compared to 41% who had not attended preschool (Entwisle, 1995). Of seventh graders, 14% of early education experienced children compared to 35% of non-early childhood students had been retained or received special education services was the conclusion of another study reported in Entwisle's (1995) article.

Schools also reap the benefits of early education programs. In an article written by Schweinhart (1994), a study done in 1993 proved that cost and benefits to schools discounted annually at 3% and also returned a large amount of money back to the taxpayers. The sources of saving came from the reduced need for special education services once a children was in kindergarten, savings in welfare assistance, and lower criminal rates which saved the community money. "Would schools rather spend money on special education classes, or on preventing kids from ever needing special education classes? It seems to me obvious. It's vastly cheaper and ultimately better to deal with a problem right off the bat" (Jones, 1999, p.10).

Cotton & Conklin (n.d., n.p.) summed up the above listed long term effects well be stating, "The general theme of these models is that good early experiences can set in motion a chain of events that pervades the child's life

through high school and beyond, increasing the quality of his/her life experiences along the way.”

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the importance of early childhood programs due to the expectations of kindergarten. The chapter touched on the fact that preschool programs have become necessary for children to prepare for kindergarten and have appropriate kindergarten “readiness” skills. In addition to the characteristics of a quality preschool program, different program models such as Head Start and the traditional model were also researched. Finally, research was reviewed that provided evidence that “quality” preschool programs provide lasting effects to students, parents and communities.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

This was a descriptive study to determine the effects of preschool attendance on students' kindergarten achievement. This chapter contains a description of the subjects, the instrument, the procedures, and the data analysis used.

Subjects

The school district in which this study occurred consisted of a large, rural, primarily Caucasian population. This study compared kindergarten achievement of students who received and did not receive preschool services within the Medford School District during the 1999-2000 school year. Students that moved into the district during the study or during their kindergarten year or received other early childhood services were categorized in the control group.

Selection of Sample

The selection of sample was taken from a small five-track school system. The sample consisted of all kindergarten students. The survey results remain confidential. The treatment group consisted of 51 kindergarten students who attended the district preschool. The other 58 kindergarten students served as the control group.

Instrumentation

The researcher used the Medford School District Record of Assessment sheets. The assessment was developed by the Medford School District with input from the kindergarten staff, the district reading specialist, and the curriculum director from the Medford District ten years ago. The assessment is reviewed each year by the reading specialist and kindergarten staff. State standards are considered during the review. Changes are made according to curriculum updates and state standard revisions. The assessment is broken into seven developmental academic areas. In the areas of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and phonological awareness students skill level rating can range from one to four, one being pre-emergent, two equaling emergent, three representing early developmental skills, and four being fluent. Spelling and print concepts/alphabetic principles are categorized by pre-communication, scribbling, semi-phonetic, phonetic, transitional, and conventional; the number line going from one to six respectively. Each category has a description of skills at that level. For example, the pre-emergent level is described as pre-emergent readers being able to listen to stories, to tell about pictures and pretend to be reading. They also should be able to recognize their name, turn pages when a story is read aloud and recognize familiar signs in their environment. The assessment is conducted at the end of the first semester and at the end of the second semester. Kindergarten teachers are directed to mark a “J” (January) on the number line to represent first semester skill level achievement and an “M” (May) second semester achievement.

Only first semester assessment data were used in this study. There are five kindergarten teachers in Medford. Students are randomly assigned to a kindergarten teacher. The treatment and control group students were evenly distributed among the kindergarten teacher's.

Data Collection Procedure

On October 30, 2001, the researcher received verbal and written permission from the participating school district to obtain and confidentially utilize assessment records for the study.

The researcher obtained a list of preschoolers from the 1999-2000 school year. The researcher collected the record of assessment sheets on the students from the preschool and kindergarten class lists, then the files were separated into two groups: Medford preschool attendees and non-Medford preschool attendees. Each student was randomly assigned a number to assure confidentiality. The researcher reviewed the reports and recorded the students' score for each developmental area onto a spreadsheet.

Data Analysis Procedure

All appropriate descriptive statistical data were utilized. The researcher determined the number and percentage of students at each skill level in each developmental area for both groups. Scores were also averaged for each child, developmental area, and both groups. A chi-square test was utilized to determine whether there was a significant difference between the treatment and control group. The chi-squared analysis was used to determine if the hypothesis,

Medford preschool students have significant academic achievement than non-Medford preschoolers according to the kindergarten record of assessment, is correct.

