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AUTHOR O'Brien, Pamela J.
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ABSTRACT

This practicum report describes an intervention to improve children's experiences of transitions to and from a day care center and from one activity to another throughout the day. Training workshops for parents and staff were held for 32 weeks. The purpose of the training, which included lectures for large groups and meetings for small groups, was to improve the consistency and effectiveness of adult-child interactions during transition times. Evaluations completed by staff and parents identified the 10 children who experienced the greatest adjustment problems during transition times. Pre- and postintervention ratings of children by parents and staff indicated that the number of proactive behaviors of the 10 selected children increased over the course of the intervention. Parents reported fewer stressful incidents with their children after the training than before the training. Staff reported a greater use of strategies to help children adjust to transitions after the intervention than before the intervention. A reference list of 71 items is provided. Appendices include pre- and postintervention rating scales for parents and staff, a description of a school policy on children's separation from their parents, a list of strategies to help children adjust to transitions, and a list of 65 references concerning transition times in children's lives. (BC)

Easing Transitions in a Private Child Care Setting Through Workshops, Conferences, and Follow-up Activities With the Cooperation of Teachers and Parents

by

Pamela J. O'Brien

Cluster XXXII

A Practicum II Report Presented to the
Ed. D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood
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for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

Verifier: Alice J Salerno
Alice Salerno

Board Member Golden Rule School
Title

Beltsville, Maryland
Address

August 27, 1992
Date

This practicum report was submitted by Pamela J. O'Brien under the direction of the advisor listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

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June S. Delano
June Delano, Adviser

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ABSTRACT

Easing the Transitions of Young Children in A Private Child Care Setting through Workshops, Conferences, and Follow-Up Activities With the Cooperation of Teachers and Parents. O'Brien, Pamela J., 1992: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: Child Development/Educational Psychology/Child Psychology/Separation Anxiety/Stress/Temper Tantrums/Parenting/Behavior Modification/Self-Esteem/Positive Discipline/Staff Development and Training.

This practicum was designed to demonstrate with the cooperation of staff and parents that good transitions were possible in a private child care setting. The goal of this practicum was "Children will experience pleasant transitions." The specific objective was to ease separations and transitions for young children through parent and staff workshops, conferences, and follow-up activities presented by the writer.

The writer administered three surveys to parents and staff. Two of the checklists provided a measure for self-evaluation by parents and teachers to rate their consistency in interactions with children during transition times. The third checklist focused on the frequency of effective daily lesson plan strategies used by teachers to aid children's adjustment to transitions. The writer administered and compared the results of three pre/post tests to determine if there was a change in the children's acceptance of transitions; the consistency levels of parent and staff interactions with children during transitions; and in the frequency and effectiveness of teacher transitional strategies employed in daily lesson planning.

The results of the practicum were positive. Analysis of the data revealed that parents and staff perceived themselves as more confident, calm, and consistent in their interactions with young children after the training. A significant increase in proactive behaviors and overall acceptance of transitions by children was reflected in pre/post test rating by parents, teachers, and the writer. Teachers self-reported an increase in effectiveness to aid children to adjust to transitions measured by checklists given before and after the training. The three objectives of this practicum was achieved. Not only did children experience some pleasant transitions; but the number of happy transitions substantially increased in frequency as a result of the intervention.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Description of the Community

The child development center was licensed by the State Department of Health. It operated under the guidelines of the State Department of Human Resources, Child Care Licensing Division. Concurrently, it was accredited as a nonpublic school by the State Department of Education. It has been in operation for two years and has a licensed capacity for 60 children. The comprehensive center offered a continuum of services including: before and after school programs, alternate kindergarten, pre-kindergarten, nursery school, and snow-day care, as well as child and family counseling. It provided a solid foundation for each child's development and full mental, emotional, social, and physical growth. The large classrooms, learning centers, indoor and outdoor play equipment, and varied curriculum provides a stimulating environment for the young child. It allowed the child to learn about his/her expanding world and begin to develop positive friendships with peers and teachers.

The center's philosophy of education was based on the 20th century American philosophy of John Dewey. He claimed the ideal aim of education was "learning by doing" and "learning from experience." These quotes became the slogan of the progressive reformers of the first half of this century (Walker & Soltis, 1986).

Reflecting John Dewey's view of the democratic society, the center aimed to teach children to value the rights of each individual child together with the rights of the group. The name of the center was

selected because it embodied the center's philosophy which was to encourage young children to treat others the way they wish to be treated. The center focused on the growth and development of the whole child. The needs of the child's family were also carefully considered in an effort to make the preschool years of child care a positive experience for both the child and each parent.

The facility was situated in a middle-class suburb, and catered to its commuting parents by operating year-round, Monday through Friday, from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Knowing the staff was well qualified and committed to treating each child with respect and acceptance in a pleasant atmosphere, alleviated much of the anxiety from the parents' commute.

Background Information

Ratios between the number of staff and the number of children were in accordance with the State child care licensing regulations. The ratio for two-year-olds was six children to one adult. For three-year-olds, four-year-olds, and five-year-olds, the ratio was ten children to one adult. The ratio for six-year-olds to 12-year-olds was 13 children to one adult. The ten member staff included a part-time assistant and five experienced certified teachers. The assistant had a master's degree in early childhood education. She had been a teacher in the public school system for 30 years.

The professional senior staff was highly qualified. The lead instructor of the two-year-olds had a bachelor's degree. The kindergarten teacher had a degree in early childhood education with five years teaching experience. The music teacher also had a bachelor's degree, as did the three's and four's teacher. All senior staff met the child care licensing requirements for the State.

Trained in Early Childhood Education, the staff was encouraged to attend child care workshops and in-service training to keep informed of current concerns and methodology in child development and early childhood education. Through the use of age appropriate activities in the learning centers and in the recreational areas, the staff strived to interest each child in tasks designed to enhance self-esteem, social competence, and physical capabilities.

Supplemental to the learning centers, which consisted of social studies, science, math, and language arts, the child's day included music, art, and play time. Play was a crucial aspect of the child's day and encourages creativity in thoughts, speech, and action. When guided by center staffers, children develop language skills and imagination in the ability to explain their arts and crafts in sand, clay, paint, and paper.

"Children need the feeling of adventure within the constraints of some routine and rituals because they like to feel both free and safe" (Vukelich, 1989). Safety procedures took precedence over all others at the center because the parents want their children to feel secure in their quest to experiment and discover.

The Writer's Background

The writer was the director-owner of the child care center. She had a master's degree in crisis counseling with seven years experience in the public school system. She had worked as a self-contained special education teacher, a resource room teacher, and faculty representative.

In her four years of supervisory status, she had provided practicum experience to prospective clinical counselors through the National Academy of Certified Clinical Counselors Board. With her experience in education and counseling, she had the necessary

qualifications to direct the staff and parents in training workshops to make transition times more pleasant for the children attending the school.

Writer's Role and Responsibilities

As the director of the center, the writer was responsible for the overall operation and the growth of the school and child development center. She managed the day-to-day conduct of business including planning, organizing, staffing, budgeting, purchasing, initiating reports, and maintaining personnel and financial records.

In addition to overseeing the staff, children, and parents, she evaluated the center's activities, curriculum, programs, and personnel. Representing the child development center in her marketing campaigns, she emphasized its community reputation for high standards and her hope to maintain it as a model preschool.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Statement

The problem was that many of the children have difficulty with transitions of the school day. The problem related to the distress some children exhibit when arriving at school, during nap time and when leaving school. The most difficult times of preschool for some children and their parents were arrivals and departures; whereas, nap time was the most difficult for other children and staff. Some parents bribed children during the arrival and departure. Other parents threatened children with physical punishment when a child acted uncooperatively during the arrival and departure times at preschool.

Some of the staff believed that to empathize with a crying child after the second year of school was to pamper the child. Other staff prolonged a child's crying by over focusing. This was done by asking the child too many questions or by providing excessive explanations.

If the problem of difficult transitions were solved, the morale and self-esteem of the children and staff would increase (Balaban, 1985). If transition times were made more pleasant, children would feel more secure in the belief that their parents will return (Honig, 1989). If this problem were resolved, parents and staff working together would improve communication (Brodkin, 1989). Finally, the children would feel comfort knowing that parents and teachers were responding to them in the same way (Stone, 1987). The problem was the children had difficulty with transitions of the school day.

Problem Documentation

The literature substantiated the difficulty children have in dealing with transitions (Ainsworth, et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1973; Howes and Olenick, 1986; Schmitt, 1987). The writer's on-site observation over a two-year period evidenced the difficulty children had in dealing with arrival, departure and nap time at preschool. The nonadapting behaviors exhibited during transitions by the 10 out of 30 children ranged from withdrawn to aggressive, crying to yelling and hiding to hitting. Conferences with parents and teachers confirmed the anguish parents felt in leaving a crying child and teachers experienced in trying to comfort a child during nap time. Journal and newspaper articles emphasized the fact that guilt feelings often influenced a parent's conduct with their child during transitions (Cowley, 1989; Gottschall, 1989; Gross, 1970; Schmitt, 1987).

