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Transition to Kindergarten Videos and Their Relationship to Family Engagement

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Transition to kindergarten videos (in English and Spanish) are one proposed technology tool to promote parental engagement. Regression analyses were conducted to examine links between parents' video experience and parental self-efficacy, teacher communication, and school communication. High parental self-efficacy was associated with more positive perceptions about teacher communication but less positive perceptions about school communication. Parents' experience of the transition video was not associated with their parental self-efficacy. Viewing videos with children was only associated with lower levels of parental self-efficacy. Implications for practice and future research are discussed.

Keywords: family engagement; technology; transition to kindergarten; videos

INTRODUCTION

As children enter kindergarten, a major focus for schools, families, and communities is on how prepared or ready these young students are for elementary schools. In recent years, the focus of kindergarten readiness has led to the development of assessments to be administered as children enter school. The other side that needs to be considered is what is being done before and during the transition into the new school environment. Over the years, many elementary schools have attempted to assist children with the transition into kindergarten through a variety of activities and practices within prekindergarten and kindergarten classrooms. Furthermore, schools have tried to go beyond simply preparing

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children by increasing efforts to reach the families through open house events, transitional summer programs, and by sharing meaningful information about the transition through both traditional and innovative means (Ahtola et al., 2011; Dail & McGreea, 2008; LoCasale-Crouch, Mashburn, Downer, & Pianta, 2008).

TRANSITIONING INTO KINDERGARTEN

As children transition into kindergarten, research has suggested that their level of readiness may predict of their later academic success (e.g. Duncan et al., 2007; Grissmer et al., 2010; Stormont, Thompson, Herman, & Reinke, 2017). As today's families face an ever-increasing demand on their time, utilizing easily accessible technology such as videos has created new opportunities for reaching families during this transition (Walsh, Romo, & Jeon, 2018). The efforts of pre-kindergarten teachers to assist children and families with the transition have been found to positively relate to kindergarten teachers' perceptions of children's adjustment to their classrooms as well as the children's social and emotional competencies at the beginning of the school year (LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2008). Thus, methods of preparing both the child and his or her family for the transition need to be further understood.

INVOLVING FAMILIES

One major contributor to early learning and child development is family engagement. One way of increasing family engagement is to open lines of communication early with families and begin creating ways for them to be involved with their child's education. Epstein (2011) suggests that family involvement is more complicated than simply attending events because involