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## Understanding Parent's Perspectives Of Their Kindergarten Children's Transition To School

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UNDERSTANDING PARENT'S PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR  
KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S TRANSITION TO SCHOOL

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Science  
in the Department of Early Childhood Education  
in the College of Education  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates possible reasons why parent's perceive that their kindergarten child complains about school. Using data in the parent questionnaires from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Kindergarten Class of 1998-1999, this research looks at a nationally representative sample of boys and girls and specifically targets those children whose parents indicated that they complained more than one time per week during the first two months of school. Looking at factors both from home, including socioeconomic status, maternal education levels and family structure, and from school, including length of the kindergarten day, transition practices received by the child and prior pre-school experience, Chi square tests were employed to examine the relationship between these factors and the amount of complaining. Basic findings support the premise that when good transition practices are employed by schools, parents perceive that their children complain less about going to kindergarten. The small effect sizes suggest, however, that the statistically significant relationships may be an artifact of sample size. Good transition practices, however, are key to effective transitions and if implementing these practices will help make this important transition smoother, educators should utilize this relatively easy strategy to help new students.. When there were good transitioning practices done by the kindergarten program, the child experienced greater success and complained significantly less about school regardless of all other factors.

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

Up through the 1970s, across the nation, kindergarten attendance was similar. Most five year-olds began their introduction to formal education through a half-day kindergarten program. Most children were five or close to turning five and went to school for about two and one half to three hours each day, either the morning or afternoon session. Beginning in the late 1970s, however, a shift occurred and more and more states allowed kindergarten programs to extend the school day so that full day kindergarten was more common than not. The length of the school day changed for five year olds from a three hour day to a six hour day, doubling the time spent in the school environment (Lee, Burkam, Ready, Honigman & Meisels, 2006)..

Two primary factors that played into this shift include the increased need by parents for full day programs due to employment and childcare issues and the new demands on schools for achievement through academic performance (Walston & West, 2004). Both of these forces have significantly influenced this shift to full day kindergarten. The question that remains and has been the subject of much research and debate asks whether this shift is indeed best for five-year-old children.

Transitioning to kindergarten has always been a benchmark for children and families in the United States. This rite of passage marks the time formal schooling begins. Each new school year thousands of young children across the country face this new adventure. Many parents indicate that this transition to kindergarten is a major event within the family structure. Most

children greet this transition with excitement and anticipation but some are not as eager to step into this new experience. The responses to this rite of passage are as unique and varied as children themselves. Kindergarten itself however, has undergone a dramatic change in the past few decades and while the rite of passage remains the same, much of the stereotypical kindergarten activities have been left in the twentieth century (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003).

The adjustment to kindergarten requires five year-olds to make the dramatic shift from environments where their own interests and abilities set the standard for daily activities to much more structured setting where specific skills are expected to be mastered within a predetermined timeframe (Schulting, 2005). The ability to adjust to this new situation requires much from a five year-old child and not all children make this transition smoothly and without repercussion. According to Schulting (2005), 16% of all children have difficult or a very difficult entry into kindergarten. Through analysis of the public use data collected through the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Kindergarten Class of 1998-1999, this study looks at those children to determine the several factors, including home life, participation in prekindergarten programs, length of school day or other school factors which may influence successful transition to kindergarten.



### Research Question

Young children's perceptions of themselves as competent and qualified learners have been the subject of recent research (Measelle, Ablow, Cowan & Cowan, 1999; Ladd, Birch & Buhs, 1999; Payne, 2003). Research focuses on whether five year-old children can be trusted to make judgments about themselves, their academic achievements, their social competence and their abilities. Many studies indicate that children can and do accurately assess their own abilities with accuracy when compared to teachers' and parent perceptions. (Payne, 2003)

Using the ECLS-K class of 1998-1999 data, which was collected through a longitudinal study done by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), this research looks at the transition to kindergarten. The specific research question to be answered is:

Does a caregiver's (parents, guardians) perception of their child's adjustment, as measured by parents' perceptions of their child's complaints about school, relate to specific factors? The factors to be considered include family issues such as socioeconomic status, maternal education level and family structure, as well as school factors such as the length of the school day, specific transition practices received, and/or participation in some type of Head Start, daycare, preschool, or pre-kindergarten program prior to kindergarten.

## Significance

Understanding the answers to this research may help us understand kindergartners' abilities to cope with the new demands and stresses placed upon them during this transitional year from informal to formal schooling. Because the kindergarten year is foundational to a child's educational experience, understanding the reasons for complaining and lack of interest in education may help educators and policy makers take steps to ease the transition process.

Understanding whether length of day makes a difference in children's attitudes towards their school experiences can be helpful. As educators better understand the needs of these children, steps can be taken to insure that kindergarten becomes the optimal place to insure high quality social, emotional and academic experiences which will in turn lead to better outcomes.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature review that follows is based on a thorough search of the literature and contains the most current research as well as key research that has contributed greatly to the knowledge base of early childhood education.

### Family Factors: Introduction

Measelle, Ablow, Cowan & Cowan (1998) along with others (Ladd, 1996; Sameroff & Haith, 1996) define adjustment as “the degree to which children become engaged, interested and successful in the academic and nonacademic aspects of school” (Measelle et. al, 1998, p. 1559). The transition to kindergarten and the adjustment children must make to acclimate themselves to a new environment and appropriate ways to ease this transition has been the subject of much research (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta & Cox, 2000; LoCasale-Crouch, Mashburn, Downer & Pianta, 2006; Ladd & Troop-Gordon, 2003). Understanding the dynamics of the parent and child relationship may help educators better identify children’s difficulties with adjustment to new settings, particularly kindergarten adjustment (Early, et al., 2002).

Children’s primary relationships play an important role in school adjustment. According to Lambert (2000), the amount of support or stress the parent or primary caregiver provides to their child plays a role in that child’s ability to cope with the pressure and stress that is a part of the transitional experience of starting kindergarten (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Emde & Sameroff, 1989). Stressful situations within families, like divorce or poverty, have been found to be factors for

children who are anxious or display other socially negative behaviors. These children are often coping with family stress. Parenting styles have also been associated with various behaviors in young children both positive and negative and play a role in children's early school adjustment (Cowan, et. al. 1994). Strong and warm parent-child attachment generally creates a secure child who is able to cope with the stresses of a new situation, like going to kindergarten for the first time. Insecurely attached children have a more difficult time expressing their emotions and thus have more difficulty navigating the transition process with ease (Lambert, 2000).