Parents and staff were observed being inconsistent in their interactions with the children. The inconsistencies escalated the frequency of temper tantrums and other maladjustive behaviors. A lack of open communication between staff and parents caused some of the strife during transitions. Some parents, who had expressed guilt feelings, criticized the staff and blamed the teachers for their child's reluctance to leave the parents. According to the literature, the parental inconsistency and lack of firmness in setting limits for acceptable behavior often contributed to "acting out" behaviors by children during transitions (Honig, 1987; Schmitt, 1987).

The disciplines touched upon in the writer's search included child development, early childhood education and child care. Other subjects investigated were psychology, business, parent training, and staff development.

Causative Analysis

The causes of children's temper tantrums or dependent behavior during transitions were many (Gottschall, 1989). A child's anxiety may be due to separation from a significant security person (Brodkin, 1989). The immobility to control a parent's arrival and departure may have angered a child (Gottschall, 1989). The powerlessness of the child during departure of the significant other often reduced the child's self-esteem (Kagan, 1987). Unfulfilled parent promises, sibling rivalry or other environmental stress outside the school setting including the parent-child relationship, parents' remarriage or child's health may have caused the child stress (Brodkin, 1989; Gottschall, 1989; NAEYC, 1988).

The teachers' stress, anger or irritability may be felt by the children (Balaban, 1989). Some staff did not understand separation anxiety was a continuing reality for older children. Some staff felt the children were being manipulative or simply overly indulged by their parents. These staffers were uninformed about the emotional upheaval older children experienced during separations. Subsequently, some staff dealt with these children with less tenderness. The writer observed staff and parents were unrealistic in their expectations for their children. Frequently, they demanded more mature behaviors than their children could achieve developmentally.

Most of the staff was unaware of the need for transition strategies to be incorporated into their daily lesson plans. Attempts by staff were unconnected, sporadic and made little positive impact on the child's difficulties with transitions. The "highly reactive" (Kagan, 1988) child may become withdrawn, shy or aggressive (Honig, 1989). Being left at the center may cause the child to imagine the loss

of a parent's esteem (Gottschall, 1989). A child may feel resentment and bewilderment at adult explanations (Gottschall, 1989). Often a child may feel lonely, shy and unable to voice fears in a new environment with new playmates and new adults (Honig, 1989).

The adults' inability to respond effectively during transition times often escalated the child's temper tantrums at the center. Failure by parents and teachers to tune into the child's feelings stimulated emotional outbursts and increased anxiety in the children. Some parents had been inconsistent in their interactions during the arrival and the departure times at the center. The inconsistency caused confusion in the children and often led to increased difficulties for the youngsters during transitions.

Guilt of parents led to parents' establishment of a learned association between delaying the parents' leaving and the crying by the child. Some mothers were late to work in the mornings because they stayed too long saying goodbye to their children. Inconsistency of many parents and some staff was apparent. Often these same parents broke promises by failing to pick-up their children on time, which reinforced the children's mistrust and the parents' guilt. As a result, the uneasiness of the children and stress of the parents heightened during these transitions interactions.

Related Literature Review

Anxiety related behaviors exhibited by children during transition times has been identified by a preponderance of literature (Balaban, 1985; Bettelheim, 1987; Coleman, 1982; Erickson, 1950; Gross, 1970; Honig, 1987; Greenberg, 1990; Greenberg, 1991; Greenspan, 1990; Greenspan, 1991; Greenspan, 1992). Separation from parents may be a frightening, frustrating, and maddening experience for young children as their outward behavior clearly demonstrated. Children reacted to separation differently, but most reacted vehemently in some way to their

new setting (Balaban, 1989). Healthy separation was needed because it reinforced feelings of trust when children attempted something new. The anxiety of the children was gradually replaced by feelings of safety and warmth during a healthy separation process (Balaban, 1989).

Separation was a loss, and losses were difficult until one developed ego strength to face them (Honig, 1988). To make it easier for young children during nap time, Honig (1989) suggested reading body gestures, such as grinding of teeth or rocking back and forth, indicative of children's depression. Further, Honig (1989) cautioned against parents being visibly anxious leaving because the children may become alarmed. Even children who were good or appeared to have adapted to the child care setting were having separation anxiety. Often these children were uncontrolled at home because they had returned to their security person (Honig, 1989).

The child who was obviously delighted and at ease at school often cried when the parent left (Brodkin, 1989). The most adaptable child found parting difficult for awhile. If the child was truly sad, the recovery time would not be fast. However, the parent's concern for leaving the crying child was justified as the parent worried about the child after he/she left.

Parental guilt aroused tension between the parents and children during transitions. Leaving the children, even with the most loving caregiver, ranked near the top on the mothers' list of reasons to feel guilty (Bennetts, 1991). However, no matter how solicitous and attentive parents were, children tended to resent even occasional absences of their security person. In the best of all possible worlds, the children's ultimate desire was total devotion and attention from the parents (Bennetts, 1991). As a result of the parents' guilt and vulnerability, the parents unwittingly established a learned association between delaying the parents' leaving and the crying or other manipulative behaviors by the child at the center.

Parents were sometimes plagued by the second child guilt syndrome, providing a classic opportunity for parental guilt (Bennetts, 1991). Some parents felt as though they were doing damage to their child by bringing a competitor into the family. Children may have voiced their discontent over new siblings by telling parents how they have upset their lives (Bennetts, 1991).

Eating and sleeping problems were frequent sources of parental guilt as were toileting and bed-wetting. Mothers were more likely to chastise themselves for not attending to their children's every need than were fathers (Bennetts, 1991). Mothers of children experiencing toileting complications at the center tended to be critical and curt in their interactions with the staff. Staffers reported feeling misunderstood and occassionally demeaned by parents of children who were toilet training. Hesitation to go to school resulted from a child's feeling of not wanting to share a teacher or a feeling that a teacher was indifferent (Bennetts, 1991). Reluctance to share a teacher became apparent at the center with two little girls when one of the staff substituted for another on maternity leave. The two girls cried whenever their teacher worked in the other classroom.

In summary, the literature emphasized the goal of this practicum that it is possible for children to experience pleasant transitions. Separations and transitions for children may be eased, according to the literature, by open communication and training of teachers, parents, and children. Further, the literature stressed the high correlational relationship between the increase in the children's self-esteem and the reduction in fear when parents and teachers worked together to achieve consistency in the children's environment.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Statement of Goals and Objectives

Young children had difficulty with transitions of the school day. The most difficult times of preschool for some children and their parents were arrivals and departures; whereas, nap time was more difficult for other children and staff. The goal of this practicum was "Children will experience pleasant transitions."

Performance Objectives

The following performance objectives were projected for this practicum:

1. The children accepted transitions and exhibited an increase in the number of proactive behaviors measured by the parents of 10 out of 30 children and their teachers on behavioral checklists (see Appendices A & B) before and after the intervention.

2. Three out of the 5 teachers exhibited an increase in the effectiveness of their daily lesson strategies to aid children to adjust to transitions. Teacher self-evaluation checklists (see Appendix C) measured the effectiveness of daily lesson plans before and after the intervention.

3. During transitions, 10 out of 30 parents exhibited an increase in consistent and calm behavior measured in checklists before and after the intervention (see Appendices A & B).

Evaluation Instrument

The parent and teacher checklists (see Appendices A & B) were developed by the writer to provide a measure for self-evaluation by the two groups to assess attainment of objectives one and three of this practicum. Specifically, parents and teachers self-reported whether the number of proactive behaviors and acceptance of transitions increased in the 10 out of 30 children after the intervention.

The parent and teacher checklists (see Appendices A & B) offered the parents and staff a measure to self-rate their confidence, consistency and calmness in interactions with their children during transition times before and after the intervention. This evaluation was developed to establish if an increase in mean scores on the post test resulted.

The instructional teacher self-analysis checklist (see Appendix C) was developed to determine if 3 out of 5 teachers exhibited an increase in the effectiveness of daily lesson plans incorporating transition strategies. It was administered before and after the training to assess the accomplishment of the second performance objective.

The pre/post test format allowed staff and parents to self-assess, before and after the training, the children's proactive behavior during transitions, the children's acceptance of transitions and the consistency levels of parent, staff and child interactions. The frequency and effectiveness of lesson plans, before and after the training workshops, incorporating transition strategies were self-evaluated by teachers.

The checklist items followed the Likert rating scale method with each element assigned a value of 1 to 5 with the value of 5 being the most frequent and the value of 1 the least. The items included

feelings, attitudes, stressor behaviors, patterns of interactions with the child when arriving and departing the school, as well as bedtime, nap time and weekends.

Mechanism for Recording Unexpected Events

A journal log was kept by the writer throughout the duration of the practicum. It was kept in order to record daily proceedings as well as any unexpected events during the implementation phase.

