

THE INFLUENCE OF NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR
EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS ON SELECTED
RURAL SETTINGS OF THE EDUCATION
SERVICE CENTERS IN EAST TEXAS

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This study addressed the current status of early childhood curriculum design and implementation in the Texas Education Service Centers Seven and Eight. No Previous research about the characteristics of the preschool programs had been completed in those areas. This research established if preschool programs were receiving priority status in East Texas. The results yielded evidence regarding the characteristics of administrators, teachers, curriculum implementation, plus parent and community involvement. The information also provided insight regarding short-term and longitudinal effects on children who have attended preschool programs.

Data were collected from a search of educational literature, regional service preschool directors, administrators, and teachers. The procedure used in designing the survey and interview documents was Michael Scriven's goal-free strategy. The main sources for the questions were the National Association for the Education of Young Children and Head Start. The study first directs attention to the common characteristics of national programs/standards, then discusses the level of implementation in local rural prekindergartens.

The fifteen open-ended interviews yielded concise information relevant to the population of students served and administrative beliefs on current practices. Surveys

were sent to a total of all preschool administrators in the Education Service Center Regions of Seven and Eight. A 51 percent response rate was received. The results of the analysis demonstrated the direction current administrators hope early childhood will take in the areas of 1) developmentally-centered curriculum, 2) parental and community input, and 3) professional development. The administrators' commitments and focal points were correlated with the national standards. Recommendations are made that should result in an overall increase of successful prekindergarten and high school graduates.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The only successful early childhood programs are those of high quality (Rescorla, 1991). There are many studies of typical projects that have produced little in the way of positive outcomes (McKey, 1985). The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has developed an elaborate system of evaluation. The elements high quality programs have in common are: leadership, knowledgeable teachers, funding, personnel policies, position in school system, classroom sessions, and home visits, a ninety minute session once every two weeks (NAEYC).

The twenty-first century school model should build childcare and family support into the existing school system (Zigler, 1989). It is essential that educators keep the idea of developmentally appropriate practices for young children in the forefront of our thinking (Bredekamp, 1987). Teachers must make decisions based on knowledge of how children develop and learn, the individual children and families in question, and the social and cultural context (NAEYC, 1987). The ultimate success of any intervention model is whether the child displays everyday social competence by meeting social expectancies, advances appropriately, and maintains self-discipline. Success should be measured by whether the child has a good self-image and a high level of aspiration (Zigler & Trickett, 1978). With these tools the child has an opportunity to reach his potential and to lead a fulfilling life (Rescorla, 1991).

The proper way to view the twenty-first century school is not by the intervention cost, but as an investment in human capital. Human resources in large part are our children; if society wants to have productive workers in the future, we must invest in our children today.

Statement of the Problem

National studies have addressed a growing concern about preschool students and their families. The problem addressed by this study will be the current status of early childhood programs in the Texas Regions of Seven and Eight.

Purpose

The purpose of this study will be to determine if preschool programs are receiving priority status by administrators in the selected Texas Educational Service Center areas of Seven and Eight. The information is important because we know so little about the preschool programs in Texas.

Hypotheses

There will be a high level of agreement among administrators in the Texas Regions of Seven and Eight that their schools are adhering to the National Association for the Education of Young Children Standards in the following areas:

1. The prekindergarten curriculum will match standards set forth by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.
2. Each child's development will be enhanced by maximizing the parents' involvement.

3. Prekindergarten teachers participate in workshops and professional organizations to best serve the young children's needs.
4. Administrators draw from a broad scope of sources: national, state, staff, family, and community input to develop their instructional leadership qualities.
5. Special populations such as special education, diverse cultures, and economically disadvantaged are recognized in prekindergarten programs.
6. The local community is actively involved in supporting the prekindergarten program and provides services to young children and their families.

Definition of Terms

Adaptive Functioning: "The effectiveness or degree with which the individual meets the standards of personal independence and social responsibility expected of his age and culture group" (AAMD Manual).

B = P x E Model: Behavior (B) is the result of the Person (P) interacting with the Environment (E).

Diverse Populations: Populations consisting of multiple sub-groups which may include, but are not limited to, various socio-economic and various ethnic groups.

Federal Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142): Law passed in 1975 that entitles all school age handicapped children to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment.

Individualized Educational Program (IEP): A program written for a specific child detailing the present level of educational functioning, annual goals, services to be provided, specific evaluation procedures, and objective criteria.

Intervention: Services, programs, and strategies, which are modified to maximize the child's progress.

Normalizing: Objectives that provide for development of progressively more normal functioning with progressively more normal teaching techniques.

Regional Education Service Center: An area service center that assists school districts in developing quality school programs and assists in coordinating information among districts.

School District: School(s) within a geographic location on one campus or many, with a primary/elementary school, or all grades (Texas Education Agency)

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Importance of Early Childhood Intervention

Research has established that human learning and development are most rapid in the preschool years (Smith, 1988). If the most teachable moments are not utilized, the child may have difficulty learning a particular skill at a later time. Early intervention can also impact the siblings and parents of the exceptional child. Intervention can result in improved parental attitudes, better parent-to-child teaching, and more release time for leisure and employment. Society will reap maximum benefits from quality preschool programs. As the child's independence increases, so does the family's ability to cope, providing economic and social benefits.

Early intervention can be remedial, as a means to help preschoolers attain adaptive functioning, or preventive, giving at-risk families the means/materials to prevent developmental problems. Early intervention may focus on the child or on the child and family together. Programs may be center-based, home-based, hospital-based, or some combination of these services. Services range from identification/screening to diagnostic and direct intervention programs. The three primary reasons for intervention are: 1) to enhance the child's development, 2) to provide support to the family, and 3) to maximize the child's and family's benefit to society (Smith, 1988).

Small groups and individual attention characterize the preschool environment. The children learn survival skills such as: being able to function independently for group instruction, following classroom routines, completing tasks in an allotted time period, and working in the absence of teacher instruction. These skills help prepare the child for the demands of the general school setting.

The Capstone Transition Process (Johnson, Cook and Yongue, 1990) is one strategy that provides for a successful transition from preschool to kindergarten. The process addresses specific preparation, implementation, and evaluation activities that begin twelve months before the move into kindergarten. The Capstone Transition Timeline includes:

1. Develop the transition timeline.
2. Notify appropriate administrators of the student's approaching transition.
3. Inform parent(s)/caregiver(s) that the child will be making the transition and collect information that the family transition needs.
4. Determine the communication policy of the potential receiving program(s) and obtain a description of the program(s).
5. Obtain information from teacher(s) in potential receiving program(s) and obtain a description of the program(s).
6. Verify the receipt of transition information and/or follow up request for the transition information or additional information
7. Re-evaluate: verify the student's assessment and eligibility.
8. Prepare the parents for the transition meeting.

9. Hold the transition planning meeting.
10. Hold the IEP meeting.
11. Obtain permission from the parents to release information.
12. Provide information to all transition team participants.
13. Link the parent/primary caregiver of the transitioning child with a parent/primary caregiver of a child already attending the new program.
14. Send the receiving program all pertinent records and verify the receipt of the records.
15. Provide the receiving program with information about the child's current program.
16. Evaluate the effectiveness of the process after completion.

Many early childhood experts believe that children who have been involved in high quality group care or nursery school are better prepared for formal schools. There is substantial evidence of the short-term effects of attending a high quality early childhood program, and there is some evidence of long-term effects (The 1995 Condition of Education Report). In the National Goals 2000, Goal 1 states, By the year 2000, all children will start school ready to learn. This underscores the role early experience must play in preparing children for school. Thus, all disadvantaged and disabled children need access to high quality and developmentally appropriate preschool programs for school preparation.

Children from lower income families, incomes less than \$35,000, have lower participation rates in preschool (The 1995 Condition of Education Report). Differences in academic development, speech development, social and emotional developments are all associated with family income. Head Start has substantially increased the proportion of low income children enrolled in preschool, but by 1993, it still served only forty percent of eligible four-year olds, and fewer than twenty percent of eligible three-year olds (The National Center for Education Statistics).

The National Household Education Survey (NHES), reported by The National Center for Education Statistics, focused on 2,000 children, who had turned four by the end of 1992 and were about six months away from starting kindergarten at the time of the survey. A majority of these four-year olds could button their own clothes, hold a pencil properly, identify colors, count to twenty, and recognize most letters of the alphabet. Hispanic preschoolers showed fewer signs of emerging literacy and more indications of physical activity-attention difficulties, and to be in less good general health than white non-Hispanic or black non-Hispanic children. Controlling for related risk factors such as a mother with limited education and minority-language status reduced the ethnic differences, but did not eliminate them. However, racial differences are wholly accounted for by related risk factors such as low maternal education, poverty, and single parenthood (The National Center for Education Statistics).

The accomplishments and difficulties that children bring with them when they arrive at kindergarten, were correlated with sociodemographic risk factors that have been found to be associated with learning difficulties after children start school. The five

family risk factors were examined: mother has less than a high school education, the family is below the poverty line, the mother's main language is not English, the mother was unmarried at the time of the child's birth, and only one parent is present in the home. Half of today's preschoolers are affected by a least one of these risk factors, and fifteen percent are affected by three or more of them (NHES).

The NHES study shows that attending Head Start or prekindergarten programs is linked to higher emerging literacy scores in four-year olds. The increase remains statistically significant when other child and family characteristics are controlled. This benefit of preschool attendance accrues to children from high- and low-risk family backgrounds.

Brief History

In the early 1960s President Kennedy suggested, The prevention of adult poverty and dependency must begin with the case of dependent children. He believed the dependence on welfare was transmitted intergenerational because vital values and motivations were not reinforced during a poverty-laden childhood. President Johnson declared his war on poverty and created the office of Economic Opportunity & Equal Opportunity Act in 1964. Two classical volumes were influential in redirecting empirical thought about child development. First, J. McVicker Hunt's Intelligence & Experience (1961) concluded that experience programs develop the human brain and affect the fate of early development in human infants. Benjamin Bloom surmised that about 50 percent of the variation possible for any particular child was established by age four. Since the

environment can be adjusted, Bloom discussed social responsibility for disadvantaged children (Steiner, 1976).

Head Start was proposed by an interdisciplinary panel chartered by Dr. Robert Cooke, a professor of pediatrics at John Hopkin's University School of Medicine. He recommended improving a child's health as well as educational opportunities. Edward Zigler assumed the leadership of Head Start in 1970. The Nixon administration considered the effort still experimental. Zigler had such affirmative reports from parents due to the positive effects on their children that the program was continued. It grew in popularity in the 1980s. Zigler stated (1985) the attributing factors to its renewed success were:

1. Effective support by parents, staff and advocacy groups such as the Children's Defense Fund;
2. A positive image in the media;
3. Strong bipartisan Congressional support;
4. Robust, reliable research demonstration, the long-term cost-effective benefits of Head Start; and
5. Powerful converts to the program, who, after working with Head Start, have become advocates, a sequence of events which Zigler notes is quite common.

The 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also passed during Lyndon Baines Johnson's presidency, laid the foundation on which the country could work toward educational achievement (Zarefsky) In its first fifteen months, ESEA distributed an average of \$40,000 each to some 25,000 school districts in the United

States to be spent on the educationally disadvantaged (Boone) The 1966 Task Force on Early Childhood Development made recommendations and set the basis for the Follow-Through Program, Parent and Child Centers in the Johnson administration, and for the establishment of the Health/Education/Welfare's Office of Child Development during the Nixon administration.

In 1968, Congress passed Public Law (PL) 90-538, which created the Handicapped Children's Early Education Program (HCEEP). PL 101-476 changed the name of this program to the Early Education Program for Children with Disabilities, as well as re-titled the Education of the Handicapped Act to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. PL 90-538 awarded funds for the establishment of experimental preschool and early education programs for handicapped children which ... show promise of promoting a comprehensive and strengthened approach to the special problems of such children [Section 2(a)].

Congress's principal intent was to stimulate activity in early childhood special education. Representative Carl Perkins of the United States House Committee on Education and Labor pointed out: This program should be viewed as a model demonstration program not as a service program. However, programs that show promise of providing meaningful answers for education of handicapped children should at the appropriate time be evaluated for permanent legislative approval (Representative Perkins).

The Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (BEH) funded the first twenty-four HCEEP demonstration projects in 1969-70. The goal of Congress was to stimulate

interest in and explorations into the possibilities of early education for young children with disabilities. The demonstration projects were to provide a forum in which ideas might be tested, elaborated, and refined (Kennedy & McDaniels, 1982).

In 1970, Congress passed PL 91-230, which brought HCEEP and several other special education programs together under a single legislative authority, the Education of the Handicapped Act (EHA). Grants were made available to assist states in the initiation, expansion, and improvement of programs and projects for the education of handicapped children at the preschool, elementary school, and secondary school level [Section 611(a)]. The amount of the grant awarded to the state was determined by the state census count of children between the ages of 3 and 21, inclusive.

BEH adopted two strategies in the early 1970s to encourage the sharing of information about early childhood special education. A technical assistance center for the HCEEP projects was created; the other was the Technical Assistance Development System (TADS). TADS was established to provide program development assistance to the HCEEP demonstration projects. In 1983, the scope of technical assistance was expanded to include the states.

Federal policy in early childhood began to focus more on the state level in the mid-1970s. In 1974, a major step was taken in federal special education policy through a comprehensive set of amendments to Part B of the EHA. These amendments, PL 93-380, outlined significant new requirements for state education agencies (SEAs) in return for federal grants for services at the preschool, elementary, and secondary levels.

The middle years of federal policy in early childhood opened with the passage of landmark special education legislation, PL 94-142. There was an increasing emphasis on regulating the provision of special education which, in some states, included services to 3- through 5-year-olds. Efforts directed toward building a state infrastructure for the universal provision of early childhood services were intensified (Hebbeler, 1991).

Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, mandated a free appropriate public education (FAPE) by September 1, 1980, for all eligible 3- through 21-year-olds. PL 94-142 incorporated all of the previous requirements, due process, least restrictive environment, etc., and added others such as individualized education programs (IEPs), and specific procedural safeguards. Congress stopped short of requiring FAPE for all 3- through 5-year-olds with disabilities.

One consequence of the new law was that the focus of attention was clearly on the school-aged population (Black, 1990). A second consequence was that states without preschool mandates maintained more control over how they would serve 3- through 5-year-olds.

Public Law 94-142 also created the Preschool Incentive Grant Program, which provided additional funds to encourage states to expand services for 3- through 5-year-olds. Although Congress had authorized up to \$300 per child, it only appropriated sufficient funding for \$63 per child for 1977. By 1980, the per-child amount was a little over \$100 (U.S. Department of Education, 1986).

The Bureau for the Education of Handicapped took a major step toward building state capacity in 1976 with the creation of the first grant program directed toward

encouraging state planning for the expansion of early childhood services. The State Implementation Grants (SIGs) supported activities such as needs assessments, the convening of planning groups, the development and dissemination of plans, staff training, the development of program standards and guidelines, the development and support of consortia, and data collection and analysis (Black, 1990; Roy Littlejohn Associates, 1982). The SIGs were competitive; only 16 to 25 states received funding annually. The SIG's were 2-year awards, after which a state had to re-compete to keep its state-level activities supported. By 1984, 43 states and territories had received SIG awards.

Services to young children with disabilities had expanded by the early 1980s. By 1982 nearly all states had developed new programs or had refined or expanded existing programs.

The Education of the Handicapped Act was amended again in 1983, by PL 98-199, which made major changes to the state planning grant component of HCEEP. Congress created a program to assist states in planning, developing, and implementing a comprehensive delivery system for the provision of special education and related services to handicapped children birth through five years of age [Section 623(b)(1)]. These new grants, the State Plan Grants (SPGs), were not competitive; any state that applied could receive one.

Public Law 94-457, the 1986 Amendments to Education of the Handicapped Act (EHA), addressed the needs of children ages three through five, through the Preschool Grants Program (PGP). The PGP, Section 619 of Part B of the EHA was designed to ensure the availability of a free, appropriate public education for all children ages birth

through five with disabilities. During the 1989-1990 school year approximately 642,000 children were served through these programs (Thirteenth Annual Report to Congress, 1991).

National Input

In April 1991, President Bush announced America 2000, an educational strategy designed by the president and the Nation's governors that set educational priorities. Later, in March 1994, President Clinton signed a similar contract: Goals 2000: Educate America Act. It was to be a blueprint for prosperity, world leadership, and production. The first goal of Goals 2000 specifically relates to the preschool population. The goal states:

1. All disadvantaged and disabled children will have access to high quality and developmentally appropriate preschool programs that help prepare children for school.
2. Every parent in America will be a child's first teacher and devote time each day helping his or her preschool child learn; parents will have access to the training and support they need.
3. Children will receive the nutrition and health care needed to arrive at school with healthy minds and bodies, and the number of low birth-weight babies will be significantly reduced through enhanced prenatal health systems.

In taking steps to improve children's readiness to benefit from schooling, we urge states and localities consider the following:

4. Initiate collaborative, community-based planning to ensure that children who are disadvantaged or who have disabilities have equal access to quality early education and care.
5. Take advantage of existing funding sources in augmenting efforts to improve the readiness of at-risk children. Administrators can use federal funds such as Chapter 1 to improve preschool and kindergarten programs for children in need of supplemental services. Combining resources from Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 with those from Head Start and Even Start would provide a substantial increase in resources available for preschool and kindergarten programs.
6. Strengthen ties with families. The family is the primary stimulus for early learning.
7. Build connections among parents, preschools, and elementary schools to ensure smooth and coherent transitions.
8. Expand efforts to screen children, particularly the disadvantaged, early on to prevent developmental delays. States and local agencies could build on information networks developed under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that bring together personnel from hospitals, Medicaid programs, state and local social service agencies, as well as individual pediatricians to identify infants and toddlers in need of special education services.

9. Use ongoing observations by teachers and parents to assess children's progress in cognitive, social, emotional and physical domains.
10. Base eligibility for school entry on chronological age. Do not use standardized testing to screen out young children to be not academically ready for school entry or to place them in differentiated kindergarten programs.
11. Early education and care must be congruent with learning patterns of young children.
12. Respect the cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity of children and their families and reflect this respect in instructional practice and expanded efforts to recruit minority teachers and teacher aides.
13. Provide training to caregivers, school administrators, teachers, and ancillary staff who work with young children.
14. Mobilize provider networks, resource and referral agencies, teacher training institutions, and other forms of self-help and technical assistance to improve the quality of early education and care and to offer support to existing providers, particularly those with limited resources.

Similarly, the public and private sectors have an obligation to help support families in the following ways:

15. Establish family education and support programs, which are geared to the personal needs of participants.
16. Personal contacts are critical in conveying information about child-rearing practices.
17. Providers of early education and care should recognize that parents and teachers each make unique contributions to children's development.
18. Preschool and school administrators should make parent involvement a basic responsibility of all caregivers and teachers, providing training, time and incentives for carrying out this function.
19. Develop policies that support families with young children in the workplace.

Together, we can live up to our responsibility to make homes, schools and communities places where all young children have the opportunity to learn and to grow to the fullest extent of their capabilities (John T. MacDonald, 1991).

Federal programs offer support for preschool education, childcare, prenatal care and health services, as well as tax credits to families with young children. Among the most important sources of assistance for improving children's readiness are: Head Start, Chapter 1, Even Start, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Family Support Act, Medicaid, the School Lunch program, the Maternal and Child Health Block Grant, the Child Care and Development Block Grant, Title IV-A of the Social Security Act and

the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). To help achieve the readiness goal, federal agencies must sharpen their efforts to serve young children and their families, and support interagency collaboration in planning, development, research, and evaluation (U.S. Department of Education, 1991).

The growth in the number of children being served under the Preschool Grants Program contained in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) jumped from 261,000 in 1986 to 548,441 as of 1996 (NEC-TAS Notes and 1997 Annual Report). The U.S. General Accounting Office (1994) identified the Preschool Grants Program as the second largest federal program targeting its funds to three-, four-, and five-year-old children. It is the only federal program exclusively serving preschool-age children with disabilities.

The Early Education Program for Children with Disabilities (EEPCD), originally named the Handicapped Children's Early Education Program (HCEEP) support young children ages birth through age eight. Their demonstration topics address a variety of issues. Examples include: use of technology, multi-disciplinary intervention services for young children and families, curriculum and materials development, and unique needs of children with low incidence disabilities such as deaf-blindness. In-service training projects are a priority to prepare professionals to develop and evaluate training models.

Two well-documented curricula are the "whole" child approach begun at the Jowonio School and the High/Scope Curriculum for Early Childhood Care and Education, with its beginnings at the Perry Preschool. The Jowonio School in Syracuse, New York, was founded in 1969. It emphasized an individualized curriculum for the

whole child, including emotional and social development, as well as academic achievement. One-third of the students attending had special needs. It was an inclusive program in which typical students, ages two to five, were served with special needs peers in the same classrooms. The program provided peer models while programs across most states used segregated learning settings for special needs students. Emphasis was on cooperative rather than competitive activities. The program currently uses the National Association for the Education of Young Children's Developmentally Appropriate Practice Guidelines, which offer many opportunities for children to manipulate a wide variety of materials, to play alone and with others in sensory, constructive, and symbolic activities; to ask questions and develop concepts about themselves and the world; and to express themselves in words, art, and music. Teachers also work closely with the children's parents to develop their role as the children's life long advocate. Teachers attempt to: 1) facilitate a child's growth through parent contact, 2) support and empower the parents in their parenting role, 3) provide resources, and 4) facilitate the transition of parents and children to their next environment (Roopnarine, 1985). Quality teaching is enhanced through teamwork.

The High/Scope Curriculum for Early Childhood Care & Education, developed by David P. Weikart and Lawrence J. Schweinhart, is an open framework of ideas and practices based on Piaget's views on the natural development of young children. The major national program today using the High/Scope Curriculum is Head Start. No special materials are necessary, simply the items that would be necessary in any good learning environment. The developmentally appropriate practices lend themselves to training and

supervising, so parents and administrators can rest assured that their children are receiving high-quality programs.

Several federal programs have helped fund and develop the High/Scope Curriculum which was first put into practice in 1962 with the Perry Preschool program in Michigan (High/Scope Educational Research Foundation). A long-term study by the High Scope Educational Research Foundation in Ypsilanti, Michigan, found that high-quality preschool education can help poor children to lead significantly more successful lives by the time they reach 19 years old (High/Scope Educational Research Foundation). The studies indicate that when you have dedicated, qualified teachers and parent involvement, disadvantaged kids will benefit from preschool education, says Joan E. Sprigle of Florida State University in Tallahassee. Teachers made home visits each week to involve the family, focusing on the mother. The program's policies included:

1. Staffing ratio of no more than ten children per staff member.
2. Teachers use and own a validated curriculum model.
3. Teaching staff works in teams to plan, implement, and evaluate.
4. Parents join teachers as partners in educating the child.
5. The administration provides curriculum leadership, supervision, and assistance, including regular in-service training (High/Scope Educational Research Foundation).

