

Minnesota's Learning Readiness

1997-1998 Evaluation

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Minnesota's Learning Readiness

1997-1998 Evaluation Highlights

About Learning Readiness The purpose of a Learning Readiness program is to provide all eligible children adequate opportunities to participate in child development programs that enable the children to enter school with the necessary skills and behavior and family stability and support to progress and flourish (M.S. 121.831).

Learning Readiness is designed to allow maximum flexibility at the community level for providing a continuum of services for all children who are at least three and one-half years old but have not entered kindergarten. Children with the greatest needs, as identified through an early childhood screening process, receive priority for the more comprehensive services.

It is intended that local programs will strengthen and build upon existing services and resources to meet the health, nutrition, education and social service needs of the participating children to enhance their learning and development and future success in school.

Evaluation Focus 1997-1998

The 1997-1998 Learning Readiness evaluation focused on:

- children's progress in Learning Readiness;
- how children's next teachers assessed their transition to kindergarten; and
- parent's perspectives about child progress and Learning Readiness programs.

Eight school districts participated in the study. The study group included 177 children and 74 parents. In addition, we were successful in obtaining information from kindergarten teachers about children's adjustment to kindergarten in the fall of 1998 for all study children.

What We Learned About Children's Progress in Learning Readiness

Findings about children's progress focuses on different levels of performance and growth; children demonstrating proficiency, children demonstrating positive change in performance, and children receiving similar ratings on both fall and spring assessments.

- **By the spring assessment, approximately two-thirds or more of the children received *proficient* ratings on all 11 indicators in the domain of language and literacy and on 15 of the 16 indicators related to personal and social development.** This suggests that study children, as a group, are demonstrating knowledge, skills and behaviors that will support their transition to kindergarten.
- **A majority of children not proficient in the fall demonstrated improvement by the spring assessment.** When we look at rating change indicator by indicator, 72% or more of the children received higher ratings on 11 indicators, 60% or more received higher ratings on 12 indicators, and 57% or more received higher ratings on 3 indicators.
- **Some children (less than 18% for most indicators) rated as *in process* in the fall received the same rating in the spring.** When we look at rating change indicator by indicator, 11-18% of the children received *in process* ratings on both fall and spring assessments for 18 indicators, 7-10% received similar ratings on 5 indicators, and 23% received *in process* ratings on both assessments on 4 indicators.
- **Very few children (less than 3% for most indicators) were rated *not yet*, the lowest rating, both fall and spring.** When we looked at ratings indicator by indicator *not yet* spring ratings were received by 1-3% of the children on 19 indicators. Five to six percent of the children received *not yet* ratings on 3 indicators.

****What you need to know about 4 year olds.***

Children between the ages of 3-11 display different patterns of physical, mental and emotional development. Based on what is known about young children's development we would expect children to demonstrate different levels of skills and abilities.

What We Learned From Children's Kindergarten Teachers

In the fall of 1998, kindergarten teachers were asked to assess how well children in the study adjusted to kindergarten. Assessments were received for all children in the study.

- **93% of the study children were assessed by their kindergarten teacher as doing well or making adequate adjustment to kindergarten in the fall of 1998.** Sixty-six percent of the study children were assessed as "doing well", 27% were assessed as making "adequate adjustment", and teachers noted 7% of the children were having a "difficult adjustment" to kindergarten.

- When asked whether children's performance on 14 different indicators supported or limited their adjustment to kindergarten, teachers noted that most children (85% or more) performed in ways that aided their transition to school in the fall. 91% or more of the children were rated as demonstrating positive (supporting adjustment) performance on 9 of the 14 indicators; 5 of the 9 indicators in personal and social development and 4 of the 5 indicators in language and literacy. 85-89% were rated positively (supporting adjustment) on 5 indicators.

What Parents Told Us About Children's Progress and Learning Readiness

About Children's Progress

- Almost all interviewed parents (99%) described changes they observed in their children. Parent comments about their child's progress touched on areas of progress reflected in teacher assessments. Parents described progress children made in relationships with other children and familiar adults, cognitive skills, interest in school and reading related activities, and improved communication skills.

"I never experienced preschool before. I didn't know if it was real academic or social. [At first] he cried the whole class and wouldn't play. He slowly started to open up and do group time. Now he likes to go. He knows what day it is. He always asks if I am coming to get him. I don't know why. I think that may have something to do with that we have foster kids. Because parents drop them off and they don't come back."

"She went two times a week and she learned quite a bit. A lot of changes, as her reading and her writing goes and you know, recognizing words. She was able to speak English more. Those are big changes."

"We talk another language in our home and now he's so confident in English. Before he was not. He will share things with other kids. He learned this in school because he is an only child. He's learned not to take things from others, smaller children. He's learned from his teacher."

About Learning Readiness

- Most interviewed parents (86%) made comments about their child's Learning Readiness experience. Parent comments emphasized quality of instruction, teacher's relationship with both children and parents, the value of pre-school experience for their child, the availability of transportation, and program cost (affordability). Changes recommended by parents included extended exposure (hours per week) and availability of Learning Readiness for all families with young children.

"Learning Readiness is the best! I recommend this program to all my friends and neighbors. As a single parent with 4 children I could not afford preschool. This program is affordable, has a great teacher and gives me lots of ways to be

involved. I like that. My daughter has had a great year and I am glad that she had this opportunity that my other children did not have. It is important."

"I feel that preschool should be funded by the state. Not necessarily entirely. This year preschool was around \$110 a month plus busing which is another \$30 a month. For 90% of the people, it puts it out of reach. Without financial assistance we get through the state or the school district, we never would have been able to send our daughter and she'd be a completely different child now. She wouldn't be as ready for kindergarten as what she'll be this year. It puts them a big step ahead. I think it's something very important."

"We've been very happy with Learning Readiness. The teachers are very good. My son enjoys it and comes home happy. I've been volunteering in the classroom and it's been kind of fun to watch what happens and watch the kids go about their day. They are very self directed and I think that's neat to see that they just go from here to there and know what they can do and choose the things they'd like to do. But yet there is direction. They don't let one child always do the same thing. They guide them into other areas so they have those experiences also. We've been very happy. It's been good, a good year."

"I think Learning Readiness is wonderful, but I really think they should have it for the three-year-olds because we don't qualify for Head Start. You have to be really poor for that. A family of six, you think we would, but we don't. It's really expensive. I think \$85 a month plus the busing. I need her to be bused. I cannot bring her. I'm taking more kids this summer [day care] because, more than life itself, she wants to go to school. She went [to Learning Readiness] this spring and she just did wonderful. She was real quiet and was waiting for me at the door when I came to pick her up cause she's really a cling on. She didn't even cry at Learning Readiness so that's how ready she is."

Recommendations

Department specialists developed recommendations based on their review and discussion of evaluation findings.

For Policy (1) **Continue and expand Learning Readiness.** Children and their families participating in Learning Readiness are typically the "working poor" who do not meet Head Start guidelines, who would not otherwise be involved in a preschool experience, and who may exhibit needs identified during Early Childhood Screening. Learning Readiness is clearly meeting a previously unmet need. Consequently, more of the same is recommended.

(2) **More funds are needed to establish or expand high quality, effective parenting education components within Learning Readiness.** Research has well established that parent involvement in children's learning and development enhances success in school. In this study, a broad range of parent skills and understandings were revealed. More parenting *education* is needed, especially that focused on the development of practical parenting skills supporting children's learning.

(3) More funding for transportation is needed. Consideration needs to be given to designating more funds specifically for Learning Readiness transportation. Parent comments indicate it is *the* most critical factor in the ability of lower-middle and lower-income children and their families to participate.

(4) Continue low and no cost options for Learning Readiness families. Parents find Learning Readiness more affordable than other preschool opportunities in their communities. Consequently, sliding fee schedules and waived fees need to continue.

(5) More funds are needed to help districts expand their skills and use of curriculum embedded, performance-based child assessment. High quality, performance-based information is a critical component of effective work with young children. Implementation and use of curriculum embedded assessment strategies requires significant commitment and collaboration by teachers, district coordinators, and state specialists. More funds are needed to expand the child assessment approaches demonstrated during the first four years of Learning Readiness.

(6) Make preschool learning experiences available to all three-and-one-half and four year old children. Parents of children participating in Learning Readiness are recognizing the value of preschool experiences for their children regardless of income or background. Consequently, it is valuable to make preschool experiences available for *all* three-and-one-half and four-year-old children—all children this age and their families can benefit from the availability of a continuum of preschool learning experiences.

***For Programs* (1) Enhance and expand staff skills in child observation, assessment, and use of child assessment data.** Effective learning opportunities for young children require district teachers and coordinators who are skilled at carefully and systematically observing the children in Learning Readiness and using assessment information to guide their work. Learning Readiness, since its beginning, has encouraged the use of curriculum embedded approaches to child assessment through the collaborative efforts of teachers, coordinators and state department specialists. Teaching staffs need to continue to do more efficient and reliable data collection and documentation of child progress to improve the quality of information available to plan curriculum, inform instruction, and communicate with parents. District coordinators need to provide on-going support and training for the application and use of curriculum embedded, child assessment strategies. State

department staff need to continue collaborative efforts focused on data quality, teacher and coordinator skills, and helping districts apply assessment information in ways that enhance children's learning and development.