Description of Plan for Analyzing Results

The writer compared the results of the three pre/post results (see Appendices A, B & C) to determine if there was a change in the children's acceptance of transitions; the consistency levels of parents' and staffs' interactions with the children during transitions; and the frequency and effectiveness of teacher transitional strategies employed in daily lesson planning. Each of the pre/post checklist results were displayed by means of a line graph to ascertain if a change occurred. If the results of the second analysis showed an increase in the self-evaluation of teacher and parent mean scores, then the three performance objectives of this practicum would be achieved.

The general goal of this practicum was that children will experience pleasant transitions. This would be accomplished with the cooperation of teachers and parents in their participation in the solution of training workshops, conferences and follow-up activities presented by the writer in conjunction with university consultants. If the three performance objectives were met, then the goal of this practicum would be obtained.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

The problem was that many of the children had difficulty with transition of the school day. Some preschool children and parents exhibited distress during arrival and departures; whereas, nap time was more difficult for others and the staff. There were several possible solutions to make changes less difficult for children. In the present literature, some positive solutions were offered to make transitions easier for young children.

One positive solution gleaned from the literature was to develop a good separation policy (Balaban, 1989). In order to accomplish a healthy separation process, Balaban (1989) suggested a school separation policy. The most significant aspect of the policy was to insure that the staff understood and be committed to the importance of a healthy separation process.

Balaban (1989) specified further that other suggestions for inclusion in the separation policy should be: (1) that the director arrange a meeting with the parents about a week prior to the child's entrance in the school; (2) that parents plan to take time leaving the school, allowing the child to feel comfortable before departing; (3) that the teacher place the child in a small group for a short period to focus the child's interest away from the parents; (4) and that the teacher arrange for parents to stay in the room a few minutes to ensure

the child's feelings of safety (Balaban, 1989). These suggestions were followed.

A gradual departure by the parents gave them an opportunity to observe the teachers and to feel comfortable leaving their children and with their choice of schools. Nap time policy included asking parents, whenever reassurance was needed, to call during nap time and to provide their children with a prized cuddly, blanket or item belonging to the parents. This gave the children the feeling of bringing a piece of home to school.

Consideration of the teachers' views during the separation process was also essential to circumvent their stress and anger (Balaban, 1989) and to aid them to grow in understanding and empathy toward both the parent and the young child. Balaban (1989) recommended staff attitude training, modeling behaviors and responses by director to staff suggestions. When parents, staff and director worked together to make healthy separations happen, both children and parents felt successful.

Another solution was to have parents and teachers explain to the young children what to expect throughout the day by reviewing their schedule with the children (Gottschall, 1989). Planning with the children reduced fear (Honig, 1987; Powell, 1989). Rehearsing the day eased the children into the new, different and sometimes frightening setting of school (Gottschall, 1989; Honig, 1987).

Teachers and caregivers relieved some of the transition stresses which impede young children with reorganization of their classrooms to meet the children's needs. Conflicts were minimized through the use of role play and teacher modeling of some of the procedures for problem-solving. These strategies facilitated young children's ability to resolve frustrating situations (Turner, 1988). Respecting the integrity of young children was the single most crucial support system that

preschool teachers and providers could offer young children (Turner, 1988).

Honig (1989) recommended that parents not reveal job anxiety to their children by punishing "acting out" behaviors rather spend some "snuggly time" with each child before rushing into the daily routine. She suggested parents may need to tune into a child's special interest and reevaluate the way they spend time with each child. She pointed out parents aided a child most by singing favorite songs, rubbing noses, snuggling and giving the child a long leisurely bath. Not even the most joyous time at child care can replace the unrushed attention of parents.

Sometimes a child would burst into tears when his/her parent arrived, which was upsetting and baffling to the parent. Honig (1989) suggested that the director and staff assuage the parent's feelings by noting the parent's unique importance to the child instead of belittling the parent by claiming the child had been content. Further, she recommended advising the parents that the child's tears reflected the child's pent-up feelings for a very important person in his/her life (Honig, 1989).

To remedy the parents' uneasiness when leaving a child, Brodkin (1989) suggested be allowed parents to look through a window to witness the child's rapid recovery. However, if tears continued daily for more than ten minutes, a longer transition should be considered (Brodkin, 1989). Brodkin (1989) pointed out that parents should refuse to get visibly upset by the child's tears; instead, they should redirect the child's attention to the fun he's having with friends in the block area and other centers. Brodkin (1989) stressed the importance for parents to pick-up their children at the previously specified time. Brodkin (1989) expressed the need for parents, teachers and staff to work with

parents to make the separation process successful. Birckmayer (1982) claimed discipline was not a dirty word.

Bennetts (1987; 1991) recommended guilt-buster strategies to parents. One strategy was to wait for the relief time and experience provided. Parenthood training was another guilt-buster strategy. To help parents learn constructive ways to discipline and what to expect at different developmental stages. Parent training workshops helped parents to reduce the guilt that resulted from setting too high or too low expectations for children. Parents needed to discern healthy from neurotic guilt (Bennetts, 1991). Healthy guilt motivated parents to make positive changes that made children and parents feel better about their situations.

In a training workshop design, Birckmayer (1982) emphasized comfortable discipline techniques that are not only effective, but successful. The workshop material was specifically oriented towards parents, preschool teachers and child care providers of young children. The principles Birckmayer (1988) espoused included: telling children what they can do instead of what they cannot; offering children choices only when able to accommodate their selections; giving them safe limits which they can comprehend; and altering their environment instead of their behavior.

Bennetts (1991) claimed that an equitable sharing of child care duties between both parents was an effective method to reduce a mother's guilt. According to Bennett, help from trusted friends of single parents who feel overwhelmed can be of benefit. She suggested by getting away for a weekend or even a couple of hours, parents might regain their perspective and relieve a large amount of guilt simply by changing their mindset or attitude. Bennetts (1991) suggested that

lowering standards of perfection to relieve impossible standards may be the most effective way to reduce excessive guilt (Bennetts,1991).

By reevaluating priorities, parents found solutions to alleviate stress and guilt. One method was to restructure activities to benefit a child's need for closeness, while at the same time fulfilling the adult's need for physical activity by exercising at home instead of a gym. To be physically close to the child alleviated stress for the child who was already separated from the parents eleven hours or more a day. Planning separations for the mental health of the parents and the increased independence of the children was another solution pursued. Planning times for closeness with children was considered most important in slowing the fast-paced lifestyles which often led to empty interactions or dysfunctional relationships between family members.

A child who was bullied might be reluctant to go to school. In this situation, after a reality check with the teacher, Katz (1991) stressed the importance for parents to teach children how to verbally assert themselves. Katz (1991) recommended that the parents guide children by demonstrating a clear, firm, quiet tone when speaking. Whenever children were experiencing problems, parents had a need to talk to teachers (Katz, 1991). However, children were reassured when they knew that, no matter what happened at school, the parents' love and acceptance of the child did not change (Katz, 1991). Good communication between the parent, child and teacher cured "preschoolitis" (Katz, 1991). Open discussion of the child's feelings with parent revealed boredom or excessive stimulation which Katz (1991) suggested may be best remedied by conferring directly with the teacher.

Particular care should be taken by parents and educators to preserve young children's self-esteem and protect their vulnerabilities without condoning their actions (Briggs, 1975; Honig, 1985; Greenberg,

1991). Calmness and consistency were repeatedly referenced as vital elements to establish and maintain authority in interactions with young children (Birckmayer, 1988; Crary, 1984; Doescher & Sugawara, 1989; Essa, 1990; & Hendrick, 1992). In agreement with Turner's findings (1982), the example of parents' and teachers' behavior, Birckmayer (1988) purported, was one of the best methods to initiate and reinforce acceptable behavior. According to Moreno (1981), the benefits of preventive discipline and positive rewards elicit more conforming and adaptable behavior from young children.

Description and Justification for Solution Selected

Parent and staff training workshops was the solution selected. Focusing on separation and transitions, the workshops extended eight months with the active invovement of the staff and parents. The purpose of this training was to improve the consistency and effectiveness of adult/child interactions during transition times. Selection of training workshops was a justifiable solution because it incorporated the findings of the literature. A high correlational relationship existed between the increase in the children's self-esteem and a reduction in the children's fear when parents and teachers worked together to achieve consistency in the children's environment (Birckmayer, 1988; Briggs, 1975; Clarke, 1978; Honig, 1987; Honig, 1989; Leavitt, 1982; Moreno, 1981; Olenick, 1984).

Training workshops was the solution selected to accomodate the literature studies maintaining that many parents and teachers often need training courses on developmental stages of childhood and transitions which include separation anxiety, its causes and results. Approaches to discipline encompassing social learning theory, reality therapy, psychodynamic principles and the importance of effective communication

between adult and their children (Davis, 1989; Greenberg, 1991; Greenspan, 1990; Honig, 1985; Honig, 1987; Johnston, 1984; Lewis, 1984; Moreno, 1981; Tamashero, 1981) were also important topics for review in workshops, small-group training, parent conferences, and self-instructional materials (Allen, 1984; Leavitt, 1982; Moreno, 1981; Moreno, 1982; Sloone, 1982).