Limitations

Due to the fact that the study was performed in only one school district, the results are not generalizable to other school districts.

During the 1999-2000 school year, the Medford Preschool Program was not available to all preschool age children. It is reported that students with minimal exposure to peers, social programs, and considered “at-risk” were targeted for the Medford Preschool Program. This may have affected the developmental level of the students before and during kindergarten enrollment.

Student achievement was measured at the end of the first semester of kindergarten. It cannot be determined by this data whether the gains will be maintained or whether there will continue to be differences in achievement between the treatment and control group.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results And Discussion**Introduction**

In this chapter, results from the research regarding kindergarten achievement and preschool experience is reviewed. The chapter focuses on data collected from Medford preschool attendees and non-Medford preschool attendees. The tables will include information regarding the number and percentages of students at each skill level for each developmental area, developmental and group averages, and chi-square test results. A discussion of the results will follow each table.

Distribution Of Students By Developmental Levels In Each Skill Area

Table 1
Reading

		<i>Preschool Attendees</i>		<i>Non-Preschool Attendees</i>	
Pre-emergent	1	14	27.4%	20	34.4%
Emergent	2	29	56.8%	32	55%
Early Development	3	8	15.7%	6	10%
Fluent	4	0		0	
Total no. of students		51		58	

The information from the above table shows that the majority of students scored at the emergent level. Even though the difference is not considerably higher, more preschool attendees scored at the emergent level than non-preschool attendees. It is noted that the non-preschool attendees had a higher percentage of students at the pre-emergent level than the preschool attendees.

Table 2
Writing

	<i>Preschool Attendees</i>			<i>Non-Preschool Attendees</i>	
Pre-emergent	1	14	27.40%	26	44.70%
Emergent	2	36	70.60%	31	53.30%
Early Development	3	1	1.96%	1	1.72%
Fluent	4	0		0	
Total no. of students		51		58	

A considerably higher percentage of preschool attendees scored at the emergent level in the area of writing in comparison to non-preschool attendees. As in reading, a higher percentage of non-preschool attendees scored at the pre-emergent level than the pre-school attendees. According to the data, there were none of the students were considered fluent in the area of writing.

Table 3
Speaking

	<i>Preschool Attendees</i>			<i>Non-Preschool Attendees</i>	
Pre-emergent	1	2	3.92%	6	10.30%
Emergent	2	14	27.40%	28	48.20%
Early Development	3	31	60.80%	22	37.80%
Fluent	4	4	7.84%	2	3.40%
Total no. of students		51		58	

In the area of speaking, the majority of preschool attendees were at the early development stage. A majority of the non-preschool attendees scored at the emergent level. It is also noted that a larger percentage of preschool attendees scored at the fluent level than non-preschool attendees. The difference may be due to the socialization that occurs within a preschool classroom and one of the characteristics of a quality preschool program is promoting socialization and peer interaction skills.

Table 4
Listening

	<i>Preschool Attendees</i>			<i>Non-Preschool Attendees</i>	
Pre-emergent	1	4	7.84%	8	13.76%
Emergent	2	18	35.3%	27	46.4%
Early Development	3	25	49%	19	32.7%
Fluent	4	4	7.8%	4	6.9%
Total no. of students		51		58	

Listening appears to be a strong area for preschool attendees in comparison to non-preschool attendees. At the level of early emergent, 49% of the preschool attendees scored whereas only 32.7% of the non-preschool attendees scored at the early emergent level. The difference in this area may be due an emphasis on following directions and teacher directed activities that occur within the preschool setting.

Table 5
Phonological Awareness

	<i>Preschool Attendees</i>			<i>Non-Preschool Attendees</i>	
Pre-emergent	1	7	13.70%	4	6.90%
Emergent	2	13	25.50%	29	49.90%
Early Development	3	23	45%	18	31%
Fluent	4	8	15.70%	7	12%
Total no. of students		51		58	

Phonological awareness is categorized by a students' ability to discriminate, recognize, and produce rhyming, clapping words in a sentence and syllables in a word, and count the number of sounds in words. According to the data, the majority of preschool attendees achieve skills within the early development level. A higher percentage of non-preschool attendees scored at the emergent level in the area of phonological awareness.