(2) Make parent education an essential component in Learning Readiness. Because of the broad range of parent skills and understandings revealed in this study, especially through the parent interviews, it is clear that more parenting *education* would be valuable, especially that focused on the development of practical parenting skills that support children's learning. Learning Readiness staff need to stretch their creativity to find ways to include more meaningful parenting education in their work with children and families. Parents cannot articulate their goals for their children, do not always have a clear understanding of typical child development or the importance of the early years to learning, and do not understand their own child's development. The potential for addressing these issues is likely to come through more fully involving them in program activities that include parenting education and thoughtfully designed opportunities for parent-child interaction.

(3) Continue and expand efforts to ease the transition to kindergarten for children and parents participating in Learning Readiness. Many Learning Readiness programs are doing well communicating with kindergarten teachers about children's skills, abilities, and needs. In other districts, communication between early childhood education staff and primary level K-12 programs needs improvement. The goal for all Minnesota districts should be to facilitate a smooth transition for children (and their families) from early childhood to K-12 programs.

Evaluation Approach

Eight school districts participated in the study and data from 177 children and 74 parents was included in the sample. In addition, information from kindergarten teachers about children's adjustment to kindergarten was obtained for all of the study children. Study districts included Grand Rapids, Mounds View, Osseo, St. Cloud, St. Francis, St. Paul, Rush city and South Washington County.

Data collection strategies included the following:

Information about child progress. Information from the Work Sampling System checklist was used to assess child progress. The assessment included two domains and 27 indicators: personal and social development (16 indicators) and language and literacy (11 indicators). Teachers completed the checklist twice (fall and

spring) for each child in their class by comparing written observation notes to explicit rationales and examples of ratings for every performance indicator.

Information about children's adjustment to kindergarten.

Kindergarten teachers were asked to review a child's performance based on 14 indicators and assess whether the child's performance helped or hindered their adjustment to kindergarten. Teachers were also asked to provide an over-all assessment of a child's adjustment and progress in kindergarten. Kindergarten teachers completed the survey for all former Learning Readiness children participating in the study.

Information from parents. The spring parent interview included 19 open-ended questions. The interview provided information about how parents talk about their child's learning and development, how well they understand child development and parenting issues, and how they perceive their role in supporting growth and development as their child moves into kindergarten. The interview also included questions asking parents what changes they had observed in their child and their opinions about Learning Readiness. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for analysis.

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LEARNING READINESS

1997-1998 Evaluation Summary

Background

Minnesota's Learning Readiness

The purpose of a Learning Readiness program is to provide all eligible children adequate opportunities to participate in child development programs that enable the children to enter school with the necessary skills and behavior and family stability and support to progress and flourish (M.S. 121.831). Learning Readiness is designed to allow maximum flexibility at the community level for providing a continuum of services for all children who are at least three and one-half years old but have not entered kindergarten.

Children with the greatest needs, as identified through an early childhood screening process, receive priority for the more comprehensive services. It is intended that local programs will strengthen and build upon existing services and resources to meet the health, nutrition, education and social service needs of the participating children to enhance their learning and development and future success in school.

Evaluation Focus and Intended Users

The 1997-1998 Learning Readiness evaluation focused on understanding children's progress and their adjustment to kindergarten, parent's observations about their children's progress and Learning Readiness experience, and parent comments about their role in supporting child development and learning.

The evaluation focused on these questions:

Child Progress

In what ways do children participating in Minnesota's Learning Readiness demonstrate progress?

Children's Transition to Kindergarten

To what extent do children who participated in Learning Readiness demonstrate successful adjustment to kindergarten?

Parent's Observations About Child Progress and Programs

What have parents observed about children's progress and Learning Readiness?

Parent Comments About Child Development and Learning

How do parents talk about their child and their role in supporting child development and learning?

The intended users of this evaluation are Learning Readiness staff and public officials.

Evaluation Approach

Eight school districts participated in the study and data from 177 children and 74 parents was included in the sample. In addition, information was obtained from kindergarten teachers about children's adjustment to kindergarten for all study children. Study districts included Grand Rapids, Mounds View, Osseo, St. Cloud, St. Francis, St. Paul, Rush City and South Washington County. These districts were selected based on their years of experience using the Work Sampling System of child progress assessment (2 or more years) and their willingness to participate in the evaluation.

Children involved in the evaluation were from two or three classes in each district, four-years-old by September 1, 1997, and participated in Learning Readiness two half-days a week. Children receiving Early Childhood Special Education services were not included in the sample.

Parents participating in in-depth interviews were selected by teachers based on teacher's impression of the parent's involvement with their child's learning and development. Teachers were instructed to identify a mix of parents representing low, medium and high involvement.

In the fall of 1998, kindergarten teachers were identified for all of the children participating in the evaluation and asked to complete a survey about each child's adjustment to kindergarten.

Data Collection Strategies

Information about child progress. Information from the Work Sampling System checklist was used to assess child progress. The assessment included two domains and 27 indicators: personal and social development (16 indicators) and language and literacy (11 indicators). Teachers completed the checklist twice (fall and spring) for each child in their class by comparing written observation notes to explicit rationales and examples of ratings for every performance indicator.

Information about children's adjustment to kindergarten. Kindergarten teachers were asked to review a child's performance based on 14 indicators and assess whether the child's performance helped or hindered their adjustment to kindergarten. Teachers were also asked to provide an over-all assessment of a child's adjustment and progress in kindergarten. Kindergarten teachers completed the survey for all former Learning Readiness children participating in the study.

Information from parents. The spring parent interview included 19 open-ended questions. The interview provided information about how parents talk about their child's learning and development, how well they understand child development and parenting issues, and how they perceive their role in supporting growth and development as their child moves into kindergarten. The interview also included questions asking parents what changes they had observed in their child and their opinions about Learning Readiness. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for analysis.

What We Learned About Child Progress

Terms You Need to Know. Child progress themes reported in this section use terms describing what is assessed and ratings. The terms are described here within the context of the assessment process.

Learning Readiness teachers completed a Work Sampling checklist for each child in their class at two intervals. The checklist focused on two *domains* (personal and social development, language and literacy). Each domain is broken down into *functional components and performance indicators*. Indicators in the domain of personal and social development focus on how children view themselves as learners, their sense of responsibility to themselves and others, and children's interaction with others. Particularly important are the skills children show they are acquiring while making friends, solving conflicts, and functioning in groups. Language and literacy indicators emphasize the acquisition of language skills to convey and interpret meaning.

Teachers complete checklists based on systematic and focused observation of children's performance. When observing a child, teachers look for evidence of specific behavior and then record their observations. Teachers assess performance by comparing observation notes (evidence of performance) to the Work Sampling Guidelines. (See Appendix 1, page 18, for examples of guidelines used by teachers to assess child performance.)

The Work Sampling Guidelines provide teachers with explicit rationales and examples of ratings for every performance indicator. Possible checklist ratings of children's performance for a specific indicator are *not yet*, *in process*, or *proficient*. *Not yet* means the skill, knowledge, or behavior has not been demonstrated. *In process* means the skill, knowledge, or behavior is emergent and is not demonstrated consistently. *Proficient* means the skill, knowledge, or behavior is firmly within the child's range of performance.

Note. The rationale for selecting The Work Sampling System, as well as lessons learned from implementing the system in Learning Readiness Programs, is included in the first and second year First Grade Preparedness evaluation reports (Mueller, 1998, 1999).

Child Progress Findings

Children between the ages of 3-11, display different patterns of physical, mental and emotional development (Dichtelmiller, 1994). Based on what is known about young children's development we would expect children to demonstrate different levels of skills and abilities. In addition, we would not expect all children to demonstrate proficiency by the second assessment on every indicator. Findings about children's performance reported here focus on different levels of performance and growth: children demonstrating proficiency, children demonstrating positive change in performance, and children receiving similar ratings on both assessments.

By the spring assessment, approximately two-thirds or more of the children received *proficient* ratings on all 11 indicators in the domain of language and literacy and on 15 of the 16 indicators related to personal and social development. This suggests that study children are demonstrating knowledge, skills and behaviors that will support their

transition to kindergarten. Table 1 shows the percentages of study children rated *proficient* by the spring assessment in each domain. Appendix 2, page 21, shows the percentages of children receiving all three possible ratings (*not yet, in process, proficient*) for both fall and spring assessments. By spring, 78 percent or more of the children demonstrated proficiency on 18 indicators emphasizing self-concept, self-control, approach to learning, interaction with others,

Table 1: Percentages of Study Children Rated Proficient by the Spring Assessment

Performance Indicators		Children receiving <i>proficient</i> ratings in the spring* (n=177)
Personal and Social Development		
(Self Concept)	Begins to show comfort with self as someone growing in skills and abilities.	82%
	Shows some self-direction in actions.	87%
(Self Control)	Follows classroom rules and routines.	80%
	Uses classroom materials purposefully and respectfully.	90%
	Manages transitions.	85%
(Approach to Learning)	Shows eagerness and curiosity as a learner.	82%
	Chooses new as well as a variety of familiar classroom activities.	82%
	Approaches tasks with flexibility and inventiveness.	64%
	Persists in a task and seeks help when encountering a problem.	65%
(Interaction With Others)		
	Interacts easily with one or more children, beginning to play or work cooperatively.	78%
	Interacts easily with familiar adults.	88%
	Participates in the group life of the class.	79%
	Participates and follows simple rules in group activities.	79%
	Shows empathy and caring for others.	67%
(Conflict Resolution)	Seeks adult help when needed to resolve conflicts.	64%
	Uses words to resolve conflicts.	55%
Language & Literacy		
(Listening)	Listens with understanding to directions and conversations.	82%
	Follows directions that involve a two- or three-step sequence of actions.	81%
(Speaking)	Speaks clearly enough to be understood without contextual clues.	86%
	Uses language for a variety of purposes.	79%
(Literature and reading)		
	Listens with interest to stories read aloud.	89%
	Shows interest in reading-related activities.	81%
	Guesses what will happen next in a story using pictures for a guide.	70%
	Retells information from a story.	71%
	Recognizes the association between spoken and written words.	65%
(Writing)		
	Uses scribbles, shapes, and letter-like symbols to write words or ideas.	66%
	Copies or writes own name.	81%

*Percentages reported were calculated excluding missing data.

listening, speaking, literature and reading, and writing. Approximately two-thirds of the children demonstrated proficiency on 8 indicators emphasizing ways children approach learning, conflict resolution and empathy, literature, and writing. Over half of the children (55 percent) were rated *proficient* on one indicator emphasizing their ability to use words to resolve conflict.

A majority of the children not proficient in the fall demonstrated improvement by the spring assessment. When we look at rating change indicator by indicator, 72% or more of the children received higher ratings on 11 indicators, 60% or more received higher ratings on 12 indicators, and 57% or more received higher ratings on 3 indicators. By the spring assessment 72 percent or more of the children received higher ratings on 11 indicators emphasizing self-concept, approach to learning, interaction with others, speaking, literature and reading and writing. Sixty to sixty-nine percent of the children received higher ratings on 12 indicators emphasizing self control, approach to learning, interaction with others, conflict resolution, literature and reading and writing. Over half of the children (57-59 percent) received higher ratings on 3 indicators emphasizing interaction with others and listening. Our analysis of rating change excluded children rated *proficient* on the fall assessment. Table 2, page 6, shows the percentages of children demonstrating improved performance by the spring assessment for each indicator.

Some children (less than 18% for most indicators) rated as *in process* in the fall received the same rating in the spring. Eleven to eighteen percent of the children received *in process* ratings on both assessments for 18 indicators emphasizing self concept, approach to learning, interaction with others, conflict resolution, listening, speaking, literature and reading and writing. Seven to ten percent of the children received the same rating (*in process*) on 5 indicators emphasizing self-concept, self-control, interaction with others, speaking and literature and reading. Twenty-three percent of the children received the same rating (*in process*) on 4 indicators emphasizing approach to learning, interaction with others and conflict resolution. Table 3, page 7, shows the percentages of children receiving the same rating, either *not yet* or *in process*, on both fall and spring assessments.

Very few children (less than 3% for most indicators) were rated *not yet*, the lowest rating, by the spring assessment. On the fall assessment, up to 20 percent of the children were rated *not yet* on performance indicators. By the spring assessment very few children received *not yet* ratings. One to three percent of the children received *not yet* ratings on 19 indicators. Five to six percent of the children received *not yet* ratings on 3 indicators emphasizing literature and reading and writing. No children in the study group received *not yet* ratings on five indicators emphasizing self control, approach to learning, and interactions with others. Table 3, page 7, shows the percentages of children receiving *not yet* ratings on both fall and spring assessments.

Table 2: Percentages of Study Children Demonstrating Positive Change in Performance

Performance Indicators		Percentages* of Children Receiving Higher Spring Ratings**
Personal and Social Development		
(Self Concept)	Begins to show comfort with self as someone growing in skills and abilities.	78%
	Shows some self-direction in actions.	80%
(Self Control)	Follows classroom rules and routines.	62%
	Uses classroom materials purposefully and respectfully.	67%
	Manages transitions.	69%
(Approach to Learning)	Shows eagerness and curiosity as a learner.	76%
	Chooses new as well as a variety of familiar classroom activities.	73%
	Approaches tasks with flexibility and inventiveness.	60%
	Persists in a task and seeks help when encountering a problem.	61%
(Interaction With Others)	Interacts easily with one or more children, beginning to play or work cooperatively.	80%
	Interacts easily with familiar adults.	80%
	Participates in the group life of the class.	77%
	Participates and follows simple rules in group activities.	62%
	Shows empathy and caring for others.	59%
(Conflict Resolution)	Seeks adult help when needed to resolve conflicts.	68%
	Uses words to resolve conflicts.	60%
Language and Literacy		
(Listening)	Listens with understanding to directions and conversations.	58%
	Follows directions that involve a two- or three-step sequence of actions.	57%
(Speaking)	Uses language for a variety of purposes.	76%
(Literature and reading)	Listens with interest to stories read aloud.	72%
	Shows interest in reading-related activities.	68%
	Guesses what will happen next in a story using pictures for a guide.	64%
	Retells information from a story.	69%
	Recognizes the association between spoken and written words.	72%
(Writing)	Uses scribbles, shapes, and letter-like symbols to write words or ideas.	64%
	Copies or writes own name.	77%

* Percentages calculated based on the number of children receiving *not yet* or *in process* fall ratings. Study children rated proficient on fall assessments excluded from calculation.

**This includes children whose ratings moved from *in process* to *proficient*, *not yet* to *in process*, or *not yet* to *proficient*.

Table 3: Percentages of Children Receiving the Same Rating on Both Assessments

	Performance Indicators	Percentages* of Children Receiving In Process Ratings Fall and Spring	Percentages* of Children Receiving Not Yet Ratings Fall and Spring
Personal and Social Development			
<i>(Self Concept)</i>	Begins to show comfort with self as someone growing in skills and abilities.	13%	1%
	Shows some self-direction in actions.	9%	1%
<i>(Self Control)</i>	Follows classroom rules and routines.	17%	---
	Uses classroom materials purposefully and respectfully.	8%	---
	Manages transitions.	12%	---
<i>(Approach to Learning)</i>	Shows eagerness and curiosity as a learner.	13%	1%
	Chooses new as well as a variety of familiar classroom activities.	14%	---
	Approaches tasks with flexibility and inventiveness.	23%	1%
	Persists in a task and seeks help when encountering a problem.	23%	2%
<i>(Interaction With Others)</i>	Interacts easily with one or more children, beginning to play or work cooperatively.	11%	---
	Interacts easily with familiar adults.	7%	1%
	Participates in the group life of the class.	15%	1%
	Participates and follows simple rules in group activities.	16%	1%
	Shows empathy and caring for others.	23%	3%
<i>(Conflict Resolution)</i>	Seeks adult help when needed to resolve conflicts.	16%	2%
	Uses words to resolve conflicts.	23%	3%
Language & Literacy			
<i>(Listening)</i>	Listens with understanding to directions and conversations.	15%	1%
	Follows directions that involve a two- or three-step sequence of actions.	17%	1%
<i>(Speaking)</i>	Speaks clearly enough to be understood without contextual clues.	11%	1%
	Uses language for a variety of purposes.	10%	1%
<i>(Literature and reading)</i>	Listens with interest to stories read aloud.	7%	1%
	Shows interest in reading-related activities.	12%	2%
	Guesses what will happen next in a story using pictures for a guide.	17%	6%
	Retells information from a story.	12%	5%
	Recognizes the association between spoken and written words.	17%	2%
<i>(Writing)</i>	Uses scribbles, shapes, and letter-like symbols to write words or ideas.	18%	5%
	Copies or writes own name.	12%	2%

* n=177. Percentages reported were calculated excluding missing data.

What We Learned About Children's Transition to Kindergarten

Background

One way to understand the difference Learning Readiness makes for children is to look at child progress information. Another way is to ask children's next teachers (kindergarten teachers) how well children made the adjustment to school. In the fall of 1998, study districts contacted kindergarten teachers and assessments were received for all children in the study.

Survey focus. The survey of children's kindergarten teachers included two parts. One part of the survey asked the teacher to provide an over-all assessment of a child's adjustment and progress in kindergarten. The other part listed 14 indicators and asked the teacher to assess whether the child's performance in that area helped or hindered his or her adjustment to kindergarten.

Kindergarten Teacher's Assessment

Ninety-three percent of the study children were assessed by their kindergarten teacher as doing well or making adequate adjustment to kindergarten in the fall of 1988. Table 4 shows how children's adjustment to kindergarten was assessed by their teacher in the fall of 1988. Sixty-six percent of the study children were assessed as "doing well", 27 percent were assessed as making "adequate adjustment", and teachers noted 7 percent of the children were having a "difficult adjustment" to kindergarten.

