

ABSTRACT OF CAPSTONE

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The Graduate School  
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April 17, 2023

KINDERGARTEN READINESS: BEST PRACTICES

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Abstract of Capstone

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the  
Ernst and Sara Lane Volgenau College of Education  
At Morehead State University

By

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Inez, Kentucky

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Morehead, Kentucky

April 17, 2023

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## ABSTRACT OF CAPSTONE

## KINDERGARTEN READINESS: BEST PRACTICES

Students entering Kindergarten need to obtain readiness skills to make their first year of school a successful one. Many students may appear overwhelmed with the activities and expectations that are placed on them in a kindergarten classroom. Many families and teachers would like for kindergarten to be conducted the way it was many years ago, but it does not seem that is going to take place. Education standards have become more advanced at this grade level. Early childhood settings need to attempt to prepare the students as much as possible.

Learning how to hold a writing utensil, trace and write their name, along with naming at least some letters and sounds should be happening before students enter kindergarten. It is time for the students and families to take this step with confidence and reduce the number of retentions. Literacy is the foundation of all learning, and early childhood settings should be doing their part in providing the first steps.

To determine some of the best practices in kindergarten readiness, the author completed a mixed methods study that included the quantitative Brigance kindergarten readiness scores from the 2019-2020 and 2022-2023 school years. The study examined the difference in readiness scores of students coming from Head Start/Preschool as compared to the home setting. These scores examined overall Brigance readiness scores from both years and the alphabet recognition scores from 2022-2023 school year. The Guided Reading program was introduced in Martin County Head Start and Preschool classes during the 2021-2022 school year. The

study also included a survey of six questions that inquired about the readiness perceptions from all seven kindergarten teachers in the county.

The results from the 2022-2023 Brigance scores demonstrated that there was a significant difference in the readiness scores of students who attended Head Start/Preschool and were provided with the Guided Reading curriculum compared to the students who came from the home setting. The alphabet recognition section of the 2022-2023 Brigance screening also demonstrated a significant difference in the number of letters recognized from the students attending Head Start and preschool and participating in the Guided Reading program as compared to the students who came from home.

The study found it is time for the teachers and families to take this step and pay close attention to what is needed so the students can enter Kindergarten ready to learn. Much time is spent on state testing, preparation for high school graduation and eventually college, but how much time are we spending on the young students? Afterall, birth to five is when all the learning begins.

**KEYWORDS:** Kindergarten readiness, Preschool, Head Start, Literacy

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KINDERGARTEN READINESS: BEST PRACTICES

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this capstone to God and my family. To God, I would be nothing without every breath that you have given me and for being there for me through it all. I have had you by my side through all the good times and in the bad times. You made the promise that you will never leave me, and never forsake me and I am forever grateful. Be strong, fear not. Deuteronomy 31:6

To my Mom and Dad, the people who made me who I am today. Dad, thank you for all your hard work in the coal mines to provide for your family. The countless hours of listening to me read and helping me with math is something I will cherish forever. Thanks for believing in me, encouraging me, and supporting me in my education. Teaching me to work hard and never give up means the world to me. As your heart beat the final beats, I told you that I may go as far as I can, and I did just that.

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my education from day one has been such a blessing. The many hours that you dedicated to me from childhood to adulthood never went unnoticed and are forever in my heart. I cherish your support so much and I will forever be grateful for having my sister with me through it all. To Frank, my companion in this life. Thanks for understating my goals and being patient with every second it has taken me to reach them. Thanks for being so supportive during the countless hours of studies for many years. I am forever grateful. Special thanks to all my previous teachers and all of my students in my career, I will cherish your impact forever. To Nona, my friends, and special co-workers I appreciate all your love, support and encouragement.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Kindergarten has become the new first grade. The kindergarten classroom setting has changed from a learning at play atmosphere to a more structured setting. Students are now expected to obtain beginning reading skills and add and subtract within the sum of five in Kentucky's kindergarten classrooms. By providing more learning opportunities in the early childhood setting, students can obtain some basic skills that will assist them with meeting the expectations when it's time to enter the kindergarten classroom. (Kentucky Academic Standards, 2022).

During age three, early childhood settings encourage students to begin to develop fine motor skills, sharing, and basic self-help routines. Many students at age four are ready for more academic type activities and can begin with tracing, handwriting, and letter and sound recognition. These types of strategies can assist with less retentions in kindergarten, and less stress on students, teachers, and families. Age birth to five is a time frame that much learning can take place. This is the beginning of life and the beginning of learning. 90% of brain development is developed by age five. (Kentucky Governor's Office of Early Childhood, 2022.). Educators and families should take advantage of this precious time and work on these skills that can help the students excel later in school.

This project examined the Brigance screening scores of kindergarten readiness from students involved in a Head Start/Preschool as compared to students who came from the previous home setting. The Brigance overall scores and alphabet recognition

scores of Head Start and preschool students who were provided with the Guided Reading curriculum were also compared to a group of students who did not receive the instruction and came from the home setting. This project sought to understand the perception regarding readiness factors from kindergarten teachers. As educators, we need to help the students be ready to learn and succeed. Appendix A provides a description of the Brigance screening and Guided reading curriculum.

The Kentucky Governor's Task Force provides a definition for school readiness. "School readiness means each child enters school ready to engage in and benefit from early learning experiences that best promote the child success" (Governor's Task Force School Readiness Definition, 2019, para. 3). It is important that early childhood programs, school staff, families, and other members of the community collaborate to provide opportunities and experiences that promote growth and learning to enable children in Kentucky entering school to be ready to learn.

This organization also recognized five developmental areas that are important to child development. These include the approaches to learning, health and physical well-being, language and communication, social and emotional development, and cognitive and general knowledge. (Governor's Task Force School Readiness Definition, 2019). The Kentucky Task Force describes indicators that can work with the five developmental areas with young children. The task force provided these approaches for early childhood programs, but these were not meant to be considered an expectation. Children develop at different levels, and all children learn in a

different way. These indicators can assist preschool teachers, childcare centers, and families with goals of how to help prepare young students for school.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Literacy skills such as letter and sound recognition are the beginning steps to reading. Each academic skill is important, but without reading, there may be difficulty in all other subjects. Literacy begins at home and with language modeling activities such as reading stories, singing songs, and reciting rhymes. Young children should be exposed with skills that they can base their reading success on (Goldestein et al., 2017).

Many students may not be able to have these types of activities in the home setting. Research demonstrates that students from low SES (socioeconomic status) homes have fewer reading materials at home and not as many opportunities to be read to by families (Fioliand et al., 2013). Each school district should take this into consideration when planning for the curriculum of preschool programs. The fact that some students do not have as many opportunities to excel as others may, is a reason to address academic concerns early instead of waiting until the children are in elementary school. The purpose of this project was to investigate readiness status of students who attended the Martin County Head Start/Preschool program as compared to students who came from the home setting.

Studies indicate that during school entry, some students who attended a preschool setting scored higher in literacy than students who did not attend a program. The scores demonstrate that by the kindergarten spring semester, this

declines up to as much as 60% (Weiland et al., 2001). Retaining information may be an issue with students during the kindergarten year. More focus needs to be placed on literacy curriculum in the preschool area to reduce this problem because students who exhibit difficulties in reading may develop a greater risk regarding academic progress and functioning as citizen in the day-to-day world (Psyridou et al., 2021). Many students who are identified as having reading difficulties (RD) can benefit from early assistance.

Preschool programs need to offer social emotional readiness, getting along with others, and learning school routine. These factors are very important, but early childhood programs should still consider implementing academic areas beginning with early literacy skills that can assist with preparing the students with school readiness while including other academic areas (Hall et al., 2014). The purpose of this project was to investigate readiness status of students who attended the Martin County Head Start/Preschool program as compared to students who came from the home setting.

### **Significance of the Problem**

The 2019-2020 Brigance scores demonstrate that the kindergarten students beginning school in the state of Kentucky, and in the Martin County School District specifically are demonstrating concerns in readiness (Table 1). Many may be under the impression that if literacy skills are taught at the preschool level, the students are forced to learn in a way that is not considered developmentally appropriate and can hinder their creativity and reduce the social emotional skills that are much needed.

This does not always have to be the case. Preschool programs can adapt literacy instruction and other academic areas of instruction in a way that is developmentally appropriate and enjoyable for the young students.

**Table 1**

*2019-2020 Brigance Kindergarten Readiness Scores*

	Below Average	Average	Above Average
State	62.7%	31.8%	5.5%
District	64.8%	25.4%	9.8%
School	58.3%	20.8%	20.8%

(Martin County Education School Report Card, 2022)

The 2019-2020 fourth grade reading scores for the state, district, and school display an overall low score for reading (Table 2). There were many novice scores obtained from this school year. These scores indicate that the state, district, and local school can benefit from improved focus on literacy interventions, and this needs to be addressed. Research demonstrates that when students attend preschool can have lasting academic effects through grade 8 (Ansari, 2018).

**Table 2**

*Kentucky 4th Grade 2019-2020 Reading Scores*

	Novice	Apprentice	Proficient	Distinguished
State	43.7%	28.2%	19.4%	6.0%
District	47.3%	28.2%	19.4%	5.1%
School	47.0%	26.8%	20.1%	6.0%

(Martin County Education School Report Card, 2022)

Kindergarten has changed tremendously compared to 25 years ago.

Kindergarten classrooms spend more time working on literacy while the areas of art, music and science have been reduced (Costantino-Lane, 2019). During 2010, it was found that 30% of the public-school Kindergarten teachers were using standardized testing once per month. This data also demonstrated that this was happening 2.6 times more often than the rate that first grade students were being tested during 1999 (Costantino-Lane, 2019).

Students served within the Big Sandy Head Start area programs are required to have 60 minutes of gross motor activities, 120 minutes of free play, and at least 30 minutes of rest time. Even with these schedule challenges, there should be a balance of teacher and child directed approaches (Big Sandy Policies and Procedures, 2021). These policies were developed by the regional Head Start program. Preschool leaders, teachers, and paraprofessionals are trained on developmentally appropriate practice and when using a curriculum, there should be a balance of how the activities are taught according to the student age. If there is an issue in an area that lacks training for the employees, there needs to be training opportunities available. Collaboration with others should also be included to be successful (Friesen et al., 2014) Working together with leaders and staff on kindergarten readiness goals can lead to improvements in student achievement when entering elementary school.

Play based activities in preschool are appropriate for young children. (Costantino-Lane, 2019). When combining play with learning, the students can be getting two different types of skills they need, instruction and play. When using play-

based literacy activities in preschool, students can benefit from language skills and exposure of functional skills when working with print. When adults guide the play experience, there can be more opportunities for literacy skills. When teachers lead sociodramatic play experiences that include a theme, students' language and number of words improve. Research shows that kindergarten lacks this time for play due to increased standards (Costantino-Lane, 2019). Appendix B includes the kindergarten Reading Foundational Skills Standards. This standard indicates that students will be able to first identify all letters and letter sounds and will begin to read emergent reader text with purpose and understanding. Kindergarten student will also be expected to demonstrate an understanding of verbs and adjectives (Appendix C). Handwriting and composition are also important as kindergarten standards state that the students will be able to print all upper- and lower-case letters, numbers and begin to capitalize the first word of a sentence and spell simple words (Appendix D). Children are now required to spend more time performing in academics in comparison to play from two decades ago (Costantino-Lane, 2019).

Play can assist with social and cognitive learning. Having time for students to play can later affect the student's confidence and flexibility in which can assist the students with challenges that they may encounter as adults (Costantino-Lane, 2019). There has been a decrease in play type activities in kindergarten from 92% to 71%. The teachers feel that there is no time for free play since activities such as worksheets have increased from 30% to 47% (Rand & Morrow, 2021). Preschool and early childhood classrooms still have the opportunity to take part in these types of lessons.



With the balance of play and teacher led activities, students can obtain the skills they need to become ready for the kindergarten setting.

### **Background of the Problem**

Both Kentucky preschool (Ky Early Childhood Standards, 2021) and kindergarten (Kentucky Academic Standards, 2022) have their own standards, but there is a very large gap between those standards. It is difficult to have a goal of students identifying a few letters and sounds of the alphabet in a preschool setting when they are expected to learn approximately a letter or two per week in kindergarten. Appendix E includes examples of the Kentucky Early Childhood Literacy Standards. Kindergarten classroom teachers feel that they can determine which students will have to be retained very early in the school year because of their lack of skills needed to be able to meet the expectations. Parents of kindergarten students do not usually expect such high standards because they are not familiar with the way that kindergarten has changed over the years, and this leaves families in a panic. Belfield and Garcia (2014) found that parents are beginning to place more attention of the importance of school readiness.

### **Capstone Overview**

This capstone was designed to inquire about how attending Head Start/Preschool can promote literacy and overall kindergarten readiness and what perceptions kindergarten teachers have on school readiness. The overall Brigance scores in the state of Kentucky demonstrate that students need more support in

obtaining academic skills prior to kindergarten (Martin County Education School Report Card, 2021).

