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The Reality of the Greene County School System Preschool Program.

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The Reality of the Greene County School System Preschool Program

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ABSTRACT

The Reality of the Greene County School System Preschool Program

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State funded preschool programs are recent phenomena in the United States and the state of
Tennessee. The intent of the researcher was to explore the implementation of the preschool
program in the Greene County Schools system and to develop a better understanding of the
effects of this process at the classroom level. This study may provide significant information
for other pre-k programs in the state of Tennessee or nationwide programs in partnership
with Head Start.

The preschool program in the Greene County Schools system consisted of 16 classes with
nine of the classes in partnership with Head Start and one class in partnership with a
community child care center. Data were collected from the transcripts of three focus groups,
documents, and classroom observations. The constant comparative analysis method was used
to analyze the data (Glaser, 2004; Merriam, 1998; Thorne, 2000).

Triangulation of the data resulted in the identification of several supports and barriers to
teaching and learning in the pre-k classrooms. Supports identified were the curriculum, the
use of effective teaching strategies, specific teacher characteristics, specific rules and
regulations, services provided by Head Start, and adequate program funding. Participants
defined barriers to teaching and learning in the pre-k classroom as specific rules and
regulations, teacher isolation by location in the school, teacher isolation from peers, the need

for knowledge of early childhood education and regulations of the program, and specific components of the Head Start partnership.

The recommendations of this study are to continue the partnership that allows for a powerful combination of the organizational resources between the Greene County Schools Pre-K Program and the Upper East Tennessee Human Development Agency (UETHDA) Head Start to continue. The use of an outside ECERS-R evaluator and monthly Head Start classroom evaluations should be discontinued. New practices to implement are an attendance policy for the pre-k classrooms and regularly scheduled collaboration meetings with administrators of both organizations and classroom personnel. Other districts considering similar programs should identify financial resources and use a collaborative process in the development and maintenance of the pre-k program.

CONTENTS

OPENING VIGNETTE

The young pre-k teacher sighs with contentment as she proudly views her handiwork. It had taken 5 long days to open boxes upon boxes of brand new classroom furniture, materials, and equipment. She had arranged and rearranged until everything was just the way she had imagined in her dreams. After 4 years of working minimum wage jobs and attending college classes, this 22 year old had finally reached her goal, her own early childhood classroom. She excitedly looks around her classroom one more time before walking out the door to begin her first free weekend in years.

A week later, the young teacher is sitting at a table in her classroom. She is totally confused and frustrated as she looks at the three stacks of forms and reports lying neatly in front of her. During the past week she has attended orientation for Greene County Schools, Head Start, and her assigned school. Each training session provided massive amounts of information about the process and documentation requirements in the operation of her classroom. Sadly, the information from each session frequently duplicated or contradicted each other. To compound the situation the young teacher feels completely isolated in this teaching position. Although other teachers in the school have been very nice to her, they have their own classrooms to prepare, and no one in the building has any knowledge or experience in this new pre-k program.

All of her college classes and supervised classroom placements had not prepared her for the experience. The reality of being a teacher in a newly developed pre-k classroom exploded upon her life-long fantasy of being an early childhood teacher.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The idealists dream and the dream is told, and the practical men listen and ponder and bring back the truth and apply it to human life, and progress and growth and higher human ideals come into being and so the world moves ever on.

Anna Howard Shaw (1847–1919)

The international influence to improve education is attributed to Russia's launch of Sputnik, the first satellite, in 1957 (Schwartz, 1997). The federal government responded to the launching of Sputnik by mandating progress in the public schools. Federal legislation, No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), required the local and state educational agencies to document progress in the terms of student performance (National Education Association, 2002). In response state level governments have focused on standards-based instruction and early intervention programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

This research focused on the actions of one local educational agency in response to the federal and state desires for educational progress via early childhood education. The local educational agency, Greene County Schools, is located in Greene County in the state of Tennessee. Greene County is situated in the upper eastern region of Tennessee and includes part of the Appalachian Mountains. This county has two local educational agencies, Greene County Schools and Greeneville City Schools. The Greeneville City School system has educational jurisdiction within the city limits of Greeneville, TN and provides services to approximately 3,000 pre-k through 12th grade students. Greeneville City Schools consist of one high school, one middle school, and four elementary schools. Greene County Schools provides educational services to the approximately 7,000 pre-k through 12th grade students

whose parents reside outside of the Greeneville city limits and within the boundaries of Greene County. Greene County is the largest county in the state, and the distance between the elementary schools ranges from 5 to 40 miles. Greene County Schools has four high schools, one middle school, and 11 elementary schools. In addition the Greene County and Greeneville City School systems have joined in a collaborative partnership to provide an Early Learning Program (ELP) and a vocational-technical program. ELP is an educational program for preschool age children with disabilities.

Greene County Schools began the implementation of a preschool program during the 2004-05 school year. Each school year additional pre-k classrooms have been added, and the program was comprised of 16 classrooms in 2007-08 school year. Fifteen of the classrooms are located at 10 of the 11 elementary schools in this vast geographical county. The 16th classroom is located in and staffed by a not-for-profit facility. All of the pre-k classrooms are "income based," which requires educational services to be provided to children of low income families as a priority. In addition, a partnership with nine of the classrooms has been developed with Head Start through the Upper East Tennessee Human Development Agency (UETHDA). This partnership requires compliance with federal rules and regulations due to the funding for the agency.

The early childhood teachers of Greene County are the most important component of the implementation of a preschool program at the local level, and these teachers are making progress in terms of transforming the laws of federal and state legislators and the policies of the local governing board into practical strategies. Teachers have reported legal conflicts between the federal, state, and local guidelines and requirements for this program. For example, state requirements for the length of the school day and the supervision ratio

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contradict the local teacher contract that lists the teachers' rights to a duty-free lunch and equitable planning time (Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE), 2005; Tennessee Code Annotated (T.C.A.) 49-6-Part 1). Teacher request for clarification in the conflicting legal issues have resulted in different interpretations from the supervisor, principals, and Head Start administrators.

The pre-k teachers have expressed concerns about perceptions of isolation. These teachers are physically isolated from the rest of the school personnel due to the location of the classroom within the physical layout of the school buildings. In most situations the teachers do not have a peer teacher at this instructional level located at their assigned schools, and they are often omitted from school functions due to the focus and nature of the pre-k classrooms. Due to the unique state mandates and philosophies of preschool classrooms, site level administrators and K-12 teachers have no experience or knowledge of appropriate instructional strategies or classroom management techniques for the pre-k classrooms.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the preschool program in the Greene County School system and to develop a better understanding of the impact that the regulations for pre-k classrooms and the system's resulting organizational practices have on principals' and teachers' perceptions of the teaching and learning in the classroom.

Research Questions

This research was guided by two research questions:

1. How do the organizational practices and the regulations for a pre-k class impact principal and teacher perceptions of teaching and learning in the classroom?

2. How do principals and teachers define their perceived supports and barriers to teaching and learning in the pre-k classrooms?

Significance of the Study

The dual purpose of this study was to use the findings to provide information for other school systems in developing a successful and effective pre-k program and to improve the current Greene County Schools pre-k program. The information obtained from this study could provide one approach to organizing a pre-k program in all school systems addressing the conflicts between federal, state, and local mandates. Locally, the information can be used to better understand any legal, organizational, or social concerns inherent in the Greene County Schools pre-k classrooms.

This qualitative study could provide beneficial information for use by other school systems implementing or continuing pre-k classrooms in the state of Tennessee. Nine of the classrooms in this study have a partnership with Head Start. The information obtained about the dual program requirements as a result of this partnership could benefit other Tennessee school systems implementing preschool programs in a collaborative process with Head Start. Local and state policymakers could benefit from the information derived about the conflicting legal requirements. This study provides useful information about organizational matters for state personnel, central office personnel, principals, teachers, and Head Start personnel. Other researchers or educators could use the definitions and understanding of the phenomena to identify and evaluate possible solutions to address the concerns of the stakeholders involved in the process of implementing a preschool program. Addressing any stakeholder concerns discovered through this study could lead to a higher level of teacher satisfaction and quality educational opportunity for students. The individual benefits of

participating in this study could be the development of supportive relationships from other members of the group and the knowledge gained from this study.

Delimitations of the Study

Considering the originality of the phenomenon and the nature of the distinct sets of participants, the qualitative research methods of focus groups, participant as observer, document review, and classroom observations are the best tools to provide the most useful and accurate data for this research. The study was limited to two distinct sets of stakeholders consisting of Greene County pre-k teachers and Greene County administrators for participation in homogeneous focus groups.

Researcher Perspective

As the current curriculum supervisor of grades pre-k through three with the Greene County Schools, the researcher of this study is the supervisor of the pre-k teachers, peer to the principals, and a professional partner with the Head Start administrators. These relationships are very collaborative, trusting, and collegial in nature. The duties of the researcher for the past 4 years have included the completion of administrative tasks required for the development of the pre-k program in the Greene County Schools. Examples of these duties are obtaining funding via annual grant proposals for the pre-k program, assisting in the hiring of the pre-k teachers, supervising these teachers, working as a professional peer to the principals, and developing the partnership with Head Start, and working with Head Start personnel to provide support to the classroom teacher.

The researcher is very committed to quality education and believes that the quality of an educational program is a direct result of teacher empowerment and focus on student need.

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A collaborative, supportive, and respectful environment is mandatory for the development of teacher empowerment and a compassionate focus on student needs.

Due to the researcher's professional position and philosophical beliefs about teacher empowerment and a student centered approach to education, the researcher has encouraged the teachers to engage in open communication. This communication has focused on perceived effective practices and concerns that may hinder their ability to deliver quality instruction to their students. The researcher has become sympathetic to the concerns discussed, which have no apparent solution. These feelings of sympathy have lead to a burning desire to better understand this phenomenon with the belief that a better understanding will define the exact nature and validity of the teachers' concerns.

The researcher has committed a lot of personal and professional time, energy, and emotion to the successful implementation of the pre-k program in the Greene County School System. As a result the researcher has developed a sense of ownership of the program, which evokes all of the typical human emotions of pride and protectiveness. These emotions are tempered with the logic embedded in the high expectations for teacher and partnership performance held by the researcher.

Definition of Terms

The following list of terms will assist in the understanding of the information presented in this study. These terms are frequently used in the educational field but may not be easily understood by the layperson.

Case Study – Case study can have multiple meanings. In this study, a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context (Sofaer, 1999).

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Constructivist Theory – Constructivist Theory is a theory of child development and learning that aligns with the belief that children learn and develop through interaction with the environment and the people in that environment (Huitt & Hummel, 2003).

Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142) – Federal law that requires states to develop and implement policies to assure a free appropriate public education for students with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2005).

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) – This law, signed by President Johnson, is considered to be the first and most comprehensive education law by the federal government. It provided large amounts of monetary funding for the professional development of kindergarten through twelfth grade teachers, instructional materials, supplemental resources, and parent involvement (National Education Association, 2002).

Focus Groups – Focus groups are organized discussions with a selected group of individuals to obtain information about their experiences and perceptions of a topic (McNamara, 2006; Sofaer, 1999).

Grounded Theory – Grounded Theory is an inductive research method used in qualitative research of the social science disciplines in which theory emerges from the data (Borgatti, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) – This federal law enacted in 1990 mandated a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment for students with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2005).

Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA) – Federal law that mandates increased accountability, increased parent involvement, and research-based practices and materials (U.S. Department of Education, 2005).

Mastery Learning – Mastery learning is an instructional method that requires students to demonstrate proficiency on a specific learning objective before advancing to a subsequent learning objective (Eisner, 2000).

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) – This act updated ESEA and focuses on greater student and teacher accountability, flexible and local control, increased parent options, and effective teaching methods (National Education Association, 2002).

Qualitative Research – This method of research focuses on the spoken and written word of individuals involved in the case study, uses the researcher as the data collection tool, and provides a comprehensive understanding of human behavior in a specific context (Sofaer, 1999).

Standards-based Learning – Standards-based learning is an educational reform intended to objectively measure student performance (Scott-Little, Kagan, & Frelow, 2003).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Historical Overview of Preschool

The idea that children are the hope of the future has focused educators and philosophers on early schooling since the 3rd century B.C. During this era of history, Plato proposed to remove very young children from their parents and place them in training programs. Philosophers such as Comenius, Pestalozzi, Frankel, and Locke continued to recommend early schooling as a benefit for society throughout the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries (Schwartz, 1997). In the present day early childhood education has become a national issue that involves all levels of government, various professionals, and the public.

Schwartz (1997) stated that early childhood education did not exist in the United States until the 19th century. These early programs began in the 1800s as a function of economic necessity and were fundamentally organized childcare programs for working mothers. During World War II the government became involved by providing federal funds for childcare programs that enabled women to work in the war related industries. Prior to the Great Society and War on Poverty policies enacted by the federal government during the 1960s social revolution, considered a time of rebellion against conservative social norms, the goal of early childhood education was to provide custodial childcare. With the influence of the social revolution, early childhood changed its focus toward cognitive development experiences via social enrichment activities. Many of the early programs, like Head Start, aligned with the guidelines for early intervention for special needs or at risk children. According to Hechinger (as cited in Schwartz, 1997) the intent of these compensatory

education programs was to address the deficient parental care and training at an early age and to better enable these children to be productive members of society as adults.

The fields of educational psychology and federal law also contributed to this change of focus for early childhood education in the 1960s. Jean Piaget developed a theory of cognitive development that consisted of four stages. His theory, which provided some of the foundation for constructivist learning, suggested the two instructional techniques of discovery learning and supporting the developing interests of the child (Huitt & Hummel, 2003). Jerome Bruner extended Piaget's work to describe 3 systems a child uses to acquire knowledge. These systems are enactive, use of manipulative objects; iconic, use of sensorial based mental images; and symbolic, use of language and reasoning (Hevern, 2004). Benjamin Bloom developed a cognitive taxonomy that listed cognitive operations in 6 increasingly complex levels and introduced the concept of mastery learning (i.e., goal attainment). Bloom also recommended the implementation of early childhood education programs to address the needs of children from underprivileged environments. These programs would provide the appropriate stimulation during the period of rapid intellectual growth that occurs during the preschool years (Eisner, 2000). In 1957 Soviet Union's launch of Sputnik, the first satellite, focused the United States on improved education in the areas of math and science by requiring higher curriculum standards at an earlier age.

Schweinhart et al. (2005) claimed that the study with the greatest impact on early childhood education during the 1960s was the High Scope/Perry Preschool Project. David P. Weikart began this 40-year longitudinal study from 1962-1967. Data were collected annually for the first 5 years of the study then at scheduled times spanning a 4-decade period on the 123 African Americans identified as living at the poverty level and at a high risk of failing

school. At age five, 67% of the students enrolled in the program obtained a score of 90 or above on an IQ assessment, and only 28% of those not enrolled in the program performed at this level. Schweinhart et al. (2005) stated that the Perry Project continued to document the impact that a quality preschool had on today's society. After 40 years the individuals enrolled in the Perry Project program continued to excel in the academics, made more money, and committed fewer crimes than those individuals who did not receive the early childhood instruction (Schweinhart et al., 2005).

Another influential long-term study that focused on early invention of children from low income families was the Abecedarian Project that began in 1972 and was conducted at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. This study differed from others in that the treated group of participants began the program in early infancy and continued through 5 years of high quality exposure in the areas of social, emotional, and cognitive development with emphasis on language skills. The children of both groups, treatment and no treatment, were from 18 months to 21 years of age. The findings of this study were very similar to the Perry Project. Females enrolled in the program delayed their pregnancies and had fewer children than the females of the control group. The individuals who received the early intervention scored higher on cognitive and academic assessment, completed higher levels of education, refrained from the use of drugs, and were employed in higher skilled jobs (Advocates for Youth, 2006; UNC FPG Child Development Institute, 2006).

In 1965 the federal government addressed education through a comprehensive reform, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), which provided substantial funding for kindergarten through 12th grade education. The act addressed educator professional development, instructional materials, support resources, and parent involvement.

Since its enactment ESEA has been reauthorized every 5 years and has occasionally been renamed. The premises of ESEA of providing a quality education for all children remained intact as evidenced by the statement made by President George W. Bush in January of 2001, "These reforms express my deep belief in our public schools and their mission to build the mind and character of every child, from every background, in every part of America" (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). With the passage of NCLB, students and teachers were held more accountable, local educators had more control, parents had school options, and professional development became more innovative (National Education Association, 2002).

During the 1975 session the United States Congress focused on the education for students with disabilities with the enactment of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142). The purpose of this act was to assure a free and appropriate education for all children with disabilities, to protect the rights of the children and parents, to support state and local educational agencies in the education for all students with disabilities, and to hold educators accountable for providing this education. In 1986 the updates to Public Law 94-142 required the states to provide programs and services to individuals with disabilities beginning at birth. The 1975 reauthorization of this act changed the name of this act to Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). With this reauthorization emphasis was given to developing national support systems to better address the needs of preschool age children with disabilities. On December 3, 2004, the Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA) was signed into law reauthorizing IDEA and aligning the law with the goals of NCLB. The intent of the alignment between the two laws was to ensure that high standards were set for all students and that every child received a quality education. Emphasis was also given to the early and accurate identification of

children with disabilities and the identification of appropriate support to enable them to be successful socially and academically (U.S. Department of Education, 2005).

<div align="center">*Head Start*</div>

The U.S. Department of Human Services (2006) outlined the history of Head Start. In 1964 the Federal Government assigned a panel of child development experts the task of designing a program to meet the needs of preschool aged children considered to be disadvantaged due to low family income. The report developed by this panel lead to the implementation of an 8-week summer program, Project Head Start, in 1965, which was funded by the Office of Economic Opportunity. The intent of the program was to break the cycle of poverty for families of low income by addressing the emotional, social, health, nutritional, and psychological needs of the children. Children from 3 years of age to school entry age were recruited for this program. This successful program was well accepted by parents, education, early childhood specialist, and community leaders.

In 1969 Head Start was transferred to the Office of Child Development in the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Currently the Head Start program is found within the Administration for Children and Families in the Department of Health and Human Services. Head Start programs operate in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Territories. Each program is locally administered, and the Department of Health and Human Services Regional offices awards the grants for funding (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006).

After the success of Project Head Start many states, including the State of Tennessee, implemented Head Start programs using federal funds. Currently Tennessee Head Start (2007) has 29 Head Start programs that provide services to nearly 20,000 children and

families. These programs include 936 classrooms at 367 preschool centers and usually involve a partnership with the local school districts.

Upper East Tennessee Human Development Agency (UETHDA) provides several community action programs including Head Start services in the upper east region of Tennessee (Tennessee Head Start, 2009). This agency provides services to 1,105 prekindergarten students through 68 classrooms as a result of partnerships with the local school systems in 8 counties (Upper East Tennessee Head Start, 2006).

