

SCHOOL READINESS SKILLS: PARENT AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS

by

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Abstract

This study examined the differences between parents' and teachers' perceptions of the skills that a child needs to be ready to begin kindergarten and be successful. Specifically, parents and teachers were asked to rate 30 items related to readiness in three categories: (a) academic; (b) social/emotional; (c) items based on national standards for readiness. As hypothesized parents rated the items on the academic scale higher than did teachers. Unlike what was hypothesized there were no significant differences between parents' and teachers' perceptions of social/emotional readiness skills. Parents rated none of the items on the survey as unimportant for kindergarten readiness.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	vi
List of Appendix	vii
Chapters	
1. Introduction	1
Overview	1
Definition	1
School readiness	1
Academic readiness	2
Social and emotional readiness	2
Factors Influencing Kindergarten Readiness	3
Influences on kindergarten readiness	3
Parental characteristics	3
Parental involvement and expectations	4
Perceptions of Readiness	5
Parental perceptions of readiness	5
Parental perceptions of academic readiness	6
Parental perceptions of social and emotional readiness	6

Teacher Perceptions	7
Teacher perception of readiness	7
Issues Regarding Teachers and Parent Perceptions	8
Differences Between Teachers' and Parents' Perceptions of Readiness	9
Summary	10
Purpose of the Current Study	10
Hypotheses	11
2. Methods	12
Participants	12
Parents	12
Teachers	12
Measures	13
Parent	13
Teacher	13
Procedure	14
3. Results	15
Hypothesis 1	15
Hypothesis 2	15
Additional Analyses	18
4. Discussion	20

Limitations	22
Sample	22
Future Directions	22
References	23
Appendix	26

List of Tables

Table	Page
1. Means for Items on the Academic Scale	16
2. Means for Items on the Social/Emotional Scale	17
3. Means for Items on the National Standards Scale	19

List of Appendix

Appendix	Page
A. IRB Approval Letter	28

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Overview

The National Education Goals Panel stated that by the year 2000 all children would enter schools ready to learn (NEGP, 1997). Although most would agree that children should enter school ready to learn, there is currently no consistent definition that clarifies what constitutes a child's readiness to begin school. The purpose of this study was to determine how parents and teachers define kindergarten *readiness*, i.e. what characteristics and qualities they perceived were important for a child to possess to begin kindergarten and be successful. Specifically, the current study explored what characteristics kindergarten teachers and parents of 3 and 4-year-old children reported as important for children to possess when entering into kindergarten.

Definition

School readiness. School readiness is characteristically viewed as a child's development of emotional, behavioral, and cognitive skills that are necessary to successfully function and learn in school (e.g., Fantuzzo, et al., 2005; Rafoth, Buchenauer, Crissman, & Halko, 2004). This essentially means that a child is prepared to enter a social environment that is focused on educational tasks (Rafoth et al.). Five areas of readiness were outlined by the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP): (a) physical well-being and motor development; (b) social and emotional development; (c) approaches toward learning; (d) language development; and (e) general knowledge (NEGP, 1997). There now is no accepted, single definition for the term *readiness*.

According to Hair, Halle, Terry-Humen, Lavelle, and Calkins (2006), readiness implies

the mastery of certain basic abilities or skills that a child possess permitting him or her to function successfully in a classroom, both academically as well as socially and emotionally. They continued on to define readiness as being more of a set of skills that a child possesses than a set of tasks that the child can complete. Hojnoski and Missall (2006) reported that the foci of school readiness was prevention, promoting wellness, and fostering competence in the general population. Due to a lack of research, parents and teachers have been left to rely predominantly on their own beliefs when assessing school readiness and preparing young children for school (Piotrkowski, Botsko, & Matthews, 2000). For purposes of the current study, these areas of readiness were put into the two categories of academic readiness and social and emotional readiness.

Academic readiness. Academic readiness, as measured in terms of cognitive and language development, is an important predictor in a child's academic performance (e.g., Hair et al., 2006). Researchers have reported that one's culture, background, socioeconomic status, demographic, and even geographical location, were important factors in academic readiness and how it was perceived (e.g., Fantuzzo et al., 2005). Additionally, Fantuzzo and colleagues found that social knowledge, motor skills, and work habits were necessary to do well academically in kindergarten. In reviewing issues pertinent to school psychologists related to readiness, Hojnoski and Missall (2006) emphasized the importance of creating a meaningful link between early education and formal schooling. Skills related to reading such as vocabulary, rhyming, and alliteration were additional factors identified as important for assessing academic readiness.