The inclusion of the Guided Reading literacy intervention program was based on the need for stronger literacy goals for the students at Inez Elementary. The "Ducking Readers" section of the program was introduced to the Head Start and Preschool programs in 2021-2022. After the program was adopted for the school in grades K through 6th, the Head Start/Preschool program begin to incorporate it as an additional approach to the effective standard based curriculum being used in the school year 2021-2022. The district literacy coach completed a training with the "Duckling Readers" program with the Head Start and preschool teachers.

A mixed method approach was completed. A chi-square analysis was administered for the 2019-2020 group of students to compare the overall readiness scores from students attending an early childhood program compared to the home setting. These scores obtained results titled as *'Ready with intervention'*, *'Ready'* and *'Ready with enrichment'*. Unfortunately, numerical scores were not available from this screening. The online data system did not save the numerical scores, and the paper copies were not available from each classroom. This year was chosen due to the COVID pandemic taking place during the end of 2019-2020, and throughout the year of 2020-2021. During the 2021-2022 intervention year, Martin County Head Start students received instruction with Guided Reading program. Lessons were taught that gave the students an opportunity to develop literacy skills. All students were tested

with the Brigance kindergarten screener at the beginning of their kindergarten year in 2022-2023.

For the 2022-2023 Brigance screener, a chi-square analysis was also used to tally the scores titled '*Ready with intervention*', '*Ready*' and '*Ready with enrichment*'. Numerical scores were available and a two-tailed t-test was used to analyze these scores. These scores were examined to determine whether there was a difference in the overall readiness scores and alphabet recognition scores from the students attending Head Start/Preschool compared to the students coming from the home environment.

The qualitative portion of the study included a seven-question survey that inquired about the readiness perceptions of the seven kindergarten teachers in the Martin County School District. These questions were developed to find the opinions of how many students enter kindergarten ready, to ask the teachers to describe how their students are considered ready, ready, and what is considered most important factors in literacy and overall readiness. The teachers were also offered to provide additional comments about readiness.

Students entering kindergarten have a much different experience than those of students years ago. The Kentucky Reading Standards describe that during the kindergarten year, students will recognize and name all upper-case letters of the alphabet, isolate and produce the initial, medial vowel, and final sounds in three phonemes words. They will read common high frequency words by sight and read

emergent reader text with purpose and understanding (Kentucky Academic Standards, 2022).

Many times, students, families, and teachers struggle to assist the students to obtain these skills during the kindergarten year, because they did not enter school ready for the instruction. Parents are surprised with the standards, and do not expect this degree of content at the kindergarten level. When students enter kindergarten with some basic degree of content of print, including knowing a few letters and sounds especially those in their own name, they do not seem to demonstrate as much difficulty as students who do not enter Kindergarten with some of these foundations.

The benefit of the information from this capstone can provide support to administrations, teachers, and families. The data may assist with planning for appropriate curriculums for Head Start and Preschool programs that can in return help prepare students for kindergarten.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions served as a foundation for this study.

1. How does participating in a structured preschool program impact kindergarten readiness?
2. What readiness skills do kindergarten teachers indicate as being needed by students entering kindergarten?

### **Definition of Terms**

*Kindergarten readiness:* For this capstone kindergarten readiness is being measured by the Brigance kindergarten screener. This screener assesses students in

the areas of cognitive, language, and physical skills. The validity of this assessment has demonstrated positive scrutiny for over 30 years (French, 2013) The Brigance will identify 91% of children with disabilities and 87% of children with advanced development. This screener can be beneficial for teachers to be able to identify the needs of students entering kindergarten.

*Intervention:* The Guided Reading Duckling Readers series is an early literacy classroom curriculum that focuses on building and writing names, working with letters and sounds, shared and interactive reading, interactive writing, cutting up sentences, and working with rhythm and rhyme. This program also provides instruction in phonological awareness with activities that include working with sounds of letters in words, clapping syllables, and sorting pictures by sounds.

*Brigance Readiness Category Scores:*

"*Ready with intervention*" implies the student is ready for kindergarten in regard to age and birthdate but will need assistance with content. For students with chronological age of 5-0 through 5-5 the cut off to receive this score is <61, and for age 5-6 through 5-11 the cut off for the score is <70.

"*Ready*" describes that the student scored overall ready for kindergarten with the content of the assessment. Students with chronological age of 5-0 through 5-5 and score ready with scores of 61-88. The students age 5-6 through 5-11 score ready with scores of 70-91.

"*Ready with enrichments*" indicates that students score at an advanced level of readiness for kindergarten. Student with chronological age of 5-0 through 5-5 with a

cutoff of >88 and students age 5-6 through 5-11 with a cutoff of >91 fall into the ready with enrichment score.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

This chapter will discuss research that demonstrates the benefits of early childhood programs to kindergarten readiness. The new kindergarten academic expectations and Kentucky readiness goals are described. The literature review also contains many examples of interventions that have been used in Head Start or Preschool settings to prepare young children for school. Research is provided that explains how students attending early childhood programs demonstrate an advantage in overall academic readiness, literacy, math, science, social, behavior, early intervention, low-income families, and lasting educational effects.

#### **Academic Readiness**

The standards and expectations of the academic skills in kindergarten have greatly increased over the years. Many refer to kindergarten as the new first grade. This places a large amount of attention to young students being equipped with the academic skills that they need to be considered ready for school.

Honig et al. (2018) demonstrates that knowing the names of letters is the beginning of literacy learning for young children. Attending preschool can help students not only prepare for kindergarten but these readiness skills can be a positive contribution to the later years of education. Many preschools and Head Start classrooms are focusing more attention on preparing the young students academically for entering kindergarten.

The five developmental areas developed by the state of Kentucky serve as guideline to kindergarten readiness. The developmental areas are approaches to learning, health and physical well-being, language and communication development, social and emotional development, and cognitive and general knowledge. Early childhood programs in the state of Kentucky use these development areas along with the Kentucky early childhood standards to assist with preparing young students for kindergarten.

### ***Approaches to Learning***

This area focuses on preparing students to become learners. Head Start and preschool settings can promote learning by providing students with opportunities to begin to focus on activities, interact and play with others, and investigate topics. Providing opportunities for students to work on challenging tasks will also help them develop strategies to approach activities that may seem complicated. These strategies can encourage them to keep trying when unsuccessful. This is a very important characteristic to have when entering the kindergarten classroom considering the expectations and standards that are required. (School Readiness in Kentucky, 2023).

Students need to be able to focus on tasks and listen to the instructions from adults to be able to learn to the best of their ability. Routines with rules and guidelines in an early childhood setting can help young children function in a public setting that is different than home. Being able to focus, listen to instructions, and work with adults can prepare the students for the kindergarten setting. When providing students in early childhood programs with many different experiences and



activities that relate to various topics, students can begin to inquire on subjects that interest them. Developing curiosity can help students become interested and excited about learning. This can also be preparation for continuous learning. (School Readiness in Kentucky, 2023).

### ***Health and Physical Well-Being***

Young students should have the opportunity to be provided with healthy habit activities that include an appropriate diet, rest, and exercise. Developing these healthy habits will allow students to feel well and be able to perform academic and physical tasks as they approach school entry. (School Readiness in Kentucky, 2023).

Without these needs being met, it is hard for adults to expect students to be able to focus on academic tasks. Early childhood programs in Kentucky strive to provide everyday routines and activities that promote the health and well-being of the students. Well balanced meals and lessons that promote healthy diets are provided through out the school day. Exercise opportunities in and outside the classroom are also provided. Depending on the hours of operation, the early childhood programs may provide quiet times or rest times.

Handwashing, tooth brushing and other healthy habits are also encouraged and used in the Kentucky early childhood classrooms. The early childhood staff including teachers, family service providers, and directors, work with families to make sure the young children are obtaining regular medical, dental, and vision care. The staff also educate the families of available immunizations. Early childhood employees monitor classroom attendance and make contact such as phone calls or

home visits to keep track of the children's health and to make sure they receive appropriate medical care. (School Readiness in Kentucky, 2023).

### ***Language and Communication Development***

Communicating needs and expressing feelings to others is also an important factor that students need to acquire before entering kindergarten. Beginning at a young age, students need to be exposed to sample conversations, books, and discussions to practice language use. This will be beneficial when beginning to socialize with their kindergarten teacher and peers. This area of development in early childhood centers also focuses on identifying and writing names and discussing and re-telling stories. The students also practice to reciting information such as their home address and birthdate. Recognizing letters and sounds may also be added to the language domain. (School Readiness in Kentucky, 2023).

The Kentucky Head Start and preschool centers complete a Brigance screening at the beginning of the school year. This screener identifies whether the student have a speech or language delay and can begin intervention and speech therapy if needed. Having an opportunity to address these issues can prepare the students for entering kindergarten as they can begin to participate in interventions that help them communicate and express themselves.

### ***Social and Emotional Development***

Just as being able to communicate and socialize, recognizing individual emotions and the emotions of others are factors that can assist students when entering any new setting. Being able to deal with the emotions of themselves and others can

provide young children with a foundation of how to handle social situations before entering elementary schools. Providing Head Start and preschool students with an opportunity to learn rules, routines, and strategies to work and play with others can be beneficial in social and emotional development. (School Readiness in Kentucky, 2023).

When attending an early childhood setting, students also begin to practice separating from the families at their home. Being able to approach the separation process without becoming upset can help the students adjust to new settings that are not familiar. After attending Head Start or preschool, the students have already become adjusted to separating from their families, and this can be a great experience before entering kindergarten. Many centers use social emotional curriculums that can also guide students on controlling emotions, using their words to work out problems, and how to share successfully (Denham et al., 2014).

### ***General Knowledge and Mathematics***

The Kentucky school readiness category in general knowledge and mathematics provide students with an opportunity to participate in activities that promote students classifying objects, identifying colors and shapes, counting, and connecting numbers to quantities. Having some knowledge of academic topics allows students to feel confident and be able to adapt to a kindergarten setting when entering the classroom. (School Readiness in Kentucky, 2023). The kindergarten classroom setting approaches academic instruction quickly and students who have general knowledge of such activities can be prepared for further academic instruction.

Approaches to learning, health and physical well-being, social emotional skills, and language and communication are all very important factors in Head Start and preschool. Early childhood centers that balance these areas and plan daily lessons according to these five factors of school readiness can benefit the students during their experience and can also prepare the students and family for the transition to kindergarten. This can make moving to kindergarten a more positive experience and can allow the students to have confidence in approaching the new situation.

### **Early Childhood Standards**

Along with these developmental areas, the state of Kentucky Department of Education has also developed standards for the early childhood classrooms. These standards were recently revised in 2021. (Kentucky Academic Standards, 2022). These standards are developed to meet the areas of approaching of learning, creative arts, health/mental wellness, language and early literacy, mathematics, physical education, science, social studies, and technology. The early childhood literacy skills include goals of recognizing some letters of the alphabet, awareness of print, and using different writing tools. This early literacy can be a foundation for early reading skills.

### **Academic Activities**

There are many curriculums used in early childhood settings that have a main goal of social interaction and some random academic skills. Many early childhood centers allow the students to make their own choices and rarely have a time for them to take part in academic activities. This could be very beneficial for three-year olds,

for research shows that there is also sometimes no change noticed in the three-year-old children from the beginning of the school year to the end of the school year (Goldstein & Worde, 2013).

Lacking more academic instruction may result in the four-year-old students with the lack of exposure to some skills that are appropriate to them. Many Head Start and preschools often focus only on fingerplays and songs regarding literacy instruction, while other programs are adapting more detailed lessons.

When providing early childhood programs with curriculums, leaders should consider that there is a difference in what is appropriate for three-year-old students and what may work differently for four-year old students. At the age of four, the students may be able to participate in more academic based activities and retain the information that can help prepare them for kindergarten. Without alphabet and some phonological students may experience difficulty in later reading instruction (Goldestein et al., 2017).

Head Start programs are federally funded and are allocated monies that assist with materials, programs, and activities that can greatly benefit Head Start students. The guidelines with the federally funded programs may have different aspects as compared to state funded preschools. There are sometimes funds available for state funded Preschools for districts who would like to apply and take part in these types of opportunities.

Hustedt et al. (2015) describes the fact that the Arkansas Better Chance Program was awarded \$11 million in 2011-2012 to provide preschool children with

an opportunity to prepare the students in state funded programs for kindergarten. It was found that students who attended scored higher in vocabulary, math, and print awareness. This was an excellent opportunity to provide these students with a chance to be able to take part in a program that enhanced academic skills.

Preschool activities that promote school readiness can have long term effects (Manfra et al., 2017). Offering this type of instruction for young children is shown to lead to higher paying jobs and less crime rates in the future. Today, many young children are being exposed to technology. Children are using tablets and cell phones as often as many adults use them. Technology can be a good enhancement on learning, but it does not take place of the traditional forms.