#### *Family Factors: Maternal Education*

Maternal education levels have consistently been shown to play a role in a child's language acquisition as well as their cognitive and academic development (Magnuson, Sexton, Davis-Keen & Huston, 2009). Research has shown (Entwisle & Alexander, 1993; Lee & Burkham, 2002) that the more highly educated the parents are the greater the potential for academic success for their children. Mothers with a higher level of education have been shown to provide home environments that are more conducive to early learning experiences (Alexander, Entwisle & Bedinger, 1994). It would stand to reason then that the better the early learning experiences are the easier the transition to kindergarten would be for young children.

### *Family Factors: Socioeconomic Status*

Low socioeconomic status is a key factor that puts children at risk for not only early school adjustment but for continued school difficulties, including school failure (Alexander & Entwisle, 1988). Head Start programs attempt to ease these risk factors by offering high quality early childhood programs to low socioeconomic families that not only target academic preparation but include health and nutrition care, parent involvement requirements and positive social and emotional emphasis in the curriculum (Ramey, et al., 1998). Children from homes with both a low socioeconomic status and low levels of parental education tend to have more school conflicts and more difficulties with transitions (Ladd et. al, 1999)

Many full day kindergartens are commonly found in urban settings. The socioeconomic status of a child impacts the ability to transition well to a new school environment. Generally, children from a low socioeconomic status exhibit more behavior difficulties in the transition process to kindergarten than children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2000). The combination of coming from a low socioeconomic status as well as an urban environment where there are more “at risk” children in the school system as a whole produces the most children with transition difficulties. (Hope & Bierman, 1998) When children have access to services that are specifically designed to help them with school success, adjustment is easier (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2000). The ability to attend full day kindergarten at a school where the child feels relatively safe may provide a respite for many “at risk” children. According to Pianta (1999) when a child has positive beliefs and feelings about school, these may act as a protective factor for children who are at risk due to low socioeconomic status.

### Family Factors: Family Structure

Family structure impacts children's academic outcomes. As McLanahan (1997) reports children from single family households have greater risks for negative socio-emotional development than children who are living with two parents. McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) also report that children with stable family structure as defined by two parents in the household have higher test scores, less chance to drop out of school and better school attendance. The economic stability of two parent households is much greater than in single parent homes as well. No matter the income level, family relationships that are positive and foster positive interaction between home and school, teacher and child, and child and peers can ease children's adjustment to school (Ladd, 1997). But the inverse is also true in that negative teacher-child and peer relationships can foster emotional or behavioral problems and a negative adjustment to school (Pianta, Steinberg & Rollins, 1995). Lambert (2000) states that children's relationships with significant adults have an important impact on successful adjustment to the school environment.

### School factors:

#### School factors: Kindergarten transition factors

Because the entrance into kindergarten can set the stage for future school adjustment and achievement, this transition is a significant experience for children and their families (Sameroff & Haith, 1996; Alexander & Entwisle, 1988). Research shows that while most children make the transition to kindergarten successfully unfortunately, a little less than ten percent of children do have serious difficulty with this experience. (Powell, 1995; Ramey, Lanzi, Phillips, & Ramey, 1998). Valeski & Stipek (2001) indicate that children with positive attitudes about school and

their achievements experience more success in school and are more engaged and enthusiastic about learning. Children with more negative attitudes will inversely have lower achievement levels, self-perceptions and quality of engagement. Valeski & Stipek (2001) make the assumption then that the more competent a child feels the more they like school, like their teacher and make more of an effort to be successful.

The self-systems theory for classroom connectedness states children's basic psychological needs are best supported when certain characteristics are present in a classroom environment (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Skinner & Belmont, 1993; Skinner, Wellborn & Connell, 1990). The basic psychological needs that must be met include feeling academically competent, feeling socially connected and valued and having a relationship with their teacher. Effective transitioning occurs when children feel socially connected to their teachers through close interpersonal relationships and have a strong grasp of their own perception of competence (Valeski & Stipek, 2001).

According to Valeski & Stipek, young children are already accustomed to close relationships with adults and therefore a close relationship with the teacher makes a child feel more connected and engaged in their education. In their research the results showed that kindergartners who liked their teacher had more positive attitudes about school in general and their own abilities and academic competence. The research also showed no clear difference between gender perceptions, however past research (Ramey et. al, 1998) states that girls tend to have more positive relationships with their teachers than boys.

Rimm-Kaufmann, Pianta & Cox (2000) state that teachers' judgments are the best indication of the effectiveness of transitioning practices. Using the National Center for Early Development and Learning's Transition Practices Survey (1996) they found that 16% of all children studied have a difficult or very difficult experience transitioning to a formal school environment and up to 46% of kindergarten teachers indicate that problems with following directions and working independently characterized over half of the children in their classrooms (Shulting, et al., 2005). There are several predictors of smooth transitions to kindergarten. Social competency, a strong family environment and quality preschool or childcare experiences (Howes, 1998) all have been shown to ease the adjustment period for many children (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta & Cox, 2000). The relationship between children's performance during early elementary school and their later academic achievement has been well documented. Research indicated that the relationship between the performance of children during their early elementary years correlates with later academic achievement (Belsky & McKinnon, 1994; Entwisle).

Effective school transitions require positive connections between the various systems with which children are involved, including home, school and community. Positive home school communication prior to the start of school, quality transition from the pre-kindergarten classrooms to kindergarten classrooms and various other practices help to ensure that transitions are smooth and stress free as possible. Lo Casale-Crouch, et. al.(2008) believe that understanding methods that ease transition and promote successful adjustment can ameliorate risk for school failure, especially for at risk children. In their study, LoCasale-Crouch and colleagues discovered that the more transition practices children were exposed to caused a



stronger adjustment to the new school setting. Pianta and Kraft-Sayre (2003) list five guiding principles for successful transition – the fostering of relationships to serve as resources, the promotion of continuity from preschool to kindergarten, a focus on the strengths of the family, tailoring the practices of the classroom to the needs of the individual and the formation of collaborative relationships. Using these principles during school transition helps all children and their families navigate this critical period with confidence.