Current Focus, Program Models, Theory, and Philosophy of Preschool
Focus

The changes in the demographics of employment, social and political influences, and research on the effects of preschool have significantly contributed to a trend for preschool programs to become more available to all children and to have an academic focus (Schwartz, 1997). The governmental desire for positive child outcomes in conjunction with the accountability of funds invested in early childhood education have increased the pressure for educators to identify specific performance standards that should be mastered before a child enters kindergarten (Scott-Little et al., 2003; Stipek, 2005). This new focus of student performance standards contradicts the past approaches that operated under a system of program standards only. However, program standards remain important as they regulate the delivery of services in areas such as classroom size, supervision ratios, and curricula.

The trend toward a more academic approach in the preschool classrooms has not been without resistance. Brovoda and Leong (n.d.) claimed that the emphasis on developing academic skills in children at younger and younger ages has taken a toll on dramatic playtime, an activity that they deem important in teaching children to concentrate on tasks

and cooperate with others. As a result they strongly urged early childhood educators to stand firm in the support of play, which they consider to be the cornerstone for all learning. In addition, Shepard, Kangan, and Wurtz claimed that children of preschool age developed in a sporadic manner and often demonstrated growth at varying rates across the developmental areas of physical, intelligence, cognitive, emotional, and social education (as cited in Scott-Little et al., 2003). Researchers and educators that have embraced the potential benefits of standards-based learning should recognize the need to balance standards-based learning with the knowledge of children's growth and developmental patterns.

A review of the literature addressing the trend toward an academically focused and standards-based educational program for preschool aged children indicated that researchers and educators support this approach to enhance the development of early literacy skills. Roskos (2004) claimed that early literacy education should include strong standards, appropriate assessments, quality curricula, and research-based instruction. Strickland and Riley-Ayers (2006) stated that early literacy development was a function of a child's language and literacy experiences, and that limited experiences for a young child could result in difficulty in learning to read. They stated that standards should be set for child outcomes, curriculum content, and teacher preparation to assist in the establishment of clarity of purpose and a shared vision for early literacy education. Early literacy curricula and teaching practices should to be evidence based and integrated within all domains of learning. Strickland and Riley-Ayers (2006) encouraged policy makers at the state and local levels to develop early literacy standards that articulate with K-12 programs.

Program Models

The current variety of program models for preschool education can be directly related to the 1994 reauthorization of Head Start that resulted in several programmatic changes (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006). This reauthorization required Head Start to focus on school readiness, establish student performance measures, and to deliver higher quality services and employ more educated teachers. The 2003 Head Start reauthorization ignited debates about the devolution of the federally controlled early education program to state controlled programs by questioning the quality and effectiveness of early educations programs provided under state control (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006). On one side of the issue was that Head Start had been effectively addressing the social-emotional and medical needs of "at risk" children since President Lyndon Johnson initiated the program in 1965 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006). Funding for these programs was provided directly to local agencies, which offer a broad school readiness and social support program for 3 and 4 year olds residing in economically disadvantaged homes. The opposing faction claimed state directed programs could also provide a quality and effective early childhood program. Henry, Gordon, and Rickman (2006) conducted a study comparing the state prekindergarten and Head Start programs in the state of Georgia. They concluded that upon entering kindergarten the developmental status of the children attending the state program was at least as high as that of the children attending Head Start programs. The results of the study negated the fears that state prekindergarten programs would hinder the developmental status of new kindergarten students. However, the matter of social services offered through Head Start was not included in the study.

Another study conducted by Landry, Swank, Smith, Michael, and Gunnewig (2006) in the state of Texas from 2001 to 2003 addressed early literacy skills through a teacher training program. They claimed that the Head Start programs did not use a curriculum to enhance early literacy skills for fear that a cognitive focus would negatively impact the children's social-emotional development. In addition many teachers in the Head Start programs did not have a formal postsecondary education. Landry et al. (2006) recommended a combination of teacher directed and child centered activities for the instruction of 3 and 4 year olds. In addition, they discovered that teachers with 4 or more years of education were more likely to have students achieve greater gains in early literacy outcomes than teachers with 2 or fewer years of education. However, some educators with lower levels of education also demonstrated high student performance gains.

Dixie Jordon (2005) with Parent's Press in San Francisco, California provided information on the various program models available for the parents of preschool aged children. Some of the more popular models listed are Montessori, developmental, Head Start, parent co-ops, religious, and academic. The Montessori approach or philosophy allows a child to progress through a series of learning activities at his or her own rate. A major component of this approach is the availability of multisensory materials for student manipulation. The developmental model, the most widely used, provides a variety of developmentally appropriate activities for student self-selection. The children can participate in these social or cognitive activities in small groups or individually. Teacher directed whole group activities of singing and story telling are scheduled for brief periods several times a day. In addition to student selected developmental activities Head Start programs provide social services to the child and family. The oldest program model for preschool children is

the parent co-op model that dates back to 1915. The programs are usually part-time, require

parents to volunteer, hire an early childhood professional to conduct the program, and can be

grounded in religion. Religious programs are sponsored by religious organizations and can

adopt other preschool philosophies for program delivery. However, religious training is a

component of the curriculum. The academic programs emphasize a preparation for

elementary school. These programs are very structured and incorporate academic readiness

and paper-pencil activities into the daily schedule.

Theory and Philosophy

The underlying theory of the current pre-k programs relies heavily on the program

model. For example, the academic approach is grounded in the cognitive or information

processing approach that is based on the works of Jerome Bruner and Lev Vygotsky. This

approach requires the provision of a range of learning activities and concepts for core course

objectives (Boetcher, 2005). Some professionals use the behaviorist theory developed by

John B. Watson and B.F. Skinner that emphasizes the importance of observable behaviors

and operant conditioning and generally uses direct instruction techniques (Early Childhood

Education, 2006). The Montessori approach adheres to the maturationist theory that was

advanced by the works of Arnold Gessell and Maria Monetssori (North Central Regional

Educational Laboratory (NCREL), 2004; Olaf, 2004). The premise of this theory is that

learning is a biological process that occurs naturally. This approach also claims that the role

of the instructor is to develop an environment and curriculum that allows for a child's

individual exploration and creativity based on his or her interests. Head Start and other

developmental programs align with stage theories such as those developed by Erik Erikson

and Jean Piaget. Erikson's developmental theory labels the stages of a child's psychosocial

development in learning self-esteem and trust. Piaget's theory names the stages of a child's cognitive processes in the way he or she learns from birth to age 15 (Straker, 2006).

Each preschool program has a dominant theory that guides the program's philosophy, curriculum, and instruction; however, most programs incorporate several theories. For example, the Reggia Emilia, a new approach to early childhood, incorporates the maturationist theory via the emergent curriculum as determined by student interest and constructivism learning theory through the manipulation of the environment to enhance the construction of knowledge (Vaage, 2003). In addition, early childhood teacher preparation programs reflect this eclectic approach by requiring the study of a variety of philosophical theories. The child development and constructivism learning theories are dominant in teacher training programs (Ryan & Grieshaber, 2005; Theories of Child Development, 2006). In fact the Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI) (2003) recommended this multiple theory approach in a position paper that stated that the knowledge necessary to help young children explore and interpret the world around them in a way that makes sense to them should be a required component of the teacher preparation curriculum. ACEI also recommended that early childhood educators should have a solid grounding in the child development theories.

Based on the dominant child development and constructivism learning theories of early childhood education and the goal of preparing children for kindergarten, the resulting philosophies matching these theories are that the programs are child-centered and play oriented. This combined approach is conducive in allowing the young child to interact and explore his or her environment to develop knowledge from the experiences. In addition, the organization of the environment with the placement of well-organized centers permits

children to self-select activities of interest (Bodrova & Leong, 2006; Landry et al., 2006; Scott-Little et al., 2003; Stipek, 2005). The curriculum addresses the domains of cognitive, social-emotional, fine arts, and motor skills through this approach (Theories of Child Development, 2006). Emphasis is placed on assisting each child to build self-esteem, confidence, curiosity, and self-discipline in a fun way that allows him or her to explore personal interests while engaging in social interaction (Early Childhood Education, 2006). Current preschool programs, as required by the United States Government with the Early Childhood Initiative announced on April 2, 2002, are literature based programs and held accountable for standards of learning in early literacy, language, and numeric skills as they align with State K-12 standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Prekindergarten in Tennessee and Greene County

Tennessee Pre-K Program

In 1998 Tennessee initiated a pilot early childhood education program for 4 year olds considered at risk for completing a successful education due to limited income, disability, or other at risk factors. Under the guidelines of this program, every prekindergarten classroom was required to have licensed and highly qualified teachers and assistants, a teacher to student ratio of 1:10, a maximum of 20 students, and age appropriate curriculum (TDOE, *Tennessee's Pre-K Pilot Program*, 2006). Tennessee began this program with 30 classrooms, and the program had grown 147 classrooms for the 2003-2004 school year (TDOE, *Pre-K in Tennessee*, 2006).

In May of 2005 the Voluntary Pre-K for Tennessee Act of 2005 passed both the House and the Senate. This action was the result of the enactment of an early childhood initiative announced by President Bush on April 2, 2002. This initiative required the

Department of Health and Human Services to implement a new accountability system to ensure that Head Start programs and state preschool programs assessed students according to the standards of learning in early literacy, language, and numeric skills (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). This law approved the use of excess lottery dollars to establish quality prekindergarten classrooms via a competitive grant process. The initiative was to expand the opportunity for Tennessee's 4-year-old children, with priority given to those 4 year olds who are at risk, an opportunity to develop school readiness skills in a positive educational environment that promoted success in kindergarten and throughout the child's life.

The Tennessee of Department of Education (TDOE) sponsored the first grant competition for *Pre-K for Tennessee* classrooms and awarded grants for 300 classrooms across the state in June and July of 2005 (TDOE, *Voluntary Pre-K for Tennessee Initiative*, n.d.). As a result 8,900 4 year olds received pre-k services through the 146 pilot classrooms and the 300 new classrooms (TDOE, *Pre-K in Tennessee*, 2006). For the 2006-2007 school year the state added 230 classes through an expansion grant. The additional classrooms provided the opportunity for 13,500 students to enroll in this program (TDOE, *Voluntary Pre-K for Tennessee Initiative*, n.d.).

The local education agencies (LEA) that received the grants were required to provide a program that met the state rules and laws under the guidance of the Department of Education (DOE) or the Department of Human Services (DHS). The state rules are listed in the Tennessee Rules and Regulations (TRR) (TRR 0520-12-1), and the laws may be found in Tennessee Code Annotated (T.C.A.) (T.C.A. 49-6-Part 1). Classrooms that developed a partnership with Head Start were required to meet the DHS guidelines for licensure. Other classrooms solely under the jurisdiction of the Local Education Authority (LEA) were

required to obtain licensure under the DOE guidelines. Licensure under the jurisdiction of DOE and DHS is issued on an annual basis.

Each year, the Tennessee Department of Education, Office of Early Learning publishes a Scope of Services that lists the required program components and annual reports (TDOE, *Voluntary Pre-K for Tennessee Initiative*, n.d.). This document, grounded in state law and rules, addresses the areas of: child eligibility, length of school day, length of school year, licensure, enrollment, attendance, health, nutrition, safety, transportation, curriculum, transition into pre-k, transition into kindergarten, family engagement, collaboration with the community, classroom assessment, and required reports. The curriculum for these classrooms must be developmentally appropriate and use research-based educational curriculum that aligns with the Tennessee Early Childhood Education Early Learning Developmental Standards (TDOE, *Early Childhood Early Childhood Education Early Learning Developmental Standards*, n.d.). The required instruction must address the developmental areas of language, cognitive, social-emotional, and physical, and the delivery of the curriculum is to include direct instruction, individualized instruction, group activities, and self-selected center activities. Materials are to be used that offer concrete and relevant experiences with technology integrated into the curriculum. The educational experiences are to meet the wide range of student development levels, interests, abilities, and cultural diversity. In addition, the classroom activities must be determined by teacher observation and assessment of each child's developmental ability and growth (TDOE, *Voluntary Pre-K for Tennessee Initiative*, n.d.).

Greene County Pre-K Program

The Pre-K Program in the Greene County Schools began during the 2004-2005 school year. Three classrooms were implemented that year with local funds and in partnership with Head Start. The following school year, six classrooms were added to the program through a grant awarded by the state that used excess lottery money. Partnerships with Head Start were also developed for these classrooms. During the 2006-2007 school year five more classrooms were added to the Greene County Schools Pre-K program through a grant that addressed the expansion of current programs. The state funded these classrooms from the general budget. Head Start was unable to develop a partnership with the last five classrooms due to limited funds. In addition the last classroom awarded after the beginning of the school year resulted in the change of funding of one of the 2005-2006 classrooms from excess lottery funds to pilot funds. Changes for the 2007-2008 school year included the addition of one classroom at one of the schools, a new classroom located in a community child care center, the change of funding from local to state for two preexisting classrooms, and state funds for all classrooms generating from the general budget instead of lottery funds. The classroom in the community is the result of a partnership with a not-for-profit organization. Greene County Schools has contracted with this agency to house and staff this classroom.

The Head Start partnership developed for nine of the classrooms is governed by an annual contract between Greene County Schools and Head Start that outlines the responsibilities for each organization. Head Start provides funding for various classroom materials, teacher assistants, three Family Resource Specialists (FRS), eight bus drivers, and meals for students and employees. Greene County Schools provides funding for the teachers,

one FRS, one bus driver, various classroom materials, playground upgrades, and building maintenance. Both of the organizations provide inservice for the teachers and assistants and transportation for the children. Greene County Schools provides the facilities and speech services, and Head Start provides family meetings, social services, and medical screenings. For the past 2 years the curriculum for these classrooms has been greatly influenced by the Greene County Schools.

The three different funding sources and Head Start partnerships with only nine of the classrooms has resulted in a different licensure source and program services from one classroom to the next. For example, the classrooms with a Head Start Partnership have transportation provided and monthly parent meetings to address required Head Start topics. Another difference in the partnered classrooms is the age of the students enrolled. Only two classes may enroll up to eight students who are 3 years of age. The contract between Head Start and Greene County Schools stipulates that the one classroom that is locally funded enroll only children from families at a poverty level of income as defined by federal standards. In addition, the partnered classroom teachers are required to administer the Learning Accomplishment Profile-Diagnostic (LAP-D) to each students three times a year. The only difference in the Scope of Services for the classroom that has the pilot label is that up to eight 3-year-old children may be enrolled. With the support of Tennessee Department of Education Office of Early Learning, the change in funding occurred October 2006 to address the concerns over the low enrollment for this specific classroom. At this same time the original funding for this classroom was transferred to implement a new classroom at a different school.

The Greene County Schools pre-k program is a complex organization with a variety funding sources, services provided, and enrollment requirements among the classrooms (see Appendix A). Ten of the 11 elementary schools in the Greene County system house at least one pre-k classroom. Only the locally funded and pilot funded classrooms may enroll children 3 years of age. All but one of the classrooms partnered with Head Start are licensed through DHS. One major difference exists between the DOE and DHS license. An outside agency is contracted to conduct the Early Childhood Environmental Ratings Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) for the DHS license on an annual basis, and the DOE license requires the same evaluation to be conducted in-house every 2 years. All classrooms funded via the state must also conduct an Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) every 2 years. In addition six of the classrooms are housed in the main building of the school; however, two of the classrooms housed in the main building are isolated within the building structure.

Dialogue

If we try to listen we find it extraordinarily difficult, because we are always projecting our opinions and ideas, our prejudices, our background, our inclinations, our impulses; when they dominate we hardly listen at all to what is being said...

Isaacs et al. (2006)

Dialogue, defined in *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* (2006) as an exchange of ideas and opinions, is an important component of data collection during focus group sessions. However, the concept of dialogue as a data collection tool in qualitative research advances past a mere exchange of ideas. The investigator, the data collection tool in qualitative

research, must be able to listen without resistance by allowing the opportunity to hear what is being said (Isaacs, Hanig, Harinish, & Woolley, 2006).

Dialogue used for group thinking and team learning situations emerged in the early 1980s through the work of physicist Bohm. His work continued at MIT's Center for Organizational Learning where his work influenced others, such as Senge and Isaacs, to continue research in the area of systems thinking and collective learning through dialogue (Isaacs, 1999; Senge, 1990). Dialogue, the word, originated from the Greek word, *dia • logos* that is defined as a flow through of reason and meaning (Isaacs, 1999; Isaacs et al., 2006; Senge, 1990). Many definitions of dialogue are in existence. Bohm explained it best when he described dialogue as a means of exploring meaning via group effort. He claimed that the purpose of dialogue is not to produce a result and that meaning is active and transformative (Bohm, 1990). Many practitioners define dialogue in comparison and in contrast to discussion. The universal belief is that discussion is the act of stating and defending opinions and can be considered a form of debate (Isaacs, 1999; Isaacs et al., 2006; Senge, 1990). Senge (1990) defined dialogue as "the capacity of members of a team to suspend assumptions and enter into genuine 'thinking together" (p. 10). Isaacs (1999) stated that dialogue "is about a shared inquiry, a way of thinking and reflecting together" (p. 9).

Isaacs et al. (2006) provided a four leverage point dialogue model. The components of this model are discussed in detail in this text. A simple explanation is that this model is a liner representation of a nonlinear phenomenon. The results are what actually occur. The container is the context of the situation, both internally and externally, and requires an environment of trust and mutual respect. The context is leverage point #1 and involves the preparation of a protected physical setting. The intention is the focus of what each individual

desires to gain from the conversation. This is leverage point #2 that involves managing one's intentions to obtain the desired positive results from the conversation. Action embodies what is actually said and done. Action contains leverage point #3 and requires an individual to understand his or her process of thinking and the act of listening carefully to what is said without interpretation. Action also includes leverage point #4 that requires one to understand how he or she acts. One can advocate others that can be constructive or destructive; or one can inquire and be open to encourage or discourage questions. The authors' advice for leverage point #4 is for an individual to develop an awareness of the gap between self-intentions and actions by observing the reactions of others. Effort to narrow the gap can be made by remaining open to the opinions of others and maintaining a balance between advocacy and inquiry. The final component of this model, frame, represents the ideas each person has about himself or herself, others, and the situation.

Isaacs (1999) presented three levels of human interaction that are: produce coherent actions, create fluid structures of interactions, and provide wholesome space for dialogue. To achieve coherent actions requires the act of closing the gap between what one says and actually does in action. Isaacs suggested developing a *capacity for new behavior*. The four components for new behavior are voicing (speaking the truth), listening (without resistance), respecting (accepting another's opinion), and suspending (removal of assumptions, judgment, and certainty). To create fluid structures of interactions one must develop *predictive intuition*. Predictive intuition is the ability to identify forces that can undermine conversation, change any inhibiting structures of the conversations, and allow for thoughts and ideas to flow freely. The space or context of the dialogue requires both internal and external considerations. Isaacs has labeled this concept the *architecture of the invisible*.