If a student demonstrates that they do not have the kindergarten readiness skills it can be predicted as early as the entry process. It is crucial that school districts research and find as many grants and allocations as possible to be able to use with the younger students. If law makers and superintendents desire high expectations for their students, there needs to be more attention placed on the younger children to be able to build a successful foundation for learning.

### **Collaboration with Families**

Collaboration between professionals and families can also assist districts with assisting students to become ready for kindergarten. When kindergarten teachers share curriculum with preschool teachers and allow them to observe their classrooms, the preschool teachers may get a better idea of what is expected (Jarrett & Coba-Rodriguez, 2019). Studies show that when Head Start teachers and parents developed

a relationship as their child progressed through the head start program, they were more knowledgeable about what is expected in kindergarten (Jarrett & Cobarrodríguez, 2019).

### **Opinions of Kindergarten Readiness**

Interviews with mothers, preschool teachers, and kindergarten teachers found that many of the beliefs of kindergarten readiness skills may differ. When there is confusion about what is expected in kindergarten, it can leave the parents and Preschool teachers struggling to prepare the student. When students enter kindergarten, data indicates that the teachers' opinions of how they are performing can predict possible retention (Goldstein, 2014).

Another qualitative study of teacher and parents found the participants feel that Preschool goals should be consistent with kindergarten goals (Hatcher et al., 2012). This is something that should be considered as leaders decide on appropriate curriculum for Preschool programs. Brown et al. (2019) found with interviews that parents are not as concerned with their children reading when leaving Kindergarten but are more concerned with what they learn socially. When interviewed, many parents felt that they would be willing to work with the district or state representatives to make the expectations more feasible, but this is not an option for many times as policy makers make the decisions for what is best for students.

### **Early Literacy**

When interviewing kindergarten teachers with experience in the state of California, it was found that the majority believe that students entering kindergarten

who lack the skills needed struggle to meet the ELA (English/Language Arts) standards that are expected of them (Costantino-Lane, 2019). Sometimes students enter kindergarten at a young age so many families choose to delay entry to kindergarten until as late as possible, still meeting the minimum age requirement set by the state.

A study from midwestern United States found that when parents are concerned it may be beneficial for both parents and teachers to determine if kindergarten should be delayed (Donath et al., 2010). Delaying kindergarten may give the student more time to become ready, but it also delays their experience in school which can lead to a later high school graduation date and a delay on the student either entering college or the work force.

Students who have not acquired phonological awareness and some alphabet knowledge before entering the kindergarten setting may obtain a risk for problems with reading. School districts need to consider constructing early intervention with literacy strategies that assist students with become successful readers in the future (Goldestein et al., 2017).

There are many other programs that may be offered to families with the goal of enhancing school readiness from the literacy aspect. The Imagination Library Literacy Program provides all students under the age of five with a free book in the mail each month. This program is offered in states including Tennessee and Kentucky. Samei et al. (2015) describe that this program demonstrated positive effects in both literacy and numeracy to young children in the state of Tennessee. The



kindergarten readiness indicator demonstrated students within this program scored 9.64 points higher in language and 2.01 points higher in mathematics (Samei et al., 2015). Many Head Start and preschool programs distribute information about this program when students are enrolled. Without being enrolled in an early childhood program, many parents would have not known about the imagination library. Even though some communities may provide information about this program through local libraries or health departments, some families may not be able to receive the information until they are enrolled in Preschool or Head Start. Therefore, school enrollment may allow families to have an opportunity to take part in programs like these which will provide the students with additional ways to be able to prepare for school readiness.

Providing more reading and writing activities in preschool can be beneficial. Hall et al. (2014) investigated the effectiveness of the interactive writing instruction compared to the standard type of early childhood instruction. It was found that students who received the interactive writing experience were able to identify two more lower case letters and one more upper-case letter as compared to the students receiving the creative curriculum instruction with the more standards-based instruction. This demonstrates that having an actual curriculum that includes other academic skills could benefit the students even at an early age.

A study conducted in Ohio, Kansas, and Florida was used to compare PATH to Literacy and Story Friends programs on the effect of Preschool student success in phonological awareness skills. The PATH program included activities with visual

materials and gestures and opportunities to respond (Goldstein et al., 2017). The Story Friends curriculum consisted of the students listening to recorded stories with vocabulary and basic words with opportunities to respond. It was found that the students exposed to the PATH to literacy program who had previously demonstrated delays, were exhibiting more growth after being in the program. The growth from PATH demonstrated a greater increase in literacy than the Story friend group. Both programs demonstrated student growth in scores regarding phonological awareness and knowledge of print but the PATH to literacy group displayed a higher overall score for phonemic awareness (Goldstein et al., 2017).

Aswegen (2015) describes the BFED (Brain Filing Enrichment Program) used in Australia in early childhood centers. The main idea of this program was producing vocabulary by using real life photos. It was found that the program made a positive impact to the student's interest and there was an overall improvement for vocabulary with the students. Other countries are focusing on programs such as these types of activities which can serve as a better opportunity for the students to be ready for kindergarten. Focusing more on vocabulary and planning activities that can assist the students will provide enhancement in this area and can lead to literacy awareness which is a step closer to early reading skills.

There can be many different approaches to literacy in the Preschool classroom. The 3-model operation in the Young Learners project consists of language, cultural and critical power. The Young Learners project was a six-year project in early education classrooms in Australia (Scull et al., 2013). The study

examined teacher's choices of reading, drawing, and writing activities. During these activities it was noted that the teachers gave the students opportunities to take part in the story reading process by using felt pieces, and discussions on the fairy tales presented. Another example of an activity included a cooking experience to relate to the Gingerbread Man story. The students were able to help with the ingredients by using picture cards. Discussions were also used in the storytelling that focused on letter recognition. This study suggests that fairy tales were familiar regarding the aspect to the culture and the children may have been exposed to these at home. When the teachers were using language as they communicated with the students and encouraged them to communicate, they developed positive literacy programs in their classrooms. Connecting the curriculum with children's everyday lives was also a very positive aspect (Sclull et al., 2013).

Using both large and small group settings is appropriate for teaching preschool students' literacy skills. Some students learn better with one-on-one instruction, and some learn best with a whole group approach. The Children's School Success (CSS) is another successful literacy program that included literacy activities that led to students having later success in phonological awareness and oral language recognition of the alphabet (Friesen et al., 2014). Studies demonstrated that Head Start classrooms in 50 different states demonstrated a benefit in the CSS. The growth in the student's letter knowledge contributed from 67% to 78% of the teachers frequently using the literacy program. This study also demonstrated that the Head Start staff and families collaborate and shared the activities, and the families became

involved. This connection with the families that Head Start and Preschool programs have can also make with literacy readiness skills stronger (Friesen et al., 2014).

The environment of a Preschool classroom is considered much more a part of the learning process than that of an elementary classroom. Students are provided with opportunities to explore learning centers which give them adequate time to play, while learning. Examples of the classroom centers may include All by Myself, Kitchen, Block, Science, Fine Motor, Art, Science, Technology, Library and Writing.

Teachers can add reading activities and materials to these learning centers and work with the children during their free choice time. The physical literacy environment includes books and writing materials and other activities that may include focus on letters and print. When observing Preschool classrooms with the EHCO (Early Language and Literacy Classrooms) observation tool, researchers were to find more information on what types of materials are included in the classroom (Guo et al., 2012). It is very important for teachers to have knowledge when working with literacy development and the materials provided. Providing materials only without the teachers completing the instruction does not allow room for curriculum to be effective.

The class observation tool measures the interaction of teacher and students within the classroom setting. Studies demonstrate with these scores that class scores with teacher interaction relates to more alphabet recognition and name writing with Preschool students. A classroom environment combined with strong literacy in the

physical aspect with books, materials and support between teachers and student demonstrate growth (Guo et al., 2012).

Technology is making daily advances in today's society. Many students may respond to online instruction in a way that works best for their learning. There are many educational programs used in schools now, and this is something that all districts should consider since all students learn in different ways. It is important to not rely on technology only as instruction, but to use these programs as an addition and follow up with what is being instructed in the classroom.

Trotti et al. (2017) tested students who were exposed to the Imagine Learning Program. This program consisted of literacy instruction with computers. It was found that the control group did not participate in the computer program demonstrated larger gains. Regular classroom instruction demonstrated the greater outcome. This relates to the current practices that parents many times use at home when allowing students to participate in a large amount of screen time. This may be beneficial, but this study supports that more regular classroom instruction is more adequate. Are children receiving as much regular instruction at home as what they need to prepare them for kindergarten?

Advanced standards are pressuring kindergarten teachers to make sure students are obtaining skills such as becoming beginning readers and learning simple addition math practices. There should be more attention placed on literacy based and academic activities in the Head Start and Preschool setting (Rand & Morrow, 2021).

Rand and Morrow (2021) also demonstrate that throughout kindergarten and first grade, when the students listen to a story and are provided with a fantasy or play activities a discussion led by an adult or a drawing about the story, the story comprehension and reflection improved greatly. These strategies should be used in Preschool as the teacher adds small steps with these types of activities to the students especially the four-year-old groups to provide a foundation (Rand & Morrow, 2021).

Regarding academic instruction, many early childhood teachers place focus on literacy. It is always important to remember that there are other academic areas that need attention, and some students may learn better when presented with activities that are based on other subjects. It is also important to remember that just because the students are young, does not mean they cannot be exposed to and give opportunities for high expectations in academic areas.

Research demonstrates that having both parents who exhibit RD (reading difficulties) places children at a higher risk for struggles in literacy academics (Esmaeeli et al., 2018). It is very important for leaders to remember that reading can begin at an early age, not just within the state testing window. The key factor to the examples in this research includes that there were literacy curriculums in place. Adding effective curriculums to an early childhood program that can benefit school readiness (Goldstein et al., 2017).

### ***Letter Knowledge***

Knowing the names of the letters can be the first step to a student's literacy skills. Honig et al. (2018) states that many students begin with letter recognition by

being able to recognize the first letter in their first name. This can be helpful when teaching Preschool aged students, for recognizing the letters of their name will also help them learn to identify and spell their name and write their name, which provides the students with knowledge of something that is important to them. This can also be very a beneficial practice in preparation for the kindergarten setting. By learning the names of letters first, students can prepare for phonological awareness by relating the sound of the letter.

The phoneme of a letter is usually heard when saying the letter name and this can contribute to mastering the sound along with decoding. (Honig et al., 2018) When students are able to recognize all letters instantly at sight, they can then direct their attention to other tasks that help them develop emergent literacy skills. When recognizing letters with confidence, accurate word reading, and comprehension will follow (Honig et al., 2018).

Research explains that when combining handwriting practice with letter recognition, students exhibit better composition skills. If a young child does not seem to be able to recognize the names of letters, they may not be able to be as successful with letter sounds and spellings as compared to a child who can recognize the letters with confidence. Reading skills first and foremost depends on the actual visual letter recognition (Honig et al., 2018).

There are many different approaches to teaching letter recognition to young children. Honig et al. (2018) describes that practicing activities such as "skywriting" (making the letter formation in the air) with a "magic pencil" (using the fingers in the

air) are beneficial as guided practice for both letter recognition and handwriting.

Tracing first in the air and naming the letter then tracing with the finger on the paper then using a pencil can help the child remember the name of the letter along with the instructions of how to form the letter (Honig et al., 2018).

Administrators and teachers who are involved in early childhood classrooms such as Head Start and Preschool should consider the importance of letter recognition first and foremost in developing early literacy skills for students. Providing young children with a strong foundation in reading not only will assist with preparing for kindergarten readiness but can also benefit the student's reading skills in later years (Goldestein et al., 2017).

### **Math and Science**

Math has been included in early childhood programs in the United States and other countries. Educators look at literacy at the top of the list of importance many times, but instruction in math and other subjects are also just as needed. Ryoo et al. (2014) describes that students in Shanghai scored higher in Mathematics than Kentucky and Nebraska from Preschool to 1<sup>st</sup> grade. This information provides us with the fact that other countries may be placing more focus on early children that what is being completed in the United States.

Teaching science to young children can promote curiosity and give them the opportunity to explore the world. It is important to provide students with an opportunity to be unique with their learning instead of just "knowing". Science



experiences can be a fun way for young students to experiment and have more fun with learning (Larimore, 2020).

Tippett and Miford (2017) inquire about teachers who participated in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) activities. Including science in the preschool curriculum can be a great addition to the student's experience. With this program, science related activities provided the students with an opportunity to become engaged in science topics and were able to use language with their classmates that related to the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. This included that STEM activities seem to be appropriate for preschool while also encouraging scientific practices.

The subject of math has been known to cause anxiety to both adolescents and adults. Students as young as kindergarten level begin to feel math anxiety as they begin to feel worried and describe negative feelings about learning more about numbers (Lu et al., 2021).

