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**EVALUATING A DISTRICT-WIDE KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION PROCESS  
FOR  
PRESCHOOL CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

**by**

**Pamela Parker-Martin, Ph.D.**

**A Dissertation Proposal Submitted to the Faculty of the  
DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION, REHABILITATION,  
AND SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY**

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and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

[Signature]  
Dr. Richard Morris, Ph.D.

11/4/99  
Date

[Signature]  
Dr. Lawrence Aleamoni, Ph.D.

11/4/99  
Date

[Signature]  
Dr. Shitala Mishra, Ph.D.

11-4-99  
Date

[Signature]  
Dr. Shirin Antia, Ph.D.

11-4-99  
Date

[Signature]  
Dr. Linda Levine, Ph.D.

11-4-99  
Date

Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copy of the dissertation to the Graduate College.

I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

[Signature]  
Dissertation Director  
Dr. Richard Morris

11/4/99  
Date

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## ABSTRACT

The present study was an explorative summative program evaluation of the preschool to kindergarten transition process used by a school district in the Denver metro-area. Surveys were provided to parents, preschool staff, and elementary school staff who were involved in the transition process for 57 young children with special needs moving into kindergarten placements for the 1998-99 school year. Respondents were asked to indicate their satisfaction with, and identify the importance of, each specific transition activity within the transition process. Follow-up measures of reported satisfaction with, and importance of, the various transition activities, as well as a measure of each child's adjustment to kindergarten was obtained from the respondents two months following the beginning of the school year. All respondents reported high levels of satisfaction with the overall transition process and rated nearly all of the individual transition activities as important to the overall transition process. However, parents were significantly more satisfied with the transition process than were the preschool or elementary school teams. In general, elementary school teams appeared less satisfied with their ability to understand the student's needs and family concerns, while preschool teams were less satisfied with their ability to make systemic placement decisions for their students. The data suggest that by incorporating a district-wide preschool to kindergarten transition process, parents and educators were able to provide satisfactory transitions for a group of young children with special needs. Limitations of the present study, as well as future directions for research, are also discussed.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The study of transitions in educational research has generally focused on the shift from school programs to work programs for developmentally delayed teenagers and young adults (e.g., Bullis & Gaylord-Ross, 1991; Collet-Klingenberg, 1998; Cummings & Maddux, 1987; Gabel, Laycock, Maroney, & Smith, 1991; McDonnell, Mathot-Buckner, & Ferguson, 1996). Two critical transitions, however, have been identified for young children in the preschool years: the entry into preschool and exiting from preschool in order to enter kindergarten (Hanline, 1993). Historically, concern for young children has focused primarily on the transition from kindergarten to first grade, but with increased emphasis on the development of early childhood programs, an even more critical time has been identified as the transition between preschool and kindergarten (Caldwell, 1991). Love and Yelton (1989), for example, have indicated that for many children the transition into kindergarten may be considered the most critical transition, whether the child is coming from home, daycare, or a preschool setting. More recently, one of the recommendations for implementing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) at the preschool level requires public schools to address several “urgent issues” including the need for creating transition plans for young children with special needs moving into kindergarten programs (Gottwald & Pardy, 1997). Transition planning has also been identified as a component of recommended best practices for the field of early childhood services (McDonnell & Hardman, 1988).

Coleman (1993) has provided a definition of transition that is specific to early childhood special education. She defines transition as:

"...the purposeful, organized process of helping children who are at-risk or have developmental disabilities move from one program to the next, such as from the hospital to home, or from an infant developmental program to a preschool program for children with special needs. The child's parents and multidisciplinary team are involved in the process of selecting the program/class that would best meet the child's needs and in preparing for the change" (p. 303).

While Coleman provides a broad definition of transition, Wolery (1989) has identified three types of transitions found within early childhood special education programs: developmental transitions, nondevelopmental transitions, and within-class transitions.

According to Wolery, developmental transitions are sequential and often age-based changes such as moving from an infant program into a preschool setting or moving within a program from a younger to an older peer group.

Nondevelopmental transitions are less common than developmental transitions according to Wolery. Nondevelopmental transitions occur within each age group and usually involve movement from one program to another based on the level of restrictiveness. One example might be moving from a program with only special needs students into a more integrated setting in order to facilitate peer relationships. The third type of transition, within-class transitions, refers to the movement from one activity to another within a classroom. For example, moving from a storybook activity to a gross

motor activity would be considered a within-class transition. Using Wolery's categories, the process of moving from preschool to kindergarten would be considered a developmental transition and it is this type of transition that forms the basis for the present study.

Providing a stable continuum of educational services that allows for "seamless learning" for young typically developing children implies an important rationale for studying the transition process between preschool and kindergarten (Anderson & Shane, 1972). Transitions that are most likely to create difficulties for children are those that occur at an early age, are abrupt, discontinuous, and occur in situations where the experiences of one setting do not prepare the child for the next setting (Love & Yelton, 1989). Love and Yelton suggest focusing attention on creating greater continuity between preschool and kindergarten services as a means of improving the transition.

Wolery (1989) has also identified the continuity of services as an important rationale for studying the transition of young children with special needs. Moreover, Rosenkoetter (1995) has argued that the goal of transition should be to create as much continuity as possible for young children entering kindergarten by developing a partnership among families, schools, and communities that is aimed at facilitating preschool-to-kindergarten transitions.

The concept of continuity, however, can extend beyond the simple continuation of services (e.g., Caldwell, 1991; Kagan, 1990, 1991). Caldwell (1991), for example, has suggested that while development is continuous, educational systems are not and are marked by a definite discontinuity between levels and systems. Moving from one level of

education to another (e.g., preschool to kindergarten, primary school to middle school, or middle school to high school) involves moving into a new culture or ecology with a different set of norms, procedures and requirements, which, according to Caldwell, does not lend itself easily to promoting continuity.

Continuity is described as a principle of development while transitions are the strategies used to promote continuity (Kagan, 1991). Kagan describes continuity on three dimensions: philosophy, pedagogy, and structure. In terms of philosophy, there must be a basic agreement that young children learn differently and have different learning needs in order for continuity to flourish. Pedagogy, according to Kagan, is addressed by the basic agreement that early childhood instruction must transcend any one particular curricular approach and encompass more than the cognitive domain. For the dimension of pedagogy to support continuity, all areas of development must be included. The third dimension, structure, refers to the broad systemic and/or legislative issues and constraints faced by early childhood education including regulations, policies, and funding variations. Early childhood educators have only recently begun to address the issue of discontinuity collaboratively according to Kagan.

For decades, there has been concern about the lack of collaboration between preschools, kindergartens, and elementary schools, as well as the effect that such discontinuity had on children (Kagan, 1990). As Kagan points out, critics of early childhood intervention have questioned the large monetary investment in early childhood programs, given that many children in such programs will enter schools where the quality of their early childhood education will not be matched and where the advantages of early

intervention will be diminished. In order to promote continuity, Kagan (1991) suggests a collaborative approach to accomplishing the following three goals: (1) more congruence among the beliefs and values that form the foundation for practice, (2) more congruence among the content of curriculum and the process of instruction as it relates to the developmental levels of children, and (3) more congruence among the systems, policies, and regulations that shape services.

In her review, Kagan (1991) remarks that many have addressed the need to build effective links between preschools and schools in an attempt to promote continuity but that despite major national and local efforts, the field of early education remains unclear about the empirical effects associated with transition projects. It also remains unclear as to which aspects of transition are most beneficial and which children benefit most by transition activities. Lastly, Kagan identifies a larger systemic issue around transition. Specifically, she describes most transition efforts as "Band-Aids," where the surface needs are addressed but rarely have the underlying and deeply-rooted systems issues (i.e., philosophy, pedagogy, and structure) been addressed.

Another important rationale for studying the transition between preschool and kindergarten is related to the effect of the transition process on the family (e.g., Wolery, 1989). Often times, the needs of the child receive the majority of the attention during transition, while the holistic focus of transition, which encompasses the needs of the child and family, is overshadowed (Lazzari & Kilgo, 1989). Several studies, however, suggest that transitioning from a special education preschool program into a public school kindergarten program can be a particularly stressful event for families (e.g., Bray,

Coleman, & Bracken, 1981; MacKeith, 1973; Marion, 1981; Wickler, 1981), and can result in feelings of frustration, confusion, and anxiety on the part of families and staff (Wilson, 1998). To prevent such negative repercussions, Lazzari and Kilgo recommend giving equal weight to the child's needs, the needs of the parents, and the needs of the service providers when planning and implementing transition activities.

### Transition Programs for Young Children With Special Needs

Parents of children with disabilities share many of the same concerns as parents of typically developing children regarding the transition into kindergarten (Hanline, 1993). For example, Rosenkoetter and Rosenkoetter (1993) describe the transition from preschool to kindergarten as a “family milestone” for parents of disabled children as well as for parents of non-disabled children. In their survey of 592 parents of children with disabilities and children without disabilities, Rosenkoetter and Rosenkoetter found that most families were generally optimistic regarding their child's upcoming transition to kindergarten and felt their child was ready for new challenges and more exposure to academic activities. However, parents with disabled children expressed less eagerness to start in a new program and more concern regarding the appropriateness of the new setting for their children. They were also less confident regarding their children's ability to perform in the new setting. All of the parents involved in the study wanted to learn more about their child's new school, staff, program information and available services, but the parents of children with disabilities wanted more information specific to the transition needs of their children. Lastly, parent concern increased with the level of severity of the child's disability.

According to Hanline (1993), the unique concerns of parents of young children with special needs regarding the transition to kindergarten from preschool can potentially create more stress for the family. Wickler (1981) has reported several critical events that are stressful for families of disabled children. For example, he cites the age the child should have begun to walk or talk, as well as when the child began public school as being particularly difficult coping times for families of disabled children.

Stress also appears to increase with the age of the special needs child (Gallagher, Beckman, & Cross, 1983). In this regard, MacKeith (1973) identified the process of determining educational placement and services as being a major stress-producing event for families of young special needs children. Bray et al. (1981), for example, surveyed the parents of 169 special needs children and found that 24% of them judged as critical the circumstances around their child's education, including: (1) their child's adjustment to the program, (2) quality of related services, and (3) the appropriateness of the child's educational placement. Parents also worry about the quality of intervention services their child will receive in kindergarten, how they will be accepted by teachers and classmates, and how well the school will understand their child and their child's special needs (Marion, 1981). Hanline (1993) has suggested that individualized family support can help ease some of the stress associated with transition.

Transitions have been described as "times of vulnerability" for special needs preschoolers and their families, characterized by change and uncertainty (Rice & O'Brien, 1990). These changes include possible delays in service delivery, inconsistency in treatment or intervention, changes in transportation needs, additional expenses, and

difficulty establishing and maintaining effective communication with all parties involved. Furthermore, according to Rice and O'Brien, transition has not been included as part of most early childhood teachers' pre-service training and, as such, teachers of young special needs children are often unsure of how to facilitate successful transitions.

Hanline and Halvorsen (1989) found concerns raised by parents similar to those expressed by Rice and O'Brien (1980). For example, Hanline and Halvorsen interviewed 13 families of children receiving special education services regarding their views on the transition from a segregated special education program to an integrated program in the public school. The children involved ranged in age from 4 to 22 years-of-age and the majority were severely disabled. Six pre-transition concerns were identified by the parents: (1) worries about their child's safety in the new program; (2) wary of how well their child would be accepted in an integrated setting by non-disabled peers; (3) concerns regarding how services would be delivered in the new setting; (4) uncertainty around possible changes in transportation services; (5) doubts about the school district's ability to commit to an integrated program given all of their other programs vying for resources; and, (6) fear that their child might "fail" the new program or that the program itself would not be effective in meeting their child's needs. Parents did find that being involved in their child's transition and receiving professional and personal support was helpful in easing the stress involved in moving from a segregated special education program to an integrated program across all ages. The authors, however, indicated that the results must be viewed with caution due to the small sample size, non-random selection, and the potential influence of the interview situation itself on parents' responses.

Fowler and Ostrosky (1994) also describe the types of changes young children with special needs and their families encounter when making the transition from preschool to kindergarten. For example, changes in service delivery can be encountered including changes in who provides the service, the location where the service is provided, the type of service provided, and the focus of the intervention from a family-focused approach consistent with early childhood practice to a more child-centered approach consistent with school-age approaches. The authors also point out that the transition from preschool to kindergarten is typically based on age, not developmental readiness. Preschool special education programs are funded for children ages three through five years. As a result, according to Fowler and Ostrosky, children enter kindergarten during the fall after their fifth birthday, regardless of whether they or their family are ready for the change.

Although transition can be confusing and anxiety-producing for the child and family, the many changes inherent in the transition process can also be seen as potential options available for the family and educational professionals to choose from which allows for increased flexibility and individualization for the child's next program (Fowler & Ostrosky, 1994). In this regard, Mack (1995) suggests that schools must provide support to families by presenting them with general information about the transition process and granting them access to at least one professional who can provide information and support. Parents also need contact with the receiving teacher, according to Mack, and be able to visit the new program and receive follow-up support after the transition.

In a survey of parents and receiving teachers of young children transitioning from Head Start to kindergarten programs, Karr-Jelinek (1994) found that 100% of the teachers expressed interest in visiting the preschool programs of their future students and to have the opportunity to meet with preschool staff to determine the children's needs. Karr-Jelinek also found that most, but not all, parents wanted to meet with their child's kindergarten teacher prior to placement.

The literature described above suggests that transition is a stressful time for families and implies that careful planning of the transition period from preschool to kindergarten may be beneficial in supporting the needs of the child and family; however, as Kagan (1991) has pointed out, the empirical support for such transition planning is scarce in the literature. Rosenkoetter, Hains, and Fowler (1994) have provided a lengthy list of potential evaluation questions with respect to transition including: (1) identifying which components of a transition process contribute most to successful transitions, (2) what supports are necessary for families during transition, and (3) what conditions are necessary to promote professional collaboration between preschool and elementary school staff. Rosenkoetter et al. also suggest that researchers should first determine the focus of the evaluation and then decide whether the evaluation will be a system-level or program-level evaluation. System-level evaluations, according to the authors, seek information regarding the transition plan's effect on the entire community while program-level evaluations are more directed toward providing information for in-house adjustments to the transition process. They also indicate that an evaluation of transition can take place

before, during, and/or after the transition has occurred and is determined by the type of information needed.

### Purpose of the Present Study

Based on the available research linking transition with family stress (e.g., Bray et al., 1981; Rice & O'Brien, 1990; Fowler & Ostrosky, 1994; Wickler, 1981) and with maintaining the continuity of services for young disabled children (e.g., Anderson & Shane, 1972; Kagan, 1990, 1991), a program-level evaluation of a school district's transition process for facilitating the transition between preschool and kindergarten for children with special needs was conducted to determine its relative effectiveness with respect to respondents' ratings of satisfaction with the transition process. Specifically, program effectiveness was measured in terms of satisfaction ratings with the transition process obtained from parents, as well as those from sending team members and receiving team members who were involved in the transition process. Participants in the study were also asked to rate their level of satisfaction with specific features of the transition process.

In the present study, the term sending team members refers to those groups of educational professionals who were currently involved with the child in the preschool classroom setting. The membership of these latter groups could consist of an early childhood special educator, speech and language pathologist, occupational therapist, school psychologist or social worker, and an early childhood regular education teacher. The term receiving team members refers to those groups of educational professionals who were involved with the child in the kindergarten program to which the child was

transitioned, and could include a learning specialist, speech and language pathologist, occupational therapist, school psychologist, school social worker, and a regular education teacher. Differences among parents, sending teams, and receiving teams were also analyzed in order to determine whether any particular transition activities were rated as more important than others.

The relationship between the child's disability and the participants' ratings of satisfaction with the transition process were explored as was the length of time that the child attended the special education preschool. Following the completion of the child's transition, a rating of the perceived level of adjustment to the kindergarten classroom was obtained from each child's parents and receiving team, and these results were then compared with the respective initial satisfaction ratings of each group to determine the relationship between the perceived satisfaction with the transition process and the perceived level of adjustment of the child to the actual kindergarten program. It was also determined whether participants' ratings of satisfaction, as well as their ratings of perceived importance of specific transition activities, remained consistent over time following the completion of the transition process. Respondents were also asked to indicate which transition activities they participated in to determine the degree to which the transition process was implemented as it was intended. The following evaluation questions were addressed in this exploratory study:

- 1) Is the total number of transition activities that respondents are expected to complete different from the observed total number of transition activities in which they actually engaged?

- 2) Is there a significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) between parents, sending teams, and receiving teams in terms of their total satisfaction rating score of the transition process immediately following the transition staffing for each child.
- 3) Is there a significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) between parents and receiving teams in terms of their total satisfaction rating score of the transition process two months following the beginning of the school year?
- 4) Which activities in the transition process are rated by parents, sending teams, and receiving teams as being most important to the transition process following each child's transition staffing?
- 5) Which activities in the transition process are rated by parents and receiving teams as being most important to the transition process at two months into the school year?
- 6) Is there a significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) between respondents' total satisfaction rating scores based on the total number of transition activities in which they participate?
- 7) Is there a significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) between respondents' total satisfaction rating score based on either (a) specific disability, (b) the number of months in special education, or (c) kindergarten catchment area?
- 8) What is the correlation between respondents' total rating scores of student adjustment in the new program and respondents' initial total satisfaction rating scores of the transition process?

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

This chapter will review the literature regarding early childhood education, program evaluation, and transition models as they relate to preschool children with identified special education needs. Historical antecedents and the philosophical underpinnings of early childhood education will also be presented in order to provide a foundation for understanding current practices in early childhood special education and implications for transition planning.

#### Historical Overview of Early Childhood Education

According to Ershler (1992), educators have been grappling with the concept of early childhood education for more than 2,000 years. Osborn (1980) has even suggested that the very roots of education and early schools can be traced back to 2,500 B.C.. More direct influences, however, on early childhood education can be traced back to the Renaissance period beginning in the 14th century, through the Reformation in the 16th century, and continuing on into the present day (e.g., Ershler, 1992; Gordon & Browne, 1985; Woodill, 1988). Beginning with the Renaissance and throughout the Reformation, conditions for children began to improve from Medieval times and the acquisition of basic skills and knowledge at an earlier age was seen as a benefit for the entire family (e.g., Gordon & Browne, 1985). A more educated child could earn more goods and money and thereby help the family's financial status.

In the 17th century, John Comenius wrote the first picture book for children to be used as a guide for teachers regarding nature studies (Gordon & Browne, 1985).

Comenius maintained that children's development followed a natural and individual timetable (Gordon & Browne, 1985) and believed that children should be taught by their mothers for the first six years of life (Osborn, 1980). He outlined his philosophies in his book, The School of Infancy written in 1628 (Osborn, 1980). According to Osborn, Comenius was followed by John Locke, who in 1693, also emphasized the importance of education following the natural developmental timetable he believed children inherently possessed. In the 18th century, Jean Jacques Rousseau promoted early education and an educational environment that allowed for the spontaneous interests and activities of children (Gordon & Brown, 1985).

By the 19th century, the development of education in general, including early childhood education, progressed dramatically in both Europe and the United States (Osborn, 1980). For example, by this time most towns in Massachusetts offered education for young children and by 1826, five percent of the children enrolled in these schools were below five years-of-age (Spodek, 1988). In 1822, the concept of the "Infant School" was brought from England by Robert Owen and established as part of the cooperative community of New Harmony, Indiana (Osborn, 1980). Children as young as 18 months participated in this activity-based approach to early education (Spodek, 1988). Spodek considers the Infant School the predecessor of child development programs designed to help parents and children cope with poverty and social problems, and describes it as the cornerstone of current programs due to its emphasis on medical care, nutrition, hygiene, social services, and education. By the 1830's, however, Spodek indicates that the Infant School movement faded-out. The reasons for this change were related to an increased

emphasis on considering a child's mother as his/her best teacher, and a fear that excessive intellectual activity in young children could cause insanity (Spodek, 1988).

While these early educational leaders all had an influence on early childhood education, Friedrich Froebel stands out as a primary influence on early childhood education and is considered the "father" of the kindergarten concept (Gordon & Browne, 1985). Froebel's first kindergarten was established in Germany in 1837 and provided an environment where children had access to toys and play activities that were structured by trained teachers (Ershler, 1992, Osborn, 1980). Froebel believed in the idea of a natural timetable for children's education development similar to the ideas set forth by Rousseau, Locke, and Comenius before him (Ershler, 1992). According to Ershler (1992), Froebel believed in the importance of respecting a child's needs but also emphasized the importance of early sensory training for learning. Although considered a play environment, many of Froebel's materials were abstract objects, such as cylinders and spheres, rather than concrete objects the child would typically encounter in daily life (Gordon & Browne, 1985). In 1856, Margarethe Schurz, who worked with Froebel in Germany, opened the first American kindergarten in the German-speaking community of Watertown, Wisconsin (Osborn, 1980). Shortly thereafter, the first English-speaking kindergarten was established in the United States in 1860 by Elizabeth Peabody (Osborn, 1980). In 1873, the St. Louis, Missouri school district was the first school district to include kindergarten as part of their educational curriculum (Gordon & Browne, 1985).

Towards the end of the 19th century, in conjunction with a nationwide educational reform movement sweeping the United States, psychologist John Dewey emerged as one

of the first major influences in American Education (Gordon & Browne, 1985). Dewey established the University of Chicago Laboratory School in 1896 and believed children were valuable individuals to society and that education should be integrated into children's lives (Gordon & Browne, 1985). According to Gordon and Browne, Dewey's ideas were considered "progressive" in comparison with Froebel's "conservative" approach. Dewey espoused group learning and encouraged the idea of working in teams. Early education was viewed as a social service to help the less fortunate. Dewey's model favored child-centered learning and the use of real objects and real situations in play as opposed to Froebel's teacher-directed learning style and the use of less meaningful materials. Social skills were developed along with academics and children were thought to learn best by doing, building, and constructing.

Around the turn of the century, psychologist G. Stanley Hall organized the Child Study Movement which called for educators to focus their study on children in order to better understand the processes children used to learn and develop (Charles, 1987). During this time, early childhood education broadened in focus and began to include children from poor and unenriched environments in an effort to improve their opportunity to learn and be successful (e.g., Ershler, 1992; Gordon & Browne, 1985). In Italy, for example, Maria Montessori opened a preschool in 1907 for poor and mentally retarded children who were living in the slums (Gordon & Browne, 1985). Montessori wanted to provide these children with the proper motivation and environment. She was the first to specifically equip her classrooms with child-sized furniture and materials. Montessori felt cognitive ability stemmed from sensory discrimination and many of her materials were

tactile. She also believed in teaching children in small steps and in sequence, resulting in many of her materials being presented to the children in a prescribed order.

In England, Margaret and Rachel McMillan opened the first nursery school in 1911 based on the premise that children could not develop properly unless they were healthy in their formative years (Spodek, 1988). They originated the term nursery school meaning "nurture school" and felt that deprived children would benefit from a hygienic program where health was the focus (Gordon & Browne, 1985). In 1921, Abigail Elliot, a graduate of Radcliffe College of Harvard University studied nursery education with the McMillan sisters in London, and in 1922, she brought the nursery school concept to the United States (Gordon & Browne, 1985, Osborn, 1980) and another early nursery school in America was opened in 1922 in Detroit by Edna Noble White (Osborn, 1980).

Although still on the periphery of general education in the United States, the early education movement continued to grow, reform, and expand during the 1920's and 1930's (Gordon & Browne, 1985). During this time, the field of early education began to achieve professional status as evidence by the formation of professional organizations such as the International Kindergarten Union formed in 1924 (and later renamed the Association for Childhood Education in 1930) and the National Association for Nursery Education in 1930 (which was later re-named the National Association for the Education of Young Children or NAEYC in 1964) (Bailey & Wolery, 1984). The International Kindergarten Union published Childhood Education, which is probably the first professional journal directed toward early childhood education (Bailey & Wolery, 1984).

By 1917, the “child study movement” had given way to the “child development movement” (Davidson & Benjamin, 1987) and the fields of education and psychology began to have a common focus on children which led to increased interest in determining the most appropriate methods for educating young children. Several important written works were published by psychologists during the 1920's including The Language and Thought of the Child by Jean Piaget in 1926, and Psychological Care of the Infant and Child by John Watson in 1928 (Osborn, 1980). In addition, the first public school nursery school began in 1925 in Chicago, Illinois and in 1933, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration provided funding for nursery schools allowing the Works Progress Administration (WPA) to fund 3,000 nursery schools and enroll as many as 61,000 children. (Osborn, 1980). According to Gordon and Browne (1985), Dewey's child-centered approach and his ideas of learning best through doing, building, constructing, and interacting with others were becoming increasingly adopted in early education, although the debate between the progressives (referring to the followers of Dewey) and the conservatives (referring to the followers of Froebel) continued until the mid to late 1930's. At that time, the progressive ideas were firmly established although some Froebelian influences persisted (Gordon & Browne, 1985).

The 1920's also saw an increase in the development of research centers and laboratory schools including new laboratory schools at Columbia University, Merrill Palmer Institute, Mills College, Bowling Green State University, Smith College, Vassar College, and Cambridge University (Gordon & Browne, 1985). Gordon and Browne (1985) further asserted the active role of laboratory schools in expanding the knowledge

of the importance of the early years in a child's development and a better understanding of how young children grow and learn.

The onset of the Depression, and later World War II, brought positive changes for early childhood education (Gordon & Browne, 1985; Hanson & Lynch, 1989). The government funded nursery schools and hired unemployed school teachers as nursery teachers. In addition, as WWII propelled women into the workforce, the daycare movement developed and both government- and industry-sponsored daycare programs were initiated for the new working mothers. Once WWII ended, however, and child care was no longer needed on a large scale, many of these government- and industry-sponsored programs were closed down or turned over to respective local state governments (Gordon & Browne, 1985). Smaller programs continued, however, as many parents valued the early enrichment opportunities provided by preschools and daycare centers (Lerner, Mardell-Czudnowski, & Golderberg, 1981). During this time, in 1944, the second professional journal focusing on early childhood education, Young Children, was published (Bailey & Wolery, 1984).

In general, children's education was dormant following WWII, although the launching of Sputnik in 1957 created a renewed emphasis in the U.S. on the educational curriculum of American youth in order to "catch-up" with the Russians. This change did not directly impact early childhood education. The late 1950's and 1960's, however, have been described by Mori and Olive (1980) as a period of time where pioneer efforts demonstrated that experiential and environmental factors could greatly influence a child's development.

For example, by the 1960's, the civil rights struggle pointed out the plight of the poor as well as the possibility that education could help society move toward equality (Gordon & Browne, 1985; Hanson & Lynch, 1989). As a result, in 1965, Project Head Start was initiated as a summer program for four and five-year-old children from low socio-economic backgrounds and was expanded into an academic year program after the first summer (Gordon & Browne, 1985; Mori & Olive, 1980; Osborn, 1980). Head Start was based on three major components: (1) compensatory education in order to compensate for inadequate early life experiences; (2) parental involvement to include parents in the planning, teaching, and decision making for their children; and, (3) community control to encourage local support and participation (Gordon & Browne, 1985). The development of Head Start resulted in a "burst of enthusiasm" for early childhood education according to Gordon and Browne, and provided national attention to the importance of good early care and educational experiences for young children.

The 1960's also saw a change in the type of evaluative research being conducted in the field of early education (Ershler, 1992). According to Ershler, prior to the 1960's research efforts were concerned with documenting the lack of harmful effects of early schooling on young children who were typically from middle class backgrounds. The goals of early childhood education at that time were to facilitate a child's social and emotional development and decrease separation anxiety (Ershler, 1992). From the 1960's on, the concern shifted to defining the ameliorative effects of early education and the clarification of cognitive development, particularly with disadvantaged children (Ershler,

1992). The 1970's saw considerably more "experimentation and reflection" on early childhood education programs (Read, 1982).

Woodill (1988) also describes a paradigm shift beginning in the 1960's that created a split in philosophy between the "progressive model" and a more academic preschool model based on the tenets of cognitive psychology. It was during this time that the work of Jean Piaget resurfaced and directed educators more towards the cognitive aspects of a child's development and away from the psycho-social or psycho-sexual aspects (Shultz & Shultz, 1987).

In 1972, the "Economic Opportunity Amendments" (PL 92-424) extended Head Start services to young disabled children and required that at least 10% of the children served by Head Start be disabled (Hanson & Lynch, 1989). Hanson and Lynch cite additional laws that encouraged the development and improvement of early intervention programs for children with special needs including the "Handicapped Children's Early Education Assistance Act" (HCEEA; PL 90-538). In 1975, a free and appropriate education for children from ages 3 to 21 years was legislated by PL 94-142 ("Education for All Handicapped Children Act"). In an effort to promote an awareness of the needs of all children on an international scale, 1979 was declared the "International Year of the Child" by the United Nations (Read, 1982).

By the mid 1970's, early childhood education had undergone a "quiet but pervasive revolution" as a result of the legacy of Head Start (Brown, 1978). Brown describes a phenomenal rise in early education and intervention programs, more preschool programs within the public schools, and an increase in the quality of daycare,

as well as a plethora of books, records, toys, and television programs for young children. By this time, the competencies of children were more respected and early education was considered an accepted and functioning institution according to Brown.

As more children began to receive early childhood services, concerns were raised regarding the education of young children with special needs (Lerner et al., 1981). Lerner et al. provided four reasons for providing early childhood special education to young special needs children. First, the authors described the crucial importance of experiences in the early years on later intellectual growth. Second, Lerner et al. pointed out that early periods of rapid growth may be even more crucial for young special needs children than was previously thought to be the case. Third, the authors suggested that specialized programs may prevent certain developmental problems from becoming entrenched. Lastly, Lerner et al. felt special services could allow preschool special education students to perform at a higher developmental level than possible without early intervention. The first professional journal written expressly to address the issues of young special needs children, Journal for the Division of Early Childhood, was published in 1979, followed in 1981 by the publication of the second professional journal in the field, Topics in Early Childhood Special Education.

Although young children with special needs could access special services in certain states under PL 94-142, it was not until the 1980's that changes were made in the law that specifically addressed the needs of young disabled children on a more pervasive scale. In 1986, PL 99-457 ("Education of Handicapped Children Act Amendments of 1986", Section 619) was passed by the U. S. Congress and signed into law by President

Reagan. This law mandated a free and appropriate public education within the least restricted environment in which the needs of preschool children could be met (Striefel, Killoran, & Quintero, 1991). PL 99-457 gave states five years to develop an early childhood identification and service delivery system for which federal funding could be accessed. With the passage of PL 99-457, the emphasis has now shifted from accessing special education services for young children to determining the best practices in early childhood education (Striefel et al., 1991).