In 1999, Head Start had been running for thirty-three years. It has been a trailblazer that helped focus public attention on the needs of young children that currently

exists. While the number of poor people in the U.S. has been relatively stable over the last twenty years, the number of poor children has increased significantly ... nearly one out of every five babies, toddlers and preschoolers are eligible for federal aid (National Center for Children in Poverty, 1993). By 1996, the National Center for Education Statistics reported that forty-one percent of children ages three to four, enrolled in Early Childhood Centers lived in poverty.

Head Start began as a demonstration to determine whether the cycle of poverty could be interrupted through the focus on families with young children. The reasons why the program continues to generate excitement are: 1) it helps kids improve adaptive functioning, 2) it demonstrates capacity to empower parents and communities, 3) it is a model for early childhood education, and 4) it helps the nation face and overcome contradictions about children.

Over 13 million children have been served since 1965 (Valora, 1995). Head Start helps kids get better by its virtually unanimous immediate positive cognitive effects. The long-term effects include: students were less likely to have to repeat grades or need special education, improved self-esteem, social and motor development, nutrition and dental care.

Head Start empowers parents and communities through career training and employment. Head Start has active parental participation and volunteer work. The favorable impact on the local community is that it develops leadership potential among the poor.

Head Start (HS) serves as a model for early childhood programs. HS assists low income families such as those that: have parent(s) behind bars, a family member or the child has AIDS, as well as others. HS is committed to forming relationships with families and agencies that share the goal of family self-sufficiency. It has served as a lab for innovative early childhood programs.

HS helped the nation face and overcome contradictions about children, promoted civil rights, and has proven all children can learn, regardless of race. Thirty-seven states have state-funded programs modeled after Head Start. They, however, lack the scope of services HS provides. If the programs do not have a strong anti-poverty program to help the families to better themselves economically, it is not a true high-quality HS program.

After 50 years of early intervention research, both quantitative and qualitative, there is evidence of long-term benefits from quality preschool education for the child, the child's family, and society. The weight of the evidence establishes that early childhood care and education can produce large effects on intelligence during the early childhood years and sizable persistent effects on achievement, grade retention, special education, high school graduation, and socialization (Barnett, 1995). In particular, the evidence for effects on grade retention and special education is overwhelming. These effects are large enough and persistent enough to make a meaningful difference in the lives of children from low-income families. For many children, preschool programs can mean the difference between failing and passing, regular or special education, staying out of trouble or becoming involved in crime and delinquency, dropping out or graduating from high school (Barnett, 1995).

In the Ypsilanti Perry Preschool Project, a longitudinal study on disadvantaged children who had participated, showed the participant having significant gains at age 19 (Berrueta-Clement, Schweinhart, Barnett, Epstein, Weikart, 1984). Compared to children who did not attend preschool, the Perry Preschool graduates were more committed to schooling and more often finished high school and went on to post-secondary studies. They scored higher on reading, arithmetic, and language achievement tests at all grade levels and showed fewer anti-social or delinquent behaviors outside of school.

The longitudinal study of children who participated in the Perry Preschool Project found that when schools invested \$3,000 per child for one year of preschool, the schools immediately begin to recover their investment through savings in special education services. Other types of savings included \$3,353 per year by the children not requiring as many years in grades and many thousands of dollars in projected lifetime earnings for the child. The study identified seven elements in successful programs:

1. High structure
2. Clear child behavioral objectives
3. Clear family behavioral objectives
4. Teacher behaviors and activities to be used in each lesson
5. Task analysis procedures
6. Regular complete child assessments

7. Assessments and progress data to modify instruction

In addition, children participating in quality preschool programs showed greater success in adolescence and adulthood (Weikart, 1989). Their rates of delinquency, teenage pregnancy, and welfare usage are lower, and their rates of high school completion and subsequent employment are higher. Weikart points out that the easing of these social and economic problems associated with poverty translate into savings for taxpayers.

According to Weikart, several factors contribute to effective early education programs:

1. A curriculum that provides ample opportunity for children to solve problems independently, to initiate meaningful conversations with peers and adults, and to explore materials and interests on their own,
2. At least two adults for each group of 16-20 children,
3. Staff trained in early childhood education and care,
4. Effective evaluation procedures that help the staff observe each child's response to the program,
5. Active involvement of parents in developing and operating the program and in parent-training activities,
6. Good administrative backup and clear links to such comprehensive services as health, nutrition, and social supports (Weikart, 1989).

Cultural Diversity

Another factor that must be addressed in preschool programs today is cultural diversity. Researchers Derman and Sparks relate specific activities and discussion questions developed to enhance cultural diversity. They give these tips to teachers and parents:

1. Children have culturally relevant needs, experiences, interests, questions, feelings, and behaviors. Teachers must be familiar with the children's construction of identity and attitudes and have a developmental perspective based on the research.
2. Families' beliefs, concerns, and desires for their children are understood. Teachers must gather information from parents about what they (parents) want their children to understand about values.
3. Society's events, messages, and expectations permeate children's environments. This extends beyond the family to how the children's communities regard one another and the effects of television, radio, and spiritual leaders on the children.
4. Teachers' knowledge, beliefs, values, and interests have a formative effect on

the curriculum and on teaching practices. Teachers weave into the curriculum what they believe. It is important to learn what the parents and communities value and national goals (High/Scope Educational Research Foundation).

A culturagram is an assessment tool that focuses specifically on different aspects of culture, developed to help practitioners better understand and empower culturally diverse families (Congress, 1994). A culturagram can address the following topics: reasons for immigration, length of time in the community, legal or undocumented status, age at time of immigration, language spoken at home and in community, contact with cultural institutions, health beliefs, holidays and special events, impact of crisis events and values concerning family, education and work. The areas may vary in significance for the family as a unit and for each family member. Congress suggests that the following items can be used in completing a culturagram:

1. What brought you to the United States? Why did you decide to leave (country of origin)?
2. How long have you lived in the United States? In this community?
3. Do you have a green card? There are agencies that can help people secure a green card.
4. How old were you when you came to the United States?
5. What language do you speak at home? In the community?

6. What clubs/groups do you belong to?
7. When you are sick what do you do? Where and to whom do you turn for help?
8. What kinds of family parties do you have? What holidays do you celebrate?
How do you celebrate?
9. What particular events have been stressful for your family?
10. Do you believe everyone should have a high school/college education?
11. Do you believe that the man should be the family breadwinner?

The culturagram is a tool that can be used to empower the family and help those in the school setting better understand a family's background. The culturagram assists in:

1. Understanding the complexities of culture as it affects families
2. Becoming sensitive to the daily experiences of culturally diverse families
3. Developing differential assessments of family members
4. Involving the family in understanding its cultural background and
5. Discovering specific areas for intervention (Congress, 1997)

From a system point of view what affects the family affects the school. Therefore, it is important to understand that the child's school performance cannot be separate from the family's self-identity (Dowling & Osborne, 1985). For example, school programs,

especially Head Start and other early childhood programs, expect or mandate parental participation in a child's educational planning. However, expectations do not ensure parental participation, particularly if cultural factors are overlooked by professionals (Correa, 1989). However, when parents are genuinely invited and properly utilized, they are an invaluable resource and highly effective collaborators in the educational process (Aponte, 1976; Chavkin & Garza-Lubeck, 1990; Correa, 1989). Educators should avoid professional jargon that may provide conflicting interpretations and deter family involvement. For personnel working with various ethnic populations, an Ethnic-Sensitive Inventory is presented as a useful self-assessment guide (Man Ke Ling Ho, 1991; Congress, 1997). The inventory and its implications can increase the school staff's realm of multicultural information.

Being positive with all parents will encourage parents to discuss relevant genetic dispositions, such as, "His brother was this way at this age, too", etc. With empowerment of families, vast numbers of children will experience an increasingly satisfying and productive relationship with the educational system and will be able to reconcile the various cultural challenges presented by the home, the community and the school (Congress, 1997).

Appropriately, Head Start offers a number of multicultural services. The children of migrant workers have been of special concern to Head Start (Valentine, 1979) since 1969. Migrant Head Start programs operate for very long hours, sometimes from 4:00 AM to midnight, with open enrollment to infants and toddlers as well as four- and five-year-olds. Health, education, and nutrition specialists follow children as their parents

follow the crops.

Hispanic children now comprise about 23 percent of all Head Start children. Special efforts are made to meet their special developmental and cultural needs. Projects have been funded to provide instruction in two languages for Spanish-speaking children and to establish resource centers with programs for Spanish-speaking children and families (Richmond, Stipek, and Zigler, 1979).

Linguistic diversity is a significant issue in many Head Start programs. A full 63 percent of the programs have children who use two or more languages.

Head Start has been a leader in requiring that the home, cultural, and ethnic background of children and their families be an integral component of the program. Slaughter et al. (1988) states that the Head Start climate provides an environment of acceptance, which helps each child build ethnic pride. Head Start's interpretation of what a multicultural program entails is broad and focuses on the child's lifestyle and pattern of social interaction at many levels, including the family and the community as well as ethnic and cultural background. Head Start has developed several bilingual and multicultural curricula for use in conjunction with the national curriculum, in order to provide programs that meet the needs of children within the context of their ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Arenas, 1980; Slaughter et al., 1988).

Ellsworth Associates (1993) point out, Head Start families and children are not all alike. The problems faced by an African-American child growing up in an inner city neighborhood are only broadly like those of a Native American child on an Indian reservation, a child growing up in a depressed area of Appalachia, or a Spanish-speaking

child in the migrant stream. It is essential that future research and evaluation on the efficacy of Head Start address the program effects for these diverse populations.

Texas Input

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) gives general guidelines for public school preschool programs. The Texas Education Code devotes Sections 29.153 and 29.154 to prekindergarten. Section 29.153 states that:

- a. Any school district may offer prekindergarten classes, but a district shall offer prekindergarten classes if the district identifies 15 or more eligible children who are at least four years of age. A school district may offer prekindergarten classes if the district identifies 15 or more eligible children who are at least three years of age.
- b. A child is eligible for enrollment in a prekindergarten class if the child is at least three years of age and is:
 - 1) unable to speak and comprehend the English language;
 - 2) educationally disadvantaged; or
 - 3) homeless, as defined by 42 United States Code Section 11302, regardless of the residence of the child, of either parent of the child, or of the child's guardian or other person having lawful control of the

child.

- c. A prekindergarten class shall be operated on a half-day basis. A district is not required to provide transportation for a prekindergarten class, but transportation, if provided, is included for funding purposes as part of the regular transportation system.
- d. On application of a district, the commissioner may exempt a district from the application of this section if the district would be required to construct classroom facilities in order to provide prekindergarten classes.
- e. Each school district shall develop a system to notify the population in the district with children who are eligible for enrollment in a prekindergarten class of availability of the class. The system must include public notices issued in English and Spanish.
- f. A district's prekindergarten program shall be designed to develop skills necessary for success in the regular public school curriculum, including language, mathematics, and social skills.
- g. If a school district contracts with a private entity for the operation of the district's prekindergarten program, the program must at a minimum comply with the applicable child-care licensing standards adopted by the Texas Department of Human Services under Section 42.042, Human Resource Code.

Section 29.154, which evaluates prekindergarten programs, discusses that the commissioner of education and commissioner of human services shall monitor and evaluate prekindergarten programs as to their developmental appropriateness. Also, for the purpose of providing cost-effective care for children during the full workday, the commissioners shall investigate the use of existing child-care program sites as prekindergarten sites. Programs shall be integrated with the cooperation of the school district and other program administrators to the greatest extent possible.

1. How do schools find preschool teachers who will initiate major changes in young children's lives and what types of support services are needed?
2. A broad review of educational literature would provide a philosophy and a teacher's job description that would include the following elements:
3. Have a thorough understanding of skills ranging from birth to five years,
4. View the child's development in the emotional, social and academic areas,
5. Be able to translate plans into action,
6. Have a general understanding of the diverse cultures of the families you will work with,
7. Act as a liaison between parents and the school,
8. Initiate a smooth transition from prekindergarten to kindergarten.

It would appear that the best source for finding qualified preschool teachers would be the universities that offer sound research-based practices. Other sources would include recommendations by current employer, universities, and professional organizations.

The United States Department of Education and Texas Education Agency (TEA) have developed program descriptions, evaluation tools, and also re-mediation tools for below satisfactory teachers, but this researcher could find no preschool job description documented, except a general teacher description at the school district level. At the district level there are generic job descriptions that meet the Texas Education Code (TEC). But, it would appear it is left to the personnel officer, team of professional educators and/or principals to ferret out of the resume and/or applicant if that person has the qualities desirous to preschool teaching. Much discretion as to hiring is left to the interviewer.

Once the preschool teacher is hired, there is a new set of guidelines/principles to follow. TEC 13.038; 19 Texas Administration Code (TAC) 149.22 states that the new teacher without prior teaching experience shall be assigned a mentor teacher and the new teacher shall participate in teacher orientation programs. Twenty hours of staff development training shall occur during regular in-service hours (TEC 16.052b). Teachers working with children who have disabilities shall participate in personnel training to teach them how to plan for these students [TEC 16.056; 19 TAC 149.41(a)]. District guidelines often are more specific than the TEA/TAC codes.

A certified teacher is required for every twenty-two children. In the preschool setting, once the student/teacher ratio reaches 14:1, an educational aide must be hired.

Other school personnel that assist the preschool population and their families include: diagnosticians, speech pathologists, occupational and physical therapists, school counselors, nutritionists, and any particular personnel needed to address the students' educational needs. Efforts are made to coordinate with and involve community service personnel as well. Professional services most often needed are doctors and the Texas Department of Human Services. Parents must sign a written consent form for professional assistance. Nonprofessional volunteers are welcome in the program. There is a current trend for retirees to come and read to/interact with the children. Whether professional or nonprofessional, each volunteer must pass through a screening process, including police record check before having any involvement with the students. Screening processes should be clearly stated in district policy.

A child's first teacher and caregiver is the parent (Bredekamp, 1987). One way Human Services can assist the parents and schools is by offering child development seminars. The school district simply needs to communicate the need. There are myriad services available.

The 74th Texas Legislature (1995) completed an extensive revision of the Texas Education Code. In stating the Mission of Public Education, there is an emphasis on the importance of parent involvement. Parent involvement is further grounded on the conviction that a successful public education system is directly related to a strong, dedicated, and supportive family and that parental involvement in the school is essential for the maximum educational achievement of a child. The Texas Education Code, Section 4.001(b) lists the objectives of public education. Objective 1 reads: Parents will be full

partners with educators in the education of their children. Objective 1 is amplified in Section 26.001(a): Parents are partners with educators, administrators, and school district boards of trustees in their children's education. Parents shall be encouraged to actively participate in creating and implementing educational programs for their children (The 74th Texas Legislature). Parent involvement greatly improves the quality of a child's educational experience, and parents are children's first and most significant teachers (TEA Press Release, Moses, 1997).

The Texas State Board of Education advocates parent and family involvement as indicated in its Long-Range Plan for Public Education, 1996-2000, as it has in every plan since 1986. Parent and Family Involvement in Student Learning is the lead objective in the plan, and is followed by Community Involvement in Student Learning. There are six initiatives which accompany these objectives and that give focus to the agency's Parent Involvement and Community Empowerment Initiative. The board's objectives are evidence of the strong agreement between the legislature and the boards on the necessity of a coordinated effort to communicate state educational priorities for comprehensive reform and the achievement of academic excellence.

The Parent Involvement and Community Empowerment Unit (PICEU) in Texas is a source for regional education service centers and school districts to use in their efforts to strengthen the relationship between families, schools, and local communities. It does not mandate parent involvement; PICEU assists and advises in these initiatives. The importance of parent involvement has been emphasized at state, federal and local levels, and enjoys the widespread positive support of business and industry. PICEU encourages

collaboration among all parties who serve children and families, where the outcomes promote educational excellence and equity for all students enrolled in the Texas public education system. The initiative has six main focus areas:

1. Coordination of state, regional, and local initiatives that help young children enter school ready to learn, including developmentally appropriate programs for children from birth through prekindergarten
2. Providing assistance to education service centers, districts, and campuses in their efforts to enhance parent and family involvement in education
3. Encouragement of voluntary parenting education programs
4. Promoting adult and family literacy, which contributes to the overall improvement of educational and workplace skills for children and families
5. Planning with other state agencies and the business community to foster successful school-to-work transitions
6. Identification of policies that enable local communities to coordinate resources that serve the needs of students and families (TEA Report, 1996)

Preschool programs in seven Texas public school districts were named to the 1997 Showcase of Promising Practices in Preschool Programs for Children with Disabilities, officials of the Texas Education Agency announced. The program is part of the Texas Preschool Evaluation Project, a Texas Education Agency project that provides

meaningful and useful information about preschool programs to Texas educators. The seven programs were recognized for effectively meeting challenges in specific areas of preschool education, in a particular situation, and at a designated time.

The seven preschool programs receiving Promising Practices status were: the Leander Independent School District's special education program; the Carver Early Childhood Center in the Bryan ISD; Elkhart Elementary School in the Elkhart ISD; Lakeland Elementary School in the Humble ISD; Baxter Elementary School in the Midlothian ISD; the Brazos Valley Regional Day School for the Deaf administered by the Bryan ISD; and Chancellor Elementary School in the Alief ISD (TEA Press Release, 1997).

The programs had to provide information on why the practice was started, the individuals involved in its development, how long the practice has been in effect, and the population for which it was designed and implemented. Programs also had to list specific goals, steps, or processes involved in the practice, expected and actual results, data sources used to document results. They also had to explain the challenges confronted during development and implementation, plus what other programs might encounter if they attempted to implement the practice. Program officials had to list suggestions for meeting all challenges associated with the practice and explain the next steps planned.

Two panels of education professionals from throughout Texas reviewed the nominations and selected programs for site visits to ascertain consistency between the nomination and actual practice, and to collect individual information to use in reviewing the nominations. Only practices validated through on-site visits were given the Promising

Practices status. Distinction as a Promising Practice could be given in one of eight categories:

1. Family involvement in preschool programs for children with disabilities;
2. Community involvement in preschool programs for children with disabilities;
3. Inclusion of young children with disabilities and their non-disabled peers;
4. Effective teaching strategies for children with disabilities;
5. Appropriate and effective assessment models used with children with disabilities;
6. Models for transition into or from preschool programs for children with disabilities;
7. Administrative involvement and support for preschool programs for children with disabilities; and
8. Integrated therapy services in preschool programs for children with disabilities.

The purpose of the Promising Practice Program is to spotlight preschool education for children with disabilities; acknowledge those programs that are effectively meeting challenges in preschool education; and to foster networking and information sharing among programs interested in improving their services. Since the program's inception in 1990, 70 practices in Texas public schools have received Promising Practice status.

There is little or no data about the characteristics of Texas Educational Service Center areas of Seven and Eight preschool programs. Most of the available information is documentation for the purposes of funding (TEA Report). With the growing emphasis on the importance of a child's prekindergarten years, this research distinguishes if preschool programs are receiving priority status in Texas Educational Service Center areas of Seven and Eight public schools. The results yield evidence regarding the characteristics of trained professionals, curriculum implementation, plus parent and community involvement.

Moreover, this research is important because many of the preschool administrators serve in a district with a population of 1000 students or less. The data show how well current administrators are versed in recent preschool educational research and the significance that is placed on preschool education in small public school populations.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Preparation

The preparation phase used educational research in formatting survey questions. These questions were then tested for face validity for summation by two university professors, two service center directors, and one local program director. Having received validation for all these questions from all of the above, the questionnaire was finalized. The majority of the questions were taken from information collected by the National Association for the Education of Young Children in Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs. The secondary source of data comes from Head Start materials. The survey was designed to test the hypothesis that Regions Seven and Eight Administrators adhere to the national standards of:

1. The prekindergarten curriculum will match standards set forth by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.
2. Each child's development will be enhanced by maximizing the parent's involvement.
3. Prekindergarten teachers participate in workshops and professional organizations to best serve the young children's needs.
4. Administrators draw from a broad scope of sources: national, state, staff, family, and community to develop their instructional leadership qualities.

5. Special populations such as special education, diverse cultures, and economically disadvantaged are recognized in prekindergarten programs.
6. The local community is actively involved in supporting the prekindergarten program and provides services to young children and their families.

In addition to the survey, fifteen preschool administrators were selected and interviewed to obtain in-depth information to discover if there are commonalties in the professionals' educational background and in the preschool programs. The interview questions were reviewed by three university professors to ensure validity and eliminate interviewer bias (Isaac, 1995).

The hypotheses were accepted under the basis of at least two-thirds of the preschool administrators following the national elements for two-thirds of the time. The interview data was used to accept or reject the results of the survey responses.

Data Collection

The researcher distributed the Prekindergarten Programs and Administrators' Beliefs Survey to all 112 preschool administrators in the Texas Education Service Regions of Seven and Eight. If the original mailing had not yielded a 50 percent or better return rate within a two-week period, the survey would have been sent again until a 50 percent return rate was received.

All survey forms were anonymous and not coded in any manner. Personal notes from survey participants specifically mentioning their schools and/or districts remained confidential.

The researcher also had personal interviews with selected administrators/directors. The open-ended method of this interviewing resulted in more complete data and provided a means of checking and assuring the effectiveness of communication (Isaac, 1995). To avoid misinterpretation, summarizing or confirmation questions were asked (Armitage, 1999). The interviews were tape recorded to obtain the most complete and accurate records, to afford optimal inter-personal communication, and to make the analysis of the data most efficient (Wilson, 1997). The respondents were given an explanation that accuracy was the reason the tape recorder was being used. All participants were willing to give full answers during the taping, so it was not necessary for the researcher to take notes. The fifteen open-ended interviews are regarded with anonymity in documentation.

Research Approach

The research approach used is Michael Scriven's goal-free evaluation strategy in which the evaluator is intentionally shielded from the stated purposes and objectives of the program (Scriven, 1970). The goal-free approach to program evaluation has the special merit of avoiding much of the cueing toward goals that occur when an evaluator is exposed to program documents (Scriven, 1993). It is primarily concerned with reducing the effects of bias in evaluation (Madaus, 1983). The goal-free approach added a dimension of program evaluation not covered by the monitoring approach. The monitoring and goal achievement could have missed many aspects of the program that needed improvement and left the evaluator open to a dozen flaws in the reasoning behind recommendations to continue, terminate, curtail, or supplement a program (Scriven,

1993). The only systematic methodology found for detecting side effects is the goal-free approach.

No local program mission statements or objectives were obtained before sending the survey to preschool administrators. Such an unbiased perspective was likely to uncover relationships that, longitudinally, could have major significance (Isaac, 1995).