Booked On Math is a program used to introduce Preschool students to math concepts through interactive stories. Combining literacy with math can also to continue to strengthen literacy performance in young children. These programs used 10 books with lesson plans included. Research from a university family development center in Colorado examined 6 Preschool teachers and 74 students (McGuire et al., 2021).

Forty-four of the students received the Booked-on Math program and 30 of the students were considered the control group. The Teaching Strategies Gold

Assessment demonstrated that students who participated in the Booked On Math Program scored higher in quantifying, spatial relationships, and shapes (McGuire et al., 2021).

There are often new programs available that can be adapted to the Preschool program, but schools and districts may decide it would not be appropriate for the younger groups. The NT Math Games is a play-based curriculum introduced in Australia. When training Preschool teachers and providing curriculum programs such as the NT Math Games, students in Australia demonstrated much greater scores in counting and number naming as students who did not participate in the program (Cohrissen & Niklas, 2019). Leaders should consider other ideas even if a curriculum is not completely play based, the directors and teachers in an early childhood program can work together to add play and to reduce time frames on activities to make the material work with the preschool level. It is important to remember that programs can be adapted to work with young ages.

Just as curriculum and assessments are important with elementary, middle, and high school students, it can be just as important with Preschool students. 63% of teachers from Pennsylvania and New Jersey used a purchased curriculum and the remaining 37% used self-made. It was also noted that 94% had training on assessments (Gischlar & Vesay, 2018). It is important for early childhood programs to understand that the quality of the curriculum and what is being taught and assessed is very important in regard to focusing on kindergarten readiness. In some programs, there is not a lot of attention given to curriculum and assessments because the

Preschool setting is not considered as important as other grade levels and seems to be overlooked. Having a plan and a curriculum can assist the students with preparing for kindergarten. Gischlar and Vesay (2018) reported some states are focusing on the curriculum and assessment with preschool aged students, and this can be a great addition to the children's educational experiences and can in return assist with preparing them for kindergarten.

### **Social-Emotional Benefits of Early Childhood Programs**

When students enter kindergarten, they may be faced with social situations that they have never had to encounter before. The students will be soon learning how to interact with many other young children and adults. This is a big change from being at home with families and the comfort level will change to a more social setting. Goldstein and Ward (2013) include that along with academic instruction early childhood programs also offer instruction in social emotional learning. This is an important addition to early childhood programs. Not only is social emotional an important factor in kindergarten readiness, but it's also a life skill that everyone needs to be able to function with others.

Many students enter kindergarten before attending any other previous setting. These students may be lacking the social skills that can only be obtained with being around other children. Denham et al. (2014) indicate that students who begin kindergarten with social skills are more likely going to attribute a positive outlook in regard to wanting to come to school, and in return, this will help them to be more successful in school.

Many Head Start programs use the Second Steps Curriculum. This program includes many lessons on managing emotions and solving problems (Denham et al., 2014). Students who took part in this program would have an advantage to other students who may not have had the opportunity. Denham et al. (2014) also found that students attending an early childhood setting were able to identify emotions such as happy, sad, angry, and afraid. These students were also able to deal with social issues both independently and within a group. When entering kindergarten with the high demands of state standards, being equipped with a foundation of social skills will benefit young students. These types of skills can assist the students when they are able to express themselves and socialize with other students and teachers.

### **Behavior Benefits from Early Childhood Programs**

Along with academic and social preparation, it is necessary for students to begin kindergarten with appropriate behavior in order to be ready to learn. The new academic standards require the students to learn a large amount of information, and this does not leave the kindergarten teachers with much room to work on behavior problems. Students who exhibit behavior problems in Preschool can later portray lower academic achievement (Ritz et al., 2014). Therefore, the preschool setting would be an appropriate time to begin to address the issue. The authors also describe that the early interventions for noncompliance and other behavior issues can be beneficial to young children's academic performance in later years. Addressing behavior problems at home may not always prepare the students for school. When

entering kindergarten there may be different social situations that students have not had experience with at home or any other setting.

Many teachers use time out, break time, making choices, and guided compliance options as behavior management techniques. There are also other interventions such as handing out stickers for praise, positive behavior charts, and overall classroom management strategies. With these types of interventions, students are being exposed to behavior management techniques that they may have not had the opportunity to do so in the home setting. Having these opportunities in these settings would be able to form a foundation of what type of behavior is expected in school and how to approbatively respond to that. This will be an advantage to the students who attended preschool as compared to that of the students who stayed at home (Ritz et al., 2014).

With teacher training and evidence-based practice, using praise is something that more than likely be found in early childhood settings instead of the home. When teachers use praise, many students demonstrate a higher number of positive behaviors. Many families may not have the information of praise and behavior management at home, and there may not be as much praise as what they students may receive at school. The Situ training coaches the teachers to be able to use positive guidance each time the students exhibit negative behavior. LaBrot et al. (2020) found that the teachers who administered the positive behavior strategies from this training had students who demonstrated improved behavior compared to the students in other classrooms whose teachers were not using specific positive reinforcement. This

would be a great aspect for students to have when entering kindergarten, and again an opportunity that many students who do not attend preschool may not have access to.

### **Early Intervention**

Today's society faces the possibility many children being identified with special needs. These areas of concern may include diagnosis such as autism, ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) or developmental delays. The needs of students are important factors that families and educators must take seriously in order to find how to help them be successful. When the students are identified early, this places a focus on what they need, instead of waiting until they are older to begin providing those services. Being able to pinpoint needs of students at the Preschool age can provide the students an opportunity to take part in services and interventions that can begin and continue. Being identified before kindergarten will allow the students to be more ready and will provide the teacher and families with an idea of how to make adaptations for the child.

Policy makers and parents are giving more attention to early childhood as compared to what has been given in the past. Students who have a delay or disability that has not been identified or addressed may struggle when entering kindergarten. Without knowledge if there is an issue, both families and educators may struggle with the standards and providing the students with what they need to be able to learn at their highest ability. Keesbury (2015) found that when students who had a disability or delay and were given an opportunity to participate in a preschool setting, they were able to acquire skills such as gross motor, language and cognitive skills that

successfully assisted them in preparing for kindergarten. This would be very beneficial to the students, families, and educators.

When entering kindergarten, the parents would know what to ask for, the educators would know how to assist, and the students would have an opportunity to feel more included and supported. There would also be room for special educators to provide extra services and the wait that usually takes a while for the IEP would not be existent. Mattern (2015) also supports this idea by including that 40% of families, 80% of early childhood teachers and 83% of intervention specialist feel that Preschool was where most of the students' delays, and disabilities were identified. Preschool students from Tulsa Oklahoma identified with special needs performed higher on letter and word recognition along with spelling (Phillips & Meloy, 2012).

Students who may not be able to participate in a Preschool or early education program may not have the opportunity to have their needs assessed and identified. This may not take place until they reach kindergarten which leads to them not being ready and the educators fails to provide them with what they need as they enter school. This can be very frustrating when the students are immediately faced with the standards of kindergarten that may seem overwhelming without precious identification and preparation.

Just as school districts need to focus on interventions with students who may have special needs, attention also should exist with gifted students. A qualitative study in Australia demonstrates that teachers believe high quality Preschools could help meet the needs of gifted preschoolers, while parents feel that the teachers in high

quality Preschool programs need to be more informed with the topic of giftedness (Wellisch, 2019).

### **Low-Income Families**

Many areas in the United States are faced with families that struggle with the challenges of having low income. Whether it be the lack of high school or college degrees, lack of job opportunities and or job loss, there are many families who are faced with income challenges, and this can be troubling when there are children to support. To add to the struggles of low income in regard to meeting needs, parents must also be faced with preparing their students for school. If parents are not educated on how important it is for their child to be ready for kindergarten, they may lack opportunities to be involved with preparing their children at home.

Weiland et al. (2017) found that low-income families that participated in the Head Start program engaged in more literacy activities with their children at home prior to kindergarten. These parents were providing their children with storytelling, letter name recognition, and writing skills. The students being involved with the Head Start program can lead to parents being more involved at home. Some parents feel students who demonstrate the skills that they need to be ready for kindergarten still struggle with the transition (Miller et al., 2015). This demonstrates the need for low-income students and families to be provided with opportunity's that promote readiness skills at both an early childhood setting and in the home.

When attending a high-quality early childhood program, students who are considered at risk for low income or poverty issues demonstrate more skills for



kindergarten readiness than at risk students who may not be able to attend (Herndon & Waggoner 2015). Head Start and preschools offer home visits and support to families, and this can be a great time to begin with school readiness outcomes. The Spark Ohio Home Intervention Program consists of lesson plans with the Ohio standards that include books and activities cards provided to families to use at home (Kenne, 2018). Many of these students who participate in the program are considered economically disadvantaged, they were able to take part in the program that demonstrated a result to higher kindergarten readiness scores.

### **Lasting Effects of Preschool**

Students who attended a preschool setting before kindergarten will in return obtain the skills they need to be able to become prepared. A large amount of attention is being placed on school readiness and early childhood advantages, but the fact of how long the benefits last from preschool sometimes goes unnoticed. When students attend preschool or another early childhood setting, it is obvious that the focus is on preparing them for kindergarten and elementary school, but we should also consider how much the early experience will benefit the children past that point.

Ansari et al. (2017) describes that when third grade students were tested with the Florida Comprehensive Achievement test, it was found that when these students who attended Preschool reached the third grade, they demonstrated academic gains in association with math and reading skills compared to student who did not attend Preschool.

Long lasting effects of preschool have also been found in the middle school grades. Students in middle school who attended Head Start often scored three percent higher and there were less amounts of students being retained as compared with students who did not attend Head Start or a preschool program (Phillips et al., 2016). Students who attended preschool not only demonstrated that they were more ready when entering kindergarten but were also portraying more advanced academic skills when finishing the 8<sup>th</sup> grade (Ansari, 2018). This demonstrates that the benefits of Preschool can very well linger until after the first grade through middle school. This is something law makers, educators and families should consider when discussing early childhood and school readiness.

### **Conclusion**

Research demonstrates that students who attend early childhood centers can benefit from academics such as literacy, math, and science. There are social benefits from the setting that assist with identifying emotions and getting along with others. Positive behavior interventions are also displayed in these programs that can assist with students entering kindergarten. The research also included that early identification and intervention for students with special needs can be a positive result of attending a preschool setting. Benefits of assisting low families and lasting educational advantages are also demonstrated in this research. Districts need to consider developmentally appropriate practice while rotating child and teacher led activities. Studies demonstrate that it is important for the students to participate in

free play and open expression, but also necessary to balance this with instruction that can assist them academically and prepare them for kindergarten.

The goal for students entering kindergarten students is to be able to enjoy and feel excited about school, and for the parent to feel confident that the students will be able to successfully compete their kindergarten year. To expect a kindergarten student to succeed in academic goals such as becoming a beginning reader, or to add and subtract within the sum of five, we must focus more on how to prepare young students for them to be able to approach these high expectations with a better foundation.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Methodology**

The purpose of this project was to investigate readiness status of students who attended the Martin County Head Start/Preschool program as compared to students who came from the home setting. An examination of the Brigance readiness scores and the alphabet recognition scores was conducted through a comparison of students who attended the Head Start/Preschool program and were exposed to the Guided Reading program to students who came from the home setting. The researcher explored the Brigance readiness scores from the 2019-2020 and 2022-2023 school years. The perceptions of kindergarten teachers regarding kindergarten readiness were also examined in this capstone.

#### **Context**

During the 2019-2020 and 2022-2023 school years, Martin County School District consisted of three elementary schools, one middle school and one high school. There were approximately 1,823 students enrolled. The student enrollment of the district has suffered over the past two decades from the recent decline in the coal industry and families relocating due to searching for employment. The three elementary schools, Eden, Inez, and Warfield consisted of Head Start/Preschool through 6th grade. There were two Head Start/Blended Preschool classrooms each located at Inez and Warfield Elementary, and two Head Start units along with one state funded Preschool classroom at Eden Elementary.

Both regular and special education students were in the same setting with services provided for students with special needs during brief sessions outside and sometimes inside the classroom. Both low-income and over income families in the district had the opportunity to enroll in the Head Start/Preschool blended program.

### **Research Questions**

For this capstone the following two research questions were considered.

1. How does participating in a structured preschool program impact kindergarten readiness?
2. What readiness skills do kindergarten teachers indicate as being needed by students entering kindergarten?

### **Hypotheses**

The four null hypotheses examined the Brigance readiness scores of kindergarten students. Two different years of scores were examined; those obtained at the start of the 2019-2020 school year and the start of the 2022-2023 school year. Two groups of kindergarten students were identified; those attending Head Start/Preschool and those that did not. Two of the null hypotheses,  $H_0 1$  and  $H_0 2$ , examined the categories where students were placed based on their performance.

The final two null hypotheses examined the performance of students based on their overall readiness scores and alphabet recognition performance on the Brigance. Table 3 provides a visual of the various groups considered in the study and when the intervention (instruction involving the Guided Reading program) was involved in the Head Start/Preschool Program.