The training involved large-group lectures and small-group parent conferences. Small-group parent training sessions were held biweekly with the parents whose children exhibited the most difficult transitions. These were limited to five parents at a time. The small-group meetings were held once a month with the writer.

Ten children who had the greatest difficulty with transitions were targeted. The children were selected by teacher and parent referrals, on-site observations of the director and staff and through survey results. The ten children who scored highest on the parent and teacher surveys were compared with those selected through observations and referrals.

Concurrently, staff-training workshops which were successful in easing transitions were held on separation anxiety, child development, lesson planning, and teaching strategies including role playing, puppet shows, and children's literature. The teacher lesson plans were reviewed to see how transitions were accomplished and how they could be improved. The staff-training sessions met biweekly and general sessions between staff and parents met bimonthly.

Report of Action Taken

The implementation phase spanned 32 weeks. Beginning in the winter session, it continued throughout the summer at the year-round facility. A student teaching internship program initiated by the writer led to

university staff support in presenting two general training workshops. Parents and center staff were the audience. The writer and university consultant provided two one-hour training sessions during the first two months. The first was entitled "Transitions and Emotional Outbursts"; the second, "Focusing on Your Child's Special Talents and Abilities During Transitions."

The format was a lecture for the first 30 minutes followed by group participative discussion the last 30 minutes. During the group discussion, the parents and staff were eager to share their experiences openly and appeared relieved to find other parents with similar problems. They felt reassured to learn that they were not the only ones struggling with transition times. Parents and staff were asked to evaluate new learning gleaned from each session of the workshops. The evaluations were turned in to the writer.

At the end of the first session, the parents were given checklists to self-evaluate their child's acceptance of transition times as well as their own attitudes and reactions to their child during transition periods. From their observations, the teachers were given checklists to identify children in their classes who exhibited difficulty during transitions.

The checklist responses from parents, teachers and administrator were tallied to select the ten children who experienced the greatest adjustment problems during transitions. Once the ten children were selected, the parents were notified in a conference with the writer and asked to participate in the small-group monthly training. The writer met with the two groups of five during the beginning of the second month to review individual responses to the checklists. Strengths and weaknesses during transitions were assessed by each parent in the group.

At the first session each parent shared one strategy that worked for their child. The writer gave each member Birckmayer's (1982) self-assessment sheet to determine further the strategies used by parents when interacting with their child under stressful situations. This developed into a discussion on the discipline practices the parents used to correct their children and their feelings about discipline strategies.

The homework assignment also included keeping a record of how many times parents told their child "no" throughout each day during one month. The parents were surprised at the number. Most of the parents in the small-group training selected one different strategy to learn and work on for the month. The writer reviewed the assessments of both parents and teachers regarding each child's acceptance of transitions and found most assessments were in agreement as to which children needed special attention for the duration of this practicum.

The staff completed a checklist assessing the number of transition strategies used in their daily lesson plans. It was decided by staff and the writer that the transition strategies were haphazard and infrequent. There appeared to be a need and desire by staff for exposure to more resources for incorporation into daily planning.

At the end of the first month, the writer conducted a staff workshop on "Separation Anxiety." Discussion included how separation anxiety affected each age group attending the school. It also reviewed child development theory and expected behaviors for each developmental stage using floortime philosophy (Greenspan, 1990). The parents watched the floortime video and used the floortime questionnaires to assess if they had used the five-step process to help support their children's emotional and social development. After viewing the video, the staff was given the same material to work on strategies for incorporation of

the floortime philosophy in daily lesson planning and during transition times throughout the day. In preparation for the workshop presentation, the writer attended Dr. Greenspan's workshop for clinical therapists outlining a diagnostic model of floortime.

In the beginning of the third month, the writer published the need and purpose for a "School Separation Policy" in the newsletter insert. In it, the writer presented different approaches for separation policies specified in the current literature. Parents, staff and volunteers submitted to the writer in the following month, their recommendations of strategies to be included in the first draft of the school's Separation Policy.

By midpoint of the practicum, the parents and staff reviewed the first draft of the school's Separation Policy. It was published in the monthly newsletter for inspection and comment by all the adults concerned with the school's program. The writer, administrative staff and parents then reviewed the comments for incorporation in the final draft of the school's Separation Policy, which was published at the end of the practicum.

During the practicum, the writer conducted three workshops for staff only. Children's differences in adjusting to nap time during the training were emphasized. In subsequent weeks, nap time was observed by the writer to assess if any reduction occurred in staff reported probems and if the targeted children were accepting and adjusting to nap time more easily after the training.

The first workshop focused on the importance of children's literature in daily lesson planning to help children deal with transitions. The second focused on children's acceptance and adjustment to nap times in which staff developed strategies that included puppet shows and other techniques used in their daily lesson plans. The third

discussed the use of role-playing techniques in giving children opportunities to practice saying good-bye, expressing their feelings and dealing with transitions.

The writer met with two parent groups of the targeted children to discuss strategies reported in the literature to ease the stress of transition times such as riding in the car to and from school, bed time and strategies to help parents relax during arrival and departure from preschool. In the final weeks, the writer conducted three concluding workshops composed of both parents and staff.

The purpose of the first workshop was for the participants to evaluate changes that happened in their relations with their child during transitions after the training. In the second, the participants were asked to evaluate their own behavior and to write changes they saw in their attitudes, reactions or responses to dealing with transitions. In the third session, the writer met with the parents and teachers to assess any changes in the children's acceptance of transitions.

The results of the parent and staff response to the changes in their own and the children's attitudes and acceptance to transitions was published by the writer at the end of the intervention in the Parent Monthly Newsletter.

Throughout the training, each of the ten parents were given opportunities to practice situations and exercises in translating negative language "do not," into "do" and the session on separation anxiety also incorporated the developmental philosophy (Birckmayer, 1982; Erickson, 1950; Greenberg 1989; Greenberg, 1991; Greenberg, 1992; Greenspan, 1990; White 1991). The content of the workshops highlighted that young children's feelings of self-worth must be healthy in order for them to feel good about their capacity to learn and function in the world. The parents were introduced to the concept that adults hindered

or fostered the child's development of self-esteem by their responses to the child.

The writer used Birckmayer's (1982) acronym "IALAC" for the concept "I am lovable and capable." In the training, the writer introduced examples of ways adults stimulated or impeded their children's "IALAC's" (Birckmayer, 1982). In the follow-up assignment, the parents were directed to make an "IALAC" sign for their child and tear off a little piece from the IALAC each time the parent said or did something to hurt their child during a one-month period. At the end of each day they were to assess how lovable and capable their child felt and were to attempt to repair the child's IALAC the following day. At the end of the month, five parents self-reported an improvement not only in their child's IALAC, but in their spouse's IALAC as they applied this same technique in their other familial interactions.

The objective of the teachers and the writer, after viewing Dr. Greenspan's Floortime video (Hann & Wiford, 1990), was to "connect" with each child every day if only for a few minutes. This objective supported the overall practicum goal of easing transitions for children and making them pleasant.

Some of the modifications employed by staff included the use of dark felt fabric over the curtains to block sun and shield nappers who slept by the window. Floor mats were used as dividers to wall children from each other. From the newly instituted privacy, this strategy resulted in a increased sense of well being. Restructuring the room included monitoring the volume of the music played during nap time. Initially, it was turned loud to quiet background noises of older children who napped at a later session. After the younger ones were asleep, the volume of the music was lowered to reinforce the atmosphere

of quiet and to accommodate young children sensitive to louder sounds. The music included lullabies, classical, and meditation music.

Another change was the use by staff and the writer of "touch" or stroking the backs of the restless nappers. Prior to the floortime workshop, the staff rarely stroked any child other than their own. Another change due to Dr. Greenspan's philosophy was the inclusion of older siblings to help set-up nap time cots which seemed to make nap more comfortable and less an imposition of authority to the young children. It also instilled a sense of responsibility in the older ones to set a good example for their younger siblings (Allen, 1984).

Placement of a cart with plastic bags in the bathroom and a change of clothes on each cart shelf labelled with a child's name was another change. The three children with nap time wetting problems were told the location and contents of the cart. Further, they were instructed whenever they had an accident, they could change their cloths, bag them, and dress independently.

During the individual conferences with the writer, the 10 of 30 parents selected to participate in the small-group training sessions were given a pre/post, self-assessment test (Birckmayer, 1982) on how they corrected their children. On the pre-test before the training, all 10 said that they yelled, screamed, scolded, isolated, removed privileges or showed visual or facial disapproval.

Nine out of the 10 parents selected self-reported that they checked the item "felt terrible when they corrected their children." They marked the item that described their situation as everything they did seemed wrong and made their family life miserable. Six of these 9 also marked the item that stated they were good parents, but would like to improve their ability to correct their children more lovingly. Nine of the 10 marked the item that identified their discipline approach as

mediocre. The item reflected they were effective but sometimes made mistakes and desired to improve.

