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ABSTRACT

This study compared the beliefs of parents of preschoolers, kindergarten teachers, and child care providers in North Carolina about the characteristics children should have upon entry to public school kindergarten. Surveys were administered statewide through in-person or telephone interviews to 757 parents (half receiving public assistance), 575 kindergarten teachers, and 553 child care providers. Respondents were asked to select the 3 most important characteristics for children's kindergarten readiness from a list of 15 characteristics derived from the National Education Goals Panel. Results indicated that the three most important qualities identified by all groups were: (1) being healthy, well-nourished and well-rested; (2) being able to effectively communicate needs, wants, and thoughts; and (3) being enthusiastic and curious when approaching new activities. School-related skills such as knowing the alphabet, knowing shapes and colors, using pencils and paint brushes, counting, finishing tasks, and solving problems fell at or near the bottom of the rankings for all groups. Chi square tests of homogeneity indicated that families and child care providers ranked counting, knowing English, and knowing the alphabet significantly higher than kindergarten teachers. Providers put greater emphasis than the other groups on having good problem solving skills, being sensitive to others, and knowing colors and shapes. Teachers were more likely than the other groups to rate being enthusiastic, being able to communicate effectively, and being able to not disrupt the class as most important. (Contains 20 references.) (KDFB)

Running Head: WHEN ARE CHILDREN READY FOR KINDERGARTEN?

When Are Children Ready for Kindergarten?

Views of Families, Kindergarten Teachers, and Child Care Providers*

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Abstract

The beliefs of families of preschool children, kindergarten teachers, and child care providers about the characteristics children should have upon entry to public school kindergarten were compared. Some similarities among the respondents exist in the priorities afforded to the characteristics for determining kindergarten readiness. The 3 most important qualities for all groups were being healthy, well-nourished & well-rested; being able to effectively communicate needs, wants & thoughts; and being enthusiastic and curious when approaching new activities. School-related skills such as knowing shapes & colors, counting, knowing the alphabet, finishing tasks, and solving problems fell at or near the bottom of the rankings of the 15 readiness characteristics. Chi square tests of homogeneity indicated a number of significant differences in the ways teachers, child care providers, and families prioritized the characteristics, the results of which are discussed. The current findings help to bridge the gap between comparisons of the beliefs of families with teachers and teachers with child care providers.

When Are Children Ready for Kindergarten?

Views of Families, Kindergarten Teachers, and Child Care Providers

According to West, Hausken & Collins (1993), most children in the United States attend kindergarten. A few states mandate kindergarten attendance as part of the "official" public schooling, but even those that do not see increasing numbers of children enrolling in their programs. With more children enrolling, we see a wider range of experiences and individual differences as part of these students' first public school adventure. Some kindergartners have previously attended preschools or child care facilities, while others have spent their first five years at home with a family member or other single care giver and with comparatively little same-aged peer social interaction. With increased numbers of children come a wider variety of parents and parental experiences, as well. For some parents, their child's entrance to kindergarten is their first experience with formal education since they were in school. For others, who may have recently helped out in a siblings' classroom or have been otherwise active in education, the conception of what kindergarten will be like for their youngsters may be very different from those of their less experienced peers. Family circumstances may also play a role in both children's and parents' expectations for kindergarten, with variations in exposure to literacy, social interactions, sports, painting and other art crafts, music, etc.

Early childhood researchers have shown interest in the beliefs of the people closest to preschool children about the characteristics they deem necessary for children to begin kindergarten and to have a successful first school experience. "The extent to which parents of preschoolers and kindergarten teachers share a common understanding of the attributes and attitudes children need as they enter school is important. If parents and teachers hold similar beliefs, then there is greater opportunity for congruence between the skills parents encourage in their children prior to school entry and the skills teachers look for as children enter kindergarten. Such congruence may contribute to a teacher's positive evaluation of the child early in his or her school life and to the child having a successful early school experience" (West, Hausken & Collins, 1993, p. 1). A

similar agreement between preschool providers and kindergarten teachers about necessary skills for kindergarten may help to ensure a smooth transition from early childhood care settings to public school.