The original list of Region Seven and Eight preschool administrators was obtained from the Texas Education Agency's (TEA) Internet Directory. The list was then reviewed by the preschool regional service directors for actual on-site preschool programs and current administrative leaders. Any program or administrator on the TEA list who could not be verified by the regional director was directly contacted via the telephone to ascertain if a prekindergarten program existed on that campus and, if so, the name of the administrator directly supervising the program. Changes were made as necessary. The process resulted in 78 preschool programs identified in Region Seven, and 34 programs in Region Eight. The preschool survey was mailed to all 112 preschool administrators in Regions Seven and Eight. Specific questions addressing topics such as: curriculum, student assessment, students, parents, teachers, administrators, cultural diversity, staff development, community involvement, and funding were incorporated.

The survey questions in this study are systematic and executed to ensure appropriate coverage and efficient data collection. (See Appendix B). The results should closely reflect the population, since every preschool administrator directly serving a preschool population was surveyed. The survey questions use a percentage scale for responses. This allows for exact interpretation (Isaac, 1995). In the developmental stage

of the survey, two regional education center preschool directors, two university experts, and one local district preschool director examined the survey for clarity and purpose.

The data analyzed is organized and divided into tabular forms, percentages, and narratives relative to the information. Questions 1, 2, 6, 11, 16, 21, and 36 deal with curriculum. Questions 12, 18, 22, 23, 28, and 33 describe the student assessments, students, and their parents. Questions 13, 17, 25, 29, 30, 32, and 37 address teachers and staff development. Questions 5, 8, 14, 34, and 40 reflect administrators' roles. Special populations such as the economically disadvantaged, culturally diverse, and special education are covered in questions 3, 7, 19, 24, 26, 27, and 31. Community support is expressed through questions 4, 9, 35, 38, and 39. An additional area this research covers is funding found in questions 10, 15, and 20.

The interviews consisted of two sections, professional background and the preschool program. (See Appendix A). In the professional background section, questions range from the administrator's personal education to the comprehensive services he/she provides for the school or Co-op. Among the topics covered in the preschool program section are: preschool subpopulations, program strengths and weaknesses, strategic planning, and parental involvement.

The qualitative data was condensed, extracting and transforming the raw material from the interviews (Wilson, 1997). Next, respondent information was grouped by questions to note regularities, patterns, and possible explanations (Wilson, 1997). Finally, a comparison was made between the respondent information and quality preschool research.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Analysis of Data

Michael Scriven's goal-free evaluation strategy was used in designing the survey and interview documents (Scriven, 1993). The open-ended interviews yielded concise information relevant to the populations of student served, and administrative beliefs on methodology of current practices and how students could be best served in the future (Isaac, 1995). Clarification, summarization, and confirmation questions were asked to avoid misinterpretation (Armitage, 1999). The qualitative data were condensed, transforming the raw material into quantifiable item-analysis data (Isaac, 1995).

The surveys were sent after the interviews were conducted. The survey item responses are written in a percentage scale format, which allows for exact interpretation (Isaac, 1995). Fifty-five of the administrators, who returned surveys, answered all forty questions. The results that follow reflect the current practices of those fifty-five. Two of the returned surveys were incomplete, with questions regarding interpretation. These were omitted because it was questionable if the answers would add accurate meaning to the data. The survey return rate of prekindergarten administrators is indicated in Table 1.

Table 1
Prekindergarten Administrator Survey Return Rates

	Actual Number	Percentage
Surveys Sent	112	100
Surveys Returned	57	51

Item responses were organized by topic and divided into tabular forms, percentages, and narratives relative to the information. The results closely reflected the preschool populations served and several administrators noted unique populations, ethnically or holistically, on their surveys. The main focus of the survey was to produce data relative to the degree school administrators follow national developmentally appropriate practices.

Fifteen preschool administrators from different districts in Regions 7 and 8 were contacted by phone and asked to participate in face-to-face interviews of approximately 20 minutes in length. The districts were chosen due to their larger size, 3,400+ students, with the belief that the administrators' focus would center more on the prekindergarten population, rather than administrators who may serve prekindergarten through fifth or sixth grades. Fourteen of the original fifteen administrators agreed to the interview. Fortunately, there was another preschool administrator in the district who agreed to participate in place of the first administrator who was unavailable. Eleven interviews were conducted in Region 7 and four in Region 8. The interview ratio was proportionate to the number of districts with preschool programs per region.

The interviews ranged in length from 20 minutes to 75 minutes; some administrators elaborated more than others. The predominate time for interviews was

between 25 and 40 minutes. The setting was most often the administrator's office. Eleven of the fifteen administrators had no interruptions during the interview. All interviews were tape recorded to ensure accuracy. The interviews were designed to produce information about the administrators' professional background and their preschool programs.

Administrative Interview Results: Professional Background

Question 1: Describe your professional background, education. What degrees/certifications do you have?

Fourteen administrators held master's degrees and fourteen possessed Mid-Management Certification. The administrator who did not hold the degree had Mid-Management Certification. The remaining individual, who did not have Mid-Management Certification, served in the capacity of Head Start Director. One principal possessed his Doctor of Philosophy degree in Educational Counseling. One administrator had received the prestigious Johnson and Johnson National Early Childhood Award and two administrators' schools had received Promising Practices Awards. (See Table 2).

Table 2

<u>Area of Certification</u>	<u>Frequency of Respondents</u>
Mid-Management	14
Master's in Education (other than Early Childhood)	10
Elementary Teaching	6
Secondary Teaching	5
Early Childhood or Kindergarten Teaching	3
Master's of Early Childhood (EC)	2
Masters of Counseling	2
Counseling	1
School of Management	1
Superintendent	1
Doctorate of Education Counseling	1

Note: Some administrators possess two or more degrees.

Question 2: Do you supervise more than the preschool program? [In all questions, the word preschool may refer to prekindergarten for 3- and 4-year-old children, Preschool Programs for Children with Disabilities (PPCD), and/or school district Head Start children.] (See Table 3). *Under Frequency of... all #s are centered in each section of dis.

Table 3

<u>Grades Served</u>	<u>Frequency of Respondents</u>
Prekindergarten plus Kindergarten (K)	6
Prekindergarten (Preschool) Only	4
Prekindergarten plus K through 1	3
Prekindergarten plus K through 4	1
Prekindergarten plus K through (Medically Fragile)	1

Question 3: Are there other services you provide for the school district?

Most administrators were members of two or more district-wide committees. Five of the administrators were district coordinators of committees/services. Twelve administrators were members of, or chaired district community relation's committees/programs. Only two administrators were not involved at the district level. (See Table 4).

Table 4

<u>District Responsibility</u>	<u>Frequency of Respondents</u>
Member of 2 to 5 Committees	12
Coordinator/Chairperson of Committee/Service	5
None	2
Member of 1 Committee	1

Note: Administrators may be counted both as chairperson and member.

Question 4: How long have you been a supervisor of the preschool program? (See Table 5).

Table 5

<u>Years as Preschool Administrator</u>	<u>Frequency of Respondents</u>
2 - 5	7
6 - 9	3
10 - 13	2
14 - 17	3

Question 5: What position do you hope to hold five years from now?

All respondents expressed a deep commitment to the children they serve. Only one administrator plans to move into an assistant superintendent's position. The others stated they would remain preschool administrators until they retire. Three administrators expressed their desire to serve on state and federal education committees. (See Table 6).

Table 6

<u>Anticipated Position</u>	<u>Frequency of Respondents</u>
Continue in Current Role	10
Retired	4
Assistant Superintendent	1

Administrative Interview: The Preschool Program

Question 1: Describe the subpopulations of preschoolers you serve.

Thirteen of the school/center administrators receive Title 1 funds, thus their schools serve a population of 50 percent, or greater economically disadvantaged children. (Economically disadvantaged is based on information required to receive free school meals.) The students who qualify for Head Start fall below the poverty level (Office of Educational Statistics) and their families are eligible for more services than other preschoolers are. The Head Start population includes both regular and special education children, but the vast majority are at-risk due to medical, nutritional, social, emotional, and/or other developmental delays. The fastest growing population of preschoolers appears to be Hispanics, many of whom are new immigrants. The migrant farmers' children are also mainly Hispanic in origin.

Administrators have a choice of serving 3-year-olds but do serve qualifying 4-year-olds in Prekindergarten programs and in Head Start. Availability of space and funding seems to be the major limiting factor. Preschool services are available for children diagnosed with disabilities (PPCD) and Migrant children in both the 3- and 4-year-old groups. (See Table 7).

Table 7

<u>Subpopulation Descriptor</u>	<u>Range in Schools/Centers</u>
Economically Disadvantaged	50-83%
Below Poverty Level	20-92%
Caucasian	18-40%
Hispanic	01-50%
African American	07-50%
Asian	00-01%
Native American	00-01%
Other	00-01%

Question 2: What is the teacher to pupil ratio?

This question must first be divided into three categories, Prekindergarten, PPCD, and Head Start. The numbers are within a predictable range for each subgroup. (See Table 8, 9, and 10).

Table 8

<u>Prekindergarten (Economically Disadvantaged)</u> <u>Teacher/Pupil Ratio</u>	<u>Frequency of Respondents</u>
1:15-18, plus teacher's aide	6
1:19-21, plus teacher's aide	4
1:22-24, plus teacher's aide	3
1:15	1

Note: Not all campuses house all three of the prekindergarten, PPCD, and Head Start populations.

Table 9

<u>Head Start Teacher/Pupil Ratio</u>	<u>Frequency of Respondents</u>
1:20-22, plus teacher's aide	2
1:17-19, plus teacher's aide	1

Note: All administrators stated they follow federal program guidelines, which includes serving some children diagnosed with disabilities. The disabilities in the Head Start children usually were nutritional, social, behavioral, and/or speech delays.

Table 10

<u>PPCD Teacher/Pupil Ratio</u>	<u>Frequency of Respondents</u>
1: Numbers greatly vary, plus 1-3 aides	7
1:8-10, plus aide	3
1:6-7, plus 2 aides	1
1:4-7, plus aide	1
1:8-10, plus 2 aides	1
1:1 (Medically Fragile Child)	1

Question 3: What is your perception of the strengths and challenges in the program?

There was great variation in what administrators listed were their programs' strengths and each administrator listed more than one. Three strengths were stated which were unique to a single district. The unique strengths were: 1) tribes, a cooperative learning approach where teamwork, respect, and appreciation are emphasized. This program's attributes include: encourages individual learning, shows tolerance for student differences, decreases behavioral problems, and the framework can be used in elementary through high school grades. A first grade student who had been in the tribe approach in prekindergarten and kindergarten stated about the Colorado high school shooting, "If that student (shooter) had been in a tribe, that (the shooting) wouldn't have happened because he wouldn't have felt different." 2) Parents were their (Prekindergarten program's) best advertisers. The Hispanic mothers bring their children to Head Start. They get involved and become successful in Even Start (parents' skill building program), then they draw other Hispanic families into the services. The parents' involvement may start as a desire for socialization, but it evolves into learning English, parenting skills, and possibly job skills. 3) Transportation is exceptional in one district. Transportation is provided to and from school for students participating in the half-day and full-day programs. Thus, they serve a greater portion of the prekindergarten population, since some parents are without transportation. The preschoolers sit at the front of the bus, and the older children have a strong tendency to look after them.

The program challenges vary significantly. (See Table 11 and 12).

Table 11

<u>Program Strengths</u>	<u>Frequency of Respondents</u>
Committed Teachers and Aides	12
Literacy Focused Curriculum	9
Support Team (Social Workers, Nurses, Doctors, and/or Dentists)	4
Central Office Staff	4
Facility and Funding	4
Spanish-Speaking Children Graduating with Developmentally Appropriate English	1
Parental Support	1
Community Support	1
Regional Education Center Consultants	1

Note: Administrators listed more than one strength.

Table 12

<u>Program Challenges</u>	<u>Frequency of Respondents</u>
Parent Involvement	3
Extend Prekindergarten to All 3- and 4-Year-Olds	2
Curriculum Alignment	2
Expand Half-Day Program to Full-Day	1
Improved Curriculum for 3-Year-Olds	1
Keeping Quality at Its Peak	1
Services for Abused Children	1
Increasing Number of Children with Social/Behavioral Problems	1
More Collaboration of Prekindergarten and K Teachers with Elementary Teachers	1
Inadequate Salaries for Teachers' Aides	1
Personnel Who Can (Academically and Emotionally) Handle Children Who are Medically Fragile	1
Facilities	1
Preparing for DEC Visit	1

Question 4: Is there an improvement plan you would like to highlight?

Most administrators discussed their district's strategic plan with emphasis placed on their specific campus, either in a global or goal-oriented way. The range of time in implementing each plan varied. The focus on literacy and parental involvement in children's education was an ongoing plan. Expanding programs to include more children was a long-range plan. (See Table 13).

Table 13

<u>Type of Improvement</u>	<u>Frequency of Respondents</u>
Improve Comprehensive Strategic Plan	4
Focus on Literacy	3
Expand Knowledge of Developmental Skills	2
Inclusion of PPCD Children More	2
Expand the Number of 3-4 Year-Olds in Preschool	2
Use Full High/Scope Approach	1
Increase Parent Involvement	1

Question 5: Is there a district strategy that provides for successful transition for prekindergarten to kindergarten? Please explain.

There did not appear to be a district transition plan. Thirteen of the fifteen-campus/center administrators with their teachers' collaboration had developed their own plans. One center's transition plan was the Texas Head Start Collaboration. They were part of a pilot program. Another center housed only medically fragile children, where transition was not an issue. Survival and increasing one's awareness of one's environment was an achievement at that center. (See Table 14).

Table 14

<u>Elements of Transition Plans</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>
Towards End of Prekindergarten Year, Students Visit K Classes	10
Prekindergarten Students' Cumulative Folders are Sent to K Teacher	4
Students and Parents Meet with K Teacher in K Setting Just Before K Year Starts	3
Private Day Care Prekindergarten Students Visit K Class	3
Towards End of Prekindergarten Year, K Teacher Meets Students in Prekindergarten Classroom	1
Transition Summer School (TSS) for Developmentally Delayed Students	1
TSS for Spanish-Speaking Students	1
TSS for All Prekindergarten Students	1
Transition Program Coordinator	1

Note: Most administrators highlighted more than one element.

Question 6: What evidence of short-term benefits have your children experienced?

Administrators stated that their students who attended prekindergarten were much more likely to have their emerging skills on target. The exposure to books, developmentally appropriate centers, computers, field trips, and school structure with certified teachers was immeasurable. Before kindergarten, little testing is done at the three- and four-year-old level, except for the purposes of individual education plans. However, growth was easily observable, particularly in pre-literacy skills and social skills. (See Table 15).

Table 15

<u>Short-Term Benefits</u>	<u>Frequency of Respondents</u>
Emerging Academic/Literacy Skills are On Target	12
Knowledge of School Structure	7
Social Skills Are in Place	7
Children Make an Easy Transition to K	5

Note: Some administrators named more than one benefit.

Question 7: Has your district as a follow-up from the preschool years conducted any longitudinal studies? Please explain.

Only one district had a formal method of tracking all preschoolers through the third grade. Two districts had longitudinal data on their Head Start children, and one district had some data on Title 1 children. Some administrators were beginning to collect data. Many administrators expressed the need for longitudinal studies. (See Table 16).

Table 16

<u>Type of Longitudinal Study</u>	<u>Frequency of Respondents</u>
No District Longitudinal Study	11
Individual Campus Assessments	6
Head Start	2
Campus is Beginning to Collect Data	2
District is Beginning to Collect Data	1
Developing Development Task Force for Longitudinal Studies	1
Title 1	1
District Level, All Prekindergartens	1

Note: Many districts without district-wide longitudinal studies had campus studies initiated by the administrator.

Question 8: What services are provided by the regional service center for preschool administrators?

Services and responses varied greatly between the Region 7 and Region 8 Service Centers. Thus, the data are reflected in two tables. It would appear that Region 7, which serves 78 preschool campuses/centers, provides more services to administrators than Region 8, which serves 34 preschool campuses/centers. Eleven administrators were interviewed from Region 7, and four administrators were interviewed from Region 8. (See Tables 17 and 18).

Table 17

<u>Administrators' Participation in Region 7 Services</u>	<u>Frequency of Respondents</u>
Head Start Training Instructional Support	5
Tailor Made Staff Developments	5
High/Scope Training	3
Instructional Support	2
Technology	2
Summer Institute	2
Professional Development Assessment System	2
Teach Project	1
Total Quality Management	1
Mind Mapping	1

Note: Only one negative comment was given concerning lack of support. This was a request for a Head Start Facility Improvement Grant on small campus.

Table 18

<u>Administrators' Participation in Region 8 Services</u>	<u>Frequency of Respondents</u>
Instructional Support	1
High/Scope	1 (Same administrator as 1 above)
Professional Development Assessment System	1

Note: Three of the four administrators interviewed discussed the lack of early childhood

services provided for administrators. Two of the three administrators rely heavily on university sources. The third administrator not participating in Region 8 Services, attends Head Start summer workshops elsewhere.

Question 9: What kinds of efforts do administrators make to involve parents in their children's education? Give examples.

Administrators on every campus encourage parents to take active roles in their children's education. There is a strong emphasis on volunteering in the classroom. A central idea in most districts was that the parent would observe the prekindergarten teacher modeling appropriate interaction with the preschoolers in hopes that the behaviors translate to the home environment. Parental involvement was highest where there were Head Start and/or Even Start programs on campus. There are parent centers on those campuses where a parent can get assistance in raising children, work towards a General Education Diploma (GED), and learn English-as-a-Second Language (ESL). On two campuses childcare of younger children is provided while the parents are in training. One of those campuses provides special training and childcare to teenage parents who are still attending high school.

Two districts provide special assistance to migrant families with young children. One district provides a teacher to make home visits twice a week. She shows the parents how to work with children, brings materials and games for the families to keep, and explains how the parents can build relationships with the schools. In the past, other families have come to the homes to listen and learn while the visiting teacher was present.

In the other district that provides special assistance to migrant families, all

preschool teachers and aides were encouraged to improve communication with families by receiving free Spanish language training. In both districts, parents were eligible for special funds available to migrant families. (See Table 19).

Table 19

<u>Parental Services/Activities</u>	<u>Frequency of Respondents</u>
Parent/Family Member Involvement in Classroom	11
Special Activities Planned with Children	8
Day Care (2 YMCA Programs)	6
GED Program	5
Parent Work Program	5
ESL Program	5
Parent Centers on Campus	5
Parent/Teacher Association or Organization	4
Regularly Scheduled Home Visits	2
Extended Day Care after School Hours	2
Parents Advisory Council	2
Special Assistance to Migrant Parents	2

Question 10: What has had the greatest influence on your program within the last five years?

The most frequent answer given to the greatest influence was the strong early childhood program itself. The National Association for the Education of Young Children Guidelines, the Governors' Initiative, and federal specialists were credited with building strong programs, along with local initiatives. As part of the strong program, several administrators listed on-site social workers, nurses, therapists, community members, and

even custodial staff as impacting the students. Two programs had regular visits by doctors and dentists, also. (See Table 20).

Table 20

<u>Greatest Influence Element</u>	<u>Frequency of Respondents</u>
Strong Early Childhood Programs	9
High Expectations of All Educators	6
Improved/New Facility	4
Parental Support	4
Community Support	4
Superintendent and Board Emphasis	2
Increasing Number of Children Served	2
Strong Influx of Hispanic Population	1
Inclusion Program	1

Note: All administrators replied with 1-3 elements.

Question 11: If you could make one improvement in your preschool program, what would it be?

The dream of many administrators is to include all 4-year-olds, not just the economically disadvantaged and disabled in a full-day program. Some see the need to reach more 3-year-olds, but also to strengthen the 3-year-old curriculum by finding more developmentally appropriate activities. One administrator suggested the district serve at-risk children from birth to age two in a liaison capacity. (See Table 21).

Table 21

<u>Improvements in Prekindergarten</u>	<u>Frequency of Respondents</u>
All 4-Year-Olds Eligible for Full-Day prekindergarten	6
Modern Facility and More Funding	4
Continued Research of Developmental Activities	3
Smaller Number of Students Per Class	3
Strengthen Staff Development	2
Increase in Community Involvement	2
Increase in Special Populations Inclusion	1
Increase in Parent Involvement	1

Note: Some administrators gave 2 answers.

Question 12: Does the local funding program augment the state and federal monies in the preschool program?

The amount of local funding per preschool child per district varies greatly. The Head Start program receives the least in local funds, sometimes facilities and teachers' salaries, always district central office support. The prekindergarten program for economically disadvantaged children receives funding most often for facilities, partial teachers' salaries, and district center office support. The PPCD population receives funding for the services previously listed, as well as district special education monies. The district pays the majority of administrative salaries. Local funds are used when the district provides transportation. The amount of local funding per district per year shows extreme variations among districts, \$11 million plus (for one small district of which preschool receives a proportionate share) on the high side, and minimal in poorer districts. (See Table 22).

Table 22

<u>Local Funding Provisions</u>	<u>Frequency of Respondents</u>
Some Funding for Some Prekindergarten Needs	10
Little Funding for All Prekindergarten Needs	3
Majority of Funding for All Prekindergarten Needs	2

Administrative Survey Responses Presented by Hypotheses

The administrators' responses to each survey item are explained first in narrative style, then in a graphic format. The hypotheses are written sequentially and presented with the statements. The survey items are discussed with the context of each hypotheses presented. The narratives contain comments, which the administrators wrote on the mailed surveys. The narratives also note the administrators who have not incorporated the survey items into their philosophy for preschool students.

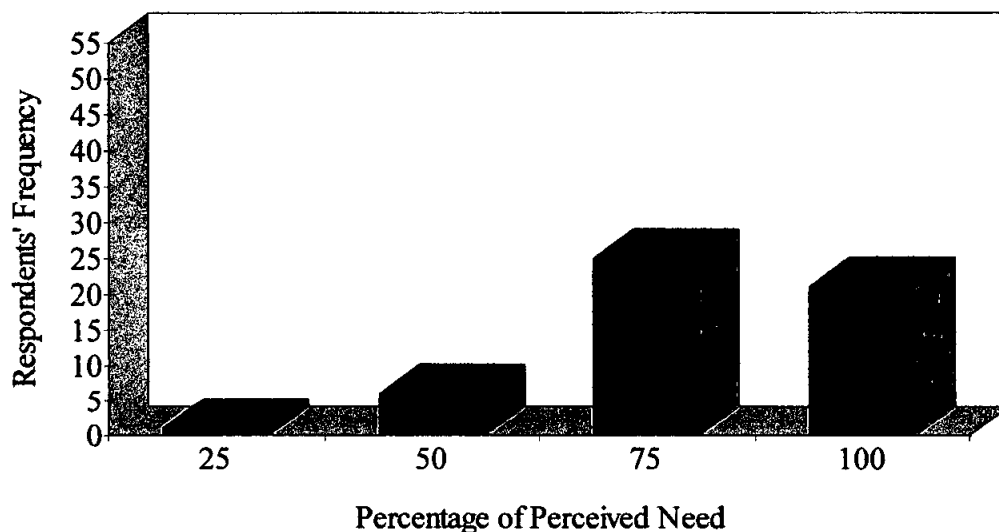
Showing zero percentage on a mathematically formulated graph was not appropriate, thus the bottom axis on each graph states the percentage of time administrators practice the statements in increments of 25. The left axis indicates the number of administrator responses. The bars indicate how many of the administrators use national standards what percent of the time in their programs.

