DIMENSIONS OF QUALITY: TEACHERS' BELIEFS
AND PRACTICES IN TEXAS PUBLIC
PREKINDERGARTENS

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

By

Katherine Taddie Kelly, B.A., M.S.
Denton, Texas
May, 1998
differences existed between prekindergarten teachers and administrators about beliefs and practices.

Implications include the need for changes in Texas prekindergarten programs. Suggestions for improvement include curricula, teacher education processes, program supervision, teacher and administrator staff development, and parent involvement. Areas suggested for further research include parent perceptions about quality preschool programs, effectiveness of various preschool curriculum models, length of program delivery, the influence of adult-child ratios, and the implications of campus configuration (grade levels included on a campus) on program effectiveness.
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Hoy, Mañana, Para Siempre
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Today, as perhaps never before, the American public is awakening to the importance of care and early education for young children. Several factors have contributed to this heightened public awareness. Dramatic research findings in the area of brain development are in the forefront of media attention today. Articles have appeared recently in Time (Nash, 1997), Working Mother (Jabs, 1996), The Chicago Tribune (Newberger, 1997), Newsweek (Begley, 1996) and The Washington Post (Newberger, 1997). A special edition of Newsweek focusing on learning in the early years was published in conjunction with the April 28, 1997, ABC-TV special “I Am Your Child.”

The media has also paid national attention to legislation designed to cut back or terminate welfare programs. Some of this legislation is designed to force an end to welfare payments by moving people from “welfare to workfare.” One group most effected by this legislation will be poor mothers. Under the new federal welfare law, even recipients with very young children are required to find work. According to the Children’s Defense Fund, there are now about 9.75 million children (about 4.5 million of them under five years) whose families are on welfare. That translates into an enormous new demand for day care, which in turn raises concerns about the quality of that care (Collins, 1996).

Attention to the state of early care and education has also occurred at a Presidential level. In particular, First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton has shown much attention to early care and education of young

One of the key aspects to public awareness is the issue of high quality in child care and early education. This issue centers not so much on the need for high quality, but how it happens, how program effectiveness can be assessed, and what it will cost. This author's study investigates the existence of quality indicators in prekindergarten programs in Texas, as evaluated by teachers, parents and administrators. Their perceptions of quality are compared to nationally-recognized quality standards in early childhood programs. This study also seeks to offer suggestions for improvement in Texas public prekindergarten programs.

The search for improvement of quality in the care and early education of children is not a new phenomenon. Many of the measures of quality that early childhood professionals recognize today are based on historical perspectives. Friedrich Froebel, considered "the father of kindergarten," showed that young children are capable of rapid skill acquisition if they are taught through use of materials that allow them to exercise their tendency toward active play while they develop their minds (Williams & Fromberg, 1992). This is a widely-accepted tenet of today's philosophy of active learning in early childhood education. Froebel also emphasized the importance of allowing kindergarten children to choose activities of interest to them, a forerunner of the current standard of child-centered curriculum. According to Froebel, the role of the kindergarten teacher was to guide each child as she or he
progressed through the natural individual developmental process (Williams & Fromberg, 1992).

In 1863, Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, with Mary Mann, published the first American kindergarten text, *The Moral Culture of Infancy and Kindergarten*. Frequently referred to as a leader in the development of kindergarten, Peabody was inspired by a Frobelian pamphlet to open America’s first kindergarten for English-speaking children in 1860. In discussing the kindergarten teacher’s role, Peabody and Mann stressed that the teacher should be a friend to the child, rather than a judge or accuser. They also pointed out that there should be no corporal punishment in the kindergarten. In this respect, they pointed the way toward redirection of young children rather than punishment for unacceptable behavior (Williams & Fromberg, 1992). This idea of redirection rather than punishment is an important indicator of high quality, developmentally appropriate preschool programs.

The Progressive Movement in education was a philosophical approach which exerted a great influence on American education from the late 1800s to the mid-twentieth century. It emerged from the belief that traditional schools were not keeping pace with the changes occurring rapidly in the life styles of America people. The traditional philosophy of American education to this time included a strong belief in corporal punishment and a very teacher-centered curriculum. Supporters of the Progressive Movement at the turn of this century included such leaders as John Dewey, G. Stanley Hall, Francis Parker, and William Heard Kilpatrick. Proponents of the Progressive Movement believed that classrooms should be child-centered and oriented to the interests of children. The implications of this movement were that (a) the “whole
child” was the proper subject of education, and (b) the curriculum should originate through observation and study of children’s interests and needs, rather than through analysis of subject matter (Williams & Fromberg, 1992). Both of these philosophies were forerunners of high-quality early childhood programs today which espouse education of the “whole child” rather than emphasis strictly on cognitive development, and utilization of a child-centered curriculum.

In 1892 kindergarten teachers at a meeting of the National Education Association established the International Kindergarten Union (IKU), the first early childhood professional organization. The primary purpose of the organization was to elevate the standards of quality in early childhood education, particularly through professional training for kindergarten teachers (Osborn, 1991). The IKU maintained that early education had evolved into a profession and that the education of young children could no longer be left to people with little or no training. The need existed for special training for teachers who worked with young children (Williams & Fromberg, 1992).

In 1925 in New York City, Patty Smith Hill led a group of 25 people interested in nursery education in a discussion of quality aspects in early education. The group established a National Committee on Nursery Schools, which in 1929 changed its name to National Association for Nursery Education (NANE). In 1964, the name was changed to National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (Hewes, 1976). Since then, National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has exerted a powerful influence on early care and education. This organization has devoted extensive time, money and effort to the study and development of quality standards in early care and education.
To provide positive and effective experiences for children, early childhood programs must be high quality. Epstein (1985) notes that defining high quality is not necessarily easy when considering all the entities involved in the field. Among these are government, practitioners, parent consumers, and child development and educational researchers. This wide variety of perspectives often leads to differences in opinions when discussing what constitutes high quality preschool programs. Practitioners vary in their beliefs about methods for providing young children with high quality, developmentally appropriate education. Family perceptions and home/school interactions are another area of concern when defining high quality early education.

Curry (1993) identifies three factors underlying the provisions of high quality care/early education: (a) the practitioner, (b) the environment, and (c) the underlying theory guiding these. Various aspects of each of these factors influence tremendously the level of quality offered by different preschool programs.

In reviewing standards offered by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) for high quality early education programs, certain indicators consistently occur in the research. Among these are such areas as adult/child ratio, classroom environment, and adult/child interactions (NAEYC, 1996).

Dunn and Kontos (1997) note that developmentally appropriate guidelines represent years of public and private discussion among early childhood professionals. The philosophies driving discussion about developmentally appropriate practice have crystallized into the NAEYC publication Developmentally Appropriate Practices in Early Childhood.
Programs (Bredekamp & Copple, 1996). This publication functions as a record of consensus on developmentally appropriate practices at the current time.

Project Head Start, one of the greatest influences on current early childhood education, and viewed by Zigler (1992) as America's most successful educational experiment, was established in 1965 during the Johnson administration. Osborn (1991) notes several factors leading to the establishment of the program, including the Civil Rights movement, the need for widespread employment for adults living in poverty, and research suggesting the need to provide quality preschool to children living in poverty.

Following Head Start's initial program during the summer of 1965, millions of dollars became available from the federal government for early childhood education programs. A wide variety of program models ensued, offering a continuum from very child-initiated programs such as High/Scope to very structured, teacher-directed programs such as the Bereiter-Englemann-Becker program, which evolved into DISTAR (Direct Instruction System for Teaching Reading and Arithmetic). It is difficult to compare these various program models due to the lack of one standardized assessment tool or method which could be utilized to measure effectiveness of various programs at that time.

In an analysis of fourteen early intervention studies which included a wide variety of curriculum models, the Consortium for Longitudinal Studies found no significant differences between programs in terms of curriculum variation. Royce, Darlington, and Murray (1983) state:
We found no significant differences in later school outcomes related to curricula. All the curricula were successful in reducing school failure... it may be that finer-grained outcome measures or measures of social learning would find differential effects, but the present indicators did not. It appears that a variety of curricula are equally effective in preparing children for school and that any of the tested curricula is better than no preschool program at all.

(p. 442)

However, strands dealing with program quality common to most program models were: (a) the necessity of family involvement in the total educational process, (b) the importance of enhancement of self image in the young child, (c) individualized instruction, and (d) the idea that children under six can profit from an enriched systematic curriculum (Weber, 1970; Evans, 1971).

Statement of the Problem

There are nationally-recognized indicators of high quality in preschool programs. These indicators are noted in the NAEYC publication Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs (1996) and in other literature on quality standards. Texas prekindergarten programs do not appear to align with many of these standards of quality. The following is a comparison of the quality standards with the current standards in Texas prekindergarten programs.

Schweinhart, Weikart, and other High/Scope staff offer recommendations about the components of high quality preschool programs (1985). One important component in their model of quality preschool is a developmentally based curriculum, grounded in theory, research, and practice. The philosophical framework of a quality
preschool program should allow for diversity in the actual curriculum, and should provide the basis for teachers to make consistent decisions about a program's day-to-day operations and long-range objectives. This underlying philosophy sets the mood and tone of the educational environment, allowing children to internalize values about their own importance in the world and about the skills they will need to acquire.

Curriculum in Texas public schools, however, is only defined by a set of standards known as Essential Elements. Prekindergarten Essential Elements are divided into areas, or domains, including: (a) Cognitive Development, (b) Social/Emotional Development, (c) Aesthetic Development, and (d) Physical/Motor Development. The Essential Elements list broad objectives which children should master in order to progress to the next grade in school, but do not define a basic educational philosophy nor explain important early childhood teaching methodologies, such as adult-child interaction strategies.

Assessment of children in quality programs must be on-going, performance-based, and multi-dimensional (Teale, 1988; Engel, 1990). Assessment of children in quality programs must also be in an authentic environment with an evaluator who is familiar with the children. Moreover, assessment information should be consistently shared with families of children on an ongoing basis (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992).

There is no standard prekindergarten program assessment in Texas, nor is any kind of individual prekindergarten student assessment required. Perhaps this latter is in response to the reluctance of school districts to use any kind of testing with three- and four-year-old children. In small (less than 2,000 students) and medium-sized districts
(2,000-25,000 students) there may sometimes be one pre-k classroom per campus or in some cases, even only one per district. This tends to isolate prekindergarten programs and limits opportunities for teachers to share experiences, ideas, staff development, curriculum and issues related to the interpretation and implementation of the Essential Elements.

In high quality early childhood programs, teachers must participate in appropriate, ongoing staff development (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1993). However, early childhood staff development and inservice training for prekindergarten teachers is not required of school districts by the Texas Education Agency. Because of this, early childhood staff development may vary widely from district to district, or may not exist at all.

In high quality preschool programs, an efficient, workable method of family involvement must exist, in which all families' cultures and contributions are welcomed (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1993). In the Texas prekindergarten programs, family involvement appears to vary significantly from district to district. Oftentimes, family involvement for parents of prekindergarten children is offered only at an impersonal district level rather than a more meaningful classroom level.

Sufficient funding must be available to provide the equipment, materials, and supplies necessary for a high quality program (Bronson, 1995). Yet in Texas, specific funding for prekindergarten programs is not mandated by the state, above the amount determined by the Average Daily Attendance (ADA) system used to fund other grades. ADA simply pays a specific number of dollars to the general financial fund in each district based on the enrollment and attendance rate of children in that district. This money may be divided among campuses and grade levels at
the discretion of each district, according to the wishes of school boards, central office administrators, and campus administrators. Thus, prekindergarten program funding may vary significantly from district to district, depending on the level of importance accorded to early childhood education by the various districts and campuses.

Research-based indicators of high quality in early childhood education are well-documented. In the state of Texas, however, all of the aforementioned factors suggest that public prekindergarten programs across the state may vary greatly in levels of quality.

In 1995, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) completed an evaluative study of Texas public school prekindergarten classes. This study demonstrated a continuing need throughout the state for the provision of training and support to prekindergarten and early elementary staff in implementing child-centered, teacher-supported, play-based learning curricula (TEA, 1995). However, there is no research that establishes a general level of quality for the prekindergarten program throughout the state of Texas as measured against nationally-accepted standards of quality for preschool programs.

Rationale for the Study

Quality in Preschool Programs

There are well-researched indicators of high quality in preschool programs. Koralek, Colker, and Dodge (1993) suggest that these include: (a) the program is based on concepts of child development, (b) the program is individualized to meet the needs of each child, (c) the physical environment is safe, orderly and contains appropriate toys and materials, (d) children have opportunities to select activities and materials that interest them, (e) children's learning is supported through active...
involvement, (f) adults show respect for children’s needs and ideas and interact with them in caring ways, (g) parents feel respected and are encouraged to participate in the program, and (h) staff members have specialized training in early childhood development and education.

Research indicates that quality is essential to the effectiveness of preschool programs, not only for children and families living in poverty, but in the broader scope of programs for young children from all economic backgrounds (Ruopp, Travers, Glantz, & Coelen, 1979; Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1989). Based on longitudinal studies of a variety of early childhood programs serving all kinds of families, there are a number of characteristics of effective programs, staff, and administrators (Schweinhart, Barnes, & Weikart, 1993). These include: (a) effective programs use explicitly stated, developmentally appropriate active-learning curricula that support children’s self-initiated learning activities (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1985; Rescorla, Hyson & Hirsh-Pasek, 1991), (b) effective teaching staff have been trained in early childhood education and do not change jobs often (Ruopp et al., 1979; Whitebook et al., 1989), (c) effective administrators provide systematic inservice training on site and supervisory support for their staffs’ curriculum implementation (Epstein, 1993), (d) effective programs maintain classes of fewer than twenty 3- to 5-year-olds for every pair of teaching adults (Ruopp et al., 1979), and (e) in effective programs, staff treat parents as partners and involve families in the educational process, including home visits to learn from parents and to help parents understand the curriculum and their children’s development (Gray, Ramsey, & Klaus, 1982; Weikart, Rogers, Adcock, & McClelland, 1971).
Further, quality programs contain a clearly defined curriculum framework that guides the daily program of activities. An effective early childhood curriculum is considered to be a framework that guides adults in creating an environment, in planning appropriate activities, and in facilitating children's growth and development. Koralek, Colker, and Dodge (1993) state that an early childhood curriculum that gives guidance on planning the daily program has the following components: (a) a statement of philosophy which includes a description of the educational theories and child-development principles underlying the curriculum's approach to early childhood education, (b) a statement of goals and objectives including clearly defined, realistic goals and objectives that cover all areas of development and that outline what children can be expected to achieve, (c) guidance on creating the physical environment including how to arrange indoor and outdoor space to support children's growth and development, (d) a clear explanation of how to plan and implement the curriculum, (e) suggestions for developmentally appropriate activities, which may differ organizationally depending on the curriculum model, and (f) a meaningful role for parents including recognition by the staff that parents are their children's first and primary teachers, and ensuring them a meaningful place in the daily program.

**Quality in the Texas Public Prekindergarten Program**

Texas public prekindergarten is currently guided by parameters set forth in Texas Senate Bill 1 (SB1), passed in 1995. Two brief sections of Senate Bill 1 (SB 1) are devoted to the curriculum, structure, and evaluation of Texas public pre-k programs. Within the context of these two limited sections, local districts may interpret pre-k program
implementation as they choose. These sections of SB 1 do not address quality standards for prekindergarten programs.

As previously noted, adequate funding for high quality prekindergarten programs is not guaranteed by the state, but instead is left to individual school districts. Funding for pre-k is based on a system of number of pupils enrolled and average number of days attending school. This is the same system used by the state to fund all other grades in public schools, and does not acknowledge that quality early childhood classrooms require a different physical environment than upper grades. Pre-k requirements include special furniture, manipulative materials, and adequate floor space to ensure a quality environment.

In Texas, Senate Bill 1 mandates that districts and campuses use a system of site-based decision making which reflects the educational philosophy of the teachers, parents, and campus administrators who form each campus’ Campus Decision Making Committee (CDMC). In site-base decision making, funding at the campus-level for various “special programs” such as prekindergarten is left to a committee whose members may or may not be knowledgeable of prekindergarten programs. Staff development opportunities for teachers are also often decided at a campus level, with staff development funding frequently targeted toward older children who must pass Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) testing. In many cases, only one prekindergarten classroom/teacher is housed on a campus, so that teacher may have little or no input into the decision process at the campus level.

High quality preschool programs demand a system of on-going staff development specific to early childhood. The Texas Education Agency currently requires three days of staff development for all public school
teachers in the state, including prekindergarten teachers. However, mandated staff development may be in any subject area, and is not necessarily specific to early childhood. Few school districts in the state of Texas list their own specialist in the field of early childhood education who would be available to districts to offer early childhood staff development to district prekindergarten teachers (1996-97 Texas Schools Directory, 1996).

While certification of prekindergarten teachers is required by the state, this certification is basically an elementary education certification with some additional hours specializing in early childhood education. Further, alternative methods for certification in early childhood classrooms are plentiful and are accepted by the Texas Education Agency. The opportunity for some teachers to receive emergency permits allowing them to teach prekindergarten with little or no training in early childhood also exists.

In high quality programs, an ongoing, appropriate process of curriculum assessment by the director or supervisor of the early childhood program must occur, in which teachers' input is valued and frequently acted upon (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1993). Administrators in Texas are required to hold Mid-Management Certification to be employed as principals or assistant principals on school campuses (Texas Education Agency, 1997). This certification is not specific to elementary or secondary campuses. An elementary principal may possess only secondary teaching experience, or a secondary principal may possess only elementary teaching experience. No campus administrator is required by the state to have any background or experience specific to early childhood education (Texas Education Agency, 1997). The campus
administrator, however, is responsible for hiring and evaluating the pre-k teachers and paraprofessionals, regardless of whether or not that administrator is knowledgeable of quality standards for early childhood programs and curricula.

Curricula in Texas prekindergarten programs are officially driven by the Essential Elements, a set of educational objectives for prekindergarten students. The Essential Elements are broadly stated, and allow for wide interpretation at district, campus and classroom levels. Essential Elements do not contain suggested activities for prekindergarten children, nor contain statements of early childhood educational philosophy. Also, the Essential Elements do not offer suggestions about how to establish quality classroom environments. An explanation of how to plan and implement prekindergarten curricula is not included in the Essential Elements, nor are family involvement strategies specific to early childhood included.

Schweinhart and Weikart (1993) state that reasonable adult-child ratios must exist in quality preschool programs. Unlike the child care industry, however, the Texas prekindergarten programs are not bound by the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services' (TDPRS) regulations defining minimum quality standards for child care. Thus, Texas prekindergarten programs acknowledge no minimum program standards. This is especially true of adult-child ratios, an area closely monitored by the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services' (TDPRS) in child care centers throughout the state. Minimum standards in child care dictate a ratio of no more than 13 three-year-olds or 16 four-year-olds with one adult. Prekindergarten classrooms in Texas, which often contain both three- and four-year-old children, are bound by
by no legal enrollment limitations, although State Education
Commissioner, Dr. Mike Moses, has suggested that pre-k classrooms
contain a ratio of no more than 22 children to one adult. Many pre-k
classrooms currently operate with this ratio of 22 students to one adult.
This same adult-child ratio could allow TDPRS to close a child care
center.

Summary

Currently, widely-accepted and well-researched guidelines for high
quality preschool programs are set forth. In the Texas public
prekindergarten programs it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which
prekindergartens use quality standards to plan and implement their
programs. This is due to lack of state-wide quality standards and absence
of a quality monitoring system at the state level. Research has shown
that long-term benefits are reaped by high-quality preschool, and that
poor quality preschool does not benefit young children and may actually
hinder them in later grades (Schweinhart, Barnes, & Weikart, 1993). The
prekindergarten programs in Texas must be more closely examined,
monitored, and perhaps regulated at the state level.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is two-fold: (a) to ascertain the level of
quality in Texas public prekindergarten programs when compared to
national standards of quality in early childhood programs, as evaluated
by teachers, parents and administrators, and (b) to compare the level of
teacher and administrator belief in high quality standards for
prekindergarten with standards of actual program implementation.
Definition of Terms

The following definitions are used in this research study.

1. **developmentally appropriate practice** -- a philosophy of early education based on knowledge about how children develop and learn, focusing on child-initiated, active learning. As Katz (1995) states:

   In a developmental approach to curriculum design...[decisions] about what should be learned and how it would best be learned depend on what we know of the learner's developmental status and our understanding of the relationships between early experience and subsequent development (p.109).

   In its publication *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs* (Bredekamp & Copple, 1996), the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) notes that developmentally appropriate practices result from the process of professionals making decisions about the well-being and education of children based on at least three important kinds of information or knowledge: (a) what is known about child development and learning, (b) what is known about the strengths, interests, and needs of individual children in the group, and (c) knowledge of the social and cultural contexts in which children live.

2. **curriculum** -- with increasing curriculum reform, the pressure to determine curriculum content has also increased (Seefeldt, 1992). Bredekamp and Rosegrant (1995) define curriculum as an organized framework delineating the content to be learned, the manner in which children achieve the identified curricular goals, what teachers do to help children achieve these goals, and the context in which teaching and learning occurs.
3. **Texas public prekindergarten programs**—preschool programs, taught by teachers certified in early childhood education by the Texas Education Agency, and enrolling three- and four-year-old children qualifying as economically or linguistically at-risk. These programs are designed to develop skills necessary for success in the public school elementary curriculum, including language, mathematics, and social skills.

4. **Texas Essential Elements**—Texas state curriculum standards defining curricular objectives to be taught at each grade level.

