THE STATUS OF TRANSITIONAL FIRST GRADE PROGRAMS IN REGIONS 10 AND 11 IN NORTH CENTRAL TEXAS

DISSERTATION

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By

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The purposes of this study were to identify public school districts that currently offer, or are planning to offer, transitional first-grade programs, to describe existing transitional programs, to describe the genesis of transitional first-grade classes in the North Texas area, and to assist in the establishment of a networking system for schools in the North Central Texas area that currently have, or are planning to have, transitional first-grade classes.

The 158 school districts in Regions 10 and 11 were surveyed. The findings of the study indicate that about one-third of the districts offered transitional first-grade programs during the 1988-89 school year, and two-thirds of the districts saw a need for transitional first-grade classes. These transitional programs were implemented to meet the needs of children who had completed kindergarten but were not ready for regular first grade.

Transitional first-grade programs focus primarily on language arts and math skills for kindergarten and early first grade. While curriculum materials vary from district
to district, language arts is likely to be based on a whole-language approach, and math is likely to focus on manipulatives.

Kindergarten teacher observation is used in the screening procedures in the majority of the districts. A number of instruments are used in the transitional screening process. The Gesell School Readiness Inventory, used in 24% of the districts, is most popular. About one-half of the districts use an informal method of evaluating the transitional program. A pretest-posttest method is used in 32% of the districts, and a longitudinal student tracking method is used in 20% of the districts.

Of the 158 districts surveyed, 122, or 77%, of the districts are interested in being included in a networking system to exchange information about transitional first-grade programs.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Transitional first-grade classes have been used for a number of years as an alternative to placing children in the regular first-grade program for which they are not ready. Although completing kindergarten, some children have not made adequate progress and fall behind their peers in achievement. These children are often recommended for retention since they are not ready for first grade (Wolf & Kessler, 1987).

The transitional first grade is a class between kindergarten and first grade. The purpose of the program is to allow children to have an extra year to develop readiness for first grade. The Gesell Institute for Child Development suggests in its report Gift of Time (1982) that children who are not developmentally ready for first grade should spend a year in a transition or pre-first-grade class. Donafrio (1977) suggests that these children that are not ready for first grade be allowed to mark time until they are in step psychologically with their "behavioral and maturational peers."

However, the results of the existing research do not support the effectiveness of transitional first grades.
Gredler (1984) reviewed five studies that evaluated transitional first-grade classes. In four of the studies, children in the transition classes did not show gains over promoted students who met criteria for the transition class. In a study conducted during the 1985/1986 school year, Day (1986) showed no significant difference in achievement between children in transitional first grade and at-risk students placed in regular first grade.

Bell (1972) found that children placed in transition classes had lower self-esteem and lower self-confidence than at-risk children who were placed in first grade. However, Reed (1987) found that students in transitional first grade developed a more positive attitude toward school, self, and others than the students that qualified for the transition class but were in regular first grade.

Several elementary schools in the North Central Texas area have implemented transition classes for students that have completed kindergarten but are "not ready" for first grade. One purpose of this study was to determine which school districts in Region 10 and Region 11 in North Central Texas have such programs, how they have identified students for the programs, how they developed their programs, how the curriculum is structured, and how the programs are evaluated. The Texas Education Agency does not have information about what districts in Texas are doing in regard to transition programs.
Another outcome of the study was assistance in the establishment of a networking system between school districts in Regions 10 and 11. This networking system can help educators in elementary schools that have planned to start transitional programs, and schools with transitional programs could share information gained from their experience with transitional first-grade classes.

There are 18 counties and 158 independent school districts in Regions 10 and 11 in North Central Texas. Each district was surveyed regarding what it is doing for students who have completed kindergarten but are not ready for first grade.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was to describe the status of the transitional first-grade programs existing in public schools in Regions 10 and 11 in North Central Texas.

Purposes of the Study

The purposes of this study included the following:

1. To identify the public school districts that currently offer transitional first-grade programs and districts that are making plans to implement such programs.

2. To describe existing transitional programs including how the programs originated, how students are identified for the programs, format of curriculum used in each program, and evaluation of the transitional programs.
3. To describe the genesis of transitional first grade classes in the North Central Texas area.

4. To assist in establishment of a networking system for school districts in the North Central Texas area that currently have or are planning to have transitional first-grade classes.

Research Questions

In order to accomplish the stated purposes, attention was focused specifically on the following research questions.

1. Which public school districts in Regions 10 and 11 in North Central Texas offer or plan to offer transitional first-grade classes?

2. How are these transitional programs being developed, implemented, and evaluated; and how are students identified for the programs?

3. How and where did the trend toward transitional first grades begin in the North Central Texas area?

4. What information can be provided and exchanged through a networking system among public schools in North Central Texas?

Significance of the Study

At the end of kindergarten, some children are not ready for first grade. Many schools have developed alternatives to the retention or promotion choice that must be made at
the end of kindergarten for these children (Wolf & Kessler, 1987). The Texas Education Agency has not collected data on transitional first-grade classes in Texas. This study is significant in that it will be helpful to public school districts that wish to implement or improve existing transitional programs.

Definition of Terms

**Transitional First Grade** or pre-first grade: a grade between kindergarten and regular first grade for students that have completed kindergarten but need an extra year to develop readiness for first grade.

**At-risk Students:** students identified as lacking prerequisite skills needed to be successful in school. At-risk students may need early intervention to prevent school failure.

**Developmental Age:** the age at which a child is behaving. The Gesell School Readiness Test assesses a child’s developmental or behavioral age (Ames, 1967).

**Readiness:** ability to cope with school environment physically, socially, emotionally, and academically without undue stress.

**Overplacement:** being over one’s head—being in a school situation which is causing strain to the total child (Zinski, 1983).
Retention: the practice of requiring a student who has been in a given grade level for a full school year to remain at that level for a subsequent school year.

Limitations

The analysis is exclusively quantitative and descriptive of public school districts in Regions 10 and 11 in North Central Texas.
CHAPTER REFERENCE LIST


CHAPTER 2

SYNTHESIS OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

Grading of children and materials was unknown in early American elementary schools. The curriculum was limited largely to the three Rs, instruction was largely individual, and the administrative problems were fairly simple. Then mass education was extended to all children, compulsory attendance was enforced, and the functions of the elementary school broadened. Administrative problems became complex, enrollments multiplied, and instruction fell into a lock step which resulted in graded schools. The graded system was advocated because pupils in the same grade could have the same books regardless of their capacity or achievement (Betts, 1946).

A pervasive and recurring issue in education is the age at which a child should enter the formal educational system. When educators consider how to determine the best entrance age, there are many factors that may influence their thinking (Wolf & Kessler, 1987). Educational practice is influenced by the social, economic, and political tenor of the times. Individual states have established entrance age to first grade by statute. In the early 1900s, the age in
Texas for even permitting school entry was eight years. This was lowered by state law to age seven in 1907-1908. In 1930-1931, this was dropped to age six, but the mandatory age remained at age seven. Today provisions exist for children as young as three years old (Moore & Moore, 1975).

Age is a factor commonly associated with school readiness, but the issue of a specific entrance age is still unresolved. It is unfair to demand the same results from an entire class based on the false assumption that all pupils of a particular age are fundamentally alike and that pupil progress can be calendar-dictated (Betts, 1946). Problems of what to do when a child does not progress as expected have resulted from the graded system (Cook & Clymer, 1982).

Grade retention has a long history in American education. There has been much research of this subject; however, the review of this research, most of which was conducted prior to 1980, has been quite inadequate for making valid inferences about the effects of grade retention (Jackson, 1975). Retention in first grade is not only ineffective, but could have long-term detrimental effects on personal and social adjustment (Dobbs & Neville, 1967). The work of students in kindergarten through third grade must be one of constant success. Failure of students to succeed with learning tasks should be regarded as failure of the curriculum rather than failure of the student. Some children will need more time and assistance to complete
certain learning tasks than will others. However, repeating a grade at this level is an inappropriate procedure (Bloom, 1981).

Curriculum Trends

Practices in kindergarten programs are frequently inconsistent with what is known about child development. Discrepancies between what is known and what is practiced show up in several trends that warrant concern. One trend is to "push down" to the kindergarten curriculum content traditionally used in first grade (Katz, 1988).

Another trend is the establishment of transitional classes for entering or exiting kindergarten children who fall below their peers developmentally (Ames & Ilg, 1979). The trend toward development of transitional classes reflects the view that the children should "fit" the curriculum; yet current research suggests that the order should be reversed. The curriculum should be adapted to the characteristics of the children (Katz, 1988).

From 1920 to 1950, early childhood educators advocated kindergarten programs that included free and organized play, stories, art, music, snacks, crafts, and rest periods (Wolf & Kessler, 1987). Today, kindergarten programs have become more skill-oriented and have less play time allocated. In many kindergartens, children can be seen doing worksheets or "reading" from flash cards. Young children can be coaxed
into work of this nature, but this does not mean that they should be (Katz, 1988).

This trend to push down curriculum content is but one of the results of a syndrome described in *The Hurried Child*. David Elkind (1981) agrees that the children of the eighties are being forced to grow up too fast and to live up to parental expectations that push older behaviors into early childhood.

In a survey reported by Wolf and Kessler (1987), Nall demonstrates the impact of the kindergarten revolution that has been in motion for the past 20 years. Nall conducted a survey of 400 kindergarten teachers in 200 midwestern cities in 1983. He found that the majority of children entering kindergarten today have been enrolled in a day-care center or nursery school. As a result, parents' expectations are higher and children are more advanced academically. Kindergarten programs have become more skill-oriented as a result of this increased preschool experience.

Chronological Age as Criterion for School Entrance

In most public schools in the United States, the only criterion for admission is chronological age as of a specified school calendar date. This requirement has been criticized for not taking into account differing rates of cognitive and emotional development among children that may affect their school performance (Kinard & Reinherz, 1986).
Two relevant principles have gained general acceptance in the area of child development. One of these is that the benefit a child derives from opportunities to acquire a skill depends to a large extent upon his level of maturity when the opportunities are provided. The second principle is that in learning something new, a child will gain as much competence from a short period of practice when he is older as he would gain from a longer period of exercise at a younger age (Carroll, 1963). If these assumptions are valid, it is questionable whether schools make the best use of a child's time when they introduce curricular content which could be more easily mastered a few months later.

Most of the opinions on the age of entrance to first grade seem to be based on the accepted age at which a child is ready to read, since reading is the basis of most school work. The traditional stage of development that allows for success with beginning reading is defined by a mental age of approximately six and one half years (Durkin, 1980). This connection between mental age and reading readiness is based on a reading achievement report by Morphett and Washburne (1931). They concluded:

It seems safe to state that, by postponing the teaching of reading until children reach a mental age level of six and a half years, teachers can greatly decrease the chances of failure and discouragement and can correspondingly increase their efficiency. (p. 503)

Their proposal fit with the temper of the times in which it was made. It gave support to postponement of first grade
because most children entering first grade do not have a mental age of six and one half years. It also supported the theory that development occurs in stages, and it honored the testing movement by being precise and objective (Durkin, 1980; Pechstein & Zornow, 1922).

Surveys of state entrance age policies for public schools show a definite trend toward requirements for children to be older upon entrance to first grade. These changes have resulted from educators’ belief that younger children experience more difficulty with school requirements and are retained more often (Wolf & Kessler, 1987).

Ayres (1909) focused attention on entrance age because of the high rate of nonpromotion found in schools, particularly in the first grade. One quarter of all children might be expected to be immature for first grade. Fifty percent of any given population will be expected to fall above the norm, 50% below. Not everyone below the norm is in trouble. The 25% just below the mean are usually considered to be near enough the mean that we do not need to worry about them. So, according to the normal curve, only 25% should be seriously immature. If we are talking about the six year old, this means that 25% of these children are immature for the work of first grade, which is the grade in which the law usually places them (Ames, Gillespie, & Streff, 1972). They went on to say:
The situation is worsened by the fact that, considering the somewhat formal, fixed, and often fairly demanding schedule of many first grades, not even all children who are fully up to a six-year level of maturity actually can make it in school. So that in real life, regardless of theoretical expectations, often substantially more than the expected 25 percent of children are actually not fully ready for first grade when they begin. (pp. 107-108)

Forty percent of the children placed in kindergarten were found to be overplaced (Gesell, Ilg, & Ames, 1976). Age alone is not an adequate basis for determining the time of school entrance (Ames, 1967).

Schools have clung to chronological age at an arbitrary cutoff date of entrance as a measure of deciding on the time of starting school (Gesell et al., 1976). Hymes (1964) believes that the ideal entry age to school is age three. He believes that children at three are ripe for school because developmentally they are becoming independent of parents and they have a hunger for intellectual stimulation.

Rowland and Nelson (1969) report that flexibility should be used when determining school entry age. They studied 57 districts that had policies of variable admission age. The age range for admission extended from five years and five months to six years. Individual tests were used to assess readiness for school, mental ability, and social maturity. Rowland and Nelson felt that the use of variable admission age policies would become more widespread as measurement procedures were refined.
In the *Phi Delta Kappan* article "Let's Give Boys a Break" (1959), Frank Pauly recommended that boys be admitted later than girls. Among implications of his findings, Pauly listed admitting boys about six months later than girls.