The null hypotheses examined in this study were:

- H<sub>0</sub> 1: There is no relationship between the performance categories obtained on the 2019-2020 Brigance and the educational environments students were in the previous year.
- H<sub>0</sub> 2: There is no relationship between the performance categories obtained on the 2022-2023 Brigance and the educational environment students were in the previous year.
- H<sub>0</sub>3: There is no statistical difference in the 2022-2023 Brigance readiness scores for students entering kindergarten who came from the home setting compared to the students who came from the Head Start/Preschool setting and received literacy instruction.
- H<sub>0</sub>4: There is no statistical difference in the Brigance readiness scores in alphabet recognition of students entering kindergarten in 2022-2023 who came from the home setting compared to the students who came from the Head Start/Preschool setting and received literacy instruction.

**Table 3**

*Groups and Intervention Provided*

	2019-2020	2022-2023
Head Start/Preschool	A: No intervention in the prior year	B: Intervention in prior year
Not Head Start	C: No intervention in the prior year	D: No intervention in the prior year

**Research Setting and Materials**

The research took place in the Martin County School District. The county seat at the time was Inez, Kentucky. The Brigance performances were obtained from the two kindergarten classes at Inez, two kindergarten classes at Warfield Elementary, and the three kindergarten classes at Eden Elementary. The Brigance readiness scores of the students who previously attended Head Start/Preschool entering kindergarten in the year of 2019-2020 were compared to the students who came from the home setting. The 2022-2023 Brigance readiness of students who previously attended Head Start/Preschool and were exposed to the Guided Reading intervention were compared to the students who previously came from the home setting.

**Research Design**

A mixed method approach was used to examine the topic of kindergarten readiness. The design included quantitative scores from the Brigance kindergarten screening from two different years. This quasi-experimental approach included the control group, the group of students who came from the home setting. The experimental group will include a year that a group of students who participated in Head Start/Preschool classrooms and the adapted curriculums. Qualitative data consisted of the perceptions of kindergarten teachers regarding readiness skills believed to be important for incoming students.

***Data Collection***

Quantitative data were obtained from all the identified Head Start students' scores from the Brigance kindergarten screener during the 2019-2020 and 2022-2023

school years. The scores were collected from the 2019-2020 school year, which was before the Guided Reading program was adapted in the 2019-2020 for use in the Head Start/Preschool program, and the year after, 2022-2023, in order to compare the student performance between the two groups. Qualitative data were obtained from a six question survey using a Google Form inquiring the opinions of school readiness from kindergarten teachers.

### ***Instruments***

The Guided Reading Duckling readers early literacy classroom collection was be used as literary interventions during the 2021-2022 school year. This literacy collection includes activities that work with the student's names, alphabet letters and sounds, shared and interactive reading, along with rhymes. The curriculum consisted of activities that promote letter recognition such as magnet letters to build names and writing letters in sand.

The Brigance kindergarten screener is a criterion-based screening that accesses areas in fine and gross motor, language and communication, academic/cognitive and self-help and emotional areas. The Brigance is highly reliable and accurate. In the state of Kentucky, school districts can assess students 15 days prior to the first day of kindergarten and no later than 30 days after the first day of school. Students age five with the scores of <61 at age 5-0 through 5-5 and the scores of <70 at age 5-6 through 5-11 demonstrate 'Ready with Intervention' for kindergarten entry for age but with content, these students need intervention. Students ages 5-0 through 5-5 with scores of 61-88 and students ages 5-6 through 5-11 with



scores of 70-91 receive the designation score of '*Ready*'. Children age 5-0 through 5-5 who score >88 and students age 5-6 through 5-11 with scores of >91 demonstrate '*Ready with Enrichments*' as they demonstrate advanced readiness skills.

Data were also collected from kindergarten teachers in an open ended six question survey to obtain the Martin County kindergarten teacher's opinions of kindergarten readiness. An online Google Form with seven open ended questions was used to obtain comments from the kindergarten teachers. Completion of the survey was optional. (See Appendix F through Appendix I for responses to the various questions organized into categories.)

### ***Procedures***

The scores of students who attended Head Start/Preschool and came from the home setting entering kindergarten during the years of 2019-2020 and 2022-2023 were obtained from individual student files, school records, and state reports. Students who were considered low income and eligible for attending the Head Start program and students who are considered above income who were enrolled in the blended preschool portion of the program were included in the experimental group. Students not attending Head Start/Preschool were the control group.

A chi-square analysis was performed to determine if the 2019-2020 and 2022-2023 Brigance categories of '*Ready with intervention*', '*Ready*' and '*Ready with enrichments*' differed in students coming from home as compared to attending Head Start/Preschool. A two-tailed t-test was used for the 2022-2023 Brigance screening

results to determine the difference in the scores of the students who came from home environment compared to students who attended Head Start/Preschool.

An email was sent to all kindergarten teachers outlining the purpose of the capstone and request their participation. The survey asked seven open-ended questions regarding their perception of readiness skills needed by students entering kindergarten. The questions were created by the researcher. The questions were developed to gain a better perspective on opinions of kindergarten readiness from the kindergarten teachers in Martin County. The teachers were asked how many of the students were entering kindergarten ready, what was considered ready and not ready and what skills were most important in literacy readiness. There was also an open-ended question at the end of the survey that inquired on any other comments that the teachers wanted to add.

### **Analyzing Data**

A quasi-experimental approach was used that included a control group, which was the group of students who came from the home setting. The experimental group included a group of students who attended Head Start/Preschool and received intervention along with lessons that promoted reading skills with the Guided Reading program during the intervention year of 2021-2022 and prior to being tested at the beginning of the kindergarten year in 2022-2023.

A chi-square analysis was used for both 2019-2020 and 2022-2023 years of data to examine the Brigance categories of '*Ready with intervention*', '*Ready*' and

*'Ready with enrichments'* between the two groups. This analysis was used to test  $H_0 1$  and  $H_0 2$ .

A two-tailed t-tests was used to compare overall numerical scores of the students coming from home compared to students coming from Head Start and Preschool during the 2022-2023 school year. A two-tailed t-test was also used to examine the performance of alphabet recognition between the students attending Head Start/Preschool and participating in the Guided Reading instruction as compared to being in the home setting.

The qualitative data was analyzed by organizing the teachers' responses from the survey questions in categories. The researcher identified the categories which included social emotional, self-help, communication, physical, and academics. The category that included the most answers in each area was considered in order to determine the most popular perception of readiness for each question. This organization of the kindergarten teacher's perception of what skills were needed for the students to be prepared for the kindergarten classroom added the opinions of the teachers to the analysis of the Brigance scores.

## Chapter 4

### Findings and Results

Students entering kindergarten without the readiness skills needed are most likely to struggle during their first year of school. Providing early childhood programs that help prepare students with social/emotional, self-help, physical, and academic skills can help make their kindergarten year more successful. Students attending Head Start and Preschool in Martin County were provided with curriculums that assist in preparing students for kindergarten with instruction in all developmental areas. In addition to these programs, the Guided Reading literacy program was introduced during the 2021-2022 school year.

The following research questions were considered in this study:

1. How does participating in a structured preschool program impact kindergarten readiness?
2. What readiness skills do kindergarten teachers indicate as being needed by students entering kindergarten?

The null hypotheses tested were:

H<sub>0</sub> 1: There is no relationship between the performance categories obtained on the 2019-2020 Brigance and the educational environments students were in the previous year.

H<sub>0</sub> 2: There is no relationship between the performance categories obtained on the 2022-2023 Brigance and the educational environment students were in the previous year.

H<sub>0</sub> 3: There is no statistical difference in the 2022-2023 Brigance readiness scores for students entering kindergarten who came from the home setting compared to the students who came from the Head Start/Preschool setting and received literacy instruction.

H<sub>0</sub> 4: There is no statistical difference in the Brigance readiness scores in alphabet recognition of students entering kindergarten in 2022-2023 who came from the home setting compared to the students who came from the Head Start/Preschool setting and received literacy instruction.

This chapter reports the findings of this study. The quantitative data included the Brigance overall readiness categories from the 2019-2020 and 2022-2023 school years, and the readiness and letter recognition performance scores from the 2022-2023 Brigance screener. The qualitative data were collected using the survey from the seven teachers currently teaching kindergarten in the district. The survey consisted of six open-ended questions inquiring the teacher's opinions of the importance of school readiness.

### **Demographic Information**

Administered in 2019-2020 school year, the Brigance scores were obtained from the 106 students entering kindergarten were obtained (see Table 4). These were students enrolled in kindergarten at Eden Elementary, Inez Elementary, and Warfield Elementary. Twenty-eight students came from the home setting before entering kindergarten while 78 of the student's received services through Head Start or Preschool.

The ethnicity background of the students tested were 98.08% White, 0.96% Hispanic, and 0.96% African American. During this school year, 68.27% of the students were identified as having free and reduced lunch, with only 30.77% identified as paid. Approximately 29.81% of this population were identified as having an IEP (individualized education plan).

**Table 4**

*Number of Students from Home or School*

<b>School</b>	<b>Home</b>	<b>Head Start / Preschool</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2019-2020</b>			
Eden Elem	8	40	48
Inez Elem	12	14	26
Warfield Elem	8	24	32
<b>TOTAL</b>	28	78	106
<b>2022-2023</b>			
Eden Elem	29	39	68
Inez Elem	13	21	34
Warfield Elem	13	28	41
<b>TOTAL</b>	57	86	143

The scores used from the Brigance 2022-2023 school year included 143 students from the elementary schools in Martin County. Fifty-seven students came from the previous home setting and 86 students received Head Start/Preschool services before entering kindergarten. Approximately 93.92% of these students were White, 1.35% were identified as Hispanic, and 1.35% African American. There were approximately 76.35% of students identified as free and reduced meals compared to 23.65% as paid status. During this school year, approximately 29.73% of students were identified as having an IEP.

## Quantitative Results

### *Category Analysis*

**2019-2020.** The performance on the 2019-2020 Brigance for the 106 students tested were obtained. These scores provided a description that indicated whether the students were ‘*Ready with intervention*’, ‘*Ready*’, or ‘*Ready with enrichments*’. The results demonstrated that 12 (42.86%) of students who came from the home setting scored ‘*Ready with intervention*’, while 27 (34.62%) from Head Start/Preschool scored in this category. Approximately 53.57% (15) of students from the home setting scored ‘*Ready*’ while 50.0% (39) from Head Start/Preschool scored ‘*Ready*’. Within the ‘*Ready with enrichments*’ category, there were 1 (3.57%) student coming from home with this score and 12 (15.38%) from Head Start/Preschool. (See Table 5)

**Table 5**

*2019-2020 Kindergarten Readiness Categories*

Setting	N	Ready with Intervention	Ready	Ready with Enrichments
Head Start/Preschool	78	27 (34.62%)	39 (50.00%)	12 (15.38%)
Home Setting	28	12 (42.86%)	15 (53.57%)	1 (3.57%)

A chi-square analysis was completed on the categories of the Brigance. The null hypothesis examined was  $H_0 1$ : There is no relationship between the performance categories obtained on the 2019-2020 Brigance and the educational environments students were in the previous year.

The results,  $\chi^2(2, N=106) = 2.776, p = .25$ , indicated for the 2019-2020 school year, there were no significant relationship in the performance on the Brigance

kindergarten screening readiness skills between the two groups. This finding supports the acceptance of the null hypothesis.

**2022-2023.** The descriptions ‘*Ready with intervention*’, ‘*Ready*’ and ‘*Ready with enrichments*’ were used to label the scores from obtained in the 2022-2023 school year along with numerical scores (see Table 6). Around 68.42% (39) of students who did not attend Head Start/Preschool and 41.86% (36) from Head Start/Preschool scored ‘*Ready with intervention*’. Approximately 21.05% (12) of students from home and 52.33% (45) of students from Head Start/Preschool scored ‘*Ready*’. The designation of ‘*Ready with enrichments*’ were given to 6 (10.53%) of the home students and 5 (5.81%) of students from Head Start/Preschool.

**Table 6**

*2022-2023 Kindergarten Readiness Categories*

Setting	N	Ready with Intervention	Ready	Ready with Enrichments
Head Start/Preschool	86	36 (41.86%)	45 (52.33%)	5 (5.81%)
Home Setting	57	39 (68.42%)	12 (21.05%)	6 (10.53%)

A chi-square analysis was completed on the categories of the Brigance to examine  $H_0 2$ : There is no relationship between the performance categories obtained on the 2022-2023 Brigance and the educational environment students were in the previous year was warranted.

The results,  $\chi^2(2, N=143) = 14.011, p < .01$  indicated for the 2022-2023 school year, there was a significant relationship between the environment and performance on the Brigance kindergarten screening readiness skills for students



attending Head Start/Preschool compared to those who stayed at home during the previous year. The rejection of the null hypothesis was warranted.