The beliefs of parents, kindergarten teachers, and early child care providers about the requisite characteristics children need for kindergarten have been studied individually (Heaviside, Farris, & Carpenter, 1993; Rosenkoetter & Rosenkoetter, 1993; Smith & Shepard, 1988) as well as in pairs. Heaviside, Farris, & Carpenter (1993) reported the results of the National Education Goals Panel survey of more than 1,300 kindergarten teachers as to their views on important factors for assessing children's readiness for kindergarten. A great majority of those surveyed (96%) believed that being healthy, well nourished & rested was the most important factor for making readiness decisions. The teachers also reported that being able to communicate effectively in one's primary language and showing curiosity and enthusiasm for approaching new activities were more crucial for a child's entrance to kindergarten than discrete skills such as counting or knowing the alphabet.

Smith & Shepard (1988), in a well-triangulated qualitative investigation of teacher beliefs and practices, found that teachers' beliefs about school readiness were related to the teachers' practices regarding retention of children who did not meet readiness standards by the end of the school year. The authors classified beliefs about the development of readiness in terms of a nativistic philosophy. Nativists believe that readiness unfolds in stages and if a child is not "ready" at a certain time, additional time is all that is needed for the child to develop. Remediationists believe that defects in readiness can be aided by additional teaching, while Interactionists believe that readiness develops "according to a complex pattern of interactions between the psychological nature of the child and the environments provided by the caregiver" (Smith & Shepard, 1988, p. 315). Thus, for those ascribing to the interactionist view of readiness, a child is not merely ready or not ready, nor can readiness be pushed. These findings suggest that it may be important to know from which theoretical camp a teacher is working when interpreting the characteristics he or she deems necessary for a child to enter kindergarten and expect to succeed.

In a study of parents of disabled and non-disabled pre-kindergarten children, Rosenkoetter & Rosenkoetter (1993) found that all parents viewed kindergarten and preschool entry to be milestones in their families' lives, thus underscoring the necessity of smooth transitions into school. Parents also tended to view kindergarten as a place for academic work, a large percentage of whom expressing ability to "do the work" as a top concern.

The literature has also produced studies of the beliefs of parents versus kindergarten teachers about what readiness for kindergarten should look like (Knudsen-Lindauer & Harris, 1989; Lewit & Baker, 1995; National Education Goals Panel, 1993; West, Hausken & Collins, 1993), as well as comparisons of preschool providers and kindergarten teachers (Foulks & Morrow, 1989; Hains, Fowler, Schwartz, Kottwitz, & Rosenkoetter, 1989). Comparing parents' beliefs about kindergarten readiness with those of kindergarten teachers can provide some insight into how best to prepare children for this significant life event. Knudsen-Lindauer & Harris (1989) found some interesting differences between parents' and kindergarten teachers' views on the characteristics children should possess upon entry to school. Both mothers and fathers rated "academic" skills such as counting, reading, and writing significantly more important than teachers, while the latter group favored curiosity to a greater extent than either mothers or fathers. Social skills tended to be rated higher among teachers than among parents.

West, Hausken, & Collins (1993) obtained similar results from two U.S. Department of Education surveys conducted with kindergarten teachers and parents of preschoolers. While the two groups agreed on the importance of effective communication ability and enthusiasm & curiosity in approaching new activities, parents placed much greater merit in "academic" skills as indicative for kindergarten readiness than did teachers, who considered knowing the alphabet, counting, and being able to use pencils and paint brushes to be marginally or not at all important. A review by Lewit and Baker (1995) compared readiness views of teachers and parents from national surveys as well, but their findings are difficult to compare with other studies because respondents did not answer the same questions or were they provided with the same items to consider.

Kindergarten teachers and preschool child care providers also hold differing views about which characteristics indicate readiness for kindergarten. Hains, et al. (1989) found that in general, preschool providers' views of necessary abilities upon kindergarten entry matched kindergarten teachers' views of requisite skills upon kindergarten exit. Thus, in their study, the authors found that child care providers held much higher expectations for children, particularly in the area of social interaction. Both groups, however, concurred on the relative unimportance of academic skill and the ability to work independently as indicators of whether or not a child should begin kindergarten.

Foulks & Morrow (1989) questioned kindergarten teachers, preschool teachers from Head Start or licensed day care centers, and family day care home providers about their views on skills children should have for survival in kindergarten. Family day care providers expected much more socially from children than either of the other groups questioned, while kindergarten teachers looked more to ability to use classroom materials and adapting to many different situations as indicative of readiness for kindergarten than their peers.