Table 4 : Kindergarten Teacher's Over-all Assessments of Children's Adjustment to School

Over-all Rating:	Percentages of Children Receiving Rating*
This child is doing well in kindergarten.	66%
This child is making adequate adjustment to kindergarten.	27%
This child's adjustment in kindergarten has generally been difficult.	7%

*n= 177

When asked whether children's performance on 14 different indicators supported or limited their adjustment to kindergarten, teachers noted that most children (85 percent or more) performed in ways that aided their transition to school in the fall. Table 5, page 9, shows kindergarten teacher's assessment of children's early fall performance on 14 indicators in the domains of personal and social development and language and literacy. Teachers were asked to indicate if a child's performance supported or limited their adjustment to kindergarten. Ninety-one percent or more of the children were rated as demonstrating positive (supporting adjustment) performance on 9 of the 14 indicators; 5 of the 9 indicators in personal and social development and 4 of the 5 indicators in language and literacy. Eighty-five to eight-nine percent were rated

positively (supporting adjustment) on 5 indicators; 4 of the 9 indicators in personal and social development and 1 of the 5 indicators in language and literacy.

Table 5: Kindergarten Teacher's Assessments of Children's Performance Supporting or Limiting Adjustment to Kindergarten During the First Six Weeks of School.

	Percentages of children whose performance in this area <u>supported</u> their adjustment to kindergarten.*	Percentages of children whose performance in this area <u>limited</u> their adjustment to kindergarten.*
<i>Personal and Social Development:</i>		
Shows some self direction in actions.	91%	9%
Follows classroom rules and routines.	88%	12%
Manages transitions.	89%	11%
Shows eagerness and curiosity as a learner.	93%	7%
Persists in a task and seeks help when encountering a problem.	85%	15%
Plays and works cooperatively with other children.	93%	7%
Interacts easily with familiar adults.	95%	5%
Participates and follows simple rules in group activities.	92%	8%
Seeks adult help when needed to resolve conflicts.	89%	11%
<i>Language and Literacy:</i>		
Listens with understanding to directions and conversations.	85%	15%
Uses language for a variety of purposes.	93%	7%
Shows interest in reading-related activities.	93%	7%
Recognizes the association between spoken and written words.	91%	9%
Copies or writes own name.	92%	8%

n=177. Percentages reported were calculated excluding missing data.

What We Learned From Parents About Child Progress and Their Child's Learning Readiness Experience

Parents of seventy-four study children participated in in-depth interviews. At the end of the interviews, parents were asked to describe any changes they observed in their children from participating in Learning Readiness. Parents were also asked for their comments or suggestions about their child's participation in Learning Readiness.

Parents participating in interviews were purposefully selected by teachers to reflect different levels of parent involvement in children's learning and development. The seventy-four parents included 65 mothers and 9 fathers. For thirteen parents, English was their second language; five parents were Hispanic, seven Hmong, and one parent was from India.

Parent s' Observations About Children's Progress

Almost all interviewed parents (99%) described changes they observed in their children. Parent comments about their child's progress touched on areas of progress reflected in teacher assessments. Parents described progress children made in relationships with other children and familiar adults, cognitive skills, interest in school and reading related activities, and improved communication skills. Almost every parent (99 percent) commented on changes their child demonstrated as a result of their Learning Readiness experience. Some parents made general comments such as "she likes school now", or "he's more interested in learning". Many parents provided specific examples of changes they observed in their child. The examples parents offered are similar to the areas emphasized in teacher performance assessments. For example, many parents talked about how their child became more outgoing and more willing to play with other children (personal and social development), displayed increased interest in books and reading (language and literacy), or seemed more capable to do things for themselves (self confidence). Illustration 1 lists samples of parent comments about their child's progress.

Illustration 1: Samples of Parent Comments About Children's Progress

This year it's been amazing from Learning Readiness the things he feels capable of doing now. Because of being around other kids and "hay, I can do that". Or you know speaking up in class. Now I really think that was because of his comfort with [his teachers]. The classroom routine and that. I think sometimes we don't always teach them that at home, some of the things they teach at Learning Readiness. Going through calendars and stuff. Things like that that you might not have thought of doing, teaching you know. The different things that they have for experiences in the class. We're not going to bring out a tactile tub at home and do different things or science experiments that they have there. It was good, because there things that you go "oh, I could have done that". You didn't do it, you know.

We talk another language in our home and now he's so confident in English. Before he was not. He will share things with other kids. He learned this in school because he is an only child. He's learned not to take things from others, smaller children. He's learned from his teacher.

continued

I think she's just blossomed wonderfully. I think it's opened up a whole new world to her. . . She's learned so much, she's so interested in the outside world and nature. She's just changed completely from last year. Her first year of preschool was wonderful too. It was good for her. At three they are learning, but you don't see it. They are taking everything in, but you don't really see it. When they are four, all of a sudden, that second year of preschool everything is just shooting out. Her projects, she just loves to write her name, she really likes that Sesame Street magazine now. She loves mazes and dot to dot. She's counting things. She's doing really good.

When it comes to fine motor skills, my son has no self-confidence and he has come so far in the last year. The Learning Readiness teacher has worked so hard with him at cutting and coloring. At the beginning of the year at daycare he wouldn't sit down for a group art activity, he just didn't want to do it because he was afraid he'd do it wrong. Now he sits through his projects, he tries to complete them. He went from giving up on a project to completing it. He is coming out of his shell a little bit, a little more socially. He was very introverted, hesitant to play with any of the other children at the beginning of the year and now he's willing to initiate play with other kids. It is really nice to see him doing those kinds of things.

She went two times a week and she learned quite a bit. A lot of changes, as her reading and her writing goes and you know recognizing words. She was able to speak English more. Those are big changes.

I never experienced preschool before. I didn't know if it was real academic or social. [At first] I felt guilty because he was screaming and crying. He cried the whole class and he wouldn't play. He slowly started to open up and do group time. Now he's very mature. He likes to go. He knows what day it is. And he still has to have his hug and his kiss. He always asks if I am coming to get him. I don't know why. I think that may have something to do with that we have foster kids. Because parents drop them off and they don't come back.

Parents' Opinions About Learning Readiness

Most interviewed parents (86%) made comments about their child's Learning Readiness experience. Parent comments emphasized quality of instruction, teacher's relationship with both children and parents, the value of pre-school experience for their child, the availability of transportation, and program cost (affordability). Those suggesting changes recommended extended exposure (hours per week) and making the program available to all families. Parent comments emphasized different attributes of Learning Readiness. Parents mentioned program quality, the value of a structured and developmentally appropriate pre-school experience for their child, staff helpfulness and expertise, cost (affordability) and the importance of transportation. Some parents felt the program should be offered more days a week and for slightly longer class periods. Other parents recommended that the program be available to all families that do not qualify for Head Start or have other pre-school options available. Illustration 2 lists samples of parent comments about Learning Readiness.

Illustration 2: Samples of Parent Comments About Learning Readiness

Well I just think the program is great. They don't have this, I came from Jersey almost 4 years ago. They didn't have anything on the caliber that you guys have. I just think that the learning, that children need something like this, some place to go, some place to learn, a preschool where they can go and develop all their little abilities like their talents, and get used to being around children their own age and make friends and get used to teachers. I think Learning Readiness really helped them these past couple of years.

continued

I wasn't sold on preschool being that big of deal but seeing the changes it has brought [to both our daughters]—it is very advantageous to send your child to a structured preschool program. They may not learn an overabundance as far as alphabets and numbers and that kind of structured learning but it teaches them a lot about being patient, and you have to wait your turn and there's a set way of going through your day. Sort of get up and you go somewhere. When you go to school it prepares them more for school. It's not a full day. It's a few hours and it kind of prepares them for kindergarten cause there are some kindergarten programs that run all day. It does prepare them for that. I gotta go to school and go through this routine at school and I think it teaches them a lot—a lot of patience, a lot of structure.

I also feel that the preschool program should be funded by the state. Not necessarily entirely. This year I believe preschool was around \$110 a month plus busing which is another \$30 a month. For 90% of the people, it puts it out of reach for them. Without financial assistance we get through the state or the school district, we never would have been able to send our daughter and she'd be a completely different child now. She wouldn't be as ready for kindergarten as what she'll be this year. It puts them a big step ahead. I think it's something very important.

Great teachers, I just can't say enough about the staff. Probably the only thing I would change in it is the two hours is too short. I would just watch the teachers spend 15 minutes to get the kids in the door and then you have 1-3/4 or 1-1/2 hour program. I've been in there volunteering and it's just one station to the next. I know this year was different since it had always been 2-1/2 hours and I just feel like it is not enough time for the teachers or the kids to really get into something. You just get into one thing and it's on to the next. Or, you are putting on their coats for the bus. I probably wouldn't put my child in again just because of that unless it was at least 2-1/2 hours. Overall I think the ratio in her class is good, and I know part of it is because there are special needs kids in there too. I went in to volunteer and there were too many adults. I felt with that kids got to do a lot of different things with adult hands helping out.

Well, I think Learning Readiness is wonderful, but I really think they should have it for the three-year-olds because we don't qualify for Head Start. You have to be really poor for that. A family of six, you think we would, but we don't. It's really expensive. I think \$85 a month plus the busing. I need her to be bused. I cannot bring her. I am going to sign her up. I'm taking more kids this summer [day care], because more than life itself; she wants to go to school. She went [to Learning Readiness] this spring and she just did wonderful. She was real quiet and was waiting for me at the door when I came to pick her up cause she's really a cling on. She didn't even cry at Learning Readiness so that's how ready she is.

