An Evaluation of the 1990-1991 Hart County Preschool Program

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Rhonda Wooldridge

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AN EVALUATION OF THE 1990-1991
HART COUNTY PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the
Department of Educational Leadership

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Education
Specialist Degree

by
Rhonda Wooldridge Bowman

June 1993
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AN EVALUATION OF THE 1990-1991
HART COUNTY PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

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Dean of the Graduate College
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In the 1990-91 school year, Kentucky’s public schools received a mandate to begin a preschool program to aid children who were at risk of school failure. Children to be served were three-and four-year-olds qualifying for free lunch or having handicaps.

This study is an evaluation of the preschool program in Hart County Kentucky. Two concerns were identified. These concerns were: (1) identifying teacher and parental perceptions of the program and (2) measuring student academic gains. The results of the evaluation indicate that teachers and parents have a positive attitude about the preschool program. Students participating in the program showed greater achievement gains when compared to a control group of students who did not participate in the program.
AN EVALUATION OF THE 1990-1991
HART COUNTY PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

BACKGROUND

Block, Seward and Seidlinger (1989) state that preschools have existed since the 17th century. As educational trends change, the popularity and need for preschools changes. Over the past 25 years, social, economic, and educational reforms have encouraged the rejoining of forces between schools, communities and parents (Kagan, 1989). Demands are being placed on schools to provide the day-care services needed within their communities.

Economic Aspects of Preschool

Today, the need for the public preschool program is clear when looking at differences in preschool attendance. The rate of preschool attendance for four-year-old children from families with incomes of more than $35,000 was 67 percent. In contrast, only 33% of four-year-old children from families with incomes of $10,000 or less attend preschool (Day and Thomas, 1989). The Federal Head Start Project, the primary source of preschool for low income families, serves only 16 percent of the
2.5 million eligible children. Public preschools would provide a necessary service to children who are not served by other programs and would reduce differences in preschool attendance based on income.

There are other factors that lead to the economic demand for public preschool. According to Strother (1988), working mothers have the strongest impact on the national economy and voice consistent demands for public preschool. Galensky (1986) notes in a review of current child-care patterns, that 62% of all mothers worked in 1985. Concurrently, preschool enrollment jumped 53 percent in 1985. Working mothers do see the need for early child-care and are trying to find it. However, getting quality child-care will become more difficult as the number of working mothers increases and the number of quality child-care openings decrease.

Parents who want good quality child-care are put on waiting lists. Alternative solutions cost the same. According to Wallis (1987) the typical cost of a babysitter or day-care facility is $3,000 a year for one child. As a result, many mothers with little money who must work leave children unattended or with older brothers and sisters. More than 200,000 non-working mothers of young children turn down job offers each month because a child prevents her from working a full-time job (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1987).

Some businesses and companies see the need for job-site day-care.
Ventura (1987) describes the impact of job-site day-care at Mereck and Company, a large pharmaceutical laboratory based in Rahway, New Jersey. Before the program started, employee turnover and absenteeism was very high. After the program started, turnover and absenteeism were significantly reduced. In addition, parents reported managing their duties as parents more easily.

People in all geographical areas are finding difficulty in getting childcare services. According to Morado (1989), 28 states are now supporting early childhood education programs. Until 1980, only nine states funded such programs. No state provides preschool programs for all four-year-olds. Eligibility criteria limits participation to those identified at risk of school failure. Parents who have an income that will not allow their child to participate in the free lunch program are denied participation in preschool.

Political Aspects of Preschool

In recent years, education has risen to the top of state policy agendas. Politicians and business leaders regard education as the key to the future, according to Odden and Odden (1984). Eight states have already enacted major educational reform programs while others are developing proposals.

National, state and local agencies have emerged to aid parents in finding suitable child care. The federal government provides support through different
programs. Some of the programs are child care tax credit, Head Start, The Social Security Block Grant, The Child Care Food Program, Chapter 1 funds for schools and The National Association of State Directors of Special Education. According to Clifford and Russell (1989), the problem is that only the children from low income families are receiving these services. Strother (1987) indicates that legislative bills provide tax incentives for employers who develop child care centers in the workplace. Bills exist to cap the tax credit for child care that will aid the lower class. Other bills provide readiness for the young.