#### *School factors: Half day versus full day kindergarten – Introduction*

Since 1970s, the trend toward full day kindergarten has been in full swing. According to the National Center for Educational Studies, the increase in full day enrollment comes from a variety of social, economic and educational variables (NCES, 2004). Early childhood education came into its own in the 1970s when its educational value was recognized (Lee, Burkam, et. al., 2006). Lee (2006) states that a variety of factors including international competition to have the brightest students, the rejection of progressive education philosophies, more advanced research on the cognitive growth of infants and young children and intervention programs like Head Start caused the shift from a play based philosophy to more formal instruction, teacher directed kindergarten programs. This new direction was reinforced in the 1990s as standards and assessments became more rigorous and school districts gave into the demands from government and political influences. Lee (2006) describes kindergarten classrooms in the 1990s as looking more like first grade classrooms, emphasizing academic skills like reading, writing and math while relinquishing the role of play formally predominant in traditional kindergartens to brief periods of recess or play centers at the end of the day. The debate over best practices continues

with the developmentally appropriate (Bredekamp and Copple, 1997) proponents arguing that children's natural curiosity and intrinsic motivation for learning are being overshadowed and destroyed by the forced academics found in most kindergarten classrooms around the United States.

*School Factors: Half vs. Full Day & Family Employment Shifts*

The 1970s marked a significant change in the family structure in the United States. Mothers were no longer relegated to the traditional "stay at home" role. The women's liberation movement facilitated this shift but economic factors certainly played a role as well. With more mothers returning to the workforce, demands for childcare skyrocketed and the trend toward full day kindergarten began. The rise in the number of households requiring two incomes to survive, the increase of single family homes and the changing role of mothers may be the noteworthy factors in this trend because childcare issues raise concerns for parents as well as schools (Gullo, 1990; Morrow, Strickland and Woo, 1998).

*School Factors: Half vs. Full Day & Increased Academic Demands*

The curriculum requirements for kindergarten children have changed drastically since the 1970s as achievement testing and the demands to meet academic outcomes have placed pressure on schools from outside influences (Shepard & Smith, 1988). Government has increasingly expanded its role in education. The "Ready for School" initiatives during the 1990s and the "No Child Left Behind Act" of 2001 continued the trend toward school accountability through high

stakes testing, state report cards and the desire to close the gap between achievers and non-achievers in our public school systems (<http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/overview/intro/4pillars.html>). The increase in academic demands has placed greater pressure on kindergarten teachers to adequately prepare their children for the demands of first grade (Zernike, 2000).

Those who hold full day kindergarten in high regard believe it allows teachers more time and opportunity to assess children's needs and individualize instruction. They feel it promotes more small group learning and provides for a broader range of experiences because there is more time to explore the curriculum in depth (Elikur & Mathur, 1997). Those who prefer half day programs believe that because of the long hours, young children will become more at risk for stress and fatigue and increased pressure will be placed on children to perform beyond their developmental capabilities. Children's love of learning will burn out faster if they are forced to master skills they should acquire in a play based atmosphere (Elkind, 1986)

#### *School Factors: Half vs. Full Day and Academic Outcomes*

Much research has been conducted as to which option, full or half day, is better for children. Most research shows that children in full day programs make greater gains but often the research has shortcomings (Lee et al., 2006). Walston and West (2004) looked at the ECLS-K 1998-99 data and found that full day children do make better progress in reading, language arts and math from fall to spring of the kindergarten year than half-day children. They also found that these gains remain within various individual characteristics of different groups of children. When

items like gender, race, ethnicity, poverty status, and class size were taken into account gains were still made by the full day classes over the half-day classes. Many studies of full vs. half day were conducted in the 1980s but according to Lee (2006) and colleagues the research that was conducted had weak design. Olsen and Zigler (1989) also agree that full-day kindergartners have greater gains than half day and suggest that this is particularly true for disadvantaged and bilingual children. Their research does indicate that the curriculum of a full day kindergarten is not necessarily better and felt that some children were not developmentally ready for the long hours of full day classes. Fusaro (1997) looked at over 23 studies and also found that full day children have better academic outcomes than half-day children. Lee et al. (2006) also indicates that concerning social and emotional growth, the data has proven to be inconclusive as to which group made better gains in these domains. The other issue at stake when looking at the full vs. half-day debate concerns how the extra time is spent in a full day classroom versus a half-day classroom. While full day teachers spend more time on instruction in math reading and language arts, the percent of time spent on reading, writing and mathematics instruction is consistent in both full day and half-day programs. Full day teachers who take advantage of the extra time by providing developmentally appropriate enrichment activities have the best outcomes overall. (Walston & West, 2004))

#### Other factors: Preschool or pre-kindergarten experience

Children come to kindergarten from many diverse backgrounds. Some have experienced high quality childcare situations from birth while others have remained solely at home in the constant care of their mothers. The range of experiences between these two points is a different as

children themselves. All research indicates however, that exposure to high quality pre-kindergarten programs benefits all children and most especially children with at risk backgrounds for school success (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta & Cox, 2000; Reynolds, Temple Robertson, Mann, 2001). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2009), 63% of U.S. children between the age of three and five attended some sort of preprimary program. In fact, during the entire first decade of the twenty-first century, this number only fluctuated from 61% - 65% in any given year (2000-2008). The program types include full day childcare centers, private preschools, private nursery schools and public preschool programs. These results mean that over one-third of all children in the U.S. who enter kindergarten do so with no prior classroom setting experience.

As Schulting, Malone & Dodge (2005) note, transition to kindergarten is difficult for children from a variety of aspects as children are moving from a primarily child centered environment to a classroom where conformity is expected and rewarded. Children enter kindergarten coming from a variety of early care experiences. Some have stayed home and have never been introduced to a classroom environment. Many more have come from daycare or preschool settings where their individualities have been recognized and in many cases adapted to in order to accommodate various personality styles and types.

It is also interesting to note that according to research, most kindergarten teachers prefer strong social and emotional competence rather than strong academic knowledge. Pianta and Kraft-Sayre (2003) indicate that kindergarten teachers are predominantly concerned with children's

abilities to cooperate with others and felt that almost 20% of children who came to their classrooms had serious difficulty with the transition. When children transition effectively the results demonstrate greater academic achievement which may account for the results of Schulting et. al's study (2005) that better transitioning caused children to adjust better from a social and emotional perspective thus allowing the children to feel more competent and focus better on the academic portion of the kindergarten experience.

*Other factors: Head Start*

The Head Start program has been funded for over thirty years and targets at risk children living at or below the poverty level. One of the goals of Head Start is to help these children be better prepared for formal school. Head Start encompasses the whole child through parent education, health and nutrition support, parent involvement and positive socialization experiences as well as providing a developmentally appropriate pre-kindergarten environment (Ramey, et. al, 1998). In 1990, Congress provided the funding through the Head Start Public School Early Childhood Transition Demonstration Project to continue with Head Start services for children through second grade. This project insured ongoing health and nutrition services, social services, transition demonstration programs, support for parental involvement as well as developmentally appropriate classrooms to Head Start children and their families (Department of Health and Human Services, 1990; Ramey & Ramey, 1992).