To better understand the limitations and flow of information during dialogue, Isaacs (1999) provided 2 models, *core principles of dialogue* and *four-player model*. The principles of dialogue presented by Isaacs are participation, awareness, unfolding, and coherence. The principle of participation is beneficial in addressing the problem of abstraction. Abstraction involves an individual disengaging from the holistic conception of a situation that should combine ethics, science, and art. In addition, one should remember that he or she is a part of the whole situation. Limitations of certainty are addressed by the principle of awareness. Certainty can become a limitation due to partial understanding or rigid views. Awareness involves the suspension of certainty to enable the ability to consider multiple points of view that leads to fluid dialogue. Unfolding is the act of recognizing and accepting the new reality without the influence of partial understanding or assumptions. The last principle, coherence, relates to the violent defensiveness against others' views by denying any understanding of their ideas and imposing self-developed interpretations on them. Coherence is the art of gathering the information to develop a holistic view by inquiring and allowing connections to develop between the related parts.

In a 1995 seminar Kantor presented a "Four-Player Model" that identified four actions an individual may take in a conversation (Isaacs, 1999). These actions are move, follow, bystand, and oppose. When an individual makes a *move* in a conversation, he or she is initiating an action and providing direction. A second individual may *follow* the first person and provide completion or support to the thought. Another individual may *oppose* or challenge the idea for correction, and the fourth person, the *bystander*, comments to expand the concept and provide perspective. Kantor insisted that a productive conversation contained all four actions. In a 1999 article published in *The Systems Thinker* Isaac shared two models

that extended the Four-Player Model in the areas of the advocacy and inquiry component and leadership practices of dialogue. Isaacs stated, "To advocate well, you must move and oppose well; to inquire, you must bystand and follow" (p. 3). The second model provided a visual graphic of the correlating leadership capacity behaviors with the four conversation actions. He shared that a leader can enhance a conversation by using a true voice to encourage others to move, participating and listening to other as they provide completion, respecting the coherence of new or unusual views, and suspending self-developed certainties to accept others' perspectives.

Case Study Method

"Qualitative research methods are valuable in providing rich descriptions of complex phenomena; tracking unique or unexpected events; illuminating the experience and interpretation of events by actors with widely differing stakes and roles; and giving voice to those whose views are rarely heard," (Sofaer, 1999, p. 1101). Sofaer emphasized the importance of using qualitative research to study a phenomenon before the event or situation changes or disappears. Ragin (1999) claimed that a case oriented research strategy is vital for developing a true understanding of the facts of a specific event or situation.

Sofaer (1999) specifically addressed the qualitative research methods of naturalistic inquiry and participant observation commonly used in case study research. Naturalistic inquiry often requires a long-term exposure to a setting or group of people, and participant observation requires the researcher to become a part of the setting or process being studied. She stated that case study research can be short in duration and does not require continuous contact with the setting and that the data collection is structured. Other typical methods used

for conducting a case study are key informant interviews, structured observations of meetings and events, content analyses of documents, focus groups, and cognitive interviews.

As opposed to using large samples and adhering to a rigid protocol to study a limited number of variables, a case study provides an intense focus on a single phenomenon within a real-life context that inherently contains a multitude of various points of interest (Yin, 1999). As a result Yin claimed that case studies should be considered from the point of view of the study design and not a prescribed data collection method. In addition, he supported the use of the case study method due to its flexibility in tolerating the unclear boundaries between a phenomenon and its context. Sofaer (1999) stated an advantage of this method is the increased ability to describe the phenomenon and develop an understanding of how and why a single situation can often be interpreted differently by the various stakeholders.

Flyvbjerg (2006) addressed and corrected five misunderstandings of case study research. The misunderstandings focus on theory, validity, and reliability. One issue with theory is concerned with the importance of the theoretical, context independent, knowledge in comparison to the practical, context dependent, knowledge when general belief is that case study research relies on practical knowledge. Flyvbjerg claimed that the two types of knowledge are equally important and argued that theoretical knowledge is needed to learn new tasks while practical knowledge and experiences allow for the development of expertise in the setting or situation. The second issue with theory focuses on the ability to develop and test theoretical hypothesis and is intricately woven into the validity and reliability of case study research. Flyvbjerg stated that the purpose of this type of research is to obtain the deepest understanding of a phenomenon that can only be achieved via a well selected setting or event. In this manner valid theory can be developed and assessed. Internally validity of a

case study research is developed through a rigorous description then a contrast and comparison of the multitude of data collected from a variety of sources. Finally, Flyvbjerg claimed that the value to generalizing the findings of a case study is invaluable in providing additional information, supporting additional research, and falsifying other research. On generalization Yin stated, "The remedy is to consider a case study, as a unit, to be equivalent to an experiment, as a unit; multiple case studies may then be considered equivalent to multiple experiments" (1999, p. 1212). In addition Yin reminded the reader that the goal of qualitative research is to develop theory and not be driven by theory. Based on his corrections, Flyvbjerg stated, "The case study is a necessary and sufficient method for certain important research tasks in the social sciences, and it is a method that holds up well when compared to other methods in the gamut of social science research methodology" (2006, p. 241).

Case study evidence must be separate from the researcher's interpretation of the evidence. Yin (1999) suggested the development of a database from the raw data provided by the various sources within the context. Golafshani (2003) stated that triangulation can include a variety of data collection and analysis methods to test the validity and reliability of a study as determined by the purpose of the research. Examples of data sources for case study research are document review, interviews, direct observations, participant observation, and physical artifacts.

Focus Group Method

Focus groups provide an effective means to gain information about a selected group of individuals' views and experiences on a topic or phenomenon (Gibbs, 1997). This research technique involves organized interviews with a group of people at the same time. McNamara

(2006) stated that an interviewer could obtain in-depth information about a phenomenon with the use of well articulated and open-ended questions that focus on the inquiry of the research. Gibbs (1997) claimed that insight and data are derived from the multiplicity of views and the emotional processes that occur within a group context.

Focus groups involve organized interviews with a group of individuals who meet a specific profile of characteristics. The groups are generally and intentionally homogenous along some dimensions and heterogeneous along other dimensions. A structured yet informal setting is used to explore a limited number of researcher developed questions (Sofaer, 1999). In-depth information from the multiple points of view resulting in theory development on the inquiry of the research can be obtained through this method (Gibbs, 1997; McNamara, 2006).

During a focus group session data are collected simultaneously via audiotape, videotape, an assigned observer, or note taking. Participants are informed of and agree to each method of data collection prior to the session. In addition to the method of data collection, participants should have an understanding of assured confidentiality throughout the data collection, data analysis, and narrative report of the study (Beyea & Nicoll, 2000b).

Focus groups are the best method when it is apparent that the interactions among group members provide as much understanding of the phenomenon as the statements by the individual participants (Sofaer, 1999). Beyea and Nicoll (2000a) listed several advantages of the focus group method. Some of the advantages listed are: the ability to collect data from many people in a short period of time, an economical and efficient method of collecting data, the provision of a positive experience for participants, the opportunity to facilitate discussion among participants, and the opportunity for group members to hear diverse viewpoints.

Classroom Observations and Participant as Observer

Kidder listed the following criteria for the use of observation as a research tool: "(1) serves a formulated research purpose, (2) is planned deliberately, (3) is recorded systematically, and (4) is subjected to checks and controls on validity and reliability" (as cited in Merriam, 1998, p.95). Kawulich (2005) focused on participant observation for data collection and claimed that this form of observation has been proven successful as a research tool that provides an accurate representation of a culture. Merriam stated several reasons for gathering data via observation. Observations can provide a better understanding of the context of the phenomenon by supporting findings discovered during interviews. They may provide a reference point for additional interview. Additionally, observations provide an invaluable tool for collecting nonverbal data and relationships among stakeholders and focus group members.

Gold provided four stances to describe the relationship between the observer and what is observed (as cited in Merriam, 1998). These stances that describe the investigator's level of membership in the group are complete participant, participant as observer, observer as participant, and complete observer. The stances range from full investigator group participation to a full investigator spectator role. The participant as observer role was stated by Merriam as, "The researcher's observer activities that are known to the group, are subordinate to the researcher's role as a participant" (p. 101).

All authors of the literature reviewed stated that an investigator must begin with a purpose for observation by identifying what is to be observed and an observational guide (Kawulich, 2005; Merriam, 1998) or a set of established criteria (Ehgie & Ehgie, 2005). In developing an observational guide, Merriam suggested the elements of the physical setting,

the participants, activities and interactions, conversation, subtle factors, and observer

behavior. Ehgie and Ehgie emphasized that comprehensive, narrative documentation

describing the behaviors and activities observed be recorded during or immediately following

the observation.

Kawulich (2005) stated that field notes are recommended to collect data from

participant observations. Taylor and Bogdan provided several recall techniques for

investigators: (1) pay attention, (2) shift from a total group to a specific event or person

focus, (3) remember key words from responses, (4) focus on the initial and final remarks of

each conversation, and (5) mentally review scenes and remarks during pauses in the

observation (as cited in Merriam, 1998, p.105).

Document Review

The literature reviewed listed various definitions of document reviews in qualitative

case studies. All authors identified two major categories of public records and personal

documentation in document review (Cresswell, 2003; Mahoney, 1997; Merriam, 1998).

Public records refer to documents available to the public such as newspapers, official reports,

minutes of meetings, birth records, and agency manuals. Personal documentation is any form

of documentation developed by an individual. Examples of personal documentation are

diaries, emails, letters, and personal journals. Merriam specifically listed two more categories

of physical material and researcher generated documents for documentation review. Physical

materials may include any of the tools and instruments (e.g., modified equipment) used

within the everyday context of the phenomenon being studied. Another consideration under

this category is physical trace material that may include positional changes in persons being

observed, the amount of discarded material in an activity, or the size of a picture produced by

a child. Examples of researcher generated documents are a participant log developed during the study, researcher photographs, quantitative data, and field notes.

Document review is a beneficial tool in qualitative research. Mahoney (1997) claimed that existing records often yield information about a setting that can only be collected via document review. Denzin and Lincoln stated that documents and artifacts are valuable in the fact that they are unchanging over time (as cited in Ahuja, 2007). Researcher generated field notes become raw data for the study (Merriam, 1998). The field notes contain valuable data about the setting, people, activities, and researcher perceptions within the phenomenon being studied.

Constant Comparative Analysis Method

The constant comparative analysis method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) is a widely accepted and frequently used method of analyzing data to develop meaning from human phenomena within a context. Data collected from each source are independently coded and themes are developed. The data from each source are then compared and contrasted with each resulting in the triangulation of the data (Guion, 2006).

This grounded theory approach requires multiple readings of verbal data to identify categories and their relationships that provide a theoretical framework of the phenomenon (Borgatti, 2006). A grounded theory study relies on inductive reasoning processes to define and construct meaning from the data. The constant comparative analysis method developed by Strauss and Corbin (1998) provides an approach to understanding human phenomena within the context in which they are experienced (Thorne, 2000). The constant comparative method allows for the generation of theory using systematic and explicit coding and analytic

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procedures (Glaser & Holton, 2004). Merriam (1998) claimed that the basic strategy of this method is to constantly compare data to develop theory.

Various authors offered a variety of similar and overlapping steps in the use of the constant comparative analysis method (Glaser, 2004; Merriam, 1998; Thorne, 2000). Rubin and Rubin (1995) stated that the first stage of analysis is *recognition* that requires an initial reading to identify and label concepts, themes, events, and topical markers. Concepts are words that symbolize an important research problem idea; themes provide summary statements and definitions of the phenomenon; events are occurrences; and topical markers are proper nouns and numbers. They also stated that a second reading for clarification and synthesis to develop a refined definition of the categorical information must be conducted. The next step requires coding by labeling the various categories followed by sorting the data. The final step is to combine all of the derived information to provide meaning and develop theory.

The constant comparative analysis method developed by Strauss and Corbin (1998) provides structured and well defined steps for qualitative data analysis. Their six-step approach in the use of constant comparative analysis began with a microscopic examination of the data in the form of transcripts. A microscopic examination is conducted during the first reading of the transcripts and requires the addition of memo statements to record thoughts and themes. The second reading, open coding, involves bracketing the data into individual categories. Axial coding, merging the coded categories, follows open coding. The next step, selective or pattern coding, provides a theoretical framework for the study. The researcher must then code for process to identify relationships between the themes and patterns. The

final step of this process is to create a conditional and consequential matrix that provides a visual graphic of the theoretical framework.

Quality and Verification in Qualitative Research

Authors consistently combined validity and reliability and stated the importance of ethical behavior in qualitative research. For example, Merriam (1998) stated, "Ensuring validity and reliability in qualitative research involves conducting the investigation in an ethical manner" (p. 198). The collection of accurate data requires strict adherence to ethical standards of qualitative research. Flinders (as cited in Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007) listed four types of ethics for viewing and addressing ethical issues in qualitative research. These categories of ethics that provide a basis for researchers to assess their decisions and actions for moral standards are utilitarian, deontological, relational, and ecological. Only three of these types of ethics are readily evident in qualitative research. Deontological ethics involves honesty, fairness, and respect for others. Relational ethics is concerned with a caring attitude toward others, and ecological ethics considers the culture and social system of the phenomenon being studied.

Merriam (1998) provided definitions for internal validity, the match between the findings and reality; reliability, the replication of the research findings; and external validity, generalizing the findings to other situations. Merriam reminded the reader that the nature of qualitative research being situational specific leads to difficulties for traditional reliability and external validity. Golafshani (2003) claimed that qualitative researchers actually discuss credibility when referring to validity and reliability, and that the credibility of qualitative research relies only on the abilities of the researcher, the instrument of data collection. In addition, she added that qualitative researchers do not view validity and reliability as two

separate entities. Thorne (2000) stated that the findings of qualitative research must be reported in a manner to withstand a review by a critical reader. She claimed this goal could be accomplished by providing explicit details about the logical processes used to develop the findings, the conclusions based on the actual data. In addition she stated that the researcher must offer credible and believable findings in relation to the data set.

Many of the authors cited Lincoln and Guba (1985) for terminology in reference to validity and reliability (Gall et al., 2007; Golafshani, 2003; Merriman, 1998; Thorne, 2000). Trochim (2006) listed in detail the four criteria that Guba and Lincoln (1985) offered as an alternative to the traditional approach for assessing the soundness of qualitative research. These criteria directly relate to the traditional quantitative approach in the following manner: internal validity and credibility, external validity and transferability, reliability and dependability, and objectivity and confirmability. Credibility is established via the participant's perspective and determination of the believability of the findings. The concept of transferability relates to the generalization of the research findings to other settings. A rich, thick description of the phenomenon being studied can advance the transferability of the findings. Due to the nature of much of the qualitative research being situational specific, reliability is difficult to achieve. The researcher must provide a detailed account for the constant changes occurring in the context of the study to provide dependable data and theory to achieve dependability. Conformability, the fourth criterion, is the degree of confirmation by others, and it can be enhanced through the documentation of the process of checking and rechecking the data at every stage of the study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The intent of this qualitative case study was to explore the implementation of the preschool program in the Greene County Schools system and to develop a better understanding of the effects of this process at the classroom level. This qualitative study used data obtained from two separate focus groups, classroom observations, and document review to induct theory. The purpose of this study was to explore the preschool program in the Greene County School system and to develop a better understanding of the impact that the regulations for pre-k classrooms and the system's resulting organizational practices have on principals' and teachers' perceptions of the teaching and learning in the classroom.

This research was guided by two research questions:

1. How do the organizational practices and the regulations for a pre-k class impact principal and teacher perceptions of teaching and learning in the classroom?

2. How do principals and teachers define their perceived supports and barriers to teaching and learning in the pre-k classrooms?

Data Collection

Focus Groups

Purposeful Samples. The sampling criteria for the two focus groups (i.e., pre-k teachers and principals) involved in this study were based on each participant's relationship to the development of the preschool program in the Greene County Schools system. Greene County Schools employed the pre-k teachers and the school principals. The principal had the experience of having a pre-k classroom located at his or her school. Participation was based on the willingness and availability of each individual.

The three separate homogenous focus groups were conducted for this study that consisted of two groups of teachers and one group of principals. Participants self-selected a focus group on a "first come, first served" basis up to a maximum of six participants per group. Focus groups were conducted as scheduled, and a minimum of three participants were in attendance. One group of teachers consisted of six participants; one group of teachers had three participants; and five principals participated in the principal's focus group. A plan was in place to reschedule or exclude focus groups from the study that did not meet the criterion of a minimum of three participants.

Recruiting Protocol. After permission to conduct the study was obtained from the director and principals of Greene County Schools, individuals were recruited for participation in the 3 focus groups (see Appendixes B and C). As the PreK-3 supervisor of Greene County Schools, the names, positions, and locations of all potential participants were readily available to the researcher. Recruitment of the participants was conducted by letter sent through an email from the researcher (see Appendix D). The email included an attachment that requested receipt of the email. The letter provided an overview about the purpose of this study, the requirements of participation, and the expected benefits of assisting in the development of the clarification of this phenomenon. The researcher followed up with a phone call if a potential participant did not respond to the email.

Focus Group Interview Guide. Dialogue in this qualitative study was used in an attempt to get to the participants' deeply held beliefs while in a safe and secure environment. Participants were encouraged to speak while the researcher was actively listening and observing. The interview questions were posed in a manner that required the participants to think and interact.

Initial interview questions based on the research questions were developed and reviewed multiple times (Merriam, 1998). Criteria for the first review of the questions focused on the clarity of the questions from the respondent's point of view. The questions were then analyzed for the capacity to produce the desired type of information such as perception, opinion, or value. The interview questions were critiqued for the possible production of quantity and quality of information.

The remaining questions were further refined after a pilot interview with a coworker in the Greene County Schools system. The individual was selected for this activity based on adequate knowledge of the pre-k program and exclusion from the study. The individual interviewed destroyed all materials from the pilot interview, with the exception of the refined questions. The final questions were included in the structured interview guide (see Appendix E).

Taylor and Bogdan listed five details that should be addressed at the onset of every interview. The details to be addressed by the researcher are stating the intent and purpose of the study, protecting participants through pseudonyms, determining the final authority over the content of the study, making arrangements for pay, and reviewing the logistics of the interview(s) (as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 84). To ensure coverage of these suggested interview requirements, the four items that pertain to this study were listed in the interview guide. An arrangement for paying the participants did not apply to this study.

Interview Logistics. Focus group sessions were scheduled on a date and time that met the needs of the participants in the specific groups of teachers, principals, and Head Start administrators. Each session was scheduled for a 1hour and 30 minute block of time at a location that was convenient for and nonthreatening to the participants.