Goldsmith (1989) states that day-care centers are multiplying rapidly due to increased funding. Federal funds are made available for the first time through the Children's Bureau to provide child care centers for children of working mothers. Also, federal funds are made available for groups of four- and five-year-olds under Project Head Start and The Community Action Program.

Kentucky's Response to Preschool

In Kentucky, the education system was declared unconstitutional and the entire educational system was reorganized. The need for preschools for children at risk of early school failure was recognized during the reorganization. By law, preschool programs were to be started in each school district.
The decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, and the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142) molded the personality of the preschool program. Preschool programs were developed to offer children who were at risk of school failure a better chance for success. Frymier and Gansneder (1989) define at risk students as those students likely to have school failure. These students may be retained in a grade, drop out of school, use drugs, be physically or sexually abused, attempt suicide, come from a non-traditional family, live in poverty, and be unable to cope with failure. The bad events that happen to children make them "at risk."

Many long term benefits from preschool experiences for children "at risk" have been identified. Nine long-term studies of the Perry Prichard Program tracked 2,658 of an original 3,592 children living in poverty from preschool to age 21 (Sava, 1988). These studies identify benefits that lasted into adulthood. In addition, Elkind (1986) found that during the elementary years, children participating in experimental preschool programs had better grades, less failure in classes, fewer absences, were less likely to be retained, had greater self-esteem, better social skills, had less special education needs, were more likely to graduate high school and move on to higher areas of education. As adults these students were more likely to be employed, were less likely to
receive public aid, and were less likely to be in a correctional institution.

Hart County as well as all counties in Kentucky began offering preschool services in the 1990-91 school year for at-risk children ages three and four. As this new program is enacted, the benefits must be evaluated. These benefits encompass Kindergarten preparedness, social skills, pre-reading skills, fine motor skills and positive school attitude. This study identifies teacher and parental attitudes toward the preschool and measures student academic achievement.
DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Chapter two contains a description of the Hart County Preschool Program components, the methodology and the design of the study. Where appropriate current literature is used to support each of the elements of this study.

Limitations

It must be noted that several limitations were present. First, the survey was designed and distributed only to teachers in the Hart County preschool program, one district in Kentucky. Second, how the district reacted to previous practices of the preschool program had not been examined. Third, the preschool program was active in only three schools in Hart County, which added to the lack of knowledge to teachers not at the preschool sites. Fourth, the questionnaire was developed in Hart County to show a comparison over time, this study used the survey to provide an end of the year snapshot of parent and teacher concerns and attitudes. Fifth, the survey was developed by only one person, the Director of Preschools; perhaps a panel of teachers and parents could be developed to design future questionnaires.
Program Description

According to the Kentucky Task Force on Educational Reform, each local school district will provide a developmentally appropriate half-day preschool program for at-risk children of the ages three and four. The Hart County Preschool began in the fall of 1990. Children who had identified handicaps pursuant to KRS 157-227 and who were eligible for enrollment with four year olds who were identified as "at risk." It is the purpose of the Hart County Preschool program to provide early intervention for children who are at risk of school failure.

Parental and teacher attitudes along with the academic achievement of these four and five year olds will give input that will help the program grow and improve to meet the needs of these students.

Hart County Demographics

Hart County is a rural area with little employment opportunity. According to the Barren River Area Development District (BRADD) about 48.6% of the students enter school economically deprived, 55% of the mothers are single parents, 40% of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch, 7.6% of the adults were unemployed and $9,836.00 was the per capita income in 1990. Most residents commute out of the county for employment, while others tend farms.
Program Components

The preschool program was set up in half-day sessions at two schools. Children are transported by bus to and from the preschool site. The program follows the High Scope method of instruction that is much like that in the kindergarten classrooms in Hart County.

Daily instruction includes developmentally appropriate experiences in social, physical, emotional, cognitive, and expressive areas. Activities are child initiated and teacher directed. Discovery learning plays a large roll in instruction.