Social and emotional readiness. Another aspect of readiness to be considered for a child entering kindergarten is how ready a child is in terms of his or her

social/emotional well-being (e.g. Pears, Fisher, & Bronz, 2007). In one study, kindergarten teachers rated learning-related social skills as critical to adjustment in kindergarten (McClelland, Morrison, & Holmes, 2000). This study noted that group participation, engagement, and following directions were social skills related to school success. Hair and colleagues (2006) found that emotional well-being was another important characteristic and influential factor. Positive social and emotional well-being have been found to have a strong link to positive academic outcomes for children (e.g., Pears et al.). Further, kindergarten children with more social relationships in school were found to hold more favorable opinions of school compared to those children without strong relationships with peers when followed up in the first grade (Hair et al.). Deficits in learning-related social skills have been found to be predictive of future academic difficulties (e.g., Hojnoski & Missall, 2006).

Factors Influencing Kindergarten Readiness

Influences on kindergarten readiness. Parent's perceptions of readiness are formed from a variety of influences (e.g., Hill, 2001); a child's level of kindergarten readiness also is affected by these influences (e.g., Lopez & Cole, 1999). Family socio-economic factors, culture, parental involvement and expectations are common influences that research has shown to effect kindergarten readiness and how it is perceived (e.g., Fantuzzo et al., 2005; Lopez & Cole; Wesley & Buysse, 2003).

Parental characteristics. Parental characteristics have been found to influence a child's readiness to begin school and parental perceptions of kindergarten readiness overall (e.g., Hill, 2001; Lopez & Cole, 1999). Hill found that parenting had multidimensional influences on early academic achievement. For example, Hill noted that

parental characteristics such as maternal warmth and acceptance impacted children's readiness skills. Parents hold a set of beliefs as to what attributes and attitudes their children should possess to do well in kindergarten, and these beliefs may influence their decision on when their children are ready to begin school (West, Hausken, & Collins, 1995). Specifically, parents' ethnic, cultural, and educational backgrounds influence parental perceptions of their children's readiness to begin kindergarten (Diamond, Reagan, & Bandyk, 2000). Parental characteristics also have been shown to exert strong influences on their perceptions of their children's educational experiences (e.g., Lopez & Cole).

Parental involvement and expectations. A parent's involvement and clear understanding of what is expected of a child upon entering kindergarten have been found to be influence their success (i.e., Lopez & Cole, 1999; McIntyre, Eckert, Fiese, DiGennaro, & Wildenger, 2007; Wesley & Buysse, 2003). Parental involvement and understanding of academic achievement also have been shown to have a significant influence on their child's academic and school success (Lopez & Cole). Lopez and Cole noted that these positive academic findings linked to parental involvement have been found regardless of whether the involvement occurred in the school or in the home. Additionally, parental involvement has been linked to social emotional skills such as positive self-concepts and classroom behavior in children (e.g., Wesley & Buysse).

Despite research that shows a common theme that children do better in schools when parents understand expectations and when they are involved (e.g., Lopez & Cole, 1999), some studies suggest that while parents appear eager to become involved and aware, they feel that they do not have the appropriate means to do so (e.g., McIntyre et

al., 2007). For example, McIntyre and colleagues found that 80% of parents reported that they would like more information regarding academic expectations for their children entering kindergarten. In an additional study, parents reported that the high expectations for children entering kindergarten caught them off guard (Wesley & Buysse, 2003).

Perceptions of Readiness

Parental perceptions of readiness. The National Association of School Psychologists as well as the National Association for the Education of Young Children advocate for a broader view of school readiness that places more expectations on the schools and families to support children's range of needs in order to prepare them for elementary school standards, rather than having all responsibility fall on the schools (e.g., Rafoth et al., 2004). This means that parents may need more resources and insight into preparing their children for kindergarten because newfound responsibilities may be placed in their hands.