In their study about Head Start children's transition and adjustment to kindergarten, Ramey et. al (1998) found that only a small percentage of these children 7% said they did not like school and

that they were not doing well. An interesting aspect of their research however discovered that these children also reported not getting along well with other children in their school. These children also felt that doing well in school was not important to their parents. The great majority of Head Start children and their families did experience a positive adjustment to kindergarten and placed a high value on school and education (Ramey et. al, 1998)

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODS**

### Data Source

This study examines public use data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-1999. The ECLS-K data is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). It is the largest study conducted of children entering kindergarten that have been followed through their eighth grade year and has a nationally representative sample of over 21,000 children from over 1200 schools. The sample selected represents the population of almost 4 million children enrolled in kindergarten in both public and private school in the fall of the 1998-1999 school year. The ECLS-K data focuses on children from both private and public school with diverse socioeconomic backgrounds as well as diverse ethnic/racial backgrounds. The ECLS-K looks at a variety of dimensions of child growth and development including academic achievement, social and emotional growth, and physical development. The ECLS-K data was collected in waves. The first wave was children at kindergarten entry during the fall of their kindergarten year (1998). Data was then collected in the spring of kindergarten (1999), the fall and spring of first grade (1999-2000), the spring of third grade (2002), the spring of fifth grade (2004) and the spring of eighth grade (2007). (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2001).

### Sampling Design

The ECLS-K used a multistage probability sample to select a nationally representative sample of children attending kindergarten in 1998-1999. The primary sample units (PSUs) were geographic areas within the United States that were comprised of counties or groups of counties.



From the counties, public and private schools that offered kindergarten programs were sampled. Then, within the sampled schools, individual children were sampled

### Instrument

The ECLS-K data used in this study examines data from parent interviews which were conducted in the fall of 1998. Thus, although data was collected on teachers, schools, and children, in addition to parents, the description of the instrumentation will focus solely on the parent interview. Eighty-nine percent of all parents completed the parent questionnaire at least once during the kindergarten year and the overall response rate for the parent interview was 65.9%. A copy of the entire parent interview questionnaire is available (NCES, n.d. b). The parent interview was conducted in the fall of the school year and the mother was the typical respondent. The minimum requirements for the respondent was knowledge of the child's care and education, 18 years or older, and residing with the child in the same household. The preferences for the respondents were ranked in such a way that the first choice was the child's mother, if she was unavailable another parent or guardian was asked to complete the interview and finally another household member was selected if neither of the above could participate (ECLS-K Base Year Public Use Data Files and Electronic Codebook, 2001).

The fall parent interview was conducted from September through December of 1998 and took about 50 minutes of the parent's time. The interview occurred primarily over the telephone. If parents were reluctant to participate, letters were sent home from the teacher and the school administrator encouraging parents to take the time to complete the interview process. The

interview was conducted in English but was translated into Spanish, Chinese, Lakota and Hmong languages and administered by trained bilingual interviewers. As stated earlier, 89% of parents completed one interview during the base year of the ECLS-K study.

Evidence of reliability and validity for the items included in this analysis are not provided in the ECLS-K technical manuals.

#### Delimitations

For the purposes of this study, only children who remained in the same school for the full kindergarten year (FKCHGSCH=0) and only children who remained with the same teacher throughout the school year (FKCHGTCH=0) were included in the analysis. Additionally, only children whose parent responded to the questions were included.

#### Variables

This research focuses on parent's answers about their child's adjustment to kindergarten. Family factors including socioeconomic status, maternal education and family structure were examined. School factors include the family's exposure to transition practices, the child's attendance in a half-day or full day kindergarten program and the child's exposure to either Head Start or other types of pre-kindergarten programs were also considered. The variables examined are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1 - Variables from the Parent Questionnaire**

Variable	Name*	Scale
Children sometimes have problems adjusting to kindergarten. On average, during the first two months of the school year... a. Did your child complain about school more than once a week, once a week or less, or not at all?	PIQ 090	1 = More than once a week 2 = One time per week or less 3 = Not at all  <i>Recoded:</i> 1 = One time per week or not at all (Low to non complainers) 2 = More than one time per week (High Complainers)
First I'd like to ask you about (CHILD)'s school. Did (CHILD)'s school or teacher send home information about any of the following when (CHILD) started kindergarten? a. How to prepare (CHILD) for kindergarten?  b. Topics or skills that are part of the kindergarten program?  c. How to get in touch with a teacher or school staff to discuss any concerns or questions about (CHILD)?	PIQ 020	1 = Yes 2 = No
Did (CHILD) attend Head Start the year before (he/she) started kindergarten?	CCQ 215	1 = Yes 2 = No
Did (CHILD) attend a day care center, nursery school, preschool or pre-kindergarten program on a regular basis the year before (he/she) started kindergarten?	CCQ 280	1 = Yes 2 = No

\*As defined in the ECLS-K public use data.

### Addressing Complex Sample Design

Because the ECLS-K is not a simple random sample, analyses were completed using Taylor series linearization in SPSS Complex Samples (v. 17). The parent base weight (C1PWO), strata (C1TPWSTR), and cluster (C1TPWPSU) were applied in all analyses. Private schools were oversampled as were Asian/Pacific Islander children. Analysis of the data using Taylor series linearization ensures that the estimates reflect an accurate sample of children attending kindergarten during the 1998-1999 school year.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This chapter will present the results of the analysis. This includes a description of the sample as well as results of analyses that answer each of the research questions. In particular, this study focuses on factors related to parent perceptions of complaints from their child: those children who complained more than one time per week about school (high complaining) and those children who complained less than one time per week or not at all (low complaining).

### Sample

As shown in table 2, most kindergarten children did not complain about school. Almost 78% of the parents responded positively that their children never complained about going to school. Children who complained moderately (one time per week or less) made up about 14% of the total and just over 8% of children complained frequently (more than one time per week).

**Table 2 - Child Complained About School (Frequencies and Percentages**

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During the first two months, how often did your child complain about school?	Less than once a week or not at all	More than once a week
Boys	46.5%	4.7%
Girls	45.0%	3.6%
All children	91.5%	8.3%

These children were further analyzed to determine whether the level of maternal education was a significant factor in complaining about kindergarten. According to the ECLS-K 1998-99, 13.9 % of the mother's studied had less than a high school education, 31.2% had a high school diploma or its equivalent, 32.2% had some college or vocational school experience and 22.8% received a bachelor's degree or higher.