After the participants from the two groups of teachers and principals were identified from the positive responses to the recruitment letter, a form requesting scheduling information was sent by email to each individual. The request form allowed the participant to list dates, times, and locations that he or she would be available to attend a focus group session (see Appendix F). Scheduling information was compiled for each of the three focus groups and compared for alignment on the dates, times, and locations. Plans were in place in the event that the alignments produce several schedule options that provided the opportunity for prospective participants to select one of the scheduled focus group events. This process was repeated until all participants selected one date, time, and location. The final email to the participant listed the selected session with a request for confirmation of attendance.

Focus group sessions were conducted before the document reviews and classroom observations. The focus group sessions with the teachers were scheduled first followed by sessions with the principals in the Greene County Schools.

Ethical Protocol. To insure the confidentiality of all participants, teachers or principals who have stated extreme views, both positive and negative, of the program were not recruited for this study. Those individuals were identified based on statements made directly to the researcher or in a public forum with faculty members or peers. Involvement in this study required that each participant receive and sign an informed consent form that provided information about the study and participant confidentiality. The informed consent form apprised the participants that the purpose of this study was to develop a better understanding of the implementation of the pre-k program in the Greene County School system and the effects of the process at the classroom level. Through the informed consent form participants learned that involvement in this study included participation in one focus

group interview session for approximately 1 hour. Participants learned that no risks or discomforts would be associated from their participation in this study and were verbally reminded of these rights and researcher responsibility during each focus group session. Participants were made aware of the fact that any opinion or information divulged would not affect their employment status or relationship with the investigator. Participants received contact information for the investigator, the investigator's advisor, and the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Participants were assured that confidentiality would be maintained and assured through self-selected pseudonyms during the interview sessions, destruction of transcripts and audiotapes after the study had been completed, and participant review of the transcripts for accuracy and content. Participants had the final authority over the contents of the transcripts and were assured that the study would only be published in an electronic format (see Appendixes G and H).

Document Review

   Sample and Selection Protocol. Documents were selected for review to validate or support the information and resulting themes acquired from the focus group sessions and classroom observations. Examples of these documents are lesson plans, daily records, and required reports. During the focus group sessions any document discussed by the participants was selected for review. The participants naming the document or describing a process that requires documentation identified the various documents to review.

   Documents that aided in the development of a better understanding of this phenomenon, were selected for review. Documents in this category included various federal and state legal documents, the partnership contract between Greene County Schools and Head Start, and the Tennessee guidelines for the pre-k classrooms.

Documents completed at the classroom level were reviewed in conjunction with classroom observations. Specific organizational documents were reviewed at the respective administrative office guided by or responsible for the production of the documents.

Additional researcher produced documents and field notes comprised the documents review portion of this study. Demographic data were collected from each participant during the focus group sessions. This data included the highest level of education degree, years of experience in education, years of experience in early childhood education with the Greene County Schools system, and total years of experience in early childhood education (see Appendix H). Field notes were recorded after each focus group and classroom observation session. Typically required documentation for K-12 classrooms were reviewed and listed for comparison to the required documentation for a pre-k classroom.

Document Review Guide and Field Notes Guide. The questions for the document review guide were initially developed directly from the research questions. Requested information listed on the participant demographic form represented typical statistical participant data. The forms were refined after a peer reviewed the demographic forms. The peer assessed the guides for use in collecting comprehensive data and focus on the research question. The guides were modified by knowledge and themes garnered from the focus group sessions (see Appendixes I and J).

Ethical Protocol. Confidentiality for document review was detailed in the informed consent form signed by all participants during the focus group sessions. Participant names were not recorded on the document review guides and locations were labeled with letters (e.g., Classroom A). Participants associated with the retrieval location of the document reviewed the various completed document review guides for content and accuracy and were

given the final authority over the content. Field notes contained participant pseudonyms and location labels. Private documents such as document review guides, field notes guides, and participant demographic data forms were destroyed upon the completion of the study. Public documents such as legal mandates and partnership contracts did not require a protection of confidentiality.

Observations

Sample and Selection Protocol. Participant observations and classroom observations were used by the investigator during this study. Participant observations were recorded on a field notes guide following each focus group session.

Classroom observations were conducted in two separate classrooms for 1/2 day sessions. One classroom was involved in the partnership between Greene County Schools and Head Start; the other classroom was involved in the partnership. Classroom observations were selected for the two categories from teachers who indicated their willingness to participate in this activity by marking the appropriate item on the participant demographic data form. The purposeful selection of the classrooms to observe was based on the teacher's willingness and ability to communicate his or her perceptions in a constructive manner as demonstrated during the focus group session and documented in the transcripts. Classroom observations were scheduled to follow all focus group sessions.

Classroom Observation Guide. The observation guide was developed directly from the research questions. The guide was updated after a peer review had been conducted. Additional items were added to the guide as knowledge was gained about the phenomenon (see Appendix K).

Ethical Protocol. Participants' rights for classroom observations were stated in the informed consent form signed by all participants during the focus group sessions. To ensure confidentiality classrooms were listed on the classroom observation guides with an assigned letter (e.g., Classroom A), and the teacher was referred to as Teacher A. The teacher involved in the classroom observation activity reviewed the completed observation guide for content and accuracy. Final authority for the content of the classroom observation belonged to the teacher. Upon the completion of this study classroom guides were destroyed.

Ethical consideration for the children enrolled in the classroom was taken under consideration for this study. The children were not observed, and a letter was sent to the parents or guardian of each child explaining that only the teacher was scheduled to be observed and specific documents were to be reviewed (see Appendix L). Parents had the right and opportunity to remove their child from the classroom during the observation.

Data Analysis

Focus Groups

The constant comparative analysis method developed by Strauss and Corbin (1998) was used to analyze the data collected from the focus group sessions conducted in this study. This six-step method requires "constant comparison" of data units at all levels of analysis. The first step of this method, a microscopic examination, was conducted on the transcripts following each focus group session. This activity allowed the researcher to record researcher thoughts and possible emerging themes that may identify additional information to collect during another focus group session, classroom observation, or document review.

Data from each separate focus group were analyzed using all six steps of the constant comparative analysis method. After the microscopic examination of the data, a second

reading for open coding was conducted. Open coding required the researcher to bracket the data into individual categories. The next data analysis step, axial coding, was the process of merging the individual coded categories according to similarities. Axial coding data from the three focus groups were compiled into one document for pattern coding. Pattern coding, the identification of themes, provided a theoretical framework for the data. This framework allowed the data to be coded for process that identified relationships among the themes. A conditional and consequential matrix was developed to graphically display the theories derived from the data.

Document Review

Data from document reviews were analyzed using three different methods. One method was a simple identification and comparison of documents that were required for a pre-k classroom above and beyond the typically required K-8 classroom documents. Another method was simple mathematical functions to compile the demographic data collected from the participants during focus group sessions. This information was used to develop a general understanding of participant background and experience.

The major method of document review data analysis was the constant comparative analysis method as described for use with focus group data analysis. Documents were grouped into categories for the initial separate analysis. The categories of documents were classroom documents, organizational documents, and field notes. After the first three steps of data analysis were completed in isolation for each document category, the axial coding data from the three document categories were combined for the remaining data analysis steps leading to theory development.

Observations

The constant comparative analysis method was used to analyze the data collected from the classroom observations. This data were analyzed in the same manner at the data from the focus groups and document reviews. The data from each observation were analyzed separately through the third step of the method then combined for the remaining steps of data analysis.

Pattern Coding and Conditional-Consequential Matrix

Pattern coding was conducted by comparing the common themes derived from the focus groups, document reviews, and observations to determine patterns of regularity or relationships that become abstract categories of the data. These abstract categories were placed in a conditional and consequential matrix. The conditional and consequential matrix provided a visual graphic of the theoretical framework. The abstract categories were assessed to ensure the inclusion of answers to the research questions, all data collected, exclusive data, appropriate label, and the same level of conceptual abstraction (Merriam, 1998).

Quality and Verification

To ensure quality and verification this study involved the use of triangulation of the data, member checks, detailed listing of researcher bias, a thick description of the context, and a comprehensive narrative of the findings. Data obtained from interviews, observations, and document reviews were triangulated to confirm emerging themes for ensuring the accuracy of the data and replication of the study under the same circumstances. Member checks on the data and empirical interpretations were conducted throughout the study to promote accuracy and completeness of the data and to prohibit researcher bias. A detailed listing of researcher bias was developed at the onset of the study and updated as needed to

communicate the honest and respectful approach that was taken. A thick, rich description of the context that included any changes in the study and an audit trail was included to authenticate the findings of this study. A comprehensive narrative of the findings enhanced the generalization of the themes developed through this study.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

This qualitative case study was designed to explore the preschool program in the Greene County School system to develop a better understanding of the impact that the regulations for pre-k classrooms and the system's resulting organizational practices have on principals' and teachers' perceptions of the teaching and learning in the classroom. Additional understanding sought through this study was how the principals and teachers defined their perceived supports and barriers to teaching and learning in the pre-k classrooms. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the preschool program in the Greene County School system and to develop a better understanding of the impact that the regulations for pre-k classrooms and the system's resulting organizational practices have on principals' and teachers' perceptions of the teaching and learning in the classroom. The information obtained from this study provides a better understanding of legal, organizational, and social concerns inherent in the Greene County Schools pre-k classrooms and might provide a better understanding of the conflicts between federal, state, and local mandates for pre-k programs in other school systems.

At the time of this study the Greene County Schools pre-k program consisted of 15 classrooms. Only the personnel associated with the 15 classrooms located at the various elementary schools in the system were invited to participate in this research. Of these 15 classrooms, nine were involved in partnerships with Head Start, six were located in the main building of the elementary school, 14 were state funded, and 13 accepted only 4-year-old children. All of the pre-k classrooms are "income based," which requires educational services to be provided to children of low income families as a priority. In addition, the Head Start

partnership with nine of the classrooms requires compliance with federal rules and regulations due to the funding for the agency. Teachers have reported legal conflicts between the federal, state, and local guidelines and requirements for this program. In addition the pre-k teachers have expressed concerns about perceptions of isolation. These teachers are physically isolated from the rest of the school personnel due to the location of the classroom within the physical layout of the school buildings.

The two organizations influencing the environment of the pre-k classrooms involved in this study are Greene County Schools and the Head Start community action program housed within the confines of the Upper East Tennessee Human Development Agency (UETHDA). The two organizations are geographically located in upper eastern region of Tennessee including part of the Appalachian Mountains. Greene County Schools provides educational services to the approximately 7,000 pre-k through 12th grade students, and the distance between the elementary schools ranges from 5 to 40 miles. The UETHDA Head Start program provides services to 1,105 prekindergarten students through 68 classrooms as a result of partnerships with the local school systems in eight counties (Tennessee Head Start, 2009).

Participants and Location

As designed this study involved the collection of data from three focus groups, document reviews, and two classroom observations. After permission to conduct the study had been obtained from the director and principals of the Greene County Schools system, individuals were recruited for participation in the three focus groups. Each participant received and signed informed consent and provided demographic data at the onset of each

focus group session. Teachers indicated a willingness to participate in the classroom

observation portion of this research.

The focus group sessions were conducted at the end of a regular school day. Two of

the focus groups consisted of classroom teachers and were conducted in a pre-k classroom

where the teacher volunteered the use of the room. To reduce travel time, one of the teachers'

focus groups was held in the eastern part of the county, and the other focus group of teachers

was located in the western part of the county. The principals participating in the focus group

met in the library of a school that did not house a pre-k classroom. Participant information of

self-selected pseudonyms, demographic data, and Head Start partnership is listed by focus

group in Appendix M.

Document reviews and classroom observations were conducted with a focus on

themes discovered during the focus group sessions as a means of collecting additional data to

support or nullify the themes. Document reviews occurred in conjunction with and

independently of the classroom observations. One observation was conducted in a classroom

in partnership with Head Start, and the other observation involved a classroom not in

partnership with Head Start.

Constant comparative analysis was used to analyze the data that were triangulated

through the use of the three different data sources. The researcher transcribed all of the

audiotapes of the focus groups. Microscopic examination of the data, open coding,

bracketing into individual categories, and axial coding were completed for each focus group.

Data from the three focus groups were compiled into one document for identification of

themes. The resulting framework allowed the data to be coded for process that lead to the

identification of relationships among the themes. The narrative summary of the data and resulting findings were reviewed for accuracy by the participants.

<p align="center">*Focus Groups*</p>

Inductive analysis of the verbal information provided by the teachers and principals to describe their perceptions of teaching and learning in the pre-k classrooms within the confines of practices and regulations and to define their perceptions of supports and barriers to teaching and learning in the pre-k classrooms led to the identification of five major themes. The effectiveness of the pre-k experience for children, the difference between pre-k and grades kindergarten through eight classrooms, the disparity when comparing the classrooms partnered with Head Start and the not partnered classrooms, the need for knowledge of early childhood education, and the need for knowledge of the various rules and regulations governing the program emerged as major categories of interest repeatedly and throughout each focus group session. The data indicated specific concerns based on the participant's organizational position of teacher or principal.

Effectiveness of Pre-K

The teachers and principals described the pre-k program in the Greene County Schools as having a strong literacy rich and academic focus. Teachers and principals specifically identified the curriculum and instructional techniques as being supportive of teaching and learning in the classroom and having significant influences on children's individual successes and the success of the program. The instructional techniques discussed were whole group instruction at circle time, brief sessions of direct instruction to a small group of students, and theme or academically focused center play. Multiple intelligence activities, pacing of instructional activities, and planned practice were identified as the

instructional strategies embedded within each activity. Supports to the success of the program discussed were the unique characteristics demonstrated by the pre-k teachers and specific rules and regulations.

Curriculum. The teachers and principals were very vocal about the effectiveness of the state approved curriculum implemented in the classrooms to promote student performance. The best example of the teachers' perceptions about the curriculum supporting teaching and learning in the pre-k classroom was a statement made by Gabby during the first focus group of teachers.

> We started the *Letter People* curriculum. Our students will pick up the other puppets available in the library center, name them, and start singing the song [that goes along with the puppet]. The other children [in the center] join in. Before long, four or five more children want to go in there. They're working on their letters, and they're enjoying it! I'm like, just go ahead and enjoy the learning process!

Flower followed this statement by sharing a comment made by a receiving kindergarten teacher about the academic performance of children enrolled in her classroom. One kindergarten teacher stated, "We can really tell when a kid has come through your program. These children have all the basics and are ready to learn more!" Flower attributed the children's successes to the comprehensive curriculum.

Teachers from the second focus group shared similar perceptions. For example, Frazzled stated,

> I like the curriculum that we use. I am so much more comfortable this year than last year. We started with the *Letter People* at the beginning of the year. I buy into it much more, I'm having fun, and I'm teaching it with different enthusiasm. These kids are really picking up on letters and really picking up on sounds. After they begin to get those initial consonants sounds and those short vowel sounds, they are beginning to read.

Pickie provided a related perception by sharing, "That's what it's all about is us giving them a head start introducing letters and numbers. These are things they are not getting at home. That's what really makes a difference!"

Principals voiced similar positive opinions about the effectiveness of the curriculum and instructional techniques in the pre-k classrooms. For example, Camille stated, "I like our curriculum we use. I like it a lot! I like the *Letter People* and the writing series we use." Mary stated, "I think it's good because it helps prepare those children for kindergarten, and I've noticed that my kindergarten students are now reading."

Instruction. In their descriptions of the classroom, teachers and principals provided information about the various instructional techniques and settings used and perceived as supportive to teaching and learning in the pre-k classroom. Floss began the discussion in the first teacher focus group by stating, "I think that you are going to see a lot of positive interactions as you walk into the classroom." Flower added, "Yes, in small group, circle time, and centers." All teachers listed additional examples of various activities one would observe in their classrooms. The list included singing, oral reading, finger plays, conversations, and writing.

When discussing small group instruction and center play during this group of teachers, Gabby shared a possible observation of her classroom. She stated,

> If you were there, you would see that it goes back to the positive interaction that the kids are having in the centers, and that the teacher is having in small group [instruction], and that the assistant is maybe doing in art.

Several of the teachers supported this statement with similar explanations of observed center activities that Floss summarized by stating, "They're applying what they learned."

During the second teacher focus group, participants shared similar perceptions of the instructional techniques and settings used during whole group, small group, and center play. Frazzled stated, "Students self-explore and develop social skills during center play, and the teacher conducts small group related to the letter." Smith described the teacher directed whole group activity conducted during circle time. Pickie joined the conversation and said, "In centers, they are practicing the instructed academic skill and learning social skills through interactions."

The principals provided similar definitions of their perceptions of the instructional techniques used in the pre-k classrooms as being supportive to teaching and learning. George claimed, "I think the classroom procedures and activities play an important role in student success and preparing them to come to kindergarten by knowing the rules and being comfortable with transition into the classroom." Jerry shared that the language rich environment and the opportunity for children to construct knowledge in the centers added to the academic success of the children. Wilbur provided global information about the success of the pre-k program by informing the group that children with the pre-k experience created a huge ability gap when entering kindergarten with children who did not have the experience. Additional supports to teaching and learning identified by this group were the use of multiple intelligence and the high levels of rigor and student engagement incorporated in all activities in the pre-k classroom.

Teacher Characteristics. Each focus group consistently listed or described specific teacher characteristics as being supportive to effective teaching and learning in the pre-k classrooms. These characteristics included a positive outlook, passion, compassion, dedication, child-focused, and high energy level. Floss of the first teacher group impulsively

stated, "I am the most positive thing in my classroom because I set the stage." Later in the conversation Pathfinder offered advice for a novice teacher by stating, "Come in with a fun loving attitude and be ready to have fun. The more you enjoy it [teaching in pre-k], the more your kids are going to enjoy it too!" Gabby followed with advice to stay focused on the children by stating, "Stay focused on the kids because they are what are most important! You need to meet each child's needs every day."

The second teacher focus group responded with the same quick enthusiasm demonstrated by the first group. Pickie quickly replied, "I think we [teachers] make a difference in the students that we have!" Pickie and Frazzled defined their dedication and passion to their profession by sharing that they constantly record ideas that would improve the learning experiences for the children for implementation the next year. Each teacher justified this information. Pickie said, "You want things to go well, and you want things to go well because you are concerned about students." Frazzled added, "It is good, and we do a good job!"

The principals shared their perceptions of the pre-k teacher characteristics and defined them as unparalleled by teachers of other grade levels. Wilbur described the pre-k teacher at his school as "surprising and unique" and defined the teacher's dedication to the job by the long hours invested. Wilbur shared that the pre-k teacher demonstrated passion through positive actions and statements. Wilbur went as far as to state that the pre-k teacher's dedication and passion have had a positive effect on the entire school. Jerry shared his perception of the effects the compassion and dedication demonstrated by the pre-k teacher at his school. Jerry stated, "The kids want to be there. I don't think that I've ever seen a day that goes by that they do not love being there with the teachers of the four-year olds."