**Hypotheses**

This study focused on beliefs and practices of Texas public school prekindergarten teachers about high quality preschool programs. The following hypotheses were formulated:

1. Texas public prekindergarten teachers, program administrators and parents of prekindergarten students recognize standards of high quality in prekindergarten programs which align with nationally-recognized quality standards.

2. A consensus of opinion on what constitutes high quality preschool programs does not exist between Texas public prekindergarten teachers and program administrators.

3. While prekindergarten teachers and program administrators may philosophically accept nationally-recognized standards of preschool quality, the Texas prekindergarten programs in practice do not consistently reflect these standards of quality.

**Delimitations**

The sample of this study consisted of 244 prekindergarten teachers, 244 parents/families of pre-k students, and 66 campus/central office
administrators. A total of 554 surveys were distributed. School districts were chosen from within six geographic areas encompassing the entire state of Texas. In each geographic area, a large city was randomly chosen, and the county where it was located was used to obtain school district samples. The schools in these counties were divided by student population into Small Districts (less than 2,000 students); Medium Districts (2,000-25,000 students); and Large Districts (25,000 or more students). Using a random drawing process, one district from each of these categories was selected for each of the counties. A total of 18 school districts was sampled.

Surveys included an opportunity for each teacher or administrator to volunteer for participation in telephone interviews with the researcher. From the returned surveys, 20 teachers and 16 administrators were selected for interviews.

Selected Omissions

The researcher did not include in the study any self-contained special education classes for prekindergarten children (known as Preschool Programs for Children with Disabilities, or PPCD classes). However, pre-k classrooms taught by non-special-education-certified teachers utilizing inclusion practices for children with disabilities were included in the study.

Limitations

The framework of this study includes some limitations. Kerlinger (1992) lists types of surveys from most effective to least in the following hierarchy: (a) personal interviews, (b) panel interviews, (c) telephone surveys, and (d) mail questionnaires.
Kerlinger also states that the mail questionnaire has serious drawbacks unless used in conjunction with other techniques. Two of these defects are possible lack of response and the inability to check the responses given. He notes that responses to mail questionnaires are generally poor, and that returns of less than 40% to 50% are common.

A second limitation of the study exists in the method of survey distribution to parents of pre-k students. To each pre-k teacher survey distributed was attached a parent survey. Pre-k teachers were given the option of choosing any parent in the classroom for participation in the study. A possible result of this method of parent selection could be that teachers chose their most actively-involved parents who demonstrated the greatest likelihood of being satisfied with the existing pre-k program.

A third limitation of the study is reflected in one aspect of its methodology. When teachers were questioned on the survey pertaining to implementation of high quality practices occurring in their classrooms, they answered according to their perceptions of what was occurring. Neither the mail surveys nor telephone interviews allowed observations by the researcher of actual practices in the classrooms.

Summary

In spite of the existence of well-established standards of quality in early childhood programs, there is little research to suggest that the prekindergarten programs in Texas reflect these quality standards on a widespread basis. Few standards of quality govern the prekindergarten programs at a state level. Prekindergarten teachers and administrators of pre-k programs are not necessarily cognizant of dimensions of quality in early childhood programs. Furthermore, even for teachers who recognize quality indicators in early childhood programs, implementation of
quality programs may not be occurring due to various reasons. Texas prekindergarten teachers' beliefs and practices in the area of quality standards have not been widely studied in a research context. This study attempts to ascertain the level of quality of public prekindergarten programs in Texas as evaluated by teachers, parents and program administrators, using nationally-recognized standards of quality in early childhood programs. Suggestions for possible improvement in existing Texas public prekindergarten programs are also offered.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This study explores beliefs and practices about standards of quality in Texas public prekindergartens as viewed from various perspectives, including prekindergarten teachers, administrators of prekindergarten programs, and families of prekindergarten students. These beliefs and practices are compared with widely-accepted national standards of quality for preschool programs.

The Review of the Literature has two foci: a review of prekindergarten education since 1965, and an evaluation of research-supported standards of quality in preschool in preschool programs. The latter area has received increasing federal attention (Mitchell, 1989).

Preschools Since 1965

A comprehensive history of all preschool programs would be beyond the scope of this paper. Hence, the background of early childhood education only as it pertains to this research will be addressed through the following topics: History of Head Start, Quality Standards in Head Start, Preschool Models in the Private Sector, Public School Based Preschool, Prekindergarten Programs in Texas, and Standards of Quality in Preschool Education.

History of Head Start

One of the greatest influences on early childhood education, Project Head Start was established in 1965 during the Johnson administration (Zigler & Muenchow, 1992). As the first large-scale public preschool program in America, an examination of Head Start's history,
especially in the areas of program quality and effectiveness research, offers a starting point for reviewing dimensions of quality in public preschool.

Osborn (1991) notes several factors leading to the establishment of Head Start. He cites the Civil Rights movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as helping the American public focus on the needs of minority groups. He also notes that such publications as Galbraith's *The Affluent Society* (1963) and Herrington's *The Other America* (1994) provided the public a more personal view of poverty.

Osborn cites the Moynihan Report titled “The Negro Family: The Case for National Action” (U.S. Department of Labor, 1965) as an influence on Project Head Start. This report surveyed the social implications of family instability and concluded that basic difficulties incurred by the American Negro had one common source: the weakness of the family structure which served to perpetuate the cycle of poverty and deprivation.

In 1965, Public Law 89-10, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was approved by the House of Representatives, and one month later passed by the Senate (Osborn, 1991). This bill earmarked $1.3 million of federal funds for use in American classrooms. There were five purposes to ESEA: (a) to strengthen elementary and secondary school programs for educationally deprived children in low-income areas, (b) to provide additional school library resources, textbooks, and other instructional materials, (c) to finance supplementary educational centers and services, (d) to broaden areas of cooperative research, and (e) to strengthen state departments of education. The bill was at that time the largest appropriation ever made
by the federal government to education. This law and the Office of Economic Opportunity Act, which included the Head Start program, led to the naming of the 89th Congress as the “Education Congress” (Osborn, 1991).

The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 provided a way to fight Johnson’s “War on Poverty.” It supported several programs to attempt the elimination of poverty, including the Community Action Program (CAP), which focused primarily on efforts to organize and employ poor adults. The first-year allocation for CAP was $300 million and by midyear the program had spent only $26 million. Faced with the possibility of a CAP surplus at year’s end, Sargent Shriver, Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) director at that time, asked the OEO research department for a recommendation on how to utilize the surplus. When the research office reported that nearly half of the nation’s 30 million poor people were children, most under the age of 12, Shriver was convinced of the need for a preschool program. This program would be designed to increase the incidence of school success for disadvantaged children, thus helping them to break the cycle of poverty (Zigler, 1979).

Shriver established a planning committee to outline the organization of the new program. The committee included Robert Cooke (chairperson), George Brain, Urie Bronfenbrenner, James Hymes, Jr., John H. Neimeyer, D. Keith Osborn, Jacqueline Wexler, and Edward Zigler (Zigler & Valentine, 1979).

In one of the opening paragraphs of its recommendations, the Planning Committee (Zigler, 1991) said, “It is clear that successful programs of this type must be comprehensive, involving activities generally associated with the field of health, social services, and
education." (p. 18). The Planning Committee also made frequent reference to the importance of parent involvement in the program.

In February 1965, President Johnson formally announced the creation of Project Head Start. In its first summer (as an eight-week program) there were 652,000 children enrolled in 2,500 centers employing 41,000 teachers and using over 250,000 other workers including volunteers in the fields of health services, nutrition services, and parent volunteers (Osborn, 1991).

In 1971, Head Start began an active recruitment effort to fill at least ten percent of its spaces nationwide with children with disabilities (Bricker, 1989). This effort offered new hope and encouragement to parents of children with disabilities, as well as the benefit of program participation to the children themselves.

During 1975, Head Start served 350,000 children in 9,400 centers in more than 1,200 communities. During its first ten years of operation, it served over five million children and their families. Also during 1975, Head Start adopted Performance Standards in the areas of education, health, parent involvement and social services. The original Standards were revised in 1997, and became effective on January 1, 1998. These Performance Standards must be met by local Head Start programs in order to receive funding (Logsdon, 1997).

In 1989, there were approximately 450,000 children enrolled in Project Head Start, including: 10% five-year-olds, 62% four-year-olds, 25% three-year-olds, and 3% under the age of three years. Between the years of 1965 and 1990, Head Start served nearly 11 million children (Bricker & Veltman, 1990).
During the fiscal year of 1996, the national enrollment in Head Start programs was 752,077. Of that enrollment, 62% were 4-year-olds, 29% were 3-year-olds, 4% were under three years old, and 6% were 5 years old or older. Children with disabilities, including mental retardation, health impairments, visual handicaps, hearing impairments, emotional disturbance, speech and language impairments, orthopedic handicaps and learning disabilities comprised 12.8% of the enrollment (Head Start Bureau, 1997).

Dimensions of Quality Within Head Start

In the years since the inception of Head Start, numerous studies have been conducted in the areas of its program quality and effectiveness. Many of these studies have been plagued by problems in research methodology. Zigler and Muenchow (1992) have noted several inadequacies in evaluative reports on the Head Start Program. During the early years of Head Start, there was dissension about which evaluative measures to use for the program. One group of researchers wanted to focus on measuring gains in intelligence among Head Start participants, maintaining that early intervention could raise children's intelligences. A second faction, led by Edward Zigler, felt that intelligence was not an appropriate measure to use for program evaluation, and wanted to develop new instruments for evaluation of the Head Start program. Zigler wanted evaluation which would measure growth in all the areas of child development rather than in cognitive areas only (Zigler & Muenchow, 1992).

In 1966, a study led by Max Wolff found that children who had participated in Head Start the summer before scored higher in readiness to enter school than a similar group of disadvantaged children. However,
after a few months in school, these early gains faded, and the non-
program group had caught up in most areas. He found no significant
difference in performance on achievement test results between the two
groups (Wolff & Stein, 1966).

Concern over fade-out of Head Start effects increased with the release of a national study entitled *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, also known as the “Coleman Report” (Coleman, 1966). This study concluded that the quality of early intervention in school counted little in students’ achievement. Many people perceived it as a sign that compensatory education such as Head Start was ineffective.

In 1968, the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) developed a proposal for a nationwide evaluation of the Head Start program (Smith & Bissell, 1970). Dimensions of the evaluation included: (a) data in the form of tests, interviews, and questionnaires of students, parents and teachers from 104 Head Start centers across the country. (b) control areas were to be obtained on at least several thousand Head Start graduates of both summer and full-year programs for the years 1965, 1966, 1967, (c) the study would use various measures to determine the cognitive and affective status of the children, and (d) the study was to be conducted retrospectively, with a control group set up three years after the program rather than a true experimental model with random assignments to Head Start and non-Head Start groups. Objections to the proposed evaluation model were raised by the Head Start research committee comprised of Urie Bronfenbrenner, Edward Zigler, and Edmund Gordon. This committee voiced serious doubts about the timeliness of the evaluation, reasoning it was too soon after the onset of Head Start to evaluate overall impact. Additionally, the committee did
not support the assumption that Head Start was a homogeneous set of programs. Furthermore, committee members protested the ability to obtain a control group equally matched to children who had attended Head Start three years earlier (Zigler & Muenchow, 1992). In spite of these protests, the study was contracted out to the Westinghouse Learning Center in conjunction with Ohio University, and a preliminary draft of the results was released on April 14, 1969 (Zigler & Muenchow, 1992).

The study sample was composed of 1,980 Head Start and 1,983 control children, all of whom were in the first, second, or third grades. The main inquiry of the study concerned the differences between Head Start first, second, and third graders and non-Head Start first, second, and third graders in intellectual and social-personal development. Standardized tests were used in the evaluation, including the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities (measured language development), the Metropolitan Readiness Test (assessed readiness for first grade), and the Stanford Achievement Test (assessed achievement in school subjects). Westinghouse also developed three attitudinal measures for use in the study, but there was no time to test their validity, and so the results on these measures tended to be dismissed.

Major conclusions drawn by the Westinghouse/Ohio researchers were: (a) no positive cognitive or affective gains were detected in those children who had participated only in the summer program—which comprised 70% of the Head Start children studied, (b) full-year programs were ineffective in aiding affective and only marginally effective in producing lasting cognitive gains, (c) all Head Start children were still considered below national norms on tests of language development and
scholastic achievement, while school readiness at grade one approached the national norm, and (d) parents of Head Start children voiced a strong approval of the program. Thus, while full-year Head Start was to be considered somewhat superior to summer Head Start, neither could be described as satisfactory (Westinghouse Learning Corporation, 1969).

In a study conducted by Ping Wu (1991) the Westinghouse Head Start Evaluation was reanalyzed using structural equation models and a computer simulation rather than the regression analyses used in the original study. In Wu's reanalysis, structural equation models were applied to analyze the ethnicity of students and the length of their Head Start program (summer-only or full-year). The reanalysis revealed that there were socioeconomic differences in the Westinghouse study between children in the Head Start group and children in the control group. This selection bias was more extreme for White children than for Black children, and for children who had attended kindergarten than for those who had not.

Wu's reanalyses indicted that Head Start had had a significant positive effect on groups of Black children and no significant positive effect on groups of White children. Harmful effects of Head Start upon White children were reported in the Westinghouse Study, but were unsubstantiated in Wu's reanalysis. An evaluation of the characteristics of Head Start programs and children's cognitive abilities indicated that higher quality programs had a greater positive impact on children's cognitive development.

In 1977, results of longitudinal studies were released which showed the "sleeper effect" of early intervention—affective gains such as school motivation not immediately apparent that showed up in later years.
These studies were presented at the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) in Denver, at the Office of Child Development meeting in El Paso in May, and by the High/Scope Foundation in August (Weikart, Bond & McNeil, 1978). All agreed that Head Start graduates through eighth grade outperformed non-program children, and were significantly less likely to be retained or placed in special education (Hymes, 1991).

In late 1985, Head Start released a study it had commissioned entitled The Impact of Head Start on Children, Families, and Communities, led by R. H. McKey. The report was based on a review of 210 research studies related to Head Start and a meta-analysis of 76 of these studies. This study concluded that while Head Start positively influenced families by providing social and health services and influencing other community agencies to provide these kinds of services, and while the program did help children to enjoy some immediate gains in cognitive and socioemotional test scores, the cognitive gains were temporary and started to disappear once the children entered public school (McKey, 1985).

A study by Bryant, Lau, Burchinal, & Sparling (1993) examined the relationship between teacher characteristics and classroom quality in 32 Head Start rooms. Also included in the study were relationships between Head Start classroom quality, family characteristics, and child outcome of 145 Head Start children. Classroom quality was measured using the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS), and child outcomes were assessed using the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children (K-ABC), Preschool Inventory (PSI), the Vineland...
Communication Domain of the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scale, and the Adaptive Social Behavior Inventory.

Results of this study showed that while no classrooms received a total rating of inadequate on the ECERS, only nine percent met the criteria for developmental appropriateness. Also, higher quality classrooms were associated with child outcomes of higher intelligence, higher achievement, and higher pre-academic skills, even after controlling for the quality of the home environment.

Currie and Duncan (1995) examined the impact of Head Start on school performance, cognitive attainment, preventive medical care, and health and nutritional status using a national sample of data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth and the National Longitudinal Survey’s Child-Mother file. The study focused on these measures of child outcomes: (a) indicators of academic performance as measured by Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) scores and the child’s progression through school, and (b) child health as measured by the child’s immunization record and child’s height-for-age. Statistically significant differences were reported for children who attended Head Start relative to other preschool children: (a) children who attended Head Start had mothers who were less educated and had lower scores on the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT), and (b) Head Start families had lower average levels of permanent income compared to other preschool children’s families. The authors also noted differences between Anglo and African-American Head Start children. When observed and unobserved differences were controlled for, findings revealed that participation in Head Start for Anglo children was associated with a significant increase in PPVT scores and a decreased probability of grade repetition. However,
the same effects were not found for African-American Head Start children. Findings also indicated that Head Start children were 8-11% more likely to have been immunized compared to children who did not attend preschool. In addition, the authors noted that although Head Start effects were positive for all Head Start children, the benefits faded more quickly for African-American children. The authors cautioned that the results, particularly those reflecting racial differences, may be a reflection of the relative poverty of African-Americans.

A study researched by Johanna White (1991) sought to determine if the Quincy, Illinois Project Head Start was a statistically significant variable in the high school graduation rate of Quincy High School students who participated in the program when compared with students who did not. The population of the study included five cohorts of Quincy Head Start students who entered Quincy High School (N = 433) and five cohorts of their respective high school graduation classes who had not participated in Head Start (N = 2,715). Findings indicated significant differences in graduation rates between Head Start students and non-Head Start students. The study also found that the actual graduation rate of the Head Start students (76%) was higher than the national average expected for this population.

Barnett (1993) wrote in response to findings that were released that year from the Perry Preschool study. These findings indicated that preschool programs can have positive, permanent influence on the lives of low income children. The author's focus was on whether the positive results found from the study could be generalized to other preschool programs, most specifically to Head Start. The author reviewed 22 studies of preschool programs for children ages three and four which
followed the children for a long enough period of time to assess whether a "fade out" of effects was observed. Results indicated that the studies were consistent in at least two areas: (a) an initial gain in children's intelligence test scores was reported among preschool programs but a decline in effects was observed after program exit, and (b) an improvement in school outcomes such as grade retention, special education, and graduation rates. The author suggested increasing federal funding for Head Start and other similar programs, and having Congress create an early childhood policy research office charged with evaluating program outcomes and assessing the costs and benefits of alternative program designs to improve program efficiency.

A study by Lee and Loeb (1995) investigated the relationship between preschool experience and the quality of subsequent schooling of Head Start graduates. This study identified the types and quality of schools attended by Head Start graduates in the eighth grade compared to schools attended by students who went to other preschools or students who did not attend preschool. The sample consisted of children selected from the base year of the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988; a subsample of 14,837 students were selected. School quality was measured along the following dimensions: (a) social composition, (b) academic excellence, (c) perceived safety, (d) human relations, and (e) a composite school quality factor.

Results indicated that Head Start graduates when compared with children who attended other preschools, were demographically disadvantaged. The family incomes of former Head Start families were less than half that of students who attended other preschools and .43 standard deviations below the family incomes for students who did not
attend preschool. Results also reflected that eighth-graders who previously attended Head Start attended middle schools of considerably lower quality compared to students who attended a different preschool or no preschool at all. Based on their findings, the authors speculated that perhaps the benefits of Head Start may be undermined as a result of students moving on to low quality schools and that these results may be a partial explanation for the fade out over time of Head Start effects.

Head Start planners have made an ongoing effort to regulate quality standards of Head Start programs. The national Head Start Performance Standards represent a major initiative in this area. The Performance Standards were initially developed in 1975 as principles listed under distinct program components. These components included Education Services, Health Services, Social Services, and Parent Involvement. The standards were revised in 1996-97 at the request of the Advisory Committee, with the new Program Standards becoming effective on January 1, 1998 (U.S. Department of Human Services, 1996).

In 1990, The National Head Start Association appointed an eighteen-member Silver Ribbon Panel which heard witnesses at Washington, Atlanta, and Phoenix meetings, and received survey responses from more than 1,400 Head Start parents and staff. The report of this panel was released as part of the Head Start 25th Anniversary celebration, and was entitled "Head Start; The Nation's Pride, A Nation's Challenge" (Silver Ribbon Panel, 1990). The Silver Ribbon Panel convened to consider ideas for Head Start expansion and improvement, and to develop recommendations for the future of the Head Start program. The
The Panel made three main recommendations: (a) investment in quality in the Head Start program take precedence over its expansion, with particular emphasis on improved staff compensation and training and technical assistance, (b) quality programs be provided to all eligible three-to-five-year-olds by 1994 and to children younger than age three by the year 2000, with full-day services available for those who need them, and (c) stronger linkages be developed with other services in the early childhood community (Silver Ribbon Panel, 1990).

In June 1993, the Department of Health and Human Services announced the formation of an Advisory Committee whose main purpose was to complete an indepth review of Head Start. Creating a 21st century Head Start: The final report of the advisory committee on Head Start quality and expansion (1993) was the result of that Committee's work. The report is a proactive plan for addressing existing quality problems in Head Start and contains recommendations for future Head Start programs. The Committee's findings included: (a) the Head Start program has been successful in improving the lives of low-income children and families, (b) quality in Head Start programs is uneven across the country, although overall Head Start does pride quality services, (c) Head Start programs need to improve services to families with diverse needs, (d) more Head Start services are needed to meet the needs of families, and (e) early childhood providers, including Head Start and public schools, are basically isolated from each other in their programs.

The Committee made three basic recommendations for Head Start expansion and delivery of quality services: (a) ensure quality within every
program, (b) increase the number of children served by Head Start and expand the scope of current services offered, and (c) create meaningful partnerships with other community and state programs in fields relevant to Head Start. These recommendations are divided into strategic steps, which in turn are divided into action objectives (Department of Health and Human Services, 1993).

Current Head Start Education services objectives include the following:

1. To provide children with a learning environment and the varied experiences which will help them develop socially, intellectually, physically, and emotionally in a manner appropriate to their age and stages of development toward the overall goal of social competence.

2. To integrate the educational aspects of the various Head Start components in the daily program of activities.

3. To involve parents in educational activities of the program to enhance their role as the principal influence on the child's education and development.