Floortime was another model (Greenspan, 1990) presented in the general training sessions. Staff and parents at the midpoint, concurred that floortime had a positive impact on changing the way they related to children. Parents and the staff were given role-playing exercises and homework assignments with various opportunities to problem solve and practice techniques discussed. Small group sessions reinforced the five step strategy in problem solving scenarios for each participant.

Parents and teachers were also directed to analyze and keep a record of inappropriate or unfair choices they offered their child for a four-week period and were given exercises to improve the quality of choices they offered children.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND DISSEMINATION

Results

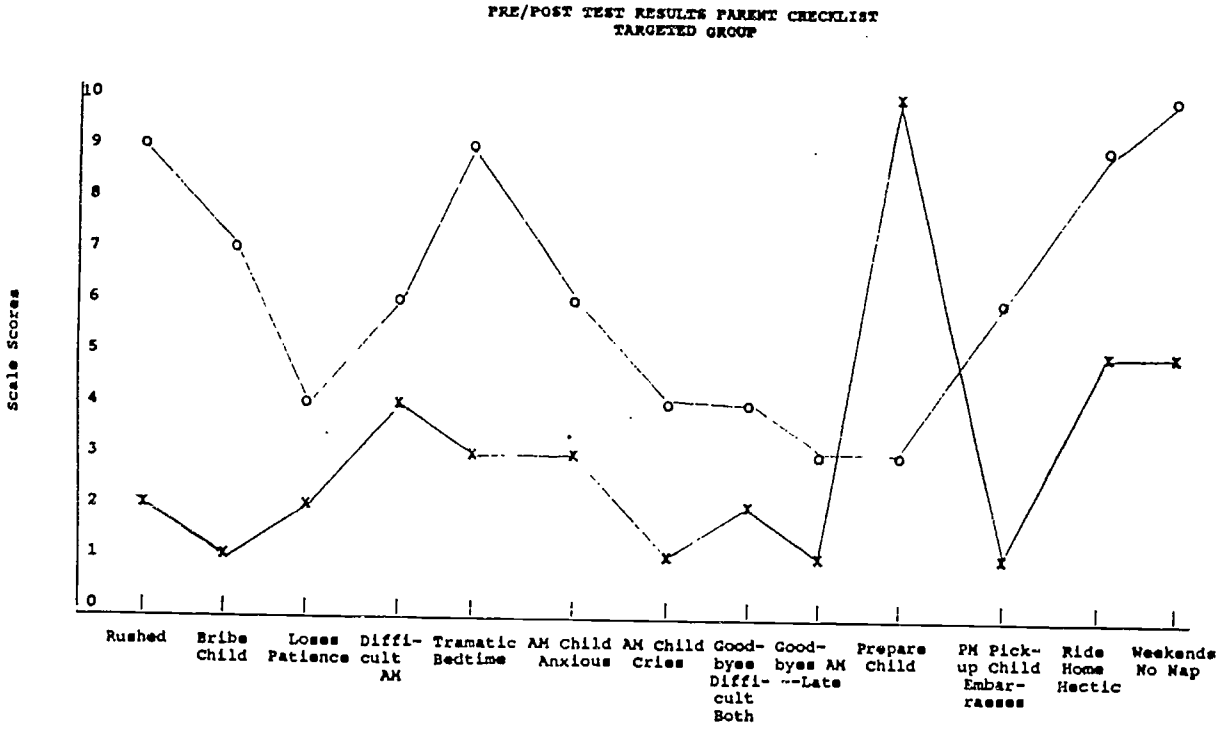
The problem was that young children had difficulty with transitions of the school day. Some preschool children and their parents exhibited distress during arrival and departures; whereas, nap time was more difficult for the others and the staff.

This practicum was designed to demonstrate with cooperation of staff and parents that good transitions were possible in a private child care setting. Parent and staff training was the solution applied to achieve the goal of making transitions pleasant for young children.

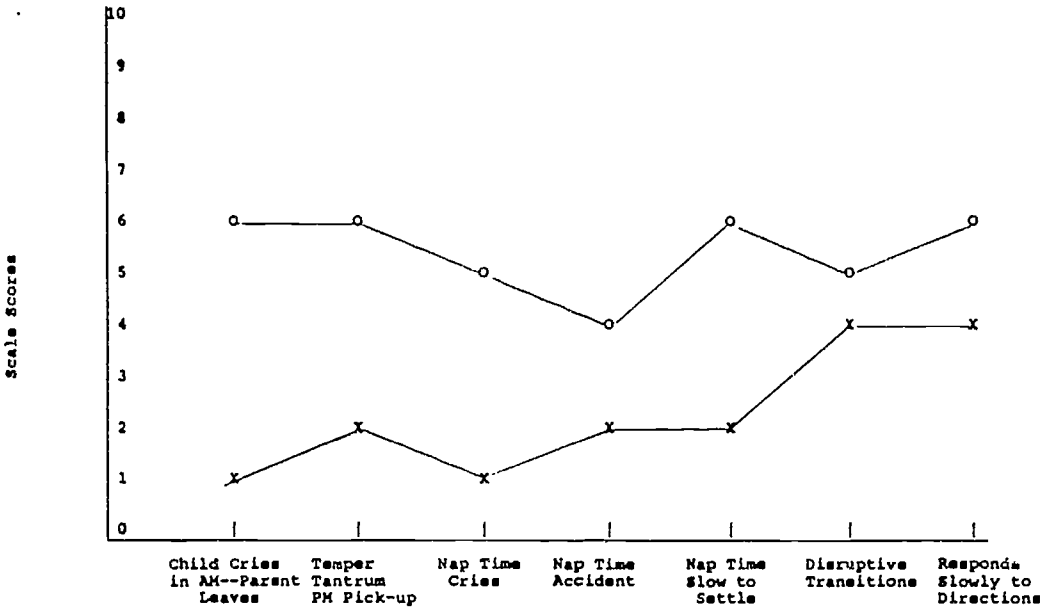
Throughout the implementation of the training three performance objectives were emphasized. They included: (1) increasing proactive behaviors and acceptance of operational transitions by 10 out of 30 children, (2) enhancing the consistency and calmness demonstrated by 10 parents and 3 out of 5 staff in interactions with young children, (3) increasing the effectiveness and frequency of transition strategies used by 3 out of 5 teachers in their daily lesson planning.

The parent-staff checklist responses reflected an increase in the mean score between the pre-test and post-test ratings. The increase indicated that the results correlated with the first objective of this practicum.

The number of proactive behaviors and the acceptance of transitions increased in 10 out of 30 children after the training intervention as measured by parents, staff and the writer (see Figures 1 and 2).



Frequency of temper tantrums and prolonged crying scenes exhibited by the ten selected children was reduced from the pre/post test rating by staff and parents (see Figures 1 and 2) in fulfillment of objective 1 that children would exhibit an increase in proactive behaviors.



Pre Test O--Represents average score for ten selected children of 30 on Pre Test

Post Test X--Represents average score for ten selected children of 30 on Post Test

Restriction of particular materials to only arrival and departure times reduced monotony or boredom, as well as improved the care of the materials used by the children. Children began to look forward to using materials which were not available any other time of the day.

It also improved the "fun factor" of the arrival and departure times, as did the involvement of staffers in game activities. Participation of staffers in the play and games of the children, seemed to help children relate more naturally to their parents when they arrived for pick-up. Therefore, children's acceptance of transitions was increased.

The increased communication between staff and parent made the transition from school to home less stressful. The negative behaviors exhibited by children, such as children running, hiding and crying when

parents arrived to pick-up the children from school, was sharply reduced as a result. Conversely, the number of proactive behaviors increased during pick-up transitions in accordance the first performance objective of this practicum.

Parents and staff reported an increased ability to work with their children instead of against them. After the implementation of floortime (Greenspan, 1990), the parents and staff reported a greater frequency in standing back and observing their children to assess what it was they were attempting to do, then developing mutually acceptable ways for the children to accomplish their goals. Both parents and teachers felt this strategy helped change many possible conflict situations into tolerable, or even pleasant transitions.

One reoccurring issue discussed in the workshop self-evaluations by parents and staff was the shift in their perceptions of crying and temper tantrums. Before the training, 8 out of the 10 parents selected for small-group training and 4 out of 5 teachers viewed tantrums as manipulative or attention-seeking ploys by young children. After the training sessions, 7 of the 10 targeted parents and 5 of 5 of the staff changed their outlook on "crying" from problematic to seeing it as a built-in healing mechanism to help children overcome stress (Solter, 1992).

This change in perceptions, as noted in the self-evaluations aided parents, staff, and administrators to empathize more quickly with the child and reduce the amount of negative energy spent by the adults focusing on her/his own inconvenience. Further, the self-evaluations demonstrated this constructive change relieved both staff and parents from the feelings of inadequacy. Repeatedly, both groups cited a fresh insight or realization that a crying child did not mean that the adult was incompetent or that the child must be quieted immediately.