Teachers facilitate the development of the whole child by encouraging expected behavior in a positive manner. Children have daily opportunities to develop large and small muscle skills.

Changes are provided as needed so that children with disabilities can benefit as well as those with no physical limitations. Children are taught at individual entry level to provide success. Preschool teachers are to communicate with primary teachers about activities and student achievement. Teachers in the primary program are to visit and observe the preschool program in action.

Program Goals and Objectives

The overall goal of the Hart County Preschool Program is to give at risk
students a better opportunity to achieve success when they begin kindergarten (Strange & Lawler, 1991).

The objectives are as follows:

1. Offer developmentally appropriate activities that focus on physical, intellectual, social, and emotional development. Students with disabilities will have activities to meet their own individual needs.

2. Provide services for children who are four (4) years old by October 1 and at risk of educational failure as identified based on federal school lunch program eligibility criteria for free lunch.

3. Avoid duplication of services and to avoid supplanting of existing federal and state funds.

4. Increase use of Head Start funds to serve four-year old’s and to assure that Head Start is fully utilized.

5. Is available for children with disabilities and for children of any income who have identified disabilities pursuant to KRS 157.226 and who are three or four years of age, or who may become five years of age after October 1 of the current year.

6. Offer free breakfast and lunch.

7. Utilizes facilities, materials and equipment that are appropriate for
Preschool Evaluation

young children.

8. Comply with all applicable statutes and regulations.

9. Submit enrollment verification data and an annual program evaluation.

10. Comply with all requirements for non-discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, sex or disability.

11. Provide a drug-free environment.

Program Participants

There were three preschool classrooms at three different elementary schools. There were three teachers, two were certified for kindergarten through fourth grade, and the remaining had 18 college hours and two years experience in early childhood education.

There were a total of 39 children enrolled, 27 of the four-year-old were identified as at risk. "At Risk " are students who qualify for the free lunch program funded by the federal government. Five were four-year-old with handicaps. The three-year-olds were served mainly in the home setting. They were included in special activities such as field trips, guest speakers, presentations and movies.

Program Concern

Although the preschool program in Hart County is mandated by law, the
question of benefits arises. Are the children who are selected to attend preschool really "at risk"? Are the children showing academic gains in the areas of Math, Reading, Visual recognition and Language Arts? Are the parents pleased with the program? Are the daily sessions of proper length? Are the children surrounded by a pleasing and happy environment?

Discussion

The Hart County preschool program was mandated by KERA in 1990 and set into operation that same year. The goal of the program is to help students who are "at risk" have a better chance of academic achievement in school. The goal of the program is to gain evidence that students who are "at risk" and attending preschool have a higher chance of achievement than those who do not participate in the program.

Evaluation Design

There are seven components described in the evaluation design. These parts are procedures, timelines, areas of concern, evaluation questions, information requirements, collection strategies and instrumentation.

Procedures

To discover the success of the state-mandated preschool program, information on teacher and parental attitudes with student achievement was gathered.
The preschool program in action was observed by this writer. Items observed were student participation, student attitude about school, and teacher student interaction. The data collected from this observation revealed the attitudes of students in the classroom setting. The questions addressed in this study were: (1) What are the perceptions of rural teachers and parents concerning the preschool program implemented in Hart County? (2) What are the differences in levels of achievement on the CTBS scores for those kindergarten students having participated in the Hart County preschool program and other students?

A 10-item questionnaire was used to obtain the information on parental attitudes and concerns about the preschool program, as seen in Appendix A. A similar questionnaire, found in Appendix B, was sent to kindergarten teachers who had program participants in their classes.

At the close of the school year, parents were asked to complete and return the survey on their perceptions of the new preschool program and to submit suggestions for improvement. According to Zarn (1988), parents should be a main source of feedback for improvement of the public school programs. Parents can discover their children’s strengths and weaknesses in areas that teachers cannot notice during the half-day sessions.

The California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) results for the 1991-92 school
year were examined. All kindergarten student achievement results were used. The differences between the results of those students who participated in last year’s preschool program and the results of those who did not were analyzed. Student’s names were not revealed to insure confidentiality.