Hypothesis 1: The prekindergarten curriculum will match standards set forth by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Survey Item 1: The prekindergarten curriculum goals are based on the normal sequential developmental steps that occur in young children.

Administrators from 25 preschool programs stated they based curriculum goals on normal sequential steps 75 percent of the time. Another 21 school administrators followed the normal sequential steps 100 percent in their prekindergarten programs. Six school districts based half of their curriculum on normal sequential steps, and one school district used the steps only 25 percent of the time. One respondent stated the data were from a district report and represented two prekindergarten campuses. (See Table 23).

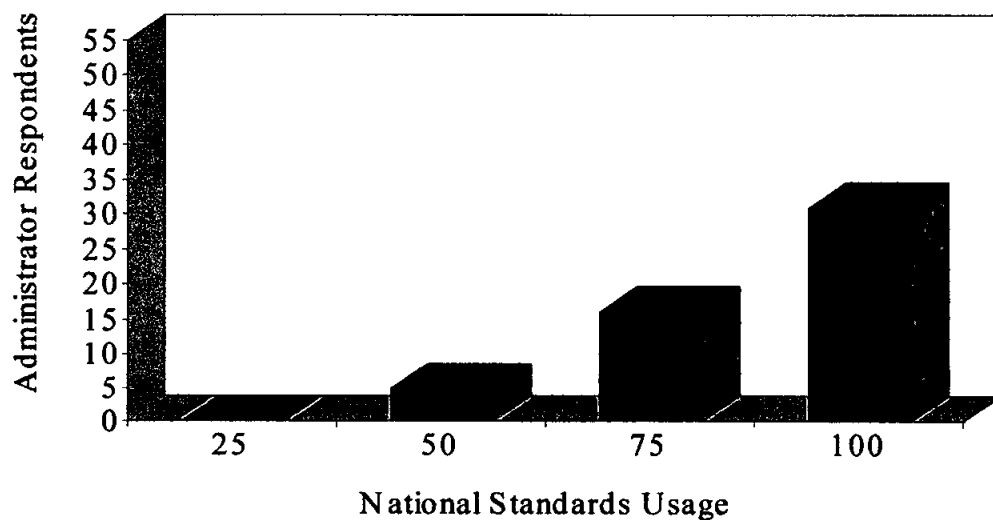
Table 23 Sequential Steps of
Developmental Goals



Survey Item 2: Our prekindergarten program addresses health, nutrition and safety issues concerning our students.

These issues were addressed by 31 of the administrators. Sixteen administrators attended to the health, nutrition and safety issues 75 percent of the time. Fifty percent of the school week was spent addressing these issues by five administrators. The remaining three people expressed no concerns. (See Table 24).

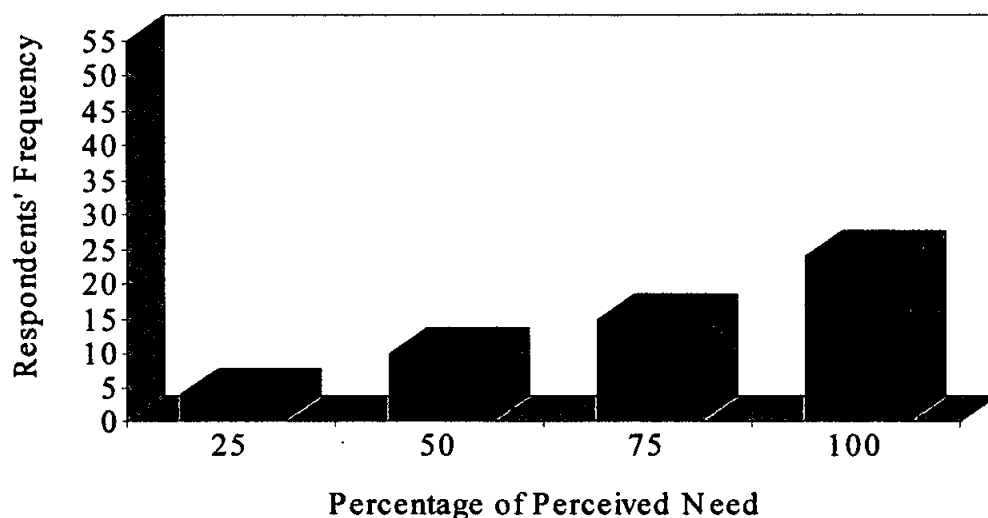
Table 24 Program Addresses
Health, Nutrition and Safety Issues



Survey Item 6: Our preschool program objectives range from identification/screening to diagnostic and direct intervention.

Administrators from 24 schools stated their schools performed the full range of objectives for all children. An additional 15 administrators said the range of services was completed 75 percent of the time. Ten administrators provided the full range of services 50 percent of the time. Six people excluded this range in their services or seldom provided both identification and screening. (See Table 25).

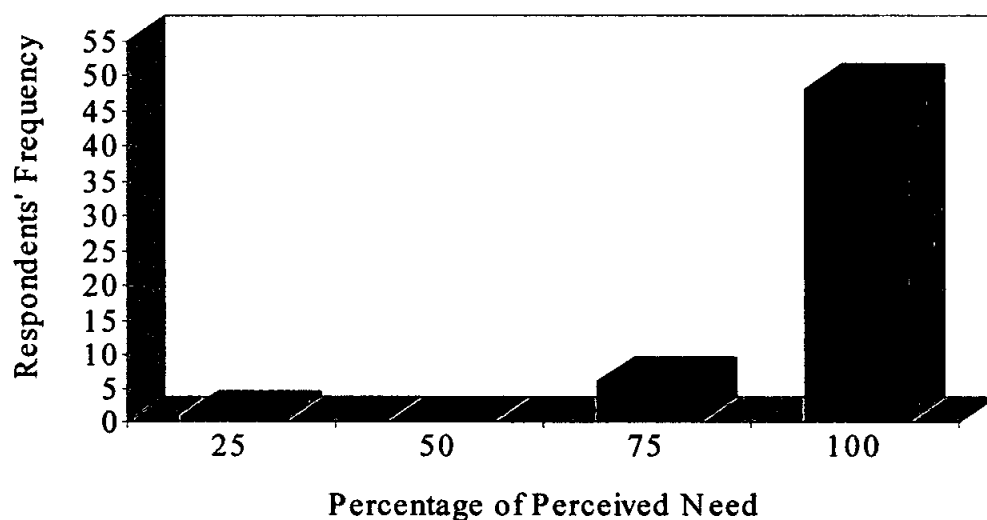
Table 25 Identification Through Screening Program Objectives



Survey Item 11: The prekindergarten classroom curriculum is integrated into all areas of child development: social, emotional, cognitive, and physical.

The great majority of preschool administrators recognized the importance of including these areas in their preschool program. Forty-eight administrators incorporated social, emotional, cognitive and physical aspects into their program all the time. Six educational leaders accessed all the areas 75 percent of the time. The remaining administrator viewed this national standard as important 25 percent of the time. (See Table 26).

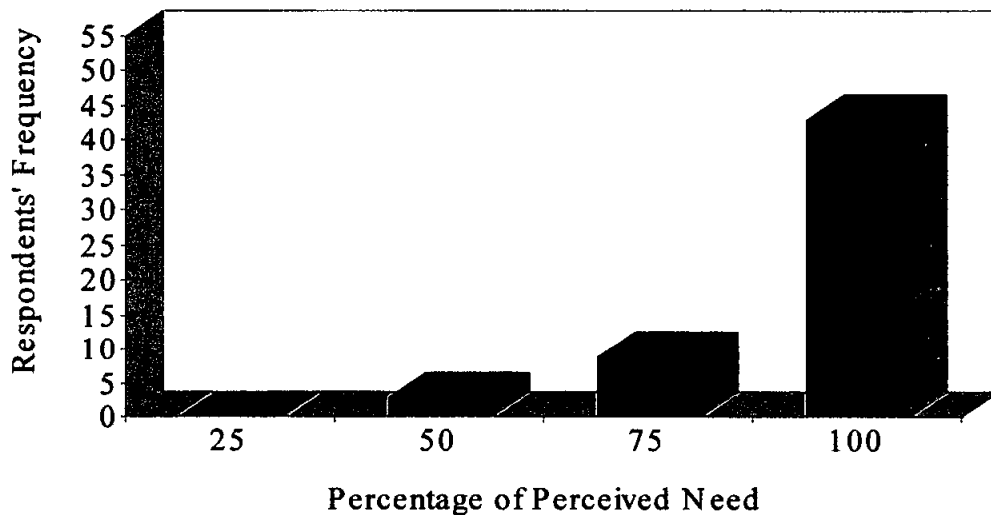
Table 26 Developmental Integration
Social, Emotional, Cognitive, Physical



Survey Item16: Our prekindergarten program offers active, hands-on, learning experiences that move from experimental to more symbolic as children develop.

Forty-three educational leaders always included these experiences in their programs. Nine administrators placed this objective into their programs 75 percent of the time. These experiences were used half of the time by three administrators. (See Table 27).

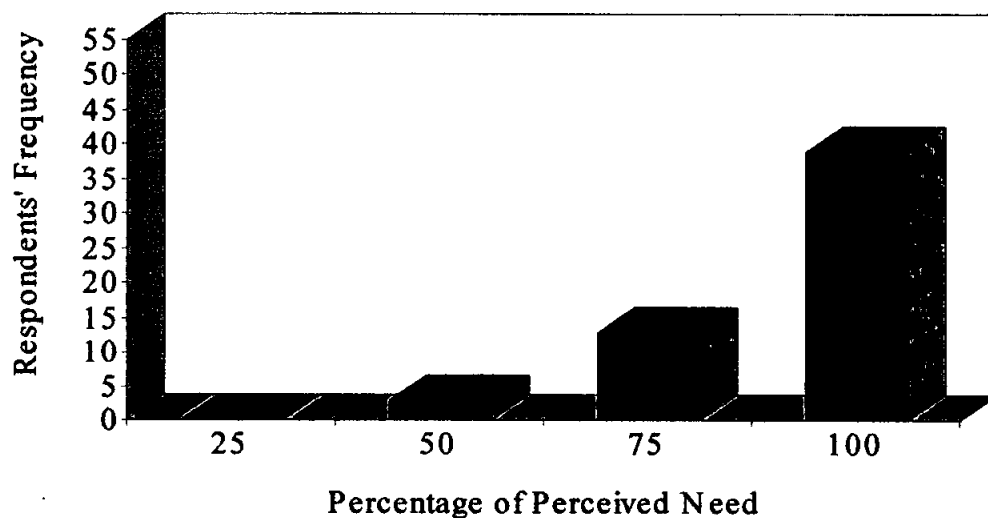
Table 27 Learning Experiences
Experimental Through Symbolic



Question 21: Small groups and individual attention characterize the prekindergarten environment.

This national standard is followed 100 percent of the time by 39 administrators. Another 13 educational leaders incorporate this characteristic 75 percent of their time. Three administrators utilize small groups and individual attention 50 percent of the time. (See Table 28).

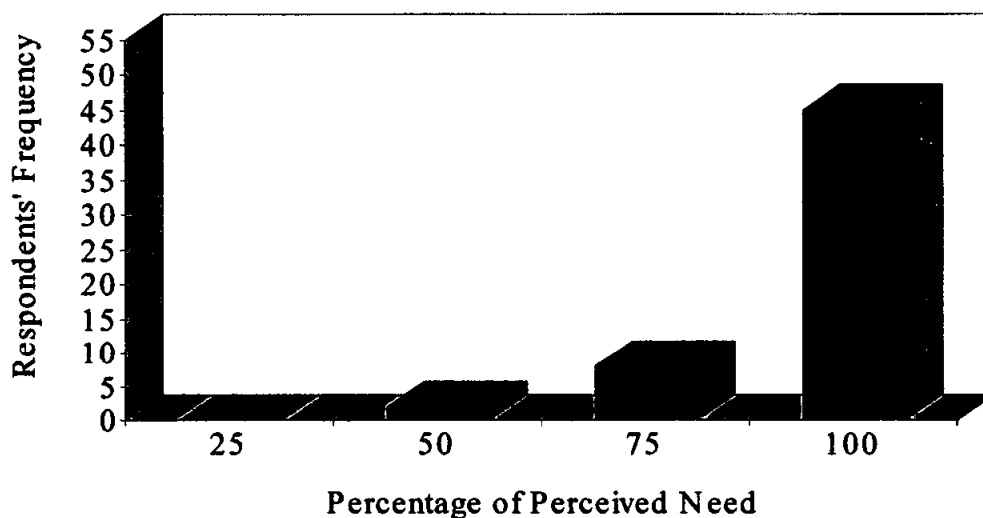
Table 28 Preschool Environment
Small Groups and Individual Attention



Survey Item 36: Time is provided in the prekindergarten classroom(s) for play, in addition to more formal school activities, such as learning numbers.

Informal playtime was allowed in 45 of the programs. Eight administrators made time for informal play 75 percent, and the remaining two administrators incorporated informal play activities into their programs 50 percent of the time. One respondent stated all learning should be done through informal small centers. (See Table 29).

Table 29 Informal Play Time
In Addition to Formal Activities

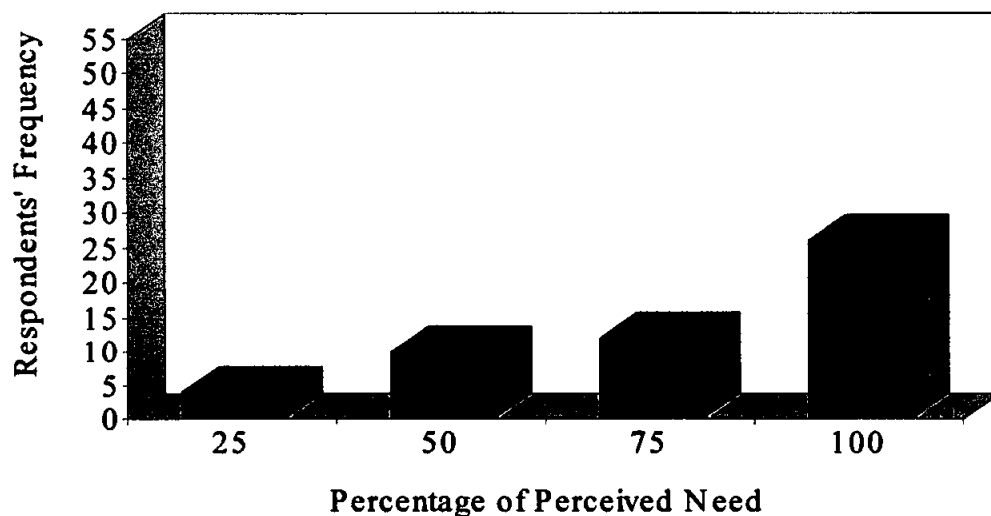


Hypothesis 2: Maximizing the parents' involvement will enhance each child's development.

Survey Item 12: School transition timelines serve to link the students and their families from prekindergarten to kindergarten.

Less than half of the preschool administrators had transition timelines that were consistently used. Twelve educational leaders used transition timelines 75 percent of the time; 10 administrators used them 50 percent of the time, and 4 administrators used the timelines 25 percent of the time. (See Table 30).

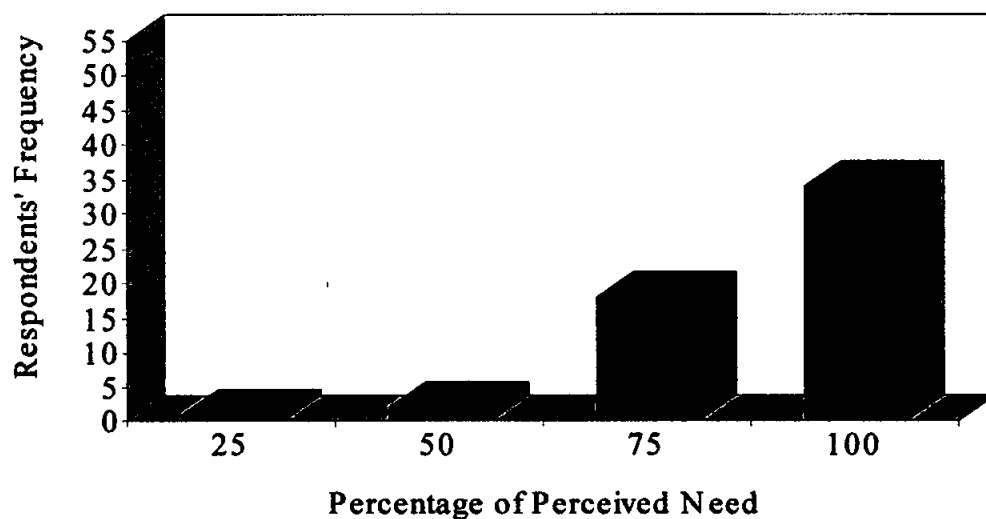
Table 30 Transition Timelines Link
Preschool Families to Schools



Survey Item 18: Parents of prekindergarten students are regularly informed of assessment results.

Assessment results are shared with parents on a regular basis by 34 educational leaders. Sixteen administrators shared the results with parents 75 percent of the time. Two administrators gave the results to parents half of the time; and one person shared assessments with parents 25 percent of the time. (See Table 31).

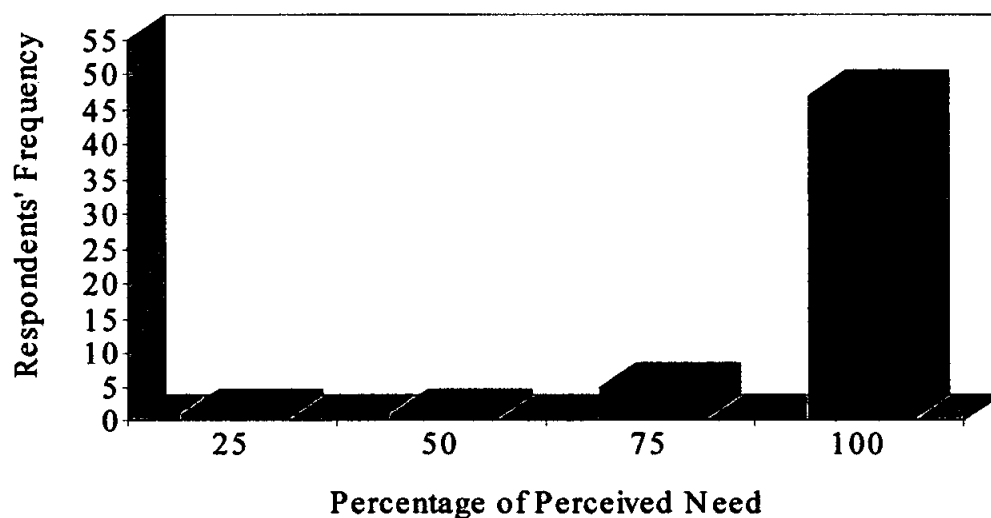
Table 31 Assessments Shared With
Parents On A Regular Basis



Survey Item 22: Children's positive and negative experiences affect their later lives.

Forty-eight administrators believed that what happens to children early in life will affect them as they grow older. Five administrators felt that young children's early experiences influenced them later in life, and were a consideration included in planning 75 percent of the time. One administrator thought the long-range theory should be applied 50 percent of the time, and one other person planned for this element 25 percent of the time. One respondent wrote that this was recognized. (See Table 32).

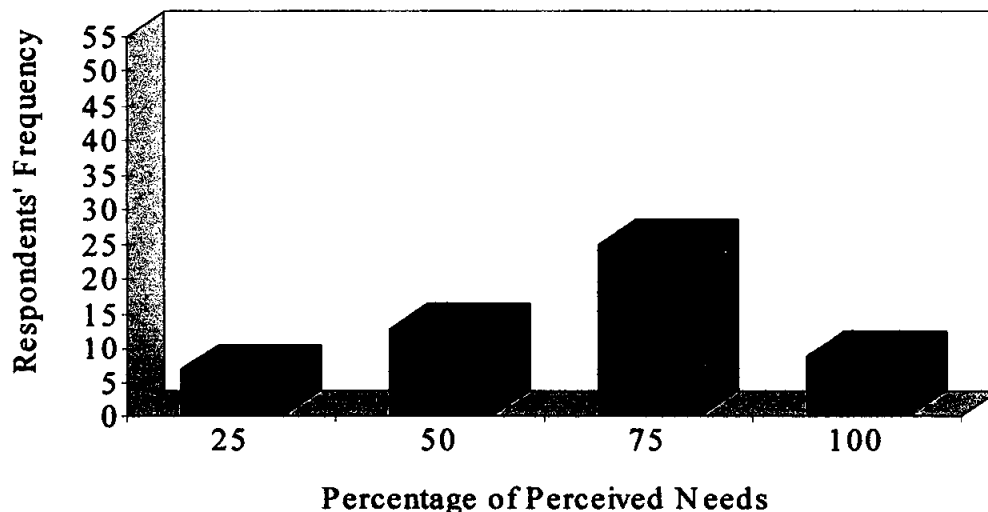
Table 32 Long-Term Effects
Of Early Childhood Experiences



Survey Item 23: The needs of prekindergarten families are considered and efforts are made to meet needs, both by the school and community services.

Efforts were made by schools and communities to consider the needs of the whole family by 24 respondents. Nineteen more respondents stated that needs were part of their decision making process 75 percent of the time. The families' were considered by nine schools and communities 50 percent of the time, and 25 percent by three survey recipients. One respondent said that their Head Start Program addressed the families' needs. (See Table 33).

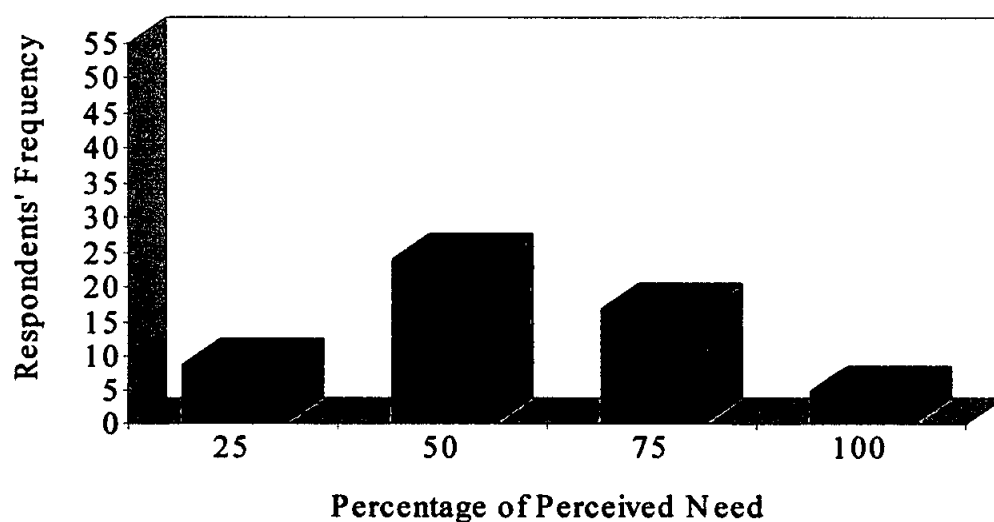
**Table 33 Consideration of
Prekindergarten Families' Needs**



Survey Item 28: The majority of prekindergarten students' families are involved in their children's schooling in one or more ways, such as direct involvement of school learning.