### ***Performance Analysis***

Because the actual scores for the 2019-2020 were not available, further analysis of the scores was not possible. For the 2022-2023 performance, a two-tailed independent *t*-test was used to compare the scores of students taking the Brigance kindergarten screener coming from the home environment in comparison to the Head Start/Preschool setting. A total of 143 students were tested. The third null hypothesis was examined.  $H_0 3$ : There is no statistical difference in the 2022-2023 Brigance readiness scores for students entering kindergarten who came from the home setting compared to the students who came from the Head Start/Preschool setting and received literacy instruction.

Based on the results presented in Table 7, the 86 students who attended Head Start/Preschool in Martin County prior to kindergarten demonstrated a significantly greater mean in the readiness scores ( $M = 64.407$ ,  $SD = 20.912$ ), as compared to the 57 students who stayed in the home setting ( $M = 54.965$ ,  $SD = 25.117$ ). The rejection of the null hypothesis was warranted,  $t(141) = 2.438$ ,  $p = .016$ ,  $d = 0.42$ .

**Table 7**

*2022-2023 Brigance Readiness Scores*

Setting	N	M	SD	df	t	p	d
Head Start / Preschool	86	64.407	20.912	141	2.438	.016	0.42
Home	57	54.965	25.117				

### ***Letter Recognition***

There were 135 copies of the Brigance screening used to determine the scores of alphabet recognition. The Brigance screening demonstrated that 22.96% of students from home and 20.74% of students from Head Start/Preschool identified 0-5 letters of the alphabet. Approximately 3.7% of students from home and 4.44% of students from school identified 6 to 10 letters of the alphabet. Approximately 15.56% of students from home and 32.59 % of students from school identified 11 to 26 letters of the alphabet. An independent two-tailed *t*-test was computed to compare the number of uppercase letters of the alphabet recognized by the 78 students entering kindergarten who came from the Head Start/preschool setting with the 57 students who came from the home setting.

**Table 8**  
*2022-2023 Brigance Letter Recognition Scores*

Setting	N	M	SD	df	t	p	d
Head Start / Preschool	78	14.333	10.723	133	2.290	.024	0.40
Home Environment	57	10.070	10.627				

A *t*-test was used to analyze the null hypothesis  $H_0$  4: There is no statistical difference in the Brigance readiness scores in alphabet recognition of students entering kindergarten in 2022-2023 who came from the home setting compared to the students who came from the Head Start/Preschool setting and received literacy instruction.

Based on the results of the t-test presented in Table 8, there was a significant difference in the number of letters identified from students who attended Head Start/Preschool ( $M=14.333$ ,  $SD=10.723$ ) as compared to the students who were at home in the prior setting ( $M=10.070$ ,  $SD=10.627$ ). The rejection of the null hypothesis was warranted,  $t(133) = 2.29$ ,  $p = .024$ ,  $d = 0.40$ .

### **Qualitative Results**

#### ***Teacher Perceptions of Readiness***

During the fall semester of the 2022-2023 school year, the researcher presented a survey to all the kindergarten teachers in the Martin County School District. The researcher shared the survey with the three teachers at Eden Elementary, two teachers at Inez Elementary, and the two teachers at Warfield Elementary. The introduction explained that the researcher was requesting opinions on the topic of kindergarten readiness, and that the survey was completely voluntary. If the teachers were willing to participate, they were instructed to continue with the survey and complete five open ended questions and one question for final thoughts. The seven teachers (100%) that were asked completed the survey.

#### ***Number of Students Ready for Kindergarten***

Of the seven responding, three (42.86%) of teachers indicated that at least 9 to 10 students or approximately half the class were ready for kindergarten when arriving. Two teachers (28.57%) reported they feel that only about 7 to 8 students of their students were prepared, while two (28.57%) of the teachers described that they felt only 4-5 of the students in their classroom were ready for kindergarten. These

data included that there were more teachers (57.14%) who felt that only around 4 to 8 students in their class was entering kindergarten ready.

### ***Indicators of Social, Emotional and Academic Readiness***

The next question inquired about the teacher's opinions on how they see the students as being ready for kindergarten. The teacher's responses were categorized in the areas of self-help, physical, communication, social emotional and academic. Two answers were given in the self-help area. It was noted that students being able to use the restroom and dress themselves were needed to be considered ready for kindergarten.

One response indicated that students should be able to speak in full sentences to be ready in communication. In the social emotional area, the teachers expressed 13 areas in which included students should have socialization skills and the ability to adapt to routines and follow directions. Transitioning throughout the daily activities, being able to listen to stories, and to have the capability to sit down and sit still when asked were also mentioned. The researcher also found that the teachers feel that students should be capable of separating with parents without becoming emotional and to complete the tasks that are asked of them.

Regarding the physical area, nine answers described the most important areas as having strong fine motor skills such as using a pencil, scissors, or crayons. The students should also copy basic shapes and be able to "At least write their first name".

When addressing the academic concerns, there were 13 responses in which literacy and math were identified. The literacy awareness included importance as the

teachers feel that students demonstrate readiness as they recognize their printed name, recognize some or most letters, identify some letter sounds, and know their first and last name. The teachers also expressed that it was very important for students to be able to tell the difference in a number and a letter. Counting from 1 to 5, 1 to 10, and counting objects were also listed in the academic area.

The most popular answers with the indicators of readiness were given in the social emotional and academic areas. Literacy and math were portrayed as being of equal importance, although the physical section mentioned writing at least the first name, and this can also be considered an area of letter recognition which can add to the total of concerns of students being ready with a literacy awareness. Appendix F includes the teacher's opinions of how the students are ready for kindergarten.

### ***Lack of Readiness Skills***

Question three obtained teachers' opinions in areas of concern that students may demonstrate when they are not ready for kindergarten. Categories included self-help, physical, communication, social emotional, and academic. The teachers expressed five concerns in self-help. These concerns of not being ready in this area included students that were unable to use the toilet, dress themselves or do things such as open snack items or use backpacks correctly. There were five concerns noted in the physical area. These included concerns with the students being unable to use fine motor skills such as holding a pencil, crayon, and lack of being able to use scissors.

The researcher found no concerns listed under communication, but the most popular responses identified 16 areas of concern in the social emotional area. These include students who are not demonstrating readiness by not being able to play or work with other children, follow teacher's instructions, leave families without becoming upset, and simply abiding by the rulers and being able to accept disappointments. One of the answers described students as "only wanting to do what they want" and "afraid of change from Head Start or Preschool" to the kindergarten setting.

The teachers' responses were grouped in six categories in the academic area. These areas included statements that described students as not being ready when they do not know the difference in letters, numbers, or words. Lacking numerical knowledge, letter recognition, and counting skills were also factors. The researcher also demonstrated that the teachers felt that students unable to recite the alphabet or unable to recognize letters or sounds of letters were also behind on kindergarten readiness. Appendix G describes the opinions of how the students are not ready for kindergarten.

### ***Literacy Readiness Skills***

When asked to describe the most important literacy readiness factors for kindergarten students, the teachers' responses fell into the categories of social and self-help, alphabet and sound recognition, fine motor skills, awareness of print and literature and rhyming. The researcher categorized six responses into the social and self-help section that indicated examples of literacy readiness as willingness to learn,

completing tasks, sit still and listen to a story, and "know limits and boundaries". Five responses were given regarding alphabet recognition as the teachers expressed the importance of students to recite alphabet, and to know some or all upper-case letters, identify sounds and awareness of language. There were more perceptions provided in the awareness of print and literature awareness. One response mentioned that students should be able to "read their own printed name" along with "spell their name". This section also mentioned that students should be able to understand left to right direction of print. answer questions about a story and know how to turn the pages of a book and recall details of a story.

The next category with the most items included social and self-help. The teachers stressed the importance of "Knowing there are limits and boundaries". It was also noted as importance for the students to be able to "Complete small tasks independently". The researcher found that building on learning stigma, being able to sit and listen to a story and obtain the wiliness to learn were also important factors of literacy readiness skills. The last categories from this question included physical and rhyming. The teachers felt that students being able to write their name and recognizing rhyming words were also important in literacy in kindergarten. Appendix H includes the teachers' responses on the most important literacy skills.

### ***Most Important Readiness Skills***

When summarizing the most important skills that students need for kindergarten, the perceptions of the respondents were grouped in the self-help, physical, social, and academics categories. Two answers were included in the self-

help as the teachers felt the students needed to be able to independently use the restroom and take care of hygienic needs. The physical area indicated the most popular factor as name writing, cutting with scissors, traces or writes letters and numbers and uses a pencil correctly.

Socially, it was listed that the most important skills were basic social skills in general and others including listening, following directions, and sitting still. The most popular answer given in the academic area included being able to recognize letters, the two next popular were identifying letters in name and recognizing letter sounds. The remainder ideas of academic importance consisted of knowing parts of a book, reciting the alphabet, and identifying colors and shapes. The awareness of numbers, rote counting and counting objects were also mentioned. The researcher noticed that the academic area demonstrated the most answers regarding what the teachers felt were most important factors in kindergarten readiness. Within this area, alphabet recognition received the most attention in the responses. Appendix I list the responses on the most important factors of kindergarten readiness.

### ***Final Thoughts of Kindergarten Readiness***

The end of the survey provided the teachers with an opportunity to add final thoughts on readiness. This survey item received just three responses.

“Head Start and preschool needs to focus on providing students with strong social and emotional skills.”

“I think it’s VERY important for children to attend Head Start or preschool to be able to be prepared for kindergarten!”



“Student’s need to be ready to follow rules and teacher directions. Students need to know that not everything is their choice. Students should have some independent skills, carrying backpack, lunch box, putting on their coat, and unzipping backpack.”

### **Summary**

The quantitative results indicated that there was no significant difference in the 2019-2020 Brigance categories of ‘*Ready with intervention*’, ‘*Ready*’, or ‘*Ready with enrichments*’ from students who attended Head Start and preschool compared to the students who came from the home setting. The results from the 2022-2023 Brigance scores demonstrated that there was a significant difference in the readiness scores of students who attended Head Start/Preschool and were provided with the Guided Reading curriculum compared to the students who came from the home setting. The alphabet recognition section of the 2022-2023 Brigance screening also demonstrated a significant difference in the number of letters recognized from the students attending Head Start and preschool and participating in the Guided Reading program as compared to the students who came from home.

The responses to the survey indicated the importance of kindergarten readiness in the areas of social, self-help, physical, communication, fine motor, and academics. The teachers’ responses demonstrated more concerns in the social emotional area and academic area. The perception of kindergarten teacher indicated students should be ready to separate from families, be able to sit still, listen to directions, and participate in stories. The teachers described many areas of academics

that they perceive as being important which included both literacy and math, but the most popular answers were related to letter and sound recognition along with name recognition and writing.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusions, Actions, and Implications

Increase in the content of the academic standards in the Kentucky kindergarten classrooms has placed more importance on readiness with young students. The Kentucky Governor's Task Force developed many approaches to assist with preparing students for kindergarten. Social/emotional, physical, cognitive, and literacy areas are an important part in the early development of young children. It is very important that students are introduced to literacy at an early age. Developing the ability to visually recognize letters can be the first step in developing early reading skills. (Honig et al., 2018). Providing young children with activities such as interactive writing instruction also demonstrate more students identifying letters of the alphabet. Including curriculums that promote letter recognition, letter writing, and other literacy activities can help promote a literacy foundation that can benefit students. (Hall et al., 2014).

Transitions from Head Start or preschool to kindergarten can be an exciting but challenging time for young children and families. Education expectations of the students greatly change when daily routines transition from a large amount of free choice time to a more structured learning environment. Educators and leaders should take more action to prepare for a smoother transition and a more positive experience for the students to be successful.

Kindergarten classrooms have more tables, desks, and centers as compared to previous years such as the 1980s when kindergarten classrooms were set up more as

the Head Start and preschool classrooms are currently. There may have been kitchen or block areas along with rest time on the schedule. Kindergarten has changed greatly and the expectations that have been placed on the students are much more than what is realized. Assisting the children to be more prepared could be the first step in guiding them to viewing school as a positive place for learning. Five- and six-year-olds is a very young age to already feel defeated by school and this is something that we don't want for our young children.

### **Summary of Results and Findings**

The results of this study demonstrated that there was no difference in the performance on the Brigance for students coming from the Head Start/Preschool setting as compared to the home setting during the 2019-2020 school year. During the 2021-2022 school year, students who attended Head Start/Preschool received literacy instructions by way of the Guided Reading program. The results from the Brigance 2022-2023 assessment included that there was significant difference in the readiness indicators between students who came from Head Start/Preschool and students who came from home. There was also a significant difference in the number of letters recognized from this year for students who attended Head Start or preschool in the previous year as compared to the students that came from home.

The research question, "How does participating in a structured preschool program impact kindergarten readiness?", was examined through the analysis of scores during the 2019-2020 and the 2022-2023 school years. The chi-square analysis of the Brigance screen for the 2019-2020 school year indicated that

there was not a distinct difference in the readiness categories from the students who attended preschool compared to those that did not attend preschool.