We've been very happy with the Learning Readiness program. The teachers are very good. My son enjoys it and comes home happy. I have been volunteering in the classroom and it's been kind of fun to watch what happens and watch the kids go about their day. They are very self directed and I think that's neat to see that they just go from here to there and know what they can do and choose the things they'd like to do. But yet there is direction. They don't let one child always do the same thing. They guide them into other areas so they have those experiences also. We've been very happy. It's been good, a good year.

I would hate to see the Learning Readiness program go. I have a younger son who I think the Learning Readiness program would be wonderful for. This is going to complicate your funding a little, but I think Learning Readiness should be a whole year. Peter has had that opportunity because of his special needs, socially. I think it is very confusing to a young child to go to school for 16 weeks and then have to quite and start over some place else. The busing has been a wonderful gift to me as a working parent, because otherwise I have no way of getting my son to and from the activities. The quality of the program has been excellent. I have some background in early childhood education. I was a teacher in a daycare. I know some of the things that a good teacher should be doing. I think they're doing those things in his class. That's wonderful. The teacher is very sensitive to his needs. She lets me know if anything has happened that day that I should be concerned or be aware of. She's always willing to hear my concerns. I wish that all district children could have this experience and have it be 32 weeks not 16.

The Learning Readiness program is the best! I recommend this program to all my friends and neighbors. As a single parent with 4 children I could not afford a preschool. This program is affordable, has a great teacher and gives me lots of ways to be involved. I like that. My daughter has had a great year and I am glad that she had this opportunity that my other children did not have. It is important.

What We Learned About Parent's Knowledge and Understanding of Child Development and Learning

Background

One purpose of the evaluation was to understand how parents talk about their children's development and their role in supporting learning. Better understanding of parent capabilities enhances the likelihood that educators work with parents in meaningful ways. The information presented here is intended to support staff planning for helping parents enhance skills that support their child's learning and development.

Interview Focus. The interview included 17 questions covering knowledge and understanding of their child and child development, parent-child interaction related to guidance and control, parent role, and school readiness. Illustration 3 shows the four concepts covered in the interview and the interview questions. The parent interview guide used for this study was based on the interview guide used in Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) and Way to Grow evaluations (Cooke, 1992, Mueller, 1996, 1997).

Illustration 3: Parent Interviews--Concepts and Questions

Knowledge and Awareness of Own Child	Tell me about your child. What is ____ like? What are 4-year-olds like? What have you noticed about how ____ learns best? On a typical day what do you do together that you feel good about?
Guidance and Control	On a typical day how do you get your child to mind you? When your child is angry or frustrated what do you typically do?
Parent Role	What kind of words would you use to describe your job as ____'s parent? What are you trying to accomplish as a parent; what is it you're working toward down the road when you do your parenting job today? In what ways do you feel your job as a parent will change when your child is in elementary school?
School Readiness	What do you do with your child that you feel will help her/him be ready for kindergarten? What kinds of things will you look for in your child to assure yourself that he/she is really ready to go to kindergarten? When your child goes to kindergarten what will you expect from your child's teacher? What do you feel your child's teacher should expect from you? How will you help your child's teacher learn about your child?

Interview Process. Parents participating in interviews were purposefully selected by teachers to reflect different levels of parent involvement in children's learning and development. The seventy-four parents included 65 mothers and 9 fathers. For thirteen parents, English was their second language; five parents were Hispanic, seven Hmong, and one parent was from India.

The 20-45 minute interviews were conducted by a teacher (someone other than their child's teacher) or parent educator in the spring of 1998. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. The Learning Readiness evaluation committee coded transcripts based on an analysis scheme used in ECFE and Way to Grow evaluations (Mueller, 1996, 1997). After coding, parent responses were rated *not yet/emerging*, *developing* or *proficient* based on how responses compare to what is known about child development, effective parenting and developmentally appropriate practices. *Not yet/emerging* means a parent response reflects developmentally inappropriate knowledge of child development or uncertainty about what they do as a parent or their own child's behavior. *Developing* means parent responses demonstrated basic and appropriate child development knowledge or parenting behavior. *Proficient* means parent response reflected a relatively sophisticated understanding of child development and parenting skill. *Proficient* ratings reflect integration of developmentally appropriate knowledge and awareness of their child's behavior in relation to themselves and others. Appendix 3, pages 23-28, shows examples of parent comments reflecting different ratings.

Parent Themes

The predominant skill level pattern demonstrated by parents on 12 of the 14 questions was at the *developing* level. Table 6 shows the predominant ratings of parent responses for each question. In general, more parents received *developing* ratings in areas related to knowledge of child and child development and school readiness than in areas related to guidance and control and parent role perception. Half of the parents received *not yet/emerging* ratings for their responses to questions about how they anticipate their parenting role will change when their child enters school and how they describe what they are trying to accomplish today as a parent.

Table 6: Parent Performance Ratings—Predominant Patterns (n=74)

Question Focus	Percent	Rating
Awareness of what child and parent enjoy doing together.	73%	Developing
How parent describes purpose.	71%	Developing
Knowledge of own child.	70%	Developing
Awareness of how child learns.	66%	Developing
Expectations of teacher.	64%	Developing
Knowledge of child development.	63%	Developing
How parent interacts with child when child is upset.	62%	Developing
How parent role will change.	54%	Not Yet/Emerging
How parent describes role.	49%	Not Yet/Emerging
How parent will assess child's readiness for kindergarten.	48%	Developing
Teacher expectations of parent.	48%	Developing
How parent will help teacher understand child.	42%	Developing
How parent gets child to mind.	40%	Developing

Approximately one-fifth to a third of the parents were rated *not yet/emerging* on 8 questions covering parent role perception, guidance and control, knowledge of their child and child development, and school readiness. Study parents displayed different levels of parenting knowledge, skills and abilities. The percentages of parents rated low (not yet/emerging) or high (proficient) are listed in Table 7 on the next page.

Table 7: Percentages of Parents Whose Responses Were Rated Low or High (n=174)

Question Focus	Percent Low (Not Yet/ Emerging)	Percent High (Proficient)
How parent role will change.	54%	9%
How parent describes role.	49%	11%
How parent gets child to mind.	37%	23%
How parent helps child now.	31%	27%
How parent will assess child's readiness for kindergarten.	27%	23%
Knowledge of child development.	21%	16%
How parent will help teacher understand child.	19%	35%
Knowledge of own child.	18%	12%
How parent interacts with child when child is upset.	18%	21%
How parent describes purpose.	18%	10%
Awareness of what child and parent enjoy doing together.	11%	16%
Awareness of how child learns.	10%	24%
Teacher expectations of parent.	8%	44%
Expectations of teacher.	4%	32%

Appendix 3, beginning on page 23, shows examples of parent responses to each question demonstrating different skill levels. The examples are included to support planning by staff for meaningful ways to help parents enhance skills that support their child's learning and development.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were developed by department specialists based on their review and discussion of evaluation findings.

Recommendations for Policy

- (1) **Continue and expand Learning Readiness.** Children and their families participating in Learning Readiness are typically the “working poor” who do not meet Head Start guidelines, who would not otherwise be involved in a preschool experience, and who may exhibit needs identified during Early Childhood Screening. Learning Readiness is clearly meeting a previously unmet need. Consequently, more of the same is recommended.
- (2) **More funds are needed to establish or expand high quality, effective parenting education components within Learning Readiness.** Research has well established that parent involvement in children’s learning and development enhances success in school. In this study, a broad range of parent skills and understandings were revealed. More parenting *education* is needed, especially that focused on the development of practical parenting skills that support children’s learning.
- (3) **More funding for transportation is needed.** Consideration needs to be given to designating more funds specifically for Learning Readiness transportation. Parent comments indicate it is *the* most critical factor in the ability of lower-middle and lower-income children and their families to participate.
- (4) **Continue low and no cost options for Learning Readiness families.** Parents find Learning Readiness more affordable than other preschool opportunities in their communities. Consequently, sliding fee schedules and waived fees need to continue.
- (5) **More funds are needed to help districts expand their skills and use of curriculum embedded, performance-based child assessment.** High quality, performance-based information is a critical component of effective work with young children. Implementation and use of curriculum embedded assessment strategies requires significant commitment and collaboration by teachers, district coordinators, and state specialists. More funds are needed to expand the child assessment approaches demonstrated during the first four years of Learning Readiness.
- (6) **Make preschool learning experiences available to all three-and-one-half and four year old children.** Parents of children participating in Learning Readiness are recognizing the value of preschool experiences for their children regardless of income or background. Consequently, it is valuable to make preschool experiences available for *all* three-and-one-half and four-year-old children—all children this age and their families can benefit from the availability of a continuum of preschool learning experiences.