4. To identify and reinforce experiences which occur in the home that parents can utilize as educational activities for their children. (U.S. Department of Human Services, 1996)

Emphasis within these Head Start educational standards, as well as within the other Performance Standards components, parallels the NAEYC published guidelines for developmentally appropriate high quality preschools (Bredekamp, 1997).

On May 18, 1994, President Bill Clinton signed the Human Services Amendments of 1994 (National Head Start Association, 1994) which recommended increased Head Start funding. A second
recommendation of the Human Services Amendments of 1994 was commitment to the Excellence Initiative Project. From this resulted the National Head Start Quality Initiative System. This is a self-assessment instrument to assist in improvement of Head Start programs. The first component is to improve the comprehensive model framework of Head Start and the second component is to move beyond minimum standards, encouraging greater excellence in early care and education (National Head Start Association, 1994).

Project Head Start has been widely labeled as a "success" by both the public and many early childhood professionals. However, the program has endured persistent questions concerning program quality in several areas, among them poorly paid staff, high turnover rates, inadequate staff training and supervision, growing size of adult/child classroom ratios, and hours that are not sensitive to family needs (Hymes, 1991).

Unarguably, Head Start has made numerous contributions to early childhood care and education. Perhaps one of the most important of these was alerting the public to the importance of children’s early years. Head Start was also a beginning point for further research in the early childhood field, in such areas as preschool curriculum, evaluation, family involvement, adult/child interactions, and learning environments. Head Start utilized the idea of the Child Development Center, and thus focused attention on the contributions to the "whole child" concept--viewing early care and education in all aspects of child development, across disciplines such as medicine, social work, and nutrition (Osborn, 1991).

Another contribution of Head Start was its extensive use of volunteers--a movement currently sweeping the country again. Head
Start originally utilized over 100,000 volunteers in the summer of 1965 (Osborn, 1991). It has had a strong parent/community volunteer component ever since that time. During the 1996 year, 1,239,000 volunteers throughout the nation participated in Head Start programs (Administration for Children and Families, Head Start Bureau, 1997).

Summary

After reviewing over 500 studies and meta-analyses of Head Start program effectiveness, program evaluation, and longitudinal benefits to program participants, this researcher found no evidence of long-term cognitive benefits to Head Start graduates. However, numerous studies supported benefits to Head Start participants in the areas of increased family involvement, increases in timely immunizations, and affective benefits such as improved feelings toward school and improved graduation rates.

Preschool Models in the Private Sector

Non-public preschools exist in a multitude of different models. These program models are rooted in many different philosophies, utilize different teaching strategies and materials, and promote various outcomes for young children. A short review of the history of preschool in the private sector follows.

During the sixties, millions of dollars became available for programs in early childhood education. Funding came from different sources, including over 20 million dollars for program research under Title II of the Office of Economic Opportunity Act (OEO Act). In addition, Public Law 89-10, better known as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was passed in 1965 and provided large sums of money under Title I and Title II for research, demonstration and
innovative programs. As well, a renewed interest by researchers in the role of the environment in human development was emerging, evidenced by such influential writers as J. McVicker Hunt and Benjamin Bloom. As a result of this increase in national focus, early childhood programs abounded during the decade of the sixties (Spodek, 1993).

While comparison of such a wide variety of programs is difficult, researchers have sometimes attempted to do so. In one extensive analysis of curriculum development in early childhood programs, Parker (1972) focused on curricular goals and objectives of fourteen different programs. In several chapters of his book, other curriculum specialists offered updating and extension of their earlier curriculum models.

In order to evaluate effectiveness of various methods of preschool intervention, Head Start, in conjunction with Project Follow Through (a federal program designed to extend the benefits of Head Start through elementary school) initiated the Planned Variation program in 1969. The purpose of this study was to define and evaluate various methods of program delivery for Head Start. In her analysis of the Planned Variation, Klein (1969) defined and evaluated twelve variations of model preschool programs in operation at 44 different sites.

In another curricula analysis, Fallon (1973) recognized and described in detail forty innovative early childhood programs in operation during the early 1970s. He considered these programs innovative in the sense that each represented new approaches for those school systems implementing the programs.

In 1975, partly in response to the Westinghouse Study, a number of researchers who had been studying the effects of early childhood programs since the 1960s formed the Consortium for Longitudinal
Studies. The purpose of the Consortium was to assess long-term effects of early childhood education across different programs. Results from the Consortium's pooled data on various programs and from follow-up studies showed lasting effects of preschool in four areas: (a) school competence, as measured by rates of retention and special education placement, (b) developed abilities, as measured by intelligence tests and achievement tests, (c) children's attitudes and values, and (d) impact on families (Spodek, 1993).

In his analysis of early childhood curricula, Spodek (1993) classified the development of early childhood programs into four general categories: (a) Montessori programs, (b) behavioral programs, (c) open education programs, and (d) constructivist programs. He noted that these models differed in a number of ways.

Constructivist models are based on the philosophy that the developing child constructs its knowledge and its mind step by step through interaction with the external environment. This model differed from other program models not only in the developmental theory underlying it, but also in its program goals. Behavioral programs focused more on academic skills, while constructivist programs focused on developing cognitive processes. The open-education models usually considered expressive skills and personal autonomy to be as important as cognitive processes and academic preparation.

The Montessori program was different from the others in that it was based on a much earlier model which experienced renewed interest during the late 1950s through the 1970s. This model was generally established in private schools. However, a number of public school
systems, such as Cincinnati and Milwaukee, have offered Montessori programs as alternative models of preschool (Spodek, 1993).

The behavioral programs developed in the 1960s and 1970s included the Bereiter-Englemann-Becker program, which later evolved into DiSTAR, a highly-structured commercially published program (Bereiter & Englemann, 1966; Englemann & Osborn, 1976); DARCEE (Gray, Klaus, Miller, & Forrester, 1966); and the Behavior Analysis program (Bushell, 1973). Behavioral programs state goals in behavioral terms, organize learning in small, sequenced steps, and consistently use some form of reinforcement. The teacher controls the children's activities during instructional time (Spodek, 1993).

A third category of early childhood programs is called open-education by Spodek. He notes that the task of identifying the characteristics of this type of program is difficult because it has traditionally been a grass-roots type of movement characterized by individuality and typified by the use of slogans instead of theory. Spodek suggests that many of its practitioners fear codification (Spodek, 1993).

Some elements common to most open-education programs are: (a) total development of the child in all domains is the most important goal, (b) children's interests provide the basis for learning in school, and (c) while different instructional methods may be used, the emphasis is on active learning and child-centered curriculum, rather than on a teacher-initiated curriculum. A major source of open-education strategies was that offered by the English Infant Schools in the 1960s and 1970s. One well-known open-education model was the Bank Street Approach, originated in the Bureau of Educational Experiments under the direction of Lucy Sprague Mitchell in the 1920s. The Bank Street approach focuses
on engaging children in meaningful learning and on helping them to feel able and competent (Biber, Shapiro, & Wickens, 1971). While the program was originally designed to serve children from middle-class families, it has today been adapted for use with minority and low-income children. The Bank Street approach today encourages teachers to use their own judgment about educational practices in light of their understanding and observation of children's development (Epstein, Schweinhart, & McAdoo, 1995).

Spodek’s final category of early childhood program models is the constructivist approach, which uses the work of Jean Piaget as a basis for developing programs for young children. The best-known of these programs is the High/Scope Cognitively Oriented Curriculum (Hohmann, Banet, & Weikart, 1979), known today as the High/Scope approach. This model is based on the principles that children must be actively involved in their learning, that they construct meaning from interaction with the world around them, and that the role of the teacher is to supply children with experiences and help them reflect on these experiences (Epstein, Schweinhart, & McAdoo, 1995).

Each of these early education models has been used during the past thirty years in various private preschool settings. These settings often vary immensely, depending on locality, funding and program providers. Williams and Fromberg (1992) explore several types of preschool providers in the private sector, including parent cooperatives, laboratory schools in colleges and universities, group child care homes, industry-based child care, and nursery schools. They note that in the United States, programs for three- and four-year-old children have traditionally been offered through the nursery school model.
Nursery schools are generally privately run, and parents pay a fee for their children's attendance. Nursery school programs determine their own criteria for accepting children into the program, and may or may not be part of a larger early childhood program which includes infants, toddlers and kindergartners. Based on an early 20th century model developed by Margaret and Rachel McMillan, called the "open-air nursery school," the nursery school program traditionally stressed creativity, the development of imagination, and the value of play—all part of the child study movement at the turn of the century (Spodek, 1993).

Nursery school programs were designed to promote the children's social and emotional growth, rather than stress academic achievement. Nursery school teachers encourage interaction and imagination among the children by providing unstructured materials such as water, sand, paints and other art materials, and blocks. Many nursery schools operate on only a half-day schedule, and may be attached to departments of home economics or child development in colleges or universities (Williams & Fromberg, 1992).

Based on the preceding review of literature, one begins to understand the difficulty in comparing and evaluating various preschool programs over the past thirty years. Different program goals, philosophies, and implementation techniques, as well as different populations of children served, have confounded the issue of program evaluation, and thus, of defining program quality in preschool models. A further issue has been confusion in evaluation terminology, with the term "program effectiveness" being interchanged with "program quality."
History of Public Prekindergarten

Over the last decade, an increasing number of three- and four-year-old children have been served in public school prekindergarten programs. Before 1980, only eight states legislated public school prekindergarten. By 1989, thirty-one states and the District of Columbia were funding public prekindergarten programs for four-year-olds (Spodek, 1993). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (1997) data from the 1995-96 school year, the most current available, showed 636,846 children enrolled in public prekindergarten programs. During 1996, school-based prekindergarten programs were offered in all states with the exception of Wyoming. Prekindergarten programs were also available in American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Northern Marianas.

Recent interest in the role of public prekindergarten is not driven strictly by the increasing needs of working parents for child care. Increasingly, research has documented the impact of early care and education on very young children. Researchers in brain development have documented "windows of opportunity" for learning that occur in children at a very young age. These windows denote periods of time during which an infant's brain undergoes optimal development in particular areas. Child development experts say that there is an urgent need for preschool programs designed to optimize brain development. This is especially true for children born into impoverished families, where early experiences offered in a family setting may be limited (Nash, 1997). For many years, scientists assumed that at birth, the structure of babies' brains was already determined. Recent brain research, however, has shown that early-childhood experiences exert a dramatic impact. These early
experiences physically impact the development of the neural circuits in the brain through a process called neural plasticity (Begley, 1997).

Spodek (1993) notes several important trends that have emerged as public schools have expanded to include preschool services for children aged three to five years. These are: (a) the majority of school-based early childhood programs are designed to serve children who are at risk of school failure, (b) these programs are generally funded using federal money, and (c) schools are collaborating with other agencies to provide full-day services.

Spodek notes that the majority (two-thirds) of school-based early childhood programs serve children who are “at risk” of not being successful in school. Reasons for this lack of success in children may include poverty, disabilities, developmental delay, or speaking English as a second language (ESL). With funding for public school prekindergarten limited, the state and/or district must make a decision about which children are most in need of being served. Generally, children with conditions predicting school failure are given high priority for enrollment.

A second trend, according to Spodek, is that until very recently the majority of programs for young children used federal money, typically Chapter 1 of ECIA, 94-142, or Head Start. In some cases, this money may be augmented by state-appropriated funding. Spodek’s third observation concerning school-based prekindergarten is that, as more women join the paid labor force, schools are expanding their programs or linking with non-school-based programs to provide full-day services.

In 1988, the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) released its benchmark discussion on early childhood education
in public schools. *Right from the Start* (1988) expressed problems and concerns with school-based early childhood programs during the 1980s. Leading these concerns were availability and sources of funding. The report noted that the combination of state, federal, and local programs fell far short of meeting needs of preschool for at-risk children, working parents' need for child care, or new parents' support and education. Children of low-income families were most in need of high quality preschool and would show the most dramatic benefit from it (Begley, 1997). Yet fewer than 33% of four-year-olds whose families had incomes of less than $10,000 in 1985 were enrolled in a preschool program. In contrast, 67% of four-year-olds whose families earned over $35,000 a year or more attended preschool.

Another concern that the task force noted was that staff wages, staff training and staff turnover rates in early childhood programs were a major problem, with many child care workers earning only poverty-level salaries. Staff turnover rates were 40% annually nationwide in child care centers.

A final concern reported by the task force was that inconsistent regulations and separate funding sources for early childhood programs undercut efforts to promote a consistent level of quality even among publicly funded programs. Because of this inconsistency, career mobility for professionals was limited. Further, this funding inconsistency complicated the lives of parents seeking services for their young children.

The NASBE report strongly endorsed the formation of the early childhood unit in public school, which would provide an organizational structure for collaboration among teachers, administrators, and parents to promote learning and development in young children. The report also
called upon the need to see young children in context rather than simply as "students" in a specific program. For example, public policies needed to reflect sensitivity to how a part-day prekindergarten program fits into the full waking hours of a four-year-old.

Finally, the NASBE report reiterated the need for building partnerships between public schools and other early childhood programs, with the intent of combining resources and funding in ways that best serve the maximum number of children.

A decade later, many of these same issues still concern professionals in the field of early care and education. Gerry (1996) suggests that funding for early childhood programs needs to shifted from a group of providers to one universal-access model in which the assumption exists that quality care/early education should be available to all children and families who need it, not only to those who have been categorized as "disadvantaged." As well, all families should be expected to contribute to the financing of services, as much as they are financially able.

Responsibilities for regulating availability and quality standards in child care and early education are even more complex today then when the NASBE report was written. Gormley (1996) offers a triangular model of values including availability, affordability and quality of early care and education. He suggests that a three-tiered model of governmental provision and regulation should exist for early care and education.

In this tiered arrangement, each level of government should bear primary responsibility for one of the value areas. The federal government should promote the goal of affordability, since it is best equipped to do so. Local government could promote the goal of availability, since it has
more opportunity to be responsive to individual families’ needs. The state government could be responsible for promoting availability of early care and education, as government at that level strikes a balance between local and federal in competence and responsiveness.

Gormley believes that this division of responsibility would reduce overlap and redundancy in child care regulation and funding, and lead to an increase in availability and quality of early care.

Prekindergarten Programs in Texas

In 1986, Texas mandated a prekindergarten program for four-year-old children who have limited English proficiency or are from a low-income family that qualifies for the federal free-reduced lunch program. These children are eligible for, but not required to attend, the prekindergarten program. Using the same eligibility criteria as for four-year-olds, districts may but are not required to offer prekindergarten programs to eligible three-year-olds.

In 1995, Texas Senate Bill 1 called for school districts to “integrate programs, staff, and program sites for prekindergarten, child-care, and federal Head Start programs to the greatest extent possible.” In answer to this mandate, Waco Independent School District (Waco ISD) began a collaborative child-care/prekindergarten venture called the Pre-k Center.

Waco ISD has operated prekindergarten classes since the program was first legislated in Texas in 1986. The district offers half-day classes (three hours) to all eligible children. Prekindergarten eligibility is determined by families meeting free and reduced lunch program economic guidelines, or by speaking English as a second language. All prekindergarten students must reside within the district boundaries, and must meet age requirements.
In the Waco ISD, both “traditional” campus-based prekindergarten and a collaborative off-campus prekindergarten program are operated, in an attempt to meet the needs of all four-year-olds in the school district (Kelly, 1997). The collaborative pre-k sites are housed in one of two variations of settings. Eight prekindergarten classrooms have been established in local child care centers. In these classrooms, the actual classroom space is furnished by the child care center, and is maintained at the expense of the center. However, the Waco ISD furnishes everything necessary to set up the classroom environment, including furniture, supplies, equipment, manipulatives, and books. The district also supplies a certified prekindergarten teacher and a paraprofessional assistant teacher.

Standard Waco ISD prekindergarten curriculum is utilized in these classrooms. This curriculum is locally generated, and is a series of integrated thematic units across subject areas. The curriculum is based on a developmentally appropriate philosophy, and stresses developmental activities as well as pre-reading and pre-writing activities. In addition, state-adopted prekindergarten materials (Scholastic Workshops) are used to supplement the local curriculum. Frequent field trips are provided, and special services such as speech therapy are offered to those children who require them. These site classrooms are designed for parents who want to enroll their children in public prekindergarten, but who require a full-day setting due to work or training schedules.

Two additional prekindergarten classrooms are located within the context of collaborative sites. Community rooms in local government-subsidized housing projects offer a three-hour morning or afternoon session of prekindergarten, designed for those families who reside within
or near the housing development and who are unable to transport their children to a prekindergarten classroom at a campus. These classrooms are also furnished and equipped by the district, with certified teacher and paraprofessional provided, and Waco ISD curriculum utilized.

The number of school districts across the state of Texas offering prekindergarten programs has continued to increase. According to the Texas Education Agency, by the 94-95 school year there were 4,300 three-year-olds and 105,912 four-year-olds enrolled in prekindergarten programs in the state of Texas (TEA, 1996). By 1995, over 688 Texas school districts offered prekindergarten programs to 103,000 four-year-old children (Texas Evaluation Study of Prekindergarten Programs, 1995).

In 1989, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) began a comprehensive evaluation of the prekindergarten program in Texas. The ultimate purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of prekindergarten programs in Texas for the first time since the statewide inception of such programs. The findings and recommendations of the study were published by TEA in 1995.

During the first two years of the study, statewide surveys provided a better understanding of program implementation practices across Texas and parents' perceptions of prekindergarten programs. The final phase of the study described the final status of prekindergarten classroom practices in contrast to initial findings of the study (TEA, 1995).

The following four components were included in the study: (a) a statewide survey of districts and campuses focusing upon pre-k program characteristics, implementation, and parents' perceptions of the programs, (b) a case study of ten schools that required prekindergarten programs to examine in-depth program implementation in relationship
to developmentally appropriate practices, (c) a self study in which prekindergarten staffs participating in the case study component self-examined the developmental quality of their classroom practices, and (d) a longitudinal study of approximately 2,000 students enrolled in the prekindergarten program during the 1998-99 school year, in relationship to a comparison group of 600 students who were eligible for pre-k but did not participate in the program.

Findings from this study revealed that students from prekindergarten programs were: (a) less likely to be retained, (b) closer to being on grade level in their reading comprehension, and (c) less likely to be referred for special education programs. Conversely, children who were eligible for prekindergarten, but did not participate were: (a) more likely to be retained, (b) below grade level in their reading comprehension, and (c) more likely to be referred to special education.

The final recommendations of this study are for: (a) provision of staff development to administrators and instructional staff at both the preservice level and inservice level, (b) revision of state teacher evaluation instrument and process to make it responsive to and accountable for the characteristics that demonstrate developmentally appropriate practices in prekindergarten through early elementary grades, (c) development of reflective strategies and evaluation skills of administrators and instructional staff to guide implementation practices in the classroom, (d) provision of training and support to prekindergarten and early elementary staff in implementing child-centered, teacher-supported, play-based learning curricula, (e) provision of training and support to prekindergarten and elementary staff in implementing the State Board of Education Policy Statement on Early Childhood and Elementary
Education. (f) identification of programs that are demonstrating exemplary developmentally appropriate practices to participate in the elementary school mentor network and to provide observation sites for developing programs, (g) participation by prekindergarten, kindergarten, and early childhood teachers in the self-study evaluation process developed within this study, and (h) participation in prekindergarten by all children who are eligible for the program.

The TEA study of Texas prekindergarten program includes a limited evaluation of some quality standards such as developmental appropriateness of activities and interactions, classroom environment and materials, and training and staff development of teachers and administrators. As such, it serves as a baseline for future studies of prekindergarten programs in the state.

Standards of Quality in Preschool Education

To offer positive and effective experiences for children, early childhood education programs must be high quality. Epstein (1985) notes that defining "high quality" is not necessarily easy when considering all the entities involved in the early childhood care and education field, among which are government, practitioners, parent consumers, and child development and educational researchers. This wide variety of perspectives often leads to differences in opinions when discussing high quality preschool. Questions can be raised about the role of government, including what it should do, can do, and cannot do. Practitioners vary in their beliefs about ways that high quality and developmentally appropriate education should be provided to young children. Parents must be helped to carefully choose among early care and education options provided for their children. The ways in which
researchers can best contribute to the field’s knowledge about the determinants of good quality early childhood experiences must also be considered. Finally, family perceptions and home/school interactions are another area of concern when defining high quality early education.

Curry (1985) suggests the need for practitioners and researchers to work together to ensure high quality programs for young children. She points out that all programs for young children are educational; children learn and adapt whether or not that is the conscious intent of the adults involved with them. She suggests that the concern of adults should be not whether to educate children in programs, but rather what and how children are taught.

Curry identifies three factors underlying the provisions of high quality care/early education: (a) the practitioner, (b) the environment, and (c) the underlying theory guiding these. She notes that the practitioner, or teacher, must be well grounded in child development theory, research, practice and programming. She also proposes that two other factors are necessary for a high quality teacher: inservice educational opportunities to “refresh” the teacher, and good administrative supervision to provide support and an objective viewpoint for problem solving.

When considering the environment, Curry looks beyond the obvious factors, such as clean facilities, equipment in good repair, and sufficient toys and materials, to the underlying messages communicated by the setting. The major goal of the high quality environments must be to meet the developmental needs of children, not efficiency or neatness concerns of adults.
Finally, Curry describes how a good theory provides guidance and direction to practitioners. Without this underlying philosophy, the experiences of children in their classrooms can only be haphazard. A useful theory must be grounded in knowledge about how young children develop. Without this developmental philosophy, Curry cautions that classroom practices will be neither appropriate nor effective. Curry concludes that current early educators are able to provide children with high quality education and care. She stresses, however, that theories, environments, and above all, teachers, must be consciously directed towards this end.