Research findings indicate that parents want to be involved in their children's transition to kindergarten and to be informed about academic and behavior issues related to kindergarten readiness (McIntyre, et al., 2007). In a study exploring families' experiences transitioning into kindergarten, McIntyre and colleagues found that parents in their study wanted information regarding academic standards for students entering kindergarten, as they did not fully understand what the standards were. This confusion was not surprising at all considering a general definition of readiness does not exist. Parents' understanding and perceptions of school readiness are crucial because research has shown that decisions regarding when students are ready to begin school are typically determined by parents and not schools (e.g., Diamond et al., 2000).

Parental perceptions of academic readiness. Before sending their children to kindergarten, parents have general ideas about what they believe their children need to know in terms of academic readiness. West and colleagues (1995) found that the majority of parents in one study believed that academic related skills were very important for children to possess upon entering kindergarten. Specifically, they found that 58% of parents believed that knowing the alphabet was very important or essential, 59% rated being able to count to 20 or more as very important or essential, and 65% felt that being able to use a writing utensils was very important or essential for a child entering kindergarten.

A study by Piotrkowski and colleagues (2000) indicated that parents perceive academic readiness as being more important than behavioral readiness. The findings in this study further indicate that parents rated basic knowledge, which was composed of skills such as knowing basic colors and the alphabet, as being absolutely necessary upon entering kindergarten. Parents in this study also indicated that they believed their children holding advanced knowledge, such as reading a few simple words, counting to 50 or above, and knowing their address, was more important than teachers rated the importance of these skills. These parents, however, did rate compliance with routines as important, which could be thought of as being related to social emotional readiness.

Parental perceptions of social and emotional readiness. Some research has shown that parents feel that their children's first experiences in formal education should be more than just academic skill development (e.g., Wesley & Buysse, 2003). Diamond and colleagues (2000) found that parents placed emphasis on the importance of social, emotional, and academic skills equally in terms of their children being prepared for

kindergarten. This, however, does contradict the more common finding that parents place higher regard on academic skill for their children (i.e., Piotrkowski, et al., 2000; West et al., 1995).

Teacher Perceptions

Teacher perception of readiness. Like parents, kindergarten teachers also hold beliefs as to what skills and attitudes children should possess to succeed in kindergarten. These beliefs may influence these teachers' perceptions of the children's abilities and expectations of their success in school (West et al., 1995). Research has shown that teachers place more emphasis on social-emotional skills than on academic skills (e.g., Ackerman & Barnett, 2005; West et al.). For example, only 10% of kindergarten teachers in a study by West and colleagues believed that the kindergarten students knowing the alphabet was very important or essential to be ready for kindergarten, and only 7% believed being able to count to at least 20 was very important or essential. Teachers have been found to place a great deal of importance on social and emotional behaviors (e.g., Ackerman & Barnett; West et al.). Ackerman and Barnett report that teachers view social-emotional development and cognitive skills as equally important for success in kindergarten. Piotrkowski and colleagues (2000) found that teachers believed interest and engagement were substantially more important than basic knowledge upon a child entering kindergarten. The kindergarten teachers in this study also rated compliance with teachers much higher than basic or advanced knowledge.

Differing views have been found in research regarding teachers' perceptions of academic and behavioral readiness (Ackerman & Barnett, 2005; Piotrkowski, et al., 2000; West, et al., 1995). Although teachers find these social and emotional needs important,

they express concern regarding teaching children these skills in the classroom.

Specifically, Wesley and Buysse (2003) found that many kindergarten teachers in their study stated that they did not have enough time to support children's social and emotional development while also preparing the children for the academic assessments that they were required to complete. In this study, teachers also have expressed clear concern that academics were still being forced to take precedence, even in these young children just beginning kindergarten.

Issues Regarding Teachers and Parent Perceptions

Although parents may believe that teachers are responsible for all of the academic requirements placed on the children, most of these standards are mandated from a much higher level (Wesley & Buysse, 2003). Contrary to the idea that parents may have in placing the responsibility of educating the children solely on teachers, many teachers believe that the parents should help prepare children for school at home (Diamond et al., 2000; Hains, Fowler, Schwartz, Kottwitz, & Rosenkoetter, 1989). The extent to which teachers and parents share a mutual understanding of the traits and skills necessary to begin school is important (West et al., 1995). When parents and teachers share similar beliefs, there can be greater congruence between the skills parents encourage in their children prior to school entry and the attributes that teachers look for in their kindergarten students. Another study that surveyed teachers found that they believed their own expectations for children's readiness, both academically and behaviorally, were higher than were parents' expectations (Hains et al.).