Table 6
Spelling

	<i>Preschool Attendees</i>			<i>Non-Preschool Attendees</i>	
Pre-communication	1	1	1.96%	2	3.40%
Scribbling	2	12	23.50%	17	29.20%
Semi-phonetic	3	29	56.80%	29	49.90%
Phonic	4	7	13.70%	9	15.50%
Transitional	5	2	3.90%	1	1.72%
Conventional	6	0		0	
Total no. of students		51		58	

Within the area of spelling, a higher percentage for preschool attendees and non-preschool attendees scored at the semi-phonetic level which entails the ability to use both upper and lower case letters, select spellings that match sounds and correctly spell words they know. It is interesting to note that the smallest percentage for the preschool attendees was in the pre-communication stage, however, the smallest percentage for the non-preschool attendees was in the area of transitional.

Table 7
Print Concept

	<i>Preschool Attendees</i>			<i>Non-Preschool Attendees</i>	
Pre-communication	1	1	1.96%	0	0%
Scribbling	2	0	0%	4	6.90%
Semi-phonetic	3	10	19.60%	6	10.30%
Phonic	4	27	52.96%	34	58.50%
Transitional	5	10	19.60%	10	17.20%
Conventional	6	3	5.90%	4	6.90%
Total no. of students		51		58	

The data from this table shows the largest percentage for the preschool attendees and non-preschool attendees is at the phonic range. Recognizing core words, giving most letter names/sounds and giving the first sound in word at elements within the phonic level. This table also shows that there were a higher

percentage of non-preschool attendees at the conventional level than the preschool group.

**Distribution of Averages in Each Developmental Area for Preschool and
Non-preschool Attendees**

Table 8

	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Writing</i>	<i>Speaking</i>	<i>Listening</i>	<i>Phonological awareness</i>	<i>Spelling</i>	<i>Print Concepts</i>	<i>Total</i>
Preschool attendees	2	1.82	2.82	2.71	2.78	3.13	4.26	2.79
Non-preschool attendees	1.99	1.78	2.5	2.53	2.74	3.06	4.22	2.69

According to the data analysis, the Medford preschool attendees scored a higher average (2.79) overall than the non-Medford preschool attendees (2.69). Within each developmental area, the preschool attendees scored higher in all areas: reading, writing, speaking, listening, phonological awareness, spelling and print concepts. In reference to the above table, it appears that preschool experience plays a factor in kindergarten achievement according to the district records of assessment.

Total Number of Points Accumulated within Each Area for Each Group

Table 9

	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Writing</i>	<i>Speaking</i>	<i>Listening</i>	<i>Phonological Awareness</i>	<i>Spelling</i>	<i>Print Concept</i>	<i>Total</i>
Preschool Attendees	102 (103.9)	93 (94.5)	144 (137.9)	138 (135.9)	142 (143.6)	160 (161.2)	218 (221)	997
Non-Preschool Attendees	116 (114)	103 (102.5)	145 (151.1)	147 (149.1)	159 (157.4)	178 (176.7)	245 (242.1)	1093
Total	218	196	289	285	301	338	463	2088

$$X^2(6, N=2088) = 12.592, p > .05$$

Setting the confidence level at .05 with six degrees of freedom, a chi-square significant level of 12.592 must be reached in order for a significant relationship to be assumed. Comparison of the two groups resulted in a chi-square of .8, which is not statistically significant. The data shows that there is not a significant relationship in students' academic performance between students who attended the Medford preschool program and the control group.

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary, Conclusion, And Recommendations

Introduction

This final chapter contains a review of the study on the relationship between kindergarten achievement and preschool experience. This chapter summarizes the purpose of the study, methods and procedures followed, and the data analysis used. Results of the study are reviewed, and conclusions are stated. Educational application, research limitations, and recommendations for further study conclude the chapter.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate a possible link between kindergarten achievement and preschool experience. The Medford School District Records of Assessment were examined to determine achievement of kindergarteners that had been enrolled in the district preschool program and kindergarteners that had not been enrolled in the district preschool. The rubric is categorized into seven developmental areas. Reading, writing, speaking, listening, and phonological awareness are rated from one to four: pre-emergent, emergent, early, and fluent. Spelling and print concept are rated from one to six: pre-communication, scribbling, semi-phonetic, phonetic, transitional, and conventional. Students' scores were recorded and analyzed individually and within each developmental area. The total average mean for each group was used in determining which group had a higher achievement level in January 2000.