Rashid (1993) offers suggestions about how to do better research on the determinants of quality in early childhood education. He notes that research alone cannot determine the level of quality to be implemented in programs; economic and political realities may cause tradeoffs between quality and cost.

Rashid states that the same basic principles found in research at the elementary school level apply to early childhood programs: good programs require strong leadership, high expectations that students will succeed, an orderly climate, learning focused on basic skills, and frequent student evaluation. But he cautions that "basic skills" does not mean teaching preschoolers in the same way as elementary school students. He emphasizes that the teaching of young children must be done in a developmentally appropriate manner.

One of the major American researchers in the field of quality in early education, David Weikart, initiated a study in this area in 1962 entitled the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project. This longitudinal study assesses whether high-quality, active learning preschool programs can
provide both short-term and long-term benefits to children living in poverty and at high risk of failing in school. The study has followed the lives of 123 African-American subjects who began life as children living in poverty and at risk of failure in school. Subjects were paired across variables such as intelligence test results, gender, and socioeconomic status, then randomly assigned to two groups. A program group, included children who received a high quality active approach to preschool, and a no-program group included children who received no preschool services. Study findings of subjects at age 27 (Schweinhart, 1993) indicate that in comparison with the no-program group, the High/Scope program group had: (a) significantly higher monthly earnings at age 27, (b) significantly higher percentages of home ownership and second car ownership, (c) a significantly higher level of schooling completed, (d) a significantly lower percentage receiving social services at some time in the previous 10 years, and (e) significantly fewer arrests by age 27, including fewer arrests for crimes of drug making or dealing.

The preschool program group also had: (a) significantly higher scores than the no-program group in general literacy at age 19, (b) higher scores than the no-program group in school achievement at age 14, and (c) higher intellectual performance (intelligence) from the end of the first year of the preschool program to the end of first grade at age 7. Moreover, as compared with the no-program group, the program group spent significantly fewer years in programs for educable mental impairment and had a higher percentage reporting at age 15 that their school work required preparation at home.

The authors of this study note that the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project findings present challenges for developing and
maintaining widespread preschool programs similar to the program for this study (Schweinhart, Barnes, & Weikart, 1993). Such programs, like other preschool programs that demonstrate lasting success would demonstrate the following quality standards: (a) provide a classroom programs operating at least 12.5 hours weekly for all 3- and 4-year-olds living in poverty, (b) encourage child-initiated activities through use of developmentally appropriate practices, (c) promote a high level of outreach to parents as partners, (d) maintain a child-staff ratio of no more than 10 children per adult, (e) employ staff who are well trained in early childhood education, and (f) provide consistent staff supervision and staff training in the developmentally appropriate curriculum approach used.

Based on twenty-plus years of experience in early childhood education related to developing curricula, training supervisors and staff, evaluating programs, and demonstrating long-term benefits of high quality programs to participants and to society, Schweinhart, Weikart, and the other High/Scope staff (1985) offer recommendations about the components of high quality preschool programs. In its 1997 position statement, the National Association for the Education of Young Children recommendations of sound principles of high quality early programs align closely with the High/Scope findings on quality dimensions.

Schweinhart and Weikart (1985) define quality in early education as a three-component model, including:

1. A developmentally based curriculum, grounded in theory, research, and practice. The philosophical framework should allow for wide diversity in the actual curriculum, and provide a basis for teachers to make consistent decisions about a program’s day-to-day operations.
and long-range objectives. This underlying philosophy sets the tone of the educational environment, allowing children to internalize values about their own importance in the world and about the skills they will need to acquire to participate in it fully.

2. **Staff training and supervision.** Schweinhart and Weikart make the point that caring about children is not enough to provide quality early education. Staff working in the classroom must also be knowledgeable of child development and how to implement a curriculum to enhance children's development. Program supervisors and administrators must also be knowledgeable in child development, as well as in program management. Ongoing staff development should occur to encourage teachers' growth and maintain their interest. Regular supervision can ensure that what is learned in training is practiced in the classroom.

3. **Ongoing evaluation.** All programs need minimally some mechanism for internal evaluation. While these strategies may be qualitative or quantitative, early childhood programs must be accountable to the children and families that they serve. Ongoing evaluation is necessary for programs to regularly examine whether the goals they promote for participants and providers are being met.

When considering quality in early education, Elkind (1986) makes the observation that young children do not learn in the same ways as older children and adults. Elkind maintains that the education of young children must complement their modes of learning. He also warns against applying educational programs designed for school-age children to early education programs. Denying young children high quality early education may result in short-term risks to them such as stress resulting
in fatigue, loss of appetite and decreased efficiency. Lack of quality in preschool programs may also invite long-term risks including potential harm to the young child's motivation to learn and a decrease in the child's ability to reason abstractly. Long-term social damage may occur to children in poor quality early education through loss of self-esteem and loss of the potential to experiment and become a "risk-taker" in society (Elkind, 1986).

Standards written by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) for high quality early education programs focus on certain indicators of high quality programs that consistently occur in research. The researcher will now paraphrase these indicators as proposed by NAEYC (1997) and cite the research upon which NAEYC bases its indicators of quality standards. Additional consistently-occurring quality indicators cited from other research are also included by the researcher.

Children's learning experiences need to demonstrate integration across all the domains of child development. Experiences in the physical, emotional and social areas are as important as experiences in the cognitive area. Development in any one domain can aid development in the other domains. Thus, early experiences for young children need to be organized across all the domains in order to better allow children to build meaning from their experiences (Sroufe, Cooper, & DeHart, 1992; Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren, 1993).

Curriculum goals and early learning environments need to be based on accepted child development theories. The predictable sequences of growth and change which occur in children during the first nine years of life need to be understood and used when teachers prepare and

Within children's learning styles and development, there exist individual variations that should be expected and planned for by preschool teachers. There are variations in different age groups of expected or "normal" development. Moreover, there are individual variations within norms for age groups. Preschool teachers need to have high expectations for all of their students, but at the same time, they must be aware of and value individual differences in all children (Sroufe, Cooper, & DeHart, 1992).

Children's early experiences have both cumulative and delayed effects on their later lives. Frequently occurring experiences have more lasting and powerful effects on young children's later lives than infrequently occurring experiences. Because of this, preschool programs should offer repeated opportunities for positive early experiences for their students (Katz & Chard, 1989; Kostelnik, Sodeman, & Whiren, 1993; Wieder & Greenspan, 1993).

Children move developmentally from learning through concrete experiences toward learning through more abstract experiences. High quality early programs use this premise to offer students learning experiences and activities that follow the developmental sequence of concrete to abstract (Bruner, 1983).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1989, 1993) suggests that children's development is best understood by viewing the broader scope of family, educational, and community settings. These settings will
influence how individual children learn, express themselves, and
demonstrate their achievements. Teachers must recognize and value the
sociocultural contexts within which their students operate.

Children actively contribute to their own learning as they
construct meaning from daily experiences and activities at home, at
school and in the general community. Teachers need to understand this
concept and structure classroom environments and experiences to allow
young children opportunities to contribute to their own learning
(Piaget, 1952; Vygotsky, 1978; DeVries & Kohlberg, 1990; Gardner, 1991;
Kamii & Ewing, 1996).

In order to construct meaning from daily experiences, young
children need the time and opportunity not only to engage in appropriate
activities and experiences, but also to reflect on these experiences and to
verbalize and share their reflections. Preschool teachers must provide
time for children's thoughtful reflection on their daily experiences—at
school, at home and in the community (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1993).

Play serves many important functions for young children. It
encourages physical, emotional and social development in children, as
well as supporting cognitive development. Teachers must recognize this
and provide many extended opportunities for play during the school day

Children are highly motivated to explore what they can almost but
not quite understand. They are most motivated to learn in a classroom
where the teacher's expectations for them are high, and where an
environment is provided for them that is challenging but not frustrating.
Teachers must provide an environment of this type that also accounts for
cultural and linguistic diversity (White, 1965; Vygotsky, 1978).
Children have different ways of knowing and learning. They also have different ways of demonstrating what they know (Malaguzzi, 1993). Teachers in quality preschool programs are able to understand and accept this concept. Preschool programs and curricula must also allow for and encourage differences in children’s demonstration of knowledge and ability.

High quality programs for young children must provide for adequate health, safety and nutrition. Children’s development will be handicapped and their learning processes inhibited if basic needs such as nutrition and health are not met first (Maslow, 1954).

To develop normally, children need to establish and maintain positive, consistent primary relationships with some adults in their lives (Bowlby, 1969; Stern, 1985; Garbarino, Dubrow, Kostelny, & Pardo, 1992). High quality early childhood programs will offer these relationships to children by providing caring, well-trained staff with a low turnover rate. A reasonably low adult-child ratio must exist in preschool programs, in order to ensure quality care and interactions between adults and children (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1993).

Because young children demonstrate different modes of showing what they know, assessment in high quality early childhood programs must be multi-dimensional. Assessment must also be performance-based, rather than “pencil and paper” based. Assessment must be ongoing throughout the year rather than based on a single experience in order to provide a more accurate picture of young children’s learning (Teale, 1988; Engel, 1990).

Assessment of children in high quality programs should be performed in the child’s everyday environment by someone with whom
the child is familiar. In high quality programs, methods such as group-administered, standardized achievement tests are not used before fourth grade (Shepard & Smith, 1988).

Teachers of young children must share their students’ assessment results with children’s family members. Assessment should be across all domains of development, and should be shared on a frequent basis and in a positive manner with family members (Shepard, 1994).

In high quality early education programs, an efficient, workable method of family involvement must exist. All families’ cultures and contributions must be welcomed (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1993). Additionally, quality programs must be sensitive of and responsive to the needs of families of children in the program (Kagan et al., 1995).

Teachers in high quality programs must participate in appropriate ongoing staff development. Staff development must include study and participation in training in current knowledge of child development and early learning and its application to early childhood practice (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1993). Teacher participation within a professional organization oriented towards early childhood is encouraged (NAEYC, 1994).

In quality preschool programs, there is an ongoing process of curriculum assessment by the director or supervisor of the program. In the curriculum assessment process, preschool teachers’ input is valued and frequently acted upon (NAEYC, 1991).

To maintain standards of high quality, early childhood programs require extensive materials, supplies and equipment appropriate for young children. Sufficient funding must be made available and appropriately utilized to provide the equipment, materials and supplies
necessary to establish an optimal early childhood environment (Bronson, 1995).

In high quality early programs, community resources are available and used to support the needs of children and their families. These resources are utilized in a comprehensive manner, allowing programs to link families with a range of services, based on identified resources, priorities and concerns (Kagan, Goffin, Golub, & Pritchard, 1995). Full advantage is taken of opportunities for collaboration with other early childhood professionals, both within public school settings and within local child care settings (Kagan, 1991).

Summary

When the literature on high quality early care and education programs is reviewed, it is evident that certain clear-cut indicators of quality exist. Such indicators as child/adult ratios, staff development, family involvement, appropriate assessment styles, and types of teacher/child interactions are shown to be strong determinants of program quality.

In some ways, Texas leads the nation in offering programs to prepare young children for entry into schools. Equal access for program entry across the state, and the Essential Elements which loosely define program goals are some of Texas prekindergarten programs' strengths. However, Texas prekindergarten programs may not be optimally utilizing existing research and other resources defining high quality programs to implement high quality programs. Inadequate funding, a rushed planning and start-up period in the mid-1980s, relatively large class sizes, and the effective absence of meaningful provisions for coordination are factors in blocking delivery of high quality prekindergarten services in Texas.
Whether or not prekindergarten teachers, parents, and administrators recognize quality indicators in early education programs, and whether or not they perceive these indicators as present in Texas prekindergarten programs are the foci of this study.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study examined the perceptions of Texas prekindergarten teachers, parents of pre-k students, and campus and central office program administrators related to the criteria of high quality in public prekindergarten programs in Texas. Approached in three phases, the study included preparation, data collection, and data analysis.

Preparation

The Preparation Phase included identification of school districts participating in the study, selection of subjects, and development of a research design and data gathering instruments.

Setting

The study was conducted in the state of Texas, in eighteen public school districts employing prekindergarten teachers certified by the Texas Education Agency. The districts chosen included six districts with small student populations (less than 2,000 students), six districts with medium student populations (2,000-25,000 students), and six districts with large student populations (25,000 or more students). The districts were located in specific areas of the state chosen to reflect the geographic and demographic diversity of Texas.

Selection of School Districts

The researcher undertook the following selection process in order to obtain a representative sampling of Texas public school pre-k teachers according to geographic location and various district sizes. A map of the state of Texas was divided into six sections encompassing the entire
state based on natural geographic lines. These sections were labeled: Western Region, North Central Region, South Central Region, Rio Grande Valley Region, and Eastern/Coastal Region. Figure 1 illustrates these divisions. Then the largest cities in each geographic area were pooled and the name of one large city in each area was randomly drawn. Results of this random selection of large cities is reflected in Table 1.

Figure 1. Geographic divisions of Texas involved in the research study.
The only large city located in the Western Region is El Paso, which made its selection as the largest city automatic.

Table 1

**Major Cities in Geographic Areas in Texas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic Regions</th>
<th>Large Cities in Each Geographic Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Panhandle Region</td>
<td>Amarillo, Lubbock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Region</td>
<td>El Paso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central Region</td>
<td>Ft. Worth, Dallas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Central Region</td>
<td>Austin, San Antonio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio Grande Valley Region</td>
<td>McAllen, Brownwood, Harlingen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern (Coastal) Region</td>
<td>Beaumont, Texarkana</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following the selection of the large cities, the researcher used an atlas to determine the counties in which the selected cities are located. Using the 1996-97 *Texas Schools Directory*, the researcher listed all school districts in the selected counties, accompanied by their student populations. The districts were then divided according to student population into small districts (less than 2,000 students), medium districts (2,000-25,000 students), and large districts (25,000 or more students). Using a random drawing process, one district from each of these categories was then selected from each of the counties.

**Subjects**

The subjects included a sample of 244 pre-k teachers employed by the school districts chosen for this study. A packet which included a cover letter giving directions, a Teacher Early Childhood Beliefs Survey (Appendix A), a Parent Early Childhood Beliefs Survey (Appendix C) in English and Spanish, and two stamped, self-addressed envelopes was
assembled for each teacher. In the cover letter, each teacher was directed to ask one parent or family member of a pre-k student in that classroom to complete and return the parent survey. In most of the districts, a central office or campus administrator volunteered to distribute the teacher surveys to the pre-k teachers. In two large districts, however, at the suggestion of central office administrators the survey packets were mailed directly to pre-k teachers at their campuses. Central administrators provided district pre-k teacher rosters for the researcher.

The third group of subjects included 66 campus administrators (principals) and central office administrators (support staff) in districts with prekindergarten programs. The researcher first made contact by telephone with the central office in each district explaining the research project and requesting district participation. Then, Administrator Early Childhood Beliefs Surveys (Appendix B), cover letters, and pre-addressed, stamped envelopes were sent to either the Director of Elementary Schools or the Director or Specialist supervising the early childhood or prekindergarten programs. In two small districts no central office administrators were familiar with the pre-k program. In these cases the researcher used the Texas Schools Directory to mail the administrator surveys directly to the principals of those elementary schools.

Research Design

This was a nonexperimental research design utilizing survey research methodology intended to examine relationships between knowledge about indicators of quality in pre-k programs and perceptions of the levels of quality actually occurring in pre-k classrooms.

Survey research is used to study large and small populations by selecting and analyzing samples chosen from the populations to discover
the relative incidence, distribution, and interrelations of sociological and psychological variables. Kerlinger (1992) lists types of surveys from most effective to least in the following hierarchy: (a) personal interviews, (b) panel interviews, (c) telephone surveys, and (d) mail questionnaires.

Kerlinger (1992) notes three major weaknesses of nonexperimental research: (a) the inability to manipulate independent variables, (b) the lack of power to randomize, and (c) the risk of improper interpretation. However, he also notes that, despite its weaknesses, much nonexperimental research has been done in the fields of psychology, sociology, and education simply because many research problems do not lend themselves to experimental inquiry. Kerlinger also notes that "if a tally of sound and important studies in the behavioral sciences and education were made, it is possible that nonexperimental studies would outnumber and outrank experimental studies" (p. 360).

Kerlinger notes that the mail questionnaire has serious drawbacks unless used in conjunction with other techniques. Two of these defects are possible lack of response and the inability to check the responses given. He notes that responses to mail questionnaires are generally poor, and that returns of less than 40% to 50% are common.

Mail surveys, however, also offer advantages unavailable in other methodology. They are relatively inexpensive to use, and offer anonymity to the respondent. They allow for standardized wording on the form, and disallow interviewer bias. As well, they allow securing of data with few geographic limitations (Nunnally, 1978).

In order to offset the limitations of the mail survey format, the researcher made use of a multifaceted approach in this study. In conjunction with the mailed surveys, the researcher conducted in-depth
telephone interviews of pre-k teachers representative of three school district sizes and six geographic regions in Texas. Administrator surveys and administrator telephone interviews were also part of the study. Parents surveys which included open-ended questions provided a third approach to the study. The use of these methods for gathering data provided a triangulated approach to the study instead of a one-dimensional approach of only mailed surveys.

Instruments

Two types of instruments were developed for this study, a written survey and an oral interview instrument. Both the survey and the interview instrument were field tested in April, 1997 in Waco, Texas, prior to data collection. Modifications to item terminology were made on the surveys and the interview instruments based on the field test results.

Validity. The instruments were examined by a panel of experts to assure content validity. The panel included prekindergarten teachers, college professors of child development and early education, and program administrators. Appendix F lists the names and affiliations of panel members. Nunnally (1978) has noted that “inevitably content validity rests mainly on appeals to reason regarding the adequacy with which important content has been sampled and on the adequacy with which content has been cast in the form of test items” (p. 93). When constructing both the survey form and the interview instrument, the researcher utilized nationally-recognized and well-researched quality standards to assure content validity, discussed in Chapter Two of this study.

Construct validity focuses on theoretical constructs upon which the testing instrument is based. Cronbach states that there are three
parts of construct validation: suggesting what constructs possibly account for test performance, deriving hypotheses from the theory involving the construct, and testing the hypotheses empirically (Kerlinger, 1992). Thomas and Nelson (1990) point out that construct validation requires using a pattern of consistent findings from different studies. Construct validity for this study was obtained by using extensive well-documented studies about high quality preschool programs. These studies are cited in Chapter Two of this study, in the section entitled “Standards of Quality in Preschool Education.”

Reliability. Reliability is the accuracy or precision of a measuring instrument (Kerlinger, 1992). According to Thomas and Nelson (1990) in using qualitative strategies such as interviews, triangulation of sources establishes external reliability. In this study, a triangulated approach was followed which evaluated prekindergarten programs from three different perspectives: (a) (closed-response) written surveys and telephone interviews of pre-k teachers, (b) (closed-response) written surveys and telephone interviews of administrators, and (c) (open-ended) written surveys of parents of pre-k students. External reliability was further increased by conducting a pilot test in Waco, Texas, on the instruments prior to data collection.

Surveys. Indicators of high quality preschool programs consistently identified by experts in the early childhood literature and research were used by the researcher to design the survey forms. These indicators were used to write survey items fundamental to evaluating beliefs about and practices of high quality preschool programs. The teacher survey used in this study was a modification of Marcon’s Pre-k Survey of Beliefs and Practices (Marcon, 1988) designed to measure teachers’ beliefs about high
quality preschool programs. The administrator survey and parent survey measured administrators' and parents' beliefs about high quality preschool programs. Items on the administrator survey and parent survey were based on the same well-researched indicators of quality used for teacher survey items.

Survey questions in this study used a Likert scale for responses. A summated rating scale (one type of which is called a Likert scale) is a set of attitude items, all of which are considered of approximately equal "attitude value." Subjects respond with degrees of agreement or disagreement. The scores of the items are summed, or summed and averaged, to yield an individual's attitude score (Kerlinger, 1992). Responses on the scale used in this study indicated the following:

1 = "strongly disagree," 2 = "disagree," 3 = "neither agree nor disagree," 4 = "agree," and 5 = "strongly agree." In the developmental stage, the surveys were examined for clarity and understanding by the researcher's colleagues and by university experts in the field of child development and early education. Appendix F lists the panel of reviewers by name and affiliation. Response blanks were included in both the teacher and administrator surveys allowing teachers and administrators to volunteer for participation in telephone interviews conducted by the researcher following collection of the survey forms.

The survey items were developed in pairs. One item in each pair addressed the philosophy or belief of the pre-k teacher, administrator, or parent, while the second item of each pair addressed whether or not the respondent felt that indicator was actually occurring in the pre-k classroom. A total of 25 pairs (50 items) were included on the teacher survey and the administrator survey. A total of 25 items were included on
the parent survey. Twenty of these questions were on a Likert Scale and the other five questions were open-ended and required a written response (see Appendix C). All items on all surveys were randomly assigned their numerical order on the forms, in order to eliminate obvious pairings of belief and practice items.

The teacher and administrator surveys were similar in the types of items included. The teacher survey is included in Appendix A. Items included in the administrator survey and parent survey are in Appendices B and C, respectively.

Interview instruments. Questions for the telephone interviews were developed by the researcher based on the same indicators of high-quality preschool used for the surveys. The interview questions were designed to allow more open-ended, in-depth responses to items addressed on the surveys. Interview instruments are included in Appendices D and E.