Wesley and Buysse (2003) employed a focus group study to examine notions of school readiness by engaging parents of kindergartners and public school personnel. A

teacher participant in one of the focus groups expressed that she would like to find a balance between the academics and the social activities for kindergarten children, despite the mandates that place heavy emphasis on academic goals for children. The teachers in this study expressed clear goals and understanding of readiness, while expressing few concerns. Focus groups of teachers were found to engage in directed conversations of readiness with clear conceptions as to what readiness was. The teachers' discussions in the focus groups did reveal tensions, but they exhibited a strong understanding and had experience applying readiness concepts to many children and families. Some apprehension and tensions expressed by the teachers in regard to readiness were related to the pressures and expectations for these kindergarten students, especially given the inconsistent definitions of eligibility by both age and entry skills.

Differences Between Teachers' and Parents' Perceptions of Readiness

Teachers and parents tend to view characteristics and skills necessary for children to begin school differently. The National Educational Goals Panel (1997) reports that parents typically focus more on cognitive skills, but teachers tend to view social-emotional development as equally important for success in kindergarten. Knudsen-Lindauer and Harris (1989) found that parents ranked counting, reading, and writing as significantly more important than teachers did, and the teachers in this study ranked the children gaining independence and developing curiosity as more important than parents did. Diamond and colleagues (2000) found that parents place more emphasis on their children's academic skills, but rank social-emotional and academics as important in regard to global readiness. Piotrkowski and colleagues (2000) found that kindergarten teachers rated motor skills as less important than parents did. This study further noted

that parents placed more importance on basic knowledge (e.g., knowing body parts, colors, and the alphabet) than kindergarten teachers. Parents in this study also ranked advanced knowledge (e.g., knowing their address and telephone number) as more important than kindergarten teachers ranked these skills. Many discrepancies appear regarding the views of what a child needs to begin kindergarten and be successful.

Summary

Research indicates that inconsistencies exist between parents' and teachers' perceptions regarding the skills that they believe a child needs to begin kindergarten ready to learn (e.g., Hair et al., 2006; Piotrkowski et al., 2000). For example, several studies (e.g. Knudsen-Lindauer & Harris, 1989; NEGP, 1997) found that parents placed more importance on academic and cognitive skills for their children, while teachers have been shown to place more importance on social/emotional skills (e.g., Ackerman & Barnett, 2005; West et al, 1995). Other research suggests that both parents and teachers find academic as well as social/emotional skills important for children (Diamond et. al, 2000; Wesley & Buysse, 2003). Limited research exists that presents clear standards for what children need to begin kindergarten ready to learn, which may accounts for the ambiguity between parents and teachers regarding kindergarten readiness skills.

Purpose of the Current Study

The purpose of this study was to determine how parents and teachers defined kindergarten readiness, i.e. what characteristics and qualities were important for a child to possess to begin kindergarten and be successful. Specifically, this study explored the characteristics kindergarten teachers and parents of 3 and 4-year-old children find important for children to be ready to begin

school. The current study focused on perceptions of academic skills, social/ emotional skills, and the national standards for readiness.

Hypotheses.

1. It was predicted that parents would rate the academic scale questions as more important than teachers would rate the academic scale questions.
2. It was predicted that teachers would rate the social/ emotional scale questions as more important than the parents would rate the social/ emotional scale questions.

CHAPTER II

Method

Participants

Parents. Parents were recruited from two day care centers in suburban middle Tennessee. Parents of 3 and 4 year-old children from the day care centers were asked to participate in the study. There were 25 parents who completed and returned the survey with 76% indicating they were married, 16% reported being single and 8% reported being divorced. The majority of the parents that participated were mothers (72%); 28% were fathers. The majority of the parents were Caucasian (80%); 16% of the parents were African American and 4% were Asian. Most (68%) of the parents were between 25 – and 35 – year-old; 20% were more than 35-years- old , and only 12% were less than 25 – years - old. Many of the parents reported they had a bachelor's degree (44%); 32% of the parents indicated they has some college, and 24% indicated they had a post bachelor's degree. None of the parents reported having only a high school diploma or less. Regarding family income, 44% reported a yearly family income between \$20,000 and \$50,000, 40% reported a yearly family income greater than \$50,000, and only 16% reported a yearly family income below \$20,000.