While these studies shed much light on the beliefs of the three groups of people in greatest contact with preschool-aged children, none have offered a comparison of all three groups within a single research study, using the same items to measure such beliefs. The current investigation is the first to do so. Hopefully, the results will prove helpful in structuring the best transition possible for young children to begin their formal schooling.

Methods

Sample Population and Data Collection

The data for this study is part of a larger data set collected for a state-wide initiative to determine county needs and resources for young children and their families in North Carolina. This initiative is part of North Carolina's Smart Start program, a program conceived during Governor James B. Hunt's administration, the purpose of which is to assist families in making sure that all children are healthy and ready to learn upon entry to school. Data collection took place

during March and April of 1994 with all 100 counties participating. Data collection instruments were developed by the Center for Urban Affairs and Community Services (CUACS) at North Carolina State University under the guidance of the governor-appointed Smart Start Advisory committee. Particular items of interest for this investigation, the kindergarten readiness questions asked of families, child care providers, and kindergarten teachers, were taken from the National Education Goals Panel (1993). The data were collected through in-person or telephone interviews, and were extensively checked for errors through visual and machine edits.

A total of eight families per county were surveyed. In each county, four families receiving any type of public assistance were selected from a referral list provided by local human service providers and four families receiving no public assistance were chosen from referrals by community service providers (such as doctors offices or child care centers). For families, we received an overall response rate of 95%, and after removing one case from analysis for missing responses to the kindergarten readiness questions, had a final sample size of 757. Over 94% of these family respondents were parents, 92% were women, and the ethnic distribution of the sample is representative of the state with 61% white and 35% black.

Per county, six kindergarten teachers who represented the range of schools within each district (in terms of race/ethnicity, income, etc.) were surveyed, with 582 responding. This yielded a overall response rate of 97%. A sample size of 575 was utilized for this investigation after removing 7 cases for missing responses to the kindergarten readiness items. These teachers, 92% of whom are women, have an average class size of 24 students, have spent an average of 11.36 years teaching kindergarten, and a majority majored in early childhood education in college (92%). Ethnic group representation of the teachers is different from that of North Carolina's population and from the other two respondent groups, with 86% white and 13% black. However, the ethnicity of the teachers in the sample is representative of North Carolina elementary teachers (83% white and 16% black), as well as all teachers in the state (83% white and 16% black) (NC Dept. of Public Instruction, 1993).

Child care providers of 4-year olds were sampled at the rate of six per county, three from licensed child care centers and three from registered family day care homes. These respondents were selected from the local child care resource/referral agencies' roles. As with families and kindergarten teachers, a high response rate was realized for this subgroup of respondents (93%). Four cases were removed from our analysis because of missing responses to the kindergarten readiness items, yielding a final sample of 553 with over half (57%) represented by lead teachers in licensed child care centers. The child care providers as a group, 75% of whom are white and 24% of whom are black, have spent an average of 10.9 years working in child care.

Procedures

The information of interest in this investigation is the rankings of families, kindergarten teachers, and child care providers of the three most important characteristics for children's readiness for kindergarten. A list of 15 characteristics was supplied to the respondents, from which they had to choose their top three (See Table 1). These characteristics were taken from the National Education Goals Panel (1993) and are in ordinal and non-numeric form so a coding scheme had to be created to analyze the data. The coding scheme created weighted each characteristic in first place "3", each characteristic in second place "2", each characteristic in third place "1", and if the characteristic was not listed as a top choice its value was entered as "0". For each characteristic, then, the values were summed across all respondents, yielding an overall sum of ranks. Descriptive statistics were calculated on these sums, and are reported in Table 1. The characteristics are listed in the order in which they were presented to the respondents during data collection.