Recommendations for Programs

- (1) Enhance and expand staff skills in child observation, assessment, and use of child assessment data.** Effective learning opportunities for young children require district teachers and coordinators who are skilled at carefully and systematically observing the children in Learning Readiness and using assessment information to guide their work. Learning Readiness, since its beginning, has encouraged the use of curriculum embedded approaches to child assessment through the collaborative efforts of teachers, coordinators and state department specialists. Teaching staffs need to continue to do more efficient and reliable data collection and documentation of child progress to improve the quality of information available to plan curriculum, inform instruction, and communicate with parents. District coordinators need to provide on-going support and training for the application and use of curriculum embedded, child assessment strategies. State department staff need to continue collaborative efforts focused on data quality, teacher and coordinator skills, and helping districts apply assessment information in ways that enhance children's learning and development.
- (2) Make parent education an essential component in Learning Readiness.** Because of the broad range of parent skills and understandings revealed in this study, especially through the parent interviews, it is clear that more parenting *education* would be valuable, especially that focused on the development of practical parenting skills that support children's learning. Learning Readiness staff need to stretch their creativity to find ways to include more meaningful parenting education in their work with children and families. Parents cannot articulate their goals for their children, do not always have a clear understanding of typical child development or the importance of the early years to learning, and do not understand their own child's development. The potential for addressing these issues is likely to come through more fully involving them in program activities that include parenting education and thoughtfully designed opportunities for parent-child interaction.
- (3) Continue and expand efforts to ease the transition to kindergarten for children and parents participating in Learning Readiness.** Many Learning Readiness programs are doing well communicating with kindergarten teachers about children's skills, abilities, and needs. In other districts, communication between early childhood education staff and primary level K-12 programs needs improvement. The goal for all Minnesota districts should be to facilitate a smooth transition for children (and their families) from early childhood to K-12 programs.

Appendix 1: Examples of Guidelines Used by Teachers to Assess Child Performance

The following examples are taken from: Marsden, Dorothea B., Meisels, Samuel J., Jablon, Judy R. and Dichtelmiller, Margo L.(1994) *Preschool-4 Developmental Guidelines*, 3rd edition. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Rebus Planning Associates, Inc.

EXAMPLES—Personal and Social Development

(Self Concept) Begins to show comfort with self as someone growing in skills and abilities.

Many preschool children come to school with a positive sense of self, certain they will be liked. Other children are much more timid and tentative. They need more time to observe, and opportunities to learn how to play in a group setting and become part of a group. Four year olds display a positive sense of self by:

- entering the dramatic play area and choosing a role that fits the play of others;
- teaching a word in sign language to a classmate;
- adapting to playground games and becoming part of the action;
- sitting at the art table and exchanging ideas and thoughts, even when the discussion is unrelated to the art-work they are making.

(Approach to Learning) Persists in a task and seeks help when encountering a problem.

Four year olds often need support from teachers to stay with tasks or to solve problems. Learning to work until tasks are finished is often difficult for this age group. Ways that children show persistence and willingness to accept help in problem solving include:

- accepting help from the teacher when putting together a puzzle;
- trying to start the zipper on their coat over and over until they can do it alone;
- accepting teacher or peer suggestions for solving a problem (for example, understanding that putting another block at the base of the tower would make it more stable);
- trying several different ways to form the play dough into a specific object such as a birthday cake.

(Interaction With Others) Shows empathy and caring for others.

At four years of age, some children are naturally aware of the feelings of their classmates. Other four year olds need to be taught to notice their peers and to relate to their experiences. Four year olds are generally better able to show caring about concrete occurrences than abstract ideas. Examples include:

- going over to a friend who has fallen and giving comfort;
- getting help when classmates cannot get their boots on or cannot find their painting to take home;
- showing acceptance and support of a classmate with a behavioral disorder or physical disability;
- expressing sadness to a friend whose pet has died.

(Self Control) Follows classroom rules and routines.

Four year olds find established routines very comforting. They feel safer and better able to participate when rules are clear and followed consistently. They show their acceptance and understanding of rules and routines by:

- knowing they have to wait until someone leaves the water table when the rule is “only four people at a time”;
- clearing off their place at the snack table by taking their cup to the designated place and throwing away their napkins and leftovers without frequent reminders;
- holding hands (or hanging onto a rope) when crossing a street that has no traffic light or crossing guard;
- washing hands before snack;
- removing a finished painting from the easel and knowing where to hang it up to dry;
- turning off the tape recorder after listening to a story;
- knowing to go to the circle area after clean-up.

(Conflict Resolution) Uses words to resolve conflicts.

Four year olds are just learning how to resolve conflicts with words and compromise. They need to learn alternatives to hitting or crying. They can follow simple formulas given to them by adults, including:

- asking the teacher to use a timer to decide when one child’s turn on the bike ends and another’s begins;
- giving alternatives to friends, such as, “I’m playing with these, you play with those”;
- using words to express feelings, such as, “I don’t like it when you push me”;
- if non-verbal, using facial expressions or gestures to communicate needs or to resolve conflict;
- negotiating with another child to resolve a conflict.

EXAMPLES—Language and Literacy

(Literature and Reading) Recognizes the association between spoken and written words.

As children grow in awareness of the power of words and writing, they begin to ask adults to write signs and letters for them. Children show that they are aware of writing as a communication tool by:

- asking the teacher to make signs for the dramatic play area, such as “Fire House,” “Hospital,” “Please leave this block bridge standing,” or “Do not disturb”;
- requesting that the teacher write a dictated story about a painting;
- asking the teacher to write words for a letter the child wants to send to a friend;
- recognizing words from environmental print (for example, brand names, store names, street signs).

(Listening) Follows directions that involve a two- or three-step sequence of actions.

Four year olds are beginning to follow two- and three-step directions with relative ease. They can also respond to group directions rather than always needing individual instruction. Four year olds show they can follow directions by:

- following the class instruction to “go get your coats, and when you are dressed, sit next to your friend”,
- repeating an instruction to a friend;
- following directions given to the class to “Take this note about our class trip home, ask your family to read it, have a family member sign it, and bring it back to me”;
- following the class instruction to “go wash your hands and then sit down at the table”.

(Writing) Uses scribbles, shapes, and letter-like symbols to write words or ideas.

As children observe the teacher making lists and putting names on art work, they often want to perform this function for themselves. Position of letters on the paper, actual formation of the letters, and backward and forward order are not yet part of the child’s repertoire.

Children’s writing at this age includes:

- asking the teacher to make a model of a word or specific letters so they can copy them;
- beginning to know a few letter shapes so they only need the teacher to say the letter name instead of seeing it written in order to write the letter;
- “writing” some shapes on a paper and then “reading” the words to someone;
- making a row of squiggles on a paper and calling it writing;
- using letter stamps or typing letters to represent words and then “reading” the message or story to another person.

(Speaking) Speaks clearly enough to be understood without contextual clues.

By four years of age, children should be speaking with sufficient clarity that it is easy to know what they are talking about without the help of context or gestures. (This indicator also may be assessed by observing children’s use of alternative communication systems, such as gesture, sign, or communication boards.) Evidence of this includes:

- speaking clearly enough so that a classroom visitor knows what the child is saying;
- communicating in a way that other children understand what is being said without constantly having to ask, “What did you say?”;
- repeating what they have already said in order to communicate it more clearly;
- being understood when using alternative methods of communication;
- being understood when delivering a message from home to the teacher.

Appendix 2

Learning Readiness Evaluation—Child Progress Ratings 1997-1998

Teacher Ratings--Child Progress (4-Year Olds)

DOMAIN (FUNCTIONAL COMPONENT)	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	Number of Children	RATINGS (percent of children)*					
			Not Yet		In Process		Proficient	
			Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring
Personal and Social Development <i>(Self Concept)</i>	Begins to show comfort with self as someone growing in skills and abilities.	177	6%	1%	56%	18%	38%	82%
	Shows some self-direction in actions.	177	5%	1%	43%	12%	52%	87%
Personal and Social Development <i>(Self Control)</i>	Follows classroom rules and routines.	176	3%	---	42%	20%	56%	80%
	Uses classroom materials purposefully and respectfully.	177	2%	---	24%	10%	75%	90%
	Manages transitions.	177	3%	---	37%	15%	60%	85%
Personal and Social Development <i>(Approach to Learning)</i>	Shows eagerness and curiosity as a learner.	174	6%	1%	52%	17%	42%	82%
	Chooses new as well as a variety of familiar classroom activities.	176	5%	---	47%	18%	48%	82%
	Approaches tasks with flexibility and inventiveness.	171	14%	1%	46%	35%	40%	64%
	Persists in a task and seeks help when encountering a problem.	171	14%	2%	50%	33%	36%	65%
Personal and Social Development <i>(Interaction With Others)</i>	Interacts easily with one or more children, beginning to play or work cooperatively.	172	13%	---	43%	22%	44%	78%
	Interacts easily with familiar adults.	177	7%	1%	33%	12%	60%	88%
	Participates in the group life of the class.	177	7%	1%	42%	20%	51%	79%
	Participates and follows simple rules in group activities.	175	6%	1%	38%	20%	55%	79%
	Shows empathy and caring for others.	172	12%	3%	50%	30%	38%	67%
Personal and Social Development <i>(Conflict Resolution)</i>	Seeks adult help when needed to resolve conflicts.	174	20%	2%	38%	33%	42%	64%
	Uses words to resolve conflicts.	171	22%	4%	42%	42%	36%	55%

*Percentages reported were calculated excluding missing data.