Timelines

This study occurred in several phases as seen in Figure 1. From July 1 to August 15 of 1990, visits occurred with the Director of the Hart County Preschools preparing the questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed on May 6 of 1991. Parent and teacher surveys were returned by May 27 before the close of the 1990-91 school year. Students were administered the California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) on April 8 of 1992. The CTBS scores arrived on the 20th day of May of 1992. The total length of the study was two years.

**Figure 1**

**Timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>July 1 to August 15, 1990</th>
<th>Visits to the Director of Preschools to prepare questionnaire.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 6, 1991</td>
<td>Parent and kindergarten teacher questionnaires were mailed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 27, 1991</td>
<td>Parent and kindergarten teacher questionnaires were returned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 8, 1992</td>
<td>Students were administered the (CTBS).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 20, 1992</td>
<td>(CTBS) scores were returned to the schools.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Areas of concern

In the wake of educational reform, education must reach beyond the school room. Education must reach families, communities, social services and other social institutions in order to help children. Kagan (1989) and Erikson (1988) indicate causes of school dropout, teen crime, drug addiction and teen suicide may have resulted from circumstances that are seen every day.

Single parent homes, young mothers still in school, more mothers in the work force, early drug use, poverty, poor quality day-care and pressures such as advanced technology work which requires more education and fewer mistakes are factors. Problems such as these impact educators' ability to be successful in transferring knowledge to students.

There is the belief that preschool programs for low income children have been proven to repay the public's investment. Haskins (1989) warned that it was unwise to use the cost-benefit from Barnett's (1985) study of the Perry Preschool Project to support this theory. Eighty percent of taxpayers benefit. Barnett's analysis came from welfare and crime reduction. More long term research on Head Start is needed.

A study conducted by Barnett and Escobar (1987) found that few studies provide credible evidence that early intervention for disadvantaged children can be an economic investment. Although there are studies such as the two
mentioned before, Kagan (1989) urges the continuance of preschool research and practice. Research will improve the services we have that aide children from low income homes. He sees the need for preschool.

Many parents express the concern that children are being pushed into school too early. This possibility is a valid concern to some parents who are not working or who have excellent child care services that offer educational experiences. There are however, many children who receive poor care in the home or from caregivers. Many are left alone to care for themselves.

Increasing awareness of the importance of early intervention is being seen by laymen. According to Smyser (1990) much of a child’s cognitive, emotional, and physical development occurs before kindergarten. If children are in surroundings with little educational experiences, how can these areas be developed?

Elementary schools are beginning to extend their services to pre-kindergarten students. There is a need for quality care during the day, during school hours, and after school. Rather than returning home alone or being left with siblings, children who have quality day-care have proven to benefit.

At present, many children under age five are not in public schools. Mitchell and Madigilani (1989) state that 90% of children age five to eight are in schools trying to adopt programs that will serve even younger children in the
future. Early childhood programs are becoming a major part of our nation’s public educational system.

Hart County is much like the rest of the nation in expressing concerns about preschool education. Many of the parents have a low priority on education for many reasons. Many were high school dropouts, received special education services which stigmatized them as slow learners, were from low income homes and had parents who had the same attitudes about the school system. These early experiences made many parents reluctant to value the preschool organization. Since implementation attitudes have changed. Parents have been educated on the value of early childhood education. The importance or early intervention has become a widespread trend in Hart County.

Evaluation Questions

The main goal of the study on the Hart County Preschool was to see the success of this first year program and discover weaknesses so that revisions could be made for the next school year. To locate the positive and negative aspects of the program, parents and teachers completed a questionnaire. The participants were asked several questions on likes and dislikes of the program. They were asked if their child had a positive attitude about school. An area was provided to offer suggestions for the next school year.

To assess the progress of the program, a measure of student achievement
was gathered. Children’s CTBS scores were compared to examine the differences of students who had preschool experience and those who did not.

**Information Requirements**

To conduct the study of concerns and attitudes of teachers and parents, several methods of gathering information could have been used. It was felt that a simple questionnaire that asked specific questions and offered areas for feedback and suggestions would be most valid. Much space was available for feedback and suggestions.