### Philosophical and Theoretical Views Concerning Early Childhood Education

Spodek (1988) has traced three major philosophical shifts in the history of early childhood: rationalism, empiricism, and constructivism. According to Spodek, rationalism served as the basis for Froebel's work and focused on logical thinking with less attention to helping children understand their objective reality. Empiricism formed the basis for early educators such as Montessori, who believed that sensory perceptions played a central role in learning. Constructivism reflects a more integrated approach according to Spodek, and is grounded in the work of Piaget (as cited by Spodek, 1988). According to constructivism, knowledge results from the interaction of mental processes and personal experiences. Current early childhood education programs in the U.S. tend to be based on this model (Spodek, 1988).

Ershler (1992) describes three models of early childhood education that grew out of the desire in the 1960's to improve academic performance of economically disadvantaged children. Ershler's model is based on blending psychological theory with educational practices in order to link empirical work with practical application. There is

no single theory, but clusters of approaches that share similar assumptions about the nature of early childhood development. Ershler identifies these as the maturationist view, the learning view, and the interactionist view.

With the maturationist view, early development is governed by a biologically based schedule (Ershler, 1992). Although children's abilities and their achievement of developmental goals are mostly considered to be predetermined, the importance of early experiences for subsequent emotional, social and cognitive development is a core belief according to Ershler. The goal of a program ascribing to this view would be to provide a nurturing supportive environment where the child's "innate" abilities would blossom while their less desirable characteristics would be minimized. Such a program would be child-centered and child-directed where the child was actively involved with his/her own learning. Teachers would focus on developing the competency and self-esteem of their young students.

Ershler's (1992) learning view revolves around the basic premise that the sequence and pairings of environmental stimuli, responses, and reinforcers produce the changes in behavior that characterize learning. This view assumes that in general, behavior is learned and may be modified by environmental events. The goal of a program ascribing to this view would be to focus on changing behavior or transmitting information in the most efficient way with no assumptions made about children's development or readiness (Ershler, 1992). Ershler further suggests that learning objectives would be broken down into smaller steps and reinforcers would be used, such as a token economy or other organized reinforcement system.

The third model approach summarized by Ershler (1992) is called the interactionist view and is also known as the cognitive-developmental view. According to Ershler, this model acknowledges both the maturation and the learning views but believes that developmental changes are age-related and due to five sources: (1) biological factors (including maturation); (2) experiential factors; (3) cultural and educational transmissions; (4) social factors; and (5) equilibration. The model is heavily based on a Piagetian perspective and stresses the interaction between internal processes and external experiences and then how an individual makes sense of acquired information through the equilibration process. A program based on this view would recognize that children think about the world differently than adults and may also organize information differently. The program would provide active opportunities for learning and experimentation. Each child would be allowed to progress at his/her own rate and direct their own activities. Social interactions would be viewed as opportunities for the children to clarify their own thoughts by defending their ideas to others and considering the alternative viewpoints of their classmates. The goal of such a program would be to facilitate the development of independent thinking and problem solving (Ershler, 1992).

While each of the three models has implications for program development, curriculum, and the role played by teachers, Ershler (1992) was unable to document any long lasting relationships between programs adhering to a specific educational model and children's intellectual development or achievement.

Lerner et al. (1981) described six theoretical approaches to early childhood education. The philosophical or moral approach is an extension of parental child rearing

and is focused on preparing children to fit into society. The developmental or normative approach is a more psychological view and describes the sequential stages of growth for an average or normally developing child. Educational instruction is then timed according to these sequences and presented only when the child is ready. The psychoanalytic approach is based on the growth of the child's personality as it unfolds through the stages of psychosocial development. The compensatory education approach ascribes to the belief that formal education is needed to help children overcome crucial inadequacies in their family, culture, or environment. Project Head Start was developed out of this model. The belief that a child's environment can be planned and arranged to bring about desired behavior underlies the behavioral approach which relies heavily on reinforcement theory. This is similar to Ershler's (1992) Learning View. The final approach, as summarized by Lerner et al. is the cognitive psychology approach. This approach focuses on the child's maturing thinking skills and how a child views and understands the world. Like Ershler's (1992) Interactionist View, this approach is drawn from the work of Piaget. Lerner et al. suggest a more generalized approach to education and a trend toward providing similar positive early childhood experiences for all young children.

As early childhood education has continued to develop, and theories and approaches expanded or were modified, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) responded by publishing in 1988 a position statement that outlined for early childhood education professionals a recommended best practices approach (Bredekamp, 1988). The position statement referred to the early education of both disabled and nondisabled young children. The statement was developed in response

to the increase in formal instruction in academic skills in early education programs, in spite of research that suggested that children learn best through a concrete, play-oriented approach to early childhood education (Bredekamp, 1988). According to the NAEYC, a "developmentally appropriate" approach is recommended where the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of young children is nurtured and the needs of families are addressed. Developmentally appropriate practice incorporates the principles of the maturationist view and interactionist view of Ershler (1992), Spodek's (1988) constructivism, as well as Lerner et al.'s (1981) cognitive psychology approach.

The concept of developmental appropriateness is based on two factors: (1) age-appropriateness and (2) individual appropriateness (Bredekamp, 1988). When an educational program is planned with an understanding of the predictable sequences of growth in all domains of development, it is considered to be age-appropriate. Individual appropriateness refers to the understanding that each child is unique with an individual pattern and timing of growth as well as an individual personality style, learning style, and family background. The developmentally appropriate approach is a child-centered approach where play is seen as the primary vehicle for learning (Bredekamp, 1988). Teachers are viewed as facilitators or supporters who prepare the environment for children to learn through active exploration and interaction with adults, other children, and the materials in the classroom.

Although the trend in early childhood education today is toward the model of developmental appropriate practice, it is not without its critics. For example, Mallory (1992) describes some dissension in early childhood education circles even though

NAEYC has provided a position statement. Developmentally appropriate practices may not always be applicable, especially for special education students, according to Mallory. Instead, the author proposes a convergent model that draws from developmental, functional, and biological models and is more systematic and instructional in nature than the developmentally appropriate approach.

Although a position statement from NAEYC may clarify current ideas on best practices, the specific theoretical derivation of a program matters less than the provision of high quality educational experiences (Ershler, 1992). Ershler further suggests a movement toward theoretical pluralism where different theoretical approaches may be applied to different aspects of the program or behavior. One model may still be emphasized, but program designers and teachers could incorporate aspects of other approaches as well. Developmental and learning theories must, nevertheless, continue to guide practice and family and community involvement must continue to be supported according to Ershler regardless of the primary theoretical orientation. Based on current research (e.g., Castro & Mastropieri, 1986; Dunst, 1986; Marfo & Cook, 1991), the focus has shifted from determining the primary philosophical orientation to determining whether or not early childhood education is effective in promoting the development and learning of young children.

#### Efficacy of Early Childhood Education Programs

Over the years, several authors have studied the efficacy of early childhood education programs (e.g., Bailey & Bricker, 1984; Castro & Mastropieri, 1986; Dunst, 1986; Edmiaston & Mowder, 1985; Ershler, 1992; Goldring & Presbrey, 1984; Helmich,

1985; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1988; Shonkoff, Hauser-Cram, Krauss, & Upshur, 1988; Telzrow, 1988). The Head Start program, in particular, has undergone extensive study since its inception in 1965, and by 1985 there were over 200 research reports available (McKey, Condelli, Ganson, Barrett, McConkey, & Plantz, 1985).

In their final report of the Head Start Evaluation, Synthesis, and Utilization project, McKey et al. condensed the 210 research reports into 76 remaining studies after deleting those that were primarily narrative reviews. Using meta-analysis, the authors found that Head Start had immediate positive effects on children's cognitive ability but that by the end of the second year after participating in Head Start, there were no educationally meaningful differences on any of the measures of cognitive ability. However, children who attended Head Start were less likely to fail a grade in school or be assigned to special education classes according to McKey et al.'s findings. Head Start was also found to have immediate positive effects on children's self-esteem, achievement motivation, and social behavior. Social behavior remained higher for the Head Start children for two years after the program while achievement motivation and self-esteem dropped to the same level as non-Head Start peers within one year.

An early summary report of national evaluations of Head Start by Datta, McHale, & Mitchell (1974) found that participating children showed significant gains in their cognitive development and that generally child and family background characteristics were unrelated to the magnitude of change observed. No significant differences were found between different program or curricular approaches according to Datta and her

colleagues.

Several researchers have investigated the long-term effects of early childhood education (e.g., Abelson, 1974; Beller, 1974, Christner & Sailor, 1984; Hubbell, 1978; Karnes, Zerbach, & Teska, 1974; Lazar & Darlington, 1978, 1982; Sprigle, 1974; Weikart, Deloria, & Lawsor, 1974). For example, Abelson compared 175 Head Start students from 21 Head Start or Child Development Centers in New Haven Connecticut with non-Head Start peers and found that after one year, increases in both intelligence and academics persisted through first grade. Head Start graduates performed better on standardized IQ tests, demonstrated stronger basic conceptual knowledge and perceptual motor skills, and also displayed more social and emotional maturity than did their non-Head Start peers. Abelson concluded that inner city children who were provided a Head Start experience were better equipped to enter public school as kindergartners.

Beller (1974) compared four early childhood programs in four public schools in an "urban slum" area of northern Philadelphia. Beller followed the intellectual development, academic performance, cognitive style, and social emotional functioning of the children in his study from first through fourth grade and found evidence for immediate and prolonged benefits of early childhood education in all areas.

The effects of the Ypsilanti Perry Preschool Project were documented by Weikert et al. (1974) over a five-year period from 1962-1967. The Ypsilanti Perry Preschool Project was a two- year preschool program designed to compensate for functional mental retardation found in some children from disadvantaged families. The group of children followed in the study were predominantly economically disadvantaged African-American

children from Detroit who were initially diagnosed as functionally mentally retarded prior to entering preschool. According to the authors, the program was based on a cognitively oriented curriculum drawn from Piagetian theory. After participating in the two-year program, the children were then followed through the third grade. Ninety percent of the original group was followed and compared to a control group of children who had received no early education at all. The general results suggested that preschool seems to be an effective method of compensating for the deficits disadvantaged children bring to the educational process according to Weikart et al. Specifically, they found that the preschool graduates had and maintained significantly higher IQ scores than children from the control group but that a downward drift in IQ persisted through the grades as these children progressed. They also found that most of the graduates were able to achieve in school at a normal rate while most of the children from the control group were generally unable to profit from regular education. Lastly, preschoolers were consistently rated higher by their teachers on measures of academic, social, and emotional development than their non-preschool peers through the third grade.

In 1976-1977, a broad follow-up study was undertaken by the Consortium for Longitudinal Studies in order to determine the long-term effects of early childhood education (Lazar & Darlington, 1978, 1982). The Consortium consisted of 14 investigators, 12 of whom had designed and operated early intervention programs beginning in the 1960's. None of the programs were Head Start programs although some were very similar to, and perhaps harbingers of, future Head Start programs (Lazar & Darlington, 1978). Although the programs were all designed as research projects and

were often part of a university, the authors describe the programs as being independent and generally dissimilar from each other. Home-based and center-based programs were included in the study which provided intervention to infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and pre-kindergartners. The purpose of the Consortium was to determine whether, and to what extent, these preschool programs had any impact on the children's lives 10-15 years later when they ranged in age from 9 to 19 years old.

The central data bank derived from the participating programs contained information on approximately 3,000 low-income children who participated in intervention or as controls. Each project was considered separately for each hypothesis test and the data were never pooled together into one group for analysis. The data suggest that early childhood programs significantly reduced the number of children later assigned to special education and also reduced the number of children who were retained in grade. Early education led to increases in children's scores on fourth grade mathematics achievement tests with a suggestive trend toward increasing fourth grade reading scores as well. Children who had participated in early education surpassed their controls on IQ testing using the Stanford-Binet for up to three years after graduating from their programs. The difference in IQ scores then seems to fade out according to the authors and by the age of 13 years or older, no significant differences in IQ between program participants and controls were found. Lazar and Darlington suggested that early education gives children an early advantage that allows them to better adapt to the demands of school. Children who had gone to an early education program were more likely to give achievement-related reasons for being proud of themselves suggesting their academic

self-esteem was stronger than their controls. Lastly, it appeared that all of the children who had participated in early education received benefits from the program as there were no significant differences found based on gender, ethnicity, higher initial IQ scores, one-versus two-parent homes, number of siblings at home, or mother's level of education. Lazar and Darlington concluded that the preschool programs directed by the Consortium members had substantial and lasting effects on the school performance of low-income children; however, they were unable to find evidence that certain program characteristics or approaches were any more beneficial than others. The Consortium studies had a profound impact on social policy and resulted in a resurgence of public and professional interest and support for early childhood education which included increased governmental funding (Brown, 1985).

While the Consortium studies and the Head Start research focused primarily on young disadvantaged children, other investigators have been focusing their research on the efficacy of early childhood special education in promoting the development and school success of young children with special needs (e.g., Castro & Mastropieri, 1986; Edgar, McNulty, Gaetz, & Maddox, 1984; Edmiaston & Mowder, 1985; Telzrow, 1988).

Among disabled young children, Edmiaston and Mowder (1985) found strong evidence of the benefit of early intervention over no intervention and reported that the proven benefits have been found across a variety of disabilities. In their review, Edmiaston and Mowder found immediate and far reaching effects of early intervention including a decreased need for special education services as the preschoolers entered school-age programs, less grade retentions, and increased cost-effectiveness over time.

Telzrow (1988) also reviewed studies of early intervention programs for young disabled children and found limitations with the research, but positive benefits for the children involved---including fewer years in special education and greater achievement and developmental progress.

Using school placement following preschool as an indicator of the effectiveness of preschool programs for children with special needs, Edgar et al., (1984) compared 22 local programs from two states (Colorado and Washington) on the number of preschool children with special needs placed in regular education, regular education with support, and self-contained programs upon entering public school. Overall, the majority of severely disabled children (80%) were placed in self-contained special education classrooms. The authors did not interpret this as an indicator of preschool failure but rather interpreted the other 15-20% of the severely disabled children participating in regular education as a "noteworthy achievement" of special education preschool programs. The majority of mildly disabled children were placed in regular education. The authors found a discrepancy between the two states in terms of how children were placed. Specifically it appeared that Colorado placed more children with special needs into regular education placements with or without support (68%) than Washington where 65% of the children were placed into a self-contained special education program. While the authors noted that maybe Colorado had more effective preschool programs or that Colorado may have had more accepting regular education programs, they suggested more strongly that the difference may be due to a disproportionate number of more severely involved children in the Washington sample, and also that prior to 1980, Washington

tended to provide more funding to self-contained programs which discouraged less restrictive placements.

In their review of 13 programs for severely disabled infants and young children, Bailey and Bricker (1984) found that all of the programs reported positive outcomes leading the authors to suggest that early intervention can be an effective tool for enhancing the development of severely disabled young children. However, the authors recognized the variability of the 13 programs studied and the limitations of those studies including the lack of control groups and the reliance on pre-post test measures using standardized scores.

In a seminal work, Castro and Mastropieri (1986) provided a meta-analysis of early intervention programs for young disabled children ages 0-5 years. They reviewed and analyzed 74 studies and found that early intervention produced a sizeable effect size and resulted in moderately large immediate benefits. The authors also found that longer, more intense programs were associated with greater efficacy but that there was little support for the notion that starting intervention programs earlier, such as during infancy or toddlerhood, was better. Castro and Mastropieri indicate there is some evidence to suggest that disabled young children who began receiving intervention between the ages of 36 to 48 months or 48 to 66 months responded better to the intervention than children who began receiving intervention at ages younger than 36 months old.

The most frequently used outcome measure found by Castro and Mastropieri (1986) was a standardized IQ or cognitive assessment score followed by language, motor, social-emotional and self-help measures. Benefits were found across a variety of children,

handicapping conditions, and types of programs. The authors found few studies regarding long-term effects of early intervention for disabled young children but speculated that the effects may last as long as two years. Research on efficacy studies for nondisabled, but disadvantaged children suggests long-term benefits may last to approximately five years after intervention (Castro & Mastropieri, 1986) and in some cases, through high school (Goldring & Presbrey, 1984).

Although these studies suggest early intervention is effective in promoting the development of young children with special needs, the majority of authors who have reviewed the literature suggest that the findings should be viewed with caution due to the methodological and conceptual flaws in the research (e.g., Bricker, 1986b; Dunst, 1986; Hanson & Lynch, 1989; Marfo & Cook, 1991; Swan, 1983). For example, in their review of the early intervention efficacy research, Marfo and Cook (1991) found three major problems with the available studies. First, many studies were with environmentally at-risk or culturally disadvantaged children and the authors felt the results could not be easily generalized to special needs populations. They also felt that increased critical analysis was needed as opposed to the "uncritical acceptance of the complacent and self-serving tradition of efficacy research that characterized the early years" (p. 18). Lastly, the authors suggested the need to move beyond global indicators of the effectiveness of early intervention and begin to focus more on the relative importance of specific dimensions of early intervention that are successful.

Dunst (1986) reports that the majority of early childhood education efficacy studies have serious methodological flaws. According to Dunst, 74% of the 57 efficacy

studies he reviewed were seriously flawed to the point of no longer providing useful information. Dunst cited the following as the methodological flaws he encountered: poor design, failure to provide controls for threats to internal validity; lack of adequate information regarding subject characteristics; failure to establish reliability of dependent measures; and failure to use scientifically acceptable methods of analysis to determine the impact of early intervention. His criticisms are supported by others (e.g., Bricker, 1986b; Hanson & Lynch, 1989; Swan, 1983; Telzrow, 1988). The general consensus appears to be that early childhood intervention research needs to provide more systematic and sophisticated efficacy studies before clear determinations of benefits and long term outcomes can be made (e.g., Bricker, 1986a; Castro & Mastropieri, 1986; Guralnick, 1989; Marfo & Cook; 1991; Shonkoff et al., 1988). Broader outcome measures have also been recommended as needed, as opposed to the tendency to rely on standardized tests of cognitive or intellectual ability as primary indicators of change (e.g., Castro & Mastropieri, 1986; Miller & Dyer, 1975; Powell & Sigel, 1991; Ramey, Campbell, & Wasik, 1982; Shonkoff et al., 1988; Telzrow, 1988; Vane, 1976; Zigler & Balla, 1982; Zigler & Trickett, 1979). One approach to further determining the efficacy of early childhood education has been to use the techniques and designs associated with the field of program evaluation (e.g., Bricker, 1986a; Jones, 1974; Royce, Murray, Lazar, & Darlington, 1982; Sponseller & Fink; 1988; Takanishi & Feshbach, 1982; Wolery, 1987).

### Overview of Program Evaluation

Although a relatively newly recognized area of educational inquiry, program evaluation has a rich history dating back to the mid-1800's (Madaus, Stufflebeam, &

Scriven, 1983). More recently, however, as a result of the exponential increase in human service programs, program evaluation was brought to the forefront in the 1960's and has continued to gain credibility and acceptance over the years (Madaus et al., 1983). The field of program evaluation has entered an "Age of Professionalism," according to Madaus et al., and is emerging as a distinct profession that is related to, but distinct from, the field of educational research. However, considering the field of evaluation as a comparatively newer field, Fitz-Gibbon and Morris (1987) have suggested that the development of correct procedures, including the choice of design, have not yet been firmly established.

Program evaluation has been defined as "the process of systematically gathering, synthesizing, and interpreting reliable and valid information about programs for the purpose of aiding decision making" (Snyder & Sheehan, 1993, p. 269). Most definitions of program evaluation include the provision for decision making as a key element (e.g., Fink, 1995; Jones, 1974; Provus, 1971; Stufflebeam, Foley, Gephart, Guba, Hammond, Merriman, & Provus, 1971; Worthen, Borg, & White, 1993). An early definition of evaluation offered by Provus (1971) describes evaluation as a process that serves to ensure the quality of the program, to ensure it at a reasonable cost, and to help make management decisions. Program evaluation has been viewed as a complex process that consists of more than just test construction or comparing data according to Worthen and Sanders (1973). Worthen and Sanders regard evaluation as a process by which the worth of something is determined. This notion of worth or value is also implied in the definitions of evaluation proposed by other authors (e.g., Borg & Gall, 1989, Eisner,

1985b, Scriven, 1966). Although different evaluators may place more emphasis on the decision making aspect or the judgement aspect of program evaluation, the definitions are not mutually exclusive.

The role of educational evaluation can be either formative or summative (Scriven, 1966). In a formative evaluation, the information stays within the immediate system and serves to improve the product, process, or program. Formative evaluations occur while the object of the study is still in development and are used to monitor, adjust, and refine the program on an on-going basis. A summative evaluation typically occurs when the program has been completed and information regarding it's merits is needed. Summative evaluations are often used to assist with decisions concerning the retention or expansion of programs and also for funding and resource allocation decisions.

Educational evaluation is seen as distinctly different from traditional educational research by several authors (e.g., Borg & Gall, 1989; Eichelberger, 1989; Eisner, 1985a; Guba & Lincoln, 1983, 1988; Madaus et al., 1983; Worthen & Sanders, 1973). Worthen and Sanders have provided a definition of research and described it as a process designed to obtain knowledge that is generalizable, that contributes to the development of theoretical models, and that is accomplished by contriving and testing claims about the relationship(s) among specific variables.

Worthen and Sanders further distinguished evaluation from research based on several defining characteristics. For example, research and evaluation have been undertaken for different reasons according to the authors. Research has been used largely to satisfy one's own search for knowledge while evaluation is used to assist in the solution

of a practical problem. The objective of each style of inquiry has been different as well. Research has aspired for conclusions while evaluation has been more focused on decision-making. Worthen and Sanders described research as striving to explain phenomena and as searching for laws with which to understand and predict cause-effect relationships, while evaluation has been more descriptive in nature and has sought to define phenomena idiographically with respect to a scale of value. Moreover, research has assessed the scientific truth of phenomena while evaluation has served to assess the social utility or worth of something. The results of research have also tended to be more generalizable than the results of an evaluation which have tended to be more situation-specific. The criteria for determining the usefulness of either an evaluation or research project has also been different according to Worthen and Sanders. Research has been judged based on issues of internal and external validity while evaluation has been judged based on its isomorphism and credibility. Internal validity refers to the degree to which the results are not confounded by sources of error variance while external validity refers to the degree to which the results are generalizable. Isomorphism refers to the degree to which the information obtained is congruent with the reality-based information desired while credibility refers to the degree to which the information obtained is viewed as believable to the clients who need to use the information. Worthen and Sanders continued on to identify difference in training needs and disciplinary perspectives as well. Worthen and Sanders perceived both evaluation and research as being interested with values but the styles of inquiry differ in the degree to which the approaches view values as important. They assumed a similar stance with the investigative techniques employed

by research and evaluation and felt there were more similarities among the methodologies used than differences although there are others who have not shared this view (e.g., Guba & Lincoln, 1983, 1988; Stufflebeam, 1983).

While Worthen and Sander's distinctions between research and evaluation were described over 20 years ago, the debate regarding whether evaluation is a type of research or a separate discipline continues into the present literature (e.g., Anderson, 1990; Eichelberger, 1989; Gay, 1992; Sheehan & Snyder, 1996). For example, Anderson has identified 10 points on which research and evaluation differ, many of which are similar to those defining characteristics specified by Worthen and Sanders. Similarly, Sheehan and Snyder list seven distinctions between program evaluation and basic research but also recognize the similarities between the two forms of inquiry including appropriate sampling, measurement, and design-analysis considerations. Eichelberger (1989) considers evaluation to be a separate form of inquiry due to the focus of evaluation on applied problems with less concern regarding generalizability. However, the distinction between research and evaluation is not always made clear in the professional literature (Royce et al., 1982). More recently, Gay (1992) has argued for viewing evaluation as a type of research with the purpose being to facilitate decision-making. He bases his argument on the assumption that, in actuality, only a fine line exists between research and evaluation. According to Gay, research in education often occurs in a natural setting and is subject to many of the same control-issues seen in many evaluations. Likewise, as posited by Gay, evaluations can utilize traditional research designs. Both forms of inquiry involve decision-making and use steps that parallel those of the scientific method. These

considerations have led Gay to suggest that, while the issue is not resolved, the case seems stronger for classifying evaluation as a form of research rather than as a separate, and distinctly different discipline.

### Models of Program Evaluation

Royce et al. (1982) have written that there are probably as many types of evaluation models as there are authors on the topic and that there exists a multitude of taxonomies in use to categorize the different models. For example, Royce et al. define two broad classes of evaluation models: outcome evaluation and process evaluation. Outcome evaluations are concerned with the effects of a process or program, while process evaluations are concerned with refining a process or program while still in its development phase. Worthen and Sanders (1973) described three categories of evaluation models: (1) judgmental strategies, (2) decision management strategies, and (3) decision objective strategies. Snyder and Sheehan (1993) have proposed five types of evaluation approaches which they refer to as (1) needs assessment evaluation, (2) program process evaluation, (3) impact evaluation, (4) cost evaluation, and (5) ecological evaluation. Several other authors have provided distinct taxonomies as well for organizing evaluation models (e.g., Borg & Gall, 1989; Morell, 1979; Popham, 1988).

Popham (1988) has provided a simple, but useful taxonomy for understanding the different evaluation models. His taxonomy consists of the following five categories: (1) goal attainment models, (2) judgmental models emphasizing inputs, (3) judgmental models emphasizing outputs, (4) decision-facilitative models, and (5) naturalistic models. Although Popham clearly expresses that there is overlap among the categories and that

his taxonomy is by no means the only way to view evaluation models, each of Popham's five categories will be discussed in greater detail.

**Goal Attainment Models.** Goal attainment models, according to Popham, are concerned with determining the degree to which a particular program's instructional goals were achieved. Ralph W. Tyler, who is considered by many to be the “Father of Educational Evaluation” (Madaus et al., 1983) first conceptualized evaluation in the 1930's as a comparison of intended outcomes with actual outcomes (Tyler, 1983). In Tyler's model, objectives are developed and defined behaviorally and then measured in order to determine the outcome of instruction on learning. Tyler shifted the focus from measuring organizational and teaching inputs to measuring actual student learning outcomes and comparing those outcomes with previously defined objectives. Another example of a goal attainment model according to Popham can be found in the work of Hammond (1973) who also focuses on whether a program has achieved it's intended objectives but provides a broader perspective than that of Tyler.

**Judgmental Models Emphasizing Inputs.** Popham describes this category of evaluation models as being most concerned with professional judgements related to criteria that are intrinsic to the target of the evaluation. Using professional judgement along with preestablished evaluative criteria, the evaluator directly determines how favorable or unfavorable the evaluation results will appear. A prominent example of this type of evaluation is the accreditation model according to Popham. Accreditation typically is based upon the judgement by a panel or committee of professionals who compare an individual, institution, program, etc. with a set of predetermined evaluative

standards. While accreditation remains a popular method of evaluation, Popham cites the lack of empirical evidence linking certain input factors (e.g., number of books in the library, training of the school staff, etc.) to actual final learning outcomes, which has led to a growing dissatisfaction with the accreditation approach among some educators.

**Judgmental Models Emphasizing Outputs.** This category of evaluation models also relies on the use of professional judgement to determine the worth of the target of the evaluation, but the focus is on the outcome, or the effects, of the object under study (Popham, 1988). An example of this type of evaluation, according to Popham, can be seen in the work of Scriven (1966, 1974) and Stake (1967). Scriven (1966) suggested looking beyond just comparing the program outcome to its goals and objectives, and recommended evaluating the goals and objectives of the evaluation itself in conjunction with measuring the outcome of the program. If the goals and objectives are not inherently valuable or appropriate, argued Scriven, then measuring the ability of the program to meet those goals was counterproductive. Scriven's views later evolved into a goal-free evaluation approach (Scriven, 1974) whereby Scriven contended that considering the goals of an evaluation for study was an unnecessary and possibly contaminating step. He suggested instead to compare the outcome of a program with a profile of needs that were broader in scope than goals and objectives. Goals were no longer an essential aspect of the evaluation according to Scriven and that using goals as outcome measures provided too limited a picture of the program effectiveness.

Stake (1967) proposed the countenance model which relies on determining the interrelationships between the antecedents, transactions, and outcomes of a program in

such a way that a 3 X 4 matrix of information is developed to assist decision makers.

Antecedents, as described by Stake, are any conditions that existed prior to the educational program under study. Transactions are considered the countless interactions or learning opportunities that comprise education. Outcomes are the abilities, achievements, aptitudes, or aspirations resulting from experience with the educational program under study. Stake's model is based on collecting descriptive data with which to determine the actual and the intended contingencies that link the antecedents, transactions, and outcomes and making judgements regarding predetermined standards for each antecedent, transaction, and outcome.

**Decision-Facilitation Models.** According to Popham, the decision-facilitation models are designed to provide information to decision makers and are not likely to include professional judgements. Using this approach, the evaluator gathers the relevant information, and then presents it to the decision-maker who is responsible for making the determination of worth or value. A prime example of a decision-facilitative model, according to Popham, is the CIPP model proposed by Stufflebeam. CIPP stands for context evaluation, input evaluation, process evaluation, and product evaluation and while each level of a CIPP evaluation can occur independently of the others, the four levels are synergistic as well (Stufflebeam, 1983). The CIPP model was developed in the 1960's as an alternative to the view of evaluation as an accountability tool only (Stufflebeam, 1983). Stufflebeam proposed that evaluation could be used to improve programs rather than just to prove or disprove the utility of programs. According to Stufflebeam, the CIPP model was intended to promote growth and help decision-makers

systematically obtain information that would help them meet their intended goals to the best of their resources. The CIPP model was the first comprehensive framework developed with the primary intention of helping decision-makers and has been widely used in educational evaluation (Popham, 1988).