The proportions of respondents in each of the three groups who ranked each characteristic as important for determining whether or not students are ready for kindergarten were calculated and are presented in Table 2. The proportions were then ranked ordinally within each respondent group, with a rank of 1 indicating the most important characteristic for kindergarten readiness according to that respondent group (i.e., the characteristic which had the highest proportion of teachers or child care providers or families rating this characteristic 1, 2, or 3) and a rank of 15

indicating the least important characteristic for kindergarten readiness according to that respondent group (i.e., the characteristic with the smallest proportion of respondents rating it a 1, 2, or 3). The characteristics in Tables 2 and 3 are ordered by sum of ordinal ranks, for clarity and ease of comparison among groups. Pearson X^2 tests of homogeneity were performed to test the null hypothesis that there was no difference in the ratings of each characteristic among teachers, families, and child care providers. The results of these tests are presented in Table 3.

Results

Analyses indicated that families, kindergarten teachers, and child care providers more or less reached consensus on the three most and six least important characteristics for determining whether or not a child is ready for kindergarten. They agreed that being healthy, being able to communicate needs and thoughts in one's primary language, and being enthusiastic and curious when approaching new activities are the primary characteristics for children to have to be considered ready for kindergarten (See Table 2). It is also interesting that for all three groups, the same six characteristics appeared among the lowest ranked for importance, although their exact placements in the rankings (10th through 15th) were differentially ordered. These six least crucial characteristics were knowing ABCs, counting from 1 to 20, having good problem solving skills, identifying basic colors and shapes, using pencils and paint brushes, and finishing tasks. As a group, then, these "academic" or traditionally "school-related" items appeared to be of little concern to kindergarten teachers, child care providers, and families when determining if a child is ready to begin kindergarten. In fact, teachers considered being able to count from 1 to 20 completely irrelevant for judging readiness, with no teachers ranking this item as one of the top three characteristics to be used for consideration.

Families, as compared with kindergarten teachers and child care providers, placed more emphasis on the school-related skills (namely knowing the alphabet, counting, and identifying basic colors and shapes) as well as on the importance of knowing English for kindergarten readiness. It should be noted, however, that while families as a group placed more emphasis on

the academic skills, the overall proportion of families rating these characteristics as the top considerations for making readiness judgments is less than 10%.

A closer look at the proportions of respondents ranking each of the 15 characteristics (see Table 2) reveals some interesting findings. Although families, providers, and teachers all rated children's enthusiasm and curiosity as the third most necessary ability for children to have prior to entry to kindergarten, many more teachers actually gave such credence to this skill. Over half of the teachers (51%) rated enthusiasm as one of their top three concerns, while just over a quarter of both child care providers (26%) and families (27%) held similar beliefs. Several other characteristics produced a similar pattern, whereby the difference among the ordinal rankings is not as wide as that of the difference among the actual proportions of respondents claiming a strong consideration of that characteristic as important for children to have for later school success. Sitting still and paying attention ranked ninth for both providers and teachers and eighth for families, but the proportion of teachers ranking this characteristic as important (6%) seems small compared to that of providers (12%) and families (17%). Ratings for having good problem solving skills revealed the same pattern with the proportion of providers (10%) attributing importance to this characteristic nearly doubling the proportions of teachers (5%) and families (6%).

Pearson X^2 tests indicated that families, child care providers, and teachers differed significantly in their ratings of ten of the readiness characteristics. Families and child care providers ranked counting [X^2 (2, N = 1885) = 28.18, $p < .01$], knowing English [X^2 (2, N = 1885) = 47.98, $p < .01$], sitting still [X^2 (2, N = 1885) = 35.60, $p < .01$], and knowing ABCs [X^2 (2, N = 1885) = 31.57, $p < .01$] significantly higher than the kindergarten teachers. Providers put greater emphasis on having good problem solving skills [X^2 (2, N = 1885) = 9.74, $p < .01$], being sensitive to others [X^2 (2, N = 1885) = 6.70, $p < .04$], and knowing colors and shapes [X^2 (2, N = 1885) = 21.07, $p < .01$] than families or teachers when considering the most important skills for children to have to succeed in kindergarten. Although all three groups of respondents had the same ordinal rankings for being enthusiastic and for effectively being able to communicate,

teachers were significantly more likely to rate as important these characteristics than families or child care providers, respectively [X^2 (2, $\underline{N}$ = 1885) = 97.60, $\underline{p}$ < .01] and [X^2 (2, $\underline{N}$ = 1885) = 17.98, $\underline{p}$ < .01]. Finally, a child's ability to not disrupt the class was significantly more likely to be a concern for teachers than for families or for providers [X^2 (2, $\underline{N}$ = 1885) = 9.35, $\underline{p}$ < .01].