Teachers. Kindergarten teachers were recruited from the local school district in the same suburban community in middle Tennessee. There were 22 teachers who completed and returned the survey. A majority of the teachers were women (91%); only 9% were men. All teachers who participated in the study were Caucasian (100%). Regarding the educational level of the teachers, half of the participants reported having a bachelor's degree (50%); the other half (50%) indicated they had a post bachelor's

degree. Many of the teachers (32%) reported that they had taught 5 years or less; 27% had taught 6-10 years, 23% had taught more than 20 years, and 18% had taught 10 to 20 years.

Measures

Two surveys were developed, one for the teachers, and the other for the parents. The questions used for both versions of the survey were adapted from several studies of kindergarten readiness (NEGP, 1997; Raforth, Crissman, & Halk, 2004; Wesley & Buysse, 2003; West et al., 1995). These studies were used to identify specific questions for determining readiness skills in regard to national standards, academic skills, and social/ emotional skills. Both surveys were divided into two main sections: (a) demographic questions; and (b) kindergarten readiness questions.

Parent. There were six demographic questions developed for the parent survey including: (a) gender; (b) ethnicity; (c) level of education; (d) socio-economic status; (e) age; and (f) marital status. There were 30 kindergarten readiness questions that were developed. Specifically, 10 questions address academic readiness issues; 10 questions addressed social/emotional readiness issues. Additionally, 10 questions addressed issues related to the national standards for school readiness. The rater measured each item on a 5-point Likert scale of how important they thought an item was from (1) *very unimportant* to (5) *very important*.

Teacher. There were four demographic questions developed for the teachers survey including: (a) gender, (b) ethnicity, (c) level of education, and (d) number of years having taught kindergarten. The same 30 kindergarten readiness questions were presented to the teachers as in the parents' survey using the same 5-point Likert scale.

Procedure

Regarding parent participation, the researcher obtained written permission from the directors of both daycare centers. Regarding teacher participation, the researcher sent a research proposal to the school district's director for permission for kindergarten teacher's to participate. After the approval was obtained, approval was obtained from principals in the school district. Finally, approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) committee (see Appendix A). Once approved parents of 3 to 4 year-old children and kindergarten teachers received the consent form and the surveys. To ensure anonymity, no names were collected on the consent forms.

CHAPTER III

Results

Hypothesis 1

A scale was created with the 10 academic items. As was predicted that parents rated the academic scale questions as more important than teachers rated them academic, $F(1,45) = 4.75, p = 0.35$. As can be seen in Table 1, the means for the 10 items in the academic readiness scale were higher for parents than teachers on all but 1 question, a child should be able to write their name. The question on which the means were the furthest apart dealt with a child being able to read basic words. Teachers rated this as the lowest item on this scale. The item that both parents and teachers rated highest on this scale was being able to say the alphabet.

Hypothesis 2

A second scale was created with the 10 social/emotional items. Unlike what had been predicted, teachers did not rate the items on the social/ emotional scale as more important than parents, $F(1, 45) = 0.2, p = .65$. As can be seen in Table 2, all of the means for both parents and teachers were 4.1 or higher indicating that all participants in the current study felt that the items in the social emotional scale were important or very important. Teachers rated the items addressing being able to follow directions and being able verbally communicate needs as the two items having the highest means on this scale. The item receiving the highest mean on this scale from parents was being able to take turns. Parents rated both being able to follow direction and being able to verbally communicate needs as the second highest skills needed for readiness.

Table 1.