To measure the amount of progress that these "at risk" students had made in comparison with students who were not in preschool, some means of assessment was needed. The California Test of Basic Skills was chosen due to the fact that it is administered in the spring of each school year and compares students scores in Math, Reading, Vocabulary, Word Analysis and Visual Recognition. If needed, these results are stored for future comparison.

**Collection Strategies**

All procedures and instruments used in the collection of the attitudes on the Hart County Preschool Program were prescribed by the Director of Preschools in Hart County. Since the questionnaire was developed by only one person, more input may be needed for the next school year. This feedback will be available due to the feedback of teachers and parents that responded.
The questionnaire was mailed to 39 parents and four kindergarten teachers in the Hart County School System. The questionnaire was administered in the early part of May 1992 at the end of the second year in which the preschool program was in full implementation.

To obtain the information about the environment of the preschool classroom it was necessary for the writer to make visits to the preschool classroom so that a first hand view of child attitudes could be observed rather than questioning the teacher or the parents.

The students were administered the CTBS in the latter part of March. The tests were sent to Frankfort Kentucky for analysis and National comparison. Print outs containing student scores were returned to the school in May. Children’s scores could be compared with national scores as well as with others in the classroom.

This study was begun in the Fall on 1990. Questionnaires were mailed and returned in May of 1991. The CTBS scores were also administered and analyzed in May 1992 before the close of the school year. The total length of this study was one year.
Instrumentation

Due to the uniqueness of this study, two questionnaires were developed by the director of preschools in Hart County. The first questionnaire was directed to kindergarten teachers and may be found in Appendix A. The second questionnaire was directed toward the parents and may be found in Appendix B. Both questionnaires were assumed to have face validity by the director. This fact may be identified as a weakness. The questionnaires were used to collect data on concerns, weaknesses and strengths of the preschool program and its effect on "at risk" children.

The California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) is a standardized test that has been used for several years in the Hart County schools to obtain the end of the year achievement. This test has been used to identify children who have learning disorders or who need extra concentration in the areas of Math and Reading. The scores have also been used to measure the amount of achievement from year to year. Teachers often use these scores when making a referral for Special Education services. Since KERA was developed in 1990, the perception of this test has changed. Many educators feel that the test is only measuring only certain areas of learning. At present new methods of assessment such as writing and math portfolios are being tested. These new assessment methods allow for self-expression rather than correct answers.
must state here that the validity of the CTBS may be questioned.

When the observation of the children was in progress, no questions were directly asked to students. The writer only observed the children to detect the mood of the environment.

The information in this chapter has provided a design for evaluating the Hart County Preschool Program. The results of the evaluation are presented in the next chapter.
RESULTS

There are two purposes of this study. The first is to find out what attitudes and concerns were noted by parents and teachers about the Hart County Preschool Program. The second was to compare the academic gains of students who participated in the preschool program and those who did not participate. A survey was developed by the preschool director and mailed to parents and teachers. Students' scores from the California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) were obtained for comparison.

In this section results are presented in the two categories that reflect the purpose of this study. The first results reported reflect parent and teacher attitudes about the preschool program. The second results reported reflect the academic comparison of students who participated in preschool and those who did not.

Attitudes

The 10 item survey was mailed to 39 parents. A similar survey with 8 items was mailed to kindergarten teachers. Parents and teachers were given different surveys due to the fact that the teacher's questions would be slightly different. All 4 teachers responded to the survey. Only 20 parents responded.
Six questions were dichotomous. The options for answering these questions were: yes and no.

The six questions sent to parents were aimed at finding out whether or not:
(a) The parents felt that their child benefitted from the program, (b) Their child enjoyed the opportunity of working with a group of children the same age, (c) Their child seemed to enjoy preschool activities, (d) They feel that they have been informed about activities occurring in the preschool program, (e) They feel that the Preschool classrooms have appropriate equipment and supplies, and (f) The Preschool program is well-organized? Results are reported in Table 1. Parents who returned the survey responded positively to these questions.

The remaining four questions on the survey were open ended. Parents were given space to comment and offer suggestions to better the program. The open ended questions were: (a) What parts of the program seem to be the strongest? (b) What areas of the program are the weakest? (c) What suggestions do you have for the program? and (d) What comments do you have about the program?