Selection of Interview Subjects

Teacher Interview Selection. The researcher recorded the teacher name and district identification number from each survey returned with an affirmative response for the telephone interview. Information was recorded on slips of paper and divided into sets by district size and geographic location. All three district size categories were not represented in all geographic locations. However, there was representation in every district size category and in every geographic district used in the study.

From the district divisions, the researcher did a random drawing to select teacher interviewees from as many separate size/geographic categories as had affirmative returns. Size/geographic categories not included in the random teacher interview drawing due to lack of affirmative responses on the surveys included: Small/Panhandle,

**Administrator Interview Selection.** The researcher distributed 66 Administrator Surveys. Of those surveys, 44 (67%) were returned. Of the 44 survey forms returned, 16 administrators agreed to be interviewed by telephone. The researcher interviewed all 16 administrator volunteers.

**Field testing**

The surveys and interview questions were field tested in a pilot study to ensure instrument reliability. Ten pre-k teachers, four parents, and three campus administrators completed the surveys. Teachers and administrators were interviewed also. Following the pilot test, the participants and the researcher reviewed the survey items and interview questions, in order to check for clarity and understanding. This process allowed for modification to the interview questions and survey items.

**Data Collection Procedures**

The researcher distributed and collected Teacher Early Childhood Beliefs Surveys (Appendix A), Administrator Early Childhood Beliefs Surveys (Appendix B), and Parent Early Childhood Beliefs Surveys (Appendix C) (Kelly, 1997) over a period of six weeks from May 1 through June 15, 1997.

Voluntary telephone interviews with teachers and administrators began on May 15 and concluded September 15, 1997. No interviews were conducted during July, due to school closings for the summer. Each interview concluded with an opportunity for the participant to ask questions, clarify comments, or add additional pertinent information. During each interview, the researcher recorded the participant's responses on a written interview form. Immediately following each
interview, the researcher then added reflective notes for later analysis.

All survey forms were anonymous and coded only with district size/geographic codes. Participants who volunteered to take part in the telephone interviews were guaranteed anonymity. Final interview notes were recorded using only size-geographic codes. All interview field notes remained confidential and in the researcher's sole possession.

Data Analysis

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study:

1. Texas public prekindergarten teachers, program administrators and parents of prekindergarten students recognize standards of high quality in early childhood programs which align with nationally-accepted quality standards.

2. A consensus of opinion about what constitutes a high quality preschool program does not exist between Texas public prekindergarten teachers and program administrators.

3. While prekindergarten teachers and program administrators may philosophically accept nationally-recognized standards of preschool quality, Texas prekindergarten programs, in practice, do not consistently reflect these quality standards.

Survey Analysis. Nonparametric statistical tests of significance are used when assumptions underlying the use of parametric tests are not met. This was the case in the present study. Assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were not reasonably met with these survey responses. Thus, a Rank Transformation (RT) approach was utilized.

Rank Transformation (RT) replaces data with their ranks, then applies the usual parametric tests to the ranks. This approach results in a class of nonparametric methods that includes the Wilcoxon-Mann-
Whitney test, the Kruskal-Wallis test, the Wilcoxon signed ranks test, Spearman's rho, and others.

Conover and Iman (1981) note several ways in which ranks can be assigned to observations. The following are their suggestions for ranking. In the present study, the RT-1 method was used.

RT-1. The entire set of data is ranked from smallest (rank 1) to largest. Average ranks are assigned in case of ties.

RT-2. The observations are divided into subsets, with observations in each subset ranked independently of the other subsets.

RT-3. This type of ranking involves restatement of the data in another appropriate form, then applying RT-1.

RT-4. Data is appropriately re-expressed in another form, then RT-2 is applied.

The Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney analysis was used to assign values on the “Beliefs” portion of the surveys for teachers, administrators and parents. Teachers, administrators and parents were divided into categories of "high belief" (mean scores of $\geq 4.0$) and "low belief" (mean scores $< 4.0$). Inclusion in the "low belief" category indicated lack of recognition of quality standards in preschool programs, while inclusion in the "high belief" groups indicated recognition of quality standards.

To examine the relationship of the groups' acceptance of quality standards ("beliefs") as compared to actual classroom implementation of the standards ("practices"), a Wilcoxon Signed Ranks analysis was used. This test paired mean scores of "beliefs" (recognition of standards) with mean scores of "practices" (implementation of standards) for both teacher and administrator groups.
Nonparametric alternatives to one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) are documented in the statistical literature dating back to 1970 (Zwick, 1985). One nonparametric MANOVA method is the multivariate rank test, which is an extension of the Kruskal-Wallis test to the case of more than one dependent variable. In the present study, the rank MANOVA analysis was used to determine between-subjects effects of teachers and pre-k program administrators. This analysis determined differences between the teacher and administrator groups on each of the eight factors (Beliefs 1-4 and Practices 1-4).

Telephone Interview Analysis. Telephone interview items were based on well-researched and nationally-recognized dimensions of high quality preschools. The Teacher Interview Instrument and the Administrator Interview Instrument (Kelly, 1997) were used to conduct the interviews. The researcher recorded verbatim on paper the results of the interviews. Analysis of telephone interview responses was conducted using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means and percentages.

Summary

A research study was conducted in order to examine teacher, administrator and parent beliefs about quality indicators in Texas public prekindergarten programs. Subjects' beliefs were compared to well-researched and nationally-recognized indicators of high quality early childhood programs. The study was conducted in eighteen districts in Texas, representing six geographic areas. Districts in the study included small student population (under 2,000 students), medium student population (2,000-25,000 students), and large student population (25,000 or more students). Mailed surveys and telephone interviews were
used to collect data. Procedures for the study consisted of preparation, data collection, and data analysis.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The survey return rates of prekindergarten teachers, program administrators, and children's parents are indicated in Table 2.

Table 2
Prekindergarten Study Survey Return Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Category</th>
<th>Surveys Distributed</th>
<th>Surveys Returned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prekindergarten Teachers</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>96 (39%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>44 (67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>56 (23%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item responses on Teacher, Administrator and Parent Surveys were combined into factor categories based on theoretical concepts. These were labeled Belief 1 through Belief 4 and Practice 1 through Practice 4. Belief 1 measured acceptance of high quality preschool curricula. Practice 1 measured implementation of high quality curricula in the subjects' classrooms. Belief 2 and Practice 2 measured family and community involvement. Belief 3 and Practice 3 measured teacher-child interactions and Belief 4 and Practice 4 measured inservice and staff development.

Analysis of Data

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 7.5 was used in this study to conduct statistical analyses. A Rank Transformation approach was utilized in analysis of the data. The Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney analysis was used to assign values on the Beliefs portion of the surveys to teachers, administrators and parents. Teachers, parents and
administrators were divided into categories of “high belief” (mean scores of ≥4.0) and “low belief” (mean scores < 4.0). Inclusion in the “low belief” category indicated lack of recognition of quality standards in preschool programs, while inclusion in the “high belief” groups indicated recognition of quality standards. Table 3 indicates the results of teacher, administrator and parent groups’ beliefs about quality standards.

Table 3

**Teacher, Parent, and Administrator Groups’ Early Childhood Beliefs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>High Belief</th>
<th>Low Belief</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>91.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>93.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>89.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In all groups (teachers, program administrators and parents), subjects demonstrated a significantly high level of belief, indicating recognition of quality standards in preschool programs.

To examine the relationship of the teacher and administrator groups’ recognition of quality standards (“beliefs”) as compared to actual classroom implementation of the standards (“practices”), a Wilcoxon Signed Ranks analysis was done. This test paired mean scores of “beliefs” (recognition of standards) with mean scores of “practices” (implementation of standards) for both teacher and administrator groups. Results of these tests are reflected in Tables 4 and 5. These data reveal the differences between the scores of “belief” and “practice,” with belief scores (recognition of standards) significantly higher than practice scores (implementation of the standards).
Rank transformation with MANOVA (Multiple Analysis of Variance) was then tested on the teacher and administrator groups to determine between-subjects effects of teachers and pre-k program administrators. As indicated in Table 6, Teacher Group scores are significantly higher than Administrator Group scores on Belief 1 (recognition of high quality preschool curricula standards), Belief 2 (importance of family and community involvement), Practice 1 (classroom implementation of high quality preschool curricula), and Practice 4 (implementation of inservice and staff development specific to early childhood education) at the significance level of .001.

Table 4

Pre-k Teacher Group Means: Paired Comparisons on “Beliefs” and “Practices”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>Prob.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belief 1</td>
<td>4.6385</td>
<td>.4025</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice 1</td>
<td>4.1611</td>
<td>.4395</td>
<td>-7.552***</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief 2</td>
<td>4.4375</td>
<td>.4368</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice 2</td>
<td>3.6458</td>
<td>.6742</td>
<td>-7.734***</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief 3</td>
<td>4.5830</td>
<td>.3453</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice 3</td>
<td>3.4298</td>
<td>.4790</td>
<td>-8.395***</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief 4</td>
<td>4.2309</td>
<td>.6081</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice 4</td>
<td>3.3646</td>
<td>.8503</td>
<td>-7.645***</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***< .001
Table 5

Program Administrator Group Means: Paired Comparisons on "Beliefs" and "Practices".

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>Prob.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belief 1</td>
<td>4.5432</td>
<td>.3406</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice 1</td>
<td>3.9273</td>
<td>.5105</td>
<td>-5.556***</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief 2</td>
<td>4.5852</td>
<td>.4605</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice 2</td>
<td>3.7784</td>
<td>.6293</td>
<td>-5.244***</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief 3</td>
<td>4.4830</td>
<td>.3666</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice 3</td>
<td>3.4508</td>
<td>.4257</td>
<td>-5.716***</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief 4</td>
<td>4.5455</td>
<td>.4240</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice 4</td>
<td>2.9356</td>
<td>.9187</td>
<td>-5.443***</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***< .001
Table 6

**Rank Transformation One-Way MANOVA Test of Mean-Differences on Teacher and Administrator Groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belief 1</td>
<td>3.951*</td>
<td>.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief 2</td>
<td>4.284 *</td>
<td>.040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief 3</td>
<td>2.227</td>
<td>.138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief 4</td>
<td>.087</td>
<td>.768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice 1</td>
<td>6.733*</td>
<td>.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice 2</td>
<td>1.151</td>
<td>.285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice 3</td>
<td>.214</td>
<td>.644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice 4</td>
<td>7.463**</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Real mean scores for teacher and administrator groups are reported in Tables 4 and 5.

\* \( p < .05 \)  \** \( p < .01 \)

**Telephone Interviews**

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the telephone interview portion of this study. Descriptive statistics are used to transform large groups of numbers into more manageable, meaningful forms. For the purposes of this study, frequencies, means and percentages were used to describe the interview responses.

**Teacher Interview Results**

At the end of each Teacher Survey the researcher included a response blank for volunteers to participate in a telephone interview. From the 97 Teacher Survey forms returned, 49 teachers (51%)
volunteered to be interviewed by telephone. All teacher volunteers were female. The research design called for representation from all district sizes in all geographic areas. This did not occur due to a lack of volunteers from some of the geographic/size categories. However, there was representation from every district size category and from every geographic region category. Table 7 indicates interview participants by geographic regions, while Table 8 shows interviewees by district size.

Teacher interviews were completed between May 1 and June 10, 1997. Interviews ranged in length from 10 minutes to 50 minutes, with a mean interview length of 17.9 minutes.

Table 7

Prekindergarten Teacher Interviewees by Geographic Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic Region</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Panhandle Region</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Region</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central Region</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Central Region</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio Grande Valley Region</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern/Coastal Region</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Elementary campuses in Texas may vary in the number of grades included on individual campuses. Some campuses include only primary grades (prekindergarten through grades two or three), while others have only intermediate grades (grades three through grades five or six). Other grade configurations exist as well. Campus demographic configurations for this study varied from campuses enrolling only prekindergarten
students to campuses including grades pre-k through six. Table 9 indicates various campus configurations for the subjects interviewed.

Table 8

Frequency of Teacher Interviewees by Districts’ Student Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District Size by Student Population</th>
<th>Number of Teachers Interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small Districts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Student population under 2,000)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium-Sized Districts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Student population 2,000-25,000)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Districts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Student population 25,000 or more)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9

Campus Configurations of Participating Prekindergarten Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus Configuration</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prekindergarten Campus (serves pre-k only)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prekindergarten through grade 3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prekindergarten through grade 5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prekindergarten through grade 6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interview Questions

Interview questions asked by the researcher and the teachers’ responses follow.

Question 1: How many years have you taught pre-k?
Responses to this question ranged from one year to 13 years of experience. The mean years of prekindergarten teaching experience was 6.05 years.

Question 2: What are your educational credentials?

Of the teachers interviewed (N = 20), 18 possessed B.A. or B.S. degrees in elementary education with prekindergarten or kindergarten endorsements. The B.A. or B.S. degree is necessary to obtain certification and endorsement by the Texas Education Agency. Some teachers possessed other types of certifications, and one teacher possessed an "early education certification" (pre-k through grade three) received out of state. Four of the teachers interviewed (N = 20) had earned Masters degrees in education. Of the four Masters degrees, one was in the field of Special Education (Diagnostician), and the other three degrees were in the field of Early Childhood Education. Table 10 presents educational attainment and certification levels of the teachers interviewed.

Question 3: Did you choose to teach pre-k, or was that grade level assigned to you by your principal?

Of the 20 respondents, 12 (60%) answered that they had specifically chosen their assignments because they wanted to teach prekindergarten children. Eight teachers (40%) responded that they entered the pre-k assignment as a matter of necessity or convenience or were assigned to that grade level, rather than because of a specific desire to teach in pre-k.
Table 10

Educational Attainment and Certification Areas of Teacher Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree/Certification</th>
<th>Number of Teacher Interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors Degree</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary Education Certification with Pre-K or Kindergarten Certification</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Education Certification with Pre-K Endorsement</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual Certification</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All-level Phys. Ed. Certification</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Certification areas total more than the 20 teachers interviewed, because 10 teachers were certified in two areas.

Question 4: How frequently have you attended pre-k or early childhood staff development during the 1996-97 school year? What topic areas did you attend?

The amount of staff development specific to early childhood areas attended by the teacher interviewees ranged from zero hours to eight days of staff development. Seven teachers attended no early childhood staff development or training at all during the school year. Six prekindergarten teachers attended zero to six hours of early childhood staff development during the school year. Five teachers attended two days (12 hours) or more of early childhood staff development.

Topic areas of early childhood staff development included: children with special needs, music/movement, High/Scope, daily routines and
classroom environment, emergent literacy, and professional conferences such as Texas Association of Education of Young Children.

**Question 5: How do you view the role of pre-k teacher?**

Each teacher listed from two to five separate responses to this question. The researcher coded these responses into categories organized on constructs of quality indicators in preschool programs. Table 11 lists the response categories and the frequency of teacher responses in each.

**Table 11**

**Primary Constructs in Prekindergarten Teacher Role Perceptions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Frequency of Teacher Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher should support and encourage children's social and emotional development.</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher should motivate children and encourage them in a love of learning.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher should act as facilitator of children's learning.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher should provide basic skills such as cutting and colors recognition.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher should prepare children for later success in school.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher should act as a presenter of specific curriculum material.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher should emphasize play and having fun in the classroom.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher should plan for and provide a stimulating classroom environment.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher should facilitate parent involvement and parent education.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 6: What do you think are the most important factors in a high-quality prekindergarten program?

Each teacher responded to this question with from one to three important factors, which the researcher coded into categories based on constructs of quality indicators. Table 12 presents response categories and frequencies of teachers' responses.

Table 12

**Teacher Perception of Important Indicators of Quality Pre-K Programs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Factors</th>
<th>Frequency of Teacher Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher's personal qualities (&quot;loving,&quot; &quot;enthusiastic,&quot; etc.)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom environment with adequate materials and supplies</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging parent involvement and providing parent education</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher's professional skill and credentials</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate early childhood curriculum</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration among early childhood staff</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plentiful opportunities for children to play</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of student field trips</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low adult-child ratios</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative support for pre-K programs</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open enrollment for all children (no eligibility requirements for enrollment)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate early childhood staff development</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 7: Do you feel you have positive support for the pre-k program at a campus level? At a district level?

Concerning campus-level support, 15 teachers (75%) responded that they felt that positive support existed for pre-k, one (5%) responded that support for pre-k did not exist, and four (20%) were undecided. Concerning district-level support for the program, six teachers (30%) felt that positive support was evident, while 10 (50%) felt it was not. Four teachers (20%) were undecided.

Question 8: How do you involve families of pre-k in your classroom?

Teachers responded with from zero to four methods or techniques of family involvement which they utilized in their classrooms or on their campuses. The researcher organized these responses into categories. Table 13 shows response categories and frequencies of responses in each category.

Question 9: Do you feel you have adequate materials, supplies and equipment to ensure a quality pre-k classroom environment?

Thirteen teachers (65%) responded that their classrooms included adequate materials, supplies and equipment. Three teachers (15%) responded negatively to this question. Four teachers (20%) were undecided about how to respond to this question.

Question 10: How do you assess/evaluate your pre-k students’ development?

Teacher respondents offered from one to three methods with which they evaluate and assess prekindergarten students in their classrooms. These methods are presented in Table 14.
Table 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Involvement Techniques Reported by Prekindergarten Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Family Involvement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus or district-wide family activities not specific to pre-k or early childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom parties or special classroom events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus-wide PTA meetings or programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom parent volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilization of Family Involvement Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletter sent out to families on a regular basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled parent conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field trip volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom parent meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent orientation sessions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Each respondent offered from zero to four family involvement activities.*

Question 11: What curriculum model does your classroom or district follow?

Two teachers reported using no curricula at all, while 12 teachers used district-developed or teacher-developed curricula, and 13 teachers reported using commercial curricula. (Some teachers responded that they used more than one curriculum in their classes.) Table 15 indicates types of curricula used.
Table 14

Methods of Assessment and Evaluation Used by Pre-k Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Assessment and Evaluation</th>
<th>Frequency of Teacher Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Report Card</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Observation</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checklist</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High/Scope COR (Child Observation Record)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anecdotal Records</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolios</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized test</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Conferences</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Some teachers reported using multiple methods of assessment and evaluation in their classrooms.

Question 12: Would you support a full-day state-funded pre-k program? Why or why not?

Ten of the teacher respondents (50%) reported that they would support full-day state-funded prekindergarten. Four teachers (20%) did not support full-day prekindergarten. Two teachers (10%) were undecided. Four teachers (20%) were already teaching in a full-day prekindergarten program, and all of these reported strong support for full-day prekindergarten for all districts.
Table 15

Prekindergarten Curriculum Models Used by Teacher Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum Models</th>
<th>Frequency of Teacher Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-developed or district-developed curricula</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholastic Workshops Curriculum (Texas state-adopted curriculum)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High/Scope Curriculum</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peabody Language Development Kit</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEE CARE Curriculum</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No definable curriculum</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Some teacher responses included multiple sources of curriculum.

Administrator Interview Results

From the 44 Administrator Survey forms returned, 16 administrators (36%) volunteered to participate in telephone interviews with the researcher. All geographic regions in the study were represented. Table 16 indicates frequency of administrator representation by geographic region.

Interviews ranged in length from 5 minutes to 20 minutes, with a mean length of interview of 10.6 minutes. Interviews were completed from August through October, 1997.

District size representation was skewed toward large districts (student populations of 25,000 or more). Fourteen administrators from large districts volunteered to be interviewed, while only two administrators from medium-sized districts (2,000-25,000 student
population) and no administrators from small districts (less than 2,000 students) volunteered to be interviewed. Of the administrators interviewed, 13 were campus principals and three were central office administrators. Central office administrator interviewees included two Directors of Elementary Education and one Director of Early Childhood Programs.

Table 16

Administrator Interviews by Geographic Regions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic Region</th>
<th>Number of Administrators Interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Panhandle Region</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Region</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central Region</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Central Region</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio Grande Valley Region</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern/Coastal Region</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Administrator Interview Results

Interview questions asked by the researcher and the administrators' responses to these questions follow.

Question 1: What are your educational credentials or areas of certification?

All 16 administrators possessed Masters degrees and Mid-Management Certification, required by the Texas Education Agency to become a principal (see Table 17). One administrator held a Masters degree in Early Childhood Education. All other Masters degrees were in other fields. One administrator was originally certified in secondary
education but later went through an Alternative Certification Program to earn an elementary education certification.

Table 17

Certification Areas of Administrator Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Certification</th>
<th>Frequency of Interviewee Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary Education Certification</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Education Certification</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary and Secondary Certification</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood or Kindergarten Endorsement added to Elementary Education Certification</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Management Certification</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All-level Certification (Music, Special Education, P.E.)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters degrees in Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Some administrators possessed multiple certifications.

Question 2: Have you attended any staff development or inservice during the 1996-97 school year that was specific to pre-k, kindergarten, or early childhood? What was the topic area?

Most of the administrators interviewed had not attended any staff development specific to early childhood programs. One administrator attended multiple-day early childhood sessions. Table 18 shows the amount of early childhood staff development in which administrators participated.
Table 18

Administrators’ Early Childhood Staff Development Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of Staff Development</th>
<th>Number of Administrators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participated in no early childhood or prekindergarten staff development</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in 1 session of early childhood staff development (approx. 1.5 hours)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in 1 day of staff development (approx. 6 hours)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in more than 6 hours of early childhood staff development</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 3: Do you feel that your pre-k teachers are adequately prepared for teaching in a high quality pre-k classroom? If not, how would you like to see their education or staff development changed?