Rules and Regulations. The rules and regulations perceived to support the effectiveness of the pre-k program focused on developmentally appropriate practices and child safety. Teachers from the first focus group perceived numerous regulations from the guiding documents as being supportive to teaching and learning in the pre-k classroom. A couple of the requirements from the *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised* (ECERS-R) were identified in this category. These specific requirements were the seven centers that provided the opportunity for children to practice and apply the instructed skills and the noisy and quite areas in room arrangement that allowed for children's preferences of interactive or solitary activities. Gabby shared that the state mandated pre-enrollment activity of meeting with the parents also supported the success of the program. Flower, Annie, and Floss focused on the personal hygiene curriculum and requirements of the funding agencies that they perceived as providing a structured approach to teaching independent and healthy life skills.

Teachers from the second focus group identified several requirements from the environmental assessment, state mandates, and funding agency requirements that they perceived as supporting the success of the program. The one ECERS-R requirement discussed by this group was the need to provide an ample variety of materials resulting in a literacy rich environment. The required adult to child ratio at 1:10 and classroom space of 30 square feet per child provided appropriate supervision of the children and room to allow for freedom of movement. All teachers in this group were in agreement that the highly qualified status defined by the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) and required for program funding for teachers and assistants was a major supporting factor for the success of the program.

The principals voiced similar perceptions about the rules and regulations as supports or barriers in the area of pre-k program effectiveness. Principals expressed a concern that the hand washing requirement of ECERS-R was a barrier to teaching and learning in the classroom. At the same time the principals expressed an appreciation for safety regulations and considered them as providing support to the classrooms. Camille identified specific supportive regulations. Camille claimed that the maximum class size of 20 and the adult to child ratio of 1:10 were very effective in supporting teaching and learning in the pre-k classroom.

Pre-K and K-8 Differences

The data denoted a variance in perception of teaching and learning in the pre-k classroom as affected by organizational practices and regulations for the pre-k program between the two teacher groups versus the principal group in area of differences between the pre-k program and grades kindergarten through eighth. Teachers in the pre-k classrooms did not view themselves differently in terms of curriculum and instruction; principals communicated an opposite opinion. While all groups discussed differences in the unique rules and regulations that govern the pre-k program and the other grade levels, the principals did not identify student attendance as an issue. The teachers of the first focus group shared considerable frustration over their inability to address truancy issues with the 4-year-olds. All focus groups discussed pre-k teacher isolation as a grade specific difference.

Curriculum and Instruction. The teachers made no reference to differences in curriculum and instruction between the various grade levels; however, the principals made several comments about the instructional activities observed in the pre-k classroom as being atypical to activities observed in other grade levels within their respective schools. One

principal shared that he could go to sleep in the higher grade level rooms that were quiet with

students completing independent work. In the pre-k classroom, this principal claimed that he

felt so much excitement and energy with the hands-on activities, rigor, and multiple tasks

occurring at the same time that he could hardly sit still to observe. Another principal

identified a perceived barrier to teaching and learning in the pre-k classrooms. Jerry shared

that he would like to have the same flexibility with the pre-k curriculum that is allowed at the

other grade levels. He stated,

> I'd even like to have a little more flexibility with the curriculum. Centers are very important, but going back to something Mary said, if you've got a group that's a little more advanced and are reading more, maybe we could have a little more flexibility there. Of course, we could maintain centers and keep a lot of time in there, but on certain days, do more with reading in reading circle or mixing it up with the computers and things like that.

Later in the conversation Camille shared her perception of the pre-k curriculum in

comparison to other grade levels. Without placing a value of the perception being a support

or a barrier to teaching and learning in the pre-k classroom, Camille stated:

> I think pre-k is the old kindergarten. Kindergarten used to be just the socialization process. Part of their time is spent, not on academics to begin with, it is the socialization of being able to work with each other. Now by the end of pre-k, we have several [children] that read.

Rules and Regulations. The focus groups displayed the greatest amount of variance in

the impact the organizational practices and pre-k regulations have on their perception of

teaching and learning in the classroom when the conversation focused on the rules and

regulations of the pre-k guiding documents. The topics discussed were attendance, student

supervision, targeted population, hygiene, safety, student registration, transportation, and

funding.

Teachers of the first focus group communicated a great concern over the inability to address the lack of student attendance that was perceived as a barrier to teaching and learning in the pre-k classroom. These teachers expressed the importance of this issue via the shared frustration about children being absent or tardy and missing direct instruction. Annie stated, "We are the foundation. If we are going to have this pre-k program, and we are going to enroll these children, then they should be expected to come to school." Floss extended this thought by sharing,

> Along the lines of accountability and attendance, we're held accountable for what these children learn. They're tested; and when half of them don't show up like they should, it is reflected in their test scores. We are held accountable for that.

Pathfinder echoed the frustration with a personal story of truant children and added, "After they start with the program, there should be the same kind of attendance policy as in kindergarten." Several teachers also suggested the consideration of retaining children in pre-k as can be done in kindergarten.

The second focus group of teachers had very little to share on the topic of attendance, and the principals did not address the topic at all. Smith suggested that a standard policy to address student tardiness be implemented across the grade levels. In addition, Smith identified the inequity of free time for teachers between pre-k and other grade levels as a barrier to teaching and learning. Smith shared that every Friday, all other grade levels dismiss class 30 minutes early, and kindergarten dismisses 1/2 day early on every other Friday.

The area of the required student supervision at a 1:10 ratio was discussed by the second focus group of teachers and the principals. A teacher identified the 1:10 ratio as a support, and most principals identified it as a barrier to teaching and learning in the pre-k classroom. A teacher and a principal each communicated the necessity of this regulation.

Frazzled shared her appreciation of maintaining the adult to child ratio of 1:10 during lunch. She stated,

> The kindergarten teachers can go to lunch, and they have monitors in the cafeteria. See I like the 10:1 ratio, so I eat lunch with my kids. I take my lunch at the end of the day. I like to be there with them, even though it's chaotic, I think it's really important with them being so young that somebody that cares about them is helping teach a few manners and sitting with them.

Later in the conversation Frazzled shared that she kept children in her room from 7:15 to 3:15 to meet the 1:10 supervision requirements during bus duty. As a result Frazzled did not have the opportunity for a duty free lunch and planning that was completed after the end of the school day. Both situations are in violation of the local teachers' contract. Smith shared that she would like the children to have the opportunity to attend music instruction with another teacher for 30-minute periods once or twice per week.

The principals' focus on the issue of 1:10 pre-k resulted in a unanimous agreement that meeting the required adult to child ratio at all times during the day was a challenge. The specific times of the day identified as the most difficult to provide this level of supervision were student arrival, student dismissal, and lunch. Wilbur shared information on maintaining constant adult supervision and the 1:10 ratio at the beginning and end of the day. At the end of the discussion, Camille restated her support of the requirement by saying, "The 1:10 ratio should remain because of the developmental level of the children."

The targeted population of children from low income families for enrollment in the pre-k classrooms was another regulation identified by all three groups as a barrier to teaching and learning. The teachers and principals were very direct about their opinions on the requirement of the income based priority for enrollment. Floss of the first group of teachers stated, "I would want it [classroom] open to all children and not based on income." George, a

principal claimed, "The first thing I would do; I would throw out the income level. That's the first thing I would do." Another teacher shared that some parents at the over the income level are offended if their child cannot be enrolled in the program until after the children who qualify are enrolled. One principal expressed a different point of view on the targeted population requirement. Wilbur shared,

> We are a school of convenience. Everybody that works in town drops their kids off there. You said that you would like to get rid of the income regulations. I love the income regulations because it allows me to tell those people I got to stick by those regulations. It's hurt me at times because I've had staff members furious with me because their grandchildren wanted to get in, but I couldn't let them in because of the regulations.

Some of the requirements for hygiene and safety as enforced by the outside *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised* (ECERS-R) evaluator were identified by teachers and principals as barriers to teaching and learning. Frazzled of the second teacher focus group displayed strong feelings when sharing her opinion of the hygiene requirements. Frazzled exclaimed, "Get rid of ECERS coming in every year and expecting you to wash hands 25 times and not touch a single thing!" Additional undesirable hygiene requirements listed by the teachers were cleaning the tables with bleach before eating and brushing teeth. The rationale provided by the teachers to discontinue these practices was that the tasks interfere with instructional time. The principals were in agreement with the teachers as their perception was that hygiene was given too much emphasis

Addressing a safety issue required by ECERS and the conflicts with public schools, Frazzled stated,

> They require that every electrical outlet that those children pass be covered. Well that is truly a safety an issue, but let's be realistic here. Our custodian is going to take that cover off at the end of the day when he is vacuuming, and do you think that he is going to put it back? It is a hassle to him. So, there are certain things that all of a sudden we're required to do that just don't work in a public school system.

Wilbur, a principal, shared his opinion that some of the safety regulations for the playground required by ECERS were unnecessary. He followed this opinion by stating,

> Some of the playground regulations can be asinine, but it makes us evaluate the safety of the playground. Since they came out and evaluated mine, we've kind of had an effort to upgrade a few things. I still think they have some asinine regulations as far as playground space.

The required documentation for student registration was identified as a barrier to teaching and learning by the second focus group of teachers. Frazzled compared her classroom to a day care. She shared, "All of the paperwork I need to keep on my kids, kindergarten does not; but when Patricia comes out, I have to have all of that stuff, because I'm my own little day care." Frazzled also shared her frustrations about the differential treatment from the secretaries during the pre-k and kindergarten pre registration event. Frazzled stated,

> Last year they [secretaries] were saying they [parents] were going to come down and register because I'm DOE. I was like, 'Well, how does kindergarten do it?' They said, 'Well, they register in the office.' I said, 'Well, I'm like kindergarten because I can't be teaching if I'm registering.' They wanted to send them down and disrupt my class.

The amount of state funding provided for the pre-k program was perceived as a support to teaching and learning in the classroom by all focus group participants. During the principals' focus group Jerry provided a concise definition of his perception of pre-k funding by stating,

> Have you ever seen a program backed by so much funding, and it's excellent for kids. George was talking about getting them off to a great start, and it does. You've got all the personnel you need, and you've got support, support, support.

Teacher Isolation. The most emotional issue that was identified as barrier to teaching and learning was the pre-k teachers' isolation from similar colleagues. Annie began the conversation during the first focus group on this topic and stated in a point-blank manner, "A

lot of us are the only pre-k in our school. So we do not have someone to ask [for advice]. We

are it!" In the second focus group, Pickie shared a similar perception. She stated in a sad

manner, "I think that it would make a difference if I had someone to talk to in the school. I

feel like I am isolated down on my end [of the building]." Frazzled supported this statement

by adding, "Yes, you are the loner. We need somebody who is like minded." Frazzled

extended her definition of isolation by adding,

> I'm supposed to be a Greene County teacher! I want to be treated and respected as a
> Greene County teacher. I want to be treated as a full member of that faculty with all
> its rights and responsibilities. Not this educator that sits out here that's taking care of
> her babies.

Pickie joined in with, "Separate, as a separate entity." Smith added, "But that's totally

how we are perceived. Especially if we have the Head Start because they know there are so

many differences that they don't have to do, and not Department of Education (DOE), but the

older grades. It just seems insane to them."

The principals defined the isolation of the pre-k teacher as being the only teacher of

that grade level assigned to a majority of the schools within the system. Principals admitted

to spending a very limited amount of time mentoring these teachers. Wilbur shared another

aspect of his perception of the pre-k teacher isolation. Wilbur claimed that the relationships

between the pre-k teacher and the kindergarten teachers at his school could be strained at

times because the kindergarten teachers were envious of the resources available to the pre-k

teacher.

Head Start Partnered Classrooms

Teachers and principals identified more barriers than supports for teaching and

learning in the pre-k classrooms when discussing the differences between the classrooms

partnered with Head Start and those classrooms not in the partnership. The one support

identified was the service of transportation. The common barriers throughout all three focus groups were the conflicts with the chain of command when merging the two organizations, the lack of communication between the two organizations, and the additional tasks for the teachers in the classrooms partnered with Head Start.

One principal voiced a positive opinion about the transportation services provided by Head Start, and the other principals indicated agreement with his statement by nodding their heads in an affirmative manner. George stated his appreciation of the transportation provided by Head Start, a support to teaching and learning in the classroom. George continued by adding, "With the Head Start bus, they just climb on the Head Start bus, and they're gone. Head Start takes care of the transportation. So, there are some good things about being partnered."

Teachers and principals defined the barrier, conflicts in the chain of command, between the two organizations through their discussions of the Head Start classroom evaluations, Head Start staff evaluations, and the threat to their authority. During the second teacher focus group Pickie shared her thoughts on having to complete staff evaluations on the Head Start teacher assistant and bus aide that is a conflict in the chain of command between the two organizations. Pickie said, "I don't feel comfortable doing that. I'm not their boss. They don't have to report to me, and they let me know that." Pickie continued along this line of thought and commented on the Head Start team leader conducting an extensive monthly classroom evaluation. Pickie stated, "She's coming in to evaluate me, and I don't even work for her. She should be evaluating her assistants!"

Gabby of the first teacher focus group shared her perception of the threat to her authority in the classroom. Gabby stated, "A lot of times they [teacher assistants] do not look

at us as a figure of authority because we are not their boss. I don't want to be their boss, but I am the teacher." Polly shared that Head Start teacher assistants had verbalized to her that they have different employers, and the teacher had no right to instruct them of their job duties. On this same topic during the second focus group of teachers, Pickie stated that pre-k classroom teachers need "to assert some authority and exert their right to make decisions for the classrooms." Camille, a principal, defined the threat to her authority along the lines of principal autonomy. Camille shared that two Head Start assistants introduced themselves to her, shared that they had been working at her school, and had processed a complaint about the school through Head Start. Camille communicated how strongly she felt about this situation when she claimed, "It has not been a good thing. If we are going to be responsible, then let us be responsible. Head Start employees should not be able to report to Head Start without first informing the principal that there might be a problem." George addressed principal autonomy in the area of hiring personnel by stating,

> I would like to hire my own driver and my own assistants instead of letting Head Start do the hiring and sending you people. You can't count on them, and I've got ladies that would love to be the assistant in the pre-k room, but they can't get Head Start to hire them.

Teachers and principals discussed the lack of communication with Head Start as a barrier to teaching and learning. The teachers defined this barrier in terms of lack of respect and its effects on relationships, and one principal claimed communication was not existent. Pickie shared that the classroom self-assessment and evaluations conducted by Head Start caused her to be "torn between the two organizations". The self-assessment was conducted by a team comprised of a family resource specialist, a parent, and a team leader from another county. Pickie shared her experience with the self-assessment team visiting her classroom by saying,

The assessment team came into my room. I didn't even know they were there! We were at lunch, and the assessment team was in my room going through things. My assistant had the kids in the bathroom. I was in the hallway monitoring them. Well, out comes this woman, 'I'd just thought I'd let you know that I was in your room.' I was like, 'Who are you?' Nobody even told me that anybody was even there while we were at lunch. I just feel uncomfortable with somebody going through my files. They were giving me circumstances and things. It's not even a teacher. They come and they asked me questions for probably 30-45 minutes. We're supposed to be teaching. It's pulling you away from what you're really supposed to be doing.

The teachers shared their discomfort with the multiple strangers from Head Start who entered their classrooms and requested information. Smith displayed her resentment of the daily interruptions by stating, "There's somebody like every other day that you don't know is coming in. Not that you would change anything that they are coming. They never introduce themselves. It's lack of professionalism!" In the principals' focus group Jerry stated his perception on communication with Head Start by saying, "Is it a partnership? It should be! I think that what we are talking about is the need for communication so that we have a true partnership."

Relationships that developed between the Head Start personnel within the classroom and between Head Start personnel and parents were perceived as a threat and resulting barrier to the teachers. One teacher shared that the Head Start bus assistant developed relationships with the parents and she was "just left out of the loop". Another teacher provided information about the Head Start assistant in her classroom who became offended if a parent wanted to talk to the teacher. Pickie told the group about a unique situation with two full-time assistants in the classroom 1 year. Pickie's description of the situation was, "It's awful! It's awful! The assistants team up together, and they do not work and interact with the students. These assistants work and interact with each other."

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Additional tasks required of the teacher in the classrooms partnered with Head Start were also identified as a barrier to teaching in learning in the classroom by the teachers and principals. These tasks were defined as the *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised* (ECERS-R) conducted by an outside evaluator, the monthly Head Start classroom evaluation, the *Learning Accomplishment Profile-Diagnostic* (LAPD) student assessment, and additional paperwork.

Frazzled of the second teacher focus group suggested that Head Start discontinue the annual practice of using an outside evaluator to conduct the ECERS. Frazzled's rationale was that this was not done in the not partnered classrooms, and that the outside evaluators focused on the child care components instead of the academic environment. The teachers shared that the monthly Head Start classroom evaluation was conducted by a team leader. Smith provided a description of the function of the team leader. She said, "She goes around and observes the classrooms to make sure that we're doing what we're supposed to be doing. She fusses at us!" Pickie referred to this position within the Head Start organization as the "Head Start Nazi".

Teachers claimed that the LAPDs were very time consuming and had to be administered 3 times a year with outcomes updated on a weekly and monthly basis. Pickie referred to the outcomes as "individualized lesson plans". In addition, they shared that this assessment did not align with the implemented curriculum and interfered with the classroom time allotted for small group, direct instruction time. One teacher explained, "If they [Head Start teacher assistants] are doing LAPDs, I am the only one in the classroom; therefore I cannot do small groups because I have to oversee the classroom."

Teachers claimed that Head Start required an extraordinary amount of paperwork, and some of it replicated the required Greene County paperwork. Smith described her perception by saying, "You're signing a paper saying you signed the other paper, and sign this saying you'll work on this, and sign this saying you'll do this. There's just a whole separate folder of Head Start paperwork."

Camille of the principals' focus group shared her understanding of the teachers' positions in the classrooms partnered with Head Start and provided her perception of the additional tasks required of them. Camille opined that it was hard for the teachers in the partnership classrooms to answer to the dual requirements and expressed empathy by stating,

> When the teacher becomes so frazzled and apprehensive because they are so afraid that they are not going to please one faction or the other, then the child is going to suffer. They're not going to be up to their ultimate teaching level.

Need for Knowledge

The three focus groups were consistent in their perceptions of the need for knowledge in the new phenomenon of the Greene County Schools Pre-K Program that was identified as a barrier to teaching and learning in the classroom and was defined as inadequate early childhood teacher training and the lack of knowledge of the rules and regulations that govern the pre-k program.

The participating teachers defined the barrier of the lack of knowledge through their discussions about early childhood teacher preparation programs and professional development. These teachers shared that the teacher preparation programs focused on theory of child development and omitted the academic components for emergent literacy. Teachers identified the need for professional development in the areas of interacting with parents and children and effective instructional techniques for emergent literacy.