Beattie (1970) reviewed 20 studies from the 1930s through the 1970s that researched the effects of age of initial entry into schooling. Studies that focused on the effect of early entry into first grade on academic achievement have indicated that not only chronological age, but mental age, adjustment, and I.Q. are determining factors in success. Other researchers stated that although achievement is related to entrance age, this does not mean that raising the minimum entrance age would prove profitable. Research on early entry as related to school adjustment was also reported by Beattie. Findings showed that children that entered kindergarten or first grade at an early age had adjustment problems compared to later entrants. Another study indicated that earlier entrants had more speech defects, nervous indications, and personal and social maladjustments than did older entrants.

Weinstein (1968) stressed the importance of relative school age of children. Children who start first grade young compared to their classmates are more likely to be seen as emotionally disturbed by school personnel and are more likely to fail a grade. If the assumption that relative age rather than absolute age is valid, changing the
cut-off date would not solve the problem as long as first graders show so much variability in chronological age.

Thier (1967) advocated the ungraded school system. He proposed that children be admitted to school on their birthdays. Instruction would be individualized and children could start school as early as three years of age. Thier believed that the "birthday school" would help the ungraded approach get off to a smooth start.

A study conducted by Dickinson and Larson (1963) found mental age to be a much better predictor of achievement than I.Q. in fourth grade. This study was performed to determine the effects of chronological age at the time of entering first grade on later school development.

The results of Kinard and Reinherz's longitudinal study (1986) suggest that the use of chronological age as the only eligibility criterion for school entry may result in some children being admitted to school who are not cognitively or emotionally ready. While there were no age differences with respect to performance and adjustment in subsequent years, there were age group differences on cognitive ability at school entry. The youngest group had the lowest scores and the oldest group had the highest scores.

Inez King (1955) conducted a study to determine some of the possible effects that chronological age at the time of entrance to grade one has on the achievement of students in
their sixth year of school. King found that younger entrants fall below grade-level standards, and they are more likely to have to repeat a grade than older entrants. King also found that average daily attendance was lower among the younger entrants, and younger entrants were more likely to show poor personal and social adjustment in school.

Davis, Trimble, and Vincent (1980) compared students that entered first grade at age five with students that entered first grade at age six. They found that age of entrance into first grade was significantly related to achievement at the first-grade level and at the fourth-grade level. At the eighth-grade level, age of entrance into first grade was significantly related to achievement in the area of reading. Davis et al. recommend that educational leaders question policies that allow five year olds to enter first grade with no specific indication of readiness.

Studies on age entrance to school are mixed. Some research shows that early entrance was beneficial to children. Some reports show that children who were allowed to enter school early were at a disadvantage. Careful screening of children should be done prior to admitting children to school early (Ammons & Goodlad, 1955).

In The Appropriate Placement School: A Sophisticated Nongraded Curriculum, (1965) Brown states:

The whole process of education gets off to a bad start with the practice of admitting children into first grade when they are six years old. The use of a
non-intellective factor such as age to determine when a child will enter school sets the stage for inflexible education and conformity. The system used in Siam, where a child cannot start school until he can reach across the top of his head with his right arm and touch the lobe of his left ear, is as sensible as using the age of the child to determine when he is ready for school. (p. 50)

Regardless, most public schools continue to enroll children on the basis of their chronological age. This age requirement is set by state statutes that do not always reflect the findings of research (Ames, 1981).

Readiness

Washburne became the facilitator for the application and perpetuation of the maturity or ripening concept as it relates to readiness for school. As a result, educators believed that children would develop readiness over time, and they developed readiness activities with which students might pass time until they matured or ripened (Wolf & Kessler, 1987).

In Morphett and Washburne's 1931 report, a study was described in which the researchers worked to determine the period in the development of children when there is the best chance of their learning to read readily. Along with the concept of mental age and readiness came the development of methods to assess that readiness (Wolf & Kessler, 1987).

The term reading readiness was first used in the professional literature in the 1920s. In the study of early reading problems during the 1920s and 1930s, the single
factor found to cause reading difficulty was that first
graders were not ready when instruction began (Durkin,
1980). Children who are expected to perform at a level for
which they are not ready has resulted in many school
difficulties. Ames and Ilg (1979) reported that
chronological age is no guarantee of reading readiness.
Development takes place in stages that follow one another in
a predictable order and growth from one stage to the next
results from maturation which occurs with the passing of
time (Gesell et al., 1976).

Readiness for school is the basis for happiness in
school and for good school performance. Both happiness and
good achievement can be seriously threatened if a child is
not ready for school (Brenner, 1957). The Gesell tests
reflect a maturationist theory of development. These
theorists view readiness behavior as a function of structure
changing in a patterned and predictable way. These stages
of readiness development are considered to be similar from
child to child (Meisels, 1987).

Some symptoms of unreadiness are restlessness, crying,
short attention span, struggling to do work, failure to
participate, and disrupting other children (Gesell et al.,
1976). If children enter the school system after reaching
this readiness stage, frustration could be prevented.

Brenner (1957) has outlined traits considered to
constitute school readiness. These traits include:
(a) physical size, (b) counting ability, (c) reading and writing one's name, (d) verbal facility, (e) intelligence, (f) sociability, and (g) chronological age. Often when talking about readiness for school, educators are talking about reading readiness. There is no doubt that reading is one of the fundamentals in school and throughout life. However, readiness for school is more than just reading readiness.

The mental age concept of readiness has been accepted as being applicable to all children in all schools (Morphett & Washburne, 1931). Gates and Bond (1936) raised questions about this concept when describing the reading achievement found in four first grades. The ten lowest achievers were identified and assigned to tutors. Three months later they were all enjoying success. Gates and Bond stressed the importance of adjusting for individual differences rather than delaying the introduction of reading. Gates and Bond concluded: "The optimum time of beginning reading is not entirely dependent upon the nature of the child himself, but it is in a large measure determined by the nature of the reading program" (p. 684). Gates reached the same conclusion in another study reported in 1937 that examined different methods of teaching reading.

When it became widely accepted in the 1930s that most children entering first grade were unready to read and that postponing instruction would ensure their being ready later,
reading readiness programs were developed (Durkin, 1980). Teachers placed great faith in reading readiness workbooks and test results and found it most efficient to teach the whole class readiness material. The theories of Dr. Arnold Gesell were used to justify the need for readiness. The concept of readiness gradually changed from growing into readiness to teaching readiness skills (Wolf & Kessler, 1987).

Betts (1946) stated that the most widely quoted study on reading readiness was that of Morphett and Washburne which stressed the mental age of six and one half years as a prerequisite to reading. Downing (1963) states that the necessary mental age for reading readiness may be much younger than six years when children are permitted the greater ease and freedom of expression provided by the equipment used in his study.

Bruner (1960) questioned the view of readiness as some magic moment before which it is useless to try to teach the child. He wrote, "... any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development" (p. 33). Bruner was discussing how educators could organize and present instruction in mathematics and science, but his statement was generalized to the learning potential of young children (Wolf & Kessler, 1987).
Gates' articles from the 1930s were not noted until after the Sputnik era when educational emphasis in the United States shifted to teaching more and at an earlier school level. Lammers and VanWie published a report in 1962 about children who began reading during their preschool years and in kindergarten. They stated that "research clearly shows that it is not necessary to wait for readiness. Readiness can be developed by good teaching" (p. 350).

Educators have tried a number of approaches to address the concerns that stem from the fact that children learn at different rates and have different readiness skills when entering public school. Those who claim that readiness is a matter of unfolding growth that occurs from within feel that there is little we can do to develop readiness. Those who claim that readiness is largely a result of environment, education, and teaching methods believe we must provide a rich environment with sound teaching. There is no use in just waiting. A joint consideration is more consistent with holistic thinking. "A child's nature and nurture never act independently. Growth is a result of both. Readiness is the result of growth due to hereditary and environmental (nurture) interactions" (Brenner, 1957, p. 119).
Developmental Placement

Students of child growth and development have expressed the view that development corresponds with maturational change and predetermined growth patterns. Readiness is seen as a biological function that cannot be hurried. This view of child development has its origins in the writings of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century educators. Rousseau believed that nothing is useful or good for a child which is "unbefitting to his age." This view of development postulates that all development is made up of a series of sequential stages which occur in their own time (Rusk, 1926). These early concepts about development were expanded in the 1930s and 1940s by Gesell. Gesell's point of view is used as a rationale for postponement of school admission for children and as support of the child-centered approach to educating young children (Wolf & Kessler, 1987).

Gesell's developmental approach had great influence on the child development movement, and his concept of maturation gained support from behavioral scientists and educators. The Gesell Institute of Child Development was founded in 1950. Early studies conducted at the Gesell Institute suggested the prevalence of overplacement in school. "It is our position that through proper school placement perhaps 50 percent of school failures can be remedied or prevented" (Ilg, Ames, Haines, & Gillespie, 1978, p. 12). A school can sharply reduce the number of
children who need remedial help by using developmental placement. In a primary school in Visalia, California, there were 58 referrals for special help from their student population of 500 in one year. After using developmental placement for one year, there were only eight referrals (Ilg et al., 1978). Ames and Ilg (1979) went on to say "... our recommendation for first-graders as for kindergarten boys and girls is that those in charge be certain that before starting first grade a child be not merely fully six years old, but that he or she be developmentally up to the demands of first grade" (PP. 73, 75).

Teachers have struggled through many years of trying to teach the unready child, often with little success. Four basic beliefs have emerged from the Gesell Institute of Child Development. They are:

1. Approximately 50% of children in school are overplaced.

2. Younger children have more difficulty in school.

3. Children should be given an individual behavior examination to assess his or her performance to determine whether the child is ready for school.

4. A developmental approach should direct the kindergarten curriculum (Wolf & Kessler, 1987).

Many children today are placed in a grade which is far beyond their ability and maturity levels.
And actually many of them escape. Perhaps not literally. They go to school everyday and sit in the seat assigned to them. They escape by not doing the work requested, by not "behaving" in class, by daydreaming, by looking out the window, by not holding up physically and emotionally in the classroom and/or at home. (Ames, 1967, pp. 4-5)

It is not the child's age in years which proves the best clue as to whether or not he is ready for the work of a given grade. The very best measure of readiness for work of any grade is behavioral or developmental age. A boy or girl could be seven years old, yet developmentally he or she could be behaving like a five year old. Thus, he belongs in kindergarten with other five year olds, not in second grade where most states would place him (Ames, 1967).

Piaget concluded from his studies that the individual passes through four main stages of cognitive development in the maturation process. The four factors that influence the sequential progression through these levels are (a) maturation, (b) physical experience, (c) social experience, and (d) equilibration (Sund, 1976).

Ames and Gillespie (1970) state that no child should begin school until he is ready. We know that infants do not all learn to walk and talk at the same age. But as the child grows older, we forget our common sense and assume that by reaching a certain birthday age a child automatically becomes ready for the work of a certain school grade. More than half the children referred to the Gesell Institute of Child Development, because they were having
trouble in school were overplaced. That is, they were not developmentally ready for the grade in which their chronological age placed them (Ames & Ilg, 1963).

Ames and Ilg (1963) believe that all children should be assessed developmentally before school placement occurs. The battery that they propose consists of the following: Interview; Writing Name, Address, Letters, Numbers; Copy Forms; Gesell Incomplete Man Test; Right and Left Tests; Monroe Visual I and Visual III; Naming Animals; Giving Home and School Preferences; and Lowenfield Mosaic Test. They have made tables of norms available.

In The Hurried Child (1981), David Elkind argues that society is forcing today's children to achieve earlier and to grow up too fast. Among studies that Elkind cites to support his conclusions is one by Phinney, who found that delaying kindergarten until children were developmentally ready had positive effects on the children she observed (Elkind, 1981).

In the Fairview school system in Oklahoma, preschool screening is used to detect immature behavior in youngsters, and they recommend delayed entry into kindergarten for some. During the 1982-1983 school year, Fairview added a transitional first-grade class which lessened the need for delaying the entrance of children into kindergarten, or for retaining them another year (Friesen, 1984).
Dorothy Levenson (1977) is a strong supporter of developmental placement. After developmental testing, children repeat kindergarten or are placed in a pre-first grade or transition grade. This allows the child time to develop. School is a complex society, and many demands are made of children. Success in school means that a child can cope physically, socially, and emotionally and without undue stress.

Elkind (1981) concludes that young children think and learn differently than do older children and adults. For this reason, the four year old is not developmentally ready for a formal educational system.

In a study conducted by Kaufman and Kaufman (1972) the Gesell School Readiness Test was found to be closely associated with performance in first grade. The fact that this test is an excellent predictor of achievement does not imply that low-scoring children should be placed back in kindergarten or into transitional classes.

Retention

By the end of the Civil War, urban schools had organized their students into grades with goals expressed for each level. During the following 70 years, the rural schools followed suit. It was with this organization of the school into grade levels that the issue of retention first arose (Holmes & Matthews, 1984). The question of whether to
retain low-achieving and/or immature students in elementary grades has been a persistent concern of educators. Ayres (1909) reported the first comprehensive study of student achievement in his book *Laggards in Our Schools*. Since that time, hundreds of articles have been written both for and against nonpromotion. These studies have reported inconsistent findings and conclusions (Holmes & Matthews, 1984).

Retention is the practice of requiring a student who has been in a given grade level for a full year to remain at that level for a subsequent school year. Retention is widespread and involves many students. The retention rates vary substantially from state to state (Jackson, 1975).