Eleven (69%) administrators (N = 16) responded that they believed their pre-k teachers to be adequately prepared for teaching in high quality prekindergarten programs. Three administrators (19%) responded that they did not feel the teachers were adequately prepared. Two administrators (12%) were undecided.

Question 4: Do you feel that the pre-k program could be improved? How?

Eleven (69%) administrators (N = 16) responded that prekindergarten programs could be improved. Five administrators (31%) responded that no improvement needed to be made to the pre-k programs. Table 19 indicates areas of program improvement suggested by administrators. Some administrators offered several areas of improvement.
Table 19

**Areas of Prekindergarten Program Improvement Suggested by Administrators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of Program Improvement</th>
<th>Frequency of Administrator Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase in daily length of pre-k programs</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased family involvement</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased number of children served in the prekindergarten program</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved college preparation of pre-k teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower adult-child ratios in pre-k classes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased program funding</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved pre-k curriculum model</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate, on-going staff development for pre-k teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 5:** What do you perceive as important factors in a high quality pre-k program?

The categories of highest response from administrators to this question included teachers' personal and professional qualities. Response categories and frequency of administrators' responses are recorded in Table 20.
Table 20

Administrators' Indicators of High-Quality Pre-k Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Frequency of Administrator Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Good teachers&quot;</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal qualities of the teacher (&quot;loving,&quot; &quot;patient,&quot; etc.)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff development and inservice</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate materials, supplies and equipment</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum includes language development</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting the needs of individual pre-k students</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Getting children prepared for kindergarten&quot;</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Good&quot; family involvement</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental satisfaction with the pre-k program</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative leadership</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate funding</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good student attendance</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Some administrators reported multiple factors.

**Question 6:** What important qualities do you look for in an outstanding pre-k teacher?

Most of the administrators' responses concerned teachers' personal or professional qualities. The researcher organized the administrators' responses into several categories, based on constructs of adult-child interactions found in high quality preschool programs. These categories are indicated in Table 21.
Table 21

**Important Qualities in Pre-k Teachers as Perceived by Program Administrators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualities</th>
<th>Frequency of Administrator Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of professional experience</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to relate well to parents</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to prepare children for later school experiences</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Loves kids&quot;</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal qualities (&quot;patient,&quot; &quot;caring,&quot; etc.)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional qualities (&quot;well-organized,&quot; &quot;sensitive to individual students' needs,&quot; etc.)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** Some administrators responded with multiple indicators.

**Question 7:** How does your pre-k teacher assess students in his/her class? How is that assessment used?

Several methods of assessment were reported by administrators. Report cards were the most frequently reported method of assessment. Table 22 notes administrator responses to this question.

Teachers shared assessment results with families, according to 12 administrators. Three administrators reported that assessment results were "placed in students' records." One administrator noted that results of students' standardized testing were utilized for Bilingual Education placement.
Table 22

Methods of Pre-k Evaluation and Assessment Reported by Administrators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Pre-k Assessment</th>
<th>Frequency of Administrator Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Report Card</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checklist</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Conferences</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Observation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized Testing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;No assessment used&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** One administrator reported multiple methods of pre-k assessment.

Question 8: Does your pre-k teacher use a specific curriculum with his/her students? What is it?

Four administrators reported that they could not name the pre-k curriculum their teachers used. One administrator reported that the pre-k teacher(s) in that district used no specific curriculum. Other results are shown in Table 23.

Question 9: Would you support full-day, state-funded pre-k in your district? Why or why not?

Thirteen (81%) administrators (N = 16) responded in support of full-day, state-funded pre-k programs. One administrator (6%) responded that s/he would not support full-day pre-k. Two administrators (13%) were undecided.
Table 23

Identification of Pre-k Curricula as Reported by Administrators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curricula</th>
<th>Frequency of Use as Reported by Administrators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scholastic (State-adopted curriculum)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not know</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic units</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locally-generated curriculum</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High/Scope curriculum</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DLM</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;No pre-k curriculum utilized&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Some administrators reported multiple curricula sources.

Parent Survey Open-Ended Questions

On the parent survey, three open-ended questions were included which required a written comment from respondents. Parent responses to these questions have been grouped into categories based on constructs of quality indicators in preschool programs.

Question 21: If I could have one improvement made in my child's pre-k class it would be:

Responses to this category mainly concerned changes in staff-child interactions and improvements to classroom environment (adding computers to the classrooms, improving the playground, providing more library books). Table 24 notes the categories and frequencies of responses to this question.
Table 24

Parents’ Suggestions for Improvement of Pre-k Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency of Parent Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changes in staff’s interactions with students</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(&quot;aides more patient,&quot; &quot;more sensitive,&quot; etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement in the classroom/campus environment</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(more materials, better playground, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No improvement needed</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addition of computers to the classroom</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in the curriculum</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased parent involvement</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in daily scheduling</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide pre-k aides</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller class size</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More administrative support</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switch from half-day to full-day program</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase program eligibility to all children</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase staff development</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 22: The best thing about my child’s pre-k class is:

Parents responded to this question most frequently by naming the pre-k teachers as what they liked best about their children’s pre-k experiences. Table 25 indicates parent responses.
Table 25

What Parents Liked Best About Their Children’s Prekindergarten Classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency of Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“the teachers”</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s personal qualities (“warm,” “caring,” “welcomes me”)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom environment/materials</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum/classroom activities</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s professional qualities (trained in child development, “positively encourages children”)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation of child for later school experiences</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child’s interactions with peers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“How much my child learned”</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child learned “values”</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good teacher-child ratios</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child learned “discipline”</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 23: The things I think are most important about high quality pre-k are:

The researcher organized these responses into several broad categories, based on constructs of quality indicators in preschool programs. These are noted in Table 26. The highest frequency of responses occurred in the category of staff-child interactions, followed by the categories of curriculum and classroom environment.
Table 26
Parent Perceptions About Indicators of High Quality Prekindergarten

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff-child interactions</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom environment (Materials, floor space, playground)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning social skills/school routines</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for kindergarten</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity for learning problem-solving and having choices</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School administration</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary of the Findings

The researcher's experiences as a Specialist in Early Childhood Education and a doctoral student in early childhood education, and a review of the literature resulted in the formulation of the following hypotheses:

1. Texas public prekindergarten teachers, program administrators and parents of prekindergarten students recognize standards of high quality in early childhood programs which align with nationally-accepted quality standards.

2. A consensus of opinion about what constitutes a high quality preschool program does not exist between Texas public prekindergarten teachers and program administrators.
3. While prekindergarten teachers and program administrators may philosophically accept nationally-recognized standards of preschool quality, Texas prekindergarten programs, in practice, do not consistently reflect these quality standards.

The study was conducted in eighteen districts in Texas, representative of six geographic areas. Districts in the study represented small student population (under 2,000 students), medium student population (2,000-25,000 students), and large student population (25,000 or more students). Subjects included 96 teachers, 44 administrators and 56 parents of prekindergarten children.

The first hypothesis was accepted at p < .05. Teachers did possess a statistically significant level of knowledge ("belief") about standards of quality in prekindergarten programs. Furthermore, the administrator group and the parent group also showed a significant level of knowledge about quality preschool program standards.

The second hypothesis compared teachers' responses with administrators' responses in both "beliefs" (knowledge) and "practices" (program implementation). A significant difference was found between these groups on Belief 1 (recognition of high quality preschool curricula standards), Belief 2 (importance of family and community involvement), Practice 1 (classroom implementation of high quality preschool curricula), and Practice 4 (implementation of inservice and staff development specific to early childhood education).

The third hypothesis considered the difference between belief in quality standards and actual program implementation of quality standards. The data supported this hypothesis by demonstrating a significant level of difference between respondents' beliefs and practices.
in both the teacher group and the administrator group. Hypothesis 3 was accepted at $p < .05$.

Results of this study include both quantitative data and qualitative data. Quantitative data supported acceptance of all three hypotheses. The researcher collected qualitative data using telephone interviews to investigate more thoroughly subject groups' beliefs about quality standards in early childhood programs. Interview results are explored in depth in Chapter Five.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The researcher's concerns about quality standards led to the design of this study which examined beliefs and practices about prekindergarten programs in Texas. The study was conducted with three groups of subjects: pre-k teachers, administrators of pre-k programs, and parents of pre-k students. Surveys were distributed and interviews were conducted to determine differences in beliefs about quality standards in prekindergarten programs and actual implementation of prekindergarten programs.

Discussion

The data collected for this study were analyzed through descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Results are discussed with regards to related research information about quality standards in preschool programs.

Hypothesis 1: Perceptions of Quality Standards

Hypothesis 1 states that Texas public prekindergarten teachers, program administrators and parents of prekindergarten students recognize standards of high quality in early childhood programs which align with nationally-recognized quality standards.

Well-recognized quality standards in preschool programs include multiple indicators. High quality preschool curricula must be child-based, developmentally appropriate, and integrated across all domains of child development--social, emotional, physical, and cognitive (Sroufe, Cooper, & DeHart, 1992; Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren, 1993;
Piaget, 1952; Erikson, 1963; Dyson & Genishi, 1993; Gallahue, 1993; Case & Okamoto, 1996; Bruner, 1983; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1985). Extended opportunities for play should be included within the curriculum framework (Bergen, 1988; Fromberg, 1992).

High quality preschool programs employ caring, well-trained teachers who can establish and maintain positive, consistent relationships with young children (Bowlby, 1969; Stern, 1985; Garbarino et al., 1992). Teacher-child ratios should be reasonably low, and staff should experience a low turn-over rate (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1993).

In high quality programs, appropriate staff development must be offered and teachers must actively participate. Appropriate staff development includes study of child development and early learning as well as practical application of this knowledge to preschool programs. Also, teachers should participate in a professional organization oriented towards early childhood (NAEYC, 1991).

High quality preschool programs provide an efficient, workable method of family involvement wherein all families' cultures and contributions are welcomed (Kagan, Goffin, Golub, & Pritchard, 1995). Assessment of students is shared on a frequent basis and in a positive manner with family members (Shepard, 1994).

Survey responses from all groups of subjects (teachers, administrators and parents) demonstrated statistically significant recognition of quality standards in preschool programs such as those previously mentioned. Of the prekindergarten teacher surveys returned, 91.7% indicated a high level of belief in quality standards for preschool programs. Further, during telephone interviews with 20 pre-k teachers, the researcher asked teachers what they considered the most important
factors in a high quality pre-k program. Repeatedly, they named factors included within nationally-recognized quality standards. Some of the teachers’ suggestions of quality indicators included “a committed staff,” “collaboration between colleagues,” “the teacher as a nurturer,” “flexibility when dealing with children as individuals,” “small class size and two adults in the class,” and “an open and loving environment.” Other responses included “lots of play—people don’t realize how important it is for young children to play” and “you’ve got to have the classroom set up right with lots of manipulatives and books and supplies.”

Administrator surveys reflected 93.2% of their group recognized quality standards in preschool programs. The researcher conducted telephone interviews with 16 of the administrators. Like the prekindergarten teachers, program administrators were also able to verbalize indicators of quality preschool programs. Their comments included such important quality indicators as “teachers who care, are loving, and willing to meet the needs of all individual kids,” “parental satisfaction with the pre-k program,” and “appropriate training for teachers and aides.” One administrator noted, “I think that the home involvement is really important to program success. No matter what we do with them (pre-k students) at school, if parents don’t help at home, kids won’t succeed.”

The majority of parents (89.3%) demonstrated recognition of quality standards in preschool programs. Parents of prekindergarten children were able to verbalize about quality standards in preschool programs. Parents’ comments about important indicators of quality programs included “well-trained teachers,” “lots of free choice for kids,”
"high expectations (for students) by the teachers," and "encouraging children to reach their full potential." Other comments from parents about high quality indicators included "good parent involvement," "praise and encouragement," the patience and involvement of the teacher," "developmentally appropriate curriculum," and "letting the children express themselves."

A significant number in all three groups of subjects demonstrated recognition of quality standards as reflected in the surveys. In 36 telephone interviews with pre-k teachers and program administrators, interviewees were also able to use their own terminology to express quality indicators.

**Hypothesis 2: Difference in Beliefs Between Administrators and Teachers**

Hypothesis 2 states that a consensus of opinion about what constitutes high quality preschool programs does not exist between Texas public prekindergarten teachers and program administrators. Using inferential statistical analysis, a significant difference between teachers’ and administrators’ responses was found in several areas. These areas included the following: Belief 1 (recognition of high quality preschool curricula standards), Belief 2 (importance of family and community involvement), Practice 1 (classroom implementation of high quality preschool curricula), and Practice 4 (implementation of inservice and staff development specific to early childhood education). In all of these areas, the mean scores after ranking of the Teacher Group were significantly higher than those of the Administrator Group.

Belief 1 and Practice 1 indicate belief in and implementation of high quality preschool curricula. Teachers scored significantly higher than administrators in both of these areas. When the researcher
interviewed administrator volunteers by telephone, she asked them if
their pre-k teacher(s) used a specific curriculum in the classroom. Of 16
administrators interviewed, four reported that they did not know what
curricula their pre-k teacher(s) used, and one reported that the teacher(s)
used no curriculum. Administrator responses included “they do a letter a
week and then they also do what she calls 'centers' where the kids go in
small groups,” and “I think she uses state-adopted materials, whatever
they are.” Another administrator responded, “she has no specific
curriculum, but I think the state does provide little books for her to use
with the children.” Still another administrator responded “I think we do
have a state-adopted curriculum, but I don’t know the name of it.”

Overall, the administrators interviewed appeared to have little
knowledge of the prekindergarten curriculum. In high quality preschool
programs, there should be an ongoing process of curriculum assessment
by the director or supervisor of the program (NAEYC, 1991). However, if
supervisors of Texas prekindergarten programs are not cognizant of the
curriculum being used, it should prove difficult for them to provide
appropriate curriculum assessment.

A third area in which the teacher group scored significantly higher
than the administrator group was in Belief 2 (importance of family and
community involvement). As already noted, high quality preschool
programs provide an efficient, workable method of family involvement
where all families’ cultures and contributions are welcomed (Kagan,
Goffin, Golub, & Pritchard, 1995).

In telephone interviews with teachers inquiring what they
considered important indicators in high quality preschool programs, the
researcher combined teacher responses into categories. The third most
frequently ranked teacher response of high quality indicators in 13 categories was "encouraging parent involvement and providing parent education." However, when administrator responses of important indicators of quality preschool programs were ranked in frequency, "family involvement" received only eighth place.

A fourth and final area in which teacher scores were higher than administrator scores was Practice 4 (implementation of inservice and staff development specific to early childhood education). While both teachers and administrators demonstrated belief that ongoing staff development specific to early childhood education was important in high quality programs, only one administrator of the 16 interviewed suggested that an increase in either the amount or the quality of staff development for pre-k teachers would improve the pre-k program.

In telephone interviews with 20 pre-k teachers, however, teachers repeatedly expressed concern over their lack of appropriate staff development opportunities. When interviewed by the researcher about opportunities for staff development during their previous school year, teachers made such comments as, "too much of the time we have to go to stuff that doesn't pertain to us--it's ridiculous to make pre-k teachers go to TAAS inservice," and "well, most of the time our staff development is more like, well, teaching math and science to fifth graders and stuff." Other teachers commented, "I didn't really attend pre-k staff development--we had a workshop at the end of the year about math, but it wasn't really for pre-k or young children," and "I mostly attend just general staff development stuff, not any pre-k stuff." Another teacher responded, "I attended one day of pre-k inservice this year--and that was one day more than I ever had before! But it wasn't very good. Just some
lady explaining how she does things in her own classroom." "I went to a
session of 'KinderMan' but I had to pay for that myself," commented
another pre-k teacher. Of the 18 districts included in the study, only one
district appeared to implement any organized system of appropriate
inservice or staff development for its pre-k teachers.

Hypothesis 3: Differences in Pre-k Beliefs and Program Implementation

Hypothesis 3 states that while prekindergarten teachers and
program administrators may accept nationally-recognized standards of
preschool quality philosophically, implementation of quality in Texas
prekindergarten programs does not consistently reflect these standards.
Mean scores (after ranking) of the Beliefs survey items (recognition of
quality standards) are significantly higher than mean scores of the
Practices survey items (actual implementation of quality standards). This
is true in both the teacher group and the administrator group. Thus,
while teachers and administrators do hold a high level of recognition of
quality standards for prekindergarten programs, they do not think that
these standards are consistently implemented in pre-k classrooms. This
difference in belief and practice is also apparent in the results of
telephone interviews conducted by the researcher with teachers and
administrators.

Belief 1 includes all the survey items pertaining to quality
standards for preschool curricula. Practice 1 includes survey items about
whether high quality curricula is actually occurring in the classrooms.
Responses from both teachers and administrators indicated they were
not sure that high quality curricula were being used in the pre-k
classrooms. In telephone interviews with 20 teachers, they reported using
many different types of curricula. Only five reported using the state-
adopted pre-k materials. Teachers' feelings about state-adopted materials were mainly negative, and so were most comments about the materials. "Its organization is horrendous—it doesn't make sense," and "it really is awful." Another teacher reported "I follow it like a Bible. When I first came to pre-k from third grade, I really had nothing at all, so I was glad to have it. Even if it's not very good, it's better than nothing." Two of the pre-k teachers interviewed were not aware that Texas has state-adopted curriculum materials.

Twelve teachers reported using a curriculum generated at a local level. "We have a district curriculum written by our specialist that's tied to Essential Elements," reported one pre-k teacher. Another said, "Our pre-k and kindergarten teachers got together and wrote units like 'fall' and 'pets' and stuff. That's what we use."

Several pre-k teachers reported using multiple curriculum sources. One said, "oh, we just pull from lots of stuff. Mostly we teach alphabets (sic) and numbers." During one interview, a teacher discussed using both the state materials and the Peabody Language Kit as curriculum sources. She followed this with the statement: "But the key is the teacher. Any curriculum model will work, just depending on the teacher. I just teach what I want, anyway."

Some teachers reported using no specific curricula. "I have no real curriculum. I just have resource books that I use," said one pre-k teacher. Another reported:

The first year, I kinda used Scholastic. I use the Peabody Kit a lot now. I always used to do dinosaurs, too. Actually, I really just pick and pluck and pull and do my own thing. Next year I'm going to do
community helpers all year, one each month, so that children can identify with the people around them.

Five of the teachers who were interviewed reported using the High/Scope curriculum model. All five were enthusiastic about the curriculum, and reported it as very successful with their students. Said one pre-k teacher:

I love it! I just finished my fourth year of High/Scope. The first year it was really foreign to me. I had thought I was doing good things for my children, and then it seemed like High/Scope was telling me that I was doing it all wrong. But when I saw how well it worked, I love it. But it has taken five years for me to internalize it. It doesn't happen quickly. I wasn't very developmental. I had always thought I was a good teacher, but then they really showed me really different ways to work with children.

As noted earlier in this chapter, administrators also expressed uncertainty about implementation of quality prekindergarten curricula in the classrooms. Some administrators' responses included "we use several different sources," "they (students) do centers," "they use thematic units," and "I really don't know."

Belief 2 and Practice 2 contrast beliefs and actual program implementation in the area of family involvement in the prekindergarten programs. Teachers and administrators acknowledged the importance of family involvement in high quality preschool programs on their survey responses. However, they perceived family involvement in actual pre-k programs as less well-aligned with quality standards. Teachers reported numerous methods of involving families in their prekindergarten children's education. Some of these included classroom parent
volunteers, field trip volunteers, classroom parties and meetings, and parent orientation sessions. When teachers were interviewed, however, their responses generally reflected little satisfaction with methods of family involvement. One prekindergarten teacher said:

We have a Parent Involvement Room in the building, but I know we could do better. Even though we have a good pre-k program, we know that family involvement is not really one of our strong points. Because we are also Head Start, we must really ensure parent involvement. We try to have meetings that are of interest to the parents. There's a lady at Head Start in charge of that. We have parenting classes, too, throughout the year. I spend time telling the parents about their children, but I can't really seem to make them understand what I'm saying.

Another teacher responded to the question of family involvement in the pre-k classroom by saying, "most of my parents are not really involved. I have a room mother, but she only comes for parties. The parent volunteers are really the same way." Still another teacher confided that families of her pre-k students "mostly participate in field trips and in parties or just the fun stuff like that, but never very regularly." One teacher noted that "the parents who really need to be at parent meetings usually aren't."

Some administrators also expressed frustration with lack of family involvement in the pre-k programs. "Family involvement should have started long before pre-k," said one program administrator. "We need prenatal classes and better parenting skills classes." "I'd be happy just to get my parents involved enough to send the pre-k kids to school regularly," said another administrator. "Attendance is really a problem."
A third noted, "I'd like to see more children included in the pre-k program. I know we have more children in the district that need the program, but we can't convince the parents to bring them in."

Belief 3 and Practice 3 include indicators of high quality teacher-child interactions. In high quality preschool programs, knowledge of the ways children typically develop should guide teachers in their interactions with young children (Gallahue, 1993; Case & Okamoto, 1996). Preschool teachers need to have high expectations for all their students, yet still be aware of and value individual differences in children (Sroufe, Cooper, & DeHart, 1992). Prekindergarten teachers need to structure classroom environments and experiences so that young children have many opportunities to contribute to their own learning process (Gardner, 1971; Kamil & Ewing, 1996).