Percentages in each developmental area for each group were also analyzed. A chi-square analysis resulted in minimal significance between the two groups.

Results and Conclusions

Upon review of the tables listing distribution of percentages (table 8), it was determined that the Medford preschool experienced group scored a higher total average than the non-Medford preschool group. Within each developmental area, Medford preschool attendees also averaged higher than non-Medford preschool attendees. In most areas the difference is minimal.

The chi-square test showed that there is not a significant relationship between preschool experience and kindergarten academic success when referring to the Medford Records of Assessment as a data source. Support can be generated for the theory that children with quality preschool experience have higher kindergarten achievement than children without quality preschool experience when referencing the percentage tables. The discrepancies from the chi-square test and percentage tables may have occurred due to the non-preschool group containing students that may have attended a preschool program other than the Medford preschool program.

The study shows that students who attend the Medford Preschool Program prior to kindergarten score higher on the District's Record of Assessment than do students without the district preschool program as measured by kindergarten Records of Assessment completed by the kindergarten teachers in January of 2000.

According to the research done for this thesis, the Medford Preschool Program contains the characteristics of a quality preschool program. It is interesting to note that the average was higher for the Medford preschool attendees even though students within the control group may have attended a preschool program outside of the Medford District program.

The results of the study confirm the hypothesis that students who attend a quality preschool program prior to kindergarten will score higher on kindergarten academic achievement skills than do students without a prior quality early education program as measured by kindergarten records of assessment at the end of the first semester.

This study also supports the studies that were conducted by Warden (1998) and Perry (1999) in which kindergarteners academic skills were tested. The studies performed by Warden and Perry consisted of preschool attendees and non-preschool attended. The studies showed that preschool attendees achieved higher academic skills than non-preschool attendees.

Educational Application

The study was beneficial in demonstrating that even though the preschool experienced group averaged higher overall, the average was not considerably higher than the control group. This shows that preschool experience is beneficial, however, other factors may play a factor in kindergarten achievement. As stated above, the students in the control group may have attended a preschool program

outside the district program that have the characteristics of a quality preschool program.

The study showed that overall, the Medford Preschool attendees averaged in the emergent to early developmental stages in all areas on the record of assessment rubric (table 8). The non-Medford preschool attendees scored just a bit lower than emergent on reading and writing. An emergent level was achieved in all other areas for the non-Medford Preschool group.

When looking at individual students (appendix), the majority of Medford preschool children appear to have slightly higher levels of development in all of the developmental areas than the non-Medford preschool attendees.

The information gained from this study will show the Medford preschool teachers that overall students gain necessary skills in preschool to succeed in kindergarten. The format of the spreadsheet (appendix) for the study also presented areas in which the Medford preschool program can improve.

According to the data, students' reading and writing skills were the lowest. The Medford preschool program can improve the program by emphasizing more pre-reading and pre-writing skills within the curriculum.

Limitations of the Study

As with any study, there are limiting factors to be considered when evaluation the information presented. This study was done in a small rural community.

The effect that a teacher has on the learner and learning environment during the first semester may have been a determining factor on the achievement level of students in each group. Prior kindergarten experience may be another determining factor in a child's achievement level.

Another limitation that was not researched in this study is an analysis of academic skills prior to kindergarten for each student.

As stated in chapter two, parent participation and attitude toward school can play a factor in student achievement which may have also played a factor in individual student achievement.

The study do not expand its' research in analyzing other preschool programs in the area in which students in the control group may have attended. This may have affected the total average for the control group.

Recommendations

The results of this study were based on a small, rural, school district. To further the study it is recommended it be conducted in several districts.

It is also recommended that the control group be more closely examined. The control group for this study may have had prior kindergarten experience. It would be interesting to see a comparison of students with no prior school experience with students with a quality preschool program experience.

Another expansion of the study would be to follow the students and record first and second grade achievement levels.

A final recommendation would be to pre-test kindergarten students during the first week of school to determine prior academic skills.