DOMAIN (FUNCTIONAL COMPONENT)	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	Number of Children	RATINGS (percent of children)*					
			Not Yet		In Process		Proficient	
			Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring
Language & Literacy (Listening)	Listens with understanding to directions and conversations.	175	2%	1%	35%	17%	62%	82%
	Follows directions that involve a two- or three-step sequence of actions.	170	2%	1%	38%	18%	59%	81%
Language & Literacy (Speaking)	Speaks clearly enough to be understood without contextual clues.	169	2%	1%	18%	12%	80%	86%
	Uses language for a variety of purposes.	165	13%	1%	32%	20%	55%	79%
Language & Literacy (Literature and reading)	Listens with interest to stories read aloud.	171	4%	1%	25%	10%	71%	89%
	Shows interest in reading-related activities.	170	9%	2%	36%	17%	54%	81%
	Guesses what will happen next in a story using pictures for a guide.	151	23%	6%	42%	24%	35%	70%
	Retells information from a story.	156	22%	5%	34%	24%	44%	71%
	Recognizes the association between spoken and written words.	168	21%	2%	48%	33%	31%	65%
Language & Literacy (Writing)	Uses scribbles, shapes, and letter-like symbols to write words or ideas.	169	22%	5%	41%	30%	37%	66%
	Copies or writes own name.	171	13%	2%	48%	17%	39%	81%

*Percentages reported were calculated excluding missing data.

Appendix 3: Skill Level Examples—Learning Readiness Parent Interviews 1998

Concept Area Interview Questions	Skill Level Examples—Parent Responses		
	“Not Yet/Emerging”	“Developing”	“Proficient”
Knowledge and Awareness of Own Child Tell me about your child. What is _____ like? What are ____year olds like? What have you noticed about how ____learns best? On a typical day what do you do together that you feel good about?	Mother, Daughter--4-years-old <i>[Daughter] is very sweet but then in the same breath she can turn around and be really head-strong, her way or no way, but then two minutes after that she can be the sweetest little thing. I guess she's a typical little kid. . . They like to see how far they can go, to push their limits, and I think they know what they should do and what they shouldn't do but I think they're going to that next step where they try to see how far they can go.</i>	Mother, Daughter--4-years-old <i>She's quiet and shy when she's around people. At home she's not quite so shy. I know she seems to pick up on things quickly, and she can have her days too. . . They start getting a mind of their own. It's just like they are learning so much, and remembering things. . . I don't know, just repetitive, repeating things over and over again. She learns by doing things. . . We read. We go outside and play.</i>	Mother, Son—4-years-old <i>He is a very curious child. He asks a lot of questions predominately about science. How things work. He's very curious about those kinds of things. He's also very cautious. He has had a number of lousy day care experiences, which have, I think, made him enter into relationships with teachers, day care givers with a lot of caution. So those sorts of things are very important in understanding him because he is real quiet. . . Full of energy. He asks questions constantly. One minute very independent and the next wanting us to take care of things he can take care of on his own. He's understanding his own feelings really well and starting to express them very well. Very interested in playing with other children especially make believe activities. He likes to do things that keep him very physically active. I think all children, but my son especially, has learned motor and other skills best by practice. He loves to listen to books and that sort of thing. He has a great memory. For him, he just listens and he learns constantly. . . My son has the task of getting dressed by himself in the morning. So he did that while I fought and argued with his brother about getting dressed, which is pretty typical. I always encourage him when it comes to his little brother, in terms of helping him do something. I have a lot of chores and errands to run. He came with me one time and was just behaving very well, so he was rewarded with a small type of toy. He probably thanked me about 18 times for that little thing. The rest of the day he'll do all of his chores. We don't</i>
	Mother, Daughter—5-years-old ESL <i>She is very active. Sometimes she is uncontrollable. . . She is five years old. How are they? They fight a lot at times, over things or toys. They don't want to accept new friends. They like to cling to some kids. . . She is now learning; she asks how to write names of things, how do you say this and that. It's what she wants to know. She asks me everything first, then she'll start writing. . . Always, when we are together sharing, eating and being together.</i>	Mother, Son—5-years-old ESL <i>[My son] likes to do painting. He's very excited to build things and join things. He's very sensitive and he thinks a lot. Also, he will ask many questions about why the bird is flying and he cannot fly. We are from India and he will ask a lot of questions about India. . . He thinks like a very big kid. When he wants to do something, he wants to do it himself. If I feel like I want to hug or kiss him, he won't allow me to. He'll say, "Mom, I'm so big you can't do it to me". . . He learns when he's talking with other kids. . . Some cleaning and stuff. He likes to help me. If I'm vacuuming or something new for him, he'll ask to help me.</i>	
		Mother, Son—5-years-old ESL <i>He likes to study in English and play most everything. . . To play with other children the same age. . . By writing his name, playing with toys, looking at pictures and speaking in English. . . Yes, do homework and look at the pictures in book together.</i>	
		Father, Daughter—5-years-old ESL <i>Well, she is very eager, sociable,</i>	

		<p><i>exaggeratedly obedient, strong characteristic and decisive. She is a person who knows more (at her age) than perhaps should know. You can't lull her to sleep with anything. She's a person who gives me joy because when she comes home from school, she'll say (in English) "Hey, Father look at this." It's a great feeling of satisfaction. . . Five years old. Hyper, questioning, mischievous, depending on what type of [upbringing], they can be sociable or many times. . . they don't know how to treat people. She's not like that, for her age. She knows what to say, treats you amicably, offers what she has, shows you what she has to offer you. . . She is learning how to be social, how to conduct herself and how to speak. On top of all this she is learning how to communicate in English and Spanish. Well, she's learning this through the instruction that we give her and that's the main point. . . the education you give to your children. She also is learning English at her school. Because that is why we send her! She learns Spanish because that's our obligation. She won't forget her roots but will embrace both parts. She studies at school and I study here, at home. Right. Well, when she gets home I speak Spanish to her and she speaks English to me. I try to share both [languages]. We work together (school and home).</i></p>	<p><i>have big chores in our house. They're like, finish your dinner, say thank you, ask to be excused from the table, those kinds of things. That was a good experience for both of us. There was some give and take. We both read books. I did some activities with him and still got done what I needed to get done.</i></p>
<p>Parent Behavior</p> <p>On a typical day how do you get your child to mind you?</p> <p>When your child is angry or frustrated what do you typically do?</p>	<p>Mother, Daughter—4-years-old</p> <p><i>Ah, that's a good question. I don't know. I usually tell her that she was wrong. And sometimes I'll put her in a time out or otherwise I'll basically, I don't know, really, I can't tell. I mean I'll just tell her, "No, that was wrong," and she'll usually apologize and say she was sorry and I'll tell</i></p>	<p>Mother, Daughter—4-years-old</p> <p><i>Usually it's a verbal warning. When she's cooperative, she's very cooperative. She's very helpful, proud of what she does. Helpful with siblings. . . The first thing I do is try to find out why and try to look for solutions to what is troubling her. When she's mad at Mom, that's not easy.</i></p>	<p>Mother, Son—5-years-old</p> <p><i>I would give him options, give him choices. You know, you cannot do it this way, but you may choose this way or that way. And that worked very well. Sometimes, it's just a flat out "no you can't". Usually I try to go with the options thing, the choices. It works really really well. . . I usually tell him to sit down and to think for a few minutes.</i></p>

	<p><i>her not to let it happen again or else I'll, you know, try and come up with something if she does it again. . . Well she usually gets frustrated when she's tired. I usually send her to her room. I make her just sit down and if she throws a tantrum or something, I'll just tell her there's no reason for this.</i></p> <p>Mother, Son—5-years-old ESL</p> <p><i>Most of the time when he wants something, he wants it immediately, and it's very difficult to handle him. But sometimes for 5-10 minutes I will let him do what he wants, like if he wants to cry, I'll let him cry. Then I will talk to him nicely and tell him he's a big boy and this behavior is not appropriate. If you keep doing this I will be very angry and I'm going to hit you, so you should learn what your parents are saying. He will ask to watch TV and I say no, then one hour later he'll ask again. He'll say parents are watching TV and I tell him we are adults and you need to learn first.</i></p>	<p>Father, Daughter—5-years-old ESL</p> <p><i>Well, I know what she likes and dislikes. Let's say I rent cable TV, and not because I have money but because they offer a channel, number 58, that is Walt Disney. It's all English and they are characters, realistic that won't harm anyone. They offer movies which, in general, are clean and no violence. I believe they are a good lesson in wrong or right. I speak to her about what she is watching. I know what she likes; this channel will offer chances to see Bambi and Mickey Mouse. Well, if I tell her to help her mother with dinner or sweep and clean, I'll let her see TV. It's a way to motivate her. If she misbehaves, and then it becomes a way to punish her. . . Well, I'll hug her and ask, "What's wrong?" I'll kiss her and hug her, yes; we need to do this. Maybe she's down because she misses her grandparents in Mexico. Maybe a kid at school got something new and she feels bad because she didn't. Who knows? We have good communication day and night. We tell her a story.</i></p>	<p><i>Talk to me about what he's upset about. Usually, if I just sit down beside him and even if he's angry and saying, "oh, I don't want to sit down. I'm never going to sit down beside you" and he says that a lot. I usually just make him just sit down beside me and we'll watch TV for a few minutes. Or just sit and do nothing for a few minutes. And eventually, he'll just say what's on his mind and he'll be fine.</i></p>
<p>Parent Role Perception</p> <p>What kind of words would you use to describe your job as ____parent?</p> <p>What are you trying to accomplish as a parent; what is it you're working toward down the road when you do your parenting job today?</p> <p>In what ways do you feel your job, as a parent will change when your child is in elementary school?</p>	<p>Mother, Daughter--5-years-old</p> <p><i>Um, describe my job as [daughter's] parent. It's a difficult question. I don't know. I just try, you know, to be the best parent I can be. I try not to get frustrated. I do everything different. But I really try not to take it out on, you know, the kid. I just try and take, you know, be smooth. . . Um, probably just make her, you know, be a good kid. Be a good kid, mind and respect other people. That's basically it, and just, you know, enjoy life. . . Um, I don't know.</i></p>	<p>Mother, Daughter—4-years-old Caretaker, teacher, friend, authority figure. . . Try to build independence, self-confidence, and self esteem. Trying to create an environment that's good for learning. . . She's going to have homework and helping her with her homework will be a new thing. She's going to be getting older so she'll be getting more independent.</p> <p>Mother, Son—5-years-old ESL</p> <p><i>I will tell him that I don't have what he needs, but if I have, I will give it to him. . . Getting a close relationship with my children and keeping the family</i></p>	<p>Mother, Son—4-years-old Teacher, encourager, helper, friend. One of the things that has come up with my daughter is that mom is the meanie who makes the rules. Who doesn't let them do this or that and then we always tease that that is part of my job description—that I'm the meanie. I guess that's part of it too, setting the limits, say no when it's necessary. . . To develop responsible, respectful children who will become responsible, respectful adults. To help them learn and learn how to learn. That learning reading and learning is okay—it's fun. I</p>