According to Stufflebeam and his associates (Stufflebeam et al., 1971; Stufflebeam, 1983), context evaluation involves identifying the strengths and needs of an object, gathering relevant information, and then determining objectives to guide the improvement of the object of study. The purpose of input evaluation is to determine how best to achieve the predetermined goals and objectives in order to bring about the desired changes. Strategies and procedural designs are analyzed with respect to the resources that are available and a plan is selected by the decision-makers to promote the attainment of the goals and objectives. Process evaluation involves the ongoing monitoring and assessment of the implementation of the plan designed to bring about the desired changes. Process evaluation has several purposes according to Stufflebeam (1983). It can be useful for providing feedback regarding the extent to which the strategies or program activities are being carried out as planned and provide guidance for modifying the plan as needed. Process evaluation can also provide an extensive record of the plan that was actually implemented and how it compared to what was intended. It can also provide a full account of the various costs and resources utilized to implement the plan. Lastly, product evaluation is described by Stufflebeam (Stufflebeam et al., 1971; Stufflebeam, 1983) as a means by which to ascertain the extent to which the plan or program has met the needs of the group it was intended to serve. Product evaluation is used to measure, interpret, and

judge the attainments of a program in order for decision-makers to then determine whether a given program is worth continuing, repeating, or expanding to another setting. This is accomplished by gathering information and comparing it to predetermined standards which can include the culmination of data recorded during the context, input, and process evaluation stages. Product evaluation can occur as an on-going component of a program evaluation or as a final analysis. It can also be used to determine the potential long-term effects of a program. While Stufflebeam (1983) provides suggestions for methodology for context, input, and process evaluations, there is not set methodology for product evaluations. Stufflebeam et al. (1971) summarizes context evaluation as laying the foundation for later product evaluation while input evaluation provides the foundation for later process evaluation.

Another example of a decision-facilitative model is the discrepancy model, according to Popham (1988). The discrepancy model, as initially proposed by Provus (1971), consists of five stages (i.e., design, installation, process, product, and cost) whereby comparisons are made between actual performance with predetermined standards and the presence of a discrepancy between actual and intended outcomes is determined. The resulting discrepancy information is then used to make decisions regarding whether the program should be terminated or proceed as is, and whether either it's performance or standards, or both, should be altered.

Steinmetz (1983) elaborated on the discrepancy model and provided suggestions for how to create a standard using an input-process-output analysis for each standard to be developed. Input refers to the resources, staff, and other inherent characteristics of the

program. Process refers to the strategies that could bring about the desired changes.

Output refers to the actual objectives the program is trying to realize. Once the standards are determined, and performance information is measured, the discrepancy between the two can be used to make decisions regarding the adequacy or worth of the program.

Steinmetz, like Stufflebeam, also indicates the importance of not only determining the attainment of the desired objectives, but also determining how closely the process implemented to achieve the objectives matched the intended plan.

As can be seen in both of the discrepancy and CIPP models, there is a strong emphasis on developing goals and objectives and in designing programs to meet those objectives. There is even the inclusion of making judgements to a certain degree. However, as Popham (1988) clearly indicates, that although these models contain elements that overlap with other categories of evaluation, their primary focus on assisting decision makers is what sets them apart as decision-facilitative models.

Although not directly considered by Popham as a decision-facilitative model, one might include the stakeholder-based evaluation model (e.g., Weiss, 1983) within this category based on its focus on assisting groups with decision-making. According to Weiss (1983), the cornerstone of stakeholder-based evaluation is the appreciation that each program affects many groups, and each group may have divergent and possibly incompatible concerns regarding the program under study. Each of these groups contain people who make decisions about the program and whose lives are affected by the program and its evaluation. These people are referred to as "stakeholders." In stakeholder-based evaluation, the focus of the evaluation is on providing information for

the stakeholders in order to help them make decisions. The stakeholder approach puts a premium on flexibility and the ability to respond to changing needs as the evaluation progresses. Stakeholder-based evaluation also places less emphasis on traditional quantitative assessment.

**Naturalistic Models.** Naturalistic, also referred to as qualitative, models of evaluation exemplify a distinctly different approach to program evaluation compared to the previously defined models (Popham, 1988). The qualitative approach proposes that the understanding of a phenomenon can only be developed with respect to the particular contextual and temporal conditions present and then only by appreciating the pattern of complex interactions that exist within that context (Guba & Lincoln, 1988). Furthermore, according to Guba and Lincoln (1988), the omnipresent values inevitably affect the outcome of the evaluation and cannot be ignored or discarded. As a result, qualitative models do not assume that using objective criteria or quantifiable information is the most suitable methodology for judging the value of a program and instead, rely more on the perspectives and values of those involved in the evaluation in order to determine the worth of the program (Borg & Gall, 1989).

Guba and Lincoln (1983, 1988) have discussed several axioms on which qualitative evaluation is philosophically different from quantitative evaluation and they have made a strong argument for keeping the two approaches distinct. For example, according to Guba and Lincoln, quantitative evaluation is based on the belief that reality is objective, singular, and partitionable into a multitude of variables that can be studied independently of human perception. Qualitative evaluations, on the other hand, believe

reality to be subjective, multiple, holistic, and built on human experience. Reality, to the qualitative evaluators cannot be broken apart and must be studied as an interactional whole while the quantitative evaluators believe the inquirer can maintain an objective separateness. Another axiom cited by Guba and Lincoln on which the two approaches differ is the nature of the purpose of the evaluation. Guba and Lincoln describe quantitative evaluation as searching for cause-effect linkages while qualitative evaluation is more concerned with gaining insight into the complex interactions and patterns that exist and believe attempting to identify cause-effect linkages in an evaluative situation is arbitrary and meaningless.

Guba and Lincoln (1988) also suggest characteristics in which the qualitative and quantitative approaches differ. Quantitative methodological strategies are linear, systematic, and invariant according to the authors while the qualitative approach is more circular, complex, and variable. The authors further describe the quantitative approach as a closed, rational, and convergent process while qualitative analysis is more open, intuitive, and divergent. The quantitative evaluator maintains a distance, or separateness, from the object of the study while the qualitative evaluator becomes immersed in the process or program under study. Qualitative analysis is continuously subjected to the impact of new information that has the potential to refine and even replace existing information, while quantitative analysis is more restricted by various constraints according to Guba and Lincoln.

Based on their discussion of the axioms on which qualitative and quantitative approaches differ, Guba and Lincoln (1983, 1988) have argued that the two approaches

represent distinctly different paradigms founded on uniquely different philosophies and as such, require distinctly different methodological approaches. Each methodology is bound up in the assumptions that define its paradigm and the elements cannot be mixed and matched according to Guba and Lincoln. There can be no accommodation or compromise between the two approaches and the authors suggest choosing between the two paradigms depending upon which better fits the phenomenon being studied. However, they strongly suggest the qualitative approach is, in their view, a far better choice for studying socio-behavioral phenomena than the quantitative approach.

Additional examples of qualitative evaluation include educational connoisseurship and educational criticism (Eisner, 1985a, 1985b); responsive evaluation (Stake, 1983), and ethnographic evaluation (Fetterman, 1988). According to Eisner (1985b), educational connoisseurship refers to the art of appreciation while educational criticism is the art of disclosure or the ability to describe, evaluate, and appraise an object of study to others. Both functions are necessary for an educational evaluation and represent two modes through which evaluators can come to understand and express what is known about the target of study. An evaluator must be a good connoisseur, and have developed a full appreciation developed over time, in order to be a good critic according to Eisner.

Responsive evaluation relies less on objectives or statements of goals and focuses more on natural communication (Stake, 1983). Stake, for example, has written that as the evaluation progresses and moves in unique and unexpected directions, the evaluation efforts need to be adaptable in order to be able to respond to those changes. Relying on pre-determined goals, objectives, standards, or plans would prevent the evaluation from

being responsive to the client's need for information. Although responsive evaluation may seem loose and less systematic, it does require planning and structure according to Stake but maintains flexibility by identifying and acknowledging certain "issues" as the evaluation proceeds. Stake considers human observers as the best data collection instruments for evaluation but also utilizes more objective data when called for.

Ethnographic evaluation is the process of applying ethnographic techniques and concepts to educational evaluation according to Fetterman (1988) and is used to assess the relative merits of an educational program, service, or system. Ethnographic evaluation is based upon two key elements: (1) conducting fieldwork and (2) maintaining cultural perspective. Fetterman considers the concept of contextualization, taken from the field of ethnography, as a significant contribution to the field of educational evaluation. As described by Fetterman, contextualization refers to the ability to provide information regarding the context of the situation in order to interpret data yielded from that situation. Ethnographic evaluation can clarify the relevant interrelationships and provide insights into the values that shape behavior, which then in turn, can be used to provide policy and programmatic recommendations (Fetterman, 1988).

While the qualitative evaluation perspective is relatively consistent regarding the purposes, and the approach to conducting an evaluation, continued debate persists regarding the role of quantitative evaluation within a qualitative design framework. For example, Guba and Lincoln (1983, 1988) vociferously argue against any melding of qualitative and quantitative methodology. Eisner (1985a, 1985b) is also more stringent against using quantitative data. However, other evaluators within the qualitative paradigm

have argued for combining the two methodological approaches based upon what type of information is needed (e.g., Fetterman 1988; Stake, 1983). The argument for or against combining qualitative and quantitative approaches continues outside of the qualitative perspective with a variety of evaluators endorsing a mix of methodologies (e.g., Borg & Gall, 1989; Cronbach, 1982; Fink, 1995; Royce et al., 1982) and others recommending a reduced reliance on quantitative techniques (e.g., Stufflebeam, 1983; Weiss, 1983).

Cronbach (1982) has argued that evaluators should not decide whether they belong to the qualitative perspective or the quantitative perspective and suggests that neither extreme position results in a better evaluation. Cronbach supports a mixed approach, with more dependence on empirical and objective information than qualitative evaluators may prefer, but a mixed approach nonetheless.

#### Program Evaluation Models in Early Childhood Education

In the field of early childhood education, evaluation has been alternately referred to as evaluation research, policy research, action research, field research, applied research, program evaluation, or evaluation (Royce et al., 1989). The use of the terms “research” and “evaluation” can have explicitly different connotations and implications depending upon the evaluator as described previously in this proposal, but seem to be used interchangeably in many early childhood education studies. For example, Messick and Barrows (1972) considered the key issues for research and evaluation to be the same for early childhood education as for any level of education. These issues included identifying the characteristics or variables of interest, determining the methodology, proposing a defensible interpretation of the results, and providing for generalization. Clearly, this last

issue of generalizability, is more related to the traditional research paradigm than to the program evaluation paradigm (Worthen & Sanders, 1973). Program evaluation is more concerned with the usefulness of the evaluation to provide results specific to the situation under study.

Powell and Sigel (1991) also referred to evaluation and research as synonymous terms and consider the purpose of early childhood program evaluation as providing information for policy planning, program planning, and theory building. Theory building is generally an activity associated with research while policy and program planning are terms generally associated with evaluation (e.g., Borg & Gall, 1989; Worthen & Sanders, 1973).

It may be that for the field of early childhood education, the distinctions between "research" and "evaluation" cannot be made as clearly as proponents of each field of inquiry would prefer. Early childhood education, with its dependence upon social funding agencies for its continued existence, has had to prove its efficacy as a theoretical principle, as well as prove its impact on a program-by-program basis in order to continue to receive funding and support. Early childhood education has had to answer the question, "Is early childhood education, in general, effective?" and the question "Is each singular program effective?," almost simultaneously blurring the distinctions between research and evaluation in the field of early childhood education. As Royce et al. (1982) have written, "evaluation research" is intended to be of practical use in decision making and policy formation but it may also extend its contribution to the further development of theory and theoretical constructs.

Historically, program evaluation has been used in early childhood education as a means by which to demonstrate the effectiveness of a given program (Dunst, 1986) or in order to obtain and/or continue to receive public funding (Sponseller & Fink, 1988). Program evaluation has also been applied in early childhood education as a tool to assist with decision-making (e.g., Jones, 1974; Wortham, 1990). However, Takanishi (1979) has argued that the sole purpose of early childhood program evaluation should not be to judge the efficacy or efficiency of a program or to provide information to policy or decision makers. Takanishi suggested that program evaluation in early childhood education should also be oriented toward program development and serving the needs of the staff and children for whom the program is designed.

Additionally, program evaluation has been used to improve the quality of services, monitor the progress of children in local programs, determine the effects of various types of interventions, provide information regarding program accountability, assist with decisions around resource allocations, and provide information to legislators pertaining to the long-term effects of early intervention (Hanson & Lynch, 1989). Takanishi and Feshbach (1982) also described program evaluation as a source of information for determining social policies in early childhood education.

Several authors have applied the principles of program evaluation to the field of early childhood education in order to provide suggestions or directions for inquiry (e.g., Hanson & Lynch, 1989; McGee-Brown, 1995; Mitchell, 1989; Royce et al., 1982; Sheehan & Keogh, 1982; Sponseller & Fink, 1988; Streifel, Killoran, & Quintero, 1991; Takanishi & Feshbach, 1982; Wang & Ellett, 1982; Wolery, 1987). For example, Hanson

and Lynch recommended using evaluation to provide answers for a variety of questions relevant to early childhood special education including the following: (1) whether the program was implemented as intended; (2) whether the program has the necessary resources needed; (3) whether the program is producing the desired effects; (4) whether the program is philosophically congruent with best practices; (5) whether the program users and participants are satisfied with it; and, (6) whether the costs of the program are worth the benefits of the program.

Streifel et al. (1991) have discussed program evaluation with respect to evaluating the success of an integrated or inclusionary preschool program serving both disabled and nondisabled children. Although the authors did not provide specific data, they proposed an evaluation model using multiple measures that provides information regarding child progress, identifies aspects of the program that may need modification, and results in the implementation of informed changes that maximize the benefits of the program in relation to the money and resources expended.

Sponseller and Fink (1988) have argued that while evaluating the product of early childhood education is important, it is equally important to evaluate the processes within the early education program being evaluated in order to determine program quality. The authors gave examples of processes to consider as those aspects of a program that are considered as goals but not as direct child academic outcomes including such facets as parent participation, staff development, community-involvement, and positive child development. Sponseller and Fink further suggested more emphasis be placed on formative evaluations in early education in order to promote higher program quality and

less emphasis on summative, product-oriented evaluations. Mitchell (1988) shared this broader view and suggested developing a more comprehensive approach to evaluation in early childhood education that attends to process as well as outcome or product evaluation, which can be formative or summative.

Several authors have recommended approaches to program evaluation in early childhood education that appear consistent with Popham's (1988) decision-facilitative category for evaluation models (e.g., Mitchell, 1989; Royce et al., 1982; Takanishi & Feshbach, 1982; Wang & Ellett, 1982; Wolery, 1987). These authors differ on their specific approaches to evaluation but share the same common purpose of evaluation as providing information that can be used to make decisions regarding a particular program. For example, Royce et al. discussed the goal or outcome model of evaluation as applied to early childhood special education. Within this model, the evaluator must link the implementation of the program to later program outcomes. Program outcomes, according to Royce et al. should not be measured solely by intelligence tests but should include multiple measures that are meaningful to the purpose of the evaluation. Although Royce et al. stressed the importance of identifying the program's goals and specific objectives and then collecting outcome data relevant to those goals and objectives, they considered the purpose of such information is for decision-making.

Similarly, Wolery (1987) identified the importance of evaluating the outcomes of local early childhood programs with respect to their goals and objectives but also viewed the purpose of evaluation as a decision-making function. Wolery referred to program evaluation as impact evaluation and suggested that impact studies shift more toward

evaluating the effects of intervention strategies and program components and away from evaluating the global efficacy of programs. This shift in evaluation focus, according to Wolery, would provide more answers to the questions regarding which types of intervention strategies are most effective for which types of children and under what conditions.

Sheehan and Keogh (1982) recommended a shift in the focus of program evaluation in early childhood special education consistent with Wolery's suggestions for local program evaluations. Sheehan and Keogh summarized formal evaluation models and commonly used designs and analyses in early childhood special education but argued that the search for a single main effect or single outcome measure to demonstrate the impact or efficacy of a program is likely futile. They suggested an approach they term a discriminant approach. Based, according to the authors, on statistical discriminant function techniques, the discriminant approach serves to differentiate particular program effects within programs and between children and their families. Sheehan and Keogh acknowledged that, in general, program evaluation in early childhood special education must be carried out within single programs, without controlled comparisons. They offered the discriminant approach as a means to gather useful and meaningful information without the benefit of a controlled-experimental design, by making comparisons within the program related to which child abilities or characteristics are most/least affected by the program and other intra-program comparisons.

Wang and Ellett (1982) used the term program validation to refer to a form of decision-oriented evaluation for innovative programs in early childhood education that

can serve any one of three purposes: (1) to determine the efficacy of the program in achieving its intended outcomes; (2) to determine the extent to which the program was implemented as intended; and/or, (3) to determine the context(s) in which the program was implemented. The authors advised that efficacy data alone are not enough to ensure a program's success in another setting or context. Rather, more information is needed regarding the extent to which the program was implemented as intended in the original design, and regarding the context(s) within which the program was carried out, before a program can be validated and then adopted or adapted to other settings.

Takanishi and Feshbach (1982) referred to the importance of program evaluation in early childhood special education with respect to answering to the concerns and issues raised by Congress regarding whether the program is being implemented according to legislative intent. The authors discussed policy-relevant evaluation and gave suggestions for policy-relevant evaluation questions such as are the intended beneficiaries being served? Policy-relevant questions are taken directly from the mandated guidelines relevant to the program being studied and provide federal and state decision-makers with information regarding the operation of early childhood programs. Takanishi and Feshbach stressed the political context of program evaluation and its obligation to contribute to the development of social policies.

Both Hatch (1998) and McGee-Brown (1995) suggested the use of a qualitative or naturalistic approach to program evaluation in early childhood education. Hatch proposed the use of qualitative evaluation in early childhood settings could be used to improve our understanding of social phenomena in new and enriched ways and also help individuals

make better decisions. McGee-Brown underscored the importance of considering the cultural context in the broad sense and suggested that naturalistic evaluation using qualitative techniques can provide the needed data to determine the efficacy or efficiency of early childhood programs. While McGee-Brown indicated there is no easy or universal formula for developing a qualitative evaluation design, strategies for data collection such as participant observation and interviewing techniques are discussed along with methods for data analysis.

#### Program Evaluation Studies in Early Childhood Education

Waxler, Thompson, and Poblete (1990) described a "formative evaluation" of two Head Start transition programs but the authors did not specify how the evaluation was carried out. Information was obtained from parents, preschool teachers, and kindergarten teachers but a specific evaluation model or design was not alluded to nor presented.

Herzog, Newcomb, and Cisin (1974) used the term program evaluation to describe their analysis of a preschool program at Howard University. The authors questioned whether disadvantaged children could receive benefit from a traditional preschool program like what was available to many middle-class children. If low-income children were able to receive benefit, the authors argued, then more preschool programs could be established more quickly because specialized training would not be necessary. Herzog et al. used an experimental design with a group that received intervention and another group that did not. Each group underwent a battery of standardized tests including the Stanford-Binet, the Merrill Palmer Scales of Mental Tests, and the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities. The results indicated that the children who had received

intervention did not improve as much as had been hoped and that the children who more closely resembled the middle class in terms of socioeconomic status made the most improvement. A three-year follow-up showed the benefits to mostly wash out over time. The authors suggested the primary purpose of evaluation in early childhood education be directed toward determining the methods that most benefit young children rather than toward determining whether or not early childhood education is effective. The authors also recommended that standardized tests were not enough for a satisfactory evaluation and that more qualitative and descriptive information should be used in conjunction with quantitative data. Although this study was described as a program evaluation, a specific evaluation model or plan was not implied.

Deutsch, Taleporos, and Victor (1974) provided both qualitative and quantitative information in their program evaluation of a preschool program serving low income children in New York City. The academic progress of a group of pre-kindergarten students was followed for five years into third grade. Deutsch et al. used standardized tests such as the Stanford-Binet, the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities, the Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Test, and the Metropolitan Achievement Tests as well as collecting qualitative data from anecdotal records, open-ended interviews, unsolicited letters, and informal conversations. Their results indicated that the children who had attended the intervention program demonstrated immediate benefits but that these gains in development tended to diminish over time to where they were scoring similarly to their control peers by third grade. The authors found many limitations created by the use of standardized tests and called for the development and

utilization of more relevant measures. They also advised that future evaluations recognize that programs operate in an entire social context and often within a socio-political context that acts to influence the effectiveness of an early education program.

Datta, McHale, and Mitchell (1974) provided a summary of national evaluations of Head Start Programs from 1966-1969. Although these authors did not provide a specific evaluation model or plan, they did differentiate two purposes of their investigation. From a research perspective, the authors wrote, the data obtained contributes to the theoretical underpinnings of early childhood education and permits a refining of hypotheses and constructs. From the policy perspective, the findings provided guidance for program development and evaluation. Datta et al. also made reference to the original objectives of Head Start and commented that every program evaluation they considered made an attempt to collect data relevant to those objectives. However, according to Datta et al., it was difficult to find or construct measures that are reliable, easy to administer, readily interpreted, and psychologically meaningful across age and cultural groups.

Datta et al. examined four factors with respect to how each factor impacted children's development. These four factors were (1) family background characteristics, (2) child characteristics, (3) program and teacher characteristics, and (4) combinations of program/teacher and child characteristics. The findings reported showed that virtually all children gained from their Head Start experience. Younger children gained more in social adjustment and general cognitive development while older children gained more in the acquisition of specific skills. Datta et al. also found that the children with the lowest

initial IQ scores made the greatest gains in cognitive development. Datta et al. found that program characteristics and curriculum did have an impact on the gains made by the children. Programs that emphasized cognitive development resulted in children with stronger cognitive gains while programs that emphasized other aspects of child development (e.g., social adjustment, school readiness, academic achievement, or achievement motivation) showed stronger gains in their respective areas of emphasis. Although the authors attempted to study whether specific groups of children benefit more from specific program or curriculum approaches, they reported not having a strong enough sample in order to document any interpretable results.

Odom and Fewell (1983) investigated the use of program evaluation to study early childhood special education programs. Using meta-analysis, Odom and Fewell compared the program evaluations of 22 early childhood intervention programs serving disabled children. These programs were demonstration projects from the Handicapped Children's Early Education Program (HCEEP) network and consisted of both home- and center-based programs and served children with special needs ranging in age from birth to six-years. After a three year demonstration phase, each project submitted an evaluation report to the Joint Dissemination and Review Panel (JDRP) for verification that the programs were having actual benefits for the participants. The panel then made summative judgements about the adequacy of the program evaluation for demonstrating program effectiveness. All 22 programs were validated by the JDRP and were considered exemplary models of early childhood education at the time of their implementation. The authors found that the majority of the program evaluations were limited by their inability

to use a true experimental design and as a result generally consisted of single-group or single-subject pretest-posttest designs although some included a nonequivalent control group. Odom and Fewell identified three reasons for the difficulty in using true experimental designs in early childhood special education program evaluation: (1) there is no opportunity to assign children randomly to treatment conditions; (2) once a child is determined to be disabled, there are ethical considerations involved regarding denying services by assigning to a non-treatment control group; and, (3) limited resources and opportunities often prevent the ability to obtain data on a nonequivalent control group.

Program components related to implementation of the intervention were well specified in 19 of 22 of the evaluations, and 15 of the evaluation reports specifically stated the goals of the program as reported by Odom and Fewell (1983). However, Odom and Fewell did not make any reference or acknowledgement of whether particular program evaluation models were employed to define and guide the evaluation process. Most of the programs used norm or criterion referenced outcome measures to document program impact along with information regarding the child's next educational placement. Parent and teacher ratings, classroom observations, and parent satisfaction were also used although less frequently. Seven of the 22 programs included qualitative information alongside their quantitative data such as descriptions of child progress, unsolicited letters or endorsements, case studies, anecdotal reports, or descriptions of community impact.

Eiserman, McCoun, and Escobar (1990) provided an example of a cost-effectiveness evaluation of two preschool programs designed to serve children with identified speech delays. One program was a home-based program with the parents

receiving training around improving their child's speech while the other program was clinic-based with little parent involvement. The children who received speech intervention from their parents at home performed significantly better on measures of speech and language skills as well as on a measure of general development than the children who received speech intervention at the clinic. The cost-analysis revealed that, excluding the value of parent time, there were no meaningful differences in cost between the two programs. The authors concluded that parents, with the necessary training, can be effective change agents with their children and can serve as viable supports to an early intervention program.

Walsh and Deitchman (1980) have drawn attention to the importance of including parents in any early childhood program evaluation. The authors provided support for this assumption by presenting data from a series of pretest-posttest, single group designs. Parents and teachers of children attending a typical preschool program serving nondisabled children completed a developmental rating scale constructed by one of the authors. Walsh and Deitchman found that teachers were more likely to identify developmental growth in the children over time than the parents. The authors offered several possible explanations for this finding including the possibility that parents initially overrated their children, the possibility that teachers are more sensitive to developmental changes than parents as a result of their training and experience, and also the differences in environments in which the children were observed (at home by the parents, and at school by the teachers). Walsh and Deitchman concluded that including parents in program evaluation is beneficial and necessary if the potential of early

childhood education is to be realized.

Blaska (1989) surveyed early childhood special education teachers, kindergarten teachers, and relevant administrators across 22 school districts in order to evaluate a preschool to kindergarten model based on transition practices identified by a panel of four experts in early childhood education. With an 87.5% return rate, the most notable result, according to Blaska, was the discrepancy found between what the respondents rated as very important versus what transition practices were actually implemented. Blaska found that the practices perceived as most important were not the same as those practices actually applied.

Although program evaluation has been utilized in early childhood education from its inception (e.g., Royce et al., 1982) the majority of the studies do not indicate a particular model of program evaluation, present a plan for implementing the program evaluation, clearly identify the purpose of the study as a program evaluation, or differentiate program evaluation from traditional research. Another example comes from Goodwin (1974). From a field of 50 early childhood education programs, Goodwin found that only a few of the program evaluations used any conceptual framework, and even in those cases where a conceptual framework was identified, the frameworks were not systematically applied. However, the studies cited have demonstrated the need for continued specificity of program evaluation (e.g., Odom & Fewell, 1983), the need for a shift in thinking from evaluating the impact of programs to evaluating the impact of specific intervention strategies and program components (e.g., Sheehan & Keogh, 1982; Wolery, 1987), the need to focus program evaluation on the processes involved in early

childhood education (e.g., Sponseller & Fink, 1988); the need for program evaluation to be responsive to program development issues (e.g., Takanishi, 1979); the need for broader outcome measures and multiple measures (e.g., Royce et al., 1982; Streifel et al., 1991), and the need for parent involvement as a component of program evaluation (e.g., Walsh & Deitchman, 1980).

### Models for Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Programs

In response to the call for broader outcome measures and the need for increased evaluation of more specific aspects of program efficacy, several researchers have turned their attention and efforts toward the process of transitioning young non-disabled preschool children into kindergarten programs (e.g., Logue & Love, 1992; Love, Logue, Trudeau, & Thayer, 1992; Maxwell & Eller, 1994; Stief, 1994; Ziegler, 1985), while others have studied the process of transitioning young disabled preschool children into kindergarten programs (e.g., Atwater, Orth-Lopes, Elliott, Carta, & Schwartz, 1994; Conn-Powers, Ross-Allen, & Holburn, 1990; Diamond, Spiegel-McGill, & Hanrahan, 1988; Fowler, 1982; Fowler, Chandler, Johnson, & Stella, 1988; Fowler, Schwartz, & Atwater, 1991; Gelfer & McCarthy, 1994; Hains, Fowler, & Chandler, 1988; Johnson, Chandler, Kerns, & Fowler, 1986; Rice & O'Brien, 1990; Rosenkoetter, Hains, & Fowler, 1994; Striefel et al., 1991; Wolery, 1989). Although many of these proposed transition models for young children have not yet been field-tested--- nor are they data-based--- they nevertheless provide a theoretical framework for later outcome research.

When considering non-disabled preschool children, Maxwell and Eller (1994), for example, have maintained that the following are important factors that influence a child's

successful transition: (1) the child's skills and prior school-related experiences; (2) the child's home life and interactions with his or her parents; and, (3) the characteristics of the preschool and kindergarten classrooms. They also recommended providing guided opportunities for social development, discussions with parents around kindergarten goals and issues, and providing a developmentally appropriate classroom.

Ziegler (1985) also recommended parent involvement in the transition process and describes several specific preschool activities to promote a successful transition from a typical preschool program to kindergarten for non-disabled young children. For example, she stated that preschool programs need to develop a plan for the transition to kindergarten and incorporate related books, storytelling, calendars, maps, and dramatic play opportunities into their daily activities in order to help prepare the children for the transition. She also suggested allowing time for the children to share their feelings about moving on to kindergarten and occasions to model feelings also.

In 1987, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services published a booklet designed for early childhood teachers and administrators that was designed to ease the transition from preschool to kindergarten. Although not developed specifically for developmentally delayed children, the booklet has implications for disabled as well as non-disabled young children. The booklet defined four "keys to a successful transition" (p.5) and recommends that educational staff in both settings play equally important roles in ensuring a smooth transition. The four keys were:

- (1) providing program continuity through developmentally appropriate curricula for preschool and kindergarten children;

- (2) maintaining on-going communication and cooperation between preschool and kindergarten staff;
- (3) preparing children for transition; and,
- (4) involving parents in the transition. (p.5)

Specific transition activities were described and include the following: (1) the need to understand how young children learn and what are developmentally appropriate practices; (2) the importance of providing opportunities for communication and cooperation between sending and receiving staff members through such activities as open houses, visitations, or through committee participation; (3) the need to prepare children through visitations, storybooks, dramatic play, and planning; and, (4) how to involve parents by providing them with information about their child and about the transition process, encouraging their participation and attendance at transition events, and arranging for them to visit the new school.

Logue and Love (1992) cited the importance of administrative support and collaboration when young children are transitioning into kindergarten programs. Although the needs of special education students in particular are not addressed, the authors concluded based on a national transition study that public schools do not place a high priority on transition activities (Love, Logue, Trudeau, & Thayer, 1992). In their study, they found that schools with a transition process were more likely to be schools with the presence of a pre-kindergarten program in the building, a high level of poverty among students and families, and a high degree of administrative support. The authors suggested that there is not a single way to implement a transition process that is

appropriate for all schools. They encouraged school principals to become initiators of a plan that would tailor the process of transition to the unique needs of their schools.

In her report to the National Governor's Association, Stief (1994) described several components of effective transition services including developmentally appropriate practices at both the preschool and kindergarten level, parent involvement in the transition process, a continuum of family-focused and community-based services, communication and collaboration between preschool and elementary school staff, and planned activities to prepare children for the transition to kindergarten. She advocated for shared decision-making and the specific assignment of roles and responsibilities among all parties who are participating in the transition process. She also recommended specific timelines for transition activities and continuous program evaluation and improvement.