Discussion

A number of similarities can be found in the ways that families, kindergarten teachers, and child care providers prioritized the characteristics for kindergarten readiness. Analyses found the same three characteristics as the most important determinants of whether or not a child is ready for kindergarten: being healthy, being able to communicate effectively, and being curious in the face of new challenges. It seems as though the people who are closest to preschool children are concerned more with whole-child integrity than with discrete, namable skills with which to begin their public school experience.

This finding concurs with a national survey study (Heaviside, Farris & Carpenter, 1993) of public school kindergarten teachers' beliefs about school readiness which reported a similar rating of the top three qualities for children to have to be ready for kindergarten. However, the current finding of consensus among families of preschool children, kindergarten teachers, and child care providers that being healthy, being able to communicate effectively in one's primary language, and showing enthusiasm and curiosity in approaching new activities are the three most important characteristics for a child entering kindergarten to possess is slightly at odds with the findings of the National Education Goals Panel (1993). In that study, parents and teachers agreed with our respondents that communication (ranked first) and enthusiasm (ranked third) were important but ranked ability to take turns & share as the other top necessity for kindergarten.

"Academic" or "school-like" skills fell to the bottom of the ranks. Families favored skills such as knowing the alphabet, counting, and knowing English to a significantly greater extent than did kindergarten teachers or child care providers. This finding is in agreement with the existing research on teachers vs. families and teachers vs. providers. Knudsen-Lindauer and Harris (1989)

found that parents rated academic-oriented skills as more important than did teachers, who placed more importance on social skills. A study by Hains, et al. (1989) also found a minimal emphasis on academics for kindergarten readiness when comparing beliefs of kindergarten teachers and preschool teachers. Parents tended to view kindergarten as a chance for children to "do more with academic subjects" in a study by Rosenkoetter and Rosenkoetter (1993, p. 8). If this perception of kindergarten as a place to "do academic work" is widespread, then it makes sense that parents may put greater emphasis on academic skills. The pattern of families favoring school-like tasks more so than teachers or child care providers is also in agreement with the National Education Goals Panel study (West, Hausken & Collins, 1993) which indicated that parents rated academic skills higher in comparison with teachers, even though parents placed greater emphasis on social maturity than on academic items in general.

The skills and characteristics that fell in the middle of the ordinal rankings for all three groups achieved a lesser degree of conformity among respondents, with no clear pattern emerging. Perhaps these characteristics (not disrupting the class, knowing English, being sensitive to others, taking turns, and sitting still & paying attention) lend themselves more readily to differential interpretations with certain nuisances that are not shared among the types of respondents who were surveyed.

Part of the inconsistency with the way the various respondent groups ranked the characteristics they deemed necessary for children's readiness for kindergarten may have to do with the confusion surrounding the term "readiness". Kagan (1992) described a difference between readiness to learn and readiness for school. From Good (1973), Kagan states that readiness to learn is a "level of development at which an individual (of any age) is ready to undertake the learning of specific material, and is usually defined as the age at which the average group of individuals has the specified capacity" (Kagan, 1992, p.48). This conceptualization is the sense of readiness to which the NAEYC guidelines for developmentally appropriate practices for young children refer (Bredekamp, 1987), and Boyer concurs with this distinction with his (1991) use of "ready to learn" to mean "successfully preparing all children for school" (p. 6).

Alternatively, Kagan describes readiness for school as being much more finite and embracing of specific skills. This conceptualization "applies to young children rather than to individuals of all ages; views the educational context as static and fixed rather than fluid and evolving; and suggests that readiness is to be expected rather than fostered" (Kagan, 1992, p.48). The rather vague, widely-held public sense of readiness as "knowing colors and shapes and numbers" seems to fit this latter definition of readiness for school, and may be one of the forces behind families' tendencies to rank academic skills slightly higher than teachers or child care providers. The National Education Goals Panel's definition of readiness consists of 5 "essential and integrated domains: 1) physical well being and motor development, 2) social and emotional development, 3) approaches toward learning, 4) language usage, and 5) cognitive and general knowledge (Kagan, 1992, p.50). It is this definition that seems to encompass aspects of both readiness to learn and readiness for school and appears to be the definition used by the majority of respondents in this study. Although families tended to give more credence to "academics" than either kindergarten teachers or child care providers, no respondents in the current investigation ranked the school-related skills as more important than physical well being, general social development, and curiosity. It is also important to note that small proportions (less than 10%) of respondents rated these "academic" skills as important.