Again, both teachers and administrators scored higher in their beliefs about these standards than in actual implementation in pre-k programs. When interviewed, one teacher expressed the view that her role as a pre-k teacher was to "pull the kids in, and just give them as many fun experiences as possible." Another teacher responded, "the job of the pre-k teacher is to supply background knowledge for kindergarten and first grade." A third teacher defined her role "to teach them the things they will need to know in kindergarten, like cutting, and coloring, and walking in a line. They don't know how to do any of those things." Many of the teachers interviewed perceived their roles as teachers as that of "knowledge dispenser" rather than of "learning facilitator," and were guided in their interactions with children by those perceptions.

Some administrators also viewed the role of the pre-k teacher as that of dispensing knowledge or skills to pre-k students. They responded
to questions about quality teacher-child interactions with "she should be aware of long-term program objectives for the child," and "they should get children ready to go on to kindergarten." Other administrators focused on issues such as discipline ("she needs to be able to handle the kids and not let them just run wild" and "the teachers need to give the children a chance to learn about school rules and they'll be more ready for kindergarten and more formal kinds of school").

One strong component of high quality preschool programs is participation by staff in appropriate, ongoing staff development (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1993). Belief 4 and Practice 4 contrasted this area of preschool quality standards. Teachers and administrators recognized this quality component in their survey responses. However, as noted earlier, teachers in particular expressed disappointment in actual staff development opportunities.

The amount of staff development specific to early childhood areas attended by the 20 teacher interviewees ranged from zero hours to eight days of staff development. Two teachers (10%) interviewed "could not remember" if they attended any early childhood staff development. Seven teachers (35%) attended no early childhood staff development or training at all during their school year. Six prekindergarten teachers (30%) attended six or less hours of early childhood staff development during the school year. Thus, 75% of the pre-k teachers interviewed either could not remember or attended one day or less of early childhood staff development during the entire school year. Only five teachers (25%) attended two days (12 hours) or more of early childhood staff development.
Conclusions

Research from early childhood programs suggests that high quality preschool programs make positive differences in young children's later lives (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1993). Conversely, low quality preschool programs have demonstrated a negative affect on children's later lives (Marcon, 1993). Prekindergarten programs in Texas must be carefully evaluated in order to identify existing quality standards and to make recommendations for future program improvements. This approach is used to discuss the conclusions and implications of this study. Current study results will be compared to widely-recognized research about high quality preschool programs in order to suggest improvements to Texas prekindergarten programs. Conclusions and implications regarding dimensions of prekindergarten quality will be divided into several subtopics: (a) preschool curricula and classroom environment, (b) prekindergarten teachers, (c) early childhood staff development, (d) family involvement for parents of prekindergarten children, (e) pre-k program administrators, and (f) future issues in Texas prekindergarten programs. Recommendations for further research are included.

Study Limitations

Several conditions limit this study. One study limitation is the sampling method used. Since the Texas Education Agency (TEA) could not provide a master list of all prekindergarten teachers currently teaching pre-k in Texas public schools, true random sampling methods could not be used. Instead, the researcher developed a cluster sampling method utilizing school districts.

Parent sampling techniques were not totally random, since prekindergarten teachers were responsible for distribution of the parent
surveys. Teachers were instructed to distribute the surveys to families which would be likely to return the surveys. Because of this, the parent selection process may be biased.

Telephone interviews were conducted by the researcher with prekindergarten teachers and program administrators. Subjects volunteered to participate in the telephone interviews by marking an affirmative response at the end of their surveys. Thus, interviews were conducted with only those who volunteered.

When measuring the difference between teacher beliefs about preschool quality standards and the practices occurring in their classrooms, it should be noted that reported classroom practices are supported only by teachers' perceptions of what is occurring. In the current study, the perception of practice was not verified by an impartial outside observer. This is noted as a study limitation.

However, there is research to support the fact that classroom behavior can be inferred from self-reports of teacher beliefs. In general, attitudes and values held by teachers of young children appear to be related to teacher effectiveness (Feeney & Chun, 1985; Spodek, 1987). Wing (1989) found a basic agreement between beliefs and practices in preschool teachers, where teachers held a clear and systematic set of theoretical principles and had support for putting these principles into action. Smith and Shepard (1988) studied the relationship between kindergarten teachers' beliefs about and practices concerning kindergarten readiness and retention in grade and again found basic agreement. Spidell (1988) investigated preschool teachers' beliefs about play and found their actions related to their beliefs. In another study, Charlesworth et al. (1990) also found support for a consistency between
kindergarten teachers' beliefs and their instructional activities. Finally, Kagan and Smith (1988) found kindergarten teachers' self-reports about beliefs and behaviors to be strongly consistent with their observed classroom behaviors. Thus, it is appropriate to believe that there is a basic agreement between early childhood teachers' reported beliefs and their actual classroom practices.

**Preschool Curricula and Classroom Environment**

**Quality Curricula.** Literature supports certain indicators of quality preschool curricula. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) espouses a set of values defining "developmental appropriateness" in preschool curricula that is widely accepted by early childhood educators (Bredekamp, 1996). NAEYC suggests that child-centered, child-directed, teacher-supported play is an essential component of developmentally appropriate practice. Schweinhart and Weikart (1985) further suggest that high quality preschool curricula must be grounded in theory, research, and practice, with a sound philosophical framework.

Currently in Texas, there exists no process to consistently offer high quality curricula in prekindergarten classrooms. Texas has state-adopted prekindergarten curriculum materials available in the form of Scholastic Workshop kits. These kits include large and small children's books written in English and Spanish, some small amount of manipulatives such as small wooden building blocks, picture cards, and a teacher's curriculum guide. These materials are available, in theory, to districts, based on the numbers of prekindergarten students enrolled in the district. However, all pre-k teachers and administrators are not knowledgeable of these, as evidenced by their telephone interview
responses. Several teachers interviewed who did have access to the curriculum materials did not feel that these were useful to their students. Pre-k teachers appear basically to teach whatever knowledge they think their own students should know, often in the form of activities without philosophical framework or research base.

Texas prekindergarten programs need guidance at a state level in facilitating high quality curriculum models which are grounded in research and based on a strong philosophy of appropriate early education. Texas school districts need the opportunity to make informed choices about preschool curricula, based on carefully conducted research and evaluation studies. Careful attention must also be paid to the values and expectations of parents, pre-k teachers and program administrators when choosing a pre-k curriculum. While differences of opinion exist among educators as to the superiority of one model over another, as Katz (1988) notes:

Many people within and without the field of early childhood education think that the choice for curriculum is to have either an academic or a socialization focus. Rather, the data on children’s learning seem to suggest that what is required in preschool and kindergarten is an intellectually oriented approach in which children interact in small groups as they work together on a variety of projects that help them make sense of their own experience (p. 45).

**Quality Classrooms.** One indicator of high quality preschool programs in that children actively contribute to their own learning as they construct meaning through daily experiences (Gardner, 1991; Kamii & Ewing, 1996). Prekindergarten classroom environments need to reflect
this philosophy in room structure and in an abundance of appropriate materials and supplies. Play is one way that children contribute to their learning. Extended time frames for play and provision of materials to support young children's play must be a part of the quality pre-k classroom (Fromberg, 1992; Bergen, 1988). Young children learn best when teachers provide an environment that is challenging but not frustrating, and which provides appropriate materials and equipment to support various ages and stages of development (Vygotsky, 1978; Bronson, 1995).

During the telephone interview phase of this study, the researcher questioned 20 prekindergarten teachers to ascertain if they felt they had appropriate materials and supplies necessary to provide high quality environments for their students. Thirteen teachers (65%) responded that they felt they had adequate materials, supplies and equipment. Three teachers (15%) responded negatively to this question, while four teachers (20%) were undecided about how to respond to the question. However, of those responding that they did have the necessary materials and supplies, several noted that they received funding from other programs such as Bilingual Education, Head Start, English as a Second Language (ESL) and Special Education. One teacher remarked that she had been teaching preschool overseas with virtually no materials, and that receiving any materials at all made her happy. Another teacher said, "yes, now I do have materials, because I also teach kindergarten. Last year I taught in pre-k only, and I didn't have any stuff at all. Now I'm half pre-k and half kindergarten and I have a lot more materials."

Others teachers noted that they purchased many materials with personal money. One teacher confided:
Yes, we can get materials, but you have to prove it's educational. I have an old bathtub for my students to read in, filled with pillows, and I bought that myself. You wouldn't expect the schools to buy those things for you. Actually, when I think about it, a lot of the stuff I have is mine. I mean, I buy toys at garage sales and all things like that that my district wouldn't think was educational.

Another teacher said, “My present classroom was part of a special education classroom. The last teacher moved, and took all her stuff with her. The principal may give me more next fall, but right now it’s bare.” Finally, one teacher stated, “Yes, I have materials now, but it’s because our teacher salaries have been frozen for the last four years.”

Four teachers interviewed reported having inadequate classroom space for high quality programs, while two more reported being located in portable buildings outside with no bathrooms. This necessitated frequent interruptions for the paraprofessionals to take children inside to the bathrooms.

On the parent surveys used in this study, parents were asked three open-ended questions. Many parents responded to two of these questions with remarks about the classroom physical environment. One question asked: What is the best thing about your child’s pre-k class? Only one parent responded to that question with a positive remark about the classroom: “The best thing is the pre-k classroom is so spacious.” However, when asked the question “What is one improvement you would make to your child’s pre-k class?” several parents responded with concerns about classroom environment. “More classroom materials,” “more computers,” “separate outdoor playground and equipment,” “bigger room,” “more library books,” and “shaded playground” were responses by
parents in their perceptions of needed improvements in their children's pre-k programs.

Currently, prekindergarten programs in Texas are routinely funded for half-day programs only. Money coming to each district from the state simply goes into a district fund. This state money is distributed to campuses as district board of trustees and central administrators decide. When monies are allocated to individual campuses, the principal and site-based decision making committee decide how funds should be distributed to campus programs. Principals and campus committee members may not be knowledgeable of early childhood program standards when district monies are allocated to campus programs. Therefore, prekindergarten programs in Texas need to receive funds specifically earmarked for their classroom materials, supplies and equipment.

Materials for early childhood classrooms include many educational toys and equipment not usually found in classrooms for older children. High quality preschool materials and supplies include wooden puzzles, blocks, dramatic play equipment and other toys which are frequently more expensive than traditional school materials for older children. As well, some materials in high quality pre-k classrooms should be rotated frequently to provide an optimally stimulating environment. This factor necessitates prekindergarten classrooms needing a greater number of appropriate materials. Art activities should be available to prekindergarten children on a daily basis, with many and varied supplies available to the children. Providing these materials can also be expensive. In classrooms of older children, art is usually offered on a less frequent basis, incurring less expense for materials. Because of these
factors, funding formulas for pre-k classrooms should differ from other classrooms on campuses. A greater financial allocation should be implemented for prekindergarten programs, to better ensure opportunity for high quality classroom environments.

Quality Prekindergarten Teachers. Quality prekindergarten teachers must be knowledgeable of child development theories, and should base their interactions with students on predictable sequences of growth and development in young children (Case & Okamoto, 1996; Dyson & Genishi, 1993; Gallahue, 1993). Quality prekindergarten teachers also should be aware of and value individuality in children, whether due to age differences, individual differences, or cultural or linguistic differences (Sroufe, Cooper, & DeHart, 1992). Teachers must offer their preschool students repeated opportunities for positive early experiences (Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren, 1993; Wieder & Greenspan, 1993), and should offer children frequent opportunities for play during the day (Fromberg, 1992; Fein, 1981). Finally, teachers in high quality preschools ought to structure activities and classroom environments to allow children to actively contribute to their own learning (Vygotsky, 1978; DeVries & Kohlberg, 1978; Gardner, 1991; Kamii & Ewing, 1996).

During the telephone interview portion of this study, the researcher interviewed 20 teachers. Their years of experience in teaching prekindergarten ranged from a first year pre-k teacher to 13 years of experience, with a mean of 6.0 years of experience. When the researcher questioned, “Did you choose to teach pre-k?” twelve teachers (60%) responded that they had specifically chosen their pre-k assignments, while eight teachers (40%) responded that they had entered their pre-k teaching assignments as a matter of necessity or convenience, or were
assigned the pre-k grade level rather than requesting it. Most of the teachers interviewed held Bachelors Degrees in elementary education, with several also holding Bilingual Certification by Texas Education Agency.

Over half of the teachers interviewed (11) reported that they felt their roles as prekindergarten teachers were to support and encourage children's social and emotional development. Seven teachers also responded that they felt their roles as prekindergarten teachers should be to motivate and encourage children in a love of learning and of school. One teacher responded, "I am a servant, to the children first, the parents second, and then the community." Another remarked, "pre-k teachers are the child's first and most important teachers. We do more social work than teaching." "I focus on social skills," said another pre-k teacher. "Most of the kids have never been away from home before, and they need support with social skills." Prekindergarten teachers perceived themselves as "a mother-figure," "an entertainer--you have to motivate kids," and "you are part mother, part observer, part facilitator--your job is opening eyes and getting them to look at the world." Many teachers used the words "guide" or "learning facilitator" to describe themselves. One teacher said, "I like to compare myself to Velcro. As a pre-k teacher, I provide the stubbly side of the tape, and the kindergarten and first grade teachers provide the other stuff that sticks to my side."

Overall, the teachers interviewed verbalized a constructivist viewpoint of their teaching roles. They reported that they believed their prekindergarten students learned by active construction of meaning through opportunities for daily experiences structured by the prekindergarten teachers. Teachers mentioned providing students with a
"rich background to learn in" and "providing a stable, safe environment" for children, with "lots of choices during the day." These teachers' statements align with indicators of high quality teacher-child interactions.

Quality Program Administrators. Schweinhart and Weikart (1985) make the point that preschool program administrators and supervisors must be knowledgeable in the area of child development as well as program management. They must also provide regular supervision to ensure that what is learned by teachers is practiced in the classroom. Bredekamp and Copple (1996) emphasize that administrators of early childhood programs should have professional qualifications including child development and early education.

In the telephone interview phase of this study, the researcher interviewed 16 pre-k program administrators. All 16 of the administrators held Mid-Management Certification, required by the state of Texas to be a principal. Of those interviewed, nine held elementary education certifications from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and five held secondary certifications from TEA. One administrator had originally been certified in secondary education but went through an Alternative Education program to earn an elementary certification. Two administrators held an early childhood or kindergarten endorsement in addition to their elementary certifications, and one administrator held a Masters degree in the field of early childhood.

Of the 16 administrators interviewed, 10 (63%) had participated in no staff development specific to early childhood education during that current school year. Five administrators (31%) had attended one session (approximately 1.5 hours or less) of early childhood staff development.
Only one administrator had attended more than six hours (one day) of inservice specific to early childhood education during the previous school year.

With a lack of professional background in early education, a lack of knowledge about preschool curricula as discussed earlier, and little or no participation in early education staff development, it is difficult to understand how elementary principals can be expected to do a quality job of supervising prekindergarten programs. Furthermore, these administrators who lack early education background are generally responsible for hiring and professionally evaluating prekindergarten teachers, providing input or decisions about campus funding for pre-k programs, and even sometimes making curriculum decisions. One prekindergarten teacher noted, "we used to be able to take the kids outside to play for fifteen minutes each day, but then our principal decided that was just wasted time, so now we can't take them out at all." Another teacher remarked, "at our school our principal makes us do RAP (Read Any Place). That means every single child has to sit still, be quiet, and look at books during that time, even my three-year-olds."

Texas prekindergarten programs need encouragement to consolidate into "primary campuses" where only prekindergarten through grades two or three are served. Primary campuses would allow selection of a principal or program supervisor knowledgeable in early education and child development, which in turn would contribute greatly to high quality supervision of the prekindergarten programs at those campuses.

Issues in Texas Prekindergarten Programs

Teacher Certification. One major issue facing teachers in Texas public schools is the possibility of new methods of certification. At
present in Texas prekindergarten and kindergarten self-contained classrooms, 18.8% of teachers are teaching without specific certification for their assignments (Texas Education News, 1998). Currently under study in Texas is a plan to split elementary education certification into two areas—primary, to include pre-k through grades two or three, and intermediate, to include grades three or four through grades six or seven. Some states such as Georgia already offer an early childhood certification. Offering two separate elementary certification areas in Texas could allow teacher candidates in colleges more opportunity to specialize in early childhood education and child development.

**Prekindergarten Program Evaluation.** A second issue facing Texas prekindergarten programs is that of program evaluation and student assessment. With renewed national and state emphasis on early education programs, and with the current trend toward teacher accountability, Texas prekindergarten programs must seriously consider a program assessment process which is standard throughout the state. Ideas for the pre-k program assessment process should not be proposed by state legislators, but rather should include input from prekindergarten teachers, parents of prekindergarten children, and university experts and private specialists in the field of early education.

Guidelines should be developed at a state level for a prekindergarten student assessment process. Individual assessment of students should follow guidelines proposed in the NAEYC revised *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs* (1996). Student assessment should be appropriate, ongoing, and provide for assessment results to be shared with families throughout the year. When formulating state guidelines for the assessment process, input
from early childhood teachers, child development specialists and parents of prekindergarten students should be sought and valued.

**Prekindergarten Program Eligibility.** Several issues facing prekindergarten programs in Texas are linked. Program eligibility, student/teacher ratios, and program length all deal with the number of children to be served by Texas prekindergarten programs. Questions about program eligibility are currently occurring frequently among parents and educators. Presently in Texas, only students who meet economic guidelines (national free/reduced lunch eligibility) or who speak English as a second language are eligible to attend prekindergarten. One administrator noted, "parents don't understand why their kids don't qualify for pre-k. I think that all of the kids whose parents want them to should attend the program." On the parent surveys, parents remarked that improvements needed in pre-k programs included "pre-k classes for all children," and "not penalizing working parents by keeping their kids out of pre-k." A pre-k teacher said, "when you've taught in a school a long time, you can see the difference between kids with pre-k and kids who didn't go--they have a hard time making it. I think they should all be allowed to attend."

**Student/teacher ratios (class size),** is an issue linked to enrollment eligibility. Currently, the Texas Education Agency allows a classroom ratio of 22 prekindergarten children to one prekindergarten teacher. Interviews with pre-k teachers in this study showed that the teachers might or might not have paraprofessional aides assigned to assist them in their classrooms, dramatically effecting adult/child ratios. When parent surveys asked about improvements needed in the prekindergarten programs, several parents noted that lower adult/child
ratios were needed, or that a paraprofessional was needed in the classroom. One administrator remarked, "I wish we could make the pre-k classes smaller--put fewer children in them. But we always have such a long waiting list to get in to the program. We have to make the classes really full."

**Prekindergarten Program Length.** Full-day programs versus half-day programs is another issue facing prekindergarten in Texas. Texas pre-k programs are currently funded by the state for half day programs only. There is presently no definitive research to support full-day over half-day prekindergarten programs from a cognitive or academic gains perspective. However, as increasing numbers of families need full-day child care for their young children, the idea of offering full-day public prekindergarten in Texas is being explored. The Waco Independent School District in central Texas is presently conducting research in the area of prekindergarten program length. Project GOAL (Giving Opportunity for All-day Learning) is using district funds matched by private grant funds to pilot a three-year evaluation of the effects of full-day prekindergarten versus half-day programs. Evaluation of first year results of this project will be available in summer, 1998.

During telephone interviews by the researcher, she asked teachers and administrators their ideas about prekindergarten program length. Teachers tended to support full-day prekindergarten programs from a student learning perspective. "They need more time for learning," "I'd love it--you could give them a whole day of teaching," and "it would give them more time to learn to get along with each other." Administrators tended to support full-day more from the perspective of improving attendance
and enrollment, or of offering full-day child care. One principal remarked:

Pre-K needs to be all day. Our kids are already in care a lot. They may be left in day care at 6:30 in the morning, and then bussed to school at noon, then they go back to day care in the afternoon. We have some subsidized day care here, but a lot of it isn't good, and the bussing is really a down side. Way too many transitions for little kids. It would be great if we could give them a good environment here all day.

Another principal noted, "a full-day pre-K program can offer early intervention, such as social skills, print awareness, and reading to the children. Pre-K is more structured, more sequential than home or child care. It helps the children get ready to go on."

The issues mentioned above are but a few of those which will effect Texas prekindergarten programs in the coming years. Wide-scale study of prekindergarten programs is necessary to better explore these and related issues.

Implications

This study seeks to focus public attention on quality standards in existing prekindergarten programs in Texas. The study suggests the following implications for current Texas public prekindergarten programs.

Quality standards for early childhood education programs are well-researched and widely-recognized by many professionals in the field. Due to widespread media attention and dramatic new research in the area of brain development, the public is also becoming increasingly aware of the importance of quality standards in programs for young children. Public attention, however, has mainly focused on quality standards in early
child care settings, particularly for children in the age range of infants through three years. This study focuses attention on utilization of quality standards in prekindergarten programs offered in the setting of public schools.