Parental comments were positive and constructive as seen in Table 2. When asked what parts of the program seem to be the strongest, parents responded by writing their ideas in the provided space. There were six common areas of the program that the parents listed as being a favorite
Table 1

Attitudes of Parent's with Children Participating in Hart County Preschool Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel that your child has benefitted from Preschool?</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your child seem to enjoy the opportunity to work with a group of children the same age?</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your child seem to enjoy the activities conducted in Preschool?</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel that you are being informed about the activities taking place in the program?</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel that the Preschool classrooms have appropriate equipment and supplies?</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel that the Preschool program is well-organized?</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 20
aspect of the program. Table 2 is based on the frequency with which comments occurred in these areas. Interaction with peers was the most widely given comment about the preschool. Eight of the seventeen parents who answered this question commented upon their child’s interaction with other children. One parent stated, "The chance to be with other children is good for them in learning to share and cooperate." Five parents listed academic readiness as their favorite part of the program. One parent stated, "Using worksheets better prepares the children for kindergarten." Five also listed adult child interaction as their favorite. One parent stated, "The teacher and the aides work well with the children." One parent listed activities as a favorite

Table 2

Parental Response to Preschool Strengths by Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interaction with peers</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic readiness</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult child interaction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separation from parents</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
aspect of the program. Another parent listed separation from parents. This parent stated, "It will give my child the opportunity to see that she can be away from Mom and Dad and that it will be OK. Three parents liked every aspect of the program.

When asked what was liked least about the preschool programs six parents responded. Of the six parents responding to this question four cited the half-day sessions as a problem. One parent responded by saying that the half-day sessions should be extended throughout the entire school day so that the children could benefit from the all day experience.

When asked for suggestions about the preschool four parents responded. Two parents stated that they felt there was a need for more emphasis to be put on learning. One parent commented, "we only wish the commitment to help kids with special needs continues." One parent again commented about the half-day sessions and stated that full day sessions would cut transportation spending and help with the budget.

When asked for comments about the program, eight parents responded. Five of these parents complimented the teachers for their work with children. One parent stated, "I would like to comment on the teachers. My child really loves the teacher and her aide." Two parents said their children loved school. One
The four teachers received a similar survey with 4 dichotomous questions. The four questions were aimed at discovering whether or not (a) They felt that children in their classroom at the present who were enrolled in preschool last year benefitted from being in the program, (b) they felt that the children were appropriately prepared for kindergarten, (c) they feel that the preschool curriculum is appropriate, and (d) they feel that children in their class who had not had preschool would have benefitted from the program. Table 3 shows that all teachers agreed with questions one through three; however, one teacher disagreed with the fourth question which dealt with the fact that the preschool program would have benefitted children now in kindergarten who had not been in the program.

When asked what parts of the preschool program was liked by the kindergarten teachers, all four teachers commented that the children in their rooms had benefitted from the preschool program in the areas of reading readiness, math readiness, social skills, fine motor skills, gross motor skills, and daily school procedures. When asked what was liked least about the preschool program, three teachers responded. Two teachers commented that although it is not the job of the
Table 3

Kindergarten Teacher Attitudes Toward Hart County Preschool Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel that the children you have in your class this year who were enrolled in preschool last year benefitted from being in the preschool program?</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel that the children were appropriately prepared for kindergarten?</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel that the preschool curriculum is appropriate?</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have children in your class who you feel would have been more successful had they been in the preschool program the previous year?</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
preschool teacher to teach kindergarten skills, that there should be some alphabet recognition skills prior to kindergarten. One teacher responded that the preschool should be available to everyone, not just low income families. When asked for comments three teachers responded. One teacher commented that although the preschool is not perfect, the program is improving as well as the students who participate.

Academic

To further examine the impact of the preschool program, a comparison of CTBS scores was made. Students were divided into two groups. One group contained the nine students who had been served by the preschool program and the other group contained the students who had not been served by the program.