The amount of time administrators involve families in student learning varies greatly. Twenty-four administrators said family involvement was incorporated 50 percent of the time. Family involvement in schooling was incorporated 75 percent of the time by 17 school leaders. Nine administrators involved the family in school activities 25 percent of the time and five leaders invited parents to be involved in the total school program. (See Table 34).

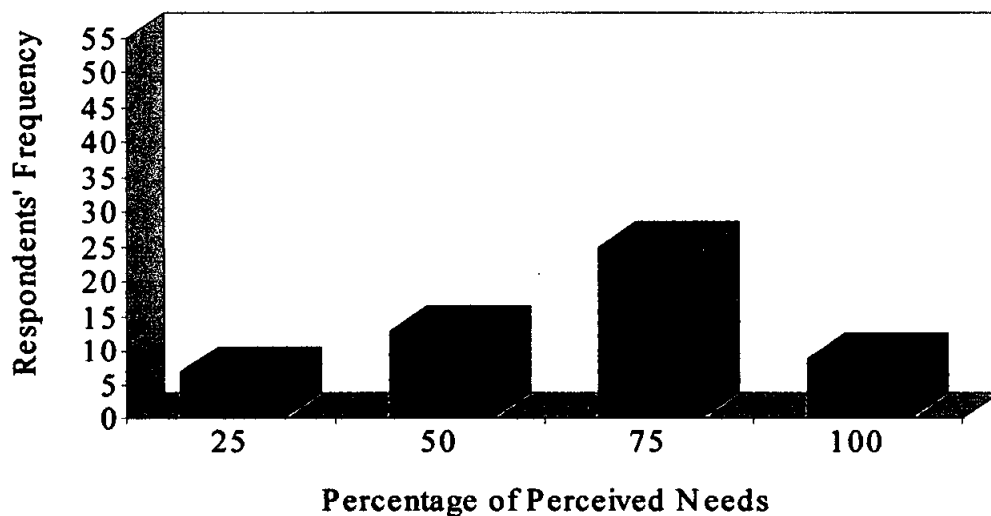
Table 34 Preschooler Families'
Involvement in Schools



Survey Item 33: Parent input is utilized in developing individual prekindergarten goals.

Parent input was accepted in 75 percent of the cases by 25 administrators. Thirteen additional leaders used parent input half of the time and nine educational leaders preferred to include parents in decision making. Administrators from 8 settings seldom or never incorporated input from the parents. (See Table 35).

Table 35 Parental Input in Individual Preschooler's Goals

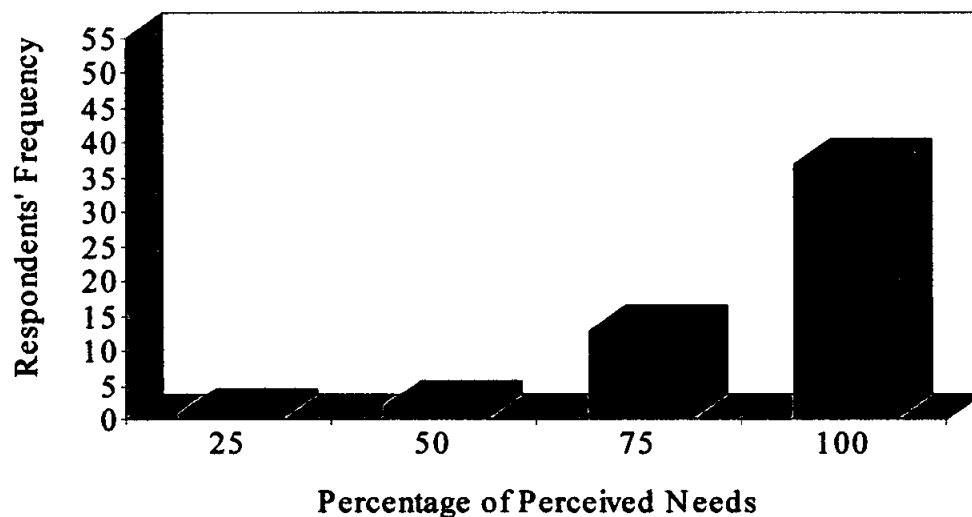


Hypothesis 3: Prekindergarten teachers followed research to help them understand the principles of developmentally appropriate activities for prekindergarten students.

Question 13: Prekindergarten teachers are encouraged to participate in professional organizations oriented toward young children.

Thirty-seven administrators stated that their teachers stayed current concerning educational research. Thirteen more leaders said the teachers were involved in early childhood professional activities 75 percent of the time. Two administrators stated their teachers participated half of the time and three administrators said their teachers were involved in professional organizations 25 percent or less of the time. (See Table 36).

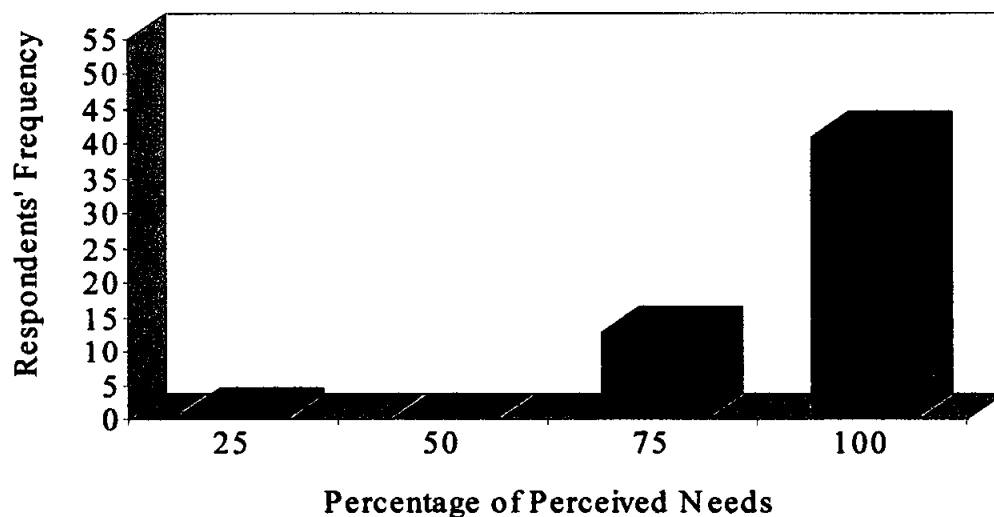
Table 36 Teachers Implement Educational Research



Question 17: Preschool teachers generally recognize that young children contribute to their own development by constructing meaning from their daily experiences and observations in their environment.

Respondents representing 41 groups of teachers recognized children's contributions to their own development. Thirteen educational leaders said their teachers saw the contributions 75 percent of the time. One administrator stated teachers accepted children's personal contributions to development 25 percent of the time. (See Table 37).

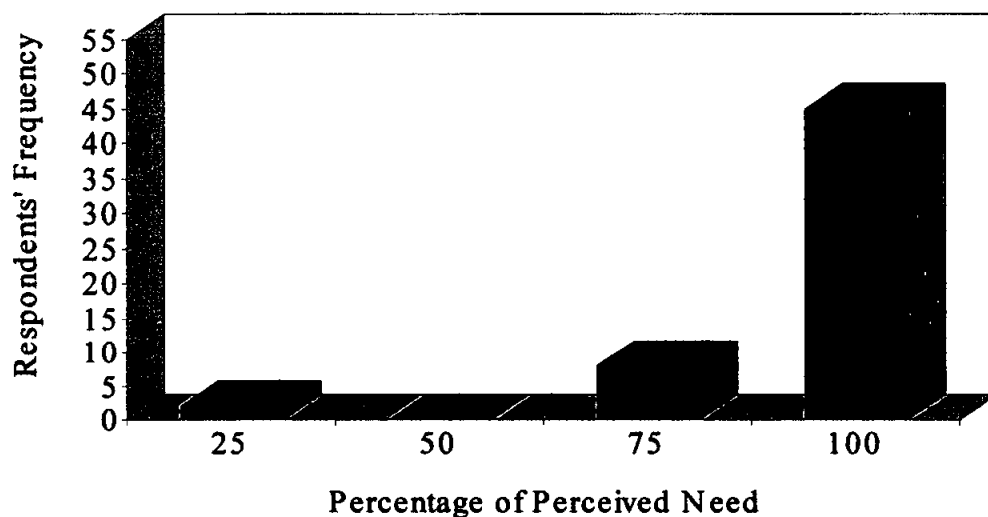
Table 37 Teachers Recognize Impact
Of Children's Daily Experiences



Question 25: Prekindergarten teachers recognize that play supports cognitive development in children and also assists in socioemotional and physical development.

Teachers used play to support cognitive and socioemotional development in children as witnessed by 45 administrators. Eight administrators said this factor was recognized 75 percent of the time and two administrators felt play supported children's development 25 percent of the time. (See Table 38).

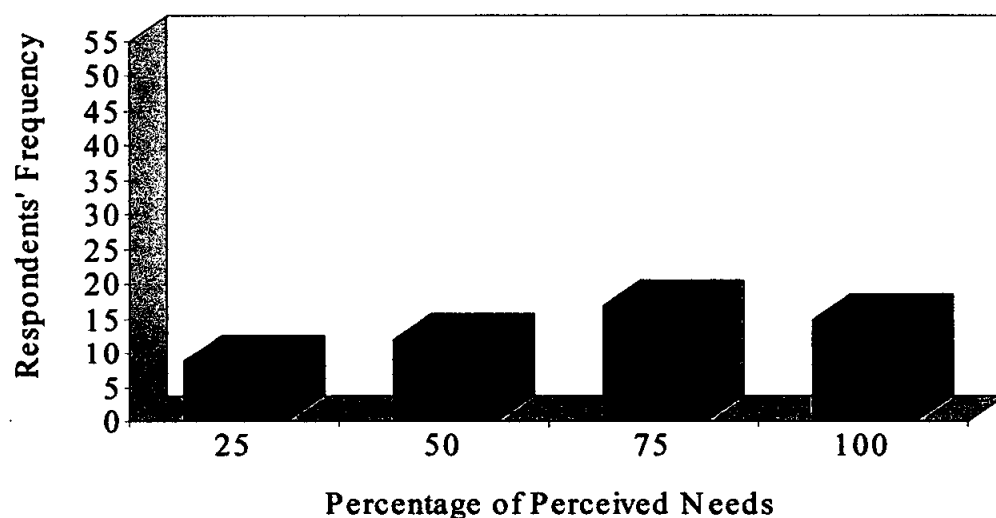
Table 38 Teacher Recognition That Play Supports Development



Question 29: Regularly scheduled staff development occurs on topics specific to working with the early childhood population.

There was a mixture of responses regarding regular early childhood staff development. Fifteen administrators placed emphasis on regularly scheduled staff development. Seventeen educational leaders acknowledged this national element approximately 75 percent of the time. Regularly scheduled staff development was instituted 50 percent of the time by 12 administrators and 25 percent or less of the time by 11 leaders. (See Table 39).

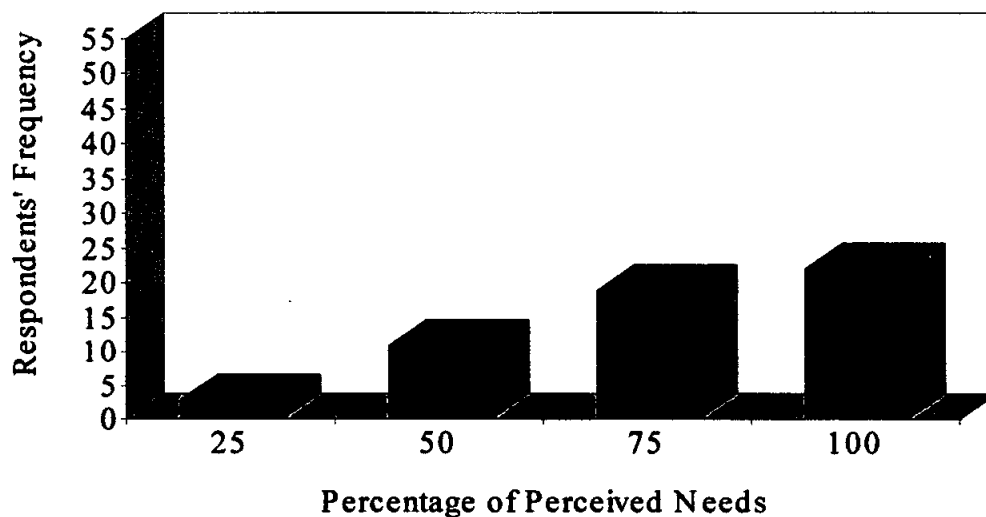
Table 39 Scheduled Early Childhood Staff Development



Question 30: Prekindergarten teachers encourage their students to review and reflect on their daily experiences by providing time in the classroom for this.

Twenty-two administrators implemented this element into their curriculum. Respondents from 19 settings included review and reflection time 75 percent and nine administrators included it half of the time. Four administrators allowed review and reflection time 25 percent or less. (See Table 40).

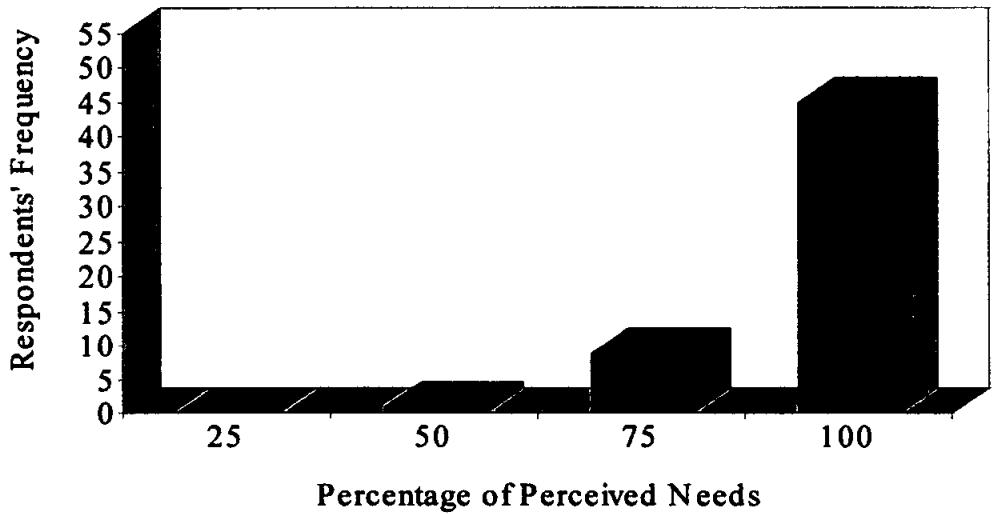
Table 40 Student Reflection Time
Encouraged By Teachers



Question 32: The teachers in the prekindergarten programs respect, value and accept children, and treat them with dignity at all times.

Forty-five administrators said this was true. Nine said this element was true 75 percent of the time and one person said teachers respected valued, accepted and used dignity with children 50 percent of the time. (See Table 41).

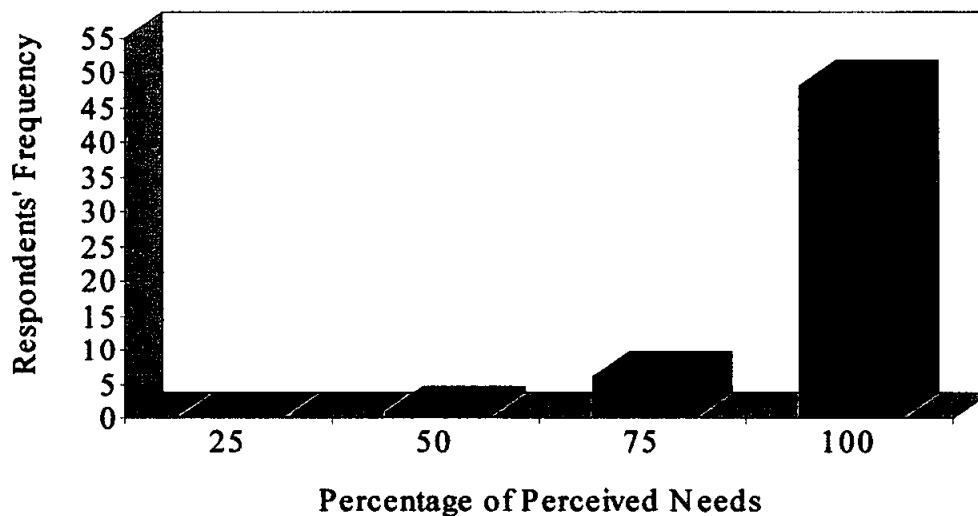
**Table 41 Respect, Value and Acceptance
Modeled By Teachers**



Question 37: Our teachers make it a priority to know each child well.

Clearly, most educational leaders shared this priority. Knowing children well was listed as an absolute by 48 administrators. Six administrators transmitted this element into 75 percent of their program and one administrator rated this element as justified in 50 percent of his program. (See Table 42).

Table 42 Teachers' Priority:
Know Each Child Well

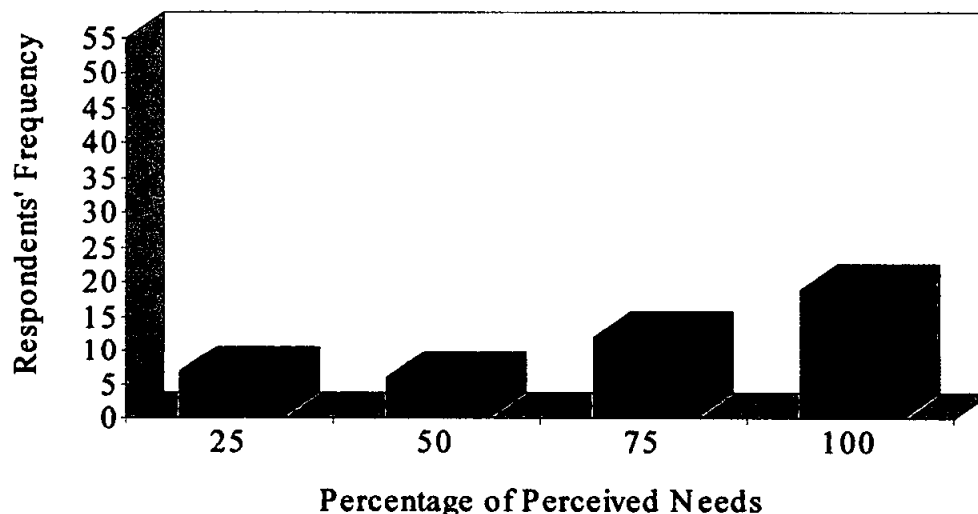


Hypothesis 4: Administrators draw from a broad scope of sources; national, state, staff, family and community input to develop their instructional leadership qualities.

Question 5: Campus administrators participate in professional organizations oriented towards young children (such as NAEYC, Texas Association of Programs for Young Children, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development).

Nineteen administrators always participated in these professional organizations. Twelve respondents participated 75 percent of the time. Six educational leaders participated 50 percent of the time. There were 17 administrators who participated in little, if any professional education organization. (See Table 43).

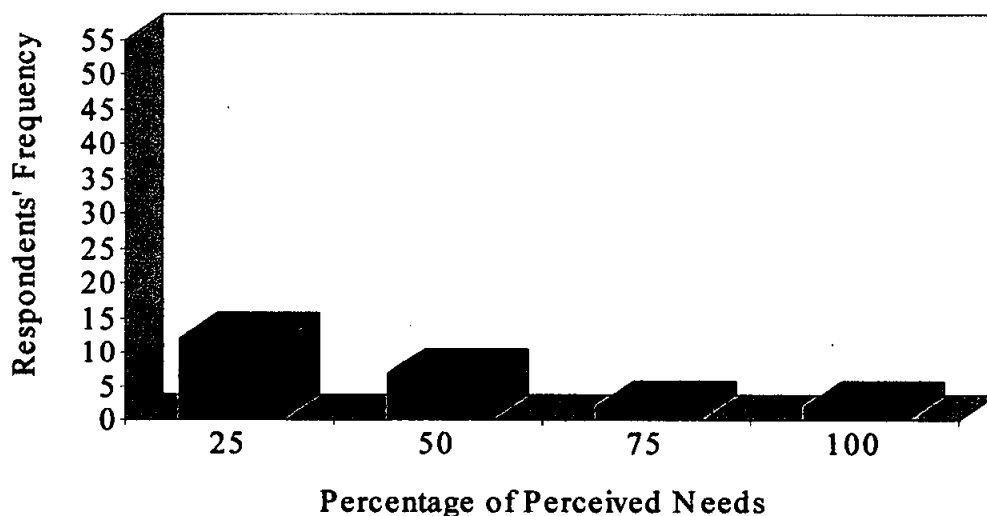
Table 43 Administrators' Sources:
Local Through National In Scope



Question 8: For administrators and personnel working with various ethnic groups, an ethnic sensitivity inventory is used as a self-assessment guide to engage the staff's realm of multicultural information.

Ethnic sensitivity inventories were not viewed as a need in many districts. Forty-two educational leaders used them 25 percent or less of the time. Sensitivity inventories were used 50 percent of the time by six administrators. Two administrators used the inventories 75 percent of the time and two other respondents used them with administrators and personnel consistently. Reasons for not using the ethnic sensitivity inventories were that sensitivity was already being practiced or that the school contained only one ethnic group. (See Table 44).