Transition models that are designed and proposed for non-disabled children are helpful to the extent that they provide an underlying foundation for developing transition models for young disabled children. The educational and social-emotional needs of young disabled children, however, can be significantly different from their typically-developing peers. As such, a successful transition process for young children with handicaps may need to incorporate different elements to fit the special needs of young disabled preschool children. For example, Fowler and her associates (e.g., Fowler, 1982; Fowler, et al., 1988; Fowler et al., 1991; Hains et al., 1988; Johnson et al., 1986) have considered the special needs of disabled preschool children and have provided suggestions for successful transition. In one discussion, Fowler presented a general model for preschool transition that focused on ensuring educational success in the receiving kindergarten program

(Fowler, 1982). She recommended a process that first entailed identifying the differences between preschool and kindergarten. The next step consisted of preparing the children for transition by teaching them the specific skills necessary to function in the kindergarten classroom including basic social and self-help skills. A third component of her model was to establish and maintain communication between the preschool and kindergarten teachers before, during, and after each child's transition. No data were presented, however, to support this particular model.

In another study, Hains et al. (1988) summarized what they believed to be key issues involved in planning transitions for young children with special needs moving from preschool to kindergarten. Specifically, they indicated that the roles of the child, family, teachers, and the educational agencies were all critical to the transition process. They base this premise on three assumptions that they believe to be decisive elements of a successful transition: (1) the need to understand a child's current level of development in terms of skills and behavior; (2) the need to examine the demands of the receiving environment: and, (3) the need for a collaborative partnership between teachers, parents, and receiving school teams.

Bruder and Chandler (1996) identified four primary components of transition for young children with special needs. The first component addressed the role of state and local agencies and recommended the development of cooperative arrangements among agencies to facilitate transition. State and local agencies also need formal communication mechanisms according to the authors to ensure the giving and receiving of information necessary for transition. Agencies also need time for planning and preparation. The

second component in Bruder and Chandler's model addressed the role of the family and other caregivers. This group needs to be informed early of upcoming transitions and families should be able to initiate transitions by requesting a change in service delivery. Families and caregivers need comprehensive information about the transition process and should have the opportunity to visit program options and to meet jointly with their child's sending and receiving teams. Bruder and Chandler recommended training for service providers regarding transition and working with families. They also suggested that a service coordinator is assigned to each family to assume the key role of a contact person to help families understand transition and service delivery procedures. The third component identified by Bruder and Chandler addressed the roles of the sending and receiving service delivery teams. All service providers must be familiar with transition policies and practices and should be knowledgeable of services options and resources. Bruder and Chandler also recommended that service providers visit each others' programs and share information regarding their observations. An additional point was made by the authors that requires receiving teams to take the initiative in preparing any other individuals for the child's transition including the children that will be in the child's classroom. The final component of Bruder and Chandler's model addressed the role of the child by identifying important skills necessary for the child to transition successfully into the new program and then incorporating these skills into the child's current program in order to prepare him or her for the next setting. Additional critical topics for transition, according to Bruder and Chandler, included having administrative support for planning, personnel training around transition issues, and the evaluation of the transition process.

The authors argued that evaluating the transition process is often the weakest part of the transition plan but should be considered a critical piece of any transition plan. As described by Bruder and Chandler, evaluation of the transition plan should include both formative and summative measures of each component of the transition process.

Evaluation of the transition plan should also include a follow-up measure that determines the family's and child's adjustment after the child has begun the new program. Finally, the authors contended that transition must be seen as a continuation of a child's intervention plan and not as an isolated process.

An earlier article by Chandler (1993) focused more on preparing the child and family for the move to the new program and supporting them as they adjust to the new program. Chandler suggested that this could be accomplished by developing a list of skills necessary for successful transition into kindergarten and then developing methods for teaching these skills. Chandler identified four general categories of transition skills related to a successful transition: (1) social behaviors and classroom conduct; (2) communication behaviors; (3) task-related behaviors; and, (4) self-help behaviors. While Chandler focused on specific steps for preparing children for transition, she also recommended encouraging parent involvement. Lastly, she indicated the importance of having the receiving teachers adopt the strategies and methods used in the preschool setting to support generalization. Chandler did not, however, provide data to support her recommendations. Sainato and Lyons (1989) and Carta, Atwater, Schwartz, and Miller (1990) have also focused their attention on determining and analyzing the specific setting characteristics and behavioral expectations of kindergarten in order to facilitate the

transition from preschool to kindergarten for children with disabilities.

In their review of the research literature, Atwater et al. (1994) summarized that teaching functional skills for transition remains an important element for kindergarten success. The authors cautioned, however, that the skills that need to be taught will vary depending upon the developmental level of the disabled child and the programs involved. Atwater et al. suggested that transition activities focus on teaching functional learning "readiness" skills such as being able to attend, participate in a group, follow directions, and behaviors associated with engaging in self-directed learning activities. Transition activities should also focus on moving the child toward increasing independence within an inclusionary setting with particular emphasis on play and social skills.

Increasing the independence of young children with special needs as a component of transition was also identified by Johnson, Gallagher, Cook, and Wong (1995). Johnson et al. surveyed 176 kindergarten teachers from urban, rural, and suburban school districts and determined that the skills related to academic readiness was less important to teachers than were the skills related to independence. The authors suggested transition is a "delicate but manageable matter" but that by understanding the expectations of the next setting and preparing the child, the transition from early intervention to kindergarten services can be less stressful and more successful.

Using a broader ecological-developmental framework, Diamond et al. (1988) developed a model for preschool transition based on the earlier work of Bronfenbrenner (1986). According to this framework, a child's development is considered in relation to his or her environment. Interaction patterns are studied in order to understand the

development and coping strategies of the child.

Using the ecological-developmental perspective, Diamond et al. (1988) sought to create and support linkages between home, preschool, and the receiving program through a 15-step transition process that began in September of the child's last year in preschool and concluded with a follow-up step in October of the child's kindergarten year. The first step involved planning for transition early in the school year and using the Individualized Education Program (IEP) as a mechanism for preparing the child for the next least restrictive educational setting. The model then proposed several steps for developing communication between the preschool, family, and the receiving program. Toward the end of the school year, a formal multidisciplinary team meeting was held with the parents to determine placement and develop a new IEP. The process concluded with a follow-up contact with the parents approximately one month after the child has begun kindergarten. By considering the child's home, preschool, and future kindergarten program in the transition process, it was assumed the transition would be less likely to breakdown and would be more likely to be a smooth and successful change for the child, family and school.

According to Diamond et al., this transition model has been in effect for the last five years at the Center for Child Study at Skidmore College. The authors reported that the model has been used successfully to plan and implement transition plans for all of the children attending the special education preschool as they moved to a kindergarten program from among 11 local public school districts. The authors did not, however, provide any data, nor describe what they considered as indicators of a "successful"

transition in their report.

Although Diamond et al. based their model on ecological-developmental theory, Rice and O'Brien (1990) have suggested that in general, "no consistent theoretical framework has guided work in the area of transition"(p.2). According to Rice and O'Brien, a comprehensive transition model would include the child, family, and school aspects but would also incorporate influential social and cultural factors and how all of these facets interact. This perspective follows the "ecocultural niche" model supported by Rice and O'Brien which views the child as a member of a family which is in turn, a part of a broader social and cultural community. In an unpublished manuscript (as cited by Rice & O'Brien, 1990,) Gallimore, Weisner, Kaufman, and Bernheimer (1989) suggested several features of the ecocultural niche model that are relevant for transition planning. Gallimore et al. asserted that there are multidimensional, interconnected influences on families and that these influences fall into a hierarchy. The model also presupposed a social constructivist perspective which holds important the family's view of circumstances, not what others' see or perceive.

According to Striefel et al. (1991), transition planning begins on the first day of the child's entrance into the special education preschool setting. They proposed a functional model consisting of four phases that occur simultaneously. The four phases included: (1) interagency planning; (2) transdisciplinary staff preparation; (3) parent preparation; and, (4) service delivery to the child based on his/her IEP. At each and every IEP meeting with the family, transition procedures are discussed and formal transition planning begins six months prior to the child entering kindergarten services. The authors

provided a sequence of steps to be accomplished within each phase of the transition process.

Gelfer and McCarthy (1994) identified five essential components of a preschool to kindergarten transition process that focuses on the development of goals and objectives determined by the transition planning team based on the child's needs. The final component in Gelfer's and McCarthy's model involved evaluating the effectiveness of the transition plan.

In a planning document distributed by the Colorado Department of Education (1994), quality standards for preschool to kindergarten transition are outlined including 21 specific steps toward providing a successful transition. The focus of the document was on planning ahead for the transition, respecting the family's needs, and actively involving the parents, child, and receiving program in the transition process. Although these quality standards have been developed and are required for young children with disabilities, the Colorado Department of Education recommends this transition plan for all children and families.

More recently, Wilson (1998) has posited a transition model based on careful planning at the agency, direct service, and family levels. Such planning can provide a "safety net" for families according to Wilson that should allow for an overlap of services and supports while the child adjusts to the new program. At the agency level, Wilson recommended interagency collaboration with a written transition plan developed for each family based upon written agreements among the agencies that reflect a shared philosophy, as well as shared responsibilities and resources. At the direct service level,

information between the sending and receiving teams is exchanged regarding the child and the program and visits are made to each other's programs. At this time, the skills necessary for a successful transition are identified for the child and incorporated into his or her current program. At the family level, parents are given the opportunity to participate in all aspects of the transition process. As described by Wilson, families are kept fully informed and are encouraged to visit program options for their child, meet new staff, and foster the skills necessary for transition identified for their child. Wilson also indicated that a transition plan should include current evaluation of the child, a discussion of possible options for placement, visits made to those program options, the selection of the program, the verification of the child's eligibility for continued services, completion of an application or registration for enrollment in the selected program, preparation of the child and receiving program, and monitoring of the child and family's adjustment to the new program.

While models for transition planning are helpful in establishing a transition process for young children, the majority of the models discussed thus far have not been data-based nor field-tested in order to determine how well the models actually meet the needs of children, families, and school programs (Fowler et al., 1991). Although transition has been a significant issue in education since the 1960's, when educators and funding resources alike became interested in whether the gains in development attained by children in Head Start programs would be maintained in elementary school, controlled research on the effectiveness of transition programs has been limited (Stief, 1994). There have been studies, however, that have shown positive results for a variety of transition

processes and activities (e.g., Fowler et al., 1988; Fowler et al., 1991; Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman, 1990; Johnson et al., 1986; Waxler, Thompson, & Poblete, 1990)

### Empirical Studies of Preschool to Kindergarten Transition

The process of preschool to kindergarten transition with disadvantaged children has been studied by Waxler et al. (1990) in their review of 30 Head Start programs. In 1986 and 1987, the designated Head Start programs were given funds to conduct demonstration projects based on innovative transition practices. All of the programs provided transition activities for the children including visits to the new classroom and meeting their teachers, opportunities to practice the skills they would need as kindergartners, and information on how kindergarten would be different from preschool. The role of parents was also seen as important and parents were given information on their new school and strategies for working with their child's new teacher. They were also given suggestions for activities that would help their child practice readiness skills over the summer. According to Waxler et al., almost all of the kindergarten teachers ranked their Head Start children as being equal or better than their peers on six categories of skills. In addition, 90 percent of the teachers rated the Head Start children as adjusting as easily or better than their peers to the kindergarten classroom. Waxler et al. also found that parents, in general, reported feeling highly prepared for their child's transition but that some parents indicated a need for more information, more academic preparation for their children, and more visits to the elementary schools.

Using parent perspectives to examine the success of a preschool to kindergarten transition process was employed by Johnson et al. (1986). Approximately four months

into the kindergarten program, parents from 19 families responded to the “Retrospective Transition Interview” (RTI) developed by the authors. Items on the RTI were generated from available research, screened by parent volunteers and specialists, and piloted with different parent volunteers. The RTI employs a combination of open-ended, multiple-choice, and Likert scale ratings and was presented verbally to parents in face-to-face interviews. Interviewers were trained and attended practice sessions. Interviews were also tape-recorded for later analysis. The interview addressed transition issues involving the parents, the preschool, and the kindergarten. The mean inter-rater reliability reported for the RTI was 89%.

Of the 19 families that participated, 17 were mothers and two were fathers according to Johnson et al. and 58% of the children were identified as multiply or physically disabled. Other disabilities included speech and language delays, learning disabilities, hearing impairment, and behavioral problems.

The results indicated that all of the parents interviewed reported they participated in their child's transition to some degree although most reported this contact focused more on day-to-day concerns and progress (Johnson et al., 1986). Planning was conducted both formally through scheduled meetings and informally through notes or brief contacts.

Johnson et al. found that four out of five parents felt the IEP meetings were extremely helpful to them. However the remaining one out of five parents felt reluctant to actively participate in IEP meetings and did not always understand the discussion or the IEP process. Parents were most concerned about the kindergarten teacher's philosophy, the special services available at the new program, and the location of the new school

when making a decision regarding their child's kindergarten placement. In addition, more than two-thirds of the parents visited the new program before enrolling their child. Of these parents, more than half would have liked additional visits or more information. This trend continued once the child was in kindergarten as well. Parents also indicated they would have liked more frequent parent-teacher contacts at the kindergarten level.

When Johnson et al. examined the degree of collaboration between the sending and receiving programs, 75% of the parents reported that their child's teachers exchanged information during the transition process. These exchanges also consisted of formal and informal contacts. The authors also found that not one parent left all of the decision making up to the professionals, parents of children attending regular kindergarten programs appeared to be more independent decision-makers than the parents of children attending more specialized programs. In addition, more than 80% of the parents felt their child was ready to begin kindergarten and reported satisfaction with their decision to enroll their child, but parents also reported their child and their families needed time to adjust to their child's new program (Johnson et al., 1986).

Lastly, Johnson et al. asked parents to rate a variety of transition-related activities based on their level of satisfaction. Parents rated all of the activities as moderately to very satisfied. They reported more satisfaction with preschool-related transition activities than with kindergarten-related transition activities. Parents felt the greatest satisfaction with parent-teacher conferences and the least satisfaction with their involvement in the kindergarten classroom and related kindergarten issues. Parents expressed a general satisfaction, however, with how their child's program was meeting his or her needs.

In summary, Johnson et al. (1986) found that parents were concerned about their child's transition and that they sought and received information from a variety of sources regarding their child's transition and general progress. Parents visited programs and attended transition-related events but they would have preferred even more opportunities to plan and communicate with educators prior to, and throughout, their child's transition. Parents participated in educational and placement decisions and expressed general satisfaction. Parents were confronted with unique issues regarding their child's education and placement and they typically underwent a degree of transition-related stress even when they agreed with the decisions.

Johnson et al. cautioned against widely generalizing the results of their study due to several limitations with their relatively small sample size and with the style of interview used. Being a retrospective interview, the researchers had to rely heavily on parents' ability to recall and report events accurately. They also reported that parents were from schools with a transition model in place and that the results could vary from program to program across communities.

Hamblin-Wilson and Thurman (1990) also surveyed parents of young children with disabilities who had recently transitioned into kindergarten. All of the children transitioned into "mixed categorical" kindergartens in the Philadelphia area that served children with learning disabilities, mental retardation, speech and language delays, social/emotional disorders, hearing and/or visual impairments, physical disabilities, and developmental disabilities. Hamblin-Wilson and Thurman sent questionnaires to the families of 379 children who attended the mixed categorical kindergartens from fall, 1981

to fall, 1986 and received responses from 91 parents (all but one were mothers). In addition to obtaining descriptive and demographic information, the questionnaire required parents to rate on a 5-point Likert scale the importance of various transition-related activities. Parents were also asked to rate how prepared or involved they were with the transition process. Lastly, parents were asked to rate their satisfaction with their perceived involvement and influence on the transition process. The questionnaire was reviewed by several relevant professionals and then revised and pilot tested. A factor analysis revealed four factors with eigenvalues greater than one. The factors were identified as:

- Factor 1: Satisfaction Factor which related to parent satisfaction and involvement with the transition process.
- Factor 2: Importance of Service Relationships which related to parental perceptions of the importance of various activities related to the transition process.
- Factor 3: Explanation and Support Factor which related to parental perceptions of support and preparation by service providers during the transition.
- Factor 4: Importance of Preparation which related to parental perceptions of the importance of preparation for the transition by the service providers.

The results indicated a slight but significant relationship between the Satisfaction Factor and the Explanation and Support Factor and the Importance of Preparation Factor.

A moderate relationship existed between the Importance of Service Relationships and the Importance of Preparation Factors. The only demographic variable found to be significant was level of education. The most educated parents were also the most satisfied parents. The majority of parents felt they received more support from their child's early intervention program than from the public schools. Most parents felt involved in the planning although fewer felt they were involved in selecting their child's classroom or school. The majority had also visited a classroom or school during the transition process.

Hamblin-Wilson and Thurman suggested that the public school become more involved in the transition process and that a more collaborative effort is established. They also suggested that those people who felt supported and had issues or concerns explained to them also felt more satisfied. Similarly, those parents who felt preparation was important also tended to be more satisfied with the process. Finally, the authors concluded that parents with less education may need more help in understanding the transition process.

Like Johnson et al. (1986), Hamblin-Wilson and Thurman (1990) also cautioned against generalizing the results of their research across communities. Hamblin-Wilson and Thurman cited limitations due to the nature of their sample and the small percentage of questionnaires returned. However, statistical analysis indicated the sample was fairly representative of the population from which it was drawn. An additional concern, not identified by the authors, is the retrospective nature of the design and the time frame involved. The questionnaire was mailed in 1987 to participants who had experienced a specialized preschool to kindergarten transition between 1981 and 1986 making some

respondents have to recall events and perceptions from up to six years earlier.

Fowler et al. (1988) developed two "Transition Planners" to help identify family and child needs during the transition from an early intervention preschool to elementary school. Thirty families participated in the study with some children identified as at-risk and others identified with a variety of handicapping conditions ranging from moderate to severe.

The Transition Planners were interviews based on parent and professional conversations and field tested for one year. The interviews were structured and included completing a checklist or rating scale as well as several open-ended questions. The first planner, "Gathering Information" (TP1), was completed by parents in the fall semester of their child's final preschool year and helped parents identify what kind of information they needed regarding their child's transition. The second planner, "Choosing the Best Program" (TP2), was completed by parents in the spring semester of their child's final preschool year and required parents to rate features of their child's next program that were important to them. After completing the second planner, parents were given a checklist that summarized the information they felt was most important. Parents were encouraged to use this checklist and refer to it during their visits and interactions with their child's receiving program.

In general, parents felt more knowledgeable about transition and comfortable with the transition process by the time they completed the second planner in the spring. According to Fowler et al., parent participation was rated as very important on the first planner. Parents expressed a strong desire to share responsibility for planning their child's

transition with school personnel. Ninety-three percent of parents were willing to work with their child at home prior to kindergarten with most of the focus on preacademic tasks. On the second planner, parents identified specific program characteristics, parent participation in the receiving program, and teacher characteristics as critical factors for their child's transition. Parents focused on categories and items that were relevant to their child's needs and to the classroom environment. Parents wanted effective teachers who were warm and able to communicate well. Interaction skills and effective discipline were also important. The most important teacher characteristic, according to parents, was the teacher's receptiveness to developing a friendship with their disabled child. Parents had a high degree of agreement about which issues were not important to their child's transition. Parents were least interested in activities or meetings that promoted parent-to-parent interactions such as parent support groups or parent networks.

A specific procedure for developing a system-wide transition process was provided by Project TEEM (Transitioning into the Elementary Education Mainstream). Project TEEM was developed at the University of Vermont in an effort to allow parents, preschool staff, and elementary school programs to collaboratively develop and implement a system-wide transition process (Conn-Powers et al., 1990). According to the authors, the model is driven by the belief that all young children should have an equal opportunity to a quality education within the local elementary school mainstreamed setting. The TEEM model does not attempt to be a universal transition planning model for all schools to adopt. Rather, the model tries to provide information and guidelines for other schools to consider when planning a system-wide transition process. Conn-Powers

et al. presented a case study of one school's application of the TEEM model. The first step of the model was to establish a planning team composed of parents and service providers from sending and receiving programs, building principals, the special education director, and other relevant personnel. During the second step, the planning team collectively identified the purpose and goals of the transition process as well as the potential barriers that could emerge. The third step consisted of the planning team writing down the specific procedures, strategies, roles, timelines, and responsibilities of key participants. The fourth step in the transition planning process was to gain system-wide support and commitment for the written transition procedures. The final step of transition planning required an evaluation of the transition process.

The TEEM model was developed and implemented across five school districts beginning in 1985 (Conn-Powers et al., 1990) and evaluated by determining the level of parent and professional satisfaction with the transition practices and by the nature of the subsequent child placement decisions. The results indicated that generally, parents and professionals expressed a high degree of satisfaction. When child outcomes were considered, the vast majority (59 out of 62) of the children participating were transitioned into a regular kindergarten program in their home school. None of the children were placed in a special education self-contained classroom and all children were transitioned into their home schools. Parents and professionals also indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the children's educational placements. In summary, Conn-Powers et al. suggested that by beginning a transition process early, and by making sure it is a collaborative effort among families, staff, and administrators, many of the barriers to a

successful transition can be removed.

A more recent follow-up of the TEEM model was reported by Fox, Ross-Allen, Capone, and Kelly (1996) and consisted of data gathered from across seven states including 19 participating school districts during 1993-1995. Although not in any specific order of importance, participants cited the following characteristics as indicators of a “successful” transition: (1) parent involvement is supported and valued; (2) communication and cooperation occur throughout the transition process; (3) ideas, resources, contacts, and space are shared; (4) the kindergarten program accommodates the child and meets the needs of all children in the class; (5) follow-up from the early childhood staff is provided once the child is in kindergarten; (6) planning is collaboratively done among team members and not determined by an individual; and (7), the child and the family are comfortable and confident in kindergarten. Of the families interviewed, 77 percent reported that the planned transition activities provided by the TEEM model made a “big” difference in their child’s move to kindergarten and 64 percent of the families were strongly satisfied with the overall transition planning process. Zero families reported being either dissatisfied with the process or that the transition activities made no difference in their child’s move to kindergarten. Similarly, all of the families interviewed were satisfied with both their child’s and their family’s adjustment to kindergarten with no dissenting viewpoints.

Although more research is being conducted in the area of early childhood transitions to kindergarten, a critical issue regarding the study of preschool to kindergarten transition concerns the limited array of field-tested models (Chandler 1993;

Fowler, 1982; Fowler et al., 1991; Hains et al., 1988; Streifel et al. 1991). In addition, the transition from preschool to kindergarten for young children with special needs has been linked to increased levels of family stress (e.g., Bray et al., 1981; Rice & O'Brien, 1990; Fowler & Ostrosky, 1994; Wickler, 1981), and there has been more focus in recent years directed toward maintaining the continuity of services for young children with special needs (e.g., Anderson & Shane, 1972; Kagan, 1990, 1991). In response to these issues, Fowler et al. (1991) and Rosenkoetter et al. (1994) have suggested that several directions for future research remain regarding the transition from preschool to kindergarten for children with special needs. Both Fowler et al. and Rosenkoetter et al. have suggested that research become more focused on determining the specific transition activities that are most predictive of parent satisfaction and family benefit. Fowler et al. further identified a need for more information about procedures for involving families that are optimal for the family and child, as well as the need for longitudinal studies to measure the short- and long-term success of the transition for both the child and the family. Fowler et al. recommended beginning with assessing the methods and activities that are currently being used to facilitate transition with respect to parent and school satisfaction with the transition process. Additionally, there is a need for more information regarding how transition models may produce differential effects based on family and/or child characteristics (e.g., Sheehan & Keogh, 1982; Rosenkoetter et al., 1994).

Based on a review of the literature, and the need for more data-based models of preschool to kindergarten transition, the current study was developed as a program evaluation of a school district's transition process for facilitating the transition between

preschool and kindergarten for children with special needs. Specifically, program effectiveness was measured in terms of satisfaction ratings with the transition process obtained from parents, as well as those from sending team members and receiving team members who were involved in the transition process. Participants in the study were also asked to rate their level of satisfaction with specific features of the transition process as well as indicate their participation or nonparticipation with specific transition activities. The purpose, therefore, of the present study was to conduct a program evaluation of a school district's preschool to kindergarten transition process, to determine the relationship between respondent ratings of satisfaction and certain family and/or child characteristics, and to provide follow-up information regarding the outcome of the transition process. The following evaluation questions were specifically addressed:

- 1) Is the total number of transition activities that respondents are expected to complete different from the observed total number of transition activities in which they actually engaged?
- 2) Is there a significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) between parents, sending teams, and receiving teams in terms of their total satisfaction rating score of the transition process immediately following the transition staffing for each child.
- 3) Is there a significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) between parents and receiving teams in terms of their total satisfaction rating score of the transition process two months following the beginning of the school year?
- 4) Which activities in the transition process are rated by parents, sending teams, and receiving teams as being most important to the transition process following each

child's transition staffing?

- 5) Which activities in the transition process are rated by parents and receiving teams as being most important to the transition process at two months into the school year?
- 6) Is there a significant ( $p < .05$ ) difference between respondents' total satisfaction rating scores based on the total number of transition activities in which they participate?
- 7) Is there a significant ( $p < .05$ ) difference between respondents' total satisfaction rating score based on (a) specific disability, (b) the number of months in special education, or (c) kindergarten catchment area?
- 8) What is the correlation between respondents' total rating scores of student adjustment in the new program and respondents' initial total satisfaction rating scores of the transition process?

## CHAPTER 3

### METHOD

#### Participants

The parents, preschool special education teams, and elementary special education teams of young children receiving special education services through the Douglas County (Colorado) School District, Early Education Program (EEP), and who were eligible to attend kindergarten during the 1998-1999 school year, were invited to participate in the present study.

Douglas County School District is a geographically large school district serving 900 square miles of rural, suburban, and mountainous areas just south of the Denver metropolitan area. The school district is one of the fastest growing districts in the nation and according to the latest school district report, serves 27,045 students (Douglas County School District Progress Report 1997-1998, 1997). There were 32 elementary schools (including six charter schools), five middle schools, five high schools, and five alternative schools. During the 1997-1998 school year, there were 16 preschool programs. Fourteen of these programs were housed within an elementary school in the district, and two were located in the District's Special Services building.

Due to the large geographic size of Douglas County, the district is subdivided into three catchment areas. Catchment areas are determined geographically and include the preschools, elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools that contribute students to those regions. These catchment areas roughly correspond with the three major

communities that make up Douglas County: Castle Rock, Parker, and Highlands Ranch. According to figures provided by the Denver Post, the overall median household income for Douglas County in 1998 was \$54,767 with a mean income of \$70,698. The median household incomes for Castle Rock, Parker, and Highlands Ranch were \$44,445; \$56,394; and, \$61,346, respectively.

At the time of the present study, four preschool sites were in the Castle Rock catchment area, six preschool sites were in the Parker catchment area, and six preschool sites were in the Highlands Ranch catchment area. Most of the elementary schools in Douglas County School District operate on a year-round calendar and begin the school year in July. There are a few schools that follow a modified year-round calendar and three elementary schools continue to follow a traditional school-year calendar

To be eligible for kindergarten for the 1998-1999 school year, the participating children had to be 5 years-of-age by September 15, 1998. All of the children involved in the study had birthdays falling between September 16, 1997 and September 15, 1998. Fifty-seven special needs preschool children were eligible to participate in the study with 32% ( $N=18$ ) from the Parker catchment area, 24% ( $N=14$ ) from the Castle Rock catchment area, and 44% ( $N=25$ ) from the Highlands Ranch catchment area. Seventeen (30%) of the children were girls and 40 (70%) were boys. Ethnicity data were gathered from each child's Individual Education Plan (IEP) and could be documented as either Asian, African-American, Hispanic, Caucasian, or Native American. Of the sample, 42 children (82.4%) were Caucasian; five children (8.8%) were African-American; two

children (3.5%) were Hispanic; three children (5.3%) were Asian; and, no children were identified as Native American.

In Colorado, preschool-age children can be identified for services under one of nine eligibility categories. Of the current sample, 32% (N=18) were categorized under the Preschool Disability category. Under Colorado guidelines, children identified with a Preschool Disability are children who are experiencing significant delays in two or more areas of development and can include social and emotional delays. It is a noncategorical label that is valid until the child's sixth-year birthday. An additional 32% (N=18) of the children were identified under the Speech-Language Disability category, while 26% (N=15) were identified under the Physical Disability category. The Physical Disability category includes children experiencing prolonged illnesses or medical conditions, children with physical limitations, and children with certain specific disorders (e.g., Autism, Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder, or Down Syndrome). Three percent (N=2) were identified under the Multiple Handicap category which is defined as a significant delay in cognitive and adaptive functioning with concurrent significant delays in at least one other area of development. The category of Perceptual Communicative Disability was identified for 3% (N=2) of the sample and included children displaying developmental delays consistent with the broader term of learning disabilities. One child (2%) was identified under the category of Significant Identifiable Emotional Disturbance and one child (2%) was identified as Vision Impaired. There were no children identified as either Hearing Impaired or Significantly Limited Intellectual Capacity. Table 1

presents the prevalence of each eligibility category within each catchment area for the total sample.

In addition to the parents of children transitioning into kindergarten, the preschool staff and elementary school staff relevant to the transition process were also asked to participate. The preschool staff is referred to as the sending team and included the following members: the regular education preschool teacher, early childhood special education teacher, the speech language pathologist, the occupational therapist, and paraprofessionals. These team members are actively involved in the transition process. The school psychologist or school social worker from the preschool programs are not as involved in the transition process and were not considered as part of the sending team in the present study. There were five sending teams in the school district, two from the Highlands Ranch catchment, two from the Parker catchment, and one from the Castle Rock catchment.

The elementary school staff, referred to as the receiving team, consisted of the special education teacher, the speech language pathologist, the school psychologist, the school social worker, and the kindergarten teacher from each of the elementary schools receiving special education preschool children (these are the professionals most closely involved with the transition process at the elementary school level). Across the district, preschoolers transitioned into 21 elementary schools which consisted of nine receiving teams from the Highlands Ranch catchment area, six receiving teams from the Castle Rock catchment area, and six receiving teams from the Parker catchment area.