The socioeconomic status was then analyzed using five quintiles of economic level with the first quintile representing the lowest income level and the fifth quintile representing the highest level. Of the children studied using the ECLS-K 1998-99 data set, 18.6% made up the first or lowest socioeconomic quintile, 19.9% were in the second quintile, 20.3% fell in the third or middle quintile, 20.2% were in the fourth quintile and 21% were a part of the fifth or highest socioeconomic quintile.

The structure within the household was the third factor analyzed. The research looked at two parent households, single parent households and other types of households that could include households headed by grandparents, other relatives or foster families. The ECLS-K 1998-99 data indicated that of the total families surveyed 75.7% of children lived in two parent households, 22.4% lived in single parent households and 1.9% lived in other types of households.

School factors included transition information received by the parents, attendance in a half or full day program and preschool, daycare or Head Start experience the year prior to kindergarten. Of

the children studied, 67.1% of their parents indicated that they did receive information from either the child's school or teacher about how to prepare their child for kindergarten and 32.9% indicated that they did not receive this type of information.

After indicating whether or not they had received information about how to prepare their child for kindergarten, parents were then asked if the school had provided them with information about the topics or skills that were part of the kindergarten program. The ECLS-K 1998-99 data set revealed that 76.6% of parents did receive information about topics or skills that were part of the kindergarten program and 23.4% of parents received no information about the topics or skills that were part of the kindergarten program.

The next transition question analyzed asked whether the parent received information about how to get in touch with the teacher or school staff if they had any concerns or questions about their child. Results indicate that 90% of parents received this type of information while 10% did not.

The school factors then looked at half day versus full day enrollment in kindergarten. According to the ECLS-K 1998-99 data, 45.5% of children attended a half-day kindergarten program and 54.5% attended school for a full day. Of the total children who attended half day kindergarten, 3% complained more than one time per week, while 5.2% of full day children complained more than once per week.

The final school factor considered focused on whether the child attended any type of program prior to their kindergarten year. The first set of data looked at children who had been enrolled in a Head Start program the year before kindergarten entry. Of the total population sampled 17.1% of all children attended Head Start the year before the entered kindergarten. The research also looked at children who attended all other types of pre-kindergarten care and children who never attended childcare or pre-school of any kind. Children who attended daycare, nursery school, preschool or pre-kindergarten made up 86.1% of the population and those who did not attend any sort of pre-kindergarten constituted 13.9%.

### Family Factors

#### Maternal Education

The first research question looked at maternal education as a factor for children who complained about school. A chi square test of association was conducted to evaluate whether the proportion of children whose parents reported that they complain about kindergarten varied depending upon their mother's education level. To decrease the possibility of a Type I error due to conducting multiple Chi square procedures, the Bonferroni adjustment was applied. Thus, rather than conducting the procedures at an alpha of .05, an alpha of .006 (.05/9) was applied. The null hypothesis was that the proportions are equal, and the alternative hypothesis is that the proportions are not equal.

The amount that a child complained about kindergarten was not statistically significant related to the level of education the mother had completed, Pearson,  $\chi^2 (df_1 = 2.794 ;$



$df_2 = 1240.606) = 5.990, p = .262$ . This provides evidence to suggest that there is not a relationship between the amount that a child complained about kindergarten and the maternal education level of the mother. Children complained equally among all four different maternal education levels that were studied. The Cramer's phi of .00001 indicates an extremely small effect.

**Table 3 - Maternal Education Levels by Parent's Report of Child Complaints About School (Percentage, Standard Error, and Standardized Residual)**

Maternal Education Level	Less than once a week or not at all	More than once a week
Less than HS Diploma	12.6% (SE=.5%; SR=-.2%)	1.3% (SE = .1%; SR = .2%)
HS Diploma or Equivalent	28.5% (SE = .6%; SR = .0%	2.6% (SE = .2%; SR = .0%)
Some College or VoTech	29.5% (SE = .6%; SR = .0%	2.7% (SE = .2%; SR = .0%)
Bachelor's Degree or More	21% (SE = .8%; SR = .2%	1.7% (SE = .1%; SR = -.2%)

### Socioeconomic Status

The next research question considered the socioeconomic status of the families as a factor in complaining. A chi square test of association was conducted to evaluate whether the proportion of children whose parents reported that they complain about kindergarten varied depending upon their socioeconomic status. To decrease the possibility of a Type I error due to conducting multiple Chi square procedures, the Bonferroni adjustment was applied. Thus, rather than conducting the procedures at an alpha of .05, an alpha of .006 (.05/9) was applied. The null hypothesis was that the proportions are equal, and the alternative hypothesis is that the proportions are not equal.

The amount that a child complained about kindergarten was not statistically significant related to the socioeconomic status of the family, Pearson,  $\chi^2 (df_1 = 3.813 ; df_2 = 1692.864) = 12.185, p = .040$ . This provides evidence to suggest that there is not a relationship between the amount that a child complained about kindergarten and the socioeconomic status of the family. Based on the standardized residual, fewer families than were expected did not complain that were in the lowest SES and more children than expected complained that were in the highest SES. The Cramer's phi = .0228 indicates a very small effect size.

**Table 4 - Socioeconomic Status by Parent's Report of Child Complaints About School (Percentage, Standard Error, and Standardized Residual)**

Socioeconomic Status	Less than once a week or not at all	More than once a week
First Quintile	16.8% (SE=.8%; SR = -.3%)	1.8% (SE = .1%; SR = .3%)
Second Quintile	18.2% (SE = .4%; SR = .0%	1.7% (SE = .1%; SR = .0%)
Third Quintile	18.7% (SE = .4%; SR = .1%	1.6% (SE = .1%; SR = .0%)
Fourth Quintile	18.6% (SE = .5%; SR = .0%	1.7% (SE = .1%; SR = .0%)
Fifth Quintile	19.5% (SE =.7%; SR = .2%)	1.5% (SE =.1%; SR = -.2%)

#### Family Structure

Family structure within the household was the next factor analyzed. A chi square test of association was conducted to evaluate whether the proportion of children whose parents reported that they complain about kindergarten varied depending upon the type of household in which they live. To decrease the possibility of a Type I error due to conducting multiple Chi square

procedures, the Bonferroni adjustment was applied. Thus, rather than conducting the procedures at an alpha of .05, an alpha of .006 (.05/9) was applied. The null hypothesis was that the proportions are equal, and the alternative hypothesis is that the proportions are not equal.