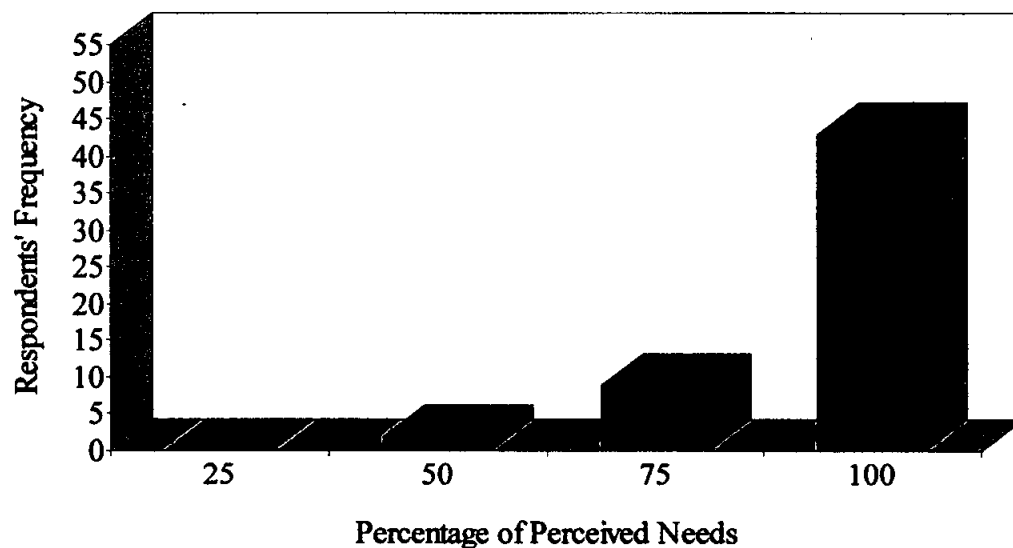
Table 44 Ethnic Sensitivity/
Self-Assessment Inventory



Survey Item 14: On my campus or co-op, prekindergarten curriculum and program assessments include input from prekindergarten teachers.

Respondents stated this was factual in 43 situations. Nine more administrators stated teacher input into the prekindergarten curriculum took place 75 percent of the time. Two educational leaders included the input of teachers half of the time. All but one administrator involved his teachers in preschool programs and assessments. (See Table 45).

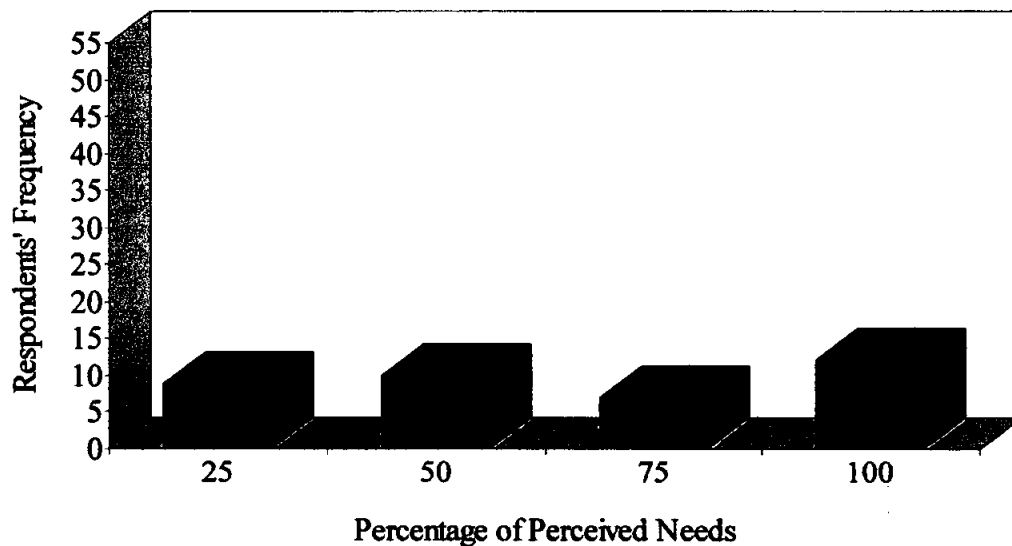
Table 45 Administrators Value And
Use Teachers' Input



Survey Item 34: I attend staff development specific to early childhood education at both the state and national levels, twice a year.

There was a wide disbursement of answers to this survey item. Twelve administrators said they attended both levels of staff development twice a year, while eleven stated they never attended early childhood state and national programs. Respondents from seven districts attended twice a year 75 percent of the time, but nine administrators only attended state and national conferences 25 percent of the time. Ten administrators went to state and national early childhood staff development half of the time. One respondent stated, not at national level, but I do attend state and area events/workshops. (See Table 46).

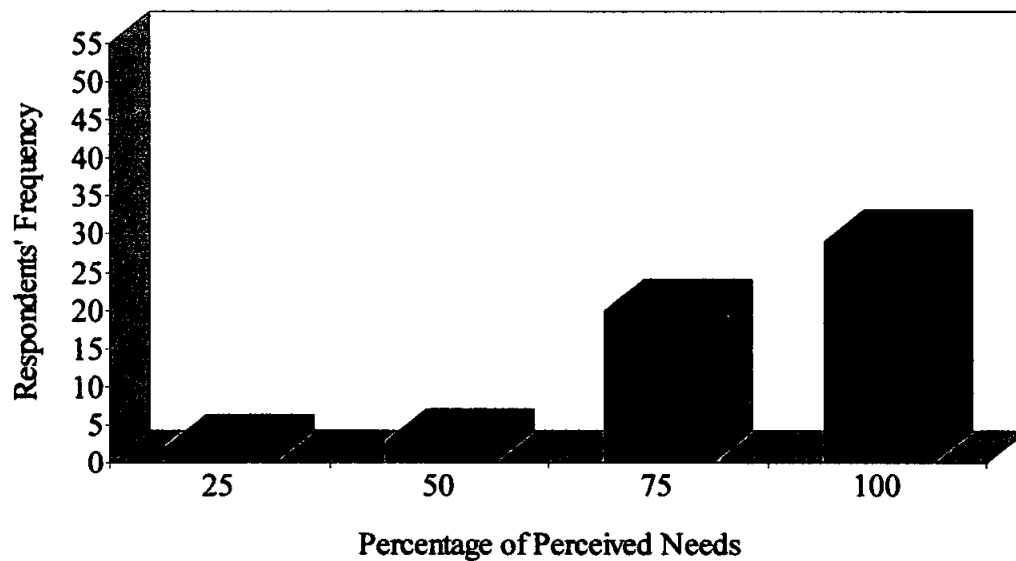
Table 46 Staff Development Attendance
Of Administrators A Priority



Survey Item 40: Campus administration provides curriculum leadership, supervision, and assistance, including regular inservice training.

Twenty-nine educational leaders provide these services to their faculty. In addition, twenty other administrators met these criteria 75 percent of the time. The services were provided half of the time by three administrators and 25 percent of the time or less by three people. (See Table 47).

Table 47 Adminsitratators Provide
Leadership, Supervision and Assistance

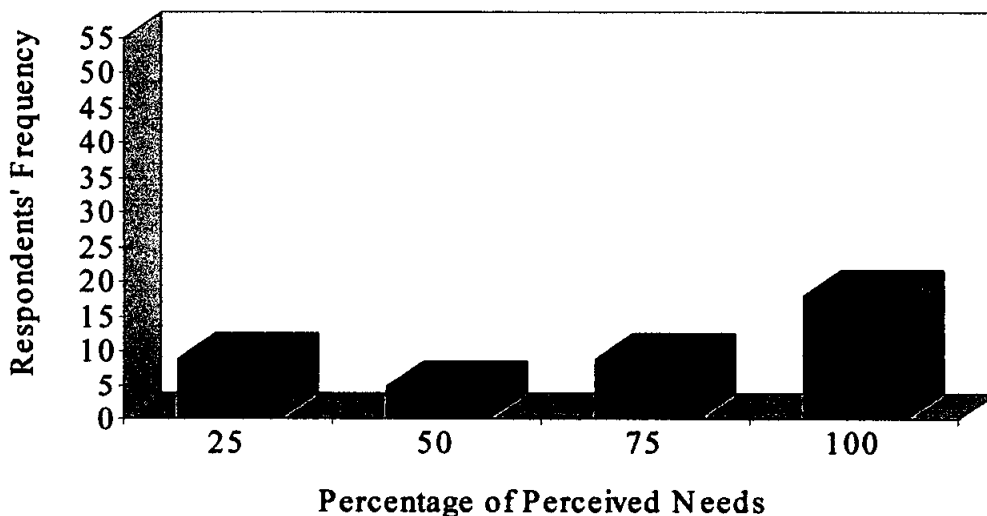


Hypothesis 5: Special populations, such as special education, diverse cultures and economically disadvantaged, are recognized in prekindergarten programs.

Survey Item 3: Bilingual teachers/school personnel are available to assist Hispanic populations/students of migrant farmers.

There was a variance in the answers, due in part to the reasons explained in the respondents' notes about the survey item. Eighteen administrators had bilingual staff to assist the Hispanic and/or migrant farm children, while 14 leaders had none. Nine administrators had the necessary personnel available 75 percent of the time, but another nine administrators had the needed assistance 25 percent of the time. Bilingual personnel were present half of the time for the remaining five administrators. Respondents from five settings stated there were no bilingual personnel because the need was not present. (See Table 48).

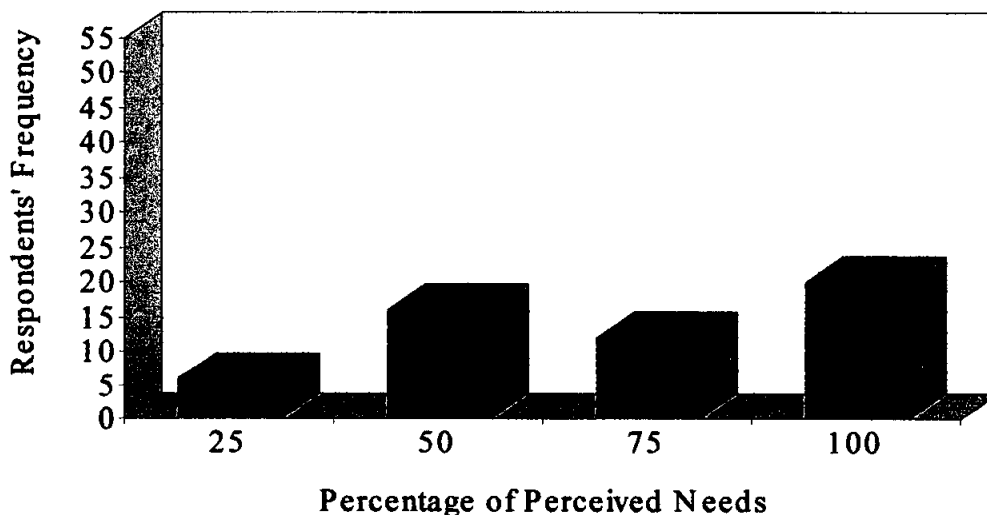
Table 48 Bilingual Personnel Available
To Assist Hispanic Populations



Survey Item 7: We are working towards the full inclusion of children with disabilities in the regular prekindergarten classroom.

Administrators from 20 prekindergarten programs had this element as their goal, and 12 other administrators said this is true 75 percent of the time. Inclusion is the goal for 16 administrators in 50 percent of their program. Full inclusion is not an issue for seven administrators. One respondent said full inclusion could not be a goal because he had no disabled preschool students. (See Table 49).

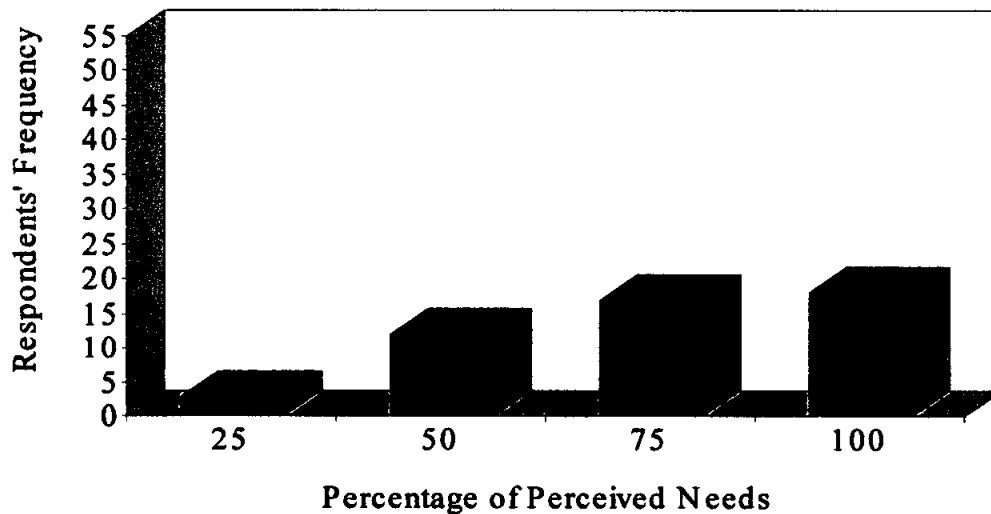
Table 49 Full Inclusion Of All
Children With Disabilities



Survey Item 19: Assessments including individual education plans address not only what the children can do independently, but also list what they can do with assistance from other children or adults.

Administrators used both types of assessments in 18 settings. Another 17 administrator use both 75 percent of the time. Independent and dependent assessments were used half of the time by 12 leaders, and eight people seldom or never use both assessments. One administrator mentioned their Head Start evaluation form is written both ways. (See Table 50).

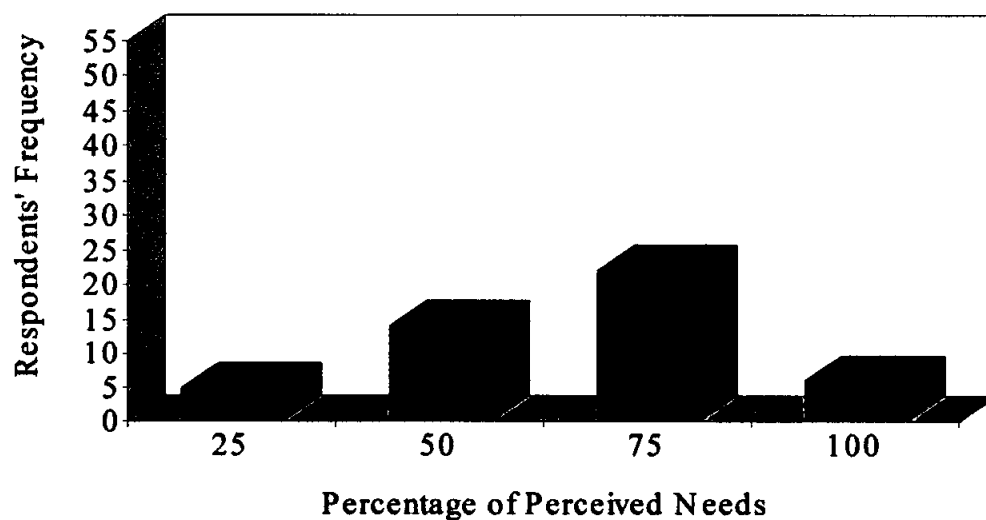
**Table 50 Individual Plans Address
Indepandant and Assisted Achievements**



Survey Item 24: Longitudinal studies of our preschoolers show increased success rates in the regular classroom and also less need for special education and bilingual programs in elementary and secondary years.

Twenty-two educational leaders saw this longitudinal effect in children 75 percent of the time and 14 administrators witnessed the effect half of the time. Six administrators expected the effect, however 13 administrators said they seldom or never saw the effect, but this was highly possible to lack of longitudinal tracking by the districts and schools. (See Table 51).

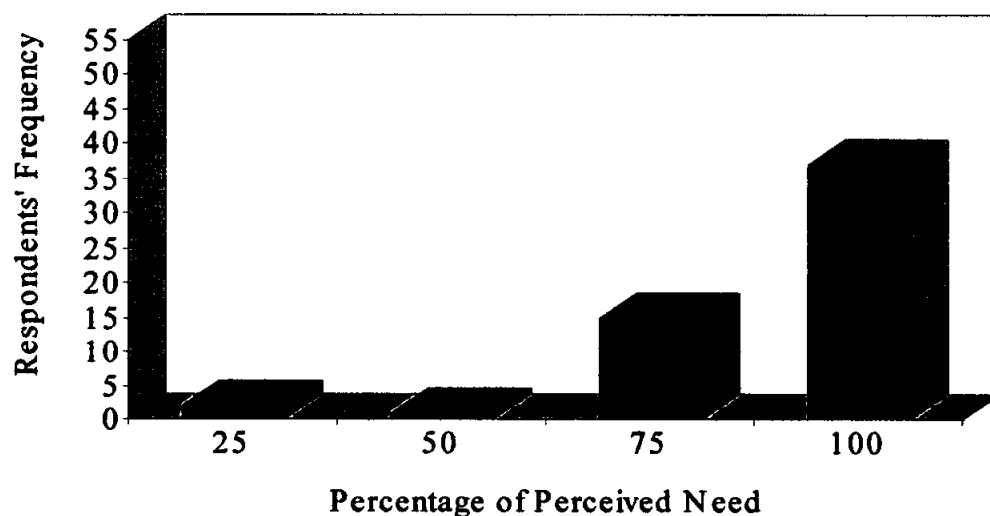
**Table 51 Preschool Longitudinal Studies
Demonstrate Increased Success Rates**



Survey Item 26: Exceptions and individual variations with children's learning styles and development are expected, valued and addressed in the prekindergarten classroom.

Educational leaders valued and addressed learning variations in 37 settings. Another 15 administrators believed the variations were important 75 percent of the time. Three administrators did not find learning variations significant. (See Table 52).

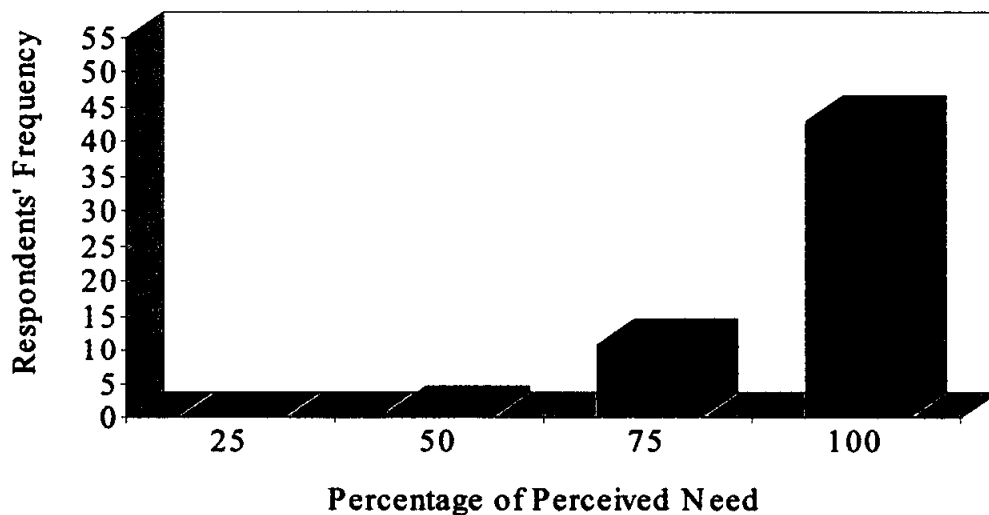
Table 52 Individual Learning Styles
Are Valued and Addressed



Survey Item 27: Prekindergarten teachers maintain high learning expectations for all children, regardless of their socioeconomic status or background.

Three-fourths of the respondents stated their teachers maintain high learning expectations for all children. Eleven administrators said this was true 75 percent of the time. One survey recipient said maintaining high expectations for all children was managed half of the time. (See Table 53).

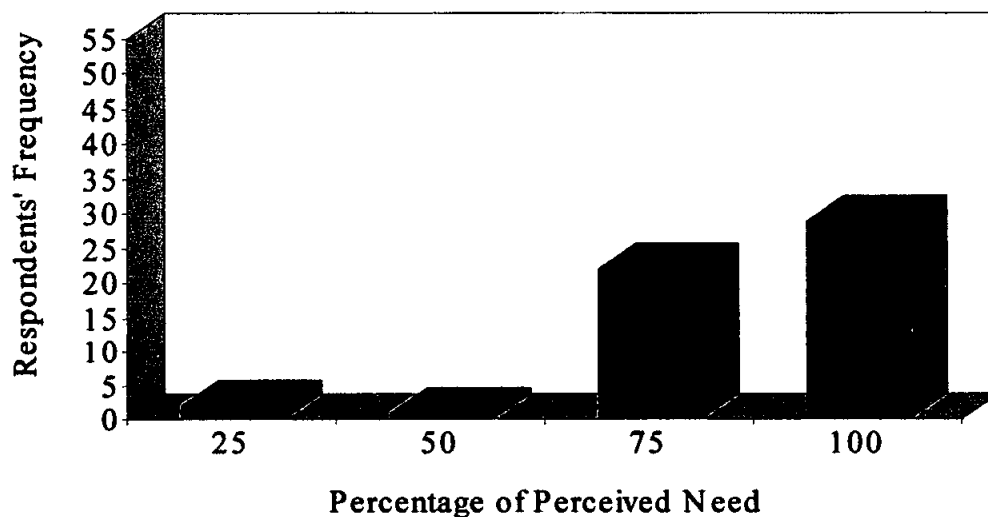
Table 53 High Expectations for All Maintained Regardless of Background



Survey Item 31: Teachers recognize social and cultural influences in children's learning and accept varied ways for children to express achievements.

This item merited a very strong response. Twenty-nine administrators said teachers recognize social and cultural influences on learning, and 22 other leaders said it was recognized 75 percent of the time. Of the remaining four administrators, one was in agreement 50 percent of the time, and the other three administrators seldom or did not recognize these variances in learning. (See Table 54).

Table 54 Social and Cultural Influences
Provide Variety In Student Achievement

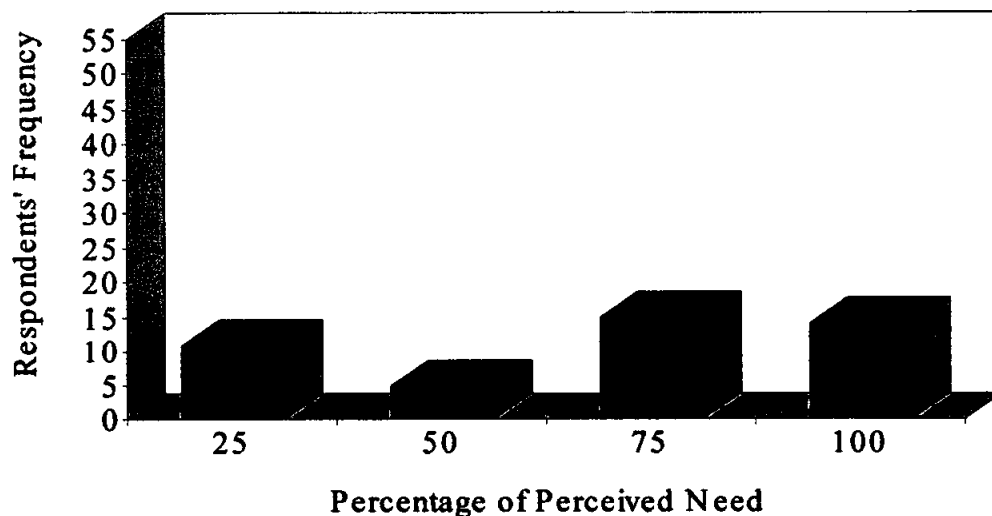


Hypothesis 6: The local community is actively involved in supporting the prekindergarten program and provides services to young children and their families.