Repeating a grade in school has fallen into disrepute in some quarters. Opponents of repeating offer various arguments for their position. Some argue that repeating does not work; children do not get better grades after repeating. Others argue that repeating harms children emotionally; children are forced to face failure, and also they are not able to adapt socially to association with children younger than themselves. Still others argue that parents do not like to have their children repeat; in many communities success in school is a status symbol. (Ames & Scott, 1969, p. 431)

Many schools have adopted policies of continuous progress for all students. These policies are based on the theory that each student does his best work when he is working with others of his age. These policies also conform with proved theories of child growth and development. Schools must assume responsibility for providing at each
grade level the type of instruction and the kind of experiences that will assure each student of maximum growth when this type of policy is adopted (Heffernan, 1952).

Bloom (1981) states that the work of students in kindergarten through third grade must be one of constant success. Failure of students to succeed with learning tasks should be regarded as failure of the curriculum rather than failure of the students. Some children will need more time and assistance to complete certain learning tasks than others will. However, repeating a grade or a year of work at this level would seem to be inappropriate. Bloom suggests the ungraded school as the solution to this problem.

There is a considerable body of research which points clearly to the fact that slow-learning children profit significantly more from promotion than from nonpromotion. Students attain higher achievement levels when promoted, display more positive attitudes, are less prone to discipline problems, and appear to be better adjusted socially (Goodlad, 1962). Goodlad cites these arguments in support of his position:

The possibility of nonpromotion is a threat that constitutes negative motivation. Children learn best under conditions of positive motivation and therefore should be promoted.

Children distribute themselves from poor to excellent on each of many school endeavors in which they engage, usually with only slight variations from child to child on the continuum. To average their attainments is
unrealistic. To determine arbitrary cutting points for passing or failing demands a refinement in judgement that defies human capacities.

The presence of older, repeating children in a classroom decreases group homogeneity. Learning is enhanced when children move on to new endeavors instead of experiencing the dullness and boredom of repetition.

Grade repetition results in over-agenseness which, in turn, produces behavior problems requiring special disciplinary action.

Promotion retains approximately equal chronological age as a common factor and results in improved personal and social relationships. (Goodlad, 1962, p. 34)

Repeating a grade is effective when students are immature and overplaced, but it cannot be expected to solve all problems (Ilg, Ames, Haines, and Gillespie, 1978). In a study by Joan Ames Chase of 65 retained first-, second-, and third-grade boys and girls, teachers felt that retention had met the needs of 75% of the children and had produced no emotional upset whatsoever in 78% of them. She found only temporary upset in 16% more. Ninety-five percent of the parents favoring retention reported that their children liked school better and felt more confident and successful than they had felt the year before. Ames also reported on a study of over 400 parents of children who had repeated a grade in Jefferson, Iowa. Eighty-seven percent of the parents felt that the good effects of retention definitely outweighed the bad. Ninety percent believed that the retention was justified and 89% never regretted the decision (Ames, 1981).
In 1909 Ayres reported that the average rate of nonpromotion was 16%. In 1933 Caswell found that the rate of nonpromotion in seven states was 10% (Heffernan, 1952). During the 1940s and 1950s retention rates declined more sharply, since this was a period of increased interest in social promotions. With the growing demand for minimum competency of the 1970s and 1980s, retention rates are on the increase. At the present time, the average retention rate in elementary schools across the nation is 12 to 15% (Wolf & Kessler, 1987).

Holmes and Matthews (1984) reviewed 650 studies on the promotion/retention issue. They concluded that "those who continue to retain pupils at grade level do so despite cumulative research evidence showing that the potential for negative effects consistently outweighs positive outcomes" (p. 232). Reiter (1973) concluded that the research tells us that "how the pupil is promoted or retained is more important than whether he is" (p. 20). He found that nonpromotion and social promotion have negative effects.

Jackson (1975) conducted a review of the research on grade retention. He concluded that much of the research was of poor quality and contained major flaws. He stated that it provided only mixed results. In conclusion, Jackson stated, "Thus, those educators who retain pupils in a grade do so without valid research evidence to indicate that such treatment will provide greater benefit to students with
academic or adjustment difficulties than will promotion to the next grade" (p. 627).

Heffernan (1952) in a review of research on retention, claimed that students who repeat a grade are no more successful than children of like ability who are promoted. On the whole, the results of nonpromotion are shown to be not greater mastery of subject matter, but less; not greater homogeneity of mental ability in the grade, but greater diversity. Nonpromotion is devastating to the personality of children. It deadens initiative, paralyzes the will to achieve, destroys, the sense of security and acceptance in the family circle, and promotes truancy and delinquency. (p. 24)

Koons (1977) feels that schools should be made to fit the children, not the pupils made to fit the schools. Passing children to the next grade when they are behind does not necessarily deny them opportunities to learn, if the school will provide for individual differences. "Regularly promoted low-achieving children score higher on achievement tests than do similar retained students after they spend an additional year in a grade" (p. 702).

In a 1977 study by Finlayson, self-concept was found not to be negatively affected by grade repetition. Finlayson concluded that nonpromotion in schools may be a valid option for back-to-the-basics advocates.

Learning is an interactive process. Teachers and other school staff must share the responsibility for a student's failure unless they have taken all measures at their disposal to help advance his or her learning. Retention suggests that the student is solely responsible and is therefore a punishment rather than a solution to a student's difficulties. (Casanova, 1986, p. 15)
Transitional First Grade

Transitional first-grade classes have been instituted in several school districts throughout the country as an alternative to repeating kindergarten or spending two years in regular first grade (Zinski, 1983). The concept of transitional first-grade classes draws heavily from the developmental theory of Gesell (Wolf & Kessler, 1987). Much of Gesell's writing reinforced the work of Hall which stressed that development occurs through stages whose sequence is predetermined and inevitable (Gesell, 1928). Gesell's normative or developmental approach had great influence on the child development movement, and his concept of maturation gained acceptance among educators and behavioral scientists. Gesell used the term maturation to represent the endogenous regulatory mechanisms responsible for determining the essential direction of all the child's development, including that conditioned in part by enculturation and learning (Gesell, 1928). The developmental growth pattern could differ dramatically from child to child, and each developmental stage could predict the degree of success a child would be expected to experience at certain tasks. To expose a child to tasks that are above his or her development level is a waste of time. The child should be held back from such tasks until the appropriate stage of readiness is reached. This delay might necessitate more levels of schooling prior to entering
a regular first-grade program. Gesell suggested that children be retained in regular first grade until they are developmentally ready to progress or that they be placed in a transitional or pre-first-grade program prior to regular first grade (Ames, 1967).

A transitional first grade is an alternative educational program for children who do not meet the minimum entry academic requirements for first grade. The purpose of a transitional first grade is to provide an appropriate program for children who need an extended time to develop skills necessary for their success in a formal first-grade class. These children are considered to be "at risk" for first-grade retention and are identified for placement in the transitional class at the end of kindergarten (Zinski, 1983).

It is Gesell's position that through proper school placement, 50% of school failures can be prevented (Ames, 1967). Gesell does advocate grade retention as a possible intervention, but he believes this would be unnecessary if children were not forced to begin first grade before they were developmentally ready. The assumption that all children are ready to read at age six is inaccurate (Ames, Gillespie, Haines, & Ilg, 1929).

Transition classes were used in a number of large schools in the 1940s but the concept did not become widespread at that time (Gredler, 1984). A study of the
transition class was conducted in 1950 in the Detroit city schools. It was found that over a period of three years, children who remained in the regular class achieved at a significantly higher level in reading. Gredler (1984) found in the Quincy, Illinois schools that children were placed in the transition room for a variable time period. This transitional program emphasized integration of the child back into the regular class without always being held back a full year. It was reported that this type of program improved the academic performance of many of the children.

Gredler (1984) reported on a study conducted in a Detroit suburban school district. The results of this two-year study showed that at-risk students in regular classes made greater achievement in reading than did students placed in the readiness room. It was also reported that students showed a loss of self-esteem and self-confidence compared to the at-risk students who were mainstreamed.

Gredler (1984) reviewed a study conducted in a Washington school system that had operated a transitional program for 12 years. The children at this school were placed in the transition class based on two factors--teacher recommendation and low scores on the Metropolitan Readiness Test. Students were promoted from the transition class to regular first grade. Children who had been in the transition class were compared during their regular first-grade year with other first-grade students. It was found
that even with the extra year in the transitional program, these students were not better in reading achievement than younger children who had only one year of school. Gredler (1984) also reported on a comparison made of transition-room students to students who qualified for the transitional program but were placed in regular first grade. This study was conducted in Roseville, Minnesota. Again, no differences in academic achievement were found between the two groups, although scores for reading achievement were somewhat better for the group in the transitional program.

Zinski (1983) conducted a study to determine if participation in a pre-first-grade transitional program would be more effective than grade repetition in enhancing first-grade readiness. Transition repeaters at the end of their first-grade year were compared to nontransition repeaters at the end of their second first-grade year on standardized reading and language achievement tests and on reading levels in the Holt series. Results indicated no significant difference in the scores of the two groups. Zinski did point out that students participating in the transitional program maintained a forward progression without the experience of not being able to compete and consequently failing first grade. First-grade repeaters were faced with failure and this was verified by their having to repeat the same curriculum a second time.
Bell (1972) compared the progress of children in the Readiness Room Program in six elementary schools over a two-year period with the progress of children of similar educational needs in an experimental group in the regular program. The findings indicated that the Readiness Room Program had been less effective than the instruction for the children in the regular program. In addition, the self-concept of children in the regular program increased between the first and second year, while the self-concept of the children in the Readiness Room Program decreased significantly.

Talmadge (1982) found that the impact of transition room placement appeared detrimental to early reading achievement in comparison to regular first grade placement. Instead of developing readiness, transition classes may simply delay instruction. Leinhardt's study (1980) examined the academic impact of assigning students to transition classes prior to first grade.

The unique aspect of transition rooms is that children diagnosed as being "at risk" of failure are identified, given special treatment, and placed back into the heterogeneous setting after a defined length of time. This system bears a resemblance to retaining a student in the same grade for a second year; however, in the case of a transition room, the student does not repeat the same instruction received in kindergarten. (Leinhardt, 1980, p. 55).

Leinhardt's follow-up study of transition students at the end of regular first grade indicated that although they may have gained maturation, they did so at the expense of
education. After two years of school, they were at the same place as similar students with only one year.

We have come to understand that students differ in the rate at which they can learn—not in the level to which they can achieve or their capacity to learn (Bloom, 1981). Education, to be effective, must be individualized, highly personal, continuous, and active rather than passive (Betts, 1946). Ayres (1909) states:

> It has frequently been argued that our school systems are well calculated to meet the needs of the average child, and that it is neither a cause for surprise nor alarm that some children complete the work in less than the normal time while others take a year or two more. (p. 73)

The research that has been done on the effectiveness of homogeneous grouping has produced mixed results (Leinhardt, 1980). It appears that for older or more advanced children, grouping for subjects is occasionally, but not consistently, effective (Cartwright & McIntosh, 1972). The same studies show little effect or negative effects of such grouping on low-achieving students. Recent nonresearch literature is strongly against grouping low-ability students for the following reasons: It results in de facto segregation, it is arbitrary and not based on academic performance, and it has a negative impact on self-esteem (Lefkowitz, 1972).

New Hampshire is one of the few states in the nation that provides readiness classes for children who have completed kindergarten but who are not yet ready for first
grade (Elkind, 1984). The Sioux Falls school district in South Dakota has offered a Junior First Grade program since 1970. Solem (1981) reports that this Junior First Grade program is successful. In 1980, 28% of the former junior-first-grade participants ranked in the top quartile of their first-grade classes, 70% ranked in the second and third quartiles, and 2% ranked in the lowest quartile. The Junior First Grade program was designed to improve reading and math readiness, to develop oral language, and to increase understanding of spoken language. Activities focus on developing gross-motor and eye/hand coordination. Development of a healthy self-concept is an important part of the program. The curriculum also includes music, art, and physical education. Health, science, and social studies are taught only incidentally (Solem, 1981).

Kilby (1984) evaluated former Junior First Grade students in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, as they progressed through school. When fourth-grade reading scores were compared, the scores of the program participants exceeded those of their counterparts to a significant degree. When verbal ability was held constant, the fourth- through eighth-grade reading achievement of program participants kept pace with that of their classmates. Kilby states: "These findings suggested that intensive reading instruction received in Junior First Grade may have had both a positive and a long-lasting effect on the reading skills of students
who attended the program" (p. 30). Placement in special education programs was significantly less frequent for program participants than for their age-mates who had not attended Junior First Grade. Kilby also found that the frequency of grade repetitions experienced by program participants was significantly lower than for their counterparts. One-tenth of one percent of the students who had attended Junior First Grade had to repeat a grade, while 27% of their counterparts repeated one grade and an average of 13% repeated two grades.

"A competent system of education may be said to exist only when all students are in programs consistent with, and challenging to, their abilities" (Brown, 1965, p. 10). Ames, Gillespie, and Streff (1972) recommend the provision of an in-between class, pre-first-grade, connecting class, readiness class, transitional class, or developmental class to give an extra year's experience for children who in their readiness are somewhat beyond kindergarten but are not yet ready for full first grade. Carll and Richard (1972) recommended a transitional first-grade program for students who were not ready developmentally for regular first grade. The three main goals cited in their book include: time to grow and develop at one's own pace; experiences through which one can make discoveries about the world and about oneself; and acceptance without condition or respect for the
uniqueness of individuals and concentration on the positive abilities already developed.