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The need for administrators to acquire knowledge of the rules and regulations that govern the pre-k classrooms was a common definition for the identified barrier of knowledge for all three groups. The teachers refined this definition by sharing their needs for support in the classroom and concerns about accurate teacher evaluations. Annie stated, "I don't think they [principals] understand it, and I don't think that it is their fault. I just think that it's so new. I don't think they really know how to react to us." Floss shared that she was always sent to find support or obtain information from a different resource because the principal did not feel knowledgeable enough to provide guidance. Pathfinder communicated a concern with principals having the ability to conduct accurate teacher evaluations without an understanding of the rules and regulations because of the required time limits listed in guiding documents.

All participating principals were very candid about their limited knowledge of the guidelines and pedagogy for early childhood and desire to learn this information. Camille shared the perceptions of the group by stating, "I have needed regulations with pre-k because I did not understand anything about early childhood. When they [the teachers] come to me, I feel bad. I tell them that I will find out, but I just do not know."

Document Reviews

Document reviews were conducted in conjunction with and independently of the classroom observations to collect additional data to support or nullify various themes that evolved during the focus group sessions. Document reviews focused on the themes of the differences between classrooms partnered and those not partnered with Head Start and the differences between the pre-k classrooms and kindergarten through eighth grade.

Procedures and forms used in the pre-k classrooms originated in the documents that govern licensing and funding. The document reviews began with a brief overview of two legal documents for each organization of this study with a focus on the similarities and differences in specific program requirements. Local policy was reviewed to verify unique requirements for the pre-k classrooms as compared to the other grades.

The various documents reviewed were organized into the categories of program licensing, funding requirements, environmental assessments, student screening and assessments, classroom documents, and local policy.

Program Licensing

Classrooms not in partnership with Head Start obtained a Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) program approval certificate by complying with the requirements published in the *Standards for Child Care Centers and School Age Child Care Programs*, Tenn. Comp. R. & Regs. 0520-12-1 (2005). Classrooms partnered with Head Start were required to follow the Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) licensing mandates as prescribed in the *Licensure Rules for Child Care Centers*, Tenn. Comp. R. & Regs. 1240-4-3 (2006). Successful compliance with these regulations resulted in the classroom being awarded a TDHS child care license. Licensing requirements within these documents were reviewed for information on documentation for children and staff records, student supervision, staff qualifications, instruction and curriculum, physical plant, and annual program approval.

The documents list identical requirements in the areas of documentation for children and staff records, student supervision, staff qualifications, and physical plant requirements. In addition to the typical requirements of enrolling a child in the public schools, the files for the

children in these programs must contain documentation of social history, health history, transportation agreement, and pre-enrollment visit. Documentation that each parent received information on the licensing requirements of the program and a student release policy must also be on file. Student supervision is defined as children being safely protected by an adult in close auditory and visual proximity and maintaining the required adult to child ratio for the age group. The mandated adult to child ratio for 4-year-old children is 1:10 with a maximum class size of 20 children.

The preferred qualifications for teachers are to have graduated from an accredited 4-year college and documentation of working with young children in a group setting for 1 year. Different combinations of degrees and experience are also acceptable. During the first year of operation, the director is to complete 36 hours of training in the areas of administration and early childhood. Training for subsequent years of operation requirements are 18 hours in the same areas. Teacher assistants are required to have a high school diploma or its equivalent. During the first year of employment, caregivers are to attend 18 hours of training in early childhood and 12 hours for each subsequent year. Staff qualifications require at least one adult to have current Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and First Aid certification in direct supervision as all times, and all staff members are to have physical examinations every 3 years.

Instructional and curriculum guidelines require daily routines to be established with a balance between child-choice and adult-directed activities and alternating sessions of vigorous and quiet play throughout the day. Child-choice activities are to be provided through centers; and adult-directed activities are to vary between large group, small group, and individual settings. Developmentally appropriate lesson plans are to written to include

activities in the areas of art, music, literature, dramatic play, science, health, fine and gross motor, and personal safety.

To meet the physical plant requirements, facilities are to provide 30 square feet of indoor space and 50 square feet of outdoor space for each child. In addition, each facility is to have annual assessments conducted by the fire marshal and health inspector.

The criteria for obtaining a TDOE approval or TDHS license include the ability of the agency to ensure the safety and welfare of the children, the caregiver's capability and training, the quality of the methods of care and the provided instruction, the suitability of the facilities, the adequacy of the administration and management methods, appropriateness of the personnel policies, and the adequacy of the funding of the center. A temporary license is awarded for the first year of operation, and the agency is required to implement various procedures within that time period to obtain a regular license for the next year. To maintain the approval or license, the classroom is to be evaluated by a trained department specific program evaluator. The evaluation consists of two visits, one unannounced and the other scheduled. During each visit the evaluator reviews and assesses children and staff files, staff and children interactions, safety and health procedures, physical plant appropriateness and maintenance, the daily operation of the program, and the quality and appropriateness of instructional activities. An additional evaluation requirement for TDHS relicensure for the classrooms partnered with Head Start is to be evaluated for the Report Card and Star Quality Child Care Program.

An annual evaluation conducted by a State trained assessor for the Report Card and Star Quality Child Care Programs is only required for the classrooms partnered with Head Start. This program recognizes child care agencies for exceeding minimum licensing

standards. The *Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale, Revised* (ECERS-R) is used to conduct the evaluation. The results of the ECERS-R are shared with the program evaluator and recorded in the program assessment section of the report card that is one of seven areas evaluated. The other six areas are director qualification, professional development, developmental learning, parent and family involvement, ratios and group size, and staff compensation. A classroom can receive one, two, or three stars to place on the license with each star indicating the accomplishment of increasingly higher standards. To earn the top rating, the teachers of these classrooms are required to participate in additional training, develop an annual professional development plan, and score a minimum of five on the ECERS-R.

Information obtained from the licensing documents reviewed supported some of the themes and barriers or supports to teaching and learning in the classroom. The additional documentation and pre-enrollment visit required of the pre-k teachers is a difference from the other grade levels and were identified as a barrier during the data analysis from the focus groups. At the same time the required 1:10 adult to child ratio, another difference from the other grade levels, was identified as both a support and a barrier to teaching and learning. The required staff cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training and physicals, while a difference from other grade levels, were not previously identified as a barrier or support. The TDHS licensing requirement of the completion of the ECERS-R by an outside evaluator is uniquely different for classrooms partnered with Head Start, and this requirement was identified as a barrier to teaching and learning.

Funding Requirements

The two organizational documents reviewed that provided guidelines for funding for the two organizations were *Scope of Services for 2007-2008 Voluntary Pre-K for Tennessee Programs* (2007) for the Greene County Schools and the Administration for Children, Youth, and Families, Head Start Program (Parts 1301-1311) of the Code of Federal Regulations (2007) for Head Start. These documents replicate and extend many of the previously reviewed program approval and licensing requirements. The documents were reviewed for additional information of the requirements in the areas of student enrollment, student supervision, staff qualifications, personnel evaluations, school day, curriculum, and environmental assessments.

The *2007-2008 Scope of Services* begins with a directive for the Grantee to create a quality early childhood education program for children who are 4 years of age on or before September 30, 2007, and "at risk" educationally due to the family's low income status. Low income status is determined by the family's annual income falling in the levels of those published for Free or Reduced Meals. If space is available after enrolling children income qualified children, other children can be enrolled according to the following prioritized criteria: children with disabilities, children identified as English Language Learners (ELL), children in state custody, and children identified as educationally at risk due to abuse or neglect. Additional criteria specific to the region and considered to cause an educationally at risk situation can be submitted for approval to the Tennessee Office of Early Learning.

Head Start programs are required to establish criteria that define the types of children and families who will be given priority for recruitment and selection. The first considerations for enrollment of enrollment of children are to be income eligible families whose total annual

income is equal to or less than the official poverty line, the age of the child, and the availability of educational programs for the child. For the purpose of eligibility a child whose family is receiving public assistance or the child is in foster care are included in this category. In addition, children with disabilities and children who are identified as homeless are to be considered on the next tier for services. If available space remains in the program, children from families above income can be considered for placement.

The *2007-2008 Scope of Services* requires the staff for the classroom to include a teacher and an assistant in order to meet a required minimum adult to child ratio of 1:10 with a maximum class size of 20 children. The teacher must possess a Tennessee state teaching license and endorsement for Early Childhood Education (ECE) or have been teaching under an approved waiver or alternative license. The teacher's assistant must have a Child Development Associate (CDA) or an associate degree in early childhood. Staff evaluations are to occur on an annual basis, and teachers are to be evaluated with the Tennessee Framework for Evaluation to ensure licensure advancement and procure tenure with the school system. Head Start programs are required to have a minimum of a teacher and teacher assistant per classroom. Teachers in the Head Start programs must hold a minimum of a Child Development Associate certificate, and the assistants must have a high school diploma or equivalent. Staff members are to be evaluated on an annual basis, and the results of the evaluations are to guide the professional development activities for the following year.

The *2007-2008 Scope of Services* requires the implementation of a state approved research-based academic curriculum that was aligned with the *Tennessee Early Learning Developmental Standards* (TNELDS). The program is to address the areas of language, cognitive, social-emotional, and physical developmental areas using direct instruction,

individualized instruction, group activities, and self-selected center based activities. Student skill acquisition is to be assessed and documented on an individual basis. The instructional requirements for the Head Start program are the same with the exception of the implementation of a research-based curriculum. The safety curriculum differs between Greene County Schools and Head Start. Greene County Schools is required to implement a safety curriculum approved by the Tennessee Office of Early Learning that is not the same the same safety curriculum implemented by Head Start.

The school day and number of days in the school year are defined for compliance in the 2007-2008 Scope of Services. The program must operate 180 days as determined by the Local Education Authority (LEA). Children must attend school 5½ hours per day exclusive of nap time. Head Start programs operate an annual number of days as submitted and approved in the grant. Head Start has the option of conducting half-day programs with a morning session and an afternoon session or a whole day program. This option is based on documentation of the needs of the community.

The 2007-2008 Scope of Services requires the implementation of two environmental assessments, the *Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale, Revised* (ECERS-R) and the *Early Language & Literacy Classroom Observation* (ELLCO). These assessments are self-administered every 2 years. A plan of action to address the needs identified through the administrations of these assessments must be developed and reviewed for progress the following year.

The requirements for student enrollment in the Greene County pre-k program results in differences between classrooms partnered with Head Start and those not in the partnership and between pre-k and grades kindergarten through eight. These differences were identified

as barriers to teaching and learning in the classroom by the teachers and principals. Teachers of the pre-k classrooms in partnership with Head Start must complete additional forms to enroll children in the pre-k program. All pre-k classrooms must enroll children based on low income eligibility.

The 2007-2008 Scope of Services replicates the requirements of the adult to child ratio of 1:10 and increases staff qualifications. Staff qualifications were identified by the participants of the focus groups as a support to teaching and learning. In the area of curriculum, both organizations required the same variety of structures and topics, and TDOE stipulated the implementation of an approved curriculum. The teachers viewed the curriculum and required activities as a support, but the principals identified the inflexibility of the required curriculum as a barrier. Environmental assessments required of the pre-k teachers are additional responsibilities in comparison to other grade levels.

Student Screening and Assessments

Student screening and assessments were reviewed to support or negate teacher and principal theories that differences occurred for the pre-k classrooms. The areas of this comparison were between the pre-k program and grades kindergarten through eight and between the classrooms in partnership with Head Start and the not partnered classrooms. In addition, the organizations requirements of using the assessments to make instructional decisions support the implementation of effective practices in the classroom.

Greene County Schools' pre-k and Head Start classrooms are required to develop instructional activities to address student academic and developmental needs. Head Start programs are required to "use a variety of strategies to promote and support children's learning and developmental progress based on the observations and ongoing assessment of

each child" (Head Start Program Regulations, 2007). The 2007-2008 Tennessee Voluntary Pre-K Scope of Services lists the requirement that each classroom was to "ensure that the organization and delivery of the daily activities within the developmental learning program is based upon teacher observations and assessment of each child's development (Tennessee Department of Education, Scope of Services 2007-2008, p. 2). The *Brigance Prescreen Screen II* and a system wide teacher made skills checklist are tools implemented by the Greene County Schools Pre-K Program to meet the student assessment requirements. Head Start uses the *Learning Accomplishment Profile-Diagnostic* (LAPD) and the *Devereux Early Childhood Assessment* (DECA).

The *Brigance Preschool Screen II,* 2007is administered at the beginning and the end of the school year. This screening assesses the cognitive elements of language comprehension, vocabulary, morphology, and syntax. The system-wide teacher made skills checklist was developed from the implemented curriculum, *Let's Begin with the Letter People* (Abrams Learning Trends, 2000) and the *Tennessee Early Learning Developmental Standards* (2005). This skills checklist is individually administrated five times per school year and is used to document student progress and make instructional decisions in the curriculum. The skills assessed are naming and making sounds represented by letters, naming colors and shapes, rote counting, number concepts, and writing first names.

In addition to the Brigance Prescreen Screen II and the skills checklist, the teachers of classrooms partnered with Head Start are required to administer the LAPD three times during each school year. The purpose of the LAPD (2009), a norm referenced assessment, is to assess individual skill development in the developmental domains of gross motor, fine motor, cognitive, and language. The DECA (2006) is a nationally normed assessment that evaluates

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the effectiveness of individual child resilience, screens for emotional and behavioral concerns, and assesses program wide interventions for social and emotional support.

The administration of the Brigance and teacher made skills checklist by the pre-k teachers is identical to the assessment requirements for the kindergarten teachers in the Greene County Schools. The assessments required by Head Start are additional tasks for the teachers. The Head Start assessments were identified by the teachers as a barrier to teaching and learning in the classroom.

Local Policy and Classroom Documents

Greene County Schools and Upper East Tennessee Human Development Agency (UTHEDA) Head Start policies and procedures were reviewed to determine common or diverse classroom requirements between the pre-k classrooms and kindergarten through eighth grade classrooms and differences between the partnered and not partnered pre-k classrooms. The Greene County Schools' policies and procedures selected to review addressed curriculum, grading, student progress reporting, class size, and teacher time schedules. The various classroom documents implemented to comply with these policies and procedures were included. The *Head Start Classroom Observation Form* developed by the UETHDA Head Start program was the only Head Start procedure selected to review.

The *Curriculum Development* (2007) policy directs teachers in grades K-12 to develop a course of study based on curriculum guides and textbooks. In addition the principals are charged with the responsibility for administering and supervising a quality instructional program for school improvement. The *Grading System* (2008) policy states that the Director of Schools is required to develop a procedure for establishing a system of grading and assessment to measure student performance on content standards for grades K-8.

Grading System, 6.200 Exhibit A, (2011) policy procedure, requires teachers in grades 1-12 to record numerical grades on the report cards that are distributed every nine-weeks. Student performance for Kindergarten is reported through a locally developed skills checklist. *Reporting Student Progress* (2008) policy states that parents are to receive interim reports at the midpoint of the nine-week periods for grades kindergarten through 12, and parent conferences, occurring outside of the 180 instructional days, are to be scheduled at least two times during the school year. *Class Size*, 4.201 Exhibit A, (2004) lists information on the legal requirements for maximum class size enrollment and average number of students per grades kindergarten through 12 for three sets of grade level ranges. Grade level ranges are kindergarten through third grade, 4th through 6th grade, and 7th through 12th grade. The maximum allowable numbers of students per class are 25, 30, and 35, respectively. The *Time Schedules and Extra Duty* (2004) policy states that teachers are to be allotted 2 ½ hours of duty free planning time each week and a duty free lunch on a daily basis.

The *Head Start Classroom Observation Form* is a 14-page document and is administered by the Head Start team leader on a monthly basis. The purpose of this document, as per the perception of the investigator, is to monitor safety guidelines, legal requirements, and the completion of classroom documentation. This comprehensive document had five sections: Classroom Observation, Onsite Inspection, Literacy Grows and Glows, Preschool Early Language and Literacy Quick Check, and Classroom Observation Student Folder Checklist.

Classroom documents reviewed were those used by personnel in the areas of lesson planning, student registration, and daily student and classroom documentation. To meet the requirement of written lesson plans containing developmentally appropriate activities for

each age group of children, Greene County Schools and Head Start developed weekly lesson plan templates. The documents of each organization address the mandated areas of curriculum, included a correlation with the *Tennessee Early Learning Developmental Standards* (TNELDS) and required database instructional goals for the students. The source of the data was different for Greene County Schools and Head Start documents. The skills checklist was the source of data for Greene County Schools, and Head Start used the information provided by the LAPD.

Student registration documents for the Head Start, Greene County Schools Pre-K, and Greene County Schools Kindergarten programs were reviewed for this study. In addition to completing the registration forms, all programs require teachers to collect copies of the birth certificate, social security card, and immunization records for each student. In classrooms partnered with Head Start teachers are required to complete the registrations forms for Head Start and the Greene County Schools Pre-K.

To register a child with the Head Start forms a teacher has to complete 13 forms and provide the parents with information on the LAPD and DECA, transportation rules, picking up children late, head lice policy, and flu prevention. Greene County forms for pre-k registration require the teacher to complete three forms and distribute information on the program policy, pre-k student attendance, and a summary of the childcare approval requirements. Kindergarten teachers have no additional forms to complete for student registration.

Daily student and classroom documentation vary between the pre-k classrooms partnered with Head Start and not partnered classrooms. Teachers in the pre-k classrooms partnered with Head Start are required to maintain several additional documents on a daily

basis that are unique to the partnership. All pre-k teachers maintain a log for children to be signed in and out of the classroom. Greene County practices require all teachers to record student attendance in a record book and electronically submit the names of children not in attendance. The classrooms not partnered with Head Start submit a lunch count in an electronic format. Teachers in partnership with Head Start complete a daily attendance and meals worksheet that documented attendance, the meals and snacks served per child and whether the child was classified as Head Start certified. Teachers in the classrooms partnered with Head Start complete two environmental logs on a daily basis to document indoor cleaning and playground inspection.

Information obtained from local policy and classrooms documents validate several of the themes discovered during the focus group data analysis. These documents support the flexibility the principal has with the curriculum. However, the rigidity of the pre-k curriculum was identified by the principals as a barrier to teaching and learning. At the same time the implemented curriculum was viewed as a support to teaching and learning by both the teachers and principals. Class size, a support for teaching and learning in the pre-k classroom, varies by grade level ranges. The lack of a duty free lunch and equitable planning time for the pre-k teachers is a barrier to teaching and learning and a violation of local policy. Similar grading and student progress reporting between pre-k and kindergarten and conferencing requirements for all grades was discovered during this review. Grading, progress reporting, and conferencing requirements were not identified as supports or barriers to teaching and learning but validate the theme of differences and similarities between pre-k and other grade levels. The additional tasks required during pre-k registration were found to be a barrier to teaching and learning for the teachers in the classrooms partnered with Head

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Start. The monthly *Head Start Classroom Observation Form*, an additional partnership task, is redundant and was identified by the teachers as a barrier to teaching and learning in the classroom. The daily meals worksheet is another redundant task, but the collection of this information is required for the funding agency. The additional logs completed by the pre-k teachers in partnership is an additional task and identified as a barrier to teaching and learning.