Survey Item 4: There is community based planning and state programs to ensure that children who are disadvantaged receive assistance before the preschool years.

There was a wide distribution in answers. These programs were available for 14 of the educational leaders and 75 percent of the time for 15 other administrators. Five stated this was true half of the time, but 21 respondents said the assistance was unavailable frequently or there was no planning or programs. The three administrators' comments ranged from Head Start covering this issue to an administrator stating this is a serious need in my community. (See Table 55).

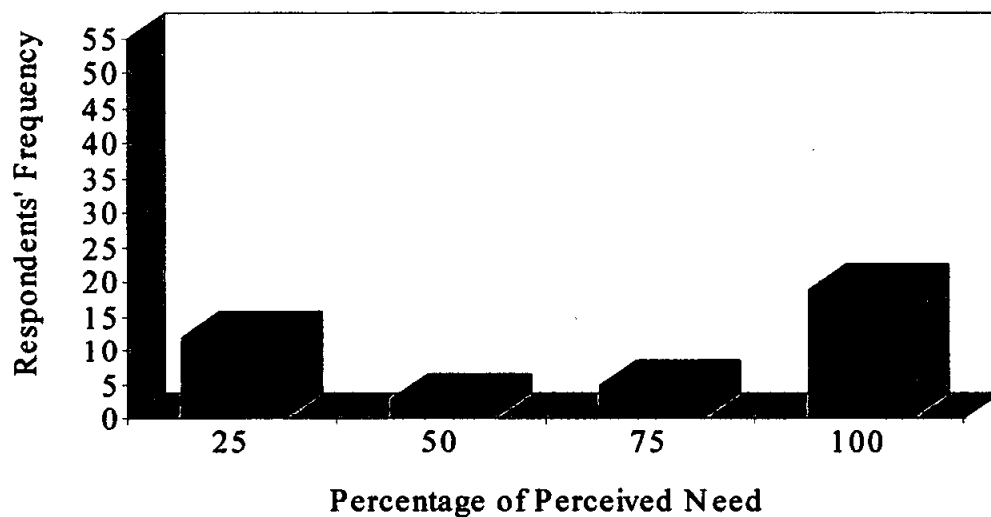
**Table 55 Community-Based Planning
Provides Preschool Family Services**



Survey Item 9: English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) programs are available in the local community for our non-English speaking families.

Administrators said the ESL programs were a part of their 19 communities all of the time. Twenty-eight administrators stated that there were no ESL community programs or that the services were not adequate. Three educational leaders stated that community ESL assistance occurred 75 percent of the time and three others said for 50 percent of the time. Five administrators commented there was no need for ESL programs in the communities and one person said all services were provided strictly through the schools. (See Table 56).

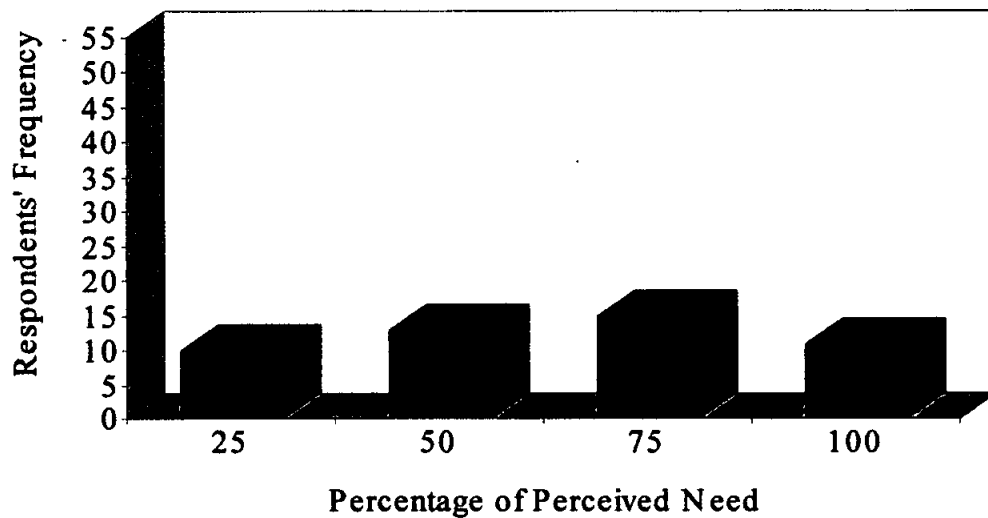
Table 56 Community ESL Programs
Are Available



Survey Item 35: Our community support involves in-school programs, as well as assisting with family needs outside the school setting.

Administrators from 15 schools agreed that in-school community support was present 75 percent of the time and 11 leaders said the support was there. Thirteen educational leaders stated they had in-school community support half of the time, but 16 said there was little if any support. (See Table 57).

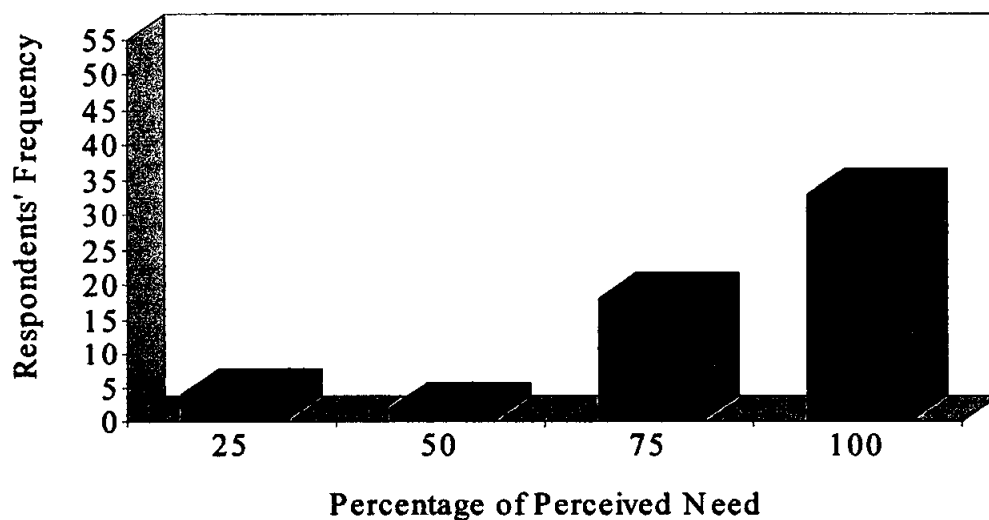
Table 57 Positive Community Support
In Schools



Survey Item 38: Our community positively supports our district's prekindergarten program.

Thirty-three administrators said their community positively supported the prekindergarten program and another 18 leaders said that this was true 75 percent of the time. Administrators from two settings said there was positive community support 50 percent and four said the support was evident 25 percent of the time. (See Table 58).

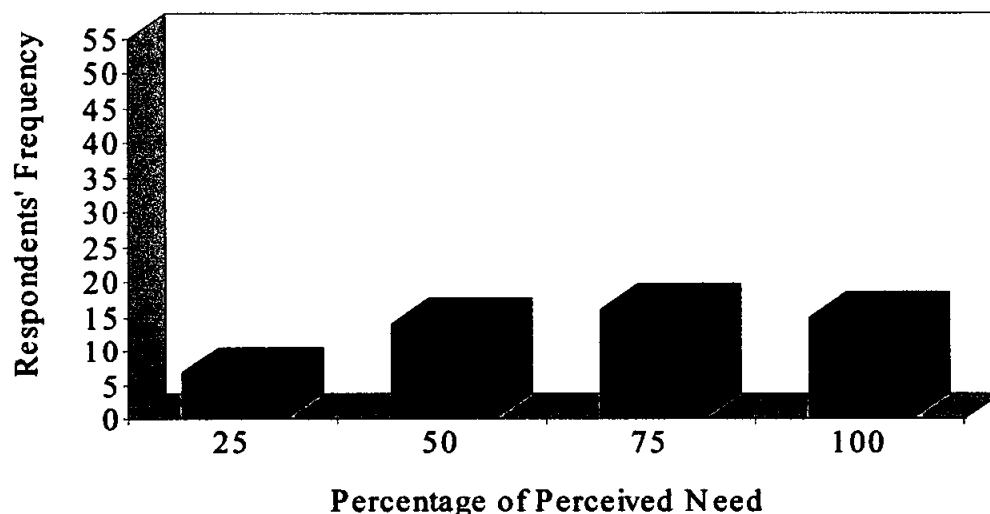
Table 58 Community Positively Supports
District Prekindergarten Program



Survey Item 39: We have a provider network with resources and referral agencies that offer assistance to preschoolers, their families and teachers.

The provider network was available for 15 administrators on a full-time basis, for 16 administrators 75 percent of the time and for fourteen administrators 50 percent of the time. Ten leaders reported that no consistent network was available in the community. Two networks mentioned by administrators were Head Start and one Texas Mentor School had a seven-year program with a day care center. (See Table 59).

**Table 59 Provider Networks Assist
Preschool Families and Teachers**

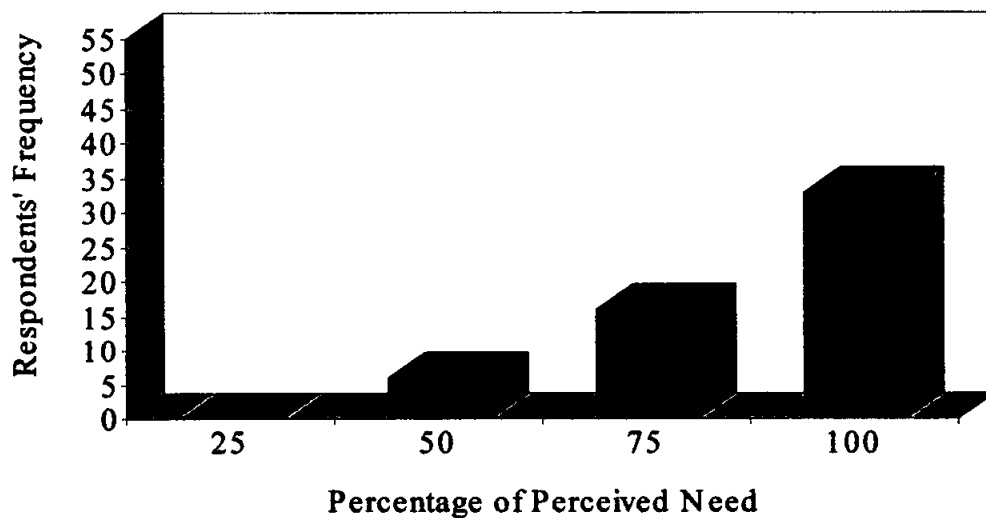


Other Survey Information: Prekindergarten Funding

Survey Item 10: The district provides sufficient funding to ensure the equipment, materials and supplies necessary for a high quality prekindergarten program.

Thirty-three administrators said district funding provided a high quality program. Administrators from 16 settings said this was true 75 percent of the time and six said district funding was sufficient 50 percent of the time. (See Table 60).

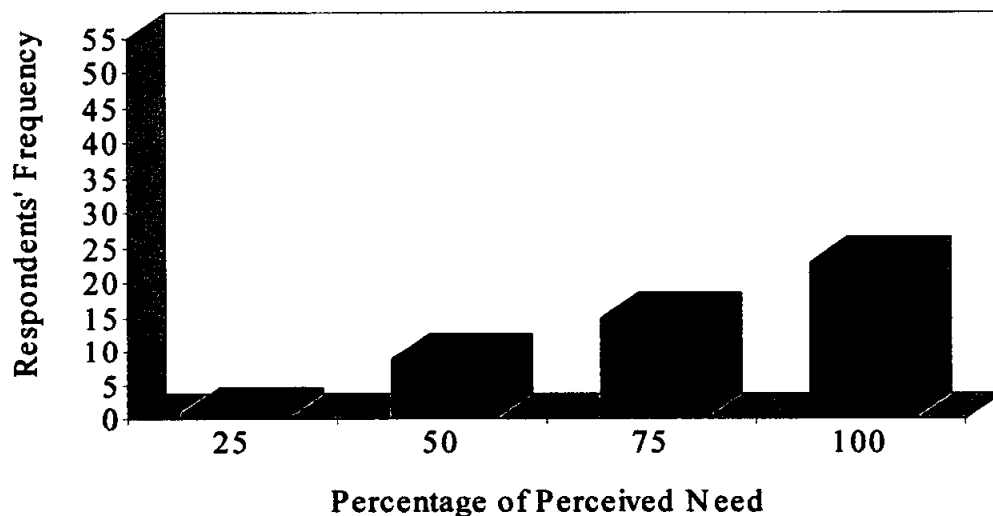
**Table 60 Local Funding Provides
Necessary Equipment And Supplies**



Survey Item 15: Our district funding is supplemented with state funding incentives.

Administrators responded that state funding incentives were an integral part of their 23 programs. Fifteen educational leaders said state supplements were in used 75 percent of the time and nine other administrators stated that the supplements were evident 50 percent of the time. Eight administrators said they seldom or never applied for state funding incentives . (See Table 61).

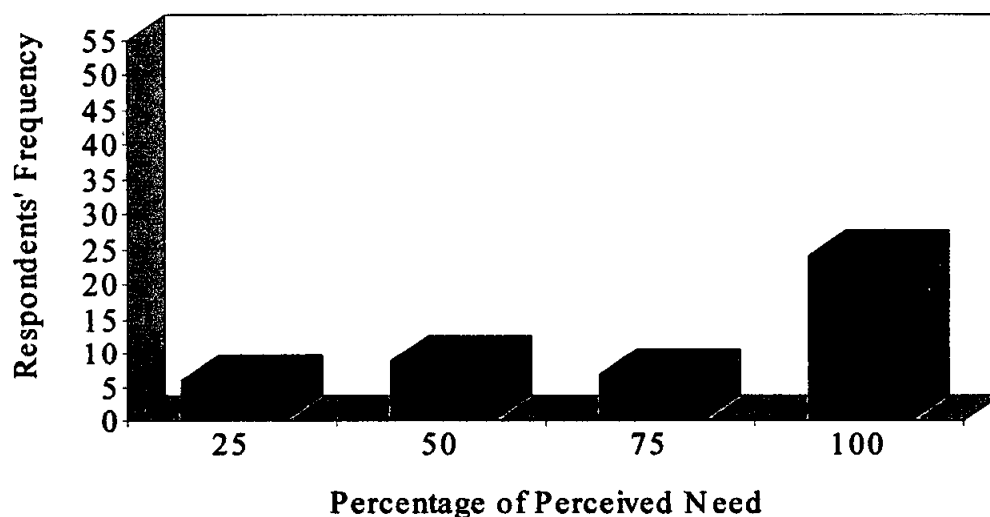
Table 61 State Funding Incentives
Supplement Local Funds



Survey Item 20: Federal grants are used to broaden our existing program.

Federal grants were accepted by 24 administrators. Seven administrators utilized educational grants about 75 percent of the time and nine administrators accepted national grants in 50 percent of their programs. Fifteen administrators did not use federal grants or rarely used them to broaden their existing programs. Two of the school districts' preschool services were provided totally from federal funds. Those programs were Head Start. (See Table 62).

Table 62 Federal Grants
Broaden Existing Programs



Summary of Survey Findings

The survey method used in this study produced both qualitative and quantitative preschool information from administrators serving school districts predominantly containing less than 1000 students. The source of information is 56 preschool administrators, who responded to the survey.

The following scale will be useful in understanding the terminology in each hypothesis' summary. (See Table 63).

Table 63

Numbers and Terms Associated with Administrators' Level of Emphasis

0	No emphasis is placed on the element by administrators.
1-25	Little emphasis is placed on the element by administrators.
26-49	Administrators place moderate emphasis on the element.
50-74	Deliberate or purposeful emphasis is placed on the element by administrators.
75+	<u>Great emphasis is placed on the element by administrators.</u>

Hypothesis 1: The prekindergarten curriculum will match standards set forth by the National Association for/the Education of Young Children. Specific goals and objectives of NAEYC curriculum include following normal sequential developmental steps, addressing the health, nutrition, and safety issues of children, services ranging from identification to screening, integrating social, emotional, cognitive, and physical child development, offering hands-on learning experiences, characterizing individual attention, and providing time for informal activities, such as play.

Administrators placed great emphasis on sequential developmental steps, health,

safety, and nutritional issues, hands-on learning, individual attention, and informal as well as formal learning activities 90 percent of the time. Less than half of all the administrators have a curriculum that provided for a full range of services from identification/screening to diagnostic and direct intervention.

Hypothesis 2: Each child's development will be enhanced by maximizing the parents' involvement. Ways to maximize parents' contributions in their children's education included a transition time line from prekindergarten to kindergarten and receiving children's assessments regularly. Administrators explained that with the correct stimulation in the early years, their children would have improved performances as they grew older. They let parents know that school personnel place emphasis on children's families, and their school-age children. Educational leaders also pointed out the ways parents can be involved in their children's schooling, and how parental input contributes to individual prekindergarten goals.

Ninty-six percent of administrators placed top priority in explaining to parents how early childhood experiences impact children later in their lives. Great emphasis was placed on parents receiving regular assessment results, and meeting needs of preschool families. The amount of emphasis placed on transition timelines, ways to involve parents in children's education, and parental input in prekindergarten goals, varied greatly from considerable time to little time spent. Parental involvement was a key factor in schools running a certified Head-Start program through the school district.

Hypothesis 3: Prekindergarten teachers participate in workshops and professional organizations to best serve the young children's needs. They practice methods such as:

using daily experiences in learning, supporting cognitive development through play, providing classroom time for student reflection, teaching respect and values, and making it their priority to know each child well.

More than 90 percent of administrators strongly believed their teachers should participate in professional organizations, and that using daily experiences to learn values, and knowing each child well, were important concepts. There were great variations in administrative answers concerning regularly scheduled staff development, and allowing time for student reflection in the classroom.

Hypothesis 4: Administrators draw from a broad scope of sources including national, state, staff, family, and community input to develop their instructional leadership qualities. Prekindergarten administrators were educational leaders on their campuses. They participated in professional organizations, and attended state and national early childhood conferences to remain current on educational issues, such as teacher input in curriculum, and multi-cultural information.

Eighty-nine percent of prekindergarten administrators viewed themselves as curriculum leaders and supervisors, who assisted in regular in-service training. Yet, only 57 percent placed great emphasis in participating in early childhood professional organizations, and 35 percent regularly attended state and national conferences. thirty-one percent of administrators showed no effort to attend state and national conferences at least twice a year. The importance of involving teachers in the development of curriculum was emphasized by 94 percent of administrators. Eighty percent of administrators place little or no emphasis on self-assessment related to ethnic sensitivity.

Hypothesis 5: Special populations, such as special education, diverse cultures, and economically disadvantaged, are recognized on the prekindergarten programs. East Texas administrators recognized the needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged students, students who were English-language deficient, from different cultures, had disabilities, and other individual needs. While some percentages were low, many exceptions can be contributed to the fact that some administrators stated their school had few or no students in subpopulations.

Accepting individual learning styles and differences was acknowledged by 98 percent of administrators. Sixty-four percent of administrators used assessments that credited students with what they can do, first independently, then with assistance. The concept of full inclusion for disabled students, met with a variety of administrator responses, including 13 percent placing little or no emphasis on full inclusion, 29 percent placed moderate emphasis, and 58 percent placed great emphasis on having children of differing abilities incorporated into the regular education classroom. Ninety-three percent of administrators recognized and adapted for cultural differences, while 49 percent placed great emphasis on meeting the various needs of ethnic minorities and/or migrant farmers. Administrators almost unanimously recognized the multiple needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged students. At that time, only 11 percent of administrators were conducting or had recently begun to conduct longitudinal studies of the effects of their preschool programs on children and the families.

Hypothesis 6: The local community is actively involved on supporting their

prekindergarten program and provides services to young children and their families. Some of the responses regarding community support of prekindergarten programs were similar, while others were in conflict. For example, 93 percent of administrators said the community greatly supports the prekindergarten program, but 29 percent of all respondents stated that support does not extend beyond the school setting. Schools which have a provider network of resources in the community, varied greatly. Fifty-six percent of administrators placed great emphasis on the network. One district had been named a Texas Mentor School because of its progressive moves to obtain and utilize the community. The results revealed that 28 percent of prekindergarten programs lacked or had little access to a coordinated effort with the community.

Community assistance for non-English speaking families varied from district to district. One reason for lack of ESL services was simply no need, all students were native English-speakers. However, this lack of need did not account for all 29 percent who offer no services, and another 22 percent who offer very little in services. Other districts stated the services provided for ESL students and families came 100 percent through the schools, which provided Head-Start programs. Approximately half of the districts placed great emphasis on community-based planning for disadvantaged children before the prekindergarten years. At the other end of the spectrum, 38 percent of districts provided little or no services for students before the preschool years. One administrator stated the need for earlier childhood assistance is critical in her community.

It was interesting to discover how districts funded their preschool programs, which districts could depend heavily on local support, and which ones used degrees of

supplements from state and federal grants. The district provided sufficient funding for prekindergarten programs in 89 percent of the cases, but 44 percent placed great emphasis on federal grants to broaden the existing program. State incentives were also utilized by 69 percent of administrators. Based on the answers and the various sizes and economic make-ups of the communities, it could be assumed that there are almost as many combinations of funding as there are districts.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Comparison of National Standards with Interview and Survey Data

Administrative priorities in preschool education are the defining factor in quality preschool programs. The elements documented in educational research point out that high quality programs have leadership, knowledgeable teachers, funding, personnel policies, positions in the school system, classroom sessions and regular home visits. Childcare and family support through school and community should also be built into the existing preschool system. The researcher wanted to discover to what extent were rural administrators currently applying national standards and practices in their programs. Little, if any research, except for funding purposes, were available in educational data.

The study was conducted with the assistance of preschool administrators living in the Education Service Center Regions of Seven and Eight in the state of Texas. The original list of administrators was obtained from the TEA's Internet Directory and was reviewed for accuracy by the preschool regional service directors.

Information from administrators was obtained using a dual system of interview and survey. The goal-free evaluation strategy was used in designing the interview and survey. The goal-free approach reduced the effects of bias in evaluation, because no local program mission statements or objectives were gathered before the interview questions

and survey items were written. The information for the interview and survey items came from educational literature and the majority of the program questions came from the NAEYC Guidelines. Specific areas addressed in the hypotheses, interview and survey documents were curriculum, student populations, parents, teachers, administrators, cultural diversity, staff development, community involvement and funding. The documents were tested for face validity by university professors and local administrators not involved in the study. The hypotheses were accepted under the basis of at least two-thirds of administrators following the national elements for two-thirds of the time. The interview data was used to accept or reject the survey responses.