Children do not "catch up." If children are immature compared to other children their age, their behavior grows about a year in one year's time, not more than one to catch up (Ames, 1967). Cooper (1980) studied the effects of retention in kindergarten and first grade on achievement, self-concept, behavior, and teacher perceptions. She found that the group considered for retention but promoted to the next grade performed better academically than the nonpromoted group. No significant difference was found in self-concept, overt behavior, or teacher perceptions. Cooper also found in her study that less than 1% of all students in the elementary school are actually retained.

One of the major differences between participation in a transitional program as opposed to first grade retention deals with the concept of failure. Students in a transitional class move forward without experiencing failure or repetition of curriculum (Zinski, 1982).

Dobbs and Neville (1967) found that a child who is continually promoted and who is unable to gain about a year in achievement each school year eventually reaches a grade level where he or she has difficulty functioning. The needs of low-achieving students are not met until the educational setting in which they are placed is designed for maximum
academic growth stressing a more positive life adjustment through satisfying success experiences.

Caggiano (1984) conducted a study to determine the effectiveness of the transition class by measuring its impact upon school success. Behavior variables were measured by the Revised Behavior Problem Checklist and academic achievement was measured by the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. He compared transitional first-grade students with children recommended for transitional first grade but placed in regular first grade and students not recommended or placed in the transition class. Significant differences were noted among the three groups in conduct disorder, attention problems, anxiety withdrawal, and motor excess. Students who were recommended but not in transitional first grade exhibited significantly more attention problems and anxiety withdrawal than transition students or regular first-grade students. They also exhibited more conduct disorder and motor excess problems. Significant differences in achievement were found between regular first-grade students and both the transition students and students who were recommended, but not placed in, transition classes. Caggiano interpreted these findings to mean that students judged not ready for first grade are more likely to adjust positively, and are more likely to experience success if they were provided with sufficient time to develop maturity, if curriculum was adjusted, and if acceptance without
pressure was offered. These conditions existed in the transitional first grade.

Day (1986) conducted a study to determine the effectiveness of a transitional first-grade program comparing transition students with students recommended for the transitional program but placed in regular first grade. No difference was found in academic achievement based on pretest/posttest using the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. When comparing boys in regular and transitional first-grade classes, the boys in regular first grade scored significantly higher in reading. The boys in regular first grade received formal reading instruction while the boys in transitional first grade received no formal reading instruction. Girls in the transitional program did as well as girls in the regular program even though they did not have formal instruction. Day recommended transitional first-grade programs for students who exhibit the need for time to mature.

In the Gesell Institute's report, *Gift of Time* (1982), it is suggested that children who are not developmentally ready for first grade should spend a year in a transition class. Donafrio (1977) believes that these children need to "mark time" until they mature. Meisels (1987) reports that transitional kindergartens are a fast-growing trend over the last five years. He stresses that these programs have not
been conclusively evaluated and criticizes the idea of adding an extra year of school to these children's lives.

Reed (1987) examined the impact of transitional first grade on students' readiness for first grade and on their attitudes toward school. She concluded that students in the transitional first-grade program maintained a more positive attitude toward school, self, and others than did the students who were recommended for the transitional program but placed in regular first grade. She also found that the transitional program provided academic achievement equal to that of the regular first-grade program.

Summary

American schools have been organized in a graded structure since the mid-1800s (Ayres, 1909). The major assumption of this graded system was that knowledge can be compartmentalized into a series of sequential skills that a child could be expected to master in a given year. This assumption translated into the theory of grade standards which required every child to assimilate a specified amount of knowledge before he or she could be promoted to the next level. The expectations of the graded system presented problems of what to do when a child was not ready for the next level (Cook and Clymer, 1962). Grade retention was soon adopted as the strategy for dealing with students that had not achieved grade-level mastery.
Retention is the practice of requiring a student who has been in a given grade level for a full year to remain at that level for a subsequent year (Jackson, 1975). There is no reliable body of evidence to indicate that grade retention is more beneficial than grade promotion for students (Heffernan, 1952; Holmes & Matthews, 1984; Jackson, 1975).

Alternatives to retention have been explored. Alternatives include altering the chronological age for admission into first grade, requiring a mental age of six and one half years before placement into first grade, and even admitting students on their birthday into an ungraded primary setting (Ames, 1981; Davis, Trimble, & Vincent, 1980; Rowland & Nelson, 1969; Thier, 1967).

Educators have always recognized that some children are simply not ready for a particular grade level just because they are chronologically old enough. Some other alternatives to retention include open concept schools, nongraded primary schools, changes in scheduling, and developmental testing and grouping (Ames et al., 1972).

"Success in initial classroom instruction is more important than providing remedy after failure" (Durrell, 1958, p. 2). It has also been shown that children who are permitted an opportunity for normal growth and development are more likely to be emotionally stable than children who are denied this opportunity (Strom, 1965). Thus,
transitional programs have been designed for first-grade students who have not demonstrated the skills considered to be prerequisite for successful performances in a first-grade curriculum (Zinski, 1983). The rationale that underlies the transition class draws heavily from the developmental theory of the Gesell Institute of Child Development (Ames et al., 1972).

The argument for placing children in transition classes is that they can benefit from smaller class size and the instruction can be aimed at their particular level. The purpose for the transition class is to give the child time to grow and gain maturity. The transition class also keeps the child from being lost and confused as they might be in a regular class in which the content and pace may bypass them. The argument against the transitional first-grade program is that it isolates children from their chronological peers, labels them as children with poor prognoses, and sets them on the bottom track for the rest of schooling (Leinhardt, 1980).

The results of the existing research do not support the effectiveness of transition programs (Wolf & Kessler, 1987). Gredler (1984) reviewed five studies on transitional first-grade programs, and in four of the five studies, transition-class children did not show gains over promoted students who were at risk for promotion to first grade and who were identified as possible first-grade failures.
Bell (1972) confirmed that students in transition classes had lower self-esteem and lower self-confidence than at-risk students who were doubtful promotions to first grade. However, transitional programs continue to emerge based on the beliefs that early childhood intervention is important for students who are not developmentally ready for formal instruction (Caggiano, 1984; Carll & Richard, 1972; Day, 1986; Gredler, 1984; Kilby, 1984; Reed, 1987; Solem, 1981; Zinski, 1983).

No child sets out in life to be a failure, a retardee, a drop-out or a juvenile delinquent. He learns to be one. He learns to be one by being literally forced to become one because of his inability to adjust himself to the learning stimuli presented to him in school. (Ames, 1967, pp. 8-9).

There is a need to assist students who are not developmentally ready for formal instruction. Several elementary schools in Region 10 and Region 11 have implemented transitional first-grade classes despite the lack of supportive research.
REFERENCE LIST


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CHAPTER 3

METHOD OF STUDY

Introduction

This chapter identifies the population and the procedure for conducting the study. The instrument which was used to collect the data is discussed and data collection is reviewed. Finally, analysis of the data is discussed.

Population

Public school districts in Region 10 and Region 11 in North Central Texas served as the population for this study. There are 158 school districts ranging in size from Average Daily Attendance of 130,885 down to an Average Daily Attendance of only 26. These school districts and membership sizes are listed in the 1988-89 Texas School Directory. All school districts in these two regions were surveyed.

Districts were divided into six categories according to enrollment:

- Group A - over 10,000 - 13 districts
- Group B - 1,470 - 9,999 - 52 districts
- Group C - 740 - 1,469 - 20 districts
- Group D - 300 - 739 - 43 districts
- Group E - 145 - 299 - 20 districts
- Group F - less than 144 - 10 districts
Groups B through F are based on enrollment sizes used by the University Interscholastic League to assign districts to conferences for the 1988-89 and 1989-90 school years.

Instrumentation

The Transitional First Grade Survey (see Appendix) was used to collect data for this study. This form was developed by the investigator using input from four administrators of transitional first-grade programs.

Data Collection

In order to accomplish the purpose of this study, a cover letter and Transitional First Grade Survey form, as well as a self-addressed stamped envelope, were sent to each superintendent in Region 10 and Region 11 in North Central Texas on May 5, 1989. After two weeks, 82 of the 158 surveys had been returned. The remaining 76 districts were contacted by telephone during the week of May 22 through 26, 1989. The phone calls prompted the return of nine surveys, and information was collected for items one through four if the investigator found that the district did not offer a transitional first-grade program. A second copy of the Transitional First Grade Survey was sent to the appropriate contact person in each of the 21 remaining school districts. During the week of June 5 through 9, 1989, telephone contact was again made to the seven districts that had not returned the survey responses, and a third copy of the survey was
mailed. By June 14, 1989, all but one survey had been returned. This one district was called and information about its transitional first-grade program was recorded by the investigator.

Analysis of Data

The returned Transitional First Grade Survey forms were divided into six categories according to Average Daily Attendance for the district. Data were hand scored and results were compiled to answer each research question and describe the status of transitional first-grade programs.

Results of research question one are reported by frequencies and percentages for each group, for each region, and for the total population. Research questions two through four are reported in a narrative form based on the responses of the 50 school districts that offered a transitional first-grade program during the 1988-89 school year.
CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The results of this study of transitional first-grade programs in Region 10 and Region 11 of North Central Texas are presented in this chapter. A total of 158 responses to the Transitional First Grade Survey were collected. However, in nine instances, individuals omitted responses to specific questions. Therefore, the descriptions of various components of the transitional first-grade programs may be based on less than the total number of respondents. The method of analyzing the data collected involved the use of descriptive statistics and is described in Chapter 3.

The responses of the 158 school districts were described for the total group and for six groups based on Average Daily Attendances (ADA) of the school district. Group A districts had an ADA of 10,000 or more, Group B districts had an ADA of 1,470 to 9,999, and Group C districts had an ADA of 740 to 1,469. Group D school districts had an ADA of 300 to 739, Group E from 145 to 299, and Group F districts had an ADA of less than 145 students.

The first research question of this study was stated as follows: Which public school districts in Regions 10 and 11
in North Central Texas offer or plan to offer transitional first-grade classes?

Of the 158 school districts in Region 10 and Region 11 in North Central Texas, 50 districts (31.65%) offered a transitional first-grade program during the 1988-89 school year. In Group A, 10 districts, or 76.92%, of the 13 districts offered transitional first-grade classes. Of the 52 districts in Group B, 29, or 55.77%, offered transitional first-grade programs. In Group C, 9 districts, or 45%, of the 20 districts offered this program, while only 2 districts, or 4.65%, of the 43 districts in Group D offered transitional classes during 1988-89. Of the 30 school districts in Groups E and F, no district offered transitional first-grade classes (see Table 1).

In Region 10, 24 of the 78 school districts (30.77%) offered transitional first-grade classes in 1988-89. In Region 11, 26 of the 80 school districts (32.50%) offered such classes.

These findings indicate that the larger districts are much more likely to have transitional first-grade programs for students that have completed kindergarten but are not yet ready for regular first grade. The districts in Groups E and F are too small to offer transitional classes.

It was noted by nine respondents that plans are underway to begin transitional programs during the next school year. These school districts, four in Region 10 and
Table 1

Frequency and Percentages of School Districts Offering Transitional First-Grade Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Offer Number</th>
<th>Offer Transitional Percent</th>
<th>Do not Offer Number</th>
<th>Do not Offer Transitional Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group A</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>76.92</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group B</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>55.77</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>44.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group C</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>45.00</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>55.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group D</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>95.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group E</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>31.65</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>68.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

five in Region 11, include Bonham, Highland Park, Sherman, Greenville, Bridgeport, Keller, Aledo, Burleson, and Forney. As one of the purposes of the study was to identify the public school districts that currently offer transitional first-grade programs, these 50 districts are listed by region and group in Table 2.

All 158 school officials responded to the question: "Do you see a need for a transitional first-grade program in your school district?" A total of 98 administrators indicated that they did see a need for a transitional program in their school district. Of the 60 administrators that did not see a need in their district, several commented
Table 2

School Districts in Region 10 and Region 11 Offering Transitional First-Grade Classes in 1988-89.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region 10</th>
<th>Region 11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group A</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Garland</td>
<td>1. Hurst-Euless-Bedford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Irving</td>
<td>3. Lewisville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Grand Prairie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Richardson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group B</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Red Oak</td>
<td>5. Mineral Wells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Commerce</td>
<td>8. Decatur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Lancaster</td>
<td>9. Weatherford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Coppell</td>
<td>11. Cleburn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. McKinney</td>
<td>13. Springtown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Rockwall</td>
<td>15. Grapevine-Colleyville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Midlothian</td>
<td>16. Eagle Mt.-Saginaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Ennis</td>
<td>18. Joshua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group C</strong></td>
<td>19. Crowley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Pottsboro</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Royse City</td>
<td>20. Pilot Point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Crandall</td>
<td>21. Lake Dallas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group D</strong></td>
<td>22. Glen Rose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Maypearl</td>
<td>23. Krum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Sanger</td>
<td>24. Dublin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Argyle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
that while they did see a need for particular students, a transitional first-grade program could not be justified for small numbers of students in their districts.

In Group A, 76.92% of the respondents saw a need for transitional classes; in Group B, 90.38% saw a need; and in Group C, 80% saw a need. As the ADA decreased within groups, so did the percentage of respondents that saw a need for transitional classes. In Group D, 48.84% of respondents saw a need; in Group E, 15% saw a need; and only 10% saw a need in Group F (see Table 3).