Means for Items on the Academic Scale

Variable	Parents <i>M (SD)</i>	Teachers <i>M (SD)</i>
Able to say alphabet	4.52 (0.82)	4.18 (1.01)
Able to count to 20	3.88 (0.88)	3.81 (0.97)
Able to write with pencil	4.08 (1.12)	4.05 (1.10)
Able to identify names of colors	4.12 (1.01)	4.00 (0.82)
Able to identify names of shapes	3.96 (1.02)	3.50 (0.86)
Able to read basic words	3.60 (1.00)	2.32 (1.00)
Able to write letters	3.52 (1.05)	2.95 (0.90)
Able to write name	3.92 (1.04)	4.09 (0.81)
Able to work puzzles	3.88 (0.88)	3.00 (0.82)
Able to recognize rhyme	3.52 (1.01)	3.27 (0.88)

Note: 1 = *Very Unimportant*; 2 = *Unimportant*; 3 = *Somewhat Important*; 4 = *Important*; 5 = *Very Important*

Table 2.

Means for Items on the Social/Emotional Scale

Variable	Parents <i>M (SD)</i>	Teachers <i>M (SD)</i>
Able to verbally communicate needs	4.68 (0.85)	4.68 (0.48)
Not be disruptive	4.64 (0.57)	4.45 (0.74)
Sensitive to others	4.44 (1.04)	4.14 (0.71)
Able to take turns	4.76 (0.83)	4.59 (0.50)
Able to follow directions	4.64 (0.91)	4.68 (0.57)
Enthusiastically approach new activities	4.44 (0.71)	4.32 (0.65)
Able to sit still and focus	4.40 (0.82)	4.41 (0.67)
Able to make friends	4.28 (0.80)	4.18 (0.66)
Able to separate from parents	4.40 (0.87)	4.50 (0.60)
Prior experience with groups of peers	4.44 (0.87)	4.27 (0.83)

Note: 1 = *Very Unimportant*; 2 = *Unimportant*; 3 = *Somewhat Important*; 4 = *Important*; 5 = *Very Important*

Additional Analyses

A third scale was created out of the 10 items related to the national readiness standards. No significant differences were found between parent and teacher perceptions on this scale, $F(1, 45) = 0.07, p = .80$. As can be seen in Table 3, for teachers the item dealing with parents reading to their children received the highest mean of any item on the entire survey. Having adequate nutrition was the item on this scale with the highest mean for parents. This item had the second highest mean on this scale for teachers. Only 1 item on this scale was rated as less than important or very important for both teachers and parents. This item, the ability to recognize sound units in words, was rated as unimportant by teachers and somewhat important by parents.

Table 3.

Means for Items on the National Standards Scale

Variable	Parents <i>M (SD)</i>	Teachers <i>M (SD)</i>
Able to follow a daily routine	4.52 (0.87)	4.50 (0.60)
Able to play with other children	4.52 (0.77)	4.64 (0.58)
Able to recognize sound parts in words	3.56 (1.04)	2.55 (0.74)
Able to dress themselves	4.24 (0.72)	4.45 (0.74)
Able to learn a new skill when taught	4.52 (0.77)	4.41 (0.73)
Access to adequate nutrition	4.76 (0.83)	4.82 (0.40)
Engages in physical activity	4.64 (0.86)	4.41 (0.73)
Receives immunizations	4.52 (0.87)	4.50 (0.67)
Access to an early childhood program	4.08 (1.00)	4.14 (0.94)
Have parents read to them	4.68 (0.85)	4.95 (0.21)

Note: 1 = *Very Unimportant*; 2 = *Unimportant*; 3 = *Somewhat Important*; 4 = *Important*; 5 = *Very Important*

CHAPTER IV

Discussion

As hypothesized parents rated items in the academic scale significantly higher than did teachers. Similar to previous research (e.g., Piotrkowski et al., 2000; West et al., 1995), it was expected that parents would rate academic skills as being more important than teachers would rate these skills. For example, Piotrkowski and colleagues found that kindergarten parents placed significantly more importance on basic and advanced academic skills than kindergarten teachers did. Interestingly in the current study, while both parents and teachers reported that being able to say the alphabet was an important readiness skills, teachers rated being able to read basic words as unimportant for kindergarten readiness while parents rated it as important.