Scores were divided into quartile divisions for easier analysis; while comparing the scores, it can be seen that students not served by the preschool had somewhat higher scores in math and visual recognition. Scores in vocabulary, comprehension and word analysis were only slightly higher. The scores of students with preschool and those not served are very close. These quartiles may be seen in Tables 4 and 5.
Table 4

1992 California Test of Basic Skills Quartiles for Hart County Students Not Served by Public Preschool during 1990-1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Testing</th>
<th>Quartile 1 0-25</th>
<th>Quartile 2 26-50</th>
<th>Quartile 3 51-75</th>
<th>Quartile 4 76-100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 20
Table 5

1992 California Test of Basic Skills Quartiles for Hart County Students Served by Public Preschool in 1990-1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Testing</th>
<th>Quartile 1 0-25</th>
<th>Quartile 2 26-50</th>
<th>Quartile 3 51-75</th>
<th>Quartile 4 76-100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Analysis</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Recognition</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 20
The purpose of this study was to obtain parental and kindergarten teacher attitudes of the preschool program in Hart County and to measure the academic gains of the students served by the program. Results have been described. In the next chapter, the results will be discussed and recommendations outlined.
RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to obtain parental and kindergarten teacher attitudes of the preschool program in Hart County and to measure the academic gains of the students served by the program.

The questionnaires indicate that parents and teachers had a positive attitude toward the program. All comments were studied and many suggestions were put into action the following year.

Implications for Further Evaluations

The questionnaire that was sent to teachers and parents was returned by 20 out of 39 parents. Reasons could have been that the parents could not read, did not want to say anything negative about the preschool, felt that the survey was not important or forgot to complete the questionnaire. To receive a more accurate account of parental attitudes and concerns an interview could be held during a mandatory parent-teacher meeting during the school year. A parent volunteer could conduct the survey at a station set up outside the classroom. Such an arrangement would save time and insure an accurate account of parental attitudes because all parents would have comments.
Implications for People Surveyed

The questionnaire that was sent to parents did not address issues that are important to the progress of the child at home. Questions that could be added are: (a) Does the parent understand how to help the child with work that is sent home? (b) How often is the child read to at home? (c) Does the child show an interest in paper pencil activities? and (d) Does the child have positive attitudes about the preschool and learning? Adding questions that address home situations will help the preschool teacher better understand how to help the child and the parent.

The questionnaire was sent only to kindergarten teachers and parents of preschool students. The preschool teacher was not issued a questionnaire. The preschool teacher plays a very important role in the success of the preschool program and should be given the opportunity to give opinions. An interview should be set up with each preschool teacher. Some of the questions that could be asked but were not addressed in this evaluation are: (a) Do you feel that you have adequate equipment? (b) Do you have adequate teaching assistants? (c) Do you feel that you have adequate opportunity to seek the extra training needed to ensure the success of the preschool program? (d) Are you teaching as in ways that you feel are developmentally appropriate? (e) Are you pressured by kindergarten teachers to teach students paper and pencil activities? and
(f) What are the preschool areas you feel need improvement in the preschool?

Implications for Administrators

The questionnaire was not sent to principals. It is important to have feedback from the building principal who sees the program in action every day. The principal may see problems before and after school, loading and unloading busses, and on the playground. Problems in communication may be noted between parent to teacher and teacher to teacher. In addition the principal may be a source of finding alternative ways of teaching by locating workshops and getting speakers to come to Hart County. The principal may have ideas from other preschool both in and out of Hart County.

Parents who responded had many positive comments along with concerns. One parent felt that the preschool should be extended from half day sessions to full day sessions. The parent felt that the student would benefit from the whole day experience rather than a short amount of time. Students may benefit from this but most 4 year olds have such a short attention span that the extra two hours may not be as beneficial as thought. These students would be tired of classroom activities and would spend the remainder of the day at nap, snack, outside or music.
Implications for Political Debate

One parent commented that the half day sessions were costing more money because busses were running at noon. The parent felt that if the children remained at school for the full day and rode the bus home in the evening with the older students that transportation money could be saved. The following school year preschool was extended to full day sessions. These parental concerns could have played a roll in this action.