The amount that a child complained about kindergarten was not statistically significant related to the type of household in which the child lived, Pearson,  $\chi^2 (df_1 = 1.923 ; df_2 = 853.773) = 6.146, p = .065$ . This provides evidence to suggest that there is not a relationship between the amount that a child complained about kindergarten and the structure of the household. The Cramer's phi = .00001 indicates an extremely small effect size.

**Table 5 - Family Structure by Parent's Report of Child Complaints About School (Percentage, Standard Error, and Standardized Residual)**

Type of Household	Less than once a week or not at all	More than once a week
One Parent Household	20.4% ( <i>SE</i> =.7%; <i>SR</i> =-.0%)	1.9% ( <i>SE</i> = .1%; <i>SR</i> = .1%)
Two Parent Household	69.5% ( <i>SE</i> = .8%; <i>SR</i> = .0%)	6.2% ( <i>SE</i> = .3%; <i>SR</i> = .0%)
Other Type of Household	1.8% ( <i>SE</i> = .1%; <i>SR</i> = .1%)	.1% ( <i>SE</i> = .0%; <i>SR</i> = .0%)

#### School Factors

##### Kindergarten Preparation

School factors included information received by the family to help the child make the transition to kindergarten. The first school factor analyzed looked at information sent home about how to

prepare their child for kindergarten. A chi square test of association was conducted to evaluate whether the proportion of children whose parents report that they complain about kindergarten varied depending upon whether their parent(s) received information about how to prepare their child for kindergarten. To decrease the possibility of a Type I error due to conducting multiple Chi square procedures, the Bonferroni adjustment was applied. Thus, rather than conducting the procedures at an alpha of .05, an alpha of .006 (.05/9) was applied. The null hypothesis was that the proportions are equal, and the alternative hypothesis is that the proportions are not equal. The amount that a child complained about kindergarten was statistically significant related to whether or not the parent received information about how to prepare their child for kindergarten, Pearson,  $\chi^2(df_1 = 1 ; df_2 = 444) = 48.416, p < .001$ . This provides evidence to suggest that there is a relationship between the amount that a child complained about kindergarten and whether or not the parent received information about how to prepare their child for kindergarten. Based on the standardized residual, parents that did not receive information about how to prepare their child had children who were more likely to complain while parents that did receive information on preparation practices had children that complained little or not at all. However, there were no standardized residuals greater than an absolute value of 2, therefore all cells were contributing similarly to this relationship. The phi statistic (.0021) indicates a very small effect which suggests the statistical significance may be an artifact of sample size. However, there were no standardized residuals greater than an absolute value of 2 which suggests all cells were contributing similarly to the relationship.

**Table 6 - Parent's Receipt of Information About How to Prepare Their Child for Kindergarten by Parent's Report of Child Complaints About School (Percentage, Standard Error, and Standardized Residual)**

Did school or teacher send home information about how to prepare (CHILD) for kindergarten?	Less than once a week or not at all	More than once a week
Yes	62.3% ( <i>SE</i> =.9%; <i>SR</i> =-.7%)	4.8% ( <i>SE</i> = .2%; <i>SR</i> = -.7%)
No	29.5% ( <i>SE</i> =.8%; <i>SR</i> = -.7%)	3.4% ( <i>SE</i> = .2%; <i>SR</i> = .7%)

### School Factors

#### Knowledge of Topics in Kindergarten

The next school factor looked at whether the parents had knowledge of the topics or skills that were a part of the kindergarten program. A chi square test of association was conducted to evaluate whether the proportion of children whose parents reported that they complained about kindergarten varied depending upon whether their parent(s) received information about the topics or skills that were a part of the kindergarten program. To decrease the possibility of a Type I error due to conducting multiple Chi square procedures, the Bonferroni adjustment was applied. Thus, rather than conducting the procedures at an alpha of .05, an alpha of .006 (.05/9) was applied. The null hypothesis was that the proportions are equal, and the alternative hypothesis is that the proportions are not equal.

The amount that a child complained about kindergarten was statistically significant related to whether or not the parent received information about the topics or skills that were a part of the

kindergarten program, Pearson,  $\chi^2 (df_1 = 1 ; df_2 = 444) = 10.051, p = .006$ . This provides evidence to suggest that there is a relationship between the amount that a child complained about kindergarten and whether or not the parent received information about the topics or skills that were a part of the kindergarten program. Based on the standardized residual, parents that did not know about the topics or skills that were part of the kindergarten program had children who were more likely to complain while parents that did receive information on the topics or skills had children that complained little or not at all. However, there were no standardized residuals greater than an absolute value of 2 which suggests all cells were contributing similarly to the relationship. The phi statistic (.0017) indicates a very small effect which suggests the statistical significance may be an artifact of sample size. However, there were no standardized residuals greater than an absolute value of 2 which suggests all cells were contributing similarly to the relationship.

**Table 7 - Parent's Knowledge of Topics or Skills in the Kindergarten Program by Parent's Report of Child Complaints About School (Percentage, Standard Error, and Standardized Residual)**

Did school or teacher send home information about topics or skills that were part of the kindergarten program?	Less than once a week or not at all	More than once a week
Yes	70.6% (SE=.7%; SR= .3%)	6.0% (SE = .3%; SR = -.3%)
No	21.1% (SE =.7%; SR = -.3%)	2.2% (SE = .2%; SR = .3%)

## School Factors

### Contacting the School

The final school factor looked at whether the parents know how to contact the teacher or school with questions or concerns. A chi square test of association was conducted to evaluate whether the proportion of children whose parents indicate that they complained about kindergarten varied depending upon whether their parent(s) received information about how to contact the school or teacher if they had concerns or questions about their child. To decrease the possibility of a Type I error due to conducting multiple Chi square procedures, the Bonferroni adjustment was applied. Thus, rather than conducting the procedures at an alpha of .05, an alpha of .006 (.05/9) was applied. The null hypothesis was that the proportions are equal, and the alternative hypothesis is that the proportions are not equal.

The amount that a child complained about kindergarten was statistically significant related to whether or not the parent received information about how to contact the school or teacher if they had concerns or questions about their child, Pearson,  $\chi^2 (df_1 = 1 ; df_2 = 444) = 13.108, p = .002$ . This provides evidence to suggest that there is a relationship between the amount that a child complained about kindergarten and whether or not the parent received information about how to contact the school or teacher if they had concerns or questions about their child. Based on the standardized residual, parents that did not know how to contact the school or teacher if they had concerns or questions about their child had children who were more likely to complain while parents that did receive information on how to contact the school or teacher if they had concerns or questions about their child had children that complained little or not at all. However, there

were no standardized residuals greater than an absolute value of 2 which suggests all cells were contributing similarly to the relationship. The phi statistic (.00005) indicates an extremely small effect which suggests the statistical significance may be an artifact of sample size. However, there were no standardized residuals greater than an absolute value of 2 which suggests all cells were contributing similarly to the relationship.

**Table 8 - Parent's Knowledge of How to Contact School or Teacher with Concerns or Questions by Parent's Report of Child Complaints About School (Percentage, Standard Error, and Standardized Residual)**

Was information sent home about how to contact school or teacher with any questions or concerns about (CHILD)?	Less than once a week or not at all	More than once a week
Yes	82.8% ( <i>SE</i> =.5%; <i>SR</i> = .2%)	7.2% ( <i>SE</i> = .3%; <i>SR</i> = -.2%)
No	8.9% ( <i>SE</i> =.4%; <i>SR</i> = -.2%)	1.1% ( <i>SE</i> = .1%; <i>SR</i> = .2%)

#### School Factors

##### Half day vs. Full Day Program

The research then looked at whether the child attended a half-day or full day kindergarten program. A chi square test of association was conducted to evaluate whether the proportion of children whose parents reported that they complained about kindergarten varied depending upon whether the child attended a half day or full day kindergarten program. To decrease the possibility of a Type I error due to conducting multiple Chi square procedures, the Bonferroni



adjustment was applied. Thus, rather than conducting the procedures at an alpha of .05, an alpha of .006 (.05/9) was applied. The null hypothesis was that the proportions are equal, and the alternative hypothesis is that the proportions are not equal.

The amount that a child complained about kindergarten was statistically significant related to whether or not the child attended a half day or full day program, Pearson,  $\chi^2 (df_1 = 1 ; df_2 = 444) = 45.942, p < .0001$ . This provides evidence to suggest that there is a relationship between the amount that a child complained about kindergarten and whether or not the child attended a half day or full day program. Based on the standardized residual, children who attended half-day kindergarten complained significantly less than children who attended full day kindergarten. However, there were no standardized residuals greater than an absolute value of 2 which suggests all cells were contributing similarly to the relationship. The phi statistic (.0073) indicates a small effect which suggests the statistical significance may be an artifact of sample size. However, there were no standardized residuals greater than an absolute value of 2 which suggests all cells were contributing similarly to the relationship.

**Table 9 - Half Day versus Full Day Kindergarten Program by Parent's Report of Child Complaints About School (Percentage, Standard Error, and Standardized Residual)**

Did child attend a half-day or full day kindergarten program?	Less than once a week or not at all	More than once a week
Half Day	42.4% (SE = .2.2%; SR = .7%)	3.0% (SE = .2%; SR = -.7%)
Full Day	49.3% (SE = 2.0%; SR = -.7%)	5.2% (SE = .3%; SR = .7%)

### Attendance in Head Start Program on a regular basis the year prior to kindergarten

The next question focused on whether the child attended a Head Start program on a regular basis during the year prior to kindergarten. A chi square test of association was conducted to evaluate whether the proportion of children that complain about kindergarten vary depending upon whether the child attended a Head Start program prior to kindergarten enrollment. To decrease the possibility of a Type I error due to conducting multiple Chi square procedures, the Bonferroni adjustment was applied. Thus, rather than conducting the procedures at an alpha of .05, an alpha of .006 (.05/9) was applied. The null hypothesis was that the proportions are equal, and the alternative hypothesis is that the proportions are not equal.

The amount that a child complained about kindergarten was statistically significant related to whether or not the child had participated in a Head Start program, Pearson,  $\chi^2 (df_1 = 1 ; df_2 = 444) = 4.382, p = .063$ . This provides evidence to suggest that there is not a relationship between the amount that a child complained about kindergarten and whether or not the child attended a Head Start program. Based on the standardized residual, children who attended a Head Start program complained significantly less than children who did not. However, the phi statistic (.00003) indicates an extremely small effect.

**Table 10 - Head Start Program Attendance by Parent's Report of Child Complaints About School (Percentage, Standard Error, and Standardized Residual)**

Did child attend a Head Start program the year prior to kindergarten?	Less than once a week or not at all	More than once a week
Yes	80.1% ( <i>SE</i> = 1.2%; <i>SR</i> = -.4%)	8.7% ( <i>SE</i> = .8%; <i>SR</i> = .4%)
No	10.5% ( <i>SE</i> = .9%; <i>SR</i> = .4%)	.7% ( <i>SE</i> = .2%; <i>SR</i> = -.4%)

Attendance in a Daycare, Nursery School, Preschool or Pre-Kindergarten the year prior to kindergarten

The research finally looked at whether attendance in any type of program (other than Head Start) the year before kindergarten would be a factor in complaining about school. A chi square test of association was conducted to evaluate whether the proportion of children whose parents reported that they complained about kindergarten varied depending upon whether the child attended any type of program (other than Head Start) prior to kindergarten enrollment. To decrease the possibility of a Type I error due to conducting multiple Chi square procedures, the Bonferroni adjustment was applied. Thus, rather than conducting the procedures at an alpha of .05, an alpha of .006 (.05/9) was applied. The null hypothesis was that the proportions are equal, and the alternative hypothesis is that the proportions are not equal.

The amount that a child complained about kindergarten was not statistically significant related to whether or not the child attended a daycare, nursery school preschool or pre-kindergarten program (other than Head Start) prior to their kindergarten year, Pearson,  $\chi^2$  ( $df_1 = 1$  ;  $df_2 = 444$ )

= .116,  $p = .766$ . The phi size = .00001 indicates an extremely small effect size. This provides evidence to suggest that there is not a relationship between the amount that a child complained about kindergarten and whether or not the child attended any type of early childhood program (other than Head Start) the year prior to kindergarten.

**Table 11 - Early Childhood (daycare, nursery school, pre-school, pre-kindergarten) Program Attendance by Parent's Report of Child Complaints About School (Percentage, Standard Error, and Standardized Residual)**

Did child attend an early childhood program the year prior to kindergarten?	Less than once a week or not at all	More than once a week
Yes	79.3% ( $SE = .6\%$ ; $SR = .0\%$ )	6.9% ( $SE = .3\%$ ; $SR = .0\%$ )
No	12.7% ( $SE = .5\%$ ; $SR = .0\%$ )	1.1% ( $SE = .1\%$ ; $SR = .0\%$ )

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION**

The results of this research indicate that there are several factors that may provide insight as to why children complain about going to kindergarten. Family factors are discussed first.