Restructuring of the room helped prevent behavior problems (Birchmayer, 1982). Rearrangement of furniture seemed to reduce crying and temper tantrums as well as nonconforming behaviors during the school day. Consensus developed among staff, administrators, and parents. Once safety concerns were negated, it was determined the best method to deal with crying and temper tantrums was to let the child alone. With this new outlook the adults at the center seemed to agree it was permissible, even positive, for children to cry to relieve themselves of hurt or anger. Children were encouraged to relate the hurt feeling to the event. Parents and staff seemed to have embraced Solter's philosophy that if children were allowed to cry as long as they needed, they would feel happier and more secure at school (Solter, 1992).

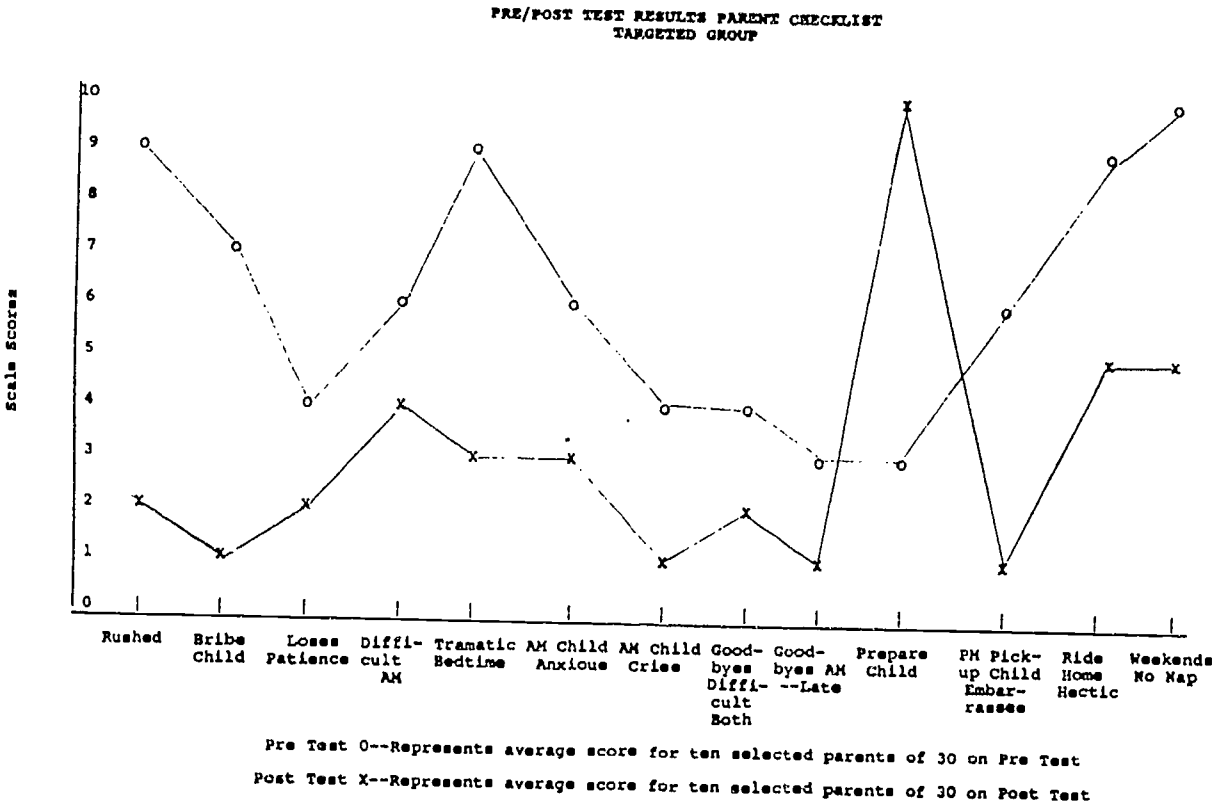
All the parents stated they employed more comfortable discipline techniques after the training. Eight out of 10 parents reported a drop in their household stress when they told children what they could do, listened and "tuned in" to their child, provided choices only when able to accommodate the children's selection, set understandable limits, altered the environment and provided examples or modeled the process of selecting alternatives (Birckmayer, 1982; Gottschall, 1989; Greenberg, 1992; Greenspan, 1990).

In the self-reported evaluations, all the parents descr bed a reduction in stressful incidents between themselves and their child at home and school, after the training (Birckmayer, 1982; Crary, 1984; Greenberg, 1992). The staff and writer's evaluations concurred with those of the parents. After the training, the staff self-reported a lessening in stress and an increase in self-esteem by the children. The staff reported the strategies learned in the training increased problem solving and self-determination among the young children in the center in

concurrance with current literature (Birckmayer, 1982; Crary, 1984; Greenberg, 1992; Johnston, et al., 1984; Turner, 1982).

The parent-teacher checklists responses demonstrated an increase in the mean score ratings between the pre and the post test results. This indicated the results correlated with the third objective of this practicum.

Ten out of 30 parents perceived themselves as more confident, consistent, and calm in their interactions with young children during transition times after the training (see Figure 1).



Parents and teachers reported a changed mindset from the beginning of the training sessions. Some parents noted they had felt anger and frustration when they had planned something fun and their child did not want to conform to their agenda. After the training, both staff and

parents saw the benefits of changing their plans to fit the needs of the child rather than the child to the plan or activity. However, they also revealed a clearer understanding of the necessity of firmness, calmness, and consistency when dealing with a child's objections to a plan that could not be changed, such as a doctor's visit (Allen, 1984; Birckmayer, 1982; Greenberg, 1988; Johnston, 1984; Moreno, 1981).

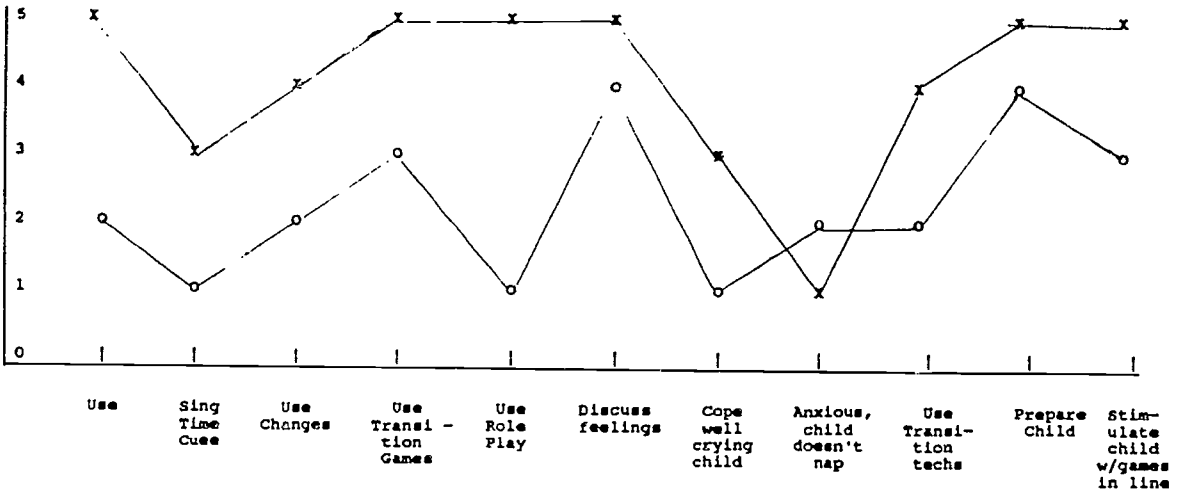
The training workshop self-evaluations revealed an increased confidence of participating parents in their ability to work through problems with their own children. The general perception held by the parents in the small-group sessions was that the training helped them to monitor themselves to be more calm and consistent in responding to their children.

All the parents stated they employed more (Birckmayer, 1982; Gottschall, 1989) comfortable discipline techniques by telling children what they could do, provided choices only when able to accommodate the selection, gave their children limits they understood, altered the environment (Ames, 1991; Birckmayer, 1982; Bluestein, 1991; Gottschall, 1989; Greenberg, 1992; Greenspan, 1990; Turecki, 1991), provided examples and modeled the process of selecting alternatives. Parents reported a lessening of stress and increased self-esteem by fostering problem solving and self-determination in their children (Birckmayer, 1982; Clark, 1978; Crary, 1984; Greenberg, 1992; Honig, 1986; Honig, 1987; Johnston, et al., 1984; Turner, 1982).

Participants stated that training helped sharpen their own problem solving ability to anticipate problems before they happened by being more "tuned in" and alert to which behaviors stimulated or caused prosocial behaviors in their child (Greenberg, 1991; Greenspan, 1990; Greenspan, 1992).

The instructional teacher self-analysis checklist responses illustrated a rise in mean score ratings between the pre and post test results. Three out of 5 teachers exhibited an increase in effectiveness of daily lesson plan strategies to aid children to adjust to transitions (see Figure 3).

PRE/POST TEST RESULTS
TEACHER'S SELF-ANALYSIS INSTRUCTIONAL CHECKLIST



Pre Test O

Post Test X

Average Score of Participants Responses

Three out of the 5 staff self-reported they spent five minutes with one child each day. Staff reported floortime helped develop an awareness of the child's unique individuality and helped nurture the emotions of each child more consistently in accordance with objectives two and three.