Table 3
Frequency and Percentages of Respondents' Perceived Need for Transitional First-grade Classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Respondent Sees Need</th>
<th>Respondent Does Not See Need</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group A</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>76.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group B</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>90.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group C</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>80.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group D</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>48.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group E</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>62.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While only 31.65% of the surveyed school districts currently offer transitional first-grade classes, it is likely that other districts will add programs in the next few years. Districts in Groups A through C will be most likely to add transitional classes because of the high percentage of district officials that see a need for this program.

There were 158 responses collected to the question: "Has your district offered a transitional first-grade program previously that has been discontinued? If so, please explain why the program was discontinued." Of these 158 school districts, seven have offered some type of transitional program in the past that has been discontinued. Plano I.S.D. discontinued the transitional program because the district noted evidence of lowered self-esteem in transitional students. There were also problems with parental misconceptions of the program and with lowered expectations on the part of transitional teachers.

Duncanville I.S.D. conducted a pilot transitional program, but discontinued it after one year because of philosophical differences. This district, too, saw lowered expectations on the part of the transitional teachers, and the district experienced a very high rate of retention that pilot year. Duncanville holds the philosophy that children are not developmentally immature, but instead, it is our
programs that are developmentally inappropriate for children. This district sees transitional first grade as an attempt to fix children rather than fixing the real problem --the curriculum.

Quinlan I.S.D. at one time offered a transitional program. This district discontinued the program and went to an ability grouping concept called Flexible Educational Ability Trails (FEAT). In this district, students are grouped in trails depending on their ability level from kindergarten through high school. The program used in Quinlan I.S.D. is outlined in a parent handout titled FEAT, A Learning Teaching Program for Quinlan I.S.D.

Van Alstyne Independent School District has not offered a transitional first grade, but they have offered a transitional grade between third and fourth grades. This district had great success with this program, but it had to be discontinued because of the cost of the program. Little Elm I.S.D. discontinued a transitional first-grade program for the same reason.

Irving I.S.D. offered a transitional program 15 years ago which was dropped for one year. It was discontinued due to lack of planning. This program was reinstated seven years ago. Mabank I.S.D. also discontinued the transitional program for two years. The reason cited was that the teacher was not experienced, and there was a lack of curriculum materials. The program in Mabank was reinstated
two years later with a veteran teacher and specific curriculum and purpose.

The second research question of this study was stated as follows: How are these transitional programs being developed, implemented, and evaluated; and how are students identified for the programs?

The contact person that is in charge of special elementary programs like the transitional first-grade program varied in position from district to district. A total of 32 respondents (20.25%) were superintendents, 77 respondents (48.73%) were principals, and 5 respondents, (3.16%) were in the role of both principal and superintendent. Fifteen respondents (9.49%) were in the position of director of curriculum and instruction, 2 respondents (1.27%) were elementary language arts coordinators, 12 respondents (7.59%) were directors of elementary education, and 9 respondents (5.70%) served as assistant superintendents. Three respondents (1.90%) were teachers, and 3 other respondents held the positions of personnel director, early childhood consultant, and elementary counseling coordinator.

In Group A, 1 respondent (7.69%) was a principal, 3 respondents (23.08%) were directors of curriculum and instruction, and 3 respondents (23.08%) were elementary education directors. Two of the respondents in Group A (15.38%) were assistant superintendents, 2 respondents
(15.38%) were elementary language arts coordinators, and 2 others (15.38%) were in the roles of early childhood consultant and elementary counseling coordinator. In Group B, 7 respondents (13.46%) were superintendents, 17 respondents (32.69%) were principals, and 12 respondents (23.08%) were directors of curriculum and instruction. Also in Group B, 9 respondents (17.31%) were elementary education directors, 5 respondents (9.62%) were assistant superintendents, 1 respondent was a teacher, and 1 respondent was a personnel director. In Group C school districts, 6 respondents (30%) were superintendents, and 14 respondents (70%) were principals.

In school districts in Group D, 12 respondents (27.91%) were superintendents, 28 respondents (65.12%) were principals, 2 respondents (4.65%) were assistant superintendents, and 1 (2.33%) was a teacher. In Group E, 4 respondents (20%) were superintendents, 13 respondents (65%) were principals, 2 respondents (10%) served as both superintendent and principal for the districts, and one respondent (5%) was a teacher. In the smaller Group F, 3 respondents (30%) were superintendents, 4 respondents (40%) were principals, and 3 respondents (30%) were both superintendent and principal for the district. These results indicate that in districts larger than 1,470 students, that is Groups A and B, the person in charge of transitional first-grade programs is difficult to predict,
but is usually not the superintendent or principal. In the smaller districts, Groups C through F, the contact person is likely to be the superintendent or elementary principal. These results are presented in Table 4.

The curriculum used in the schools in Group A differs from the regular first-grade curriculum, but varies from district to district. It is a goal of Irving I.S.D. that children placed in transitional first grade be given the opportunity to grow from a pre-readiness stage to a stage that has adequately prepared them for regular first grade. Teachers incorporate the five senses into a daily program that teaches logical thinking skills. Concrete objects and illustrations are also heavily used. In the language arts area, emphasis is on developing vocabulary, self-expression, and comprehension skills through the use of picture identification and story telling. Math curriculum is designed to form a solid foundation for future abstract thinking. Skills that are focused on include (a) sorting and classifying, (b) patterning, (c) graphing, (d) comparing, and (e) numbers. Science is interconnected with math in the foundations of sequencing, classifying, and comparing. Observation skills, inferences, predictions, and drawing conclusions are correlated into all curriculum areas. In social studies, children discover ways to deal with people and the focus is on self, family, group, and school. Personal health and safety are covered in health,
Table 4

Job position of transitional first-grade contact persons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Superintendent</th>
<th>Elementary Principal</th>
<th>Principal/Superintendent</th>
<th>Director of Curriculum and Instruction</th>
<th>Elementary Language Arts Coordinator</th>
<th>Elementary Education Director</th>
<th>Assistant Superintendent</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 7.69</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
<td>3 23.08</td>
<td>2 15.38</td>
<td>3 23.08</td>
<td>2 15.38</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>7 13.46</td>
<td>17 32.69</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
<td>12 23.08</td>
<td>9 17.31</td>
<td>5 9.62</td>
<td>1 1.92</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>6 30.00</td>
<td>14 70.00</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>12 27.91</td>
<td>28 65.12</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
<td>2 4.65</td>
<td>1 2.33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>4 20.00</td>
<td>13 65.00</td>
<td>2 10.00</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
<td>1 5.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>3 30.00</td>
<td>4 40.00</td>
<td>3 30.00</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32 20.25</td>
<td>77 48.73</td>
<td>5 3.16</td>
<td>15 9.49</td>
<td>2 1.27</td>
<td>12 7.59</td>
<td>9 5.70</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and fine arts is extended throughout all curriculum areas. Irving I.S.D. also stresses gross and fine motor development. The core curriculum in this district includes: DLM—*Springboards to Learning*; Addison-Wesley—*Happily Ever After* (Reading), *Meet the Superkids* (Reading), and *Explorations I* (Math); and McDougal-Littell—*Handwriting*. Children in Irving’s transitional program also use learning centers, *Predictable Storybooks*, and other supplemental materials that meet individual needs.

Garland I.S.D., Hurst-Euless-Bedford I.S.D., and Carrollton-Farmers Branch have also modified kindergarten and first-grade curriculum to fit the needs of transitional students. Garland devotes the first half of the school year to developing skills and essential elements (EEs) taught in kindergarten. By mid-term, first-grade EEs are presented to students. The pace of instruction moves as students master concepts and are ready for new concepts to be presented. Hurst-Euless-Bedford has developed a curriculum guide for transitional first grade and uses a variety of curriculum materials. Carrollton-Farmers Branch, too, has developed a curriculum guide which draws from kindergarten and first-grade essential elements, stressing language arts and math.

Lewisville I.S.D. uses DLM—*Springboard to Learning* and *Math Their Way* as a core curriculum and is currently working on a transitional curriculum guide. Richardson I.S.D. reinforces kindergarten skills and introduces some first-
grade skills. A whole-language approach is used and the math program is manipulative based. In Arlington I.S.D., the curriculum is based on kindergarten essential elements of the State Board of Education Rules for Curriculum. An integrated approach is taken, planned on themes or units of study. Arlington uses Predictable Books—DLM; The Story Box (Level 1)—The Wright Group, Big Books—Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Rigby, Scholastic; student-made books; and Understanding Mathematics—The Wright Group.

Mesquite, Grand Prairie, and Birdville have also adapted curriculum to fit the districts' transitional programs. Grand Prairie stresses a longer readiness period and more hands-on activities. Mesquite stresses math and reading, and teachers have developed science and social studies units that tie in math and reading. The curriculum program used in Birdville strongly resembles that described in the Irving district.

Of the 29 districts in Group B, 28 described the curriculum developed for transitional first grade. Princeton I.S.D. uses the language experience approach to reading which encompasses reading, oral language development, writing, and creative dramatics. This approach uses oral and written language drawn from personal experiences of the child to develop reading skills and reading enjoyment. The main emphasis in math is on learning concepts and skills by working with and manipulating
concrete objects. Science and social studies are areas in which the child learns to relate to the environment. In science, children are furnished with an abundance of manipulative materials for experimentation and numerous opportunities for various new experiences. In the social studies program, focus is on self-awareness and roles in society. Motor development is also addressed. Princeton's transitional program involves the child's total system: physical, social, emotional, and intellectual.

Wilmer-Hutchins I.S.D. focuses on state curriculum for kindergarten during the first semester, moving into first-grade curriculum as children master readiness skills. Crowley I.S.D. uses a whole-language approach stressing language arts and math. Joshua I.S.D. also uses a whole-language approach which is literature based. This district uses Mathematics Their Way, and science and social studies are presented in units of study. In Alvarado Independent School District, emphasis is placed on taking the regular curriculum at a slower pace and supplementing with additional curriculum materials that include Sing and Spell and Code 78 Reading. Eagle Mountain-Saginaw alters curriculum to meet individual needs and emphasizes movement at one's own pace through the curriculum. Again, this district stresses language arts and math while placing little emphasis on science and social studies.
In the Cedar Hill district, learning centers are used a great deal, and kindergarten skills are focused on during the first part of the school year. Many manipulatives are used and first-grade skills are introduced as students demonstrate readiness. Cedar Hill's program has modified methodology, materials, and pacing to meet the needs of transitional students. The core curriculum in this district includes Open Court -- Headway Level A (reading readiness) and Headway Level B (reading); Open Court -- Real Math; and DLM -- Predictable Storybooks.

Ennis I.S.D. has developed a highly individualized transitional program which emphasizes movement and experience-oriented activities. Discovery learning is encouraged and curriculum materials come from regular kindergarten and first grade. The program in Grapevine-Colleyville is also highly individualized, but curriculum materials are carefully selected not to duplicate materials used in regular kindergarten or first grade. A literature whole-language approach is used in Mansfield I.S.D. Teaching is done primarily through thematic units, and Math Their Way serves as the curriculum for math. Kindergarten essential elements are reviewed and secured, then work is begun on first-grade essential elements. A great deal of emphasis is placed on improving the child's self-esteem.

Little information was collected from Springtown, Grandbury, Cleburn, and Gainesville districts, but they do
begin the transitional year focusing on kindergarten skills, then move on to first-grade skills when children are ready. Gainesville I.S.D. noted that science and social studies are omitted from the transitional curriculum. Weatherford I.S.D. uses a whole-language approach which integrates math, reading, writing, science, and social studies. Denton and Decatur districts emphasize developmentally-appropriate activities. The main focus in these districts is in math and language arts, stressing hands-on tasks.

Positive self-concept and social maturation are emphasized in Lake Worth I.S.D., and curriculum has been developed around kindergarten and early first-grade skills. The transitional programs in Mineral Wells and Midlothian have similar curriculum descriptions. Rockwall I.S.D. uses oral-language activities to teach reading, and phonetic rules are used as building blocks. No basal reading program is used. In Red Oak, curriculum has been developed from kindergarten essential elements using High Hats for reading and Addison-Wesley Math.

The basic language arts curriculum is Sing, Spell, Read, and Write in Mabank I.S.D. Math curriculum is an extension of kindergarten skills and science and social studies are omitted from the curriculum. Both Kaufman I.S.D. and Commerce I.S.D. purchased a pre-first curriculum from Cypress-Fairbanks I.S.D. The transitional program developed for Lancaster I.S.D. is center-based and emphasis
has been placed on individual learning styles. Coppell I.S.D. is also center-based and very little paper-pencil work is done. Motor skills, listening skills, and art work are stressed. Listening skills and following directions is also stressed in the transitional program in Wylie. Again, this curriculum was adapted from regular kindergarten and first-grade objectives.

The curriculum in the McKinney I.S.D. transitional program is neither kindergarten or first. It focuses on first-grade readiness skills, socialization skills, and work-study habits. The children are provided concrete, hands-on learning experiences. The curriculum remains varied and flexible to meet the needs of children with a wide range of developmental levels. A very conscious effort is made to use only materials that the children have not been exposed to in kindergarten or will use upon placement in the regular first grade.

Of the 20 districts in Group C, only 9 offer transitional first grades, and each district has developed or adapted curriculum for the program. In Sanger's transitional program, curriculum is adapted from kindergarten and early first grade. Dublin Independent School District uses a whole-language approach to reading and reemphasizes use of manipulatives in math. Little emphasis is placed on science or social studies. Listening skills are emphasized in Crandall I.S.D. The core
curriculum is DLM and first-grade basal preprimer and primer texts. Number recognition and counting are emphasized in math. The curriculum description provided by Glen Rose I.S.D., Krum I.S.D., and Royse City I.S.D. are similar. Each district has adapted the curriculum from kindergarten and first-grade objectives.

The Lake Dallas program emphasizes language arts and math, and uses Open Court Reading and Houghton Mifflin Mathematics. The curriculum developed in Pottsboro I.S.D. focuses on first-grade readiness skills, socialization skills, modality training, fine and gross motor coordination, and work-study habits. Experiencing success and developing positive self-esteem are also emphasized. The program in Pilot Point takes on a learning-center approach. Instruction is offered in smaller segments, repeated as needed, and shorter blocks of time are set aside for each task. Positive reinforcement is stressed.

Of the 30 school districts in Groups D, E, and F, only two districts offer transitional first-grade classes. Argyle I.S.D. uses curriculum materials from Open Court for language arts and math, focusing on readiness to primer-level skills. Fine arts and physical education are also stressed, while science and social studies skills are introduced in units. The transitional program in Maypearl uses curriculum and materials adapted from regular kindergarten and first grade. Individual education plans
are developed for each student to allow children to move at their own pace.

The transition programs developed in Region 10 and Region 11 vary a great deal from district to district. Some districts have made modifications to kindergarten and first-grade objectives and materials, while other districts take great effort to see that curriculum materials used in transitional classes are not duplicated in kindergarten or first grade. Some districts emphasize language arts and math, perhaps even leaving out science and social studies. Other districts take an integrated or whole-language approach incorporating all curriculum areas. There appears to be little communication between districts in regard to developing and implementing transitional programs. Individual districts are devoting time to adapting and developing curriculum that has similar design to other districts within Regions 10 and 11.

Essential elements are modified for transitional students in 32 or 64% of the 50 districts that have transitional first-grade classes as reflected in Table 5. Students in transitional first-grade classes are not required to take the state mandated first-grade TEAMS test in 41 or 82% of the districts (see Table 6).

School districts use teacher observation, parent observation, intelligence tests, achievement tests, readiness tests, combination of tests, and check lists to
Table 5

Frequency and Percentages of School Districts that Modify Essential Elements for Transitional Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Essential Element Modification Number</th>
<th>Essential Element Modification Percent</th>
<th>No Essential Element Modification Number</th>
<th>No Essential Element Modification Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>68.97</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>31.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>55.56</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>64.00</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6

Frequency and Percentages of School Districts Requiring TEAMS Testing of Transitional Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Take TEAMS Number</th>
<th>Take TEAMS Percent</th>
<th>Do Not Take TEAMS Number</th>
<th>Do Not Take TEAMS Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>90.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17.24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>82.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.22</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>77.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18.00</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>82.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
screen children for the transitional first-grade program. In Group A districts, the screening procedures differ from district to district. All kindergarten students in the Birdville school district are administered the Metropolitan Readiness Test, and a checklist of social, emotional, physical, and academic development characteristics is completed on each child. Students scoring above the 25th percentile on the Metropolitan Readiness Test, who also appear "young" based on the checklist, are scheduled for administration of the Gesell School Readiness Inventory. Kindergarten and first-grade teachers are responsible for the screening.

In the Mesquite school district the kindergarten teacher, principal, and parents informally evaluate and identify students for the transitional class. Students in Grand Prairie are identified by a locally developed kindergarten assessment form by the kindergarten teachers. No formal testing is used in Arlington, either. Recommendations for transitional first grade are made by the kindergarten teacher based on observation. Richardson I.S.D. uses the Metropolitan Readiness Test, the Gesell Developmental Test, skill checklists, student progress reports, and teacher observation to identify students for the transitional program. The elementary principal, kindergarten, and transitional teachers work together to screen the children. In Lewisville, kindergarten teachers
make recommendations based on observation and the elementary counselor uses the Gesell School Readiness Inventory to screen children. Carrollton-Farmers Branch I.S.D. screens children with a combination of teacher checklists, Test of Early Reading Abilities (TERA), and Gesell School Readiness Inventory. These students are referred by the kindergarten teacher to the instructional diagnostician for evaluation.

Hurst-Euless-Bedford I.S.D. uses the Early Prevention of School Failure screening. A team of kindergarten, transition, and physical education teachers are responsible for the screening. Garland I.S.D. utilizes teacher evaluation and the Metropolitan Readiness Test for transitional placement screening. Additional testing using the Brigance Developmental Test and the Slosson IQ Test are administered if needed. Kindergarten and transitional teachers are responsible for the screening. The transitional first-grade teacher is responsible for screening in Irving. Screening includes teacher observation, parent observation, Early Prevention of School Failure screening, kindergarten report card, and the Maturational Assessment Test.

Of the 29 districts in Group B that offered transitional first grade during 1988-89, 28 described the screening procedures. The following districts rely on the kindergarten teacher's recommendation for placement in transitional first grade: Grandbury, Wilmer-Hutchins, Eagle
Mountain-Saginaw, Mansfield, and Lake Worth. In addition to teacher recommendation, Wylie uses mastery of essential elements and date of birth to screen students. Mineral Wells considers essential element mastery, too. This district developed a local Kindergarten End-of-Year Assessment which provides additional screening for the kindergarten teacher. Crowley uses a kindergarten readiness test in addition to teacher observation.

Decatur I.S.D. uses a developmental test and teacher recommendation for placement in transitional first grade. Joshua has developed a Pre-First Test, which is used in addition to kindergarten teacher observation. The Early Prevention of School Failure Test is used by Rockwall Independent School District, and the California Test of Basic Skills is used in Gainesville. Two schools in Group B use the Iowa Test of Basic Skills—Midlothian and Red Oak. Midlothian also uses the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test and the Dallas Preschool Visual Motor Integration Test for screening. These are administered by the school counselor. Red Oak uses the Brigance Test in addition to the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

The Metropolitan Readiness Test is used by three districts in Group B. The districts are Mabank, Cleburn, and Alvarado. Other screening tools used in Mabank are the California Achievement Test and kindergarten teacher recommendation. Alvarado I.S.D. also looks at hand-to-eye
coordination, tracking, vision and hearing screening, and immaturity. Five school districts in Group B use the Maturational Assessment Test as the primary screening tool. Teacher observation and recommendation are also considered in these districts. The districts include Denton, Springtown, Grapevine-Colleyville, Ennis, and Cedar Hill. Grapevine-Colleyville uses the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, and Ennis uses the Otis-Lennon Mental Ability Test in addition to teacher observation and the Maturational Assessment Test.

Six districts in Group B use the Gesell School Readiness Test. These districts include Princeton, Weatherford, McKinney, Coppell, Lancaster, and Kaufman. Each of these districts considers teacher observation and recommendation in the screening process. Princeton and Lancaster also include the Early Prevention of School Failure test in the Screening process. In addition to the Gesell test, McKinney developed a local checklist, "Am I ready," and use the California Achievement Test.

Each of the nine Schools in Group C use teacher observation or teacher checklists to screen students for transitional classes. Krum I.S.D. and Sanger I.S.D. also use the Metropolitan Readiness Test as part of the screening process. Pilot Point and Pottsboro use the Gesell test, and Pottsboro also uses the Early Prevention of School Failure screening and the Stanford Achievement Test. Crandall
Independent School District assesses social development, motor coordination and a locally developed mastery management test. Four districts—Royse City, Dublin, Glen Rose, and Lake Dallas—use locally-adopted achievement tests in the screening process. Lake Dallas and Glen Rose use the California Achievement Test. The two school districts in Group D with transitional programs—Argyle I.S.D. and Maypearl I.S.D.—use kindergarten teacher recommendation and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills for screening students.

Screening procedures are summarized for the 50 school districts in Region 10 and Region 11 that offered transitional first grade during the 1988-89 school year in Table 7. Kindergarten teacher observation and evaluation are used as a screening tool in most districts. The Gesell School Readiness Inventory is used in 12 districts, and the Metropolitan Readiness Test is used in 9 districts. Six districts have developed assessment instruments or checklists locally that assist in screening kindergarten students for the transitional program. The Early Prevention of School Failure Screening is used in five districts, and the Maturational Assessment Test is used in five districts.

The persons responsible for local screening of students for the transitional program included the kindergarten teacher in 33 districts, the transitional first-grade teacher in 23 districts, the counselor in 12 districts, the diagnostician in 2 districts, the elementary principal in 11
Table 7
Frequency of Transitional First-Grade Screening Procedures Used in Region 10 and Region 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Kindergarten Observation</th>
<th>Gesell School Readiness</th>
<th>Metropolitan Readiness</th>
<th>Maturational Assessment</th>
<th>Locally Developed Assessment</th>
<th>Peabody</th>
<th>ITBS</th>
<th>OL-MAT</th>
<th>CAT</th>
<th>Test of Early Abilities</th>
<th>Brigance</th>
<th>Early Prevention of School Failure</th>
<th>Dallas School Visual Motor Integration</th>
<th>CTBS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
districts, and other individuals in 3 districts. In several districts, the task of screening students is shared by several individuals (see Table 8).

Evaluating transitional programs is handled in an informal manner in 23 districts, and is based on a pretest-posttest format in 16 districts. Ten districts follow these transitional students to evaluate the long-term effects of the program. In Group A, nine of the ten districts described the evaluation method used for the transition program. Birdville I.S.D. holds weekly planning meetings with the consultant that is responsible for the program. These meetings serve as formative evaluation to some extent. Birdville has also started collecting data for input into the district’s data bank so promotion and retention rates of these students as well as others, especially those who were recommended for the program but whose parents refused to allow their placement, can be followed.

Hurst-Euless-Bedford has not decided on an evaluation procedure, but plans to follow transitional students through achievement and test scores. Carrollton-Farmers Branch is involved in a research project which will track students that have been in transitional first grade as they move through elementary school. Arlington uses the Stanford Early School Achievement Test for pretest-posttest information. Five districts,--Mesquite, Richardson, Lewisville, Garland, and Irving--evaluate the transitional
Table 8

Frequency of Person(s) Responsible for Transitional First-Grade Screening

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Kindergarten Teacher</th>
<th>Transition Teacher</th>
<th>Counselor</th>
<th>Diagnostician</th>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>PE Teacher</th>
<th>Elementary Supervisor</th>
<th>Curriculum Director</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>1</td>
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</table>
first-grade program informally. Plans are underway in Irving to conduct a formal follow-up that will track each child's academic performance throughout elementary school.

Each of the 29 districts in Group B with transitional programs described program evaluation. Informal evaluation is used in 15 of these districts. The districts are Lancaster, McKinney, Cedar Hill, Ennis, Grapevine-Colleyville, Joshua, Wylie, Mansfield, Eagle Mountain-Saginaw, Wilmer-Hutchins, Grandbury, Gainesville, Crowley, Red Oak, and Alvarado. These informal evaluations look at student success and parent and teacher perceptions of the program. Red Oak and Alvarado are looking for ways to improve the evaluation process, possibly by tracking student academic success as students move through elementary school.

Tracking transitional students' success is used for evaluative purposes in 6 of the 29 districts in Group B. Coppell tracks each child recommended for transition as well as those enrolled in the transitional class. The students' academic, social, and psychological adjustment are considered. Princeton, Mabank, Mineral Wells, Commerce, and Lake Worth track transitional students via achievement and TEAMS testing.

A pretest-posttest is used in evaluation programs in eight districts in Group B. These districts are Weatherford, Kaufman, Springtown, Denton, Cleburn, Midlothian, Rockwall, and Decatur. Weatherford also
collects data on students who were recommended but not placed in the transitional program. This district uses the California Achievement Test. Kaufman uses the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, and Midlothian uses district screening tests for post-test information. These tests include the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, and the Dallas Preschool Visual Motor Integration Test. Springtown, Denton, and Rockwall use the Metropolitan Readiness Test for pretest-posttest information.

In Group C, two districts—Sanger and Dublin—evaluate the transitional program informally. Royse City is the only district in this group that tracks students' academic progress as they move through elementary school. In Group C, six districts use a pretest-posttest method of evaluating the transitional program. These districts are Lake Dallas, Glen Rose, Crandall, Pottsboro, Pilot Point, and Krum.

Maypearl, in Group D, informally evaluates the transitional program. Argyle uses a pretest-posttest method in evaluating immediate success of the program. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills is used. Argyle also plans to track students as they move through the elementary grades.

Informal evaluation consisting of teacher observation, student progress, and parent perception of the transitional program was used in 23 (46%) of the districts. Pretest-posttest was used by 16 (32%) of the districts, and tracking student achievement through elementary school was used in 10
(20%) of the districts as reported in Table 9. One district did not describe an evaluation system. Longitudinal data should be available for transitional first grade in the 10 districts that are tracking students.

Table 9

Frequency and Percentages of Evaluation Methods Used for Transitional-First Grade Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Informal Evaluation Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Pretest-Posttest Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Tracking Student Achievement Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
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<td>A*</td>
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<td>10.00</td>
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<td>30.00</td>
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<td>51.72</td>
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<td>27.59</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
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<td>22.22</td>
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<td>66.67</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.11</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
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<td>50.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>00.00</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>46.00</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32.00</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*One district not accounted for.