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APPENDIX

Spreadsheet 1

	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Listening	Phonological Awareness	Spelling	Print Concepts/ Alphabetic Principle	Total Average
Range	1 to 4	1 to 4	1 to 4	1 to 4	1 to 4	1 to 6	1 to 6	
Medford Preschool Experience group								
	1	1	1	1.5	1.5	2	1.5	1.36
	1	1	2	2	1	1.5	3.5	1.71
	1	1	1	1	2	2.5	4	1.79
	1	1	2	2	1	2	3.5	1.79
	1.5	1	2	2	1.5	2	3	1.86
	1	1	3	1	2	2.5	3	1.93
	1	1	2	2	1.5	2	4	1.93
	1.5	1.5	2	2	1.5	2.5	3	2.00
	2	1.5	2	1.5	1	2.5	4.5	2.14
	1.5	1	2	2	2.5	2.5	3.5	2.14
	1.5	2	2	2	2	3	3.5	2.29
	1.5	1.5	2	2.5	2.5	3	3.5	2.36
	2	1.5	2.5	2.5	2	3	3.5	2.43
	2	2	2	2	2	3.5	4	2.50
	1	1	3	3	2.5	2.5	4.5	2.50
	2	2	2	2	2.5	3	4	2.50
	1	1	3	2	3	4	4	2.57
	2	2	2.5	2	2.5	3.5	4	2.64
	2	2	3	3	2	3	3.5	2.64
	1	2	3	2	3	3	5	2.71
	2	2	3	2.5	2.5	3.5	4	2.79
	2	2	3	2.5	3	3	4	2.79
	2	2	2.5	3	3	3	4	2.79
	2	2	3	3	3	3	4	2.86
	2	2	3	3	3	3	4	2.86
	2	2	3	3	3	3	4	2.86
	2	2	3	3	3	3	4	2.86
	2	2	3	3	3	3	4.5	2.93
	2	2	3	3	3	3	4.5	2.93
	2	2	3	3	3	2.5	5	2.93
	3	2	3	3	3	3	4	3.00
	2.5	2.5	3	3	3	3	4	3.00
	2.5	2	3	3	3	3	4.5	3.00
	2	2	3.5	2.5	3	3.5	4.5	3.00
	3	2	3	3	3	3.5	4	3.07
	2.5	2	3	3	3	3.5	4.5	3.07
	2	2	3	3.5	3.5	3	4.5	3.07
	2.5	2	3	3	2.5	3.5	5	3.07

2	2	3.5	3.5	3	3.5	4.5	3.14	
2	2	3.5	3.5	3.5	2.5	5	3.14	
2	2	4	3.5	3.5	3	4.5	3.21	
2	2	3.5	4	3.5	3.5	4.5	3.29	
2.5	2	3	2.5	3.5	5	5	3.36	
2	2	3	3	4	4	5.5	3.36	
2	2	3.5	4	4	4	5	3.50	
3	2	4	3.5	4	3.5	5	3.57	
3	2.5	3.5	3	4	4	5	3.57	
3	2.5	3	3	4	4	6	3.64	
3	2	4	4	4	4	6	3.86	
3.5	2.5	3.5	4	4	4	6	3.93	
3.5	3	4	3.5	4	5	5.5	4.07	
<hr/>								
total average per area	2.00	1.82	2.82	2.71	2.78	3.13	4.26	2.79

Spreadsheet 2

	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Listening	Phonological Awareness	Spelling	Print Concepts/ Alphabetic Principle	Total Average
Range	1 to 4	1 to 4	1 to 4	1 to 4	1 to 4	1 to 6	1 to 6	
Non-Medford Preschool Attendees								
1	1	0.5	0.5	1.5	2	2	1.21	
1	1	1.5	2	2	1	2	1.50	
1.5	1	1	1	2	1.5	3	1.57	
1.5	1.5	2	1.5	2	2.5	2	1.86	
1	1	2.5	2.5	1.5	2	3	1.93	
1	1	2	2	2.5	2.5	3.4	2.06	
1.5	1	2	1.5	2.5	2.5	3.5	2.07	
1	1	2.5	2	2	2.5	4	2.14	
1.5	1.5	2.5	2.5	1.5	3	2.5	2.14	
1.5	1.5	2	1.5	2	2.5	4	2.14	
1.5	1.5	2	1.5	2	2.5	4	2.14	
1.5	1.5	1.5	2	2	2.5	4	2.14	
1.5	1	2	2	2	2.5	4	2.14	
1.5	2	2.5	1	2.5	2.5	4	2.29	
1.5	1	2	2	2.5	3	4	2.29	
2	2	2	2	2	3.5	3.5	2.43	
2	1.5	2	2	2.5	3	4	2.43	
2	1.5	2	3	2.5	2.5	3.5	2.43	
1.5	1	2.5	2.5	2.5	3	4	2.43	