The NAEYC position is that kindergarten programs should have programs and practices which are age appropriate and which better accommodate the individual differences found in the students' backgrounds, capabilities, and learning experiences, rather than emphasizing academic skills (Bredekamp, 1987). A careful analysis of the current study's rankings for child care providers and for kindergarten teachers indicates that the respondents' beliefs tend to be in line with those of NAEYC. Our groups believe that sensitivity to others, enthusiasm for new activities, following directions, and having general problem solving skills are more important for a child to have upon kindergarten entry than discrete symbol manipulation skills.

Implications

In recent years, much emphasis has been placed on the role of early childhood programs in preparing children for school. The fact that the first national goal focuses on having children ready to learn is a testament to the belief that many children now enter school ill prepared to benefit from the experiences available in that setting. On the other hand, many early childhood professionals argue that it is the responsibility of schools to take children where they are when they get them and to provide appropriate experiences for them. That is, it is the schools which should be "ready", not the children. There is a reality to both points of view. Schools should be for all children, not just those who meet specific criteria. The movement over the past 20 years toward full inclusion of children with disabilities into the school setting is a clear statement of the position that schools in this country are to be for all children. But at the same time, there is a substantial body of research demonstrating that children do not benefit equally from school experiences.

The question raised here is whether there is agreement among major participants in the transition into school as to what is important regarding children's readiness for this transition. The results of these surveys indicate that there is more agreement than disagreement among families, preschool teachers, and kindergarten teachers. On the surface it seems contradictory that the very skills which are the focus of early school instruction are seen as less needed upon entry to school than other, less clearly defined abilities and skills. But the findings of this study fit with earlier work comparing teacher-parent and teacher-preschool teacher opinions.

We are left with a number of questions. "Do these perceptions of readiness fit with children's actual performance in the early school years?" While there is substantial agreement among the three groups about what readiness means, we do not have good data to support the contention that the items identified are, in fact, predictive of success in the early years. We do know that the traditional school readiness tests are not particularly good predictors of success (Chew & Lang, 1990; Ellwein, 1990). These tests tend to emphasize the skills which have a school related focus, and which all three groups of adults surveyed indicate are low in importance for school readiness.

"Do these perceptions of readiness describe what these groups actually do to prepare children for school?" There is some evidence that although teachers descriptions of best practice tends to approximate NAEYC's position statements on developmentally appropriate practice, teachers' actual practices in the classroom are much less aligned with these standards (Bryant, Clifford & Peisner, 1991). Parents, preschool teachers and kindergarten teachers may likewise act quite differently than their reports would indicate.

"How do concepts of readiness relate to the characteristics of children and their families?" We do know that age at entry into school, gender, and ethnicity are related to early school success. This study indicates some variations in views of readiness by ethnicity of reporters. However, we still have little information on whether the same reporter differs in his or her view of readiness by age, ethnicity, or gender of children.

The next logical step in examining the concept of readiness is to follow children deemed "ready" and "not ready" for school according to the reports of important readiness characteristics to see to what extent these are, in fact, predictive of school success. At the same time, information on the nature of the practices in the classrooms these children attend should be documented to see how children's readiness for school interacts with schools' readiness for children.

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Kindergarten Readiness Characteristics

As Reported by Families, Kindergarten Teachers, and Child Care Providers

	Families (n=757)			Teachers (n=575)			Providers (n=553)		
Characteristics	[a]%	[b]M	SD	%	M	SD	%	M	SD
Healthy, well nourished & rested	77.28	2.10	1.50	77.57	2.34	1.17	80.11	2.19	1.21
Finishes tasks	2.11	0.03	0.24	1.91	0.03	0.22	1.99	0.04	0.28
Counts, 1 to 20	4.89	0.09	0.44	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.07	0.06	0.34
Takes turns & shares	17.31	0.31	0.75	14.26	0.23	0.63	17.17	0.33	0.74
Has good problem solving skills	5.81	0.09	0.38	5.39	0.08	0.37	9.58	0.16	0.54
Is enthusiastic & curious	27.34	0.47	0.85	50.26	0.87	0.99	26.22	0.46	0.85
Uses pencils and paintbrushes	2.25	0.03	0.24	0.87	0.01	0.17	2.35	0.03	0.22
Does not disrupt the class	18.23	0.31	0.73	21.04	0.37	0.81	14.10	0.24	0.65