Table 1

Number of Children Transitioning From Each Catchment Area by Eligibility Category

Eligibility Category	Catchment Area			Total
	Highlands Ranch	Castle Rock	Parker	
Preschool Disability	11	4	3	18
Speech Language Disability	5	6	7	18
Physical Disability	8	3	4	15
Multiple Handicap	0	0	2	2
Perceptual/Communicative Disability	0	1	1	2
Vision Impaired	0	0	1	1
Emotional Disturbance	1	0	0	1
Hearing Impaired	0	0	0	0
Significantly Limited Intellectual Capacity	0	0	0	0

### Survey Instruments

Each of the surveys designed for this study were based on information from the literature on preschool to kindergarten transition. In addition, in order to evaluate the process of transition, it was necessary to determine how well the process was actually implemented (e.g., Stufflebeam, 1983). After extensive review of the literature, there did not appear to be any existing surveys that met the needs of the present study.

Child Transition Survey (CTS): The CTS consisted of three parts: Part I addressed demographic information including the child's catchment area, number of months in preschool, and eligibility category. Part II ("Participation in Transition") assessed parents' participation in a 9-step transition process (Total Score = 9). Part III ("Satisfaction With The Transition Process") consisted of 22 items and assessed parents' satisfaction ratings with respect to the specific characteristics of the transition process. A five-point Likert-type scale was used for the satisfaction ratings, with ratings varying from Extremely Satisfied to Extremely Unsatisfied (Total Satisfaction Rating Score = 110). This survey appears in Appendix A.

Student Transition Survey- Sending Teams (STS-S): The STS-S consisted of three parts. Part I addressed demographic and professional information. Part II ("Participation in Transition") assessed educators' participation in a multi-step transition process (Total Score = 12). Part III ("Satisfaction With The Transition Process") consisted of 25 items and assessed educator's satisfaction ratings with respect to the specific characteristics of the transition process. A five-point Likert-type scale was used for the satisfaction ratings,

with ratings varying from Extremely Satisfied to Extremely Unsatisfied (Total Satisfaction Rating Score = 125). This survey appears in Appendix B.

Student Transition Survey- Receiving Teams (STS-R): The STS-S consisted of three parts. Part I addressed demographic and professional information. Part II (“Participation in Transition”) assessed educators’ participation in a multi-step transition process (Total Score = 11). Part III (“Satisfaction With The Transition Process”) consisted of 25 items and assessed educator’s satisfaction ratings with respect to the specific characteristics of the transition process. A five-point Likert-type scale was used for the satisfaction ratings, with ratings varying from Extremely Satisfied to Extremely Unsatisfied (Total Satisfaction Rating Score = 125). This survey appears in Appendix C.

Importance of Transition Activities Survey (ITAS): The ITAS assessed respondents ratings of the perceived importance of 14 specific aspects of the transition process using a five point Likert-type rating scale, with ratings varying from Extremely Important to Extremely Unimportant. The ITAS came in three forms: (1) Parent Form; (2) Sending Team Form; and (3) Receiving Team Form (See Appendix D).

Adjustment to Kindergarten: Family Follow-Up (AKF): The AKF was a four point Likert-type rating scale that assessed parents’ perceptions over seven items regarding how they felt their child was adjusting to the kindergarten program that was selected through the transition process (see Appendix E). Ratings could vary from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree (Total Score = 28).

Adjustment to Kindergarten: Educator Follow-Up (AKF-E): The AKF-E was a

four point Likert-type scale that assessed educators' perceptions over seven items of how they felt each child was adjusting to the kindergarten program that was selected through the transition process (see Appendix F). Ratings could vary from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree (Total Score = 28).

The initial pilot testing of the five surveys was completed by the five members of Ms. Parker-Martin's doctoral committee. Each person reviewed the surveys with regard to structure, content, and readability. Content validity was further determined by having a group of parents (N=5) of children with special needs who had transitioned into kindergarten the previous year and a group of early childhood special education professionals (N=5) review each respective survey and provide feedback on a written Survey Review form (see Appendix G). The parents and early childhood professionals were asked to provide feedback on the wording of each item, ease of completion of the surveys, clarity of the directions and questions, and any additional comments they might have to improve the surveys. The final versions of the surveys included modifications based on the feedback from the pilot participants.

### Dependent Measures

The dependent measures for the study were as follows:

Transition Activities Score: the total number of transition activities (Part II of the CTS, STS-S, and STS-R) participated in by each group.

Satisfaction With Transition Score: the mean of the total score for each parent on Part III of the CTS or for each special education team on Part III of the STS-S or STS-R.

Importance of Transition Activities Score: the mean score for each item on the ITAS.

Adjustment to Kindergarten Score: the mean of the total score for each parent on the AKF or each receiving team on the AKF-E.

### Procedure

The study was an exploratory summative evaluation (Scriven, 1966) at the program level (Rosenkoetter et al., 1994) of a school district's preschool to kindergarten transition process for handicapped young children. The development of the evaluation design followed the general steps provided by Worthen, Borg, and White (1993) for designing a school-based program evaluation.

Approval to conduct the present study was given by the University of Arizona's Human Subjects Committee (see Appendix H) and permission was obtained from the Douglas County School District (see Appendix I). At the time of the present study, the Douglas County School District Early Education Program was an integrated preschool program designed to meet the needs of young children aged 3-5 years requiring special education within a regular education preschool classroom (see Appendix J for a description of the Douglas County School District Early Education Program). Each class consisted of approximately 15 children. Approximately 10 children in each class were "typically-developing" children whose parents had chosen the school district preschool as a program for their children. There were five openings in each class reserved for children who had been identified as needing special education services in a preschool setting.

Description of the Transition Process. To promote a smooth continuation of services between preschool and kindergarten, Douglas County School District developed a preschool to kindergarten transition process that consists of six formal steps (see Table 2) documented in the district's Preschool To Kindergarten Transition Guide (see Appendix K). While issues relevant to the transition to kindergarten were discussed with the family beginning with the child's initial IEP meeting, the formal transition process that was evaluated in the present study began during the Fall of the year prior to the child's eligibility for kindergarten.

During Step 1, as part of the child's fall conference, transition issues were informally discussed among the child's parents and the child's sending preschool team. Step 2 is the first formal step in the transition process and consisted of the "Transition Planning Meeting." The Transition Planning meeting occurred in January or February and was usually held at the child's home school. A "home school" is the public elementary school in the child's neighborhood that he or she would attend based upon their address. At this meeting, the sending team and the receiving team discussed information relevant to the child's transition. This discussion typically included recent information regarding the developmental levels of the child, readiness skills, classroom functioning, special considerations of the child or family, progress toward goals and objectives, and anticipated needs as a kindergarten student. A written "Action Plan" was developed at that time to outline the specific transition activities needed to help ensure a smooth transition from preschool to kindergarten (see Appendix L). The Action Plan briefly

Table 2

Flow Chart of Steps in the Transition Process

Step	Time Frame	Transition Activity
STEP 1: October-November	Transition issues were discussed with parents as part of the child's fall conference with his/her sending team.	
STEP 2: January-February	"Transition Planning Meeting" was held between each sending and receiving team and an "Action Plan" was developed.	
STEP 3: February	District-wide Transition Meeting was held for parents and families registered their child for kindergarten at their home school.	
STEP 4: February-April	Activities developed in the Action Plan were implemented.	
STEP 5: May-June	"Transition Staffing" was held for each child and included the child's parent(s) and members from the sending and receiving teams and a new Individual Education Plan (IEP) was developed.	
STEP 6: July-August	Child began attending kindergarten depending on school calendar and/or track.	

described the child's strengths and needs, identified any special considerations or supports that may be needed to help the child adjust to kindergarten, determined whether additional information is needed and by whom (e.g., standardized testing, classroom observations, etc.), and planned for the child's formal transition staffing. Although the family was not directly involved in this initial meeting, an additional meeting between the sending team, the receiving team, and the parent(s) may have be scheduled to further plan for the child's transition. As part of the Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Guide given to parents, was a copy of the Parent Action Plan that parents could choose to complete on their own (see Appendix M).

In Step 3, all parents were invited to the Transition Meeting held at a centralized location in the school district. This meeting was presented to parents by the Child Find office and was intended to inform parents of the steps in the transition process, explain how special education services were provided at the elementary school level, encourage parents to be active participants in their child's transition, and answer any questions they may have had regarding transition. If the parents had not yet registered their child for kindergarten, they were encouraged to do so at this time.

Following the Transition Planning Meeting, Step 4 involved the specific information gathering activities outlined on the Action Plan and was carried out during the months of February, March, and April. These activities, listed in Table 3, may have include updated testing, observations, visitations by the receiving team to the preschool, contacting the family, and setting up program visits for the family

**Table 3****A Listing of Potential Specific Transition Activities for Parents, Sending, and Receiving Teams**

- 
- Access to the Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Guide
  - Discussion of transition at preschool fall conference (parents and sending teams only)
  - District-wide Transition Meeting held for parents to discuss process and concerns
  - Transition planning meeting in January-February (sending and receiving teams only)
  - Possible additional contacts between sending team, receiving, team, and family
  - Complete a Transition Action Plan
  - Visit student's preschool classroom (receiving teams only)
  - Visit student's potential kindergarten placement programs (parents and sending teams only)
  - Register for kindergarten (parents only)
  - Complete updated testing or evaluation of the student for transition
  - Participate in a Transition Staffing for the student in May or June
-

Step 5 occurred in May or early June and consisted of the “Transition Staffing” which was held between the sending team, receiving team, and the parent(s) at the school where the child would be attending kindergarten. The Transition Staffing was a formal meeting where new or updated information regarding the child was shared and educational placement and service delivery was determined and documented on the child’s Individual Education Plan (IEP). New goals and objectives may have been developed at this time or existing goals and objectives may have been continued as “in progress.”

The final step in the transition process, Step 6, occurred in July or August when the child began attending kindergarten and varied depending on whether the school was on a traditional or a year-round schedule and on which attendance track the child was registered for if attending a year- round school.

Survey Procedure. Consistent with Fink and Kosekoff (1985), parents and special education team members received a “pre-letter” in the Spring of 1998 that briefly described the project and encouraged their participation (see Appendix N). After a each child’s Transition Staffing (Step 6 in Table 5), parents were sent an introductory letter which briefly explained the nature of the study and asked for their participation (see Appendix O) and an informed consent form (see Appendix P). In addition to the introductory letter and the informed consent form, parents were given the CTS and the ITAS. During the same time frame, special education teams (both sending and receiving) also received an introductory letter (see Appendix O) and enough informed consent forms

for each team member (see Appendix P). In addition, the special education teams received a STS to complete as a team following each child's Transition Staffing. After all students had their Transition Staffings, each sending and receiving team also received one ITAS to complete as a team. Depending on the timing of the Transition Staffings, some teams received all of the surveys in one packet while others received them across a longer time period. Parents and educators who had not yet returned their surveys were sent a reminder letter (see Appendix Q)

In order to provide follow-up information regarding the participant's perceptions of the transition process after the child had begun the new program, participating parents were sent an explanatory letter (see Appendix R) along with Part III of the CTS and the entire ITAS at the end of the first two months of the school year. At the same time, parents were also sent the AKF in order to determine each child and family's adjustment to the transition. Similarly, two months into the school year, the child's special education team (including the kindergarten teacher) were sent an explanatory letter (see Appendix R) along with Part III of the STS for each child, and the entire ITAS as a team, in order to measure their perceptions of the transition process after each child has begun the new program. At the same time, they were sent the AKF-E for each child that had transitioned into their classroom to determine how well each child had adjusted to the new setting. Follow-up reminder letters were sent to all participants to encourage their return of the surveys (see Appendix S).

All participants were assured that their responses would be confidential and coded

to protect their anonymity and that no names would be used. The introductory letter also indicated that data would be grouped and no individual responses would be analyzed. Parents and school staff were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix P) that described the nature of the study, provided for confidentiality of their responses, and informed them that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

### Debriefing

Parents and school staff were told that the researcher would be available to discuss the results of the study and that the findings of the study would be shared with the school district if requested. A summary sheet of the findings was also mailed to each family and school team who participated (see Appendix T). Parents and school teams also had access to the final written report. Any school team or parent requesting explanation or more detailed information would be met with personally or by phone to respond to specific questions.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

A return rate of 100% was obtained from the preschool staff surveyed in the study. However, a return rate of only 35% was obtained from the initial group of 57 ( $N=20$ ) parents surveyed. Three of the 21 schools surveyed responded (14.3%) providing data on 10 of the 57 students eligible for transition yielding a return rate of 18% for student data. Response rates of less than 30% typically result in final samples that bear little resemblance to the original sample that was surveyed (Fowler, 1988) and as such, are prone to inherent biases that limit the meaningfulness of the results. With those cautions in mind, the results are presented with regard to characteristics of the participating sample, the respondents' participation in transition activities, satisfaction with transition, ratings of importance of the various transition activities, and follow-up data.

Of the 57 families eligible to participate, 35% ( $N = 20$ ) responded and all of the participating parents were mothers. However, according to statistical analysis using proportional  $z$ -tests, the sample of children rated by the participating families was not significantly different from the original sample of all 57 children who were eligible for transition on the characteristics of catchment area, gender, ethnicity, and disability (see Table 4 and Table 6 for  $z$ -scores). Forty percent of the parents were from the Highlands Ranch catchment ( $N = 8$ ), 40% were from the Parker catchment ( $N = 8$ ), and 20% were from the Castle Rock catchment ( $N = 4$ ). From the three catchment areas, 46% ( $N = 17$ )

of the parents from Highlands Ranch; 27% ( $N = 10$ ) of the parents from Parker; and 27% ( $N = 10$ ) of the parents from Castle Rock chose not to participate in the study. Of the participating families, five (25%) of the children were girls and 15 (75%) were boys resulting in a nonparticipation rate of 12 girls (32%) and 25 boys (68%).

The ethnicity of the participating families included 85% ( $N = 17$ ) Caucasian; 10% ( $N = 2$ ) African-American; and 5% ( $N = 1$ ) Asian with no Hispanic representation in the final sample. The ethnicity of the nonparticipating families followed a similar pattern consisting of 81% ( $N = 30$ ) Caucasian; 9% ( $N = 3$ ) African-American; and 5% ( $N = 2$ ) Asian, however, two Hispanic families (5%) are also within the nonparticipating group. A comparison of the total sample with the participating families with regard to catchment area, gender, and ethnicity is provided in Table 4.

Children identified under the Physical Disability category comprised 35% ( $N=7$ ) of the participating sample of families while 25% ( $N=5$ ) of the group were identified under the Preschool Disability category. An additional 25% ( $N=5$ ) were identified under the Speech Language Disability category. The categories of Perceptual Communicative Disability, Multiple Handicap, and Significant Identifiable Emotional Disturbance each accounted for only 5% of the nonparticipating families sample, with only one child identified per category. Table 5 presents the prevalence of the eligibility categories within each catchment area for the families participating in the study.

Of the 37 families that chose not to participate, 13 (35%) were identified under the Preschool Disability category and another 13 (35%) were identified under the Speech

Table 4

A Comparison of Sample Characteristics

	Total Sample		Participating Families		Proportional $z$ -score
	<u>N</u>	%	<u>N</u>	%	<u>z</u>
<b>Catchment Area:</b>					
Highlands Ranch	25	44	8	40	0.43
Castle Rock	14	24	4	20	0.40
Parker	18	32	8	40	0.67
<b>Gender:</b>					
Male	40	70	15	75	0.41
Female	17	30	5	25	0.41
<b>Ethnicity:</b>					
Asian	3	5	1	5	0.00
African-American	5	9	2	10	0.14
Hispanic	2	4	0	0	1.00
Caucasian	47	82	17	85	0.30
Native American	0	0	0	0	n/a

Table 5

Eligibility Categories of Children From Participating Families From Each CatchmentArea

Eligibility Category	Catchment Area			Total
	Highlands Ranch	Castle Rock	Parker	
Preschool Disability	3	1	1	5
Speech Language Disability	1	1	3	5
Physical Disability	3	2	2	7
Multiple Handicap	0	0	1	1
Perceptual/Communicative Disability	0	0	1	1
Emotional Disturbance	1	0	0	1

Language Disability category. Children identified under the Physical Disability category comprised 21% ( $N=8$ ) of the nonparticipating group of families. The categories of Perceptual Communicative Disability, Multiple Handicap, and Vision Impairment accounted for 3% of the sample each ( $N = 1$ ). A comparison of the prevalence of each eligibility category for participating families and the total sample is presented in Table 6.

All five preschool teams participated in the study with an average of nearly three members ( $M=2.90$ ) collaborating on each team resulting in a 100% return rate of data on all 57 students. A special education teacher was on every team, and a speech-language therapist was involved in 98% ( $N =56$ ) of the cases. An occupational therapist collaborated 82% ( $N =47$ ) of the cases and lastly, a paraprofessional was involved 19% ( $N = 11$ ) of the cases.

From the 21 receiving teams who participated in the transition process, one team from each of the three catchment areas responded for a total of three receiving teams who participated in the current study. Of the nonparticipating receiving teams (those teams who did not participate in the current study), eight teams (44%) were from the Highlands Ranch catchment, five teams (28%) were from the Castle Rock catchment, and five teams (28%) were from the Parker catchment.

On each participating receiving team, approximately two team members ( $M=1.70$ ) collaborated per team with a range of between one and three team members. A speech language therapist was included on the team for 90% ( $N= 9$ ) of the cases and was the most frequent respondent. A school social worker collaborated on 40% ( $N = 4$ ) of the

Table 6

A Comparison of Eligibility Categories for the Total Sample and Participating Families

Eligibility Category	Total Sample		Participating Families		Proportional z-score
	<u>N</u>	%	<u>N</u>	%	<u>z</u>
Preschool Disability	18	32	5	25	0.58
Speech Language Disability	18	32	5	25	0.58
Physical Disability	15	26	7	35	0.47
Multiple Disability	2	3	1	5	0.50
Perceptual/Communicative	2	3	1	5	0.50
Emotional Disturbance	1	2	1	5	0.75
Vision Impairment	1	2	0	0	1.00
Hearing Impairment	0	0	0	0	n/a
Significantly Limited Intellectual Capacity	0	0	0	0	n/a
Total:	<u>57</u>		<u>20</u>		

cases while an occupational therapist was included on 20% ( $N = 2$ ) of the cases. A special education teacher or school psychologist were each involved for only 10% ( $N = 1$ ) of the cases and there was no collaboration from classroom teachers.

#### Participation in Transition Activities

Out of a possible nine transition activities, parents participated in an average of 5.30 ( $SD=1.81$ ) transition activities with a range from one to eight reported. Sending teams participated in an average of 9.54 ( $SD=1.41$ ) activities out of a possible 12 with a range of five to 12 reported. Receiving teams participated in an average of 4.80 ( $SD=3.36$ ) activities out of a possible 11 potential transition activities with a range of one to eight reported. Respondents' were asked to indicate which transition activities they had participated in, resulting in comparisons being based on a dichotomous choice of either did or did not participate.

Of the transition activities available to parents, the majority reported having a copy of the Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Guide ( $N=17$ ; 85%) and many of them indicated having read it ( $N=16$ ; 80%). Nearly all of the parents ( $N=18$ ; 90%) discussed transition for their child informally with their sending team; however, fewer also discussed transition issues during their child's fall conference ( $N=11$ ; 55%). Less than half of the sample indicated completing the Parent Action Plan ( $N=6$ ; 30%) and only five (25%) reported attending the district-wide transition meeting for parents. While 50% ( $N=10$ ) of the parents reported meeting with their child's receiving team prior to the transition staffing for additional planning time, less than half of the parents visited

potential options for their child's placement ( $N=8$ ; 40%). Lastly, 75% of the parents reported participating in their child's Transition Staffing ( $N=15$ ).

Using a Chi-Square analysis, based on whether they did or did not participate in each specific activity, parents were found to be significantly more likely to have received a copy of the Preschool to Transition Guide,  $\chi^2(1, N=20)=9.80, p<.002$ ; read the Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Guide,  $\chi^2(1, N=20)=7.20, p<.007$ ; discussed transition with their child's sending team informally,  $\chi^2(1, N=20)=12.80, p<.000$ , and participated in a Transition Staffing for their child,  $\chi^2(1, N=20)=5.00, p<.025$  and were significantly less likely to have attended the district-wide Transition Meeting held for parents ( $\chi^2(1, N=20)=5.00, p<.025$ ). No significant differences in participation were observed for the remaining transition activities.

Sending teams had the opportunity to participate in 12 transition activities for each of the 57 children for whom data were collected. All sending teams reported having access to the Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Guide and 100% indicated having read through it. The majority of sending teams discussed transition with parents at their child's fall conference ( $N=52$ ; 91%), and many had additional contacts with the student's parents prior to the transition staffing for further planning ( $N=49$ ; 86%). Sending teams informally discussed transition with each student's receiving team at a team meeting for 89% of the children ( $N=51$ ), and sending teams reported having additional informal contacts with the receiving teams to plan for transition for 72% of the children ( $N=41$ ). Nearly all of the sending teams reported completing a Transition Action Plan ( $N=52$ ;

91%) and 82% ( $N=47$ ) reported actually carrying out all of the activities on the Action Plan. For more than half of the students ( $N=31$ ; 54%), sending teams provided receiving teams with relevant student records prior to the transition staffing. Visits by the sending team to potential kindergarten classrooms were made for only nine of the 57 students (16%). For many students, updated evaluation was completed by the sending team ( $N=40$ ; 70%), and sending teams reported participating in all 57 transition staffings (100%).

Using a Chi-Square analysis based on whether they did or did not participate in each specific activity, sending teams were found to be significantly more likely to have received a copy of the Preschool to Transition Guide,  $\chi^2(1, N=57)=57.00, p<.01$ ; read the Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Guide,  $\chi^2(1, N=57)=57.00, p<.01$ ; discussed transition with parents at their child's fall conference,  $\chi^2(1, N=57)=38.75, p<.01$ ; discussed transition with each student's receiving team informally at a team meeting,  $\chi^2(1, N=57)=35.52, p<.01$ ; had additional informal contact's with students' receiving teams for additional planning  $\chi^2(1, N=57)=10.96, p<.01$ ; completed a Transition Action Plan,  $\chi^2(1, N=57)=38.75, p<.01$ ; carried out the activities of the Action Plan,  $\chi^2(1, N=57)=24.02, p<.01$ ; had contact(s) with students' parents prior to the transition staffing for additional planning time,  $\chi^2(1, N=57)=29.49, p<.01$ ; completed updated evaluation for each student,  $\chi^2(1, N=57)=9.28, p<.01$ ; and to have participated in a Transition Staffing for each student,  $\chi^2(1, N=57)=57.00, p<.01$ . However, sending teams were significantly less likely to have visited the potential kindergarten classrooms for their students,  $\chi^2(1, N=57)=26.68, p<.01$ . There was no significant difference between the

expected and observed frequency of providing student records to the receiving team prior to the Transition Staffing,  $\chi^2(1, N=57)=.439, p<.508$ .

Receiving teams had the opportunity to participate in 11 transition activities for each of the 10 children on whom data were collected. One of the three responding receiving teams reported not having access to the Preschool to Transition Guide. As a result, the Guide was read for only six of the children (60%). Receiving teams discussed transition with the sending team informally at a team meeting for 60% of the children ( $N=6$ ), and had additional informal contacts with the sending team for further planning for 40% of the children ( $N=4$ ). Receiving teams reported completing an Action Plan for 60% ( $N=6$ ) of the children, and carried out the activities on the Action Plan for 67% of those children. Receiving teams did not meet for additional planning time with parents of any of the 10 children prior to the transition staffing. Receiving teams visited four of the 10 children's preschool classrooms (40%) and, reviewed student records prior to the Transition Staffing for only two children (20%). Receiving teams did not provide any updated testing for any of the children. However, the three receiving teams reported participating in all of the transition staffings for preschool students with special needs entering their school.

Using a Chi-Square analysis based on whether they did or did not participate in each specific activity, receiving teams were significantly more likely to have participated in a Transition Staffing for each child entering their school,  $\chi^2(1, N=10)=10.00, p<.01$ . However, they were significantly less likely to have completed updated testing for any

preschool children with special needs transitioning to their school,  $\chi^2(1, N=10)=10.00$ ,  $p<.01$  or to have had contact with a student's parents prior to the Transition Staffing for additional planning time,  $\chi^2(1, N=10)=10.00$ ,  $p<.01$ . Receiving teams also appeared less likely to review a student's records prior to the Transition Staffing but this difference is not yet statistically significant,  $\chi^2(1, N=10)=3.60$ ,  $p<.06$ .

In order to determine whether the difference between the total number of transition activities actually participated in by each group was different from what would be expected by chance, the data for each group were collapsed so as to increase the number of expected frequencies per cell to above five as recommended by Howell (1982). For parents, there were no significant differences between participating in zero to three transition activities, four to six transition activities, or seven to nine transition activities,  $\chi^2(2, N=20)=4.9$ ,  $p<.09$ . When the frequencies were collapsed further into two categories (zero to four versus five to nine) there continued to be no significant differences between the observed frequencies and what would be expected by chance,  $\chi^2(1, N=20)=3.20$ ,  $p<.07$ . However, sending teams participated in significantly more transition activities than expected by chance when the responses were collapsed into the following categories: zero to four activities; five to eight activities; and nine to 12 activities,  $\chi^2(2, N=57) = 60.73$ ,  $p<.01$ . Data from the receiving teams had to be collapsed into two categories (zero to five activities and six to 11 activities) in order to increase the expected frequencies per cell to at least five. However, there was no significant difference found between the observed number of transition activities participated in by receiving teams and what

would be expected by chance,  $\chi^2(1, N=10)=.400, p<.527$ .

### Satisfaction With Transition

All groups were surveyed to determine their level of satisfaction with a variety of characteristics of the transition process. One item from Part III of the CTS was removed from further analysis based on the lack of parent involvement with that step in the transition process. Specifically, the item that read, "The Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Meeting held for parents in February at Chaparral High School for parents" was removed due to the lack of parent participation at that meeting. Of the 20 parents who responded to the study, only five reported attending that meeting. In actuality, only four parents district-wide attended based on attendance data collected at the meeting. As such, any data attributed to that item were deemed meaningless and eliminated from the data analysis. For the purposes of this evaluation, mean item ratings on Part III of the CTS, the STS-S, and the STS-R of 4.6 to 5 were considered very satisfied and mean ratings of 3.6 to 4.5 were considered satisfied.

Based on the responses of 16 parents (four surveys could not be used to due incomplete data), parents appeared satisfied with the overall transition process ( $M=91.75$ ,  $SD=11.22$ ) with total scores on Part III of the CTS ranging from 71 to 105. The mean response per item was 4.36, ranging 3.73 to 4.65. Parents reported being very satisfied with the ability of the sending team to recognize their child's strengths and special needs as well as the sending team's ability to recognize the family's concerns. Parents reported feeling satisfied with all other aspects of the transition process with no item means falling

below the satisfied range (See Table 7 for the mean response per item).

Overall, sending teams ( $N = 51$ ) also appeared satisfied with the overall transition process ( $M=100.31$ ,  $SD=11.35$ ) with total scores on Part III of the STS-S ranging from 75 to 121. The mean response per item was 4.01 and ranged from 3.42 to 4.63. Sending teams reported being very satisfied with only one aspect of transition: the ability of the entire transition team to recognize the child's strengths. Of the remaining items, sending teams reported being satisfied with 22 of the 25 aspects of transition surveyed. However, sending teams appeared to be less than satisfied with the amount of information they had to make placement decisions as well as the amount of information provided by elementary teams to prepare for transition (see Table 8 for the mean response for each item).

Receiving teams ( $N = 8$ ) also reported satisfaction with the overall transition process ( $M=95.12$ ,  $SD=5.94$ ) with total scores on Part III of the STS-R ranging from 84 to 104. The mean response per item was 3.80 and ranged from 3.20 to 4.40. Receiving teams do not report being very satisfied with any of the aspects of transition surveyed. They report being satisfied with 20 of the 25 items assessed. However, they appeared to feel less than satisfied with the degree to which the Action Plan was carried out, the recognition of student's special needs by our team, the recognition of student's family's concerns by our team, the degree of involvement of the student's parents in the transition process, and beginning the transition process in January (see Table 9 for the mean response per item).