Floortime was a transition strategy incorporated throughout the day by 3 out of the 5 staff. It was used during arrival and departure times, free choice playtime, lunch time, nap time, large motor outdoor

play, and particularly during transition times. The floortime philosophy reinforced the common goals of teachers and parents. It aided the staff and the writer to develop a stronger sensitivity to the stresses and fears of the center's parents. Floortime became an integral transition strategy used by staff to obtain this practicum's three performance objectives which resulted in the attainment of this practicum's goal.

After the director's workshop, the staff and writer made considerable changes in nap time. The alterations were a result of searching for ways to connect with each child (Greenspan, 1990) in order to achieve this practicum's first performance objective to make transitions more acceptable to children.

The staff noted that the lavatory cart change had increased the feelings of self-assurance by the children with toileting problems, while reducing their dependency on the teacher. The cart change also reduced the negative attention given by the staff and the stress exhibited by both the child and adult (Essa, 1990; Greenberg,1991; Greenberg, 1992; Greenspan, 1990; Honig, 1985; Honig, 1986; Honig,1987).

Another change had been a renewed sense of closeness of the staff. They self-reported a unity brought about by seeking alternatives to problem solve how best to use floortime principles and other transition strategies. Rescheduling of meetings and restructuring of time by the director was done in order to give special attention to specific restless children during the first half-hour of nap time. The director and staff modeled (Allen, 1984; Birckmayer, 1982) napping by laying on the cot next to the child or sitting close.

Early morning arrivals were made more pleasant for children after the staff restructured the rooms. Furniture was moved in the early morning activity room to provide more spaces for children to self-select

privacy or group activities, depending on their disposition that day (Greenspan, 1990). Addition of more tabletop materials including puzzles, leggos, and other skill games which children of varying ages could accomplish independently, eased the morning transition for the withdrawn center children. These restructuring efforts supported objectives one and three of this practicum. It helped increase the acceptance of transitions by children and was a useful transition strategy implemented by staff.

Several parents said they enjoyed using different strategies to help each other figure out how to work through the other's problem. The shared attitude of parents in the training became more positive as a result of the workshops and one of "can do." Parents attributed this new sense of parenting competence to the training sessions. Clearer understanding of the child's developmental stages and separation anxiety, the introduction and implementation of Dr. Greenspan's (1990) floortime philosophy and developmental model, their own changed perceptions, a new feeling of teamwork between teachers, parents and administrators were reasons given for participants more positive outlook and sense of hopefulness. The feeling as one parent explained it, "We're all in this parenting thing together and it takes practice."

One unexpected spinoff was the interest one staffer had in reading the literature and articles on parenting and transition. She was particularly interested in using information with her church groups on family ministry. Previously, this teacher taught kindergarten in public schools for 20 years. She asked the writer to speak to her family ministry committee and classes in general parenting training sessions at the church. Dr. Greenspan's philosophy of floortime that the writer espoused resulted in a job offer as a counselor.

Another change which the writer enjoyed was the challenge that this practicum had brought her in trying to find ways to help parents and children in transition frustrations. There was evidence of more collaboration, less feeling by the staff that interruptions were irritants, or perceiving parents as complaining and meddlesome.

At the end of the practicum, the writer met with staff to review the different strategies used by staff to ease children's acceptance of transitions in daily lesson planning. In agreement with the staff, the writer concluded the inclusion and focus on transition strategies had helped increase proactive behaviors of the children during the school day.

Conclusion

The behavior of the children improved significantly as a result of the joint effort of the staff, administration, and parents to make transition pleasant for children. Parents extended their departure time to make transition easier and, in this process, began to enjoy talking to teachers and playing in the center with their children. The parent's enjoyment was reflected in the children's behavior. With the comfort in knowing that parents and teachers responded to them in the same way (Stone, 1987), the children accepted transitions. The transitions for these children have become pleasant.

The staff's respect for the parents and the parents' respect for the staff increased. Complaints and demands decreased as the staff and parents began working to better understand each other. The parents who attended the workshops began to value the director and teachers for their professional experience and to seek their advice. The parents' positive response, which raised the teacher's and director's self-esteem, effected the staff becoming more sensitive to the parents'

concerns and expectations. Working and training together, produced improved rapport and open communication between parents and staff (Brodkin, 1989). In place of independent random goal setting, the staff exhibited a new sense of common purpose to make transitions pleasant for each participant, but particularly the child. Lesson plans were developed more specifically to address the special problems highlighted during transition times.

During the training, a shift in demeanor of the parents from negative to supportive determination was observed by the staff. With the parents gradually becoming more relaxed and enthusiastic, a feeling of camaraderie developed between teachers and parents. The overall response of staff and parents was positive to the training. The participants of the small group sessions generally agreed that the training aided them to monitor themselves to remain calm and consistent in responding to their children. The teachers also believed that the training helped them to stay calm and consistent in reinforcing the parents' expectations. Due to the determination of parents and staff to be consistent in their interactions with the children, the children have become more secure in the belief that their parents will return (Honig, 1989). This security has made arrival, nap, and departure transitions more pleasant for the children.

Recommendations

Even transitions times may be made pleasant for young children at preschool and child care centers. Listed below are some methods to accomplish this goal which were employed in this practicum.

1. Involving center staff and parents in refresher training workshops on child development, separation anxiety, preventive discipline strategies, stress reduction, and guilt busters strategies for parents and staff.

2. Exploring new strategies for easing children's transition in lesson planning with teachers.

3. Creatively restructuring the school environment including the lunchroom, the nap room, the arrival and the departure activity rooms to ease transitions for children.

4. Giving parent training sessions in small groups and individual conferences complete with homework assignments throughout the month toward helping children work on making child feel good about themselves and the parents less guilty during separations and transitions times.

5. Securing staff's commitment and understanding to a school-wide separation policy in order to ease transitions for children.

6. Developing a school wide separation policy with input of staff, parent, and director.

7. Providing staff with teaching strategies, roleplaying, drawing activities, use of puppetry, and songs in easing transition times for children in daily lesson planning for teachers.

8. Providing training workshops which function as guilt busters for parents.

Variables in this practicum could be altered by:

1. Expanding this practicum to involve all newly enrolled parents in the training to increase communication and philosophical reference thereby starting a new training for each new group of five families on a continuous basis.

2. Expanding practicum by having teaching staff train or facilitate parent groups on-going group-training sessions instead of the director only.

3. Expanding the practicum from 8 months to 16 months in order to obersve the children's progress for a longer period.

Dissemination

1. The practicum will be kept in the center library.

2. The staff will be given the pre-post test results in a staff meeting.

3. Parents and community will be made aware of the results through the center's newsletter.

4. The writer will volunteer to speak at local church family ministry board meeting and volunteer to help formulate parenting training sessions for a local church.

5. The writer will volunteer to speak to two local elementary school's Parent Teachers Associations.

6. The writer will volunteer to give inservice workshops on structuring the classroom for easier transitions at the same two elementary schools.

7. The writer will submit an article dealing with transitions to one of the local parenting magazines.

8. The writer will volunteer to lead parenting workshops at the county's Family Life Center on how children may have pleasant transitions through training of parents and teachers.

9. The writer will submit an article to advertise results in a local newspaper.

10. The writer will submit results to NAEYC and volunteer to give a staff training workshop discussing strategies to make transitions pleasant for children.

11. The writer will submit the results to the State Department of Education and submit a proposal to provide inservice training to pre-K staff and parents in the public school system.

12. The writer will volunteer to speak at the State Child Care Consortium on the results of this practicum.

13. The writer will submit a summation of the results to various early childhood periodicals for possible publication.

14. The writer will submit a proposal to train the County Headstart staff and families on the topics considered in this practicum.

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Appendix A

Parent Checklist

Pre/Post Test

Return in Envelope.

On the reverse, please list time of day or events most stressful in family. Also, any suggestions you have for changing or coping with these.

PARENT CHECKLIST

Circle the number which best fits regarding behavior during transitions.

Never		Sometimes		Always
1	2	3	4	5

1) I'm rushed and anxious to get to work in the mornings. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

2) I bribe my child in order to leave on time in the morning. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

3) I lose my patience with my child before arriving at school. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

4) My child and I have difficulty getting ready in the morning. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

5) The process of getting ready for bed is traumatic at our house. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

6) My child acts anxious or irritable when dropped off in the morning. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

7) My child cries when dropped off in the morning at school. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

8) Goodbyes are very difficult for me as well as my child in the morning. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

9) I'm often late to work because I stay so long saying goodbye to my child.

10) I prepare my child by telling my child what to expect for the day and when I will return. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

11) In the evening when I pick up my child, he/she embarrasses me by reacting negatively, such as, ignoring me, running away, or telling me, "I'm not ready to leave," crying, or shouting. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

12) Rides home are hectic, involving errands on the way. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

13) During the activities of the weekends, my child doesn't nap or get enough rest. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Appendix B

Teacher Checklist

Pre/Post Test

TEACHER CHECKLIST

_____
Child's Name

Behavior exhibited by child during transition observed.