<div align="center">*Classroom Observations*</div>

Two classroom observations were conducted to collect additional data to validate or nullify the themes of teacher use of effective instructional practices and the differences between pre-k classrooms partnered with Head Start and the no partnered classrooms. To obtain the needed information one observation was conducted in a classroom in partnership with Head Start, and the other observation involved a not partnered classroom. Each of the two observations was conducted for the duration of a school day and scheduled on different dates.

Effective Instructional Practices

The instructional practices used in the two classrooms observed were consistent in both settings and can be considered effective in terms of the current research. Instructional strategies observed included direct instruction, guided practice, independent practice, learning centers, cooperative learning, discovery learning, graphic organizers, K-W-L (Know-Want to Know-Learned) charts, and storytelling. These strategies were implemented through the various settings of whole group, small group, and concept focused center play. During the whole group activity both teachers introduced the academic concepts through story books, songs with movements, finger plays, and graphic organizers. In addition, the

specific learning goal was shared with the children. This brief, 15 minute, activity was followed with 75 minute session of children self-selecting centers or rotating through the teacher directed small group activity. During the small group activity that lasted approximately 10 to 15 minutes per group, each teacher conducted a formative assessment through question and response on the children's current level of understanding of the identified concept. Information the children wanted to learn was obtained in the same manner. The focus of the small group instruction in both classrooms was an integration of the weekly letter, curriculum theme, and letter theme. The children were grouped by ability and the instruction and amount of teacher guidance varied with each group. For example, one group of children participated in a low rigor matching activity and another group of children engaged in a categorization activity. Each small group session ended with the children relating what they learned during the activity.

After completing a small group session and before beginning the next session the teacher would monitor the children in the centers and would occasionally take brief moments to interact with them. The interactions were to encourage the child to construct knowledge about the curriculum theme, strengthen their interpersonal relationship, or correct an inappropriate behavior. The teacher assistant of each classroom alternated between working with children at a table and interacting with them in the learning centers. In one classroom the teacher assistant focused on an art activity at the table activity, and in the other classroom this individual focused on journal writing. The specific centers for student self-selection in both classrooms were identical. These centers were technology, art, science and math, water and sand table, blocks, puzzles, reading, dramatic play, and music. The technology center included a smart table that required the children to work cooperatively to operate the

programs. At the same time all centers contained materials to continue or replicate the weekly letter and curriculum themes allowing for repetition and extension of the academic concepts.

Partnered and Not Partnered Classrooms

Similarities and differences were observed between the classroom partnered with Head Start and the not partnered classroom. The similarities of both classrooms were found in the areas of curriculum and instruction, teacher characteristics and qualifications, materials, physical space, and daily schedules. Differences between the two classrooms were noted in the areas of transportation, personnel, meals, and additional tasks required in the classroom partnered with Head Start.

The identical academic curriculum, Abrams Learning Trends *Let's Begin with the Letter People* (1990), was implemented and instructed in both classrooms, and both teachers used the same instructional settings, techniques, and strategies, as described in the previous section. Posted certifications in each classroom documented that the teachers possessed a teaching certification from the State of Tennessee and had achieved a highly qualified status. The two teachers demonstrated high levels of energy and positive, purposeful interactions with the children. The amount and variation of the materials displayed in each classroom were very similar, and the rooms were arranged with the same number of centers and direct instruction areas. Daily schedules were very similar in the two classrooms. Students were present from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., and scheduled events occurred in the same pattern. An important observation in both classrooms was that both teachers were with the students at all times. As a result these teachers had lunch and planning scheduled at the end of the day after student dismissal.

Transportation differences between the two classrooms occurred as a result of Head Start providing transportation on a minibus for the classroom in the partnership. The not partnered classroom relied solely upon parent transportation to and from the school. In the area of personnel the difference between the two classrooms was the number of adults present throughout the day. In the not partnered classroom two adults were consistently with the students. In the classroom partnered with Head Start three or more adults were present when the students were in attendance. This occurred when the schedules of the Head Start personnel assigned to the class overlapped and when another employee from Head Start entered the room to collect documentation. The schedules for the Head Start bus assistant and Head Start teacher assistant overlap for an hour on a daily basis. Other Head Start personnel sporadically visit the classroom for various amounts of time as determined by the purpose of the visit. Meals differed between the two classrooms in that all meals (i.e., breakfast, lunch, and snack) were provided by the school's cafeteria in the classroom partnered with Head Start. In the not partnered classroom the provision of meals was determined by the parents who could choose to send meals from home or use the school's cafeteria services. The final area of observed differences between the two classrooms was in the area of additional teacher tasks. The teacher in the classroom in partnership with Head Start had to complete tasks required by Head Start in addition to those required by Greene County Schools. Additional Head Start paperwork observed was the completion of an attendance and meals worksheet, daily playground inspection form, and daily cleaning log. At the same time this teacher was observed providing instruction on the required Head Start safety curriculum.

The classroom observations validated several themes and benefits or barriers to teaching and learning in the classroom. The supports that were identified from the focus

group data analysis were consistent in both classrooms. All but one, transportation, of the differences observed was identified as barriers. Effective instructional practices, an identified support, observed were a fast paced variety of activities, the use of multiple intelligences, planned effective practice, database instructional decision, and the provision of a literacy rich environment. Additional identified supports to teaching and learning that were consistent in both classrooms are qualified teachers and a minimum of a 1:10 adult to child ratio. The differences observed between the two classrooms were the provision of transportation by Head Start, interruptions by Head Start personnel, and the additional tasks required of the teacher in the partnership classroom. Interruptions by Head Start personnel and additional Head Start tasks were identified as barriers to teaching and learning in the classroom.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research was conducted in Greene County, Tennessee, to increase knowledge and develop a better understanding about the Greene County Schools Pre-K Program. The participants of the study included principals and teachers involved in the daily operation of the Greene County Schools pre-k classrooms. Participants represented classrooms in partnership with Upper East Tennessee Human Development Agency (UTHEDA) Head Start program and classrooms that were not in partnership with this organization. Data for the study were collected via focus groups, document reviews, and classroom observations.

Findings

The study was guided by two research questions. The questions addressed the impacts of the organizational practices and regulations for the pre-k classrooms on principal and teacher perceptions of teaching and learning in the classroom and how the principals and teachers defined their perceived supports and barriers to teaching and learning in the pre-k classrooms.

Question 1

Regulations.

The massive Federal and State regulations guiding funding and licensing resulted in a compliance burdened program making the program difficult for the principals and teachers to understand. The principals and teachers involved in the partnership with Head Start often confused the regulations of the two organizations.

Practices.

Principals and teachers relied on the system level supervisor to ensure program compliance for licensing and funding regulations that continued the limitation of program knowledge at the school level. The school system was restricted to the placement of one pre-k classroom at most of the schools. This practice resulted in teacher isolation and limited teachers' opportunities to reflect in a collaborative manner. Head Start personnel interacted with classroom personnel and omitted the school and system administrators that prevented full involvement of the Greene County administrators in the classroom.

Question 2

Supports. Principals and teachers identified several supports to teaching and learning in the pre-k classrooms. These supports can be categorized into the areas of curriculum and instruction, teacher characteristics, rules and regulations, services provided by Head Start, and adequate program funding.

The literacy curriculum, *Let's Begin with the Letter People* (Abrams, 1990), was perceived as being effective in producing positive student performance results. The principals and teachers identified the instructional strategies and techniques used by the teachers as having a direct positive effect on student performance. The specific techniques identified were brief periods of direct instruction during whole group and small group activities and academically focused center play. Effective instructional strategies embedded within each activity were listed as multiple intelligence activities, fast pacing of instructional activities, and planned practice of instructed skills. Teacher characteristics noted by the participants that positively affected instruction in the classroom were a positive outlook, passion, compassion, dedication, child focused, and high energy level.

The principals and teachers identified several rules and regulation as providing support to teaching and learning in the classroom. The requirements of the *Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale Revised* (ECERS-R) to implement seven specific centers and involve student and teacher interaction in the exploration of the concepts provided in the centers was deemed very important by all participants. ECERS-R requirements for the amounts and varieties of materials were considered to support the need for a literacy rich classroom environment. The maximum class size of 20 and the required adult to child ratio of 1:10 as per the *Scope of Services for 2007-2008 Voluntary Pre-K for Tennessee Programs* (2007) were identified as supporting teaching and learning in the classroom by ensuring developmentally appropriate groupings for instructional purposes. The *2007-2008 Scope of Services* also requires specific staff certification that ensures the classroom personnel have the appropriate developmental knowledge to successfully conduct learning experiences for pre-k children. The classroom teacher must have a Tennessee state teaching license and an endorsement for Early Childhood Education (ECE) or have been teaching under an approved waiver or alternative license. The teacher's assistant is to have a Child Development Associate (CDA) or an associate degree in early childhood. Principals and teachers identified the certification requirements as being supportive to teaching and learning in the pre-k classroom.

Transportation services provided by Head Start and the adequate program funding by the state were also identified by the principals and teachers as providing support to teaching and learning. The transportation provided by Head Start is developmentally appropriate and encourages regular student attendance in the classroom. Adequate program funding allows

for the purchase of the materials and equipment necessary to equip a literacy rich environment in the pre-k classroom.

Barriers. Participants of the study identified barriers to teaching and learning in the pre-k classroom in the areas of rules and regulations, teacher isolation, the need for knowledge, and the Head Start partnership. Principals and teachers claimed the *2007-2008 Scope of Services* targeted population of low income families was a barrier in that this requirement limited student enrollment of other income levels in the classroom. In the absence of this guideline more children from a variety of income levels could benefit from the program. The ECERS-R requirement for the length of time to be spent in center play restricts the amount of time that can be devoted to direct instruction or guided practice. Principals considered this inflexibility in the curriculum as a barrier when addressing the diverse needs of the academically talented children who may benefit from the additional direct instruction or guided practice literacy activities. Teachers listed the lack of an attendance policy for the pre-k students as a barrier to teaching and learning. Teachers highlighted the fact that a truant child missing instruction and performing poorly on assessments has an adverse affect on a teacher's accountability rating. Another barrier to teaching and learning in the classroom identified by the teachers was the amount of the student and staff documentation required by the *Standards for Child Care Centers and School Age Child Care Programs* (2005). These requirements are different from other grade levels and deemed by the teachers as unnecessary and time consuming.

The isolation of the pre-k teachers was identified by the principals and teachers as being a barrier to teaching and learning in the classroom. Teacher isolation was defined as being the only pre-k teacher in a school that describes a majority of the schools in the Greene

County Schools system. Teacher isolation resulted in minimal peer and administrative support and interaction that stunted the teachers' collective knowledge and professional growth.

The need for knowledge in ECE and the rules and regulations that govern the pre-k classrooms were identified as barriers to teaching and learning. Teachers claimed that adequate preparation to meet the current academic requirements of the pre-k classroom was not provided. As a result inadequate early childhood teacher preparation programs are considered a barrier in the classroom. Teachers recommended academic components for emergent literacy, interacting with parents and children, and effective instructional techniques as specific areas of consideration for inclusion in teacher preparation programs. Principals and teachers also identified the need for administrators to have more knowledge of the principles and philosophies of early childhood education. The lack of administrative knowledge limits the principals' ability to provide support to and conduct appropriate evaluations of the pre-k teachers.

Principals and teachers identified the lack of knowledge of the rules and regulations that govern the pre-k program as a major barrier to teaching and learning in the pre-k classroom. Knowledge in this area is needed to meet the licensing and funding requirements of the program. Rules and regulations for the pre-k classrooms affect all areas of the school and the support staff associated with those areas. The site level administrator must have knowledge of the rules to provide the necessary support to meet the needs of all stakeholders in the program that includes parents, classroom staff, and support staff. The stakeholder list extends to include partnership personnel in those classrooms partnered with Head Start.

Principals and teachers unanimously identified specific aspects of the partnership with Head Start identified as barriers to teaching and learning in the pre-k classroom. The use of an outside ECERS evaluator was viewed by the principals and teachers as inappropriate and ineffective on improving student performance as the evaluator was trained to conduct the assessment with a focus on child care. The monthly Head Start evaluations were considered an interruption to instructional activities and insulting to the certified pre-k classroom teacher. In addition, many of the components of the monthly evaluations are redundant as the items monitored are addressed by other assessments or documentation tasks. The chains of command within each organization caused conflicts between the chains of command of the two organizations of Head Start and Greene County Schools. The conflicts occur at the classroom level when the staff is required to meet the dual guidelines of both organizations. In addition areas of authority in the classroom and at the school are not clear among staff members. The lack of communication between the two organizations results in strained relationships and threatens the principal's autonomy at the school. Finally the additional tasks required of the teachers in the classrooms partnered with Head Start were considered a barrier to teaching and learning because the tasks are duplicates of other tasks or not aligned with or supportive of the academic focus required by the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE).

Recommendations for School District Studied

The recommendations of this study are to continue the partnership with Head Start, the use of effective and developmentally appropriate practices, and the data-based self-assessment process. The partnership with Head Start offers a powerful combination of organizational resources with a focus on implementing safe, effective, and developmentally

appropriate programs to prepare children for successful school experiences. The practice of delivering standards aligned direct instruction, guided practice, independent practice, and learning centers while using effective strategies to address students' academic needs should continue. The continuation of the self-assessment process of using data provided from the administration of student assessments, the *Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale Revised* (ECERS-R), the *Early Language & Literacy Classroom Observation* (ELLCO), and the program licensing evaluation is recommended.

Changes in current practices and the implementation of new practices are also recommended. To maintain the integrity of this information, it must be reported that two recommendations derived from this research became practices before the completion of the study. The pre-k teachers' lack of a duty free lunch and equitable planning time was a violation of state and local law. The recommendation was to address this violation immediately. As a result, this violation was shared with principals who corrected the situation by ensuring a duty free lunch and equitable planning time. Another recommendation of this study was to pursue the possibility of licensing all classrooms through TDOE. As a result of a change in regulations at the state level, annual certificates for all pre-k classrooms in the Greene County Schools jurisdiction whether in partnership with Head Start or not are now issued by the TDOE. Participation in the Star Quality Child Care Programs (Tenn. Comp. R. & Regs. 1240-04-07, 2007) that involves the administration of the ECERS-R by an outside evaluator, is no longer a licensing requirement. However, the Upper East Tennessee Human Development Agency (UTHEDA) Head Start desires the continuation of this practice and includes it in the Memorandum of Understanding with Greene County Schools.

Recommended changes in current practices are to discontinue the use of an outside ECERS-R evaluator and the monthly Head Start evaluations. Both of these practices are offensive to the current pre-k teachers and counterproductive to meeting the needs of classroom personnel.

New practices recommended for implementation are an attendance policy for the pre-k classroom and structured communication systems to better meet the needs of all program participants. A system wide attendance policy should be developed and communicated to the parents upon enrollment of their child in the program. The policy should list the system's expectations for attendance and the consequences for identified cases of truancy.

A structured communication system in a group meeting format should be developed to identify and address participant needs. These meetings should be collaborative, include all levels of personnel, and cyclic in nature with members participating in a seamless rotation of dialog, action, and data analysis components. Meetings should be scheduled on a regular basis, and qualitative and quantitative data should be collected to evaluate the adequacy of the communication system to meet the needs of each participant. An initial consideration for these collaborative meetings to align the requirements and teacher tasks for each program in an effort to eliminate redundancy and additional tasks for the teachers involved in the partnership with Head Start. A daily communication system between the two organizations needs to be developed and conducted in a manner to ensure the safety of the children and allow for the validation of individual staff accountability. System wide professional learning teams should be developed as an effective means of addressing the professional development needs of classroom, administrative, and support staff personnel.

Recommendation for Other Districts Considering Similar Programs

Other districts considering the implementation of similar pre-k programs should identify financial resources. The requirements of a program for 4-year-old children are costly, and initial steps for the implementation of this type of program must include the identification of adequate funding from local or state sources. The district should recruit and select community partners based on the alignment of the prospective partners' and the district's focus and philosophy in the provision of a pre-k program and the partners' abilities to provide additional funding. The development of community partnerships is an effective means of combining financial resources to supplement the necessary funding of the program by splitting the cost of the required program services and materials.

A collaborative process with all stakeholders should be used in the development and maintenance of the pre-k program. Stakeholders in this process should include all levels within each organization participating in the program. For example, representation in a public school system would include teacher assistants, teachers, principals, the supervisor, and the director. The initial purpose of the collaborative process is to identify individual stakeholder responsibilities and needed supports to implement the program. The ongoing purpose of this collaborative process is the continuation of a self-evaluation process. The evaluation process should address the effectiveness of the educational practices used in the classroom and the effectiveness of system's process of meeting the needs of the stakeholders.

Recommendations for Additional Research

Additional research should be conducted in similar settings to replicate the findings of this study. Research should be conducted that includes Head Start personnel with a focus on identifying ways and means of developing more effective partnerships between Head Start

programs and public school systems. Research to determine the need and feasibility of including instruction on the academic components of emerging literacy, interacting with parents and children, and effective instructional techniques in teacher preparation programs could benefit the development of early childhood education programs located in the public schools. Longitudinal research to determine the effectiveness of the program should be conducted.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Greene County Schools, Pre-K Program (2007-2008)

School	Year Initiated	Funding Source	Head Start Partner	Type of License	Age Served	Located in Main Building
1	2006-2007	State Budget	Yes	DOE	4	No
2	2005-2006	State Budget-Pilot	Yes	DHS	3 and 4	Yes
3	2004-2005	State Budget	Yes	DHS	4	Yes
3	2006-2007	State Budget	No	DOE	4	Yes
4	2005-2006	State Budget	Yes	DHS	4	Yes
5	2006-2007	State Budget	No	DOE	4	No
5	2006-2007	State Budget	No	DOE	4	No
6	2005-2006	State Budget	Yes	DHS	4	Yes
7	2004-2005	State Budget	Yes	DHS	4	No
7	2004-2005	Local	Yes	DHS	3 and 4	No
7	2006-2007	State Budget	No	DOE	4	No
7	2007-2008	State Budget	No	DOE	4	No
8	2005-2006	State Budget	Yes	DHS	4	Yes
9	2005-2006	State Budget	Yes	DHS	4	No
10	2005-2006	State Budget	Yes	DHS	4	No

Appendix B

Letter to the Director of Greene County Schools

Month, Day, 2008

Dr. XXXX XXXX
910 West Summer Street
Greeneville, TN 37743

Dear Dr. XXXX,

As a doctoral student at East Tennessee State University in the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, I am required to conduct a study. During the 2008 spring or summer semesters, I would like to conduct research within your organization to gather information that may be used to better understand the implementation process of the pre-k programs and its effect at the classroom level.