Table 7

Mean Responses and Standard Deviations for Each Item on Part III of the CTS

<u>Item</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>N</u>
Recognition of my child's strengths by preschool team	4.75	0.55	20
Recognition of my child's special needs by preschool team	4.65	0.49	20
Information provided by preschool staff to prepare family for transition	4.58	0.60	19
Recognition of my family's concerns by preschool team	4.50	0.69	20
Recognition of my child's strengths by transition team	4.47	0.70	19
Recognition of my child's special needs by transition team	4.37	0.76	19
My level of involvement in my child's IEP	4.35	0.67	20
My child's kindergarten placement	4.30	0.66	20
My satisfaction with the overall transition process	4.30	0.80	20
My child's programming on his/her IEP	4.26	0.65	19
Specific information provided by updated evaluation	4.20	0.95	20
Felt welcomed by my child's elementary school staff	4.16	1.07	20
The "Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Guide"	4.15	0.75	20
Beginning the transition process in January	4.11	0.81	19
Recognition of my child's special needs by elementary team	4.11	1.02	18
Recognition of my family's concerns by elementary team	4.11	1.23	20
My level of involvement in the transition planning process	4.10	1.07	20
Amount of information to make programming decisions	3.95	0.89	20
Recognition of my child's strengths by elementary team	3.89	1.18	18
Amount of information to make placement decisions	3.75	1.07	20
Recognition of my family's concerns by transition team	3.74	1.33	19
The "Preschool to Kindergarten Meeting" for parents	3.67	0.88	12

Table 8

Mean Responses and Standard Deviations for Each Item on Part III of the STS-S

<u>Item</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>N</u>
Recognition of student's strengths by transition team	4.63	0.49	57
Recognition of student's special needs by our team	4.56	0.60	57
Recognition of student's family's concerns by our team	4.54	0.53	55
Specific information provided by updated evaluation	4.42	0.78	53
Beginning the transition process in January	4.30	0.57	55
Recognition of student's special needs by transition team	4.26	0.61	57
Our team's level of involvement in the child's IEP	4.23	0.78	57
The Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Guide	4.21	0.41	57
Our team's level of involvement in the transition planning process	4.14	0.67	57
Recognition of our team's concerns throughout the transition process	4.07	0.75	57
Recognition of student's special needs by elementary team	3.98	0.99	57
The student's programming on the IEP	3.96	0.78	57
Recognition of student's strengths by our team	3.89	0.87	57
Our team's satisfaction with the overall transition process	3.89	0.88	57
Recognition of student's strengths by elementary team	3.88	0.87	57
The student's kindergarten placement	3.86	0.83	57
Recognition of student's family's concerns by transition team	3.81	0.79	55
Developing the Action Plan	3.79	0.53	56
Degree of involvement of the student's parents in the transition process	3.77	0.92	57
Amount of information to make programming decisions	3.73	0.90	57
The degree to which the Action Plan was carried out	3.72	0.77	57
Recognition of student's family's concerns by elementary team	3.72	0.93	55
Collaboration with elementary school special education team	3.67	0.85	57
Amount of information to make placement decisions	3.47	0.92	57
Information provided by elementary team to prepare for transition	3.42	0.84	57

Table 9

Mean Responses and Standard Deviations for Each Item on Part III of the STS-R

Item	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>N</u>
Information provided by preschool team to prepare for transition	4.40	0.52	10
Collaboration with preschool special education team	4.20	0.79	10
Recognition of student's strengths by preschool team	4.10	0.32	10
Recognition of student's special needs by preschool team	4.10	0.32	10
Recognition of student's strengths by transition team	4.00	0.47	10
Amount of information to make placement decisions	4.00	0.00	10
Specific information provided by updated evaluation	4.00	0.00	10
Our team's level of involvement in the transition planning process	4.00	0.00	10
Recognition of student's special needs by transition team	3.90	0.32	10
Recognition of our team's concerns throughout the transition process	3.90	0.32	10
Recognition of student's strengths by our team	3.80	0.63	10
Recognition of student's family's concerns by preschool team	3.80	0.42	10
Amount of information to make programming decisions	3.80	0.42	10
Our team's level of involvement in the child's IEP	3.80	0.42	10
The student's kindergarten placement	3.80	0.42	10
The student's programming on the IEP	3.80	0.42	10
Our team's satisfaction with the overall transition process	3.80	0.42	10
Developing the Action Plan	3.60	0.52	10
The Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Guide	3.60	0.52	10
Recognition of student's family's concerns by transition team	3.60	0.84	10
The degree to which the Action Plan was carried out	3.50	0.53	8
Recognition of student's special needs by our team	3.50	0.71	10
Recognition of student's family's concerns by our team	3.50	0.85	10
Degree of involvement of the student's parents in the transition process	3.30	1.25	10
Beginning the transition process in January	3.20	0.79	10

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether there were significant differences between the three groups in terms of their overall ratings of satisfaction with the transition process. Before this could be done the three surveys were reduced to a subset of like-items (see Table 10), which resulted in three equivalent surveys, each consisting of 20 comparable items. The means and standard deviations of the total scores were affected and the data for both the like-form and the original-form surveys are shown in Table 11.

Children in the study had been identified as special education students for an average for 17.54 months ( $SD= 10.02$ ). Sixteen students had been identified before the age of 3 years and had received infant and/or toddler services in addition to receiving services through preschool. There was no correlation found between the number of months in special education and parents' ratings of satisfaction ( $r = -.23, p > .05$ ), receiving teams' ratings of satisfaction ( $r = .27, p > .05$ ), or sending teams' ratings of satisfaction ( $r = .06, p > .05$ ). When collapsed into 6- month increments (see Table 12 for frequency rates per each 6-month increment), there were no significant differences based on length of time in special education and parents' ratings of satisfaction,  $F(4, 10) = 3.19, p < .06$ ; sending teams' ratings of satisfaction,  $F(5, 45) = 1.16, p > .05$ ; or receiving teams' ratings of satisfaction,  $F(4, 5) = 1.78, p > .05$ .

Ratings of satisfaction with the transition process were compared with the number of transition activities participated in for each group using an ANOVA. The number of transition activities participated in were collapsed into categories based on equal

Table 10

**Sub-set of like-items from Part III of the CTS, STS-S, and the STS-R**

- 
1. Began the transition process in January
  2. Received copy of Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Guide
  3. Information provided to assist decision making
  4. Recognition of child's strengths by transition team
  5. Recognition of child's strengths by preschool team
  6. Recognition of child's strengths by elementary team
  7. Recognition of child's special needs by transition team
  8. Recognition of child's special needs by preschool team
  9. Recognition of child's special needs by elementary team
  10. Recognition of child's family's concerns by transition team
  11. Recognition of child's family's concerns by preschool team
  12. Recognition of child's family's concerns by elementary team
  13. Amount of information to make programming decisions
  14. Amount of information to make placement decisions
  15. Specific information provided by updated evaluation
  16. Our level of involvement in the transition planning process
  17. Our level of involvement in the child's IEP
  18. The child's kindergarten placement
  19. The child's programming on the IEP
  20. Satisfaction with the overall transition process
-

Table 11

Means and Standard Deviations for the CTS, STS-R, and STS-S Like-Forms and Original Forms

Survey	Original- Form			Like-Form		
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M per item</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M per item</u>
CTS	91.75	11.23	4.36	93.00	10.27	4.01
STS-R	95.12	5.94	3.80	76.50	3.57	3.48
STS-S	100.31	11.35	4.01	81.12	9.09	3.69

Table 12

Frequency of Occurrence Based on Length of Time in Special Education

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Length of Time in Special Education	Frequency
0-6 months	7
7-12 months	9
13-18 months	8
19-24 months	16
25-30 months	6
31 months or more	5

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increments of three for each group. No significant differences ( $F(2, 13) = 0.54, p > .05$ ) were found between parents Satisfaction With Transition Score based on whether they participated in one to three transition activities ( $N = 1$ ), four to six transition activities ( $N = 9$ ) or seven to nine transition activities ( $N = 6$ ). Similarly, no significant differences ( $F(2, 48) = 0.32, p > .05$ ) were found between sending teams' Satisfaction With Transition Scores based on whether they participated in four to six transition activities ( $N = 1$ ), seven to nine transition activities ( $N = 20$ ) or 10 to 12 transition activities ( $N = 30$ ). There were no sending teams who reported participating in fewer than four transition activities. Lastly, there were also no significant differences ( $F(1, 6) = 0.03, p > .05$ ) found between receiving teams' Satisfaction With Transition Scores based on whether they participated in one to three transition activities ( $N = 4$ ) or seven to nine transition activities ( $N = 4$ ). There were no receiving teams who reported participating in either the four to six transition activities category or the 10 to 11 transition activities category.

#### Importance of Transition Activities

For the purposes of this analysis, item mean scores on the ITAS of 3.6 to 4.5 were considered as important aspects of transition while item mean scores of 4.6 to 5.0 were considered very important. According to their responses on the ITAS, parents generally rated all 14 aspects of the transition process as important or very important with the average rating per item being 4.42 and ranging from 3.73 to 4.80. The mean total score was 61.85 ( $N = 13, SD = 4.58$ ). Table 13 provides the mean responses in the order of importance and standard deviations for each item on the ITAS as completed by parents.

Based on parents' responses, the availability of elementary school staff for questions/concerns, information from updated evaluation, sharing information between preschool and elementary school, the Transition Staffing, the availability of preschool staff for questions/concerns, and opportunities to visit the child's potential kindergarten classroom(s) were all considered to be very important or critical aspects of the transition process.

Similarly, according to their responses on the ITAS, sending teams rated all 14 aspects of the transition process within the important to very important range with the average rating per item being 4.36 and ranging from 3.75 to 5.00. The mean total score was 61.00 ( $N = 4$ ,  $SD = 3.74$ ). Table 14 provides the mean responses in the order of importance and standard deviations for each item on the ITAS as completed by sending teams. Based on sending teams' responses, the Transition Staffing, collaborating with receiving teams for transition planning, availability of receiving team for questions or concerns, and designating an elementary school contact person for the family were all considered to be very important or critical aspects of the transition process. Receiving teams' responses per item on the ITAS range from 3.00 to 4.67 with an average item response of 3.96 with a mean total score of 55.50 ( $N = 3$ ,  $SD = 6.36$ ). While most items were rated as important, the mean for each of the following three items were below the important range: (1) "beginning the formal transition process in January"; (2) "the district-wide 'Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Meeting' held for parents"; and, (3) "opportunities to visit the student's preschool classroom." The mean responses, in order

Table 13

Mean Responses and Standard Deviations for Parent Responses on the ITAS

<u>Item</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>N</u>
The availability of elementary school staff for questions/concerns	4.80	0.41	20
Information from updated evaluation	4.80	0.41	20
The sharing of information between preschool and elementary school	4.75	0.44	20
The Transition Staffing	4.75	0.44	20
Availability of preschool staff for questions/concerns	4.70	0.47	20
Opportunities to visit my child's potential kindergarten classroom(s)	4.65	0.59	20
Beginning the process in January	4.50	0.51	20
Information on educational options in district	4.50	0.69	20
Discussing transition at fall conference	4.41	0.71	17
The name of a contact person at elementary school	4.39	0.70	18
Information about kindergarten registration	4.25	0.64	20
The "Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Guide"	4.11	1.05	19
The Parent Action Plan from the guide	4.00	1.05	19
The "Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Meeting" for parents	3.73	1.03	15

Table 14

Sending Teams' Mean Responses and Standard Deviations on the ITAS (N = 4)

Item	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
The Transition Staffing	5.00	0.00
Collaboration with receiving team for transition planning	4.75	0.50
Availability of receiving team for questions/concerns	4.75	0.50
Designating an elementary school contact person for the family	4.75	0.50
Discussing transition at fall conference	4.50	0.33
Beginning the process in January	4.50	0.58
Opportunities for additional informal planning contacts with the family	4.50	0.58
Information from updated evaluation	4.50	0.58
Sharing information with the receiving team at a team meeting	4.00	0.00
Opportunities to visit students' potential kindergarten classroom(s)	4.00	0.00
The "Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Guide"	4.00	0.82
The "Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Meeting" for parents	4.00	0.82
Information on educational options in district	4.00	0.82
Developing the Action Plan	3.75	0.50

of importance and standard deviations for each item on the ITAS as completed by receiving teams is provided in Table 15. Based on receiving teams' responses, only one transition activity, the Transition Staffing, was considered to be a very important or critical aspect of the transition process. However, collaboration with the sending team for transition planning, information from updated evaluation, sharing information with the sending at a team meeting, the availability of sending team for questions/concerns, designating a contact person from your school for the family, access to student records including current IEP, collaboration with the student's parents for transition planning, information on educational options in district, developing the Action Plan and the "Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Guide" were all considered "important" transition activities.

#### Follow-Up Data

Nine out of the 20 participating parents provided follow-up data (45% return) although one parent only returned two of the three surveys. Only one of the three participating receiving teams responded to the follow-up surveys providing data on four students.

Parents tended to agree that their child had made a positive adjustment to kindergarten based on their ratings of seven characteristics of adjustment provided in the AKF based on their total scores ( $M = 28.67$ ,  $SD = 7.24$ ). The average response per item was 4.09 ranging from 3.78 to 4.56. For the purpose of this evaluation, mean item ratings

Table 15

Receiving Teams' Mean Responses and Standard Deviations on the ITAS (N = 3)

Item	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
The Transition Staffing	4.67	0.58
Collaboration with sending team for transition planning	4.33	0.58
Information from updated evaluation	4.33	0.58
Sharing information with the sending at a team meeting	4.33	0.58
Availability of sending team for questions/concerns	4.00	0.00
Designating a contact person from your school for the family	4.00	0.00
Access to student records including current IEP	4.00	0.00
Collaboration with the student's parents for transition planning	4.00	0.00
Information on educational options in district	4.00	0.00
Developing the Action Plan	4.00	1.00
The "Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Guide"	3.67	0.58
The "Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Meeting" for parents	3.33	0.58
Opportunities to visit students' preschool classroom	3.33	1.15
Beginning the process in January	3.00	1.00

on the AKF and the AKF-E of 4.6 to 5.0 were considered to indicate “strong agreement” while mean item ratings of 3.6 to 4.5 were considered to indicate “agreement.” Although parents generally did not express strong agreement with any of the seven characteristics of adjustment to kindergarten, parents typically did not express disagreement with any items on the AKF either. Parents reported that their child looked forward to kindergarten each morning ( $M = 4.56$ ,  $SD = 0.73$ ); expressed enjoyment of kindergarten activities ( $M = 4.22$ ,  $SD = 0.83$ ); was able to follow the routine of the classroom with the level of support indicated on his/her IEP ( $M = 4.11$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ); participated in activities consistent with his/her IEP ( $M = 4.00$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ); appeared to be adjusting well to the kindergarten program ( $M = 4.11$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ); my child was able to demonstrate appropriate classroom behavior with the level of support indicated on his/her IEP ( $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = 1.40$ ); and, my child’s kindergarten program was the appropriate setting to meet his/her needs ( $M = 3.89$ ,  $SD = 1.36$ ).

The participating receiving team, consisting of a speech-language therapist and a classroom teacher, reported that the children at their school had made a positive adjustment to kindergarten based on their ratings of the seven characteristics of adjustment provided in the AKE based on their total scores and their responses were less varied than the responses provided by parents ( $M = 27.75$ ,  $SD = 1.67$ ). The average response per item was 3.96 ranging from 3.75 to 4.25. Similar to the results obtained from parents, receiving teams did not express strong agreement with any of the items on the AKF-E, nor did they express disagreement with any of the items. The receiving team

reported that the children look forward to kindergarten each morning ( $\underline{M}$  = 4.00,  $\underline{SD}$  = 0.00); were able to follow the routine of the classroom with the level of support indicated on their IEPs ( $\underline{M}$  = 4.00,  $\underline{SD}$  = 0.53); participated in activities consistent with their IEPs ( $\underline{M}$  = 4.00,  $\underline{SD}$  = 0.00); the children's kindergarten programs were the appropriate setting to meet their needs ( $\underline{M}$  = 4.00,  $\underline{SD}$  = 0.00); appeared to be adjusting well to their respective kindergarten programs ( $\underline{M}$  = 4.25,  $\underline{SD}$  = 0.46); were able to demonstrate appropriate classroom behavior with the level of support indicated on the IEP ( $\underline{M}$  = 3.75,  $\underline{SD}$  = 0.72); and, expressed enjoyment of kindergarten activities; ( $\underline{M}$  = 3.75,  $\underline{SD}$  = 0.46)

Using paired  $t$ -tests, there was no significant difference ( $t = 2.4$ ,  $p < .06$ ) between parents' initial ratings of satisfaction at the time of transition ( $\underline{M}$  = 91.28,  $\underline{SD}$  = 11.25) compared to their ratings obtained two months into the school year ( $\underline{M}$  = 86.86,  $\underline{SD}$  = 13.90). Moreover, there was no significant difference found ( $t = 0.16$ ,  $p > .05$ ) between receiving team's initial ratings of satisfaction ( $\underline{M}$  = 95.50,  $\underline{SD}$  = 3.32) and ratings collected two months into the school year ( $\underline{M}$  = 94.75,  $\underline{SD}$  = 8.90).

A matched comparison correlational analysis indicated that a significant relationship was not found between parents' initial Satisfaction With Transition Score and their child's adjustment to kindergarten as measured by the AKF ( $r = .44$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Similarly, a significant relationship was not found between receiving team's initial Satisfaction With Transition Score and child adjustment to kindergarten as measured by the AKF ( $r = .12$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

Follow-up ratings of the importance of 14 specific transition activities were

collected from eight of the 20 participating parents. According to their responses on the ITAS, parents tended to continue to rate most aspects of the transition process as important with the average rating per item being 4.53 and ranging from 3.62 to 4.78. The mean total score was 63.5 ( $SD = 7.38$ ). Table 16 provides the mean responses in the order of importance and standard deviations for each item on the ITAS as completed by parents.

Parents reported that the availability of elementary school staff for questions/concerns, information from updated evaluation, sharing information between preschool and elementary school staff, the Transition Staffing, the availability of preschool staff for questions/concerns continued to be the transition activities they considered as very important or critical aspects of the transition process. In retrospect, they also rated having the name of a contact person at their child's elementary school as a very important as well, while having the opportunity to visit their child's potential kindergarten classroom was rated important as opposed to the very important rating that item received from parents just after their child's transition staffing.

Follow-up data from the receiving teams regarding the importance of each specific transition activity were returned by only one of the three participating schools and, as a result, these data were not amenable to further statistical analysis or comparison.

Table 16

Mean Responses and Standard Deviations for Parent Responses on the ITAS at Follow-Up

<u>Item</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>N</u>
The sharing of information between preschool and elementary school	4.78	0.44	9
The Transition Staffing	4.78	0.44	9
Information from updated evaluation	4.67	0.50	9
The availability of elementary school staff for questions/concerns	4.67	0.71	9
Availability of preschool staff for questions/concerns	4.67	0.71	9
The name of a contact person at elementary school	4.62	0.52	8
Beginning the process in January	4.56	0.73	9
Information on educational options in district	4.56	0.73	9
The "Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Guide"	4.44	0.53	9
Information about kindergarten registration	4.44	0.73	9
Opportunities to visit my child's potential kindergarten classroom(s)	4.44	1.01	9
Discussing transition at fall conference	4.44	1.01	9
The Parent Action Plan from the guide	4.11	0.93	9
The "Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Meeting" for parents	3.62	0.52	8

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to determine the relative effectiveness of a school district preschool to kindergarten transition process developed to promote the continuity of services for young children with special needs. Parents, sending teams, and receiving teams who were directly involved in the transition process during the spring of 1998 were asked to participate in the present study and provided with two surveys to complete. The first survey measured participation in a variety of transition activities as well as perceptions of satisfaction with the transition process. The second survey assessed the importance of each individual transition activity. Follow-up data were collected from participating parents and elementary school teams at approximately two months into the 1998-99 school year for each child. The follow-up data included re-administration of the two surveys as well as the administration of a third survey which assessed each child's adjustment to the kindergarten setting.

The results suggested that sending teams were most involved in the transition process by participating in significantly more transition activities than would be expected by chance. Parents and receiving teams appeared to be less involved in the transition process, with neither group participating in significantly more transition activities than would be expected by chance. While all three groups reported participating in the formal Transition Staffing, the responsibility for initiating and planning the transition process appeared to fall mostly on the sending teams. Sending teams had significantly more

contact with families and with receiving schools and provided most of the information and updated evaluation for each child. However, sending teams tended to be less likely to visit potential kindergarten classrooms that their student's might attend. Receiving teams tended to be less likely to review the child's records prior to the staffing or to be involved in any updated evaluation or additional planning time. Families tended to be less likely to access district resources such as attending the informational district-wide meeting held for parents on transition from preschool to kindergarten.

The present study sought not only to determine which activities parents and educators were likely to participate in, but also which specific transition activities were identified as important or very important. Although parents and receiving teams did not participate in a significant number of transition activities, all three groups considered the majority of the transition activities available to them as important or very important aspects of the transition process. More specifically, the Transition Staffing appeared to be a very important component in the transition process for parents, sending teams, and receiving teams. In addition, sending teams appeared to find collaboration and opportunities for additional discussion with the receiving teams as very important to the transition process. Parents also considered the collaboration between the sending team and the receiving team, as well as the availability of both the sending team and the receiving team for questions and concerns as very important components of the transition process. While not rated as "very" important, receiving teams considered collaboration with parents and sending teams as an important factor in transition nonetheless.

Moreover, both sending and receiving teams indicated satisfaction with the collaboration between the two educational teams. These findings provide empirical support for current models of preschool to kindergarten transition that have recommended collaboration among all parties involved in the transition process (e.g., Conn-Powers et al., 1990; Hains et al., 1988; Wilson, 1998).

Although opportunities to visit a child's potential kindergarten classroom has been considered by many authors as a key component of transition (e.g., Colorado Department of Education, 1994; Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman, 1990; Karr-Jelinek, 1994; U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1987), the results of the present study suggest that few parents or sending teams actually reported visiting the child's potential kindergarten classroom. However, sending teams generally rated the opportunity to visit kindergarten classrooms as important and parents indicated it was a very important part of transition. In order to understand this apparent inconsistency, it would be helpful to know whether parents and sending teams did not visit a child's potential kindergarten classroom because of such factors such as logistics, scheduling, time, or undetermined teacher and classroom assignments. Similarly, few parents reported attending the district-wide preschool-to-kindergarten transition meeting held for parents, yet they tended to rate it as an important aspect of the transition process. Again, understanding why parents did not attend would be useful for the school district in terms of allocating resources for future transition planning.

Designating a contact person on the receiving team was considered as important

or very important by all participants in the present study suggesting that developing a consistent link or liaison to the receiving team, as suggested by Diamond et al. (1988), is a “critical” component of transition. In addition, having access to current records was considered important to the receiving teams, and all teams regarded the updated evaluation of students as important. However, receiving teams were unlikely to have participated in any direct testing.

Receiving teams appeared to consider providing a district-wide meeting for parents regarding the transition process, beginning the transition process early, and having opportunities to visit the preschool classrooms of their potential students as less than important to the transition process. Parents and sending teams, on the other hand, did not identify any aspects of the current transition process to be less than important. Receiving teams are not directly involved in the district-wide meeting regarding transition held for parents and, as such, may not attribute as much importance to it. Receiving teams are also in the unique position of trying to meet the needs of the students already in their building, as well as anticipate the needs of potential incoming kindergarten students. As a result, it may be that planning for incoming students six months in advance or visiting preschool classrooms are not considered key aspects of the transition process. However, several authors have recommended beginning the transition process early (e.g., Bruder & Chandler, 1996; Diamond et al., 1988; Streifel et al., 1991; Udell, Peters, & Templeman, 1998) and providing reciprocal opportunities to visit potential kindergarten programs and classrooms (e.g., Diamond et al., 1988; Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman, 1990; Johnson et

al., 1986; Wilson, 1998 ). The results of the present study appear to support these recommendations by substantiating the importance of these particular transition activities at least for parents and sending teams. Parents and sending teams felt discussing transition in the fall, and beginning the formal transition process in January, were important and reported satisfaction with beginning the transition process early. It may be that these two groups need a longer time frame to plan for transition than receiving teams need which then begets the question of when to involve receiving teams in the transition process in a manner that best utilizes school and district resources.

All three groups felt that having information regarding educational options in the district was important as was developing an action plan (either the Parent Action Plan or the Transition Action Plan) to guide an individual child's transition. The importance of developing individual transition plans for each child has been suggested in the literature (e.g., Bruns & Fowler, 1999; Wilson, 1998) and the current study suggests support for including individual transition plans as a specific transition activity based on the perceptions of importance given to this activity from the respondents. The Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Guide was also rated as important by all groups (and actually used by parents and sending teams) which underscores the need of having written transition policies and procedures (e.g., Conn-Powers et al, 1990; Mack, 1995).

While it is certainly helpful to know which aspects of transition parents and educators viewed as important or very important, another objective of the present study was to determine parents' and educators' level of overall satisfaction with the actual

transition process within their school district, as well as, which specific transition activities respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with. As in the case of previous studies, parents and educators tended to report high levels of overall satisfaction with the particular transition process being implemented (see, for example, Fox et al., 1996; Johnson et al., 1986; Waxler et al., 1990). Specifically, parents and educators expressed general satisfaction with the overall transition process, as well as with their respective levels of involvement in the development of each child's IEP. However, parents reported being significantly more satisfied in their overall ratings of the transition process than were either sending or receiving teams, with no significant difference found between these latter two groups. Determining why the educators were less satisfied than parents would be helpful in creating a more effective transition process for all participants. One possible reason might be that sending teams might have felt that they lacked sufficient information to make educational decisions for the transitioning child. For example, sending teams reported being less than satisfied with both the amount of information with which they had to make placement decisions and with the information provided to them by the receiving team. However, they reported being satisfied with making programming decisions suggesting they felt more comfortable with their knowledge of a child's needs and what accommodations, adaptations, or strategies were indicated, but less confident making systemic placement decisions such as what school or educational program a child should attend.

Receiving teams were also less satisfied with the overall transition process than

were parents. A possible reason for this difference may be that receiving teams may have felt they were not able to fully understand the child's or family's needs. For example, receiving teams reported being less than satisfied with their own ability to recognize a child's special needs or the family's concerns. Receiving teams also reported feeling less satisfied with the degree to which parents were involved in the transition process. These concerns may reflect a broader dissatisfaction by the receiving team of their ability to know and understand the family and child prior to the child's entrance into kindergarten. Anecdotal comments reported by receiving teams that lend support to this argument included needing to get to know the child for several weeks in kindergarten before determining the need for specific supports or services. Although the receiving teams reported feeling satisfied with the amount of information they had to make programming and placement decisions, as well as with the information they received from the sending teams, it may be that the current transition process does not allow receiving teams to gain a broader understanding of family and child dynamics and needs. Receiving teams also reported being less than satisfied with beginning the transition process in January and may feel their time would be better spent in other ways in terms of preparing for transition.

Both groups of educators reported being satisfied with the development of an Action Plan for each child. However, sending teams reported being satisfied with the extent to which the Action Plan was implemented, while receiving teams rated this transition activity as less than satisfactory. Receiving teams are typically not as involved

with the activities outlined on the Action Plan (e.g., updated testing, visitations to classrooms) which may contribute to their lack of satisfaction with the implementation of the Action Plan.

All participants were satisfied with the Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Guide, the specific information provided from any updated evaluation, the child's programming on his/or her IEP, and the child's kindergarten placement. Each group also felt that their concerns regarding the transition for a particular child were recognized.

The results also suggested that parents felt supported by their sending teams during the transition process for their child. For example, parents generally indicated being very satisfied with the sending teams' ability to recognize their child's developmental strengths and needs. Parents also reported being satisfied with the information provided by their child's sending team to prepare their family for transition, and with the sending team's ability to recognize their family's concerns regarding their child's transition. These results are consistent with the previous findings of Johnson et al., (1986) and Hamblin-Wilson and Thurman (1990) and indicate that sending teams provide parents with valuable assistance throughout the transition process. Nevertheless, parents also reported feeling welcomed by their child's receiving team and were satisfied with the receiving team's ability to identify their child's strengths and needs as well as identify their family's concerns regarding the transition for their child suggesting that parents find receiving teams as helpful contributors to the transition process as well. However, as mentioned above, receiving teams did not feel as satisfied with their own ability to

recognize a child's special needs or understand a family's concerns but they did express satisfaction with their ability to recognize a child's strengths.

Similar to parents, receiving teams also reported being satisfied with the sending teams' ability to recognize a child's developmental strengths, special needs, and concerns of the family. Sending teams reported that both groups of educators were able to recognize a child's strengths, needs, and family concerns and were very satisfied with how the transition team, in particular, was able to recognize these child and family characteristics.

From these findings, it appears that all three groups determined the transition process was effective in identifying a child's strengths but receiving teams seemed less satisfied with their own ability to learn and understand more about a child's specific special needs and unique family concerns. For those who have known the child longer and more closely (i.e., parents and sending teams), the child's special needs may be more evident but for some reason are not conveyed as clearly as receiving teams need in order to gain a fuller understanding of the child and family.

It has been suggested in the research that the efficacy of a transition process may vary depending upon different child and family characteristics (e.g., Sheehan & Keogh, 1982; Rosenkoetter, Hains, & Fowler, 1994). However, in the present study, the length of time a child had been receiving early intervention services, the catchment area where the child would be attending kindergarten, nor the child's eligibility category, contributed in any way to respondents' ratings of satisfaction with the transition process.

While several authors have suggested that parent involvement is an important factor in developing successful transitions from preschool to kindergarten (e.g., Bruder & Chandler, 1996; Fox et al., 1996; Stief, 1994; Wilson, 1998; Ziegler, 1985), the present study did not find a significant relationship between parents' degree of participation in the array of transition activities available to them and their ratings of satisfaction with the transition process. Similarly, the number of transition activities in which receiving teams and sending teams participated in was not significantly related to their ratings of satisfaction with the transition process. In general, all of the educators and parents who responded reported satisfaction with their level of involvement in the transition process regardless of the number of transition activities in which they actively engaged.

While there is no available information in the literature regarding the relationship between educators' levels of involvement in transition and their satisfaction with the transition process, the results of the present study are consistent with the findings of Hamblin-Wilson and Thurman (1990) who found that parents' levels of involvement in transition did not appear to impact their levels of satisfaction with the transition process. However, the authors did find that parents who felt supported and prepared for transition tended to be more satisfied with the overall transition process for their child. Similarly, Fowler et al. (1986) found that parents who felt more knowledgeable regarding transition also tended to be more satisfied with the transition process. Evaluating the ways in which parents feel supported and knowledgeable about transition may provide more insight into parents satisfaction with transition than quantifying the number of transition activities in

which they participate as an indicator of involvement with the transition process.

Follow-up data from the present study indicated that parents' and receiving teams' ratings of satisfaction with the transition process were relatively stable and both groups continued to express satisfaction with transition two months after the beginning of the 1998-99 school year. However, parents' and receiving teams' levels of satisfaction with the transition process were not significantly related to their ratings regarding the adjustment of a child to his/her kindergarten classroom. Both groups reported that each child had adjusted positively to the kindergarten classroom based on seven characteristics of adjustment to kindergarten.

Of the six transition activities that parents considered to be very important to the transition process at the time of the child's transition, five of those activities continued to be considered by parents as very important aspects of the transition process at the two-month follow-up. It appears that the availability of the receiving team for questions and concerns, the information provided by updated evaluation, the sharing of information between the sending and receiving teams, the Transition Staffing, and the opportunity to visit their child's potential kindergarten classroom persist as key components of transition for parents. While not rated as very important, parents still felt that the availability of the sending team for questions and concerns was an important component of transition. All remaining transition activities were considered important to the transition process which is consistent with parents' initial ratings suggesting stability in parents determinations of what is important to the transition process. Follow-up data regarding receiving teams'

ratings of the importance of each specific transition activity was not in sufficient quantity to evaluate further. In this regard, it would be helpful to know whether receiving teams' would show a similar pattern of stability after two months or would their perceptions of what is most important to the transition process change after having the child attend class for a period of time.