The years prior to children's entry into the "formal" school system at grade one are crucial learning years (Begley, 1997; Jabs, 1996; Newberger, 1997). This study focuses on the importance of the prekindergarten programs in Texas in early learning integrated throughout all domains of child development. Too frequently, Texas pre-k programs are not supported in a positive manner by district program administrators. Consequently, the quality of the pre-k programs will suffer. When interviewed about the level of campus and district administrative support for prekindergarten programs, one teacher said, "they really don't support us. It's like they're saying to us you guys just go on over there and play—you're not important. They just ignore us." Another teacher noted, "administrators really treat pre-k teachers like McDonald's workers. We need an image change, but I don't know how to do that." "Our district always goes from the top down, with secondary schools most important," stated one prekindergarten teacher. "They don't realize they could fix a lot of things if they just concentrated on the young kids." Finally, a prekindergarten teacher noted, "administrators are really clueless when it comes to pre-k. They consider us somewhere out there in Babyland. It really is discouraging."

This study highlights one area of greatest need in Texas prekindergarten programs. High quality early childhood staff development is not currently offered consistently to all Texas prekindergarten teachers. While appropriate, ongoing staff development is widely
recognized as an indicator of high quality preschool programs (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1993), Texas Education Agency does not require any early childhood staff development of its prekindergarten teachers. Many smaller districts are ill-equipped geographically and financially to offer specific early childhood staff development to the few prekindergarten teachers it might employ—in some cases, only one pre-k teacher in the district. A state-wide system of high quality, appropriate ongoing staff development for prekindergarten teachers must be offered. Ideally, the state would also fund this staff development, to assure that smaller districts with few or only one prekindergarten teacher would not be financially penalized.

Finally, Texas prekindergarten programs must become standardized in certain areas to assure the opportunity for quality program implementation in every district. The Texas Education Agency needs to mandate that prekindergarten programs in Texas meet the following requirements, in order to consistently offer quality programs throughout the state: (a) a standard system of program evaluation, applied to pre-k programs in every district, (b) an appropriate, ongoing, multidimensional process of individual student evaluation applied to all pre-k students, (c) requirement and regulation of appropriate early childhood staff development for all prekindergarten teachers, (d) requirement of at least a minimal amount of early childhood staff development for all administrators who have responsibility for prekindergarten programs, (e) state teacher certification specific to early childhood, required for those teachers teaching in prekindergarten through grade three, (f) staff development for pre-k teachers that focuses on workable methods of family involvement in early education, and (g) resources and training for
prekindergarten teachers and program administrators to enable them to assist families of young children in recognizing standards of quality in early care and education programs.

Recommendations for Further Research

Several related issues need further research based upon the findings of this study.

1. More research must be conducted concerning parent perceptions about high quality prekindergarten programs. Current methods of educating families of prekindergarten students about quality standards in preschools should be evaluated. Currently, many families do not recognize quality preschool programs. Thus, they cannot be knowledgeable consumers of preschool programs for their young children. Increased family understanding of quality standards in early care and education programs will empower parents of prekindergarten students to make quality choices for their young children.

2. Research must be conducted in the effectiveness of various preschool curriculum models available for public prekindergarten programs. An effective method of comparing and evaluating various curriculum models must be developed and used in these studies. Texas prekindergarten programs can then consistently implement curriculum models which will offer highest quality education for young children.

3. Other prekindergarten program variables must be explored for their influence on program results. Some of these variables include length of program delivery (full-day versus half-day and full-year versus traditional nine-month calendar), the influence of adult-child ratios in prekindergarten classrooms, and the effects of campus configuration
(different grade levels included on individual campuses) on prekindergarten programs.
APPENDIX A

TEACHER EARLY CHILDHOOD BELIEFS SURVEY
TEACHER EARLY CHILDHOOD BELIEFS SURVEY

1. The prekindergarten instructional goals for physical, emotional, social and cognitive domains should be integrated into a seamless curriculum, not separated into distinct “subject areas.”

2. Children's early experiences (positive or negative) affect their later lives.

3. Curriculum goals for pre-k children should be based on the predictable sequences of growth and development that occur in young children.

4. In my capacity as pre-k teacher, I have little opportunity to influence children's later lives.

5. Individual variations within children's learning styles and development should be expected, valued and addressed in the pre-k classroom.
6. The curriculum I utilize in my pre-k classroom is integrated into all areas of child development—physical, emotional, social and cognitive—and not separated into distinct “subject areas.”

7. High quality early childhood programs should offer active, "hands-on" learning experiences that move from experiential to more symbolic as children develop.

8. The curriculum goals I develop in my pre-k classroom are based on principles of child development.

9. In my classroom, there are accepted methods which all children need to follow in order to demonstrate their achievements (such as: all children will be expected to write their names with pencil and paper, etc.).

10. Preschool teachers recognize that young children contribute to their own development and learning by constructing meaning from their daily experiences in various environments.
11. In my classroom, most of the activities in which children participate are quiet, "school-type" activities.

12. In my classroom, I teach established curriculum units based on discrete facts and information.

13. In quality early childhood programs, teachers need to recognize social and cultural influences on children's learning, and accept varied ways for children to express their achievements.

14. In my classroom, I try to keep my students active and busy at all times.

15. Pre-k teachers recognize that play supports cognitive development in children and also serves important functions in children's physical, emotional, and social development.
16. Teachers should encourage pre-k students to review and reflect on their daily experiences by providing time for this in the classroom.

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Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neither Agree nor Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

17. I expect all my pre-k students to have mastered the same skills and objectives by the end of the school year.

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Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neither Agree nor Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

18. Pre-k teachers should maintain high learning expectations for all children, regardless of their social/economic backgrounds or what language they speak.

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Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neither Agree nor Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

19. In my classroom, I expect all of my students to have successfully mastered all skill areas taught.

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Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neither Agree nor Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

20. In my classroom, I think that it is more important that a child be able to do traditional “school activities,” such as recognize the alphabet or write his name, than to do “play” activities such as building with blocks.

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Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neither Agree nor Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree
21. In my classroom, I provide time for play (in centers, outside, etc.) in addition to more formal traditional school activities.

Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree

22. Teachers understand and accept the differences that children demonstrate in modes of knowing, learning, and representing what they know.

Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree

23. In addition to providing early education, high quality early childhood programs will address health, safety and nutrition issues concerning their students.

Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree

24. High quality pre-k programs need to establish and maintain for children positive, consistent relationships between teachers and children.

Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree

25. In my district, pre-k curriculum and program assessment includes input from pre-k teachers and is conducted by district-level personnel trained in early childhood.

Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree
26. Assessment of the students in pre-k should be an ongoing process, should be performance-based, and should include different assessment methods besides paper and pencil tests.

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27. Our pre-k program addresses health, safety and nutrition issues that affect its students.

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28. In my class, the ratio of children to adults is 20 children to 2 adults (or lower).

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29. In my class, students are assessed using a standard report card system rather than alternative methods of assessment such as a portfolio.

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30. In my pre-k class, I am the primary adult interacting with my students for most of their class time nearly every day of the school year.

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31. I meet with students' families at least three times during the school year.

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32. In a high quality pre-k program, regularly scheduled staff development occurs on topics specific to working with young children.

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33. In my classroom, students are assessed individually or in small groups by taking them out of the main group of children.

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34. Pre-k students should be assessed by the regular teacher (rather than an outside evaluator) and the assessment should take place in the classroom, within the normal pre-k day.

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35. My community positively supports the pre-k program in my district.

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36. I attend staff development specific to early childhood education at least five times a year.

37. Pre-k teachers should participate in organizations oriented toward young children (such as NAEYC, K-TOT, ACEI, etc.).

38. Parents of pre-k students should be regularly informed of assessment results.

39. Pre-k curriculum should be evaluated regularly by a campus or district level specialist, utilizing input from the pre-k teacher(s).

40. An adult-child ratio of no more than 22 children to 2 adults should exist in the pre-k classroom.
41. A high quality pre-k program should involve parents in an effective and efficient manner.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neither Agree nor Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

42. Sufficient funding should be provided by the district to ensure the equipment, materials, and supplies necessary for a high quality pre-k program.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neither Agree nor Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

43. I participate in a professional organization specifically oriented towards young children (such as NAEYC, K-TOT, ACEI, etc.).

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neither Agree nor Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

44. In my classroom, the needs of students' families are considered frequently and effort is made to meet these needs.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neither Agree nor Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

45. In my classroom (on my campus) sufficient funding exists to provide the equipment, materials, and supplies necessary to operate a high quality pre-k classroom.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neither Agree nor Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree
46. In my classroom, the majority of families of my students are involved in their children's schooling in some fashion.

47. In my district, opportunities for collaboration with other early childhood professionals are utilized, both within the public school setting and within local child care settings.

48. The pre-k program should be responsive to the needs of families of children involved.

49. Positive, community-level support should exist for the pre-k program.

50. Opportunities for collaboration with other early childhood professionals should be utilized, both within a public school setting and within local child care settings.
Would you be willing to participate in a 5-10 minute telephone interview about the above survey?  YES ______ NO ______
(If "yes", please complete the following blanks.)

I will participate in a telephone interview about this survey. I can be reached at the following telephone number:
Phone Number to Call: _______________
Person to ask for: _______________
Best time to call: _______________
APPENDIX B
ADMINISTRATOR EARLY CHILDHOOD BELIEFS SURVEY
Administrator Early Childhood Beliefs Survey

1. The prekindergarten instructional goals for physical, emotional, social and cognitive domains should be integrated into a seamless curriculum, not separated into distinct "subject areas."

2. Children's early experiences (positive or negative) affect their later lives.

3. Curriculum goals for pre-k children should be based on the predictable sequences of growth and development that occur in young children.

4. Pre-k teachers substantially influence their students later lives.
5. Individual variations within children's learning styles and development should be expected, valued and addressed in the pre-k classroom.

6. The curriculum utilized in our pre-k classroom(s) is integrated into all areas of child development—physical, emotional, social and cognitive—and not separated into distinct "subject areas."

7. High quality early childhood programs should offer active, "hands-on" learning experiences that move from experiential to more symbolic as children develop.

8. The curriculum goals developed in our pre-k classroom(s) are based on principles of child development.

9. In our pre-k classroom(s), there are accepted methods which all children are expected to follow in order to demonstrate their achievements (such as: all children will be expected to write their names with pencil and paper, etc.).
10. Our preschool teachers generally recognize that young children contribute to their own development and learning by constructing meaning from their daily experiences in various environments.

11. In our pre-k classroom(s), most of the activities in which children participate are quiet, “school-type” activities.

12. In our pre-k classroom(s), teachers teach established curriculum units which are based on discrete facts and information.

13. In quality early childhood programs, teachers need to recognize social and cultural influences on children’s learning, and accept varied ways for children to express their achievements.

14. In our pre-k classroom(s), students are generally kept active and busy by the pre-k teacher(s) at all times.
15. Pre-k teachers recognize that play supports cognitive development in children and also serves important functions in children's physical, emotional, and social development.

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

17. In our pre-k class(s), all pre-k students are expected to have mastered the same skills and objectives by the end of the school year.

18. Pre-k teachers should maintain high learning expectations for all children, regardless of their social/economic backgrounds or what language they speak.

19. In our pre-k classroom(s), teachers expect all of their students to have successfully mastered all skill areas taught.
20. In our pre-k classroom(s), I think that it is more important that a child be able to do traditional “school activities,” such as recognize the alphabet or write his name, than to do “play” activities such as building with blocks.

21. In our pre-k classroom(s), time is provided for play (in centers, outside, etc.) in addition to more formal traditional school activities.

22. Teachers understand and accept the differences that children demonstrate in modes of knowing, learning, and representing what they know.

23. In addition to providing early education, high quality early childhood programs will address health, nutrition, and safety issues concerning their students.

24. High quality pre-k programs need to establish and maintain for children positive, consistent relationships between teachers and children.
25. In our district (on my campus), pre-k curriculum and program assessment includes input from pre-k teachers and is conducted by district-level personnel trained in early childhood education.

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26. Assessment of the students in pre-k should be an ongoing process, should be performance-based, and should include different assessment methods besides paper and pencil tests.

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27. Our pre-k program addresses health, safety and nutrition issues that affect its students.

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28. In our pre-k classroom(s), the ratio of children to adults is 20 children to 2 adults (or lower).

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29. In our pre-k class(s), students are assessed using a standard report card system rather than alternative methods of assessment such as a portfolio.

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30. In our pre-k classroom(s), one or two primary adults interact with students for most of their class time nearly every day of the school year.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

31. My pre-k teacher(s) meet(s) with students' families at least three times during the school year.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

32. In a high quality pre-k program, regularly scheduled staff development occurs on topics specific to working with young children.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

33. In our pre-k classroom(s), students are assessed either individually or in small groups by taking them out of the main group of children.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

34. Pre-k students should be assessed by the regular teacher (rather than an outside evaluator) and the assessment should take place in the classroom, within the normal pre-k day.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree
35. My community positively supports our district's pre-k program.

1  2  3  4  5
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neither Agree nor Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree

36. I attend staff development specific to early childhood education at least five times a year.

1  2  3  4  5
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neither Agree nor Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree

37. Pre-k teachers should participate in organizations oriented toward young children (such as NAEYC, K-TOT, ACEI).

1  2  3  4  5
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neither Agree nor Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree

38. Parents of pre-k students should be regularly informed of assessment results.

1  2  3  4  5
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neither Agree nor Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree

39. Pre-k curriculum should be evaluated regularly by a campus or district level specialist, utilizing input from the pre-k teacher(s).

1  2  3  4  5
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neither Agree nor Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree

40. An adult-child ratio of no more than 22 children to 2 adults should exist in the pre-k classroom.

1  2  3  4  5
Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neither Agree nor Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree
41. A high quality pre-k program should involve parents in an effective and efficient manner.

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42. Sufficient funding should be provided by the district to ensure the equipment, materials, and supplies necessary for a high quality program.

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43. I participate in a professional organization specifically oriented towards young children (such as NAEYC, Texas Association for Administrators of Programs for Young Children, etc.).

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44. In our pre-k classroom(s), the needs of students' families are considered frequently and effort is made to meet these needs.

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45. On my campus (in my district) sufficient funding exists to provide the equipment, materials, and supplies necessary to operate a high quality pre-k classroom.

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</table>
46. In our pre-k classroom(s), the majority of families of pre-k students are involved in their children's schooling in some fashion.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

47. In my district, opportunities for collaboration with early childhood professionals/experts are utilized, both within the public school setting and within local child care settings.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

48. The pre-k program should be responsive to the needs of families of children involved.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

49. Positive, community-level support should exist for the pre-k program.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

50. Opportunities for district/campus collaboration with early childhood professionals/experts should be utilized, both within a public school setting and within local child care settings.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree
Would you be willing to participate in a 5-10 minute telephone interview about the above survey?

YES _______ NO _______
(If "yes", please complete the following blanks.)

I will participate in a telephone interview about this survey. I can be reached at the following telephone number:

Phone Number to Call (include area code): ______________
Person to ask for: ______________
Best time to call: ______________
APPENDIX C
PARENT EARLY CHILDHOOD BELIEFS SURVEY
PARENT EARLY CHILDHOOD BELIEFS SURVEY

1. Pre-k teachers should realize that young children can make important learning discoveries on their own, without the teacher constantly directing them what to do.

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I don't really know anything about this.

2. I believe that young children can have different ways of learning and different ways of showing what they know, based on their cultures and on the values of their families.

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I don't really know anything about this.

3. Pre-k teachers should recognize that play is a very important part of how young children learn about the world.

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I don't really know anything about this.

4. In my child's class, there is about 1 adult for every 10 children in the program.

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I don't really know anything about this.
5. I believe that pre-k teachers should share frequently any special information about students, including report cards, checklists, and any other forms of testing that happen in school.

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I don’t really know anything about this.

6. I believe that enough money should be provided by the school district to make sure that good-quality equipment and materials are available in the pre-k classrooms.

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I don’t really know anything about this.

7. My child’s school has done as much as possible to make sure that each pre-k child is healthy, well-fed, and safe at school.

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I don’t really know anything about this.

8. My child’s teacher has shared information with me at least twice during the year about report cards, checklists or any testing on my child.

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I don’t really know anything about this.

9. I believe that my child’s pre-k classroom has enough good-quality materials and supplies.

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I don’t really know anything about this.
10. I believe that pre-k teachers should welcome and accept all families' contributions to the pre-k program.

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I don't really know anything about this.

11. My child's teacher recognizes the importance of play, and allows many opportunities for play during the school day.

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I don't really know anything about this.

12. I feel that my child's teacher welcomes the contributions that my family brings to my child's classroom.

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I don't really know anything about this.

13. My child's teacher allows lots of opportunities in the classroom for children to make their own discoveries, rather than always telling them how to do things.

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I don't really know anything about this.

14. My child's teacher seems to value all the children in his/her classroom, even if they are from a different culture.

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I don't really know anything about this.

15. I believe that pre-k classes should provide about adult (teacher or aide) for every 10 children in the class.

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I don't really know anything about this.
16. I believe that my child’s teacher has high expectations for all the children in his/her class, no matter what their cultures or backgrounds.

\[\begin{array}{cccccc} 
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 \\
\text{Strongly Disagree} & \text{Disagree} & \text{Neither Agree nor Disagree} & \text{Agree} & \text{Strongly Agree} \\
\end{array}\]

I don’t really know anything about this.

17. I believe that the pre-k programs should do whatever is necessary to ensure that pre-k students are healthy, well-fed, and safe in their classrooms. (Ind. #12)

\[\begin{array}{cccccc} 
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 \\
\text{Strongly Disagree} & \text{Disagree} & \text{Neither Agree nor Disagree} & \text{Agree} & \text{Strongly Agree} \\
\end{array}\]

I don’t really know anything about this.

18. My child’s pre-k teacher has different expectations for each child in his/her classroom, based on that child’s age and level of development. (Ind. #2)

\[\begin{array}{cccccc} 
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 \\
\text{Strongly Disagree} & \text{Disagree} & \text{Neither Agree nor Disagree} & \text{Agree} & \text{Strongly Agree} \\
\end{array}\]

I don’t really know anything about this.

19. Teachers should have high expectations for all the children in the class, no matter what the child’s culture or background. (Ind. #10)

\[\begin{array}{cccccc} 
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 \\
\text{Strongly Disagree} & \text{Disagree} & \text{Neither Agree nor Disagree} & \text{Agree} & \text{Strongly Agree} \\
\end{array}\]

I don’t really know anything about this.

20. I believe that pre-k teachers should have different expectations for children in their classes, based on the age and level of development of each child. (Ind. #2)

\[\begin{array}{cccccc} 
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 \\
\text{Strongly Disagree} & \text{Disagree} & \text{Neither Agree nor Disagree} & \text{Agree} & \text{Strongly Agree} \\
\end{array}\]

I don’t really know anything about this.
21. If I could have one improvement made in my child's pre-k class it would be:

22. The best thing about my child's pre-k class is:

23. The things I think are most important about high quality pre-k are:

24. My child attends the public school pre-k program for:
   1/2 day ______ Until about 3:00 _______ Until 5:00 or later ______
   ______ I'm not really sure about this.

25. I believe that the state should provide free, full-day pre-k for all children.
   ______ YES  ______ NO

26. If full-day pre-k were offered to my child at no charge, my child would participate in the program.
   ______ YES  ______ NO

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:
APPENDIX D

TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How many years have you taught pre-k?
2. What are your educational credentials?
3. Did you choose to teach pre-k, or was that grade level assigned to you by your principal?
4. How frequently have you attended pre-k/early childhood staff development during the 96-97 school year? What topic areas did you attend?
5. How do you view the role of teacher in pre-k?
6. What do you think are the most important factors in a high quality pre-k program?
7. Do you feel that you have positive support for the pre-k program at a campus level? At a district level?
8. How do you involve families in pre-k in your classroom?
9. Do you feel that you have adequate materials, supplies and equipment to ensure a quality pre-k classroom? Briefly describe your classroom.
10. How do you assess/evaluate your pre-k students' development?
11. What curriculum model does your classroom/campus/district follow?
12. Would you support a full-day state-funded pre-k program? Why?

   _____ yes  _____ no

OTHER COMMENTS:
APPENDIX E

ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
1. What are your educational credentials or areas of certification?

2. Have you attended any staff development or inservice during the 1996-97 school year that was specific to pre-k, kindergarten, or early childhood? What was the topic area?

3. Do you feel that your pre-k teachers are adequately prepared for teaching in a high quality pre-k classroom? If not, how would you like to see their education or staff development changed?

4. Do you feel that the pre-k program could be improved? How?

5. What do you perceive as important factors in a high-quality pre-k program?

6. What important qualities do you look for in an outstanding pre-k teacher?

7. How does your pre-k teacher assess students in his/her class? How is that assessment used?

8. Does your pre-k teacher use a specific curriculum with his/her students? What is it?

9. Would you support full-day state-funded pre-k? Why?

___ YES       ___ NO

Other Comments:
APPENDIX F

REVIEWING PANEL MEMBERS
### Reviewing Panel Members

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<tr>
<th>Reviewer</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. A. Baker</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>Baylor University</td>
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<tr>
<td>R. Boles</td>
<td>Pre-k Teacher</td>
<td>Waco I.S.D.</td>
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<tr>
<td>L. Briscoe</td>
<td>Pre-k Teacher</td>
<td>Waco I.S.D.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B. Bynum</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Waco I.S.D.</td>
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<tr>
<td>M. Edens</td>
<td>Pre-k Teacher</td>
<td>Waco I.S.D.</td>
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<tr>
<td>M. Garver</td>
<td>Pre-k Teacher</td>
<td>Waco I.S.D.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. G. Morrison</td>
<td>Prof., Velma Schmidt Endowed Chair</td>
<td>University of North Texas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. R. Stripling</td>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>Waco I.S.D.</td>
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<tr>
<td>P. Thomason</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Waco I.S.D.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. C. Whaley</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>Union College, Jackson, TN</td>
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