My research proposal focuses on the implementation of the pre-k program within the Greene County Schools System. Pre-K classrooms are a new occurrence in the field of public education, and developing a better understanding of the classroom level effects of the implementation process could lead to the identification of successful practices or the need for additional studies.

This qualitative research will use three separate homogeneous focus groups consisting of, Greene County principals, and Greene County pre-k teachers. Each focus group session will be conducted one time and last approximately one hour. Classroom observations and document reviews will also be components of this study. Confidentiality will be observed throughout each aspect of this study as participants' names will not be listed or specifically identified as a source for information.

I am requesting your permission to communicate with the Greene County School principals and pre-k teachers to solicit their participation in this research as a member of a focus group. Each individual will be given information about this study and his or her rights as a participant before agreeing to involvement in the focus group session. Please indicate your approval for the conduction of this research within your school system by signing and dating your signature below and returning the letter to me in the enclosed envelope.

If you have any questions, please contact my doctoral advisor, Dr. Eric Glover at (423) 439-XXXX or me at (423) 552-XXXX. Your consideration of and assistance with this request is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Crumm, Ed.S.
- -

By signing this letter, I grant approval for Kathryn E. Crumm to contact Greene County School principals and pre-k teachers and conduct research within the Greene County School System.

| _____ | _____ |
| Signature | Date |

Appendix C

Letter to Principals of Greene County Schools

Month, Day, 2008

Mrs. XXXX XXXX
910 West Summer Street
Greeneville, TN 37743

Dear Mrs. XXXX,

As a doctoral student at East Tennessee State University in the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, I am required to conduct a study. During the 2008 spring or summer semesters, I would like to conduct research within your school to gather information that may be used to better understand the implementation process of the pre-k programs and its effect at the classroom level.

My research proposal focuses on the implementation of the pre-k program within the Greene County Schools System. Pre-K classrooms are a new occurrence in the field of public education, and developing a better understanding of the impact of the regulations for pre-k classrooms and the system's organization on principal and teacher perceptions of the teaching and learning in the Greene County Schools system could lead to the identification of successful practices or the need for additional studies.

This qualitative research will use two separate homogeneous focus groups consisting of Greene County principals and Greene County pre-k teachers. Each focus group session will be conducted one time and last approximately one hour. Classroom observations and document reviews will also be components of this study. Confidentiality will be observed throughout each aspect of this study as participants' names will not be listed or specifically identified as a source for information.

I am requesting your permission to communicate with the pre-k teacher(s) at your school to solicit his or her participation in this research as a member of a focus group. Each individual will be given information about this study and his or her rights as a participant before agreeing to involvement in the focus group session. Please indicate your approval for the conduction of this research within your school by signing and dating your signature below and returning the letter to me in the enclosed envelope. This letter with your signature will be submitted with an application to conduct the research to the ETSU Internal Review Board.

If you have any questions, please contact my doctoral advisor, Dr. Eric Glover at (423) 439-XXXX or me at (423) 552-XXXX. Your consideration of and assistance with this request is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Kathryn E. Crumm, Ed.S.
- -
By signing this letter, I grant approval for Kathryn E. Crumm to contact pre-k teachers and conduct research within this school, which is located in the Greene County School System.

School	Signature	Date

Appendix D

Participant Recruitment Email

Dear Colleague,

As a doctoral student at East Tennessee State University in the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, I am required to conduct a study. My research proposal for this study focuses on the implementation of the pre-k program within the Greene County Schools System. Pre-K classrooms are a new occurrence in the field of public education, and developing a better understanding of the effects at the classroom level during this implementation process could lead to the identification of successful practices or the need for additional studies.

This qualitative research will use two separate homogeneous focus groups consisting of Greene County principals and Greene County pre-k teachers. Each focus group session will be conducted one time and last approximately one hour. Classroom observations and document reviews will also be components of this study. Confidentiality will be observed throughout each aspect of this study as participants' names will not be listed or specifically identified as a source for information.

I am asking your consideration of participating in this study that will be conducted during the month of May. Involvement for the Greene County principals will be participation in one focus group session and possible assistance in the provision of various documents. A minimal level of participation for the Greene County teachers would be attending a one-hour focus group session. Teachers have the additional option of volunteering for a half-day classroom observation session, which will include access to various documents. Two classroom observations will be conducted for this study. All focus group sessions will be scheduled at a time and location that is most convenient for each specific focus group. Benefits of participation in this study might be the discovery of individual accomplishments previously overlooked, a better understanding of the pre-k classroom, and the identification of mutually held beliefs.

Participation in this study is strictly on a voluntary basis. However, I would appreciate a response to this email to let me know if you are interested in participating or prefer not to participate in this research. Those interested in participating will receive a brief form to provide me with preferred dates and times to schedule focus group sessions.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this matter. If you have any questions, please contact my doctoral advisor, Dr. Eric Glover at (423) 439-XXXX or me at (423) 552-XXXX.

Sincerely,
Kathryn

Appendix E

Focus Group Interview Guide

I. Introduction
    A. Welcome participants – Make name cards
    B. Thank you for your assistance in this research activity. I will use your words to develop theory that will be valuable in developing a better understanding of the impact of the regulations for pre-k classrooms and the system's organization on the Greene County Schools principal and teacher perceptions of the teaching and learning in the pre-k classroom. As you hold the major positions in this program, your participation is very important. Please know that your identity will be confidential in this study. Your name will not be used, and no identifiers will be used to link you to your words. We are here to investigate the pre-k program and not individuals. Forget my usual professional position with you. I am a researcher and totally and seriously focused on obtaining accurate information. Your responses will not be taken be taken personally, and as a result, will not be held against you in any fashion. I will tape-record this session to have an accurate account of your input. In addition, you will have the opportunity to review the typed transcripts for accuracy and content. At that time, you will have the authority to make corrections to the transcripts. The session will take approximately one hour.
    C. Sign Informed Consent Form – Each participant is to read and sign the informed consent form. Provide the participants with a copy of the consent form.
    D. Collect demographic data; recruit teachers for classroom observations
    E. Ask for questions before starting the tape recorder and offer the opportunity for participants to ask questions in private. Start tape recorder.
II. Main Interview Questions
    A. Let's talk about the best and most important features of your pre-k classroom.
    B. What are the rules and regulations that support these positive features?
    C. What are the regulations and system organizational practices you would change to improve the benefits to the students?
    D. You have been assigned as a mentor for a new pre-k teacher. What advise would you give this individual?
    E. If you were given the opportunity to develop the guidelines or requirements for pre-k classrooms, what suggestions would you offer?
    F. Some people might say that the pre-k classrooms should fall under the same state requirements as the K-12 classrooms. How would you respond to them?
    G. Suppose this is my first visit to a pre-k classroom in Greene County. What individual actions and events would I observe from the beginning to the end of the day?
III. Conclusion
    A. Summarize – To ensure accuracy, I would like to summarize the information you have given me. Is the summary correct?
    B. Additional comments – Do you have any additional comments before I stop the tape?
    C. Stop recording – Do you have any comments off the record?
    D. Thank you again for your participation in this session. I will contact you when the transcripts are ready for your review.

Appendix F

Focus Group Scheduling – Email

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study!

Provide the requested information and return the form to me as soon as possible via email. After all participants in your focus group have returned this form to me, I will email you with the compiled information. Please remember that names and positions will only be used for scheduling purposes. After focus groups have been scheduled, this information will be destroyed.

Name: _____   Position: _____

Approximately one hour focus group during the month of May:
(90 minute block of time to be scheduled)

Preferred Day(s) of the Week: _____

Preferred Time of the Day: _____

I am only available for these specific dates and times: _____

Preferred Location: _____

Appendix G

East Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board Informed Consent Document

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Kathryn E. Crumm

TITLE OF PROJECT: The Reality of a Preschool Classroom in the Greene County School System

**EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT (ICD)**

This Informed Consent will explain about being a participant in this research study. It is important that you read this material carefully and then decide if you wish to be a volunteer. While I would appreciate your participation, there is no pressure for you to volunteer to participate.

PURPOSE:

The intent of this qualitative case study will be to explore the implementation of the preschool program in the Greene County Schools system and to develop a better understanding of the effects of this process at the classroom level. The dual purpose of this study will be to use the findings to provide information for other school systems in developing a successful and effective pre-k program and to improve the current Greene County Schools pre-k program. The information obtained from this study would provide one approach to organizing a pre-k program in all school systems addressing the conflicts between federal, state, and local laws. Locally, the information would be used to better understand any legal, organizational, or social concerns inherent in the Greene County Schools pre-k classrooms.

DURATION:

Three separate forty-five minutes to one-hour focus group sessions of pre-k teachers, Greene County principals, and Head Start administrators will be conducted in this research. Each participant will be involved in an audio taped focus group interview with four to five peer participants. In addition, two teachers will each participate in a half-day classroom observation session.

PROCEDURES:

Data will be collected from the three separate focus groups, classroom observations, and document review. Structured interview guides with open-ended questions will be used for the focus groups sessions, which will be audio taped only with the expressed permission of the participants. In addition, participants will self-select pseudonyms for use during the focus group sessions and on the transcripts. Following the interview session, I will transcribe the data and make copies available to the participants. Participants will be allowed to review the transcripts for content and accuracy before the data is analyzed.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: <u>Kathryn E. Crumm</u>

TITLE OF PROJECT: <u>The Reality of a Preschool Classroom in the Greene County School System</u>

On the demographic data form completed by participants prior to their focus group session, teachers will be asked to indicate their willingness to participate in the classroom observation portion of this research. Two of the teachers that agree to participate will be selected for this activity. The data collected from the half-day classroom observations conducted at the two sites will be recorded on a classroom observation form and researcher field notes guide. All notes and observation forms will not have the name of the teacher or the classroom recorded. Instead of names for the teacher and classroom, the teacher will be identified as "Teacher A or B" and the classroom as "Classroom A or B." The notes developed during the observation will be typed, and copies will be made available for participant review and correction.

Documents will be reviewed for two purposes. The first purpose for document review will be to support the data collected from the focus group sessions and classroom observations. Examples of these documents are lesson plans, daily records, and required reports, which will be reviewed during the classroom observations. The second purpose for document review is to develop a better understanding of the pre-k classrooms. These documents will be reviewed at the administrative offices of the organization responsible for the development of the document and will include the various federal, state, and local documents that guide the program. Data collected will be recorded on a document review guide and reviewed for content and accuracy by the participants associated with the retrieval location of the document.

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES/TREATMENTS:

No alternative procedures will be implemented in this research.

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS:

No risks exist for participation in this research. However, some questions or resulting discussions may cause some level of discomfort for the participants. Volunteers are free to leave the focus group at any time. In addition, participants may choose not to answer questions or participate in any discussion that causes personal discomfort.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS:

Addressing any participant's concerns discovered during this research could lead to a higher level of participant satisfaction and quality educational opportunity for students. Individual benefits of participating in this research may be the development of supportive relationships from other members of the group and the knowledge gained from this study.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Kathryn E. Crumm

TITLE OF PROJECT: The Reality of a Preschool Classroom in the Greene County School System

COMPENSATION FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT:

East Tennessee State University (ETSU) will pay the cost of emergency first aid for any injury that may happen as a result of your being in this study. ETSU makes no commitment to pay for any other medical treatment. Claims against ETSU or any of its agents or employees may be submitted to the Tennessee Claims Commission. These claims will be settled to the extent allowable as provided under TCA Section 9-8-307. For more information about claims call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board of ETSU at 423/439-6055.

FINANCIAL COSTS:

Participants will have no financial cost in this research.

COMPENSATION IN THE FORM OF PAYMENTS TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS:

Participants will not be financially compensated for their involvement in this research.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:

Participation in this research is strictly voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the research at any time, without penalty. In addition, you are free to ask questions about the research at anytime.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS:

If you have any questions, problems or research-related medical problems at any time, you may call Kathryn Crumm at (423) XXX-XXXX or Dr. Eric Glover at (423) XXX-XXXX. You may also call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at 423/439-6054 for any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Every attempt will be made to see that your study results are kept confidential. Transcripts, audiotapes, document review guides, field notes guides, and participant demographic data forms will be destroyed upon the completion of the study.
A copy of any remaining records from this study will be stored in a secure place at the researcher's residence for at least 5 years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming you as a subject.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: <u>Kathryn E. Crumm</u>

TITLE OF PROJECT: <u>The Reality of a Preschool Classroom in the Greene County School System</u>

Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the ETSU IRB and the personnel particular to this research at the ETSU Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis have access to the study records. All records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above.

By signing below, you confirm that you have read or had this document read to you. You will be given a signed copy of this informed consent document. You have been given the chance to ask questions and to discuss your participation with the investigator. You freely and voluntarily choose to be in this research project.

_____

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT   DATE

_____

PRINTED NAME OF PARTICIPANT   DATE

_____

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR   DATE

_____

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS (if applicable)   DATE

Ver. 03/22/08   Page 4 of 4   Subject Initials _____

Appendix H

Participant Demographic Data

Pseudonym: _____

Position: (Circle one)   Teacher   Principal

                Teacher Response: Are you willing to allow for a half-day classroom
                                     observation? _____

Highest Level of Education Degree: _____

Years of Experience in Education: _____

Years of Experience with Greene County Pre-K: _____

Total Years of Experience in Early Childhood Education: _____

Appendix I

Document Review Guide

Document Title: _____

Date of Documentation: _____

Date Retrieved: _____

Location of Document: _____

Rationale for Selecting the Document: _____

Document Review Questions:

1. What is the purpose of the document? What authority requires the document?

2. How does this document affect the classroom from the perspective of the teacher and students?

3. Is the document controversial? Explain

4. From the participant's point of view, in what ways is the document useful or a hindrance in his or her capacity?

5. Does the document support or counter themes developed during focus group sessions? How?

6. What, if any, are the participant's suggestions for improving or changing the use of the use of the document?

Appendix J

Field Notes Guide

Activity: _____   Date: _____

Key Words or Specific Events	Person (pseudonym)

Researcher Perception(s)	Trigger

Additional Thoughts:

Additional Specific Information to Investigate:

1.	
2.	
3.	

Appendix K

Classroom Observation Guide

Classroom Observed: _____

Date/Time: _____   Location: _____

Rationale for Observation: _____
- Illustration of classroom on back of page 1
- Observer's comments (bracketed and marked OC)

Descriptions:

1. Setting:

2. People:

3. Activities (include schedule):

.

Direct Quotations:

Appendix L

Letter to Parents of Children in Classroom Being Observed

Month Day, 2008

Dear Parent,

In addition to being the PreK-3 Supervisor with Greene County Schools, I am working on a degree at East Tennessee State University in the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis. For this degree, I must conduct research. My research is focused on developing a better understanding of the impact that the regulations for pre-k classrooms and the system's organization have on principal and teacher perceptions of the teaching and learning in the pre-k classrooms.

Pre-K classrooms are new in the field of public education, and developing a better understanding of the effects of all the requirements for pre-k at the classroom level could lead to identifying successful practices or the need for additional studies. My research proposal focuses only on the pre-k program within the Greene County School System.

For this research, I will interview teachers and principals. I will also observe two classrooms and review documents. The classroom observations will be scheduled after the interviews and will take a half-day. The purpose of the classroom observation is to gather documentation to support the information shared in the interviews. I will review the paperwork in the classroom and observe the teacher/classroom processes that involve the paperwork without disrupting the routine of the classroom.

Children will not be observed during this activity. In addition, teacher and classroom names will not be recorded at anytime on the notes I make about this observation. Although I visit your child's classroom as a supervisor, you have the right to have your child removed during the observation period for my research.

With the teacher's and principal's permission, I have scheduled a classroom observation for your child's classroom on Day of Week, Month Date, 2008. If you do not want your child to be in the classroom during this observation activity, contact his or her teacher and appropriate arrangements will be made. Also, you may contact your child's teacher at (423) XXX-XXXX, the principal at (423) XXX-XXXX, me at (423) 639-4194 or my advisor Dr. Eric Glover at (423) 439-XXXX if you have any questions about the research.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Crumm

Appendix M

Participant Information

Pseudonym	Position	Highest Degree	Years Education Experience	Years-Greene County PK	Years-Early Childhood	Head Start Partnership
Focus Group 1						
Annie	T	MEd	8	5	5	Y
Floss	T	BS	2	2	2	Y
Flower	T	BS	7	3	5	N
Gabby	T	MEd	5	2	2	Y
Pathfinder	T	BA	2	2	2	N
Polly	T	BS	8	4	8	Y
Focus Group 2						
Frazzled	T	MEd	11	2	11	N
Pickie	T	MEd	2	1	1	Y
Smith	T	BS	4	1	4	Y
Focus Group 3						
Camille	P	MEd	31	4	0	Y
George	P	EdD	25	3	0	Y
Jerry	P	EdD	23	3	0	Y
Mary	P	MEd	27	2	0	Y
Wilbur	P	MEd	11	2	0	N

KATHRYN E. CRUMM

Personal Data:	Date of Birth: January 22, 1958
	Place of Birth: Chattanooga, Tennessee
Education:	East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee;
	Elementary and Special Education, B.S.; 1980
	University of Florida, Gainesville, FL;
	Specific Learning Disabilities; M.Ed.; 1988
	University of Florida, Gainesville, FL;
	Education Leadership, Ed.S.; 1995
	East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee;
	Educational Leadership, Ed.D; 2011
Professional Experience:	Resource Room Teacher, Carter County Schools, Elizabethton, Tennessee, and Greene County Schools, Greeneville, Tennessee, 1980-1982
	Rehabilitation Therapist, Tacachale, Gainesville, Florida, 1982-1984
	Alpha Intervention Program, Mebane Middle School, Alachua, Florida, 1984-1985
	Varying Exceptionalities Teacher, Price Middle School, Interlachen, Florida, 1985-1987
	Varying Exceptionalities Teacher, Terwilliger Elementary School, Gainesville, Florida, 1987-1990

4th Grade Teacher, Terwilliger Elementary School, Gainesville,

Florida, 1990-1993

Behavior Resource Teacher, Terwilliger Elementary School,

Gainesville, Florida, 1993-1997

Assistant Principal, Metcalfe Elementary School, Gainesville, Florida,

1997-1999

Title 1/Special Education Teacher, Chuckey Elementary School,

Chuckey, Tennessee, 1999-2000

Assistant Principal, Chuckey Elementary School, Chuckey, Tennessee,

July 2000-December 2000

Principal, Nolachuckey Elementary School, Greeneville, Tennessee,

January 2001-2004

PreK-3 Supervisor, Greene County Schools, Greeneville, Tennessee,

2004-present