A parent also mentioned that more emphasis should be placed on academics. Parents as well as teachers of the primary must be informed of developmentally appropriate activities. The preschool offers several meetings between parents and teachers throughout the school year. A orientation held prior to the students enrollment of the preschool that explains activities that the child will be doing could clarify this area.

The questionnaire was not returned by all parents, but all teachers responded. Teachers freely expressed opinions about the preschool. A kindergarten teacher stated that she felt that the preschool teacher should be placing more emphasis on academics rather than on center activities. This comment from a classroom teacher could be the result of a misconception of what is developmentally appropriate for the preschool child. The preschool teachers and the primary teachers could communicate more effectively if a
monthly meeting were set up for these teachers to plan units of study, share ideas, and discuss activities that are developmentally appropriate both in the preschool and the primary.

It must be noted that several limitations were present. First, the survey was designed and distributed only to teachers in the Hart County preschool program, one district in Kentucky. Second, how the district reacted to previous practices of the preschool program had not been examined. Third, the preschool program was active in only three schools in Hart County, which added to the lack of knowledge to teachers not at the preschool sites. Fourth, the questionnaire was developed in Hart County to show a comparison over time, this study used the survey to provide an end of the year snapshot of parent and teacher concerns and attitudes. Fifth, the survey was developed by only one person, the Director of Preschools; perhaps a panel of teachers and parents could be developed to design future questionnaires.

Despite these acknowledged limitations, the results are considered an accurate measure of the parents’ and kindergarten teachers’ end of the year concerns regarding the preschool program. Because the sample size is small \(N=20\) and from only one district, the results are intended only for the district and may not be generalized to other preschool programs.

Four major recommendations for future evaluations must be considered.
First, the parent questionnaire should be presented by an aide at a mandatory parent-teacher meeting. This will ensure that all parents have a chance to respond. Second, principals and preschool teachers should be included in the survey. Third, the survey(s) should be developed by more than one person. Fourth, on-site observations of each preschool should be scheduled throughout the year to determine whether the program is being implemented as intended and to gather information on student attitudes. The impact of differences among the preschools could then be studied.
APPENDIX A

Kindergarten Teacher Survey Instrument
Dear Kindergarten Teacher:

We would appreciate your answers to the following questions as we evaluate the preschool program for the 1990-91 school year.

1. Do you feel that the children you have in your class this year who were enrolled in preschool last year benefitted from being in the preschool program?

   Yes  No

2. Do you feel that the children were appropriately prepared for kindergarten?

   Yes  No

3. Do you feel that the preschool curriculum is appropriate?

   Yes  No

4. Do you have children in your class who you feel would have been more successful had they been in the preschool program the previous year?

   Yes  No

5. What parts of the preschool program do you feel are the strongest areas?

6. What parts of the preschool program do you feel are the weakest?

7. Do you have any suggestions or ideas you would like to make for the program?

8. What other comments would you like to make concerning the preschool program?

Please return this survey form in the self-addressed envelope which is enclosed. We hope the preschool program has helped to make your job in kindergarten a little easier this year.
APPENDIX B

Preschool Parent Survey Instrument
Dear Parent:

Your child has been enrolled in the Preschool program for this year. We would appreciate your answers to the following questions.

1. Do you feel that your child has benefitted from Preschool?
   - Yes   - No

2. Has your child seemed to enjoy the opportunity to work with a group of children the same age?
   - Yes   - No

3. Has your child seemed to enjoy the activities conducted in Preschool?
   - Yes   - No

4. Do you feel that you have been informed about the activities taking place in the preschool?
   - Yes   - No

5. Do you feel that the Preschool classrooms have appropriate equipment and supplies?
   - Yes   - No

6. Do you feel that the Preschool classrooms have appropriate equipment and supplies?
   - Yes   - No

7. What part of the Preschool program did you like best?

8. What part of the Preschool program did you like least?

9. Do you have any suggestions or ideas you would like to make for next year's program?
10. What other comments would you like to make concerning the Preschool program?

Please return this survey form in the self-addressed envelope which is enclosed. Thank you for taking the time to share this information. We hope your child has had a great year in Preschool.
Bibliography