2	1.5	2	2.5	2.5	3	4	2.50	
1.5	1.5	3	2.5	2.5	3	4	2.57	
2	2	2	2.5	2.5	3	4	2.57	
2	2	2.5	3	1.5	3	4	2.57	
2	2	3	1	2.5	3.5	4	2.57	
1.5	1.5	3	2.5	3	2.5	4.5	2.64	
1.5	2	2.5	2	3	2.5	5	2.64	
2	2	2	3	2.5	3	4	2.64	
2	1.5	1.5	3	2.5	3.5	4.5	2.64	
1.5	2	3	2	2.5	2.5	5	2.64	
2	1.5	2	2	3	3.5	4.5	2.64	
2	1.5	3	3	3	2.5	4	2.71	
2.5	2	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	2.79	
2	2	2.5	2.5	3	3	4.5	2.79	
2	2	2.5	3	2.5	2.5	5	2.79	
2	2.5	3	2.5	2.5	3.5	4	2.86	
2.5	2	2.5	2.5	2.5	3.5	4.5	2.86	
2	2	3	3	3	3	4	2.86	
2	1.5	3	2.5	3	3	5	2.86	
2	2	3	3.5	2.5	3	4	2.86	
2.5	1.5	3	3	3	3	4.5	2.93	
2.5	2	3	3	3.5	3	4	3.00	
2	1.5	3.5	4	2.5	3	4.5	3.00	
3	2	2	2.5	3	4	4.5	3.00	
3	2.5	2	2.5	2.5	4	4.5	3.00	
2	3	3	3	3	3	4.5	3.07	
2.5	2	3	2.5	3	4	4.5	3.07	
2.5	2	3	3	3.5	3	4.5	3.07	
3.5	2	1.5	2.5	3.5	3.5	5	3.07	
2.5	2	2	3	3.5	4	5	3.14	
2	2.5	3	3.5	3.5	3	5	3.21	
2	2	3.5	4	3.5	3.5	4.5	3.29	
2.5	2.5	3	3.5	4	3	6	3.50	
3	2.5	3	3	4	4.5	5	3.57	
2.5	2	3.5	3.5	4	4	6	3.64	
2.5	2.5	4	3	4	5	5	3.71	
2.5	2	3.5	4	4	4	6	3.71	
3	2.5	4	3.5	4	4.5	5	3.79	
3	2.5	3.5	4	4	4	6	3.86	
<hr/>								
Total average per area	1.99	1.78	2.50	2.53	2.74	3.06	4.22	2.69

Medford Area Elementary School

1065 West Broadway
Medford, Wisconsin 54451-1311
(715) 748-2316

November 4, 2001

Ron Vaughn, Principal

Dear Parent / Guardian,

This November I will be conducting a study for partial fulfillment of my Masters Degree program. As part of that study I will be reviewing Kindergarten skill sheets of the current first grade students. This includes your child. The analysis may assist the district in identifying areas in which the district preschool program appears to have benefitted Kindergarten experiences for this class and areas to consider for possible curricular improvements in the future. The study will be conducted under the following guidelines:

- 1 - No names will be used; random numbers will be assigned for identification purposes, i.e., student #1 — student #122, etc.
- 2 - Skill sheets will be analyzed for data only i.e., how many skills were accomplished semester 1?; what skill areas were accomplished semester 1?
- 3 - The data will be compiled and presented as information regarding a "group" of students, i.e., Kindergartners who attended the district's preschool program.
- 4 - Under no circumstances will an individual student's data be released; student confidentiality will be maintained.

If you have any questions about this study please contact me at 748-2316 before November 9, 2001 so that we might discuss your questions / concerns.