(Table Continues)

Characteristics	Families (n=757)			Teachers (n=575)			Providers (n=553)		
	%	M	SD	%	M	SD	%	M	SD
Knows English	24.83	0.47	0.90	10.09	0.18	0.58	17.54	0.33	0.78
Is sensitive to others' feelings	16.25	0.27	0.66	14.43	0.21	0.56	20.07	0.33	0.72
Sits still & pays attention	17.04	0.31	0.75	6.26	0.11	0.47	11.75	0.20	0.60
Knows the alphabet	6.34	0.12	0.50	0.35	0.01	0.06	5.42	0.10	0.45
Follows directions	20.48	0.34	0.75	20.35	0.31	0.69	19.89	0.33	0.73
Knows basic colors & shapes	3.96	0.06	0.32	0.17	0.01	0.08	3.98	0.06	0.30
Communicates needs, wants, & thoughts	54.82	0.98	1.04	65.74	1.16	1.00	62.75	1.12	1.05

[a] This represents the proportion of respondents that indicated this characteristic was important (i.e., ranked in top 3)

[b] Mean rank on a scale of 0 ("characteristic not among top 3 in importance") to 3 ("most important")

Table 2

Proportions Ranking Readiness Characteristics As Important for Kindergarten and Absolute Ordinal Rankings of Characteristics by Respondent Group

	Proportions Ranking As Important			Ordinal Rankings		
Characteristics	Providers	Families	Teachers	Providers	Families	Providers
Healthy, well nourished & rested	80.11	77.28	77.57	1	1	1
Communicates needs, wants & thoughts	62.75	54.82	65.74	2	2	2
Is enthusiastic & curious	26.22	27.34	50.26	3	3	3
Follows directions	19.89	20.48	20.35	5	5	5
Does not disrupt the class	14.10	18.23	21.04	8	6	4
Knows English	17.54	24.83	10.09	7	4	8
Is sensitive to others' feelings	20.07	16.25	14.43	4	9	6
Takes turns & shares	17.17	17.31	14.26	6	7	7
Sits still & pays attention	11.75	17.04	6.26	9	8	9
Has good problem solving skills	9.58	5.81	5.39	10	11	10
Knows the alphabet	5.42	6.34	0.35	11	10	13
Knows basic colors & shapes	3.98	3.96	0.17	12	13	14
Counts, 1 to 20	3.07	4.89	0.00	13	12	15
Uses pencils & paint brushes	2.35	2.25	0.87	14	14	12
Finishes tasks	1.99	2.11	1.91	15	15	11

Table 3

X^2 Significance Analysis and Patterns of Response

Characteristic	X^2 (2, 1885)	Pattern of Response
Healthy, well nourished & rested	3.16, $p < .21$	No significant difference
Communicates wants, needs & thoughts	17.98, $p < .01$	Teachers > Providers > Families
Is enthusiastic & curious	97.60, $p < .01$	Teachers > Families > Providers
Follows directions	0.07, $p < .97$	No significant difference
Does not disrupt the class	9.35, $p < .01$	Teachers > Families > Providers
Knows English	47.98, $p < .01$	Families > Providers > Teachers
Is sensitive to others' feelings	6.70, $p < .04$	Providers > Families > Teachers
Takes turns & shares	4.96, $p < .08$	No significant difference
Sits still & pays attention	35.60, $p < .01$	Families > Providers > Teachers
Has good problem solving skills	9.74, $p < .01$	Providers > Families > Teachers
Knows the alphabet	31.57, $p < .01$	Families > Providers > Teachers
Knows basic colors & shapes	21.07, $p < .01$	Providers > Families > Teachers
Counts, 1 to 20	28.18, $p < .01$	Families > Providers > Teachers
Uses pencils & paint brushes	4.44, $p < .11$	No significant difference
Finishes tasks	0.07, $p < .97$	No significant difference

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