### Family Factors: Maternal Education Level

The research here indicates that maternal education is not a significant factor when looking at children who complain about school. While maternal education has been an observable factor in achievement of language skills and favorable academic outcomes (Entwisle & Alexander, 1993), in this study no correlation between children who complain about school and maternal education level is indicated. The research indicates that only 1.3% of children from the least educated mothers complained while that number increased by a full percentage point for children whose mothers either graduated from high school or attended some sort of post secondary schooling. Additionally, 1.7% of children of college graduates or higher complained about school.

### Family Factors: Socioeconomic Status

According to the results of this research, socioeconomic factors do not play a statistically significant role in whether or not a child will complain about school. Children from the lowest socioeconomic quintile complained the most (1.8%) and children from the highest socioeconomic quintile complained the least (1.5%). Results would concur with the general observation that wealthier families can afford to provide the highest quality and potentially most

developmentally appropriate type of school whereas the poorer children generally end up in poor school districts, with limited funding, limited resources and a variety of other issues. This finding is consistent with Hope & Bierman (1998) report that “at risk” children have the most transition difficulties.

#### Family Factors: Family Structure

Family factors relating to single parent vs. both parent households were not shown by the research to be extremely significant in relation to children who do or do not complain about school. While family structure certainly contributes to the social and emotional well-being of children (McLanahan, 1997; Ravanera & Rajulton, 2010), in this study, children from two parent households complained more than children from single parent households (about 7% and 2% respectively) which indicates that there is more going on within schools, families and children themselves that contributes to dissatisfaction with early school experiences. These results were not statistically significant, however.

#### School factors: Transition Practices

The research results favor effective usage of good transition practices as a means to lessen children’s complaints about school. In each of the three transition areas studied, parent’s knowledge about effective kindergarten preparation practices, knowledge of topics or skills their child would encounter in kindergarten and understanding how to express concerns and ask questions of either the teacher or the school resulted in children who complained the least.

Parents who felt confident with these transition practices had children who were the least likely to complain about school. As stated earlier, the definition of adjustment provides for the ways children adapt to their new school experiences (Measelle, et. al, 1998; Ladd, 1996; Sameroff & Haith, 1996). This research shows that knowledge about the new school and kindergarten experience may alleviate fears and stress levels as these children make the adjustment to the formal school setting. Valeski & Stipek's (2001) research, as well as Rous,& Hallam (2006) both agree with this factor and supports the conclusion that the more competent a child feels, the more successful the transition, the smoother the transition, the greater the chances of positive outcomes for children. Competence, in this study, could be a result of quality transition practices. When parents are confident in the school, in what their child will be learning and feel their concerns will be heard, they convey this positive feeling to their children which may ease the stress levels and fearfulness that can potentially result in complaining. All three tables (Table 6, Table 7 & Table 8) show results which are statistically significant, although the small effect size suggests little practical significance and that statistical significance may be an artifact of sample size. The results do little to indicate that good transition practices may play a role in lessening a child's complaints about the first two months of school. Although it seems that establishing good transitional practices is a practical and relatively easy way to ease the child into their new school situation while limiting potential complaints, the results of this study (based on effect size) suggest a statistically significant but very weak relationship between transitional practices and complaints from the child.

### School Factors: Half vs. Full Day

The results show that children enrolled in full day kindergarten complain more than those enrolled in half-day kindergarten and these results are statistically significant. As Olsen & Zigler (1989) found in their research while the gains may be greater for some children, particularly those who are disadvantaged or bilingual, many children are not developmentally ready for the long hours of full day classes. Bredekamp & Copple (1987) as well as Elkind (1986) would all agree that long days in formal classroom settings are developmentally inappropriate for many children and may cause short term gains with long term ramifications. Educators must ask whether the social and emotional risk of burning out children through long, sometimes tiring days is worth it. Further research with the complaining children in full day programs to determine the socioeconomic status and transition practices received may be warranted.

It is important to note that the complaining occurred in the first two months of the school year and it is possible to surmise that as the full day children got accustomed to the length of day, the complaining may have tapered off. Perhaps a gradual shift for five-year-olds would be better tolerated. As the school year progressed the day could lengthen so that learning opportunities could be maximized.

### School Factors: Preschool Experience

The results here indicate that neither exposure to a Head Start program nor other type of preschool experience is not statistically significant. Complaining did occur less frequently among the Head Start children which may be because of the family involvement, transition



services and other benefits Head Start children receive. Results from the transition practices tests showed that these were effective in limiting complaints about school. Logically, if Head Start children are provided with quality transition practices (Ramey, et. al, 1998) they may be at an advantage when compared with children who did not receive the benefits of such services.

Other types of preschool experiences did not result in statistical significance. This apparent lack of positive impact on the transition to kindergarten may be based on the research that early childhood programs are as varied as the children who attend them (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta & Cox, 2000). Some are high quality, developmentally appropriate learning environments where the teacher is concerned with providing beneficial transition practices while others are low quality schools that merely babysit children and provide limited learning opportunities. The question did not allow for the type of preschool experience prior to kindergarten to be considered as a factor. It would make sense that the higher quality the pre-kindergarten experience, the less likely the child would be to complain about school. All early childhood centers and schools should adhere to the research that shows unquestionably that strong connections between pre-schools and kindergartens will smooth the road from informal to formal education for young children and lead to improved social, emotional and cognitive learning (Pianta, Cox & Snow, 2007).

### Conclusion

Kindergarten entry is a major milestone in the lives of children and their families. This entrance into the formal school experience should be greeted with positive anticipation and excitement. A

child's kindergarten school year should be a time when children truly capture a love and passion for learning. Classrooms should be places children enjoy. Each morning every five-year-old should wake up eager to go to school and excited about the new discoveries they will make. No child should complain about going to school, least of all kindergarten children.

The study looked at reasons why children might complain about school and discovered that while there are no easy answers, certain practices may help provide that wonderful learning environment in which every child is eager to learn. Some factors are easier to change than others. Educators, administrators and teachers cannot change a child's socioeconomic status. It may also be too late to change the trend toward full day kindergarten. However, the importance of high quality transition practices and the methods used to prepare a child to enter formal schooling are items that should be considered. This study suggests that a lack of quality transition practices may be the most significant factor related to kindergarten students that complain about school. Educators, administrators and teachers can do children a great service by putting thought into appropriate transition practices. Practices as simple as connecting with families, sharing information and providing opportunities for children and their parents to become familiar with their new environment may be related to children's successful adjustment to kindergarten.

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