Unlike what had been hypothesized there were no significant differences between parents and teachers perceptions of the importance of items on the social/emotional scale. All items in this scale were endorsed as important or very important by both teachers and parents. Parents and teacher both felt that being able to verbally communicating needs and being able to follow directions were very important readiness skills. Parents also felt that being able to take turns was a very important readiness skill. These findings are not consistent with the research that indicates that teachers place more importance on behavioral/social/emotional skills than parents (e.g., Piotrkowski, 2000; West et al., 1995). One possible factor for this difference may be related to the demographics of sample of parents in the current study. Most parents who participated in this study had a bachelor's degree or higher (68%), and 40% of the parents reported a household income

of over \$50,000. This sample of parents had a higher socioeconomic status than most samples used in the previous studies (e.g., Hill, 2001).

Regarding the items related to the national standards as identified by the National Education Goals Panel and the National Association of School Psychologists, there were no significant differences found between parents and teachers on this scale. All but 1 item was rated as important or very important by teachers and parents. Interestingly, both teachers and parents rated the ability for a child to recognize sound units in words as the least important skill on this scale (teachers rated this item as unimportant and parents rated it as only somewhat important). Being able to recognize the sound units in words is one aspect of phonological awareness, which is broadly defined as the alertness to the sounds in spoken language (NICHD, 2000). Phonological awareness has been identified as an important precursor skill for learning to read (e.g. NICHD). While teachers did rate alliteration skills (i.e., able to recognize rhyme) as being important, they rated the other item related to phonological awareness (recognizing sounds in words) as unimportant.

There were a few other patterns in the responses that were interesting. For example, parents rated none of the items on the survey as unimportant. Although there was not a significant difference between the parent and teacher ratings on the social/emotional scale for this study, the teachers did have higher means for the items on the social/emotional scale than they did for the academic items. This finding is consistent with the research that teachers place more emphasis on social/emotional/behavioral readiness skills than academic skills (e.g., Piotrkowski et al., 2000; West et al., 1995).

Limitations

Sample. One limitation to this study was the limited sample size of the teachers. The small sample size may have limited the ability to find significant differences between the perceptions of parents and teachers. Additionally, the sample was taken from one school district and 2 daycare centers in the Middle Tennessee area, which may make it more difficult to generalize the results to other areas in different parts of the country.

Future Directions

Because of the lack of a formal definition of kindergarten readiness that is widely agreed upon, it may be helpful in the future to have a workshop for parents with kindergarten teachers prior to kindergarten to establish the basic skills that are most important for the child to be successful in kindergarten. In-service trainings may benefit the teachers to make them aware of the specific national standards that were defined to determine skills that children needed to be ready to begin school. It would be beneficial for parents and teachers to have consistent ideas for what skills are most important for children to possess prior to entering kindergarten in order to optimize educational opportunities for them. In the future, it may be helpful for elementary school districts to collaborate with preschools in the area and provide parent trainings for those parents who have children entering into kindergarten in the next 1 to 2 years.

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Appendix

Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter



October 15, 2013

Tara Melton, Dr. Aimee Holt
Department of Psychology
tdm4c@mtmail.mtsu.edu; Aimee.Holt@mtsu.edu

Protocol Title: "School Readiness Skills: Parent and Teacher Perceptions"

Protocol Number: 14-100

Dear Investigator(s),

I have approved your study at the exempt level for the locations which have granted permission for the study. Once you receive the documentation from the other schools, please forward that information on to this office and you will be approved for those locations as well. The exemption is pursuant to 45 CFR 46.101(b) (2). This is because the research being conducted involves the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior.

You will need to submit an end-of-project report to the Office of Compliance upon completion of your research. Complete research means that you have finished collecting data and you are ready to submit your thesis and/or publish your findings. Should you not finish your research within the three (3) year period, you must submit a Progress Report and request a continuation prior to the expiration date. Please allow time for review and requested revisions. Your study expires on **October 15, 2016**.

Any change to the protocol must be submitted to the IRB before implementing this change. According to MTSU Policy, a researcher is defined as anyone who works with data or has contact with participants. Anyone meeting this definition needs to be listed on the protocol and complete the required training. **If you add researchers to an approved project, please forward an updated list of researchers to the Office of Compliance before they begin to work on the project.** Once your research is completed, please send us a copy of the final report questionnaire to the Office of Compliance. This form can be located at www.mtsu.edu/irb on the forms page.

Also, all research materials must be retained by the PI or **faculty advisor (if the PI is a student)** for at least three (3) years after study completion. Should you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Kellie Hilker

Compliance Officer
615-494-8918
Compliance@mtsu.edu