### Limitations of Findings

The present study was intended as an exploratory program evaluation of a preschool to kindergarten transition process utilized by one school district. As such, there are inherent biases in the study that limit the generalization of the results to other school districts or agencies involved in the transition of young children with special needs into kindergarten settings. First, the sample was not randomly selected, and the added effect of self-selection serves to further limit the generalizability to the results of this study. Second, the study was conducted in a fairly homogeneous community in a metropolitan area of a western state and may not apply to other districts in other geographical regions within the United States or in areas with more diversity. Third, although the participating sample reflected the overall sample, the results obtained from the present study must be viewed cautiously due to the small sample of parents who participated, as well as the significantly low rate of return from receiving teams. Fourth, in some cases the receiving teams were represented by only one or two members whose opinions may or may not have represented their entire team's perspectives. Fifth, with respect to measuring the potential effects of specific child characteristics on respondents ratings, the majority of

children in the present study were identified under the Physical, Preschool, or Speech Language Disability categories which made comparisons among eligibility groups more limited.

While conducting the study within the natural setting of a school district has its benefits, there is not the same level of consistency that can be provided in a controlled setting. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that the activities provided in the transition process were the same for every participant--- leading to the potential influence of task effects on the generalizability of the results. It is also possible that differences in how the transition activities were implemented across the district, and the personality or style differences of individual educators, could have confounded the results. Similarly, the presence of certain demand characteristics may have clouded the findings. In addition, although the researcher was generally removed from the transition process, it is possible that since she is a part of the Douglas County Early Education Program, and assisted in developing the transition process being evaluated, that sending teams in particular may have responded more positively to the process than had she been an outside evaluator.

Previous studies of preschool to kindergarten transition have utilized a variety of techniques for gathering data including structured interviews (e.g., Fowler et al., 1988), surveys (e.g., Hamblin-Wilson & Thurman, 1990), or a combination of techniques (e.g., Johnson et al., 1986). It is possible that the use of a different data-gathering approach may have yielded a larger base of information and may have even resulted in different effects from those obtained in the present study.

A final source of potential bias may be inherent in the test-retest format of the present study. However, it seems unlikely that participants' responses on the follow-up measures would have been affected by the initial data collection in that there was a considerable length of time between data collection periods (i.e., approximately 2.5 months).

#### Future Directions For Research

The present study provides useful information regarding the experience of one school district with the transition of preschoolers with special needs into kindergarten. However, additional research is needed to increase the base of knowledge regarding best practices for preschool to kindergarten transition. A broader sample of participants is needed to represent the diversity and regional differences necessary for generalization. In addition, comparison outcome studies between different models of transition procedures and a control group condition could assist in further defining the features of transition that are considered most effective. At this point in time, only noncomparative outcome studies have been conducted.

Although, the present study found no significant differences between respondents' ratings of satisfaction with the transition process and various child characteristics, continued exploration of the potential effect of child and family characteristics on the transition process is needed. With respect to a child's eligibility category, it may be more useful to focus on specific eligibility groups rather than on an overall sample due to the relatively low incidence rates of certain disabilities (e.g., vision, hearing, emotional) in

the general population.

Similarly, more exploration of the role of the receiving teams is needed to identify how best to include receiving teams in the transition process that not only maximizes school district resources, but that respects the unique contributions of receiving teams as well. Collecting data from individual team members rather than from the team as a whole could lead to more clarity regarding what types of transition activities would be most helpful to them when preparing for a child's transition.

Continued efforts to determine how to most effectively share information with families and how to increase parents' and receiving teams' participation in the transition process is also suggested. Understanding why parents and educators did not participate in activities they felt were important to the transition process could allow for the development of more effective transition activities.

### Conclusions

In general, the present study provides empirical support for recommendations made in the literature regarding the transition of young children with special needs into kindergarten settings. Overall, parents, sending teams, and receiving teams were satisfied with the transition process evaluated in the present study, and rated the individual components of the transition process as important elements. In addition, the results obtained from parents were found to be stable over time. Parents were also more satisfied with the transition process than were either receiving or sending teams. Sending teams appeared to be most involved in the transition process, and parents tended to feel most

satisfied with transition activities that involved or were initiated by their sending teams. However, contrary to many recommendations of best practices for preschool to kindergarten transition, receiving teams did not feel that beginning the process early was very important and neither sending nor receiving teams tended to visit each other's classrooms which has also been recommended as a key component to an effective transition. While all of the participants felt collaboration was a very important aspect of transition, receiving teams appeared relatively less satisfied with their own role in the transition process with regard to how well they were able to understand child and family needs and sending teams were less satisfied with their ability to make systemic placement decisions. Nevertheless, parents and receiving teams both reported the children had adjusted well to their kindergarten classrooms and all participants were satisfied with the child's placement and programming as indicated on the IEP.

## **Appendix A**

### **Child Transition Survey**

## Child Transition Survey

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Preschool your child attends: \_\_\_\_\_

Elementary school your child will attend: \_\_\_\_\_

When did your child begin attending a Douglas County Early Education Preschool as a student receiving special education support? (Please give month/year) \_\_\_\_\_

### **A. Participation in Transition**

Please check the following transition activities that apply to you:

\_\_\_\_\_ received a copy of the Transition Guide

\_\_\_\_\_ read through the Transition Guide

\_\_\_\_\_ discussed transition with your child's preschool team informally

\_\_\_\_\_ discussed transition with your child's preschool team at your child's fall conference

\_\_\_\_\_ completed the Parent Action Plan page at the end of the Transition Guide

\_\_\_\_\_ attended the district-wide Transition Meeting for parents held in February

\_\_\_\_\_ visited options for your's child's placement

\_\_\_\_\_ met with elementary school special education team prior to the Transition Staffing for additional planning time

\_\_\_\_\_ participated in a Transition Staffing for your child

## **B. Satisfaction with the Transition Process**

Satisfaction can be defined as the degree to which an experience meets your expectations. We would like to know how satisfied parents are regarding the many activities involved in the transition process. Please mark the box that most closely describes your level of satisfaction with each item below. Use the following key to rate your responses:

<b>Extremely Unsatisfied:</b>	“My expectations were not met”
<b>Unsatisfied:</b>	“Did not meet all of my expectations”
<b>Neither Satisfied or Unsatisfied:</b>	“No opinion”
<b>Satisfied:</b>	“Met my expectations”
<b>Extremely Satisfied:</b>	“Exceeded my expectations”

	Extremely Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Neither Satisfied or Unsatisfied	Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied
1) Beginning the formal transition process in January.					
2) The “Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Guide”					
3) Information provided by my preschool staff to help prepare my family for transition.					
4) The “Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Meeting” held for parents in February at Chaparral High School.					
5) Recognition of my child’s strengths by the <u>transition team</u> (preschool and elementary school teams combined) during the transition process.					
6) Recognition of my child’s strengths by the <u>preschool team</u> during the transition process.					

	Extremely Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Neither Satisfied or Unsatisfied	Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied
7) Recognition of my child's strengths by the <u>elementary school team</u> during the transition process.					
8) Recognition of my child's special needs by the <u>transition team</u> during the transition process.					
9) Recognition of my child's special needs by the <u>preschool team</u> during the transition process.					
10) Recognition of my child's special needs by the <u>elementary school team</u> during the transition process.					
11) Recognition of my family's concerns by the <u>transition team</u> during the transition process.					
12) Recognition of my family's concerns by the <u>preschool team</u> during the transition process.					
13) Recognition of my family's concerns by the <u>elementary school special education team</u> during the transition process					
14) Felt welcomed by my child's elementary school team staff.					
15) The amount of information I had to make decisions with for my child's kindergarten programming.					

	Extremely Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Neither Satisfied or Unsatisfied	Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied
16) The amount of information I had to make decisions for my child's kindergarten placement					
17) The specific information provided by updated evaluation for my child.					
18) My level of involvement in the <u>transition planning process</u> for my child's transition					
19 ) My level of involvement in the development of my child's IEP.					
20) My child's kindergarten placement.					
21) My child's programming as defined on his/her IEP.					
22) My satisfaction with the overall transition process.					

**Please return to Pam Parker-Martin by ...date.... using the envelope provided.**

***Thank you for your help!***

## **Appendix B**

### **Student Transition Survey-R Receiving Team Form**

## Student Transition Survey

(Receiving Team Form)

**Name of Student:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student's handicapping condition:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Catchment Area of Receiving Team** (Please circle):

EAST SIDE (Includes all schools in the Parker area including Franktown)

WEST SIDE (Includes all schools in the Highlands Ranch area)

CENTRAL (Includes all schools in the Castle Rock area including Sedalia, Larkspur, and Roxborough)

**Titles of Team Members completing this survey** (Please check):

\_\_\_\_\_ Special Education Teacher

\_\_\_\_\_ Speech Language Pathologist

\_\_\_\_\_ School Psychologist

\_\_\_\_\_ School Social Worker

\_\_\_\_\_ Occupational Therapist

\_\_\_\_\_ Special Education Paraprofessional

\_\_\_\_\_ Classroom Teacher

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (Please specify \_\_\_\_\_)

### **A. Participation in Transition**

Please check the following transition activities that apply to your team for this student:

\_\_\_\_\_ have access to a copy of the Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Guide

\_\_\_\_\_ read through the Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Guide

\_\_\_\_\_ discussed transition with student's preschool team informally at a team meeting

\_\_\_\_\_ had additional informal contact(s) with student's preschool team to plan for transition

\_\_\_\_\_ completed a Transition Action Plan

\_\_\_\_\_ carried out the transition activities identified in this student's Transition Action Plan

\_\_\_\_\_ visited this student's preschool classroom

\_\_\_\_\_ reviewed this student's records prior to the Transition Staffing

\_\_\_\_\_ completed updated evaluation for this student

\_\_\_\_\_ had contact(s) with the student's parents prior to the Transition Staffing for additional planning time

\_\_\_\_\_ participated in a Transition Staffing for this student

## **B. Satisfaction with the Transition Process**

Satisfaction can be defined as the degree to which an experience meets your expectations. We would like to know how satisfied receiving teams are regarding the many activities involved in the transition process. Please mark the box that most closely describes your team's level of satisfaction with each item below for this student's transition. Use the following key to rate your responses:

<b>Extremely Unsatisfied:</b>	“Our expectations were not met”
<b>Unsatisfied:</b>	“Did not meet all of our expectations”
<b>Neither Satisfied or Unsatisfied:</b>	“No opinion”
<b>Satisfied:</b>	“Met our expectations”
<b>Extremely Satisfied:</b>	“Exceeded our expectations”

	Extremely Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Neither Satisfied or Unsatisfied	Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied
1) Beginning the formal transition process in January.					
2) The “Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Guide.”					
3) Information provided to our team by this student's preschool team to help prepare for transition.					
4) Collaboration with this student's preschool team throughout the transition process.					
5) The Action Plan developed between our team and this student's preschool team to guide his/her transition.					
6) The degree to which the activities identified on this student's Transition Action Plan were carried out.					
7) Recognition of this student's strengths by the <u>transition team</u> (preschool and elementary school teams combined) during the transition process.					

	Extremely Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Neither Satisfied or Unsatisfied	Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied
8) Recognition of this student's strengths by <u>our</u> team during the transition process.					
9) Recognition of this student's strengths by the <u>preschool team</u> during the transition process.					
10) Recognition of this student's special needs by the <u>transition team</u> during the transition process.					
11) Recognition of this student's special needs by <u>our team</u> during the transition process.					
12) Recognition of this student's special needs by the <u>preschool team</u> during the transition process.					
13) Recognition of the student's family's concerns by the <u>transition team</u> during the transition process.					
14) Recognition of the student's family's concerns by <u>our team</u> during the transition process.					
15) Recognition of the student's family's concerns by the <u>preschool team</u> during the transition process.					
16) Recognition of our team's concerns throughout the transition process for this student.					
17) The degree to which this student's parents were able to be involved in the transition process.					

	Extremely Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Neither Satisfied or Unsatisfied	Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied
18) The amount of information our team had to make decisions for this student's kindergarten programming.					
19) The amount of information our team had to make decisions for this student's kindergarten placement.					
20) Specific information provided by updated evaluation for this student.					
21) Our team's level of involvement in the <u>transition planning process</u> for this student's transition.					
22) Our team's level of involvement in the development of this <u>student's IEP</u> .					
23) This student's kindergarten placement.					
24) This student's programming as defined on his/her IEP.					
25) Our team's satisfaction with the overall transition process.					

**Please return to Pam Parker-Martin at Child Find (Cantril) by**

---

***Thank you for your help!***

## **Appendix C**

### **Student Transition Survey-S Sending Team Form**

## Student Transition Survey

(Sending Team Form)

**Name of Student:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student's handicapping condition:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Catchment Area of Preschool Team** (Please circle):

EAST SIDE (Includes all schools in the Parker area including Franktown)

WEST SIDE (Includes all schools in the Highlands Ranch area)

CENTRAL (Includes all schools in the Castle Rock area including Sedalia, Larkspur, and Roxborough)

**Titles of Team Members completing this survey** (Please check):

\_\_\_\_\_ Special Education Teacher

\_\_\_\_\_ Speech Language Pathologist

\_\_\_\_\_ Occupational Therapist

\_\_\_\_\_ Special Education Paraprofessional

\_\_\_\_\_ Classroom Teacher

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (Please specify \_\_\_\_\_)

### **A. Participation in Transition**

Please check the following transition activities that apply to your team for this student:

\_\_\_\_\_ have access to a copy of the Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Guide

\_\_\_\_\_ read through the Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Guide

\_\_\_\_\_ discussed transition with this student's parents at his/her fall conference

\_\_\_\_\_ discussed transition with student's receiving team informally at a team meeting

\_\_\_\_\_ had additional informal contact(s) with student's receiving team to plan for transition

\_\_\_\_\_ completed a Transition Action Plan

\_\_\_\_\_ carried out the activities identified on this student's Transition Action Plan

\_\_\_\_\_ visited this student's potential kindergarten classroom(s)

\_\_\_\_\_ provided records to this student's receiving team prior to the Transition Staffing

\_\_\_\_\_ had contact(s) with the student's parents prior to the Transition Staffing for additional planning time

\_\_\_\_\_ completed updated evaluation for this student

\_\_\_\_\_ participated in a Transition Staffing for this student

## **B. Satisfaction with the Transition Process**

Satisfaction can be defined as the degree to which an experience meets your expectations. We would like to know how satisfied preschool teams are regarding the many activities involved in the transition process. Please mark the box that most closely describes your team's level of satisfaction with each item below for this student's transition. Use the following key to rate your responses:

<b>Extremely Unsatisfied:</b>	“Our expectations were not met”
<b>Unsatisfied:</b>	“Did not meet all of our expectations”
<b>Neither Satisfied or Unsatisfied:</b>	“No opinion”
<b>Satisfied:</b>	“Met our expectations”
<b>Extremely Satisfied:</b>	“Exceeded our expectations”

	Extremely Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Neither Satisfied or Unsatisfied	Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied
1) Beginning the formal transition process in January.					
2) The “Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Guide.”					
3) Information provided to our team by this student's elementary school special education team to help prepare for transition.					
4) Collaboration with this student's elementary school special education team throughout the transition process.					
5) The Action Plan developed between our team and this student's elementary school special education team to guide his/her transition.					
6) The degree to which the activities identified on this student's Transition Action Plan were carried out.					

	Extremely Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Neither Satisfied or Unsatisfied	Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied
7) Recognition of this student's strengths by the <u>transition team</u> (preschool and elementary school teams combined) during the transition process.					
8) Recognition of this student's strengths by <u>our team</u> throughout the transition process.					
9) Recognition of this student's strengths by the <u>elementary school special education team</u> during the transition process.					
10) Recognition of this student's special needs by the <u>transition team</u> during the transition process.					
11) Recognition of this student's special needs by <u>our team</u> during the transition process.					
12) Recognition of this student's special needs by the <u>elementary school special education team</u> during the transition process.					
13) Recognition of this student's family's concerns by the <u>transition team</u> during the transition process.					
14) Recognition of this student's family's concerns by <u>our team</u> during the transition process.					
15) Recognition of this student's family's concerns by the <u>elementary school special education team</u> during the transition process.					
16) Recognition of our team's concerns throughout the transition process for this student.					
17) The degree to which this student's parents were able to be involved in the transition process.					

	Extremely Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Neither Satisfied or Unsatisfied	Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied
18) The amount of information our team had to make decisions for this student's kindergarten programming.					
19) The amount of information our team had to make decisions for this student's kindergarten placement.					
20) Specific information provided by updated evaluation for this student.					
21) Our team's level of involvement in the <u>transition planning process</u> for this student's transition.					
22) Our team's level of involvement in the development of this student's IEP.					
23) This student's kindergarten placement.					
24) This student's programming as defined on his/her IEP.					
25) Our team's satisfaction with the overall transition process.					

**Please return to Pam Parker-Martin at Child Find (Cantril)**  
by \_\_\_\_\_

***Thank you for your help!***

## **Appendix D**

### **Importance of Transition Activities Survey**

**Parent Form**

**Sending Team Form**

**Receiving Team Form**

## Importance of Transition Activities Survey

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Preschool your child attends: \_\_\_\_\_

Importance can be defined as the degree to which a person considers something as personally relevant and valuable. Now that you have gone through the transition process, we would like to know which transition activities are considered to be the most important to parents. Please mark the box that best describes the level of importance you would give to each item below. Please use the following key to rate your responses:

**Extremely Unimportant**

**Unimportant:**

**Neither Important or Unimportant:**

**Important:**

**Extremely Important:**

“Completely unnecessary”

“Can do without it”

“No opinion”

“A top priority”

“Could not do without!”

	Extremely Unimportant	Unimportant	Neither Important or Unimportant	Important	Extremely Important
1) Discussing my child's transition with his/her preschool team at his/her fall conference					
2) Beginning the process in January.					
3) The "Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Guide".					
4) The Parent Action Plan page from the "Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Guide".					
5) Attending the district-wide "Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Meeting" for parents held in February at Chapparal High School.					

	Extremely Unimportant	Unimportant	Neither Important or Unimportant	Important	Extremely Important
6) Being given the name of a contact person at my child's neighborhood school.					
7) The sharing of information between my child's preschool team and the elementary school special education team.					
8) Information regarding kindergarten registration.					
9) Information regarding educational program options in the school district.					
10) Information from updated evaluation of my child.					
11) The Transition Staffing.					
12) Availability of the <u>preschool staff</u> for questions or concerns.					
13) Availability of the <u>elementary school special education staff</u> for questions and concerns.					
14) Opportunities to visit my child's potential kindergarten classroom(s).					
15) Other (please specify)					

**Are there any aspects of transition you think we should add to the process that are not currently a part of the school district transition process?**

**Please share any additional comments you have that could be used to improve the transition process:**

**Please return this to Pam Parker-Martin by ....date..... in the envelope provided and drop off at your school's main office.**

***Thank you for your participation!***

## Importance of Transition Activities Survey (Sending Team Form)

**Student's Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Catchment Area of Preschool Team** (Please circle):

EAST SIDE (all schools in the Parker area including Franktown)

WEST SIDE (all schools in the Highlands Ranch area)

CENTRAL (all schools in the Castle Rock area including Roxborough, Sedalia, and Larkspur)

**Titles of Team Members competing this survey:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Special Education Teacher

\_\_\_\_\_ Speech Language Pathologist

\_\_\_\_\_ Occupational Therapist

\_\_\_\_\_ Special Education Paraprofessional

\_\_\_\_\_ Classroom Teacher

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (Please specify \_\_\_\_\_)

Importance can be defined as the degree to which something is considered as personally relevant and valuable. Now that your team has gone through the transition process, we would like to know which transition activities are considered to be the most important to preschool teams. Please mark the box that best describes the level of importance your team would give to each item below. Please use the following key to rate your responses:

**Extremely Unimportant:**

“Completely unnecessary”

**Unimportant:**

“Can do without it”

**Neither Important or Unimportant:**

“No opinion”

**Important:**

“A top priority”

**Extremely Important:**

“Could not do without!”

	Extremely Unimportant	Unimportant	Neither Important or Unimportant	Important	Extremely Important
1) Discussing transition with the student's parent(s) during the fall conference					
2) The “Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Guide”.					

	Extremely Unimportant	Unimportant	Neither Important or Unimportant	Important	Extremely Important
3) Beginning the formal transition process in January.					
4) The district-wide "Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Meeting" held for parents.					
5) Opportunities for additional informal contacts with the student's family to plan for transition as needed.					
6) Sharing information with the receiving team informally at one of their team meetings.					
7) Developing the Action Plan.					
8) Designating a contact person for parents to contact at the student's home school.					
9) Information regarding educational program options in the school district.					
10) Collaboration with the student's receiving team for planning the student's transition.					
11) Availability of the receiving team staff to your team for questions or concerns.					
12) Information provided by updated evaluation of this student.					

	Extremely Unimportant	Unimportant	Neither Important or Unimportant	Important	Extremely Important
13) Opportunities to visit the student's potential kindergarten classroom(s).					
14) The Transition Staffing.					
15) Other (please specify)					

**Are there any aspects of transition your team thinks we should add to the process that are not currently a part of the school district transition process?**

**Please share any additional comments your team may have that could be used to improve the transition process:**

**Please return this to Pam Parker-Martin at Child Find (Cantril) by ....date.....**

***Thank you for your participation!***

## Importance of Transition Activities Survey

(Receiving Team Form)

**Student's Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Catchment Area of Receiving Team** (Please circle):

EAST SIDE (all schools in the Parker area including Franktown)

WEST SIDE (all schools in the Highlands Ranch area)

CENTRAL (all schools in the Castle Rock area including Roxborough, Sedalia, and Larkspur)

**Titles of Team Members competing this survey:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Special Education Teacher

\_\_\_\_\_ Speech Language Pathologist

\_\_\_\_\_ School Psychologist

\_\_\_\_\_ School Social Worker

\_\_\_\_\_ Occupational Therapist

\_\_\_\_\_ Special Education Paraprofessional

\_\_\_\_\_ Classroom Teacher

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (Please specify \_\_\_\_\_)

Importance can be defined as the degree to which something is considered as personally relevant and valuable. Now that your team has gone through the transition process, we would like to know which transition activities are considered to be the most important to receiving teams. Please mark the box that best describes the level of importance your team would give to each item below. Please use the following key to rate your responses:

**Extremely Unimportant:**

“Completely unnecessary”

**Unimportant:**

“Can do without it”

**Neither Important or Unimportant:**

“No opinion”

**Important:**

“A top priority”

**Extremely Important:**

“Could not do without!”

	Extremely Unimportant	Unimportant	Neither Important or Unimportant	Important	Extremely Important
1) Beginning the formal transition process in January.					
2) The “Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Guide”.					

	Extremely Unimportant	Unimportant	Neither Important or Unimportant	Important	Extremely Important
3) The district-wide "Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Meeting" held for parents.					
4) The sharing of information between the sending preschool team and the receiving team informally at one of your team meetings.					
5) Developing the Action Plan.					
6) Designating a contact person for parents to contact at your school.					
7) Access to the student's records including his/her current IEP.					
8) Information regarding educational program options in the school district.					
9) Collaboration with the student's preschool team for planning the student's transition.					
10) Availability of the <u>preschool staff</u> for questions or concerns.					
11) Opportunities to visit the student's preschool classroom.					
12) Information provided by updated evaluation of this student.					
13) Collaboration with the student's parents for planning his/her transition.					

	Extremely Unimportant	Unimportant	Neither Important or Unimportant	Important	Extremely Important
14) The Transition Staffing.					
15) Other (please specify)					

**Are there any aspects of transition your team thinks we should add to the process that are not currently a part of the school district transition process?**

**Please share any additional comments your team may have that could be used to improve the transition process:**

**Please return this to Pam Parker-Martin at Child Find (Cantril) by ....date.....  
*Thank you for your participation!***

## **Appendix E**

### **Adjustment to Kindergarten: Family Follow-Up**

## Adjustment to Kindergarten Follow-Up for Families

School has been back in session for some time now and we would like to know how our preschoolers are adjusting to their new kindergarten programs. Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1) My child looks forward to attending school each morning.					
2) My child expresses enjoyment of kindergarten activities.					
3) My child participates in kindergarten activities consistent with his/her Individual Education Program (IEP).					
4) My child seems able to follow the routine of the kindergarten class with the level of support indicated on his/her Individual Education Program (IEP).					
5) My child is able to demonstrate appropriate classroom behavior with the level of support indicated on his/her Individual Education Program (IEP).					
6) My child appears to be adjusting well to his/her kindergarten program.					
7) My child's kindergarten program is the appropriate setting to meet his/her needs.					

**Thank you for your help!**

Please return to Pam Parker-Martin at Child Find  
in the envelope provided by \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix F**

### **Adjustment to Kindergarten: Educator Follow-Up**

## Adjustment to Kindergarten Follow-Up for Educators

School has been back in session for some time now and we would like to know how our preschoolers are adjusting to their new kindergarten programs. Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1) The student easily enters the classroom each morning.					
2) The student expresses enjoyment of kindergarten activities.					
3) The student participates in kindergarten activities consistent with his/her IEP.					
4) The student seems able to follow the routine of the kindergarten class with the level of support indicated on his/her IEP.					
5) The student is able to demonstrate appropriate classroom behavior with the level of support indicated on his/her IEP.					
6) The student appears to be adjusting well to his/her kindergarten program.					
7) The student's kindergarten program is the appropriate setting to meet his/her needs.					

***Thank you for your help!***

**Please return this to Pam Parker-Martin at Child Find (Cantril)  
by \_\_\_\_\_**

**Appendix G**  
**Pilot Study Survey Review Forms**

## Survey Review Questions

### Child Transition Survey

---

After reading the attached survey, please circle your responses to the following statements.

1. The directions were clearly written.

**Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree**

2. The questions were clearly written.

**Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree**

3. The survey was easy to complete.

**Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree**

4. The survey was free of "technical jargon."

**Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree**

5. The survey took too much time to finish.

**Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree**

6. The questions were hard to understand.

**Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree**

7. Any additional comments or suggestions you may have to improve this survey?

---

**Thank you for your help!**

## Survey Review Questions

### Student Transition Survey

---

After reading the attached survey, please circle your responses to the following statements.

1. The directions were clearly written.

**Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree**

2. The questions were clearly written.

**Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree**

3. The survey was easy to complete.

**Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree**

4. The survey was free of "technical jargon."

**Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree**

5. The survey took too much time to finish.

**Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree**

6. The questions were hard to understand.

**Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree**

7. Any additional comments or suggestions you may have to improve this survey?

---

**Thank you for your help!**

## Survey Review Questions

### Importance of Transition Activities Survey

---

After reading the attached survey, please circle your responses to the following statements.

1. The directions were clearly written.

**Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree**

2. The questions were clearly written.

**Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree**

3. The survey was easy to complete.

**Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree**

4. The survey was free of "technical jargon."

**Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree**

5. The survey took too much time to finish.

**Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree**

6. The questions were hard to understand.

**Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree**

7. Any additional comments or suggestions you may have to improve this survey?

---

**Thank you for your help!**

## Survey Review Questions

### Adjustment to Kindergarten Survey

---

After reading the attached survey, please circle your responses to the following statements.

1. The directions were clearly written.

**Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree**

2. The questions were clearly written.

**Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree**

3. The survey was easy to complete.

**Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree**

4. The survey was free of "technical jargon."

**Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree**

5. The survey took too much time to finish.

**Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree**

6. The questions were hard to understand.

**Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree**

7. Any additional comments or suggestions you may have to improve this survey?

---

**Thank you for your help!**

## **Appendix H**

### **University of Arizona Human Subjects Committee Permission Letter**

THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**ARIZONA**  
HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER

1622 E. Mabel St.  
P.O. Box 245137  
Tucson, Arizona 85724-5137  
(520) 626-6721

22 April 1998

Pamela Parker-Martin, Ph.D. Candidate  
c/o Richard J. Morris, Ph.D.  
Department of Educational Psychology  
Education Building  
PO BOX 210069

**RE: EVALUATING A DISTRICT-WIDE KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION PROCESS FOR  
PRESCHOOL CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

Dear Ms. Parker-Martin:

We have received your proposal, 13 April 1998 letter, revised consent form and documents concerning your above cited project. Regulations published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [45 CFR Part 46.101(b) (2)] exempt this type of research from review by our Committee.

Thank you for informing us of your work. If you have any questions concerning the above, please contact this office.

Sincerely yours,



William F Denny, M.D.  
Chairman  
Human Subjects Committee

WFD:js  
cc: Departmental/College Review Committee

## **Appendix I**

### **Douglas County School District Permission Letter**



Elliott Asp  
Director of Assessment

---

Nancee Sprigg  
Assistant Director of  
Assessment

April 19, 1998

Pamela Parker-Martin  
Douglas County School District  
Castle Rock, CO 80104

Dear Pam,

Thank you for your interest in doing research in the Douglas County School District. I pleased to inform you that our review team has approved your request.

If you have any questions or need further information, please give me a call (303) 814-5278.

Sincerely,

Elliott Asp  
Director of Assessment

**Appendix J**

**A Description of the Douglas County School District  
Early Education Program**

## **Douglas County Preschools**

### **AN OPTION FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

**HISTORY:** Douglas County Preschools were started in the early 1980's to provide special education services to students with identified special needs. Classes were taught by a special education team; all children in the classes had special need. Research in the field of Early Childhood Special Education indicated that young children learn best when they have many opportunities to play with their typically developing peers. For this reason, Douglas County Preschools began to include neighborhood children without identified special needs in the classes. An inclusionary classroom provides students with special needs with an excellent learning environment.

**CLASS COMPOSITION:** There are approximately 15 children in each class. Approximately one-third of the students in a class may have identified special needs.

**STAFF:** Each class is taught by a preschool teacher and a classroom assistant. The teacher and assistant are with the class on a daily basis. The special education team consists of an Early Childhood Special Educator, a Speech Pathologist, an Occupational Therapist, and a Special Education Assistant. One of these team members works with the class daily, on a rotating basis. Each preschool site also has the consultation of a school social worker or school psychologist. All staff members are educated regarding the goals and objectives of students who have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). All staff members provide opportunities for students to work on their goals and objectives on a daily basis. In addition, each specialist works directly with the students who have needs in their area of expertise. A child's program is reviewed regularly by the special education team to be sure progress is being made and to adjust objectives as necessary.

**COST:** All students pay an annual registration fee of \$35. Monthly tuition is paid by the families of typically developing students. The special education program a child receives is at no cost to the child's family. However, a materials fee of \$30 is charged every 3 months to help defray the cost of classroom supplies (total materials fee for the year is \$90). The amount of service a child receives is based on the special education needs of the child.