Sincerely,



Jacquelyn Mushel
Early Childhood / Preschool Teacher
Medford Area Elementary School

c: Dee Novinska
Paul Schoenberger
Ron Vaughn
Angela Woyak

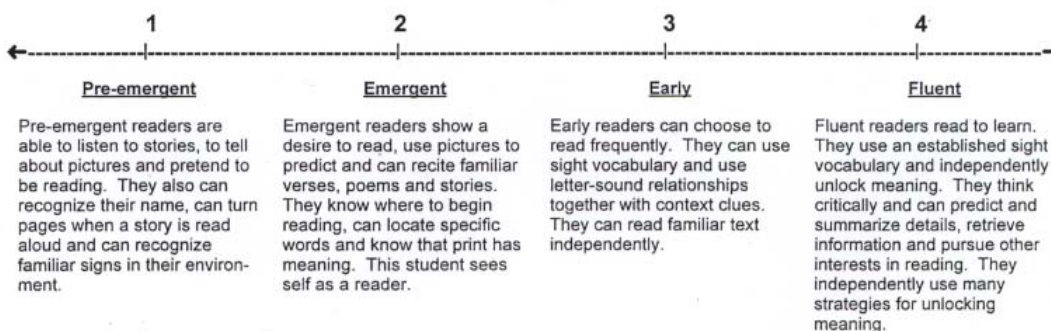
RECORD OF ASSESSMENT
Medford Area Public School District
English/Language Arts - Kindergarten

Name _____

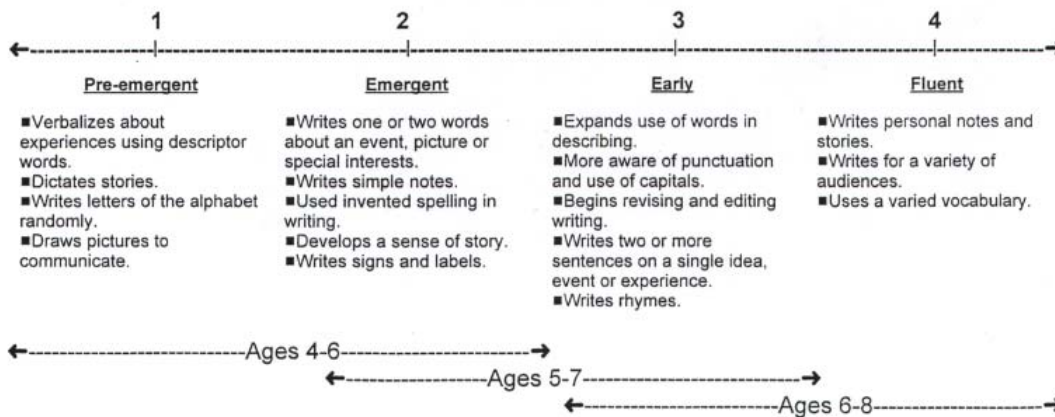
Teacher _____

Directions to teacher: For January Performance Assessment please mark student's performance level on rubric with J; for May please use M.

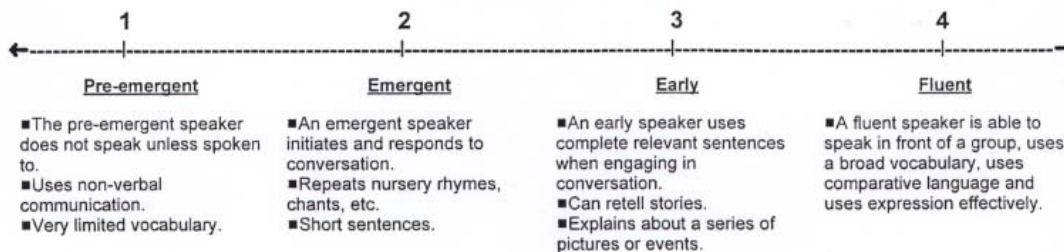
**Developmental Stages of Reading
 Progress Rubric**



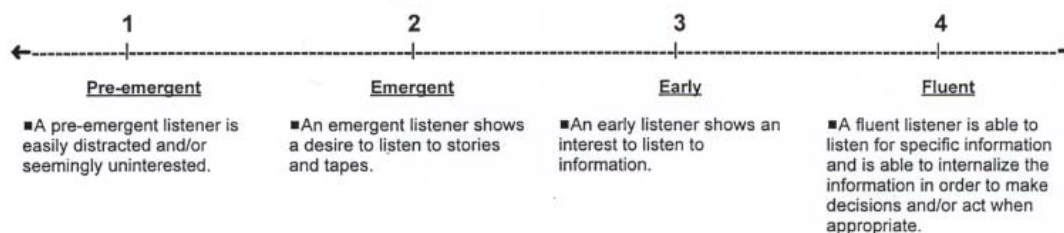
**Developmental Stages of Writing
 Progress Rubric**