	<p><i>Maybe. . .that's a good question. I think she's going to change a lot.</i></p> <p>Mother, Son—5-years-old ESL</p> <p><i>I have to do best what is in his life. I make him sit and read for one half hour every day. I will teach about our customs and our country every day. Our prayers, our God every day. He will do this. . .You are 5-years-old and there are many things to learn. The things I have not learned, you should learn. At this time he is not interested in learning what I am teaching. He wants to learn on his own, games and reading. When I read him something, he remembers it and retells the story immediately, his own way. So sometimes it is very difficult to teach him to read a book. . .I don't know, I have not been there. I'm still learning too. How to teach, how to handle.</i></p>	<p><i>together. Respect my family or children, that's what I see. . .He is not speaking in Hmong language anymore.</i></p> <p>Father, Daughter—5-years-old ESL</p> <p><i>Patient, intelligent, loving, 100% passive. With children you must have a lot of patience. Above all, don't speak grossly. I believe all children are our responsibility to speak to them. Using bad words is shameful and demonstrates our own faults! Before we help them we are hurting them; before we find the solutions, we end up making things worse. To persevere. We should count to 100 before we even think of hitting them! Be passive. Speaking to them and think of 1,001 ways before we hit them. . .Well, what I'm hoping for is that she develops well; that she perseveres as a child. I'm trying to make sure she attains the education a child her age needs. I'm going step by step. I don't want to think about her being a professional, or less, because that would rob her of her youthfulness. She should take things step by step. In kindergarten, I'll do things that relate to that. . .Sometimes as parents, we wish things for our children such as "I want my daughter to be a lawyer, etc." That we wouldn't let her be a child, playing. I hope she's a good student in kindergarten, that she plays and is mischievous. . .I have to be a little more strict about homework. Because homework will increase, I will need to prepare myself a little more, dedicate more time, because as she starts school, the responsibilities increase.</i></p>	<p><i>guess we're dealing with some issues that being different is okay. It's not good or bad. It's just different and that's okay. It's hard but you have to deal with what you're given and go from there. Those are the biggies right now and it's quite a bit. . .Obviously there will be 6 hours or so when he is not at home. That will be a different time. But it will create a need for us to find more time or other time to spend with the kids and now it's he and I all day. So when the other kids are home we deal or fit them in, otherwise now with all 3 of them in school it will become more of a puzzle to fit pieces in and fit time in. I think trying to keep on top of friends, what is going on at school. Still trying to let them have time for them selves. Obviously they'll be with people all day long and when they come home there are still people. But they need their own space and time. It's a lot of juggling of time and space and schedules and keeping on top of everybody and everything.</i></p>
<p>School Readiness</p> <p>What do you do with your child that you feel will help her/him be ready for kindergarten?</p>	<p>Mother, Daughter—5-years-old</p> <p><i>Well, I don't know. I haven't. I think [Learning Readiness] has done a lot for her. Because of the interaction</i></p>	<p>Mother, Son—5-years-old</p> <p><i>Well, he's been doing a lot more social things. And I think [Learning Readiness] has been helpful for that. I don't think I put enough importance on that</i></p>	<p>Mother, Son—4-years-old</p> <p><i>We talk about kindergarten a lot. We go by the school and we talk about where he'll go to school. We visit the school. We've taken some time to</i></p>

<p>What kinds of things will you look for in your child to assure yourself that he/she is really ready to go to kindergarten?</p> <p>When your child goes to kindergarten what will you expect from your child's teacher?</p> <p>What do you feel your child's teacher should expect from you?</p> <p>How will you help your child's teacher learn about your child?</p>	<p><i>with kids and stuff. . . I know she's excited, she wants to go. Yep, and I don't know, she's always been the ambitious one, independent. So I think she's ready. . . Well, I don't know [what parent should expect of teacher]. I don't even know what they do in kindergarten. I haven't thought about it. . . Not much, I don't know [what teacher should expect of parent]. I haven't even thought about teachers. . . I don't know. Communication I suppose.</i></p>	<p><i>when he first started preschool. Umm, but we do a lot of academic things. He's interested. He brings the books to me and says, "Mom, I want to do adding and subtracting, or I want to spell, and do this kind of stuff." So, umm, you know this kid counts. He can count by two's. I don't know where he learned how to do that. But um, the social part I kind of let take care of itself. He's got a brother and his brother invites friends over. He goes to Learning Readiness so I think he's probably getting what he needs in that regard. . . I think academically he's beyond kindergarten. Um, socially, I think he's pretty good with kids. At least when I'm around, he is. He's always, he's never afraid to go sit right in the front, or if they say, "Here, have a cookie," he'll run right up there and get a cookie. He's not real shy and stands back, and afraid to interact. So I think he's ready. . . I expect teachers to be understanding of different personalities in the children and to try to work with each one, and not try to mold them into one. And I don't think they do that. That's not the sense that I get now with my own son in kindergarten. And from what I've seen, they do a little bit of academic stuff. They do science and they do music. . . I guess if there's a problem that I should communicate that with her, you know, if I see something going on at home that might affect him at school. Um, he's got asthma, so we've got to keep in pretty close contact with the teachers and nurses anyway. And that if there was a problem she would say something to me so that we could try to work it out. . . Last year I filled out a form about my son that's in kindergarten now or maybe it was that we had a conference the very first week. We talked</i></p>	<p><i>observe kindergarten classes within the school district. We've talked about which programs/classes he liked best and why. The other simple things like helping him develop social skills to play with other children well. To share and to find interest in learning. We read books, take out the encyclopedia, talk about numbers. When he asks something, he really wants to know the answer. We try not to ignore the questions even if they seem way too big for a 4-year-old. . . An interest in learning and listening, following directions are important. He has a genuine love for all of the things that are around him and he just asks questions constantly. I think that is an important part of want to learn—learning readiness. Independently he's able to put on his shoes, jacket, take care of most of his toileting needs, and those types of things. I think he is ready. . . A lot. I would expect that the teacher is sensitive to him. I hope he gets in all day kindergarten because I think he needs to be in that environment. I expect the teacher to communicate with me, through notes and phone calls. I expect communication in terms of what my son needs, what she sees him needing/having at school and how I might be able to help with those things. . . I'd be willing to communicate and work with her in any areas that my son needs special attention. I would help foster a good learning situation for my son, to respect his teacher and rules, as well as homework and special projects. . . I've already written letters to the teacher and to the school about my concerns for my son as well as the neat qualities that he has. Then again, just basic</i></p>
	<p>Mother, Son—5-years-old ESL</p> <p><i>I think that I am very busy and can't help him that much, but Learning Readiness Program helps him a lot and I can see that he has improved a lot. . . He knows how to write his name, ABC's, and how to be along with other children. No problem at school so, I think he is ready for kindergarten. . . Teachers and parents have to share information on what works and what doesn't work. For my child the teacher has to report to me as I am the parent. . . I don't know, but I am willing to share information with the teacher, and work together. . . The teacher is the same as we are the parent. If the teacher wants to know about my child, then let me know and I will get all the information about my child to him or her.</i></p> <p>Mother, Son—5-years-old</p> <p><i>He is ready for school, I was a teacher in India so I know how to teach. I know what he knows. Last week I went to one conference for kindergarten. Kids should be prepared for kindergarten. He is prepared. Kinds</i></p>		

	<p><i>should know ABC's and [counting]. Different colors, blocks, I have taught more than that. . He should respect teachers as a teacher, not as a friend. When he wants to ask something, he can ask a friend. He should not tease. . Respect.</i></p>	<p><i>about it then. And she asked, you know, is there any concerns or anything you think I should know. And I thought that was a really good thing.</i></p>	<p><i>communication. Dropping in once in a while and talking to the teacher--not just at parent conferences.</i></p>
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