Each of the 50 districts in Region 10 and Region 11 that operated a transitional first-grade program during 1988-89 have devoted time and effort to the development, implementation, and operation of a program that serves a small percentage of the school population. Each district has planned some sort of identification screening process and has developed or adapted curriculum to meet the special
needs of transitional first-grade students. Evaluation of these programs is needed to justify their existence.

Most of these plans for transitional first grade have been made in isolation. Few districts have developed programs exactly like other programs in the North Texas area. However, many similarities of the programs indicate a shared philosophy of meeting the needs of students that have completed kindergarten but that are not yet ready for first grade.

The third research question of this study was stated as follows: How and where did the trend toward transitional first grades begin in the North Central Texas area?

Irving Independent School District, located in Dallas County, started the first transitional first-grade class in Regions 10 and 11 in North Central Texas 15 years ago during the 1973-74 school year. This initial program continued for seven years and was designed as a step between kindergarten and first grade for students that showed lack of readiness for regular first grade. This program was discontinued during the 1981-82 school year because of lack of planning. The program was reinstated after one year, and changed little from its original form. In 1987, the Irving program made some philosophical changes in the transitional program and focused the program on students that were developmentally not ready for first grade. During the 1987-88 school year, Irving set up the current identification,
selection, and placement procedures. During the 1988-89 school year, 337 students were served in the transitional first-grade program in Irving.

During the 1983-84 school year, Lake Worth and Lake Dallas started transitional first-grade programs. Officials in Lake Worth noted a number of students who were not ready for first grade being placed in first grade and experiencing failure during the early elementary years. This is why the program was implemented. The curriculum reinforced kindergarten skills and introduced first-grade objectives. Lake Worth had 16 students in the 1988-89 transitional class. The transitional program in Lake Dallas was modeled somewhat after a program in Weatherford, Oklahoma. The Lake Dallas program was implemented to allow transitional students more time for readiness activities, allow first-grade teachers to move classes forward at a faster rate, and to strengthen the first- and second-grade programs. Lake Dallas had 12 to 16 students in the transitional class each of the six years the program has been operational.

Two school districts in Region 10—Red Oak and Royse City—started transitional programs five years ago during the 1984-85 school year. Neither district modeled the program after another school district. In Red Oak, the transitional program originally started on one campus and has gone through changes in curriculum and identification. When first implemented, students could spend one year and go
into the regular second grade. Now it is set up for students to follow the transitional year with a year in regular first grade. Royse City implemented the transitional program to assist students who were not ready for first grade.

In the fall of 1985, five districts from Regions 10 and 11 implemented transitional programs. These districts include Garland, Coppell, Grapevine-Colleyville, Joshua, and Pilot Point. Two of these districts—Garland and Grapevine-Colleyville—studied the program in Irving. Garland opted to model the transitional program after the one in Irving. However, in 1987 the identification process and the curriculum in Irving went through some changes, so the programs in Irving and Garland do differ. These programs were adapted over time to meet the individual district's needs. The genesis of the transitional first-grade program in Grapevine-Colleyville started in the spring of 1984 when several kindergarten teachers saw a need for specific students in the kindergarten classrooms. These kindergarten teachers, aware of the program in Irving, went to the building level principal to ask for a similar program. After observing in the Irving Independent School District, recommendation was made and accepted to implement a transitional first grade in Grapevine-Colleyville during the 1985-86 school year. The program in Grapevine-Colleyville
focused more on student maturation than did the Irving program at that time.

In Joshua, the transitional program started out as a half-year transitional and half-year regular first grade. After the first year, it became a year long transitional class. The class in Joshua has 14 to 18 students each year. The elementary principal started the program because of the children she saw either repeating kindergarten or struggling in first grade. The programs in Pilot Point and Coppell started with teacher training by the Gesell Institute. Coppell implemented a pilot program in 1984-85. The success of this pilot program led to district implementation of the program in the fall of 1985. Over the four years, the curriculum continues to evolve and student success indicates success of this program. Coppell Independent School District enrolls approximately 50 students in this program annually. Coppell has also implemented a developmental or pre-kindergarten program for students that are chronologically old enough, but not yet developmentally ready for kindergarten. Pilot Point modeled the transitional program after suggestions made by the Gesell Institute and serves approximately 16 students each year.

During the 1986-87 school year, 12 districts in Regions 10 and 11 implemented transitional first-grade programs. These districts include Carrollton-Farmers Branch, Hurst-Euless-Bedford, Lewisville, Richardson, Mabank, Commerce,
Princeton, Midlothian, Crowley, Wilmer-Hutchins, Dublin, and Sanger. Eight of these districts did not model the transitional program after another district's program. While not modeling after another program, Princeton and Lewisville have developed similar screening procedures and curriculum. They both take a developmental approach to the program and use the same language arts curriculum. Both districts use the Gesell developmental test for screening and cite similar reasons for implementing a transitional program. Lewisville was unhappy with group testing in kindergarten. It did not seem to predict school success. The failure rate in first grade was near 33%, and teachers seemed to know early in the school year which children would experience frustration and failure. The elementary counseling coordinator investigated instruments on the market for assessing young children. The Gesell test was chosen because of the high correlation with school success. A three-year proposal was made to the local board of education and the district committed to a three-year trial transitional program. After just completing the third year, the transition program has developed many teacher and parent supporters. Plans are to continue the program. The other districts that implemented programs in the fall of 1986 that did not model the program after other districts are Hurst-Euless-Bedford, Mabank, Dublin, Sanger, Crowley, and Wilmer-Hutchins.
Carrollton-Farmers Branch, Richardson, and Commerce modeled the transitional program after the program in Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District. Cypress-Fairbanks is in Harris County, which is in Region 4 in southern Texas. Carrollton-Farmers Branch responded that principals had expressed a need for transitional first grade since 1983. This district researched existing programs and after implementation of House Bill 72, decided to implement the program. Richardson Independent School District modeled the program after Cypress-Fairbanks, also. The program in Richardson began as a result of two concerns. One concern involved research indicating that developmental age had a great impact on learning, suggesting that a "gift of time" was needed for those children not yet ready for the structure of first grade. The other concern was the increasingly rising transient population in the district that provided children who lacked early learning opportunities necessary for success in kindergarten and first grade. Richardson developed this program in 1986 to address these concerns. Commerce also modeled after the Cypress-Fairbanks program.

Midlothian's transitional program was also implemented in 1986. The district modeled the program after a pilot program in Lancaster, although Lancaster did not implement the program until 1987. Again, this program was implemented
to meet the needs of students completing kindergarten but not yet ready for first grade.

In the fall of 1987, eight school districts in Regions 10 and 11 began transitional programs. These districts include Lancaster, Arlington, Denton, Grandbury, Alvarado, Ennis, Glen Rose, and Argyle. Of these eight districts, five developed their programs without modeling after another district. Alvarado started this program two years ago because of the high percentage of slow learners that did not qualify for special education because of low IQ scores. The program was conceptualized as a half-step between kindergarten and first grade. Alvarado also has a transitional second grade. These programs are seen as remedial programs with goals designed to prevent failure. The students in Alvarado move from kindergarten to transitional first grade. From transitional first grade, students move to transitional second grade, then on to regular third grade so a year is not repeated.

In Grandbury the program was initiated as a means of addressing the "at risk" students' needs. In Arlington, the program began with a request from kindergarten and first-grade teachers to meet the needs of kindergarten students who had not mastered the kindergarten essential elements. Glenrose and Lancaster also developed the program without a model. Lancaster has aimed the program at students who are developmentally not ready for first grade. A committee of
teachers and administrators developed the program and piloted one class. In the fall 1987 the program was fully implemented.

Before implementing a transitional program in Ennis, a high incidence of first-grade failure was noted, though the student potential for success was present. A kindergarten and a first-grade teacher approached the elementary principal who directed the teachers to the elementary curriculum director. This led to visitations in the Irving school district and teacher training by the Gesell Institute. The curriculum was modeled somewhat after that in Irving, but modifications have taken place.

The program in Denton was developed because of a need expressed by kindergarten and first-grade teachers, also. The director of elementary education was familiar with the work of Clyde Gillespie, who convinced him to look into the program. The program in Denton was modeled after programs in Cypress-Fairbanks and Tulsa, Oklahoma. The transitional program in Argyle was modeled after the transitional class in Lake Dallas. The elementary principal and one school board member were familiar with the success of the Lake Dallas program and saw a need for a transitional class in Argyle.

The remaining 20 school districts implemented a transitional program in the fall of 1988. Each district is listed in Table 10. Maypearl school district implemented a
Table 10

Implementation Dates of Transitional First-Grade Programs in Region 10 and Region 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Transitional Program Implementation Year</th>
<th>Number of Years of Operation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Irving</td>
<td>Dallas</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>Lake Worth</td>
<td>Tarrant</td>
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<td>1983-84</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lake Dallas</td>
<td>Denton</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1983-84</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Oak</td>
<td>Ellis</td>
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<td>1984-85</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royse City</td>
<td>Rockwall</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1984-85</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garland</td>
<td>Dallas</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1985-86</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coppell</td>
<td>Dallas</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1985-86</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grapevine-Colleyville</td>
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<td>1985-86</td>
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<td>Joshua</td>
<td>Johnson</td>
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<td>1985-86</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pilot Point</td>
<td>Denton</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>Carrollton-Farmers</td>
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<td>Arlington</td>
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<td>Denton</td>
<td>Denton</td>
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<td>Alvarado</td>
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<td>Ennis</td>
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<td>1987-88</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>Birdville</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kaufman</td>
<td>Kaufman</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1988-89</td>
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</table>
transitional program during the 1988-89 school year because there were 14 students in the kindergarten that did not master the essential elements. During the 1989-90 school year, Maypearl plans to move this transitional class to a transitional second grade. The upcoming first-grade students do not need a transitional class, so the program will be dropped in first grade.

McKinney, Rockwall, Mansfield, Mineral Wells, Krum, Eagle Mountain-Saginaw, Gainesville, Cleburn, Wylie, and Grand Prairie implemented a transitional first-grade program because of the large number of kindergarten students who are identified through teacher observation or test data as being at risk of failing first grade. These districts share the belief that repeating kindergarten, especially if it is a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wylie</td>
<td>Collin</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1988-89</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Collin</td>
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<td>1988-89</td>
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<td>Rockwall</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Wise</td>
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<td>1988-89</td>
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<td>Weatherford</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Tarrant</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Krum</td>
<td>Denton</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1988-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maypearl</td>
<td>Ellis</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1988-89</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
half-day program, does not help children as much as moving forward into a class that builds success in children's lives.

The transitional program in Pottsboro was modeled after the program in Pilot Point, and Weatherford's program was modeled after the Carrollton-Farmers Branch program. Each of these districts focus on the developmental age of transitional students and have integrated ideas from the Gesell Institute. Teachers in these districts have received training from the Gesell Institute. Kaufman modeled the program that was implemented in the fall of 1988 after the program in Cypress-Fairbanks. This district, too, uses the Gesell testing and curriculum format.

The program in Decatur was developed locally, but several facets of the program came from observing the transitional program in Arlington Independent School District. The transitional programs in Cedar Hill, Springtown, Mesquite, and Birdville are modeled after the program in Irving. Cedar Hill has also drawn from the program in Grandbury. Birdville also implemented ideas from the Coppell school district. The genesis of the Birdville program was within the central administrative instructional personnel. These administrators had discussed their convictions that all children do not develop socially, emotionally, physically, or intellectually at the same rate and that it is important not to try to force students to
perform at levels they are not ready to master. With the state mandates for programs to serve at-risk students, Birdville administrators felt that the time was right for proposing this program as an early intervention for children. Several central administrators, principals, and kindergarten or first-grade teachers visited existing programs. A committee then adapted what was seen as appropriate for the district, and it was presented to all principals, kindergarten, and first-grade teachers. The program was presented to and accepted by the board of trustees as part of the at-risk plan for the district.

Most of the 50 districts in Region 10 and Region 11 that offered transitional first grade developed, implemented, and evaluated the programs without modeling after another district. Of the districts that did model after an existing program, adaptations were made to make the transitional program fit the district's needs. With stress being exerted on school districts in Texas to make specific plans for at-risk students at all levels, districts that have noted the need for these kindergarten students that are developmentally not ready to move on to first grade are more able to justify the expense of this program. The trend in the North Central Texas area is to implement transitional first-grade programs. This trend is easily noted in Table 11.
The fourth research question of this study was stated as follows: What information can be provided and exchanged through a networking system between public schools in North Central Texas?

The majority of the school districts in Region 10 and Region 11 are interested in being included in a networking system to exchange information about transitional first grade. Of the 158 respondents to this question, 122, or
77.22%, would like to receive more information about what districts are doing with transitional first-grade programs (see Table 12).

Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Yes Number</th>
<th>Yes Percent</th>
<th>No Number</th>
<th>No Percent</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>76.92</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>96.15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>90.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>83.72</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>65.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>90.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>77.22</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>22.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Group A, 10 districts, or 76.92%, of the 13 districts want to be included in a networking system. In Group B, 50 districts, or 96.15%, wish to be included, and in Group C, 18, or 90%, of the districts have indicated an interest. The school districts in Group D that wish to be included in a networking system include 36 schools, which is 83.72% of this group.
As ADA decreases in Groups E and F, interest in transitional programs also decreases. In Group E, 7, or 35%, are interested in an exchange of information about transitional first grades, and in Group F only one district is interested. It should be noted that no district in Group E or F offers transitional first grade. These districts have only one or two sections of first grade. The high level of interest in exchanging information and collecting information from other districts indicates that there is a trend in Region 10 and Region 11 to establish and improve transitional classes for young at-risk students. A networking system can assist schools through the Regional Service Centers to establish criterion for screening children into transitional classes, adapting curriculum to meet the needs of transitional students, and in evaluating transitional programs. The school districts in Region 10 and Region 11 that are interested in becoming part of a transitional first-grade networking system are listed in Table 13.
Table 13

Public School Districts in Region 10 and Region 11 that are Interested in Information about Existing Transitional Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region 10</th>
<th>Region 11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plano</td>
<td>Hurst-Euless-Bedford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richardson</td>
<td>Arlington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garland</td>
<td>Birdville</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mesquite</td>
<td>Lewisville</td>
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<tr>
<td>Irving</td>
<td>Northwest</td>
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<td>Grand Prairie</td>
<td>Carroll</td>
</tr>
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<td>Denison</td>
<td>Bridgeport</td>
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<td>Sherman</td>
<td>Castleberry</td>
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<td>Quinlan</td>
<td>Stevenville</td>
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<td>DeSoto</td>
<td>White Settlement</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Azle</td>
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<td>Greenville</td>
<td>Mineral Wells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonham</td>
<td>Lake Worth</td>
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<td>Waxahachie</td>
<td>Denton</td>
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<td>Red Oak</td>
<td>Decatur</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mabank</td>
<td>Weatherford</td>
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<td>Kaufman</td>
<td>Gainesville</td>
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<td>Commerce</td>
<td>Cleburn</td>
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<td>Grandbury</td>
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<td>Cedar Hill</td>
<td>Springtown</td>
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<td>Coppell</td>
<td>Mansfield</td>
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<td>Wylie</td>
<td>Grapevine-Colleyville</td>
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<td>McKinney</td>
<td>Eagle Mountain-Saginaw</td>
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<td>Princeton</td>
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<td>Joshua</td>
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<td>Wilmer-Hutchins</td>
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<td>Ennis</td>
<td>Glen Rose</td>
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<td>Pottsboro</td>
<td>Boyd</td>
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<td>Forney</td>
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<td>Sadler and Southmaid</td>
<td>Millsap</td>
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<td>Consolidated</td>
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<td>Howe</td>
<td>Alvord</td>
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<tr>
<td>Royse City</td>
<td>Venus</td>
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<td>Crandall</td>
<td>Keene</td>
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<td>Scurry Rosser</td>
<td>Rio Vista</td>
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<td>Italy</td>
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<td>Caddo Mills</td>
<td>Ponder</td>
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<td>Godley</td>
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<td>Callisburg</td>
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<td>Celeste</td>
<td>Slidell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tom Bean</td>
<td>Garner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sam Rayburn</td>
<td>Lipan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honey Grove</td>
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<tr>
<td>Celina</td>
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<td>Prosper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bells</td>
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<td>Wolfe City</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bland</td>
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<td>Palmer</td>
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<td>Maypearl</td>
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<td>Alvalon</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Melissa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunnyvale</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Van Alstyne</td>
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CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS
AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the summary, findings, and conclusions of this study. Recommendations for further research are also included.

Summary

The purposes of this study were to identify public school districts that currently offer, or are planning to offer, transitional first-grade programs, to describe existing transitional programs, to describe the genesis of transitional first-grade classes in the North Texas area, and to assist in the establishment of a networking system for schools in the North Central Texas area that currently have, or are planning to have, transitional first-grade classes.

A Transitional First Grade Survey was mailed to the superintendent of each of the 158 public school districts in Region 10 and Region 11 in May 1989. After two weeks, 52% of the surveys were returned. The remaining 76 districts were contacted by telephone. The telephone calls prompted the return of nine surveys, and information was collected for items one through four if the investigator found that
the district did not offer a transitional first grade. A second copy of the survey was mailed to the appropriate contact person in each of the remaining 21 districts. During the first week of June, telephone contact was again made to the seven districts that had not responded. By June 14, 1989, all but one survey had been returned. Information for this district was collected by telephone. Thus, all surveys were accounted for.

These responses were divided according to district size: Group A districts, 10,000 or more ADA; Group B, 1,470 to 9,999 ADA; Group C, 740 to 1,469 ADA; Group D, 300 to 739 ADA; Group E, 145 to 299 ADA; and Group F, less than 145 ADA. Groups B through F coincide with conference division size dictated by the University Interscholastic League.

The data from these survey forms were used to identify districts that offer transitional first-grade programs and to describe screening procedures, curriculum, and evaluation procedures. The genesis of transitional programs in North Central Texas and information that could be exchanged in a networking system were described in narrative form from information gathered from the survey.

Findings

The following is a summary of the findings of this study, organized in terms of the research questions.
Research Question 1. Which public school districts in Regions 10 and 11 in North Central Texas offer or plan to offer transitional classes?

1. About one-third of the 158 districts in Regions 10 and 11 offered a transitional first-grade program during the 1988-89 school year. These districts include:

Region 10

Garland  Hurst-Euless-Bedford
Mesquite  Arlington
Irving  Lewisville
Carrollton-Farmers Branch  Birdville
Grand Prairie  Mineral Wells
Red Oak  Lake Worth
Mabank  Denton
Kaufman  Decatur
Commerce  Weatherford
Lancaster  Gainesville
Cedar Hill  Cleburn
Coppell  Grandbury
Wylie  Springtown
McKinney  Mansfield
Princeton  Grapevine-Colleyville
Rockwall  Eagle Mountain-Saginaw
Midlothian  Alvarado
Wilmer Hutchins  Joshua
Ennis  Crowley
Pottsboro  Pilot Point
Royse City  Lake Dallas
Crandall  Glen Rose
Maypearl  Krum
Richardson  Dublin

Region 11

2. About two-thirds of the respondents saw a need for transitional first-grade classes in their districts.

3. Seven school districts had discontinued a transitional program. Three districts discontinued the program because of philosophical differences, and two districts discontinued the transitional program because of
the cost of the program. Two districts discontinued programs for other reasons, but later reinstated the program.

4. Nine school districts plan to pilot transitional first-grade classes during the 1989-90 school year. These districts are Bonham, Highland Park, Sherman, Greenville, Bridgeport, Keller, Aledo, Burleson, and Forney.

Research Question 2. How are these transitional programs being developed, implemented, and evaluated, and how are students identified for the programs?

1. The contact person in charge of transitional programs is likely to be someone in the central office in larger school districts. In smaller districts, the contact person is more likely to be the elementary principal.

2. The curriculum in transitional first grade is based on kindergarten and early first-grade objectives.

3. School districts in Regions 10 and 11 adapt state kindergarten and first-grade curriculum to meet the district's transitional first-grade needs.

4. Most school districts focus on language arts and math in the transitional first grade.

5. While curriculum materials vary from district to district, language arts is likely to be based on a whole-language approach, and math is likely to focus on manipulatives.

6. About two-thirds of the districts modify the essential elements for transitional students.
7. The majority of districts do not require transitional students to take the first-grade TEAMS test.

8. Kindergarten teacher observation or check lists are used in the screening procedures in the majority of districts.

9. A number of instruments are used for screening transitional students. The Gesell School Readiness Inventory, used in 24% of the districts, is most popular.

10. Kindergarten and transitional teachers are most likely to be responsible for the screening process.

11. About one-half of the districts use an informal method of evaluating the transitional program. A pretest-posttest method is used in 32% of the districts, and a longitudinal student tracking method is used in 20% of the districts.

Research Question 3. How and where did the trend toward transitional first grade being in the North Central Texas area?

1. The Irving Independent School System had the first transitional program in Regions 10 and 11.

2. Transitional first-grade programs were implemented to meet the needs of children who had completed kindergarten but were not ready for first grade.

3. About one-half of the transitional programs have been implemented in the last two years.

4. Six school districts noted that new state regulations which emphasize plans for the at-risk student
have helped attain support for transitional first-grade classes.

5. About one-third of the districts observed transitional programs in other districts before implementing programs in their district.

Research Question 4. What information can be provided and exchanged through a networking system between public schools in North Central Texas?

1. Of the 158 districts surveyed, 122, or 77%, of the districts are interested in being included in a networking system to exchange information about transitional first-grade programs.

2. Information about curriculum, student identification, and program evaluation can be exchanged through a networking system.

Conclusions

The findings of this study warrant the following conclusions.

1. The trend toward having transitional first-grade classes has been aided by state regulations which emphasize plans for the at-risk student.

2. Districts that have implemented transitional first-grade programs have worked on their own to develop and adapt guidelines and curriculum for the program.

3. The number of districts offering transitional first-grade programs will increase over the next few years.
Of the 158 respondents, 98, or 62%, perceive a need for a transitional program.

4. Transitional programs can be improved by exchanging information with other districts. Student identification procedures, curriculum development, and program evaluation are areas where existing programs can be improved.

5. A networking system can assist districts that are planning to implement transitional programs.

6. Transitional first-grade programs focus primarily on language arts and math skills. Emphasis is placed on whole language and manipulatives.

7. As districts track the success of transitional students as they move through elementary school over a number of years, data will be available to effectively evaluate the long-term impact of the transitional first-grade program.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were derived based upon the findings of this study.

1. Schools that are planning to implement transitional first-grade programs should contact and visit districts that have operated transitional programs for a number of years. This would save time and prevent problems.

2. The Texas Education Agency should develop guidelines for transitional first-grade programs.
3. The study should be replicated statewide to confirm the findings and conclusions of this study.

4. More long-term research should be conducted to determine the lasting student benefits attained from the transitional first-grade program.

5. This study should be repeated in five years to determine the impact that the Texas focus on the at-risk student has on transitional first-grade programs.

6. The transitional first grade should become part of a district's at-risk plan.
APPENDIX
Dear Superintendent:

I am currently involved in a doctoral dissertation study in the Department of Elementary Education at the University of North Texas, Denton, Texas. This study is being conducted to identify and describe existing transitional first-grade programs in Region X and Region XI in North Central Texas. It is believed that the results of this study will provide Texas public schools with a networking system to exchange information about implementing and improving transitional first-grade programs for our young "at risk" students.

In order to accomplish the purposes of this study, I must ask you to respond to the enclosed questionnaire and to send me any information or data on existing transitional programs that you might have. I realize that your time is very valuable, but I hope that you will be willing to help me conduct this potentially very valuable study. This study is endorsed by the Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association.

Enclosed for your convenience is a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Also, please indicate if you would like me to reimburse you for any copy costs or additional postage for copies of information on existing transitional programs. Since it is late in the school year, your prompt response will be appreciated. I will gather follow-up information by phone and will place reminder calls to you approximately two weeks after you receive this questionnaire. If you would like the results of this study and a list of schools within this soon-to-be-developed networking system, I will be happy to furnish this information.

As a professional administrator, I will be careful to handle this data in a professional manner. Thank you so much for your help.

Sincerely,

Dawn Angove
Elementary Principal
Argyle Elementary

Dr. Patricia Moseley
Professor of Elementary Education
University of North Texas
Transitional First Grade Survey

There is a trend in public education to provide a "transitional first grade" program for children who have completed kindergarten but are not yet ready for first grade. Your response to this survey is appreciated.

School District ___________________________ Region ______________________

Contact Person (Curriculum Director, Elementary Ed. Director, Principal) name ___________________________ position ___________________________

District Average Daily Attendance:

- 1,470 to 9,999
- 740 to 1,469
- 300 to 739
- 145 to 299
- less than 145

Kindergarten Enrollment (1988-89) ___________________________

First Grade Enrollment (1988-89) ___________________________

1. Does your school district offer a transitional first grade program for children that have completed kindergarten but that have been identified as "at risk" for first grade failure? yes ___ no ___

2. Do you see a need for a transitional first grade program in your school district? yes ___ no ___

3. Has your district offered a transitional first grade program previously that has been discontinued? yes ___ no ___
   If so, please explain why the program was discontinued.
   ___________________________________________________  ___________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________  ___________________________________________________

4. Would your district like information about existing transition programs in North Central Texas? yes ___ no ___

PLEASE CONTINUE IF YOUR DISTRICT CURRENTLY OPERATES A TRANSITIONAL FIRST GRADE PROGRAM

5. How many students are currently enrolled in your transitional first grade program? ___________________________
6. When did your district begin a transitional first grade program?

7. Describe screening procedures used to identify students for transitional first grade.

Continue on back or attach an additional page if needed.

PLEASE ATTACH TEACHER CHECK LISTS OR OTHER LOCALLY DEVELOPED INSTRUMENTS.

8. Who is responsible for screening children for transitional first grade in your district?

9. Is your program modeled after a program in some other district? yes ___ no ___
   If so, please list model program

10. How does curriculum differ from that of regular first grade?

Continue on back or attach an additional page if needed.

11. Are modifications made for essential element mastery? yes ___ no ___
   Do transitional first grade students take the TEAMS test? yes ___ no ___
12. How is your transitional program evaluated?


Continue on back or attach an additional page if needed.

13. Describe the genesis of your program including why the program was implemented.


Continue on back or attach an additional page if needed.

14. Describe your transitional first grade program.


Continue on back or attach an additional page if needed.

PLEASE SEND ANY OTHER INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM INCLUDING ANY STUDENT EVALUATION INFORMATION AVAILABLE. THIS DATA WILL REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL AND YOUR COPY COSTS WILL GLADLY BE REIMBURSED.

THANK YOU
REFERENCE LIST