There were different results from the 2022-2023 school year. The t-test and chi-square analysis demonstrated that there was a significant difference in the readiness scores of students who attended Head Start/preschool compared to students who came from the home setting. An additional analysis examined the letter recognition skills of students. The analysis showed there was a significant increase in the numbers of letters recognized by students who attending Head Start/Preschool compared to the students who came from the home setting. Head Start and preschool students were exposed to the Guided Reading program during the school year of 2021-2022, and the students tested in 2022-2023 scored significantly higher in readiness and alphabet recognition as compared to the students tested in 2019-2020.

The second research question included in the study asked: “What readiness skills do kindergarten teachers indicate as being needed by students entering kindergarten?” This question was examined through the responses to the survey completed by the seven kindergarten teachers in Martin County. The responses varied from discussion of the importance of social emotional, physical (fine and gross motor), self-help skills, communication skills and academic skills. In the academic area, overall, more answers were given in literacy awareness and letter recognition area.

Teachers indicated the importance of letter and sound recognition along with identify letters of the name and writing names. The teachers also described that

students should be able to identify some or most upper case and lower-case letters, recite the alphabet, identify letter sounds and write and spell their name. It was also noted that students should have the ability to understand the concepts of print awareness such as understanding the left to right direction of print, identify rhyming words, and answer questions about a story.

There were also responses that placed an important emphasis on the topics of following directions and being able to sit still in class. The social emotional areas of the answers also indicated that it is important for students to be able to get along with other children and the teachers. One teacher explained it is difficult when students come to kindergarten "Only wanting to do what they want." Self-help and hygiene skills were mentioned as teachers feel that the students should be able to approach dressing, have toilet training skills and be able to take care of opening snacks and using their backpacks accordingly. The most important area mentioned in the physical aspect included fine motor skills more specifically regarding name writing. Communication skills such as being able to speak in sentences were mentioned briefly.

### **Interpretations**

The 2019-2020 Brigance categories did not demonstrate a difference with respect to students who participated in a preschool program or not. The students during this year were not provided with an opportunity to obtain lessons from the Guided Reading program, for it had not been adopted by the Head Start/Preschool program. The 2022-2023 scores did demonstrate a significant difference in the overall

Brigance scores along with higher number of alphabet recognition scores of the students who participated in the preschool program. The Guided Reading program had a positive impact on the overall Brigance performance for students receiving Head Start/Preschool services.

The Guided Reading program gave the Head Start and preschool students an opportunity to be exposed to lessons that could not only promote alphabet recognition, writing and early literacy skills, but it also gave them opportunities to practice following instructions and focusing on a particular activity. The study demonstrated that providing students with curriculums that provide activities focusing on letter recognition, writing skills, and guided reading practice is effective in preparing students for kindergarten transition.

Students coming from the home setting demonstrated a disadvantage during the 2022-2023 Brigance screening due to lack of exposure to the Guided Reading program. Head Start and preschool programs offer different types of learning activities that can help young children, but this project demonstrated that adding a literacy program can be affective. This program assisted with not only preparing the students with kindergarten readiness and letter recognition, but opportunities to take part in group work and following rules and expectations while gaining social and emotional skills as they learn to work with other children and adults.

The survey responses gathered from the kindergarten teachers included that half feel only 4-9 of their students enter kindergarten ready for the setting and the instruction. This demonstrated a need for more intervention in kindergarten readiness.

It also described that students should be able to adapt to a structured environment with less of free choice activities and more teacher led parts of the daily schedule. Self-help, social/emotional, physical, and academic skills were mentioned in the responses with numerous answers including the factor of students being able to write and spell their name, name some or all upper case and lower-case letters, identify letter sounds and be able to sit quietly and discuss a story. The interpretation from the teacher's opinions describes that early literacy opportunities are important in preparing young students for kindergarten, and this also supports the idea of including a literacy program such as the Guided Reading program to the Early Childhood setting.

### **Implications for Improvement and Change**

The Kentucky Kindergarten Standards imply that students become beginner readers and begin to add and subtract within the sum of five. How can students begin reading during their first year of elementary school with little or no exposure to letters and sounds before the transition? How can students begin writing numbers, and completing addition and subtraction problems when they are unable to even write or spell to begin to write their name at the top of a page? Some students entering kindergarten from the home setting may be lacking exposure to literacy activities.

Lacking previous skills in early literacy can prohibit success and lead to kindergarten retention and perhaps other problems later in the child's education. This can also lead to lack of interest and increased frustration and feelings of helplessness for students, families, and teachers. One of the final thoughts in the survey from a



kindergarten teacher was: "Students need to be ready to follow rules and teacher's directions." Students need to know that "not everything can be their choice."

Students can begin attending Head Start and preschool at age three and many of the students enter Head Start/Preschool lacking self-help skills such as toileting. The early childhood teachers and assistants must focus on these self-help skills first. The longer it takes to obtain these much-needed skills such as using the restroom, the longer it will take to begin working on following directions, routines, and other academic skills. When approaching age four it is important that the Head Start and preschool teachers begin preparing the students for their next year entry to kindergarten.

Placing more emphasis on kindergarten readiness is a great need but may be very difficult for Head Start/Preschools to balance due to having a combination of duties that differ with students ages 3 and 4 and sometimes 5. Balancing self-help skills along with letter recognition and meeting the needs of all students' regular and special education needs can take some planning, collaboration, and a lot of hard work.

To improve kindergarten readiness, childhood programs should consider additional activities that will benefit each child's age and or level of learning. It is important to consider that many activities can be adapted to be developmentally appropriate to each child. This is true for any goal desired such as self-help skills, communication, social and emotional, physical (fine or gross motor) and academic skills. Any activity in these areas can be adapted as developmentally appropriate for every child. Programs such as Guided Reading can continue to be used with

individual children and groups of children. Being exposed to writing utensils and name tracing and writing can also contribute to literacy readiness.

### **Limitations**

The first limitation of this study was included in the results of the 2019-2020 Brigance kindergarten screeners. These results indicated the scores as *'Ready with intervention'*, *'Ready'* and *'Ready with enrichment'*. There were no numerical scores for this school year. If there had been numerical scores, there may have been a difference in the findings. There were also only a single group of results available at one school, therefore the scores related to letters of the alphabet were not able to be examined. This also hindered further analysis of the student performance.

The 2022-2023 Brigance kindergarten readiness scores were taken from both students who attended a preschool program and those that did not. The students who came from the preschool setting during the previous year of 2021-2022 were still experiencing effects in the classroom from a result of the COVID pandemic. Classes were canceled due to illness and quarantining. The 2022-2023 Brigance scores demonstrated a great difference in both readiness and letter recognition, but there may have been a larger difference if the previous school year had less interruptions. An additional limitation included that the hard copy scores in which contained the alphabet recognition only included 135 students, but there were 143 tested for the overall Brigance screener. Thus, the analysis were based only on the scores available.

Some students tested from each year may not have been recorded as a student repeating kindergarten student due to retention. Listing the student as a kindergarten

student if they had already completed one year of kindergarten may have led to different results in the Brigance. The curriculums used each year is also a limitation. Each Head Start/preschool teacher may have approached the curriculums different in their own classrooms. The Guided Reading program could have been used more by some teachers than others, or in a different way.

The survey completed by the kindergarten teachers may have been limited to the number of years of teaching experience in kindergarten. Some of the input may have come from teachers who had many years' experiences as compared to teachers who may have been beginning a new career. The teachers who had more experience in teaching kindergarten may have been able to answer the questions in more detail and knowledge from their experience of having students in class who demonstrated readiness skills and those who had not.

### **Recommendations**

The result of the study demonstrates that attending Head Start or Preschool can sometimes assist with preparing students for kindergarten and letter recognition skills. Participating in the Guided Reading program can also impact the performance on the Brigance kindergarten screener. The results also indicated that kindergarten teachers feel it is very important for students to enter kindergarten with as many skills as possible. All young children can benefit from attending Head Start or preschool.

Some families may not be interested in sending their children to an early childhood program. The district and other members or organizations of the community could contribute to these families and provide them with literacy

activities such as library time schedules, and information on obtaining books monthly from the Imagination Library program. One example would be to invite these parents to a monthly workshop to provide needed conversation of these ideas. These children who are in the home setting can also be offered a time that they can visit a Head Start or preschool classroom.

Literacy can be the foundation of all learning. Many early childhood professionals can help develop and adapt lessons that can expose young children to the literacy skills that they need according to their age and developmental stage as they make accommodations for special needs and any other needs. School districts partnering with other local early learning and intervention groups such as the Kentucky First Steps program can also provide parents with resources and information that can assist them with kindergarten readiness skills and activities that they can complete at home from ages birth to three. Birth to three can also be a time for the early childhood specialists in the school district to reach out to families to begin to address kindergarten readiness skills. Districts can work together to develop a plan for all students to attend a preschool program.

### **Future Actions**

To promote kindergarten readiness and future academic success, it is necessary to begin approaches that place more interest on early childhood. District leaders, and early childhood professionals should offer workshops for families in the community to begin to address issues that families may be struggling with starting at the beginning with areas such as self-help skills. These workshops can also encourage

parents to help include literacy activities for their children whether they are planning on attending preschool program or staying home. When planning workshops such as these, parents can become involved with library programs and other groups that may assist their children with readiness. Assisting the parents with helping their children with self-help skills and early literacy awareness before entering Head Start, while in the program, or while staying at home, the students can begin working on more academic kindergarten readiness skills.

Having planned meetings throughout the school year for kindergarten teachers and Head Start/Preschool teachers can allow collaboration that is much needed between the two. The early childhood teachers can obtain ideas on what can help the transition to kindergarten. This group can also discuss ideas on how to provide activities to enhance the readiness. Collaboration of the Head Start and preschool directors along with principals of the elementary schools can also be beneficial in planning activities to make the transition to kindergarten easier.

Parents can also be invited to attend meetings or workshops on the topic of kindergarten readiness. Many families may not understand the changes in kindergarten expectations and classroom settings from the past. Providing the parents with information on kindergarten standards, class routines and teacher expectations can help them learn more about what to expect when their child moves to this grade level. Head Start and preschool centers can also send flyers home about the topics of kindergarten expectations.

Transitioning from Head Start and preschool should be considered in each elementary school. The students from the home or the Head Start and preschool setting should be given an opportunity to visit a kindergarten classroom before entering kindergarten. Having a few days on the schedule to visit can perhaps add a more meaningful experience instead of the regular "Meet the Teacher Day" that happens early in August. Visiting the kindergarten classroom during a regular school day can provide the Head Start and preschool students with a real experience that can demonstrate what to expect in the kindergarten classroom.

During the 2023-2024 school year, the Martin County School District plans to provide an early learning bus to visit children in all areas of the county who are in the home setting prior to kindergarten. There will be an early childhood teacher on the bus who can provide many literacy activities for the students to take part in during the visits. This approach can impact the students who may not enroll for Head Start or preschool with kindergarten readiness activities. Providing the teacher with activities from the Guided Reading program will assist in providing literacy instruction and readiness activities from the different locations in the community.

The Martin County School District will also participate in the "*Read To Succeed Act*" from Senate Bill 9 during the 2023-2024 school year. (Kentucky Department of Education, 2023). This program will be used to develop individual reading improvement plans for students in grades kindergarten to third grade. With this plan, the students will be provided with instructional supports and progress monitoring that is adapted to their individual needs in literacy development. A "*Read*

*at Home Plan*” will also be included for school administrators and teaching staff to collaborate with families and provide support in strategies that can benefit students from home. (Kentucky Department of Education, 2023). Providing the Head Start and preschool programs with research-based literacy curriculums can benefit the "*Read to Succeed Act*" as the students enter kindergarten with a better foundation of literacy and prepare them for success in the elementary school setting.

### **Conclusion**

Early learning should be considered just as important as any other grade level. Learning begins at birth, and we need to take precautions, plan, and help the young students learn with just as much effort in which is given to the older students in the education scene. Early childhood staff must begin to make a difference in the beginning. This study demonstrates that providing students with an opportunity to attend Head Start and Preschool can sometimes demonstrate more readiness than students who are coming from the home setting. The results from this study also provides evidence that the Guided Reading program provided in the Head Start and preschool setting can increase overall Brigance kindergarten readiness scores and letter recognition. It is time that we invest more in literacy programs to be able to provide the students better preparation for kindergarten.

Students should be able to begin kindergarten with the skills needed to succeed. Everything around is changing along with education. Families and educators have witnessed a recent pandemic, an inflation of prices of food and all needs, and the day-to-day life has become more stressful for children and families. Education is

constantly changing, and much more is expected of young children. Changes can happen at any time and students may be learning from home again in the same situation that we saw with the COVID pandemic. It is crucial to expose students to literacy, for reading is the foundation to all other learning. This can begin at birth. It is also important to remember that children learn at their own pace, and we can make any activity developmentally appropriate as to what they are ready for and how they are learning.