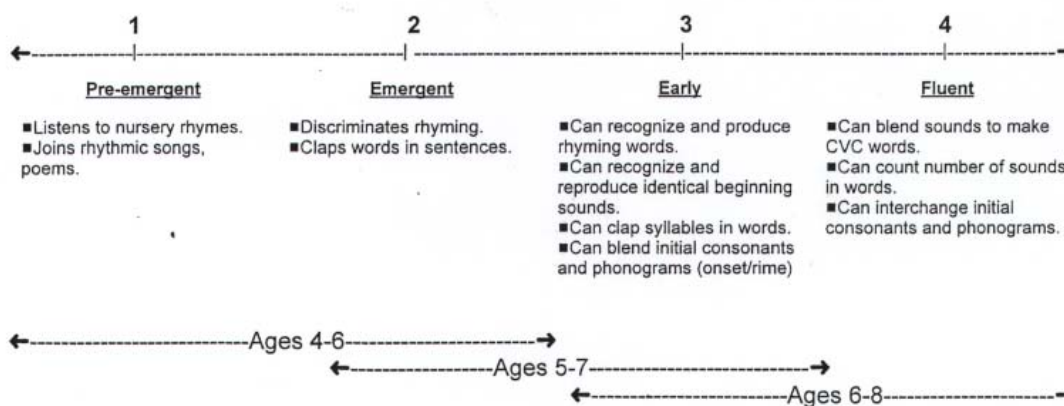
Developmental Stages of Speaking Progress Rubric



Developmental Stages of Listening Progress Rubric



Developmental Stage of Kindergarten Phonological Awareness Progress Rubric



Developmental Stages of Spelling Progress Rubric

1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>Pre-communication</p> <p>Children begin to "mock write" actual letters or approximations; however, it does not look like conventional writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use upper-case letters most of the time. Emulate the script of their culture or group. Occasionally use actual letters that are familiar to them. Compose lists, descriptions, messages. 	<p>Scribbling</p> <p>Children use a combination of scribbles and word writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scribble writers create a text that to them represents writing; letters are not discernible. Shows some evidence of overall form (scribble lists look like lists). non linear linear repeated designs random 	<p>Semi-phonetic</p> <p>Children begin to recognize that there is a relationship between letters of the alphabet and sounds of words</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select letters to represent sounds they hear. Usually show control of directionality. 	<p>Phonetic</p> <p>Children are able to map most words they write.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of both upper and lower case letters. Select spellings that match sounds. Correctly spell words they know. 	<p>Transitional</p> <p>Children are moving from mostly phonetic writing to a more conventional writing incorporating refined grammar.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempt to create syllables with vowel replacement. Use blends. Use inflectional endings. More accurate with possessives and punctuation. 	<p>Conventional</p> <p>Children are able to use accepted spelling for most words.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use descriptive writing. Use comparatives. Seek correct spelling. Able to interpret information in their own words in writing.

← Ages 2-6 →

← Ages 5-7 →

← Ages 6-10 →

Developmental Stages of Kindergarten Print Concepts/Alphabetic Principle Progress Rubric

1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>Pre-communication</p> <p>Recites alphabet. Not aware of print concepts, such as letter, number, word.</p>	<p>Scribbling</p> <p>Recognizes a "number letter". Knows print goes from left to right.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> capital/lower case letters. 	<p>Semi-phonetic</p> <p>Recognizes few core words. Can give less than half-letter names/sounds. Recognizes "word."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knows difference in capital/lower case letters. 	<p>Phonetic</p> <p>Recognizes some core words. Can give most letter names/sounds covered to date. Can give first sound in word.</p>	<p>Transitional</p> <p>Recognizes most core words. Can give sounds/names of all letters. Can give last sound in word.</p>	<p>Conventional</p> <p>Recognizes all core words. Recognizes sentence, capital and period.</p>