**SCHEDULE:** All Douglas County Preschools offer the following components during a preschool class: **Arrival, Sensory Motor Time (obstacle course, fine motor/tactile activity), Circle (story, group activity), Centers (Plan-Do-Review), Group activity, Transition, Toileting/Hand washing, Oral-Motor activity, Snack, Outside time, Closing circle.** The actual sequences of the daily activities may vary slightly by class. A child's IEP goals and objectives are infused into the preschool day, with many opportunities for practice. Targeted times to work on specific objectives are determined for each child. Douglas County Preschools are planned and organized to provide an inclusionary special education program for preschoolers with identified special needs.

**Appendix K**

**Douglas County School District  
Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Guide**

# *Preschool to Kindergarten Transition*

*A Guide for Families and Schools  
In the Douglas County School District*

Prepared by:  
Douglas County Child Find  
Douglas County Early Education Program  
312 Cantril  
Castle Rock, CO 80104  
(303) 814-5391

**Pam Parker-Martin**  
School Psychologist

**Gail Whitman**  
Child Find Coordinator

## *Setting the Stage for Transition*

The transition into kindergarten is an exciting time for many families. Children are eager to begin school and parents are excited to see their child enter a new phase of learning and development. But transition can be an anxious time for families as well. Is my child “ready” for kindergarten? Will my child receive the support he/she needs? Should I keep my child out for an extra year? These are all common questions parents have about sending their child on to kindergarten. The following guidelines were written to help parents and teachers ease the transition for young children with special needs into kindergarten. The guidelines are based on a philosophy of collaboration between parents, early childhood staff, and home school staff, and are suggested only as a framework from which to develop an individualized transition plan.

The guidelines presented here were compiled based on parent and staff input as well as from best practices recommended in the research literature and from the State of Colorado. They are intended to help parents and school staff develop a transition plan that fits the needs of the individual child and family while following legal responsibilities.

## *Transition Values*

The following “values” are the underlying reasons for developing a transition process.

- \* Transition is a collaborative process where families and school staff share equally in the planning and decision making.
- \* Children with special needs are recognized as valued members of the school community and that services and supports needed will be provided within the child’s home school whenever possible.
- \* It is the belief of the Douglas County School District that children should receive their education in their home school with other programs or services considered only when it becomes impossible for the home school to provide a beneficial education.
- \* Transition is a flexible process. Parents are at different stages of readiness for the transition process and home schools are on differing schedules and calendars. Sensitivity for families and understanding for school schedules is needed.

\* Transition is not a one time event that takes place at the end of the year. It is a process that allows parents and professionals time to plan and prepare for the changes transition brings.

## *Special Education Identification*

As of the date of the publication of this guide, children who are eligible for special due to a “preschool disability” can maintain this special education identification status until the age of 6 years. Thus, in many cases, the Individual Education Program (IEP) of the child with a “preschool disability” can continue to be valid for the kindergarten setting with some modifications to reflect how special education services will be delivered.

From age 6 years on, children with disabilities must be identified as eligible for special education using disability identifiers prescribed by the state and/or federal law. Eligibility is then determined not only by the identification of one or more developmental delays but also by the extent to which the child’s developmental delay(s) has a significant impact on his or her learning within the school setting.

## *Terms and Definitions*

**Annual Review:** A staffing meeting held with parents and the team members providing services where progress is discussed. The goals and objectives from the IEP are reviewed and new goals and objectives are written, as needed. If the child’s goals and objectives have all been met, and the child no longer needs services, the child may be dismissed from special education at that time.

**Catchment:** The area from which children attend a particular school.

**Consultation:** A form of indirect service delivery where a certified professional shares ideas and activities with another staff member who then implements the program.

**Direct Services:** These are special education services provided to the child from a certified professional.

**Home School:** The school closest to the child's home that children in that neighborhood typically attend.

**IEP:** Short for the "Individualized Education Program" which is the formal document generated by the team working with the child, and the child's parents, that summarizes the child's current levels of development, the child's needs, and the educational program designed to meet those specific needs.

**Inclusion:** The belief that children with special needs belong within their home school with age-level peers. Services are provided in their classroom as much as possible with a minimum of "pull-out" services.

**Indirect Services:** These are special education services proved to the child by a staff member who is supervised by a certified professional.

**Itinerant:** This refers to service providers who are not in the school daily but who provide services to the school on a regular basis. Typically, these professionals provide services to more than one school or program and must divide their time in each building.

**Pull-Out:** A method of service delivery where the child is instructed outside of the classroom either in a 1:1 setting or with a small group of children with similar needs.

**Receiving Team:** The teachers and specialists who will be providing services for the child during the kindergarten year.

**Self-Contained:** A method of service delivery where a child is taught in a small class with other children with similar needs with little interaction with typical peers.

**Sending Team:** The preschool teachers and special education team.

**Staffing:** A formal meeting where parents and school staff meet and share information, update progress, and develop or modify the child's IEP.

**Track System for Year-Round School:** A way of scheduling classes on 4 schedules (A, B, C, D) so that one fourth of the school is out, or "off-track" at all times. Children begin school in July or August and attend throughout the year with more frequent but shorter breaks than a long summer break.

**Transition:** A collaborative, family-focused process between parents, preschool, and school staff that results in an individualized plan to assist the child's movement from preschool to kindergarten services.

**Triennial Review:** A process that involves a complete re-evaluation of all of the areas of development culminating in a staffing meeting with parents and the school special education team. At the staffing, it is determined if the child continues to be eligible for services and new goals and objectives may be written. This process occurs a minimum of every 3 years from the date the child began receiving services.

## *Kindergarten Options for Consideration*

Kindergarten in the Douglas County School District follows a developmental perspective. There are no criteria for entering kindergarten other than turning age 5 years before September 15 of that school year. Children do not need to know colors, numbers, letters, or any other preacademic skills in order to attend and be successful in kindergarten. The developmental approach values each child at whatever level they are at and teachers provide an enriching and experiential environment that facilitates learning at all levels.

Kindergarten can be offered at different times at different schools. Some schools offer half day every day programs in the morning or the afternoon. Some schools offer full day kindergarten on alternate days and every other Friday. Some school offer both choices.

The Charter schools within the district also provide kindergarten but the philosophies vary so it is best to check with the individual school to gather more information about their programs.

Special education services are available in every school and are accessible to the kindergarten classes. The special education team consists of a special education teacher, a speech language pathologist, a school psychologist, a school social worker, and an occupational therapist. Additional services can be provided by a vision specialist, a teacher for the hearing impaired, and a physical therapist. The special education team also provides paraprofessionals, or aides, who are specially trained and assist the special education team in and out of the classroom.

Additional options for kindergarten services are available within the district for children who need such specialized programming that the home school cannot adequately provide for. These services are divided among the three high school catchment areas (Castle Rock, Parker, and Highlands Ranch) and are not available in every school. Parents are encouraged to ask their preschool team or home school team for more information about these options if they do not feel the home school can provide the necessary services for their child.

Another option parents have is to hold their child out of kindergarten for one year. Please contact your home school special education team to determine what services your child may still receive even though he or she is not attending kindergarten.

## *Special Education in Douglas County*

Each elementary school in Douglas County is served by a special education team consisting of a learning specialist, speech language pathologist, occupational therapist, school psychologist, and/or school social worker. Special education services are available on all tracks and generally consist of intervention provided through consultation to the teacher, support provided in the classroom, support provided on a pull-out basis outside of the classroom, or a combination of approaches, and is based upon the needs of the child as determined by the IEP. Children receive services individually or in group situations, again dependent upon the child's needs and IEP. For more specific information regarding special education services at your child's school, please call the contact person named for your school on the enclosed list.

# *Ready! Set! Go!*

## *The Steps in the Transition Process*

All families receive a copy of the transition guide as part of their initial Individual Education Program. An update of special education support staff is mailed to families in the month of January prior to their's child's enrollment in kindergarten.

All of the following steps occur the year prior to kindergarten.

### *STEP 1: Beginning to Plan for Transition*

In the fall of each child's preschool year prior to kindergarten, teachers and parents will begin discussing and planning for transition. These discussions may be informal or may coincide with the child's fall conference or annual review. Parent's may choose to visit classroom options at this time.

### *STEP 2: Sharing Information with the Home School*

In January/February, a member of the early childhood special education team will call the home school special education team and schedule a time to share information regarding the children in their catchment who are currently receiving early childhood special education services.

During this **Transition Planning Meeting**, information will be informally discussed and may include the child's current levels of development, review of testing and evaluations, the need for additional evaluation, review of the child's strengths and needs, review of the child's current educational program, possible services and supports for the child in kindergarten, placement options, and possible adaptations needed. It is important to remember that this is an informal meeting, no decisions regarding kindergarten placement and services are made at this time.

Possible outcomes of this meeting include the need for specific transition activities such as: additional testing, observation of the child in preschool, parent visitations to kindergarten, more information regarding options in the district, or other additional information.

To help plan for transition, an **Action Plan** may be developed that describes any specific transition activities to be completed prior to the transition staffing. A similar Action Plan is included for parents in this guide to help families plan for transition.

### STEP 3: Registering for Kindergarten

All families of children who turn 5 years of age before the district cutoff date are encouraged to register their child for kindergarten at their home school. Registration for kindergarten occurs in February or March. Please call the secretary at your home school for specific dates.

To register your child for kindergarten you will need the following:

- a copy of your child's birth certificate
- a copy of your child's most recent birth immunization records.

You will also need to know which track (A,B,C,D) you would like for your child. Please call your home school secretary for more information regarding when kindergarten is offered (mornings or afternoons; half days or alternating full days), time, and any other general questions you have about kindergarten. Most schools offer open houses, orientations, etc., and your school secretary can let you know more about these programs also.

### STEP 4: Carrying Out the Action Plan

During February, March, and April, the transition activities outlined on the Action Plan are pursued. Testing, observation, visitations, additional meetings, gathering more information, etc., are all completed during this time frame.

## *STEP 5: Transition Staffing*

In May, or early June, the **Transition Staffing** is held. The Transition Staffing is a formal meeting held at the school where the child will attend kindergarten and includes the parents, the sending team, and the receiving team. At this meeting, any new information is shared and existing information is reviewed. Educational placement and service delivery is determined at this time. The frequency and intensity of services is also described. New goals and objectives may be developed, or existing goals and objectives continued as in progress. In some cases, it may be possible to modify the existing IEP to reflect changes in the service delivery or changes in educational placement. It is also possible to combine the Transition Staffing with the child's annual or triennial review for those children whose IEP is due for formal review. In other cases, a new IEP may be generated to reflect the child's current levels of development as well as the educational program the child will receive. Specific classroom strategies and necessary adaptations should be discussed. Parents are encouraged to be active participants and share their priorities for their child's education.

## *Concluding Comments*

We hope the information included in this manual has been helpful and serves to facilitate the transition of young children with special needs into kindergarten. As with any process, transition should be fluid and flexible in order to meet the needs of the individual child and family. Transition to kindergarten can be an exciting time for both the child and the family and with a little planning, it can also be a lot less stressful for all!

For parents or school staff interested in additional reading on transition, a book titled Transitioning "Special" Children Into Elementary School shares a mother's experience with transitioning her young son with Fragile X Syndrome into kindergarten. The book may be available through local bookstores or can be obtained by contacting the author, Jane Dixon Weber at:

Books Beyond Borders  
1881 9<sup>th</sup> Street #108  
Boulder, CO 80302  
(303) 449-6440

## *Transition Action Plan For Parents*

This Action Plan is optional and provided for parents as a way to begin thinking about, and planning for, transition. It can be helpful to bring this with you to meetings with your preschool or elementary school team.

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

What are my concerns or questions regarding transition for my child?

What information do I need to have to help me plan and make decisions for kindergarten?

What do I see as my child's strengths and needs?

What supports or considerations do I think my child needs to successfully transition to kindergarten?

## **Appendix L**

### **Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Action Plan**

## *Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Action Plan*

Child: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parents: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Names of those attending the Transition Planning Meeting:

- A. Review of current strengths and needs:
- B. What considerations and/or supports are needed to help this child adjust from the preschool to kindergarten classroom?
- C. What additional information is needed?
- | What? | How? | By Whom? | By When? |
|-------|------|----------|----------|
|-------|------|----------|----------|

**D. Planning for the Transition Staffing:**

Transition Staffing Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*Are there any additional meetings or planning times need prior to the transition staffing?**

**\*Who needs to attend the transition staffing?**

**\*Who will contact the family?**

**\*Which team will facilitate the staffing?**

**\*How will goals and objectives be written?**

**E. Are there any additional considerations?**

## **Appendix M**

### **Parent Transition Action Plan**

## *Transition Action Plan For Parents*

This Action Plan is optional and provided for parents as a way to begin thinking about, and planning for, transition. It can be helpful to bring this with you to meetings with your preschool or elementary school team.

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

What are my concerns or questions regarding transition for my child?

What information do I need to have to help me plan and make decisions for kindergarten?

What do I see as my child's strengths and needs?

What supports or considerations do I think my child needs to successfully transition to kindergarten?

## **Appendix N**

### **Preletter**

# Getting Ready For Kindergarten!

## *Preschool to Kindergarten Transition*

Dear Parents and Special Education Teams,

We need your help! As parents of young children and as school teams involved in the education of young children, your perspectives on the transition process for preschoolers with special needs moving into kindergarten programs are of special importance to us. Your first-hand knowledge can help shape our transition process into an experience that is beneficial and supportive of children, families, and schools during what can be a challenging and stressful time.

In the next few weeks you will receive a survey that will ask you to evaluate our school district transition process for preschoolers with special needs moving into kindergarten programs. We hope you will be able to provide us with your feedback in order to help us continue to promote quality early childhood services in Douglas County.

Thank-you and we look forward to hearing from you!

Pam Parker-Martin  
Douglas County Child Find

## **Appendix O**

**Introductory Letter**

**Parent Letter**

**Elementary School Team Letter**

**Preschool Team Letter**



**Dear Parent(s),**

**Hello! I am a school psychologist with Douglas County Child Find and I also serve the Parker South preschools. For several years, we have been developing a transition process for helping children and families from our integrated preschool programs move into kindergarten settings. Currently we are evaluating the current transition process and ask for your help.**

**Enclosed you will find two surveys that ask you to evaluate Douglas County School District's transition process for preschool children with special needs who are moving into kindergarten programs. Your input on this process is essential to the refinement of the transition process. Should you agree to participate, two months into the school year you will receive another survey packet intended to gather follow-up data on your child's transition. Following the completion of the surveys, all participants will receive a written summary of the results. In addition to improving the current transition process used in the school district, the responses will also be used as part of my doctoral dissertation through the University of Arizona.**

**The two surveys should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete and your time is greatly appreciated. Your responses will be kept confidential and your name, your child's name, or your child's particular preschool or elementary school name will not appear on any documents, reports, or presentations of the data.**

**If after reading the enclosed Subject's Consent Form, you would like to participate, please return your signed consent form and completed surveys to me in the envelope provided by the date indicated. If you have any questions, please call me at 805-6659 or leave a message at the Child Find main office at 814-5391. Thank you for your participation and cooperation!**

---

**Pam Parker-Martin, M.S.  
Douglas County Child Find  
and Preschools**



**Dear Elementary School Special Education Team,**

**Hello! I am a school psychologist with Douglas County Child Find and I also serve the Parker South preschools. For several years, we have been developing a transition process for helping children and families from our integrated preschool programs move into kindergarten settings. Currently we are evaluating the current transition process and ask for your help.**

**If your team agrees to participate, your team will receive a survey for every special needs student currently attending one of the district's integrated preschool programs your team receives at your elementary school. Enclosed your team will find a survey for each student who has already completed their Transition Staffing. Additional surveys may follow as all of your incoming students complete the transition to kindergarten. The surveys are designed to evaluate the Douglas County School District's transition process for preschool children with special needs who are moving into kindergarten programs. Your team's input on this process is essential to the refinement of the transition process. After all of your team's Transition Staffings have been completed, your team will receive a single survey to complete constructed to evaluate the steps in the transition process in general. Two months into the school year, your team will again receive a survey packet for each student that is intended to gather follow-up data on each student's transition. Following the completion of the surveys, all participants will receive a written summary of the results. In addition to improving the current transition process used in the school district, the responses will also be used as part of my doctoral dissertation through the University of Arizona.**

**The survey should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete per student and your time is greatly appreciated. Your team's responses will be kept confidential and your name, your student's name, and your school affiliation will not appear on any documents, reports, or presentations of the data.**

**If after reading the enclosed Subject's Consent Form, your team would like to participate, please return a signed consent form for each participating team member and the completed surveys in the school mail to Pam Parker-Martin, Cantril Child Find, by the date indicated. If you have any questions, please call me at 805-6659 or leave a message at the Child Find main office at 814-5391. Thank you for your participation and cooperation!**

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**Pam Parker-Martin, M.S.  
Douglas County Child Find and Preschools**



**Dear Preschool Special Education Team,**

**Hello! I am a school psychologist with Douglas County Child Find and I also serve the Parker South preschools. For several years, we have been developing a transition process for helping children and families from our integrated preschool programs move into kindergarten settings. Currently we are evaluating the current transition process and ask for your help.**

**If your team agrees to participate, your team will receive a survey for every child your team transitions on to elementary school services. Enclosed your team will find a survey for each student who has already completed their Transition Staffing. Additional surveys will follow as all of your students complete the transition to kindergarten. The surveys are designed to evaluate the Douglas County School District's transition process for preschool children with special needs who are moving into kindergarten programs. Your team's input on this process is essential to the refinement of the transition process. After all of your team's Transition Staffings have been completed, your team will receive a single survey to complete constructed to evaluate the steps in the transition process in general. Following the completion of the surveys, all participants will receive a written summary of the results. In addition to improving the current transition process used in the school district, the responses will also be used as part of my doctoral dissertation through the University of Arizona.**

**The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete per student and your time is greatly appreciated. Your team's responses will be kept confidential and your name, your student's name, and your school affiliation will not appear on any documents, reports, or presentations of the data.**

**If after reading the enclosed Subject's Consent Form, your team would like to participate, please return a signed consent form for each participating team member and the completed surveys in the school mail to Pam Parker-Martin, Cantril Child Find, by the date indicated. If you have any questions, please call me at 805-6659 or leave a message at the Child Find main office at 814-5391. Thank you for your participation and cooperation!**

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**Pam Parker-Martin, M.S.  
Douglas County Child Find  
and Preschools**

## **Appendix P**

### **Informed Consent Form**

University of Arizona  
 Department of Educational Psychology  
 Principal Researchers: Pam Parker-Martin, M.S.  
 Richard J. Morris, Ph.D.

Douglas County School District  
 Child Find

**Subject's Consent Form**  
**Research Project:**  
**Evaluating a District-Wide Kindergarten Transition Process**  
**for**  
**Preschool Children With Special Needs**

I AM BEING ASKED TO READ THE FOLLOWING MATERIAL TO ENSURE THAT I AM INFORMED OF THE NATURE OF THIS RESEARCH STUDY AND OF HOW I WILL PARTICIPATE IN IT, IF I CONSENT TO DO SO. SIGNING THIS FORM WILL INDICATE THAT I HAVE BEEN SO INFORMED AND THAT I GIVE MY CONSENT. FEDERAL REGULATIONS REQUIRE WRITTEN INFORMED CONSENT PRIOR TO PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY SO THAT I CAN KNOW THE NATURE AND THE RISKS OF MY PARTICIPATION AND DECIDE TO PARTICIPATE OR NOT PARTICIPATE IN AN INFORMED MANNER.

**PURPOSE:**

I am being invited to participate voluntarily in the above titled research project. The purpose of this project is to evaluate the preschool to kindergarten transition process currently in use by Douglas County School District.

**SELECTION CRITERIA:**

I am being invited to participate because I am either a parent, preschool special education team member, elementary special education team member, or regular classroom teacher, who is involved with young handicapped children transitioning from a Douglas County Early Education Preschool into kindergarten for the 1998-1999 school year.

**PROCEDURE(S):**

If I agree to participate I will be asked to consent to the following:

- Parents:**
- 1) complete two surveys after my child's transition staffing that will take 15-20 minutes to complete both.
  - 2) complete three surveys two months after my child has begun attending kindergarten that will take 20-25 minutes to complete.

- Educators:**
- 1) as a team, complete one survey after each transition staffing held for each child transitioning to our school (10-15 minutes per survey) .
  - 2) as a team, complete another survey after all transition staffings have been completed (10 minutes total).
  - 3) as a team, complete two surveys for each child (15-20 minutes per child) and one survey as a team (10 minutes total) two months into the child's school year.

**RISKS:**

I understand that there are no known, nor anticipated, risks involved in participating with this study.

**BENEFITS:**

I understand that there is no direct benefit to me but that the desired benefit of this study is to provide information that can be used to further improve the Douglas County School District's Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Process.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**

I understand that the data will be grouped according to the student's catchment area or by group (e.g., "parents", "preschool or sending teams", and "elementary or receiving teams") and individual names, or school affiliation will not be specified. Data will be coded and child names will not appear in any data analysis or final reports. Data will be kept separate from the student's school file(s) and will not become part of the student's permanent school records. Only the researcher will have access to the raw data and it will be stored at the researcher's home office. After coding, the data may be shared with professionals trained in data analysis. Signed consent forms will be stored at the University of Arizona, Department of Educational Psychology, Education Building, room 602.

**PARTICIPATION COSTS AND SUBJECT COMPENSATION:**

Other than my time, there is no cost to me nor will I be compensated for my participation.

**AUTHORIZATION:**

BEFORE GIVING MY CONSENT BY SIGNING THIS FORM, THE METHODS, INCONVENIENCES, RISKS, AND BENEFITS HAVE BEEN EXPLAINED TO ME AND MY QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. I UNDERSTAND THAT I MAY ASK QUESTIONS AT ANY TIME AND THAT I AM FREE TO WITHDRAW FROM THE PROJECT AT ANY TIME WITHOUT CAUSING BAD FEELINGS. MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS PROJECT MY BE ENDED BY THE INVESTIGATOR FOR REASONS THAT WOULD BE EXPLAINED. NEW INFORMATION DEVELOPED DURING THE COURSE OF THE STUDY WHICH MAY AFFECT MY WILLINGNESS TO CONTINUE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT WILL BE GIVEN TO ME AS IT BECOMES AVAILABLE. I UNDERSTAND THAT THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE FILED IN AN AREA DESIGNATED BY THE HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE WITH ACCESS RESTRICTED TO THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR, PAMELA PARKER-MARTIN OR AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE OF THE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT. I UNDERSTAND THAT I DO NOT GIVE UP ANY OF MY LEGAL RIGHTS BY SIGNING THIS FORM. A COPY OF THIS SIGNED CONSENT FORM WILL BE GIVEN TO ME.

I can obtain further information from Pamela Parker-Martin, M.S. at (303)805-6659 or (303)814-5391. If I have questions concerning my rights as a research subject, I may call the University of Arizona Human Subjects Committee office at (520) 626-6721.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Subject's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date (day/month/year)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Please print your name here

#### **INVESTIGATOR'S AFFIDAVIT**

I have carefully explained to the subject the nature of the above project. I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge the person who is signing this consent form understands clearly the nature, demands, benefits, and risks involved in his/her participation and his/her signature is legally valid. A medical problem or language or educational barrier has not precluded this understanding.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Appendix Q**

**Reminder Letter**

**Parent Letter  
Special Education Team**



Dear Parent(s),

Not long ago, you received a packet of surveys regarding the preschool to kindergarten transition process used by Douglas County School District to help preschoolers with special needs make the move to kindergarten. This note is a reminder that it is **not too late to send your surveys in!** If you are interested in participating in the study, please return the surveys to me in the envelope provided as soon as possible. Your participation is greatly appreciated!

Your responses will be kept confidential and your name, your child's name, your child's preschool, and your child's kindergarten placement will not be used. If you have any questions, or need a new set of surveys, please call me at Pioneer Elementary at 805-6659 or leave a message at the main Child Find Office at 814-5391.

Thank you for your participation and cooperation!

---

Pam Parker-Martin, M.S.  
Douglas County Child Find and  
Preschools





**Dear Special Education Teams,**

**Not long ago, you received a packet of surveys regarding the preschool to kindergarten transition process used by Douglas County School District to help preschoolers with special needs make the move to kindergarten. Each team received a survey for each child they were involved with in the transition process, as well as one survey regarding the importance of each transition activity. This note is a reminder that it is not too late to send your surveys in! If you are interested in participating in the study, please return the survey packet to me at Child Find/Cantril as soon as possible. Your participation is greatly appreciated!**

**Your responses will be kept confidential and your team and school site will not be used. If you have any questions, or need a new survey packet, please call me at 805-6659 or leave a message at the main Child Find Office at 814-5391.**

**Thank you for your participation and cooperation!**

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**Pam Parker-Martin, M.S.  
Douglas County Child Find and  
Preschools**



## **Appendix R**

### **Follow-up Letter**

**Elementary School Team Letter  
Parent Letter**



**Dear Elementary School Special Education Team,**

Thank you for participating in my study regarding the transition from preschool to kindergarten! I really appreciate the time and effort your team took to complete the surveys sent to you. Now that the students have been attending kindergarten for several weeks, I am collecting follow-up data and hope you can continue your support of this project by completing the enclosed surveys.

The surveys should take approximately 5-10 minutes each to complete and your time is greatly appreciated. Please return the completed surveys to me at Child Find by \_\_\_\_\_ . Your team's responses will continue to be kept confidential and your name, your student's name, and your school affiliation will not appear on any documents, reports, or presentations of the data.

If you have any questions, please call me at 805-6659 or leave a message at the Child Find main office at 814-5391. Thank you again for your participation and cooperation!

---

**Pam Parker-Martin, M.S.  
Douglas County Child Find and  
Preschools**





**Dear Parent(s),**

**Thank you for participating in my study regarding the transition from preschool to kindergarten! I really appreciate the time and effort you took to complete the surveys for your child's transition. Now that the students have been attending kindergarten for several weeks, I am collecting follow-up data and hope you can continue your support of this project by completing the enclosed surveys and returning to me by \_\_\_\_\_.**

**The surveys should take about 25 minutes to complete and your time is greatly appreciated. Your responses will continue to be kept confidential and your name, your child's name, or your child's particular preschool or elementary school name will not appear on any documents, reports, or presentations of the data.**

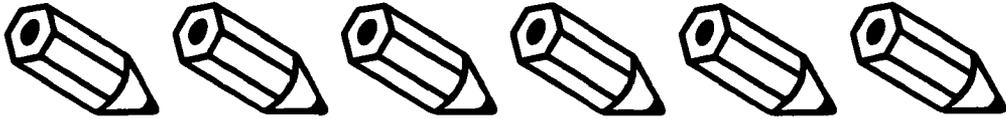
**If you have any questions, please call me at 805-6659 or leave a message at the Child Find main office at 814-5391. Thank you for your participation and cooperation!**

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**Pam Parker-Martin, M.S.  
Douglas County Child Find and  
Preschools**



**Appendix S**  
**Follow-up Reminder Letter**



Dear Parents and Special Education Teams,

Thank you for participating in my study regarding the transition from preschool to kindergarten! I really appreciate the time and effort you have taken to complete the surveys sent to you.

Recently you were sent a request for follow-up information. *It's not too late to send it in!* Please return the follow-up surveys to me at Child Find/Cantril in the envelope provided or through the school district mail as soon as possible!

Your responses will continue to be kept confidential. If you have any questions, please call me at 805-6659. Thank you for your participation and cooperation!

---

Pam Parker-Martin, M.S.  
Douglas County Child Find and  
Preschools



## **Appendix T**

### **Summary Sheet of Results for Parents and School Teams**



9-27-99

Dear Parents and Special Education Team Members,

Thank you all for participating in my study of Douglas County School Districts' **Preschool to Kindergarten Transition** process for helping young children with special needs make the move to kindergarten. I began the data collection in the Spring of 1998 and completed collecting follow-up data in the Fall of 1998. Since then I have been analyzing the data and writing the last chapters of my dissertation. This letter is a brief summary of the results of the study. For more details or questions, please do not hesitate to give me a call and I would be glad to provide you with more information.

With respect to the results of my study, 57 children were transitioning to kindergarten that spring. I received a 100% return rate from the preschool special education teams; a 35% return rate from parents (20 out of 57 parents responded); and a 14.3% return rate from elementary schools (3 out of 21 schools responded providing data on 10 children). Generally, return rates of less than 30% are not representative and must be interpreted with caution.

Overall, it appears that parents, preschool teams, and elementary school teams all indicated high levels of satisfaction with the school district's preschool to kindergarten transition process. However, parents were significantly more satisfied than either preschool or elementary school teams. Preschool teams seemed less than satisfied with their ability to make system-level decisions while elementary school teams seemed less than satisfied with their ability to understand the child's needs and family concerns.

Preschool teams participated in an average of 9.54 out of 12 transition activities; parents participated in an average of 5.3 out of 9 transition activities; and, elementary school teams participated in an average of 4.8 out of 11 transition activities. Preschool teams appeared to be most actively involved in the transition process.

While nearly all of the specific transition activities were rated as important to the transition process, elementary schools did not feel beginning the process in January was as important as parents and preschool teams reported. Similarly, preschool and elementary school teams rated classroom visitations (either of the preschool or the potential kindergarten classroom) as important but in general, few team members reported actually making a classroom visitation. The parent meeting held in February to share information with parents regarding transition was rated as important as well, but only 4 parents actually attended that meeting. All groups felt that having a contact person at the elementary school, having written transition policies, and having opportunities for collaboration among parents, preschool teams, and elementary school teams were all important to the transition

process.

The follow-up data suggested that each group continued to report high levels of satisfaction with the transition process two months after the beginning of the new school year. In addition, the students on whom data was available on generally appeared to have adjusted well to their kindergarten programs.

While this letter presents only a brief summary of the results, several themes emerged from the data such as how to include parents and elementary school teams more effectively in the transition process. Similarly, parents rated the parent meeting as important yet few attended, suggesting the need for information is strong but as a district we need to determine how best to get that information to parents. Another question involves how best to share information with the elementary school teams so that they feel they have a solid understanding of the child's needs and the family's concerns. Likewise, providing information to the preschool teams such that they feel more involved when determining options for placement and system-level decisions.

In summary, the results of the study suggest that by incorporating a district-wide preschool to kindergarten transition process, parents, preschool teams, and elementary school teams were able to provide satisfactory transitions for a group of young children with special needs. However, methodological limitations to the study, and the limited amount of data returned by the elementary school teams hinders any further application of the results.

Thank you again for your support and participation!

Sincerely,

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Pam Parker-Martin, M.S.  
School Psychologist  
Douglas County Child Find/Preschools  
Pioneer Elementary School  
(303) 805-6659

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