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**Appendices**

## **Appendix A**

### **Guided Reading Program**

The section of the guided reading program that was adapted in 2021-2022 titled "Duckling Readers" an early literacy classroom collection. The lessons that are included in this program consist of:

- Working with names
- Working with letters
- Working with sounds
- Clapping syllables
- Sorting pictures by sounds
- Shared reading
- Interactive writing
- Cutting up Sentences
- Working with Rhythm and Rhyme (Caranci, 2014)

### **Brigance**

The Brigance consists of testing in the following areas:

- Academic/Cognitive: Knows personal information
- Language Development: Names parts of the body
- Physical Development: Gross motor skills
- Physical Development: Visual motor skills
- Physical Development: Prints personal information

(French, 2013)

## Appendix B

### *Kentucky Kindergarten Reading Foundational Skills Standards*

<b>RF.K.1 Print Concepts: Demonstrate understanding of the organization and basic features of print to aid in comprehension</b>	<b>R.K.2 Phonological Awareness: Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes)</b>	<b>RF.K.3 Phonics and Word Recognition: Know and apply grade level-phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.</b>	<b>RF.K.4 Fluency: Reads fluently (accuracy, speed, and prosody) on grade-level to support comprehension.</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Follow words from left to right, top to bottom and page by page.</li> <li>2. Recognize that spoken words are represented in written language by specific sequences of letters.</li> <li>3. Recognize that words are separated by spaces in print.</li> <li>4. Recognize and name all upper and lowercase letters of the alphabet.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recognize and orally produce rhyming words.</li> <li>2. Count, pronounce, blend and segment syllables in spoken words.</li> <li>3. Blend and segment onsets and rhymes of single syllable spoken words.</li> <li>4. Isolate and pronounce the initial, medial vowel and final sounds (phonemes) in three-phoneme words.</li> <li>5. Add or substitute individual sounds (phonemes) in simple, one syllable words to make new words.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrate basic knowledge of one-to-one letter-sound correspondences by producing the primary or many of the most frequent sounds for each consonant.</li> <li>2. Associate the long and short sounds with common spellings (graphemes) for the five major vowels.</li> <li>3. Read common high-frequency words by sight.</li> <li>4. Orally distinguish between similarly spelled words by identifying the sounds of the letter that differ.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read emergent-reader texts with purpose and understanding.</li> </ol>

(Kentucky Academic Standards, 2022, pp. 21-22)

### Appendix C

#### *Kentucky Kindergarten Vocabulary Acquisition and Use*

<p><b>L.K.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple meaning words and phrases based on kindergarten reading and content.</b></p>	<p><b>L.K.5. With guidance and support from adults, explore word relationships and nuances in word meanings.</b></p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify homophones.</li> <li>2. Identify common affixes and how they change the meaning of a word.</li> <li>3. Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading, and being read to, and responding to texts.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sort common objects into categories to gain a sense of the concepts the categories represent.</li> <li>2. Demonstrate an understanding of verbs and adjective and their antonyms.</li> <li>3. Demonstrate an understanding of verbs and adjective and their synonyms.</li> </ol>

(Kentucky Academic Standards, 2022, pp. 52-53)

**Appendix D**

*Kentucky Kindergarten Handwriting and Composition Standards*

<b>HW.K.1 Print all upper and lowercase letters and numbers</b>	<b>C.K.1 Compose opinion pieces and narratives using a combination of drawing, dictating, writing and digital resources to state the topic and an opinion</b>	<b>L.K.1 When writing or speaking, demonstrate appropriate use of:</b>	<b>L.K.2 When writing:</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. With guidance and support from adults, strengthen writing through peer collaboration and adding details through writing and/or pictures as needed.</li> <li>2. Introduce the topic.</li> <li>3. Provide reasons with details to support the opinion.</li> <li>4. Use grade-appropriate transitions.</li> <li>5. Provide a concluding idea.</li> <li>6. With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed when planning, revising, and editing.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Common nouns and verbs.</li> <li>2. Regular plural nouns by orally adding /s/ or /es/</li> <li>3. Interrogative sentences using who, what, where, when why and how.</li> <li>4. Sentences using common prepositions.</li> <li>5. Complete sentences.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Capitalize the first word in a sentence and the pronoun I.</li> <li>2. Recognize and name end punctuation.</li> <li>3. Write a letter or letters for most consonant and short-vowel sounds.</li> <li>4. Spell simple words phonetically, drawing on knowledge of sound-letter relationships.</li> </ol>

(Kentucky Academic Standards, 2022, pp. 34-35,49-50)

**Appendix E**

*Kentucky Early Childhood Literacy Standards*

<p><b>Language and Early Literacy Standard 3: Demonstrates early literacy skills that are foundational for the reading.</b></p>	<p><b>Language and Early Literacy Standard 4: Demonstrates early literacy skills that are foundational for the writing process.</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Benchmark</b></p> <p><b>3.1: Listens to and/or responds to a variety of literacy-related experiences with interest and engagement.</b>                      1. Actively participates in storytelling, read alouds, and individual opportunities to hear someone reading.                      2. Demonstrates self-directed interest in the reading process.                      3. Imitates the act of reading.</p> <p><b>3.2: Shows interest in and understanding of the basic concepts and conventions of print.</b>                      1. Recognizes that print convey meaning.                      2. Demonstrates book handling skills.                      3. Demonstrates understanding of some basic print conventions.</p> <p><b>3.3: Demonstrates knowledge of the alphabet</b>                      1. Recognizes some letters of the alphabet.                      2. Recognizes some letters and words in print.                      3. Identifies some known letters of the alphabet in familiar and unfamiliar words.</p> <p><b>3.4: Demonstrates emergent phonological awareness, including early phonemic awareness.</b>                      1. Listens to and identifies different types of sounds.                      2. Recognizes rhyming words.                      3. Produces rhyming words.                      4. Discriminates separate syllables in words.                      5. Recognizes letter sounds that match.                      6. Makes some letter sound connections.                      7. Identifies some beginning sounds of words.</p> <p><b>3.5: Draws meaning and recalls information from pictures, print, and text that is read to them.</b>                      1. Gains meaning from pictures.                      2. Uses pictures or illustrations to answer questions, provide descriptions or retell details related to stories, songs and text that are read aloud.                      3. Recalls information and draws simple conclusions from text that is read aloud.</p> <p><b>3.6: Tells and retells a story</b>                      1. Acts out main events of a familiar story.                      2. Uses pictures and illustrations to tell and retell a story.                      3. Uses prior experience to help make sense of stories.                      4. Retells a story including many details and draws connections between story events.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Benchmark</b></p> <p><b>4.1: Recognizes that the purpose of writing is communication.</b>                      1. Recognizes that oral communications can be represented by written language.                      2. Dictates words to an adult to be written down to convey a message.                      3. Recognizes that once an oral message is written it reads the same way every time.</p> <p><b>4.2: Produces marks, symbols, letters and/or words to represent ideas.</b>                      1. Labels pictures or produces simple texts using scribble writing.                      2. Labels pictures or produces simple texts using letter-like forms.                      3. Writes recognizable letters.                      4. Writes familiar words.</p> <p><b>4.3: Explores the physical aspects of writing.</b>                      1. Uses tools for writing and drawing.                      2. Experiments with different ways to grasp writing tools.                      3. Adjusts body position when writing.                      4. Adjusts paper position when writing.                      5. Shows awareness of the directionality of print on a page when writing. (Top to bottom, left to right)</p>

(Kentucky Early Childhood Standards Revised, 2021, pp. 61-68)



### Appendix F

*"How" Are the Students Ready?*

<b>Self Help (2)</b>	<b>Physical (10)</b>	<b>Communication (1)</b>	<b>Social Emotional (13)</b>	<b>Academic (13)</b>
Bathroom (1)	Strong fine motor skills (1)	Speak in full sentences (1)	Socialize, play and work with others with minimal issues (5)	Know first and last name (1)
Dress themselves (1)	Use a pencil (2)		Follow 2- Step Directions (1)	Know age (1)
	Use Scissors (2)		General knowledge of routine (1)	Count from 1-10 (2)
	Write at least their first name (2)		Leave parents without getting emotional (1)	Recognize some or "most" letters (4)
	Copy Basic Shapes (1)		Complete Activities (1)	Know some letter sounds (1)
	Use Crayon (2)		Be able to sit down (1)	Count a small group of objects (1)
			Emotionally ready (1)	Rote count from 1-5 (1)
			Listen quietly to a story (1)	Know the difference between numbers and letters (1)
			Transition to the classroom and to other activities and specials (1)	Recognize printed name (1)

**Appendix G**

*How are the Students Not Ready?*

<b>Self Help (5)</b>	<b>Physical (4)</b>	<b>Communication (0)</b>	<b>Social/Emotional (16)</b>	<b>Academics (6)</b>
Unable to use restroom (1)	Poor fine motor skills (1)		Lack of experience being around other children (1)	Unable to distinguish the difference in letters, numbers, and words (1)
Unable to dress themselves (1)	Unable to hold a pencil/write (1)		Unable to pay attention (1)	Unable to count to 5 (1)
Unable to hang up coat (1)	Unable to color (1)		Unable to play peacefully, share or take turns/help others (1)	Knowing very little sounds if any (1)
Unable to place folder in backpack (1)	Lack of scissor cutting skills (1)		Unable to complete group work as a team (1)	Unable to identify numbers/ numerical knowledge (1)
Unable to open or try to open snacks (1)			Unable to participate in social conversations (1)	Unable to recite alphabet (1)
			Unable to separate from parents/families (1)	Unable to count to 10 (1)
			Not ready to learn (1)	Knowing very little letters if any (1)
			Difficulty controlling emotions (1)	
			Not emotionally ready (1)	
			Getting upset if feelings get hurt (1)	
			Getting upset when losing a game (1)	
			Difficulty following directions (1)	
			Only wanting to do what they want (1)	
			Does not work with teacher to learn (1)	
			Afraid to change from Head Start/Preschool (1)	
			Unable to listen to a short story (1)	

## Appendix H

### *Most Important Literacy Skills*

<b>Social/Self Help (6)</b>	<b>Alphabet Recognition and Sounds (5)</b>	<b>Physical Fine Motor (1)</b>	<b>Awareness of Print/Literature Awareness (7)</b>	<b>Rhyming (1)</b>
Willingness to learn (1)	Recites alphabet (1)	Writing name (1)	Practice various concepts of print awareness (1)	Recognizing rhyming words (1)
To sit still and participate for a few minutes (1)	Identify upper and lower case (some or all) (1)		Spelling name (1)	
Knowing there are limits and boundaries (1)	Identify letter sounds (1)		To read their own printed name (1)	
Ready to build on learning stigma (1)	Understand the relationship of letters and sounds (1)		Understand left to right direction of print (1)	
Complete small tasks independently (1)	Awareness of the sounds of language (1)		Answer questions about a story (1)	
Sit still and listen to a story (1)			Recall details of a story (1)	
			Know how to use a book (turn pages) (1)	

## Appendix I

### *Most Important Factors of Kindergarten Readiness*

Self-Help (2)	Physical (12)	Communication (0)	Social/Emotional (8)	Academics (13)
Bathroom/Hygiene (2)	Independent name writing (5)		Listening/Following Directions and sitting still (3)	Alphabet recognition (3)
	Cuts with scissors (3)		Basic social skills (5)	Recognizing letters in name (2)
	Traces or writes letters or numbers (2)			Recognizing letter sounds (2)
	Uses glue (1)			Knows parts of a book (1)
	Uses pencil correctly (1)			Recites alphabet (1)
				Knows colors (1)
				Knows shapes (1)
				Awareness of numbers (1)
				Rote counting and counting objects (1)

## VITA

## PATRICIA FAYE MCCOY

EDUCATION

May, 2005	Bachelor of Arts Morehead State University Morehead, Kentucky
May, 2008	Master of Arts West Virginia University Morgantown, West Virginia
August, 2020	Education Specialist Morehead State University Morehead, Kentucky
Pending	Doctor of Education Morehead State University Morehead, Kentucky

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES

Aug. 2019-Present	Head Start Teacher Martin County Head Start / Inez Elementary Inez, Kentucky
June 2019-Present	Developmental Interventionist KY First Steps (Independent Contractor) Inez, Kentucky
August 2020 - May 2020	21 <sup>st</sup> Century After School Program Teacher Kindergarten - 2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade Inez, Kentucky

Aug. 2013 – Kindergarten Teacher  
May 2019 Inez Elementary  
Inez, Kentucky

Aug. 2010 – Preschool Teacher  
May 2012 Inez Elementary  
Inez, Kentucky

Aug. 2008 – Head Start Teacher  
Aug. 2010 Eden Elementary  
Inez, Kentucky

Aug. 2005 – Head Start Teacher  
Aug. 2008 Warfield Elementary  
Warfield, Kentucky

#### AWARDS

August, 2020 Highest Average Class Score  
Martin County Head Start, Inez, Kentucky

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