Fifteen administrators were interviewed to gather in-depth information. The open-ended method of interviewing yielded information in addition to the survey format. Summarization and confirmation questions were asked to avoid misinterpretation. The interviews were tape recorded to obtain accurate records, to afford optimal inter-personal communication and to analyze the data efficiently. The respondents were told the interview information would be regarded with anonymity in documentation. The average time for each interview was between 20 to 75 minutes.

Surveys were mailed to all 112 administrators directly supervising public preschool programs. There was a 51 percent return rate. The survey method produced both qualitative and quantitative information concerning prekindergarten administrators and their programs. The questions were systematic and executed to ensure appropriate coverage and efficient data collection. The survey responses used a percentage scale that

allowed for exact interpretation. The data was analyzed, organized and divided into tabular forms, percentages and narratives relative to the information.

Findings of the Study

Six hypotheses were reviewed in this research. The concept was to ascertain if preschool children were provided the tools and opportunities to reach their potential. Were rural East Texas preschool administrators leading programs which would yield productive workers in the future as perceived by the NAEYC and other experts?

Hypothesis 1: The prekindergarten curriculum will match standards set forth by The National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Preschool administrators practice national standards in their programs. The interviews revealed that nine of the fifteen administrators used NAEYC elements/national standards as an integral part of their prekindergarten program. In districts where less emphasis was placed on national standards, less of the prekindergarten graduates tested ready for kindergarten.

The administrative survey results supported the interview data in demonstrating that 83 percent of administrators used the NAEYC standards, at least 75 percent or more of the time. Examples of the survey's NAEYC standards included in the local curriculum were following sequential developmental steps, individual attention for students and informal - play as well as formal learning activities. The findings demonstrated that Hypothesis 1 was accepted.

Hypothesis 2: Each child's development will be enhanced by maximizing the parents' involvement.

Parents' involvement in their children's education was important to most administrators. Eleven of the 15 prekindergarten administrators had parents directly involved in their students' classroom activities, where it was hoped the parents would model the teachers' appropriate interaction with the preschoolers. Eight of the 15 programs included special activities on campus for parents and preschoolers. The programs ranged from getting acquainted meetings to literacy programs. Parent participation was strongest on the campuses housing Head Start and/or Even Start programs.

The surveys supported the interview data in the levels of parental support and also stated differences among administrators' policies regarding the parents' roles in children's education. The surveys presented a strong effort made by prekindergarten administrators to inform the parents of children's assessment results, but two other statements gave conflicting views. One survey item discussed efforts made to meet the needs of prekindergarten families and disclosed a positive 79 percent administrative answer rate. However, another survey item, which advocated parental input into individual student goals, pointed out that parents' input into goals was used in just over half of the prekindergarten programs and that 11 percent of administrators did not use parental input in developing goals for individual children. Hypothesis 2 was accepted.

Hypothesis 3: Prekindergarten teachers participate in workshops and professional organizations, to serve the young children's needs.

One factor, which contributed to effective early childhood education programs, was staff trained in early childhood education and care. One survey item revealed that 90 percent of educational leaders encouraged their teachers to seek participation in young children's professional organizations. A second survey item, which discussed regularly scheduled early childhood staff development, had only a 58 percent frequently used response and 22 percent moderately used response. Seeking further explanation, the researcher spoke with teachers representing five school districts, in informal conversations. Those teachers reported that due to the small size of the districts, their administrators depended on the regional service centers or statewide programs to keep teachers informed of educational research.

The administrators' interviews supported the national belief that teachers were well prepared to teach preschoolers. Twelve of the fifteen administrators listed teacher commitment as a prekindergarten strength. An example of current educational research used by prekindergarten teachers was evident in the preschoolers' transitions to kindergarten. In several districts preschool teachers and kindergarten teachers met to discuss the assets and difficulties each child would bring into the kindergarten settings. Accommodations and much planning went into these sessions. Hypothesis 3 was accepted.

Hypothesis 4: Administrators draw from a broad scope of sources national, state, staff, family and community input to develop their instructional leadership qualities.

Effective early childhood programs have administrators with strong professional networking links. The interview responses to five questions, generated information relevant to this hypothesis. The responses provided the national influences NAEYC, governors' initiatives and federal specialists as having the greatest impact on instructional leadership. The state agency, Region VII, was a key factor in developing sound prekindergarten programs and helped educators remain current on educational issues. The answers showed a wide disbursement in parental input used by administrators. In two to four of the fifteen administrative interviews, Question responses also asserted the impact on-site specialists, community members, the superintendent and school board members had on instructional leaders.

The survey reported that while only 35 percent of administrators regularly attended two or more state or national conferences per year, 57 percent were actively involved in national early childhood professional organizations. The surveys also uncovered varying degrees of impact on administrative decisions, but 94 percent of the administrators viewed the teachers as greatly influencing their prekindergarten programs. Eighty-nine percent of administrators provided curriculum assistance, supervision and in-service training to their staff members. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was accepted.

Hypothesis 5: Special populations, such as special education, diverse cultures and the economically disadvantaged, are recognized in the prekindergarten programs.

Research demonstrated that all children lead better lives with quality education. All of the interviewed administrators served children who fell into one or more of the special populations' categories. The administrators followed state and federal guidelines to qualify students with developmental delays. The majority of the prekindergarten students served were economically disadvantaged, but few, if any of the students, were eligible for prekindergarten solely due to their diverse culture. Administrators stated that qualified bilingual prekindergarten teachers were difficult to find and keep, because larger districts could afford special financial recruitment packages. The administrators tried to supplement this need with bilingual aides, but continued their searches for qualified teachers.

The survey information supported the interviews and a few educational leaders stated that bilingual services were not needed, because the administrators did not have a bilingual population. The survey responses also supported the fact that the families' economic needs and/or students' developmental delays, were the main factors in children qualifying to attend prekindergarten programs. Cultural issues, while not a qualifying issue, were addressed in a positive manner in classrooms. Tracking preschoolers' school performance through longitudinal studies was an administrative concern in most prekindergarten programs, unless the federal program, Head Start, was the district's sole program. Hypothesis 5 received acceptance based on the elements demonstrated.

Hypothesis 6: The local community is actively involved in supporting the prekindergarten program and provides services to young children and their families.

There were variations in the administrative responses, which made connecting the responses to national standards awkward. When asked to view the greatest positive influence in prekindergarten programs, four administrators stated that influence was the community. Two other administrators said one major change they would like to see in prekindergarten programs was increased community involvement. The survey supported this split in each district's level of community participation. There was only a 14 percent difference between communities that had no or little planning for prekindergarten and families, compared to communities that placed great emphasis on prekindergarten planning. Fifty-six percent of administrators stated that school personnel had developed a provider network and referral process to increase prekindergarten and family-community involvement. Another 25 percent of school districts had a moderately successful system. The communities providing English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) services were almost equivalent to those without ESL programs. The number without ESL programs was askew, due to no ESL population in some areas. Hypothesis 6, community involvement in preschool education, was rejected.

Conclusions

Research has established that human learning and development are most rapid in the preschool years. The National Association for the Education of Young Children/national standards assist in implementing developmentally appropriate practices

and evaluating the needs and success of the whole child. When these standards are the model of local prekindergarten curricula, there are well-documented short term and longitudinal effects on children's achievement and socialization. With emphasis placed on total family involvement, the family also reaps benefits produced by the educationally stimulating environment.

Administrators' ultimate goal is to provide the tools necessary for their students to be successful in every area of their lives. How to obtain that success was defined differently by administrators. Districts with prekindergarten programs actively using the national standards, clearly showed more students who could achieve kindergarten readiness skills; they also had more parents directly involved in the schools, compared to districts that did not build their program with national standards.

The prekindergarten curriculum will match standards set forth by The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Hypothesis 1 was accepted. Teaching preschool children in a method based upon normal developmental progress is a common practice throughout East Texas Schools. An apparent need in district preschool programs is a full range of services, beginning with screening through direct intervention.

Each child's development will be enhanced by maximizing parents' involvement, Hypothesis 2, was accepted with reservations. There are some exemplary East Texas prekindergartens as evidenced by the prestigious awards the schools have earned. Many preschool graduates have surpassed kindergarten readiness skills. But, there are programs where large proportions of the preschool populations do not enter kindergarten with the necessary skills. The interviews demonstrated that these are the schools where parental

involvement beyond the meet-the-teacher night and field days had not occurred. The most progressive programs the researcher visited were sites that included parent centers and conducted parent education classes.

Prekindergarten teachers participated in workshops and professional organizations to serve young children: Hypothesis 3 was accepted. There was a strong network of teacher support beyond the rural school district. The education service centers had a multitude of training opportunities, plus many teachers attended state conferences and were members of national early childhood organizations.

Administrators draw from a broad scope of sources national, state, staff, family and community input to develop their instructional leadership qualities, Hypothesis 4 was accepted. For early childhood input, the vast majority of educational leaders relied on their national organizations to keep them informed on current research and practices. Updates concerning school law were provided through TEA and graduate university materials. The education service centers provided individualized assistance to administrators and training sessions to their teachers. The family and community had strong influences on some preschool programs and their needs. However, a few administrators remain who adhere to the concept that educators are the professionals and parents need to sit back and not affect the practices at school.

Special populations, such as special education, diverse cultures and economically disadvantaged are recognized in prekindergarten programs, Hypothesis 5, was accepted. Where there were special populations present, educators were providing programs appropriate to the preschoolers' backgrounds. It became apparent from the interviews, that

a connection existed between some cultures and the students' need for prekindergarten services. For example, migrant farm children correlate with a lack of prekindergarten readiness skills. Major concerns from administrators included more assistance/training for economically challenged families, more bilingual school personnel, a full range of services and facilities for children younger than age four and their parents and longitudinal studies tracking preschoolers through post-graduation.

The local community is actively involved in supporting the prekindergarten program and provides services to young children and their families, Hypothesis 6, was rejected. With just over half of the administrators placing importance on community support, it would appear that there are still many resources available to enrich preschool programs. A major reason forestalling this probable asset, was the legalities involved in bringing non-professionals or non-educators into the preschool setting on a regular basis. In districts struggling to find adequate professional personnel, a lack of time and a volunteer screening process contributed to the lack of community support. In districts where there was little, if any community support, little, if any recruitment took place.

Recommendations

Through careful review of research and current practices, this researcher would recommend that in-depth studies be conducted in rural areas. However, a more immediate need is to directly educate and involve the prekindergarten administrators in implementing the national goals and objectives. The natural source for the administrators' education would be the prekindergarten directors of the state-regional education service centers, who could also advise and explain federal grant incentives to assist in developing

quality prekindergarten programs. The result of these needs being met should be an overall increase of successful prekindergarten and school graduates.

Specific recommendations include:

1. Develop a screening process and transition timeline that begins at the referral stage and flows into direct intervention.
2. Involve parents in their children's assessments and share the evaluations and recommendations with the parents.
3. Use successful and proven preschool programs such as NAEYC Curriculum or Head Start ideology, to assist preschoolers and their families.
4. Demonstrate to the parents how strategies used in the classroom, can be implemented at home to assist their children.
5. Involve the parents in their children's education and school.
6. Develop parent education programs.
7. Continue to keep staff members involved in and aware of educational research.
8. Schedule early childhood staff development workshops/seminars regularly.
9. Set aside time for administrators to attend early childhood educational conferences and consult with other professionals.
10. Share the information administrators gain from their professional seminars with staff members.
11. Plan ethnic and cultural educational seminars relative to current and future needs in the district.

12. Use grants to develop incentive programs where bilingual personnel are needed.
13. Find a longitudinal implementation model that begins at/or before the preschool years. Use it to track and measure success throughout the school years.
14. Encourage volunteerism.
15. Develop a volunteer screening process and involve community members.
16. Explain to community leaders and volunteers how they can be involved in and benefit from assisting preschoolers and their families within the schools and in the community.
17. Encourage community leaders to develop a community network that can exist interdependently and independently from the school as necessary.
18. Check with the regional service centers and examine the ways they can assist administrators in developing more productive programs.
19. Enlist aid from state grants and federal incentive programs to develop or expand the existing programs.

APPENDIX A

ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW

ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW

Professional Background

1. Describe your professional background, education, etc. What degrees/certification do you have?
2. Do you supervise more than the preschool program?
3. Are there other services you provide for the school district?
4. How long have you been supervisor of the preschool program?
5. What position do you hope to hold five years from now?

The Preschool Program

1. Describe the subpopulations of preschoolers you serve.
2. What is the teacher to pupil ratio?
3. What is your perception of the strengths and challenges in the program?
4. Is there an improvement plan you would like to highlight?
5. Is there a district strategy that provides for successful transition for pre-kindergarten to kindergarten? Please explain.
6. What evidence of short-term benefits have your students experienced?
8. Has your district as a follow-up from the preschool years conducted any longitudinal studies? Please explain. What services are being provided by the regional service center for preschool administrators?

9. What kinds of efforts do administrators make to involve parents in their children's education? Examples
10. What has had the greatest influence on your preschool program in the last five years?
11. If you could make one improvement in your preschool program, what would it be?
12. Does the local funding program augment the state and federal monies in the preschool program?

APPENDIX B

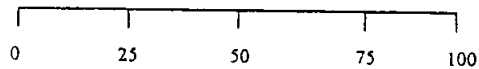
ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW

Prekindergarten Programs and Administrators' Beliefs

Please rate each item by circling the number which best represents how much your school practices the element- 0% of the time, 25%, 50%, 75%, or 100% of the time.

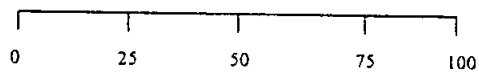
For example, a statement may read:

41. Students are assessed either individually or in small groups by taking them out of the main group of children.

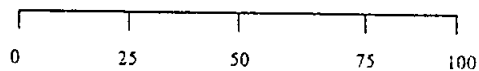


If your district only assesses special education children away from the classroom your answer may reflect this exception by stating 25%. If the population you serve is primarily special needs children: special education, at-risk, and or English as a Second Language the statistic will likely be much higher.

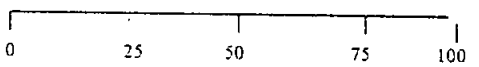
1. The pre-k curriculum goals are based on the normal sequential developmental steps that occur in young children (NAEYCE).



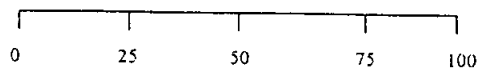
2. Our pre-k programs address health, nutrition, and safety issues concerning the students.



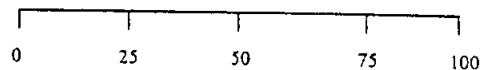
3. Bilingual teachers/school personnel are available to assist the Hispanic population/students of migrant farmers.



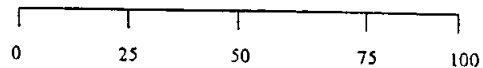
4. There is community based planning and state programs to ensure children who are disadvantaged receive assistance before the preschool years.



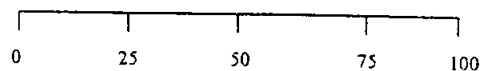
5. Campus administration participates in a professional organization oriented towards young children (such as NAEYC, Texas Association of Programs for Young Children, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development).



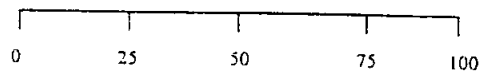
6. Our pre-k program objectives range from identification/screening to diagnostic and direct intervention.



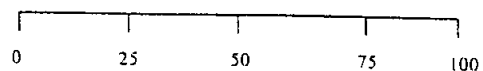
7. We are working towards full inclusion in the regular pre-k classroom of children with disabilities.



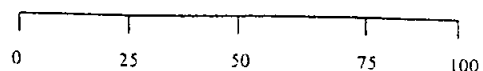
8. For administrators and personnel working with various ethnic groups, an ethnic sensitivity inventory is used as a self-assessment guide to engage the staff's realm of multi-cultural information.



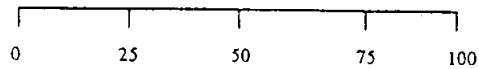
9. English as a Second Language programs are available in the local community for our non-English speaking families.



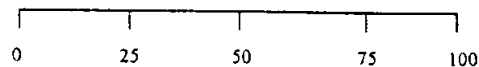
10. The district provides sufficient funding to ensure the equipment, materials, and supplies necessary for a high quality pre-k program.



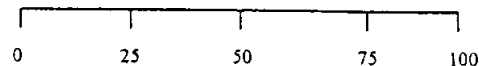
11. The pre-k classroom curriculum is integrated into all areas of child development: social, emotional, cognitive, and physical.



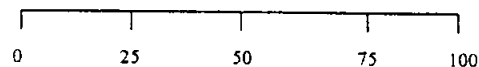
12. School transition timelines serve to link the students and their families from pre-k to kindergarten.



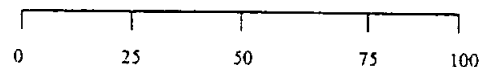
13. Pre-k teachers are encouraged to participate in professional organizations oriented toward young children.



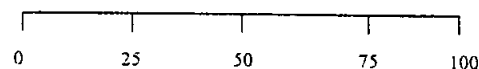
14. On my campus or Co-op, pre-k curriculum and program assessment include input from pre-k teachers.



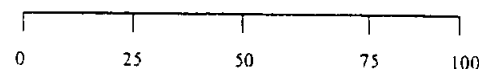
15. Our district funding is supplemented with state funding incentives.



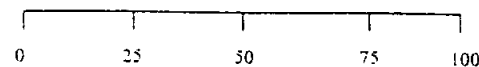
16. Our pre-k programs offer active, "hands-on" learning experiences that move from experimental to more symbolic as children develop.



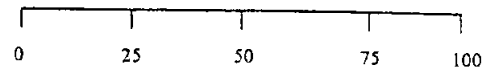
17. Preschool teachers generally recognize that young children contribute to their own development by constructing meaning from their daily experiences and observations in their environment.



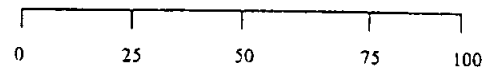
18. Parents of pre-k students are regularly informed of assessment results.



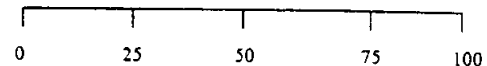
19. Assessments involving individual education plans address not only what the children can do independently, but also list what they can do with assistance from other children or adults.



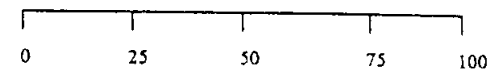
20. Federal grants are used to broaden our existing pre-k programs.



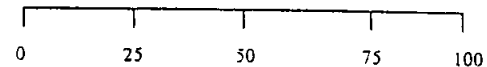
21. Small groups and individual attention characterize the pre-k environment.



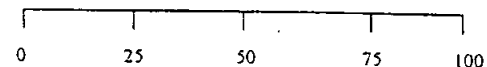
22. Children's positive and negative experiences affect their later lives.



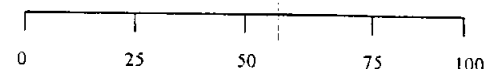
23. The needs of pre-k families are considered and efforts are made to meet these needs, both by the school and community services.



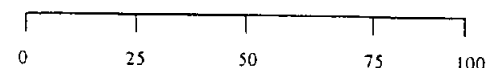
24. Longitudinal studies of our preschoolers show increased success rates in the regular classroom and also less need for special education and bilingual programs in elementary and secondary years.



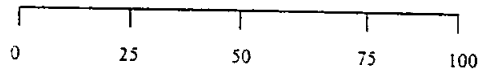
25. Pre-k teachers recognize that play supports cognitive development in children and also assists in socioemotional and physical development.



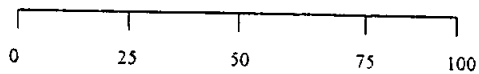
26. Exceptions and individual variations within children's learning styles and development are expected, valued, and addressed in the pre-k classroom.



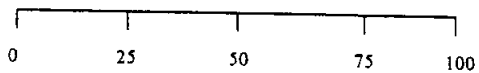
27. Pre-k teachers maintain high learning expectations for all children, regardless of their socioeconomic status or background.



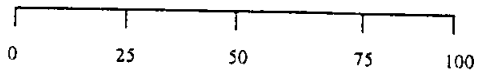
28. The majority of pre-k students' families are involved in their children's schooling in one or more ways, i.e. direct involvement of school learning.



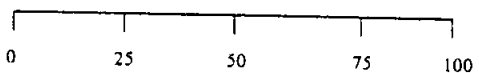
29. Regularly scheduled staff development occurs on topics specific to working with the early childhood population.



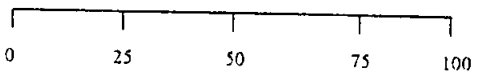
30. Pre-k teachers encourage their students to review and reflect on their daily experiences by providing time in the classroom for this.



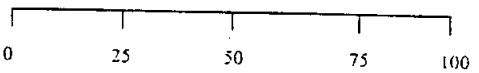
31. Teachers recognize social and cultural influences on children's learning, and accept varied ways for children to express achievements.



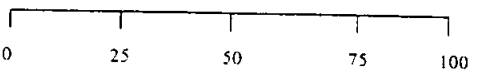
32. The teachers in the pre-k program respect, value, and accept children and treat them with dignity at all times.



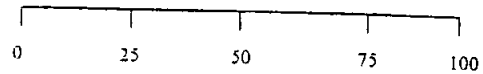
33. Parent input is utilized in developing individual pre-k goals.



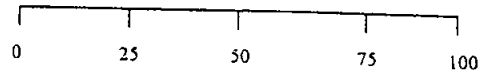
34. I attend staff development specific to early childhood education at both the state and national levels, at least twice a year.



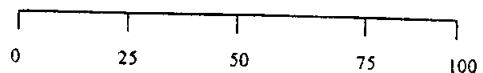
35. Our community support involves in-school programs as well as assisting with family needs outside the school setting.



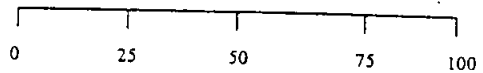
36. Time is provided in the pre-k classroom(s) for play, in addition to more formal school activities, such as learning numbers, etc.



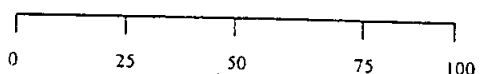
37. Our teachers make it a priority to know each child well.



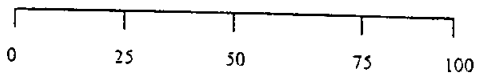
38. Our community positively supports our district's pre-k program.



39. We have a provider network with resources and referral agencies who offer assistance to the preschoolers, their families, and teachers.



40. Campus administration provides curriculum leadership, supervision, and assistance, including regular inservice training.



Additional Comments:

Thank you very much for your assistance in this study. If you have misplaced your return envelope, please send the survey to:

Mary B. Sanders
2163 Calm Water Lane
Big Sandy, TX 75755.

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