Circle the number most applicable:

Never		Sometimes		Always
1	2	3	4	5

1) Cries when parent leaves him/her in the morning.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5

2) Displays temper tantrums or negative behavior, such as, ignoring or running from parent or saying "I'm not ready to leave" when parent comes to pick up child.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5

3) Cries or displays disruptive behavior during nap time.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5

4) Has accidents during nap time. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

5) Is slow to settle down during nap time.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5

6) Displays disruptive behavior whenever there is a change in activity (during transitions).

1, 2, 3, 4, 5

7) Slow to respond to your directions when there is a change in activity.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Appendix C

Instructional

Teacher Self-Analysis Checklist

Pre/Post Test

INSTRUCTIONAL TEACHER'S SELF-ANALYSIS CHECKLIST

Never		Sometimes		Always
1	2	3	4	5

1) I prepare children for transitions with time cues by announcing the next activity and allow time for clean-up.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5

2) I sing cues for changes in activity.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5

3) I include activities (such as drawings, puppet shows, etc.) about saying goodbye and parents leaving in my lesson plans.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5

4) I have the children role play parts of the parents leaving and returning in lessons with children.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5

5) I read stories about transitions including adjusting to nap time, saying goodbyes to parents.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5

6) Discussions of feelings, being alone, and left alone are incorporated into lesson plans.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5

7) I cope well when children cry throughout the morning.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5

8) I get anxious when children don't adjust to nap time.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5

9) I remain calm, maintain even tones and use different techniques to cooperation from children during transitions.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5

10) I prepare children for the next activity by describing it to them and give them time limits.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5

11) I do not have young children wait in lines without stimulating their imaginations with memory games, following directions, etc. or songs or physical exercise movement.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Appendix D

Separation Policy

Separation Policy

Rationale for a School Separation Policy: Healthy separation reinforces feelings of trust when children attempt something new. Anxiety is gradually replaced by feelings of trust (Balaban, 1989; Honig, 1986). Healthy separation process may be accomplished with a School Separation Policy (Ballaban, 1989).

For children who have never been exposed to care outside the home:

1. Initial visit after enrollment, takes place one week before the child's entrance to school between the director, parents, and child. At this time, the director takes parents and child on tour of the facility, outdoor areas, and reintroduces the child and parents to the teacher. The parent is given a schedule of the day's events which is read aloud by the director to both parent and child to give child some idea of what to expect.

2. Then the child and parent observe the class or group for a 15-minute period together. During the next 15 minutes, the parent participates in the class activities with or without the child. At the end of the 30 minute session, parent and child say goodbye to the children (by name if possible) teacher and director before leaving.

3. Parent rehearses the schedule with the child each day for one week before entrance to school. Parent reviews what happened during first visit with the child. Parent acts out what happened with the child during the first school visit.

4. At the second visit, the parent quickly greets the director. Parent proceeds with the child on our tour of the building. Then both go directly to the class and greets the teacher and children by name of those known. Teacher helps parent by having each child say their name and greet

child. Parent then immediately participates in activities with child. After 15 minutes, parent eases out of group and leaves child alone for 15 additional minutes while remaining on premises in the school library or in another classroom. Parent explains what will happen the rest of the day. "Mommy will come back to you. Ms _____ will take care of you." Parent leaves immediately after giving this goodbye statement and a goodbye hug. (Greenberg, 1991).

5. Third visit day. Same procedure as second visit. Parent exits the premises after 15 minutes and goodbye statement and hug. Parent returns 15 minutes later to pick-up the child.

6. Child is introduced to the goodbye bench and teacher has each child practice waving goodbye; then she follows up with a story about children saying goodbye to parent during circle time.

7. Teacher reviews the daily schedule and discusses the time parents will return. Children who are able describe to the others when their parent will return.

8. The group goes to the goodbye bench and wave as parent and child leave.

<u>When Child Enters School</u> (All new children)

1. Child should have a laminated picture of mom, dad, and child together and family pet or other siblings to keep in his/her cubbie or on a string around the neck to look at throughout the day.

2. Child should have a school back-pack with child's name on it for bedding--also gives child a sense of identity with her/his school.

3. Child should have a cuddly or favorite blanket or something belong to the parents to reduce the child's stress of adjusting to a new nap situation. It also helps gives them a feeling of bringing a part of home to school.

4. Parents may call just before nap time to speak to their child and reassure child that they will be returning soon as well as reassuring themselves that child is comfortable.

5. On-going cooperation and open communication between parents, staff, and director is needed to ensure consistency of adults in their interaction with children. Children's renewed sense of security and more comfortable feelings of self result. It is the intent of this joint committee of parents, staff, and director to update this policy as needed in order to make transitions pleasant for each new

Appendix E

Transition Easer Strategies

Pamphlet

Transition Easers

- Use transition times as Relationship Builder times or "Floortime" opportunities (Greenspan, 1990).
- Tune In To Your Child. Let child take lead in play.
- Schedule 5 minutes extra bath time so you can play boat with your child.
- Talk about your day--so child will talk about hers more comfortably openly.
- Give "snugly time" to your child before starting evening routines of making dinner, etc.
- Change in routine can ease bedtime tantrums. Change "lights out" to a time closer to a time your child naturally falls asleep.
- Help child find self-comforting ways to get needs met.
- Tell child truth about stressful and frightening events.
- Providing information about death or hospital isn't harmful, deceit is.
- Let children use art and puppet play to express feelings.
- Suggest ways to cope. People who are scared of dark carry flashlights.
- Listen to your children. Let them know of your love for them each day. See child as you want her to be.
- Give positive reinforcement. Praise! Notice attempts. Smile/encourage non-verbally.
- Take time for yourself. Give yourself breaks. Teach yourself comforting ways to get your needs met.

2's - Transitions

- 2's Sensorimotor Stage (Piaget) learn through all senses/whole bodies.
- Change "lights out" to a time closer to a time your child naturally falls asleep.
- Self-esteem enhanced by physical triumphs.
- Self-esteem enhanced by "Doing It My Way," Emerging Automony (Erickson, 1963). Give them opportunities to be powerful.
- Avoid most group times for toddlers.
- Children need to practice mobility which is closely related to automony development.
- Respect the 2's automony!

1½-3's-Transitions

- Children need to hear that they can think and feel for themselves.
- Use materials that respond to their manipulation--clay, sand, water, pull toys, etc.
- Make deals--which you and child can be happy.
- Parent send "Being Messages"--Glad child is alive or "Doing Messages"--Child is capable and responsible.

3-6's - Transitions

- Children need to hear its OK to ask for what they want, don't have to feign sickness, or act mad or sad.

6-12's - Transitions

- Tell children its OK to disagree. Trust "self" what is good for them, not peers.
- Let them experience logical consequence results from own behavior.
- Give children alternatives and let them make decisions.
- Use consistency, calmness, and firm tones. Be consistent in your approach.

Car Ride Stress Easers

- Sing easy favorite song. 1st sing it soft then loud with child.
- Play favorite tape of children's record and sing along.
- Use humor--Enjoy your time together. Make up your own words or sounds to music. Sing entire song using just 1 word...bumble-bee, snickerdoole, or any word that sounds funny. (From Growing Together, Dunn & Hargett, Vol. 7 #10)

- Make up a song and sing about what will happen when you get home or Here's what happened to me today...song.

- Explore feelings. Resist giving advise or telling child how she should feel. Just listen. Helps child express herself. Shows you care. Children feel safe on cars and open up if you listen.

- Have available sing-along and story tapes in car.

Transitions Times

Dressing - Have child decide what to wear the night before and put out on chair.

Arrival/School Separations

- Tour school with your child and say good morning to each special friend in tour.

- Give child a laminated picture of parents and siblings to keep at school to look at in cubbie or carry around neck.

- Rehearse schedule for the day each day.

- Tell child after a specific event (such as nap time) you will return to pick her up.

- Develop a special secret handshake parent and child.

- Distract child with group of toys/activity or school friends. Parents should never just ease out!.

- Use the goodbye statement, "_____" will take care of you today and I will return after nap, etc." Give a special "goodbye hug." Then leave immediately after.

Departure/School

- Child tell or show something she did that day at school.

- Try to talk or touch base with written notes to teachers, caregivers each day so child can see you feel comfortable with caregivers. Produces consistent signals from home and school.

- Establish daily rituals. Have child count to seek how fast parent can get to the car, buckle up and leave parking lot!

Nap Time

- Give child a tape of parents reading a story or talking in calm soothing tones or singing favorite songs to be played at nap time.

Reduce Parents Guilt

- Spend time pursuing own interests.

- Equitable sharing of child-care duties between both parents (Bennetts, 1991).

- Seek help from trusted friends, single parents.

- Take a weekend get-away, regain perspective.

- Lower standards of perfection.

Appendix F

Children's Literature Transition References

Children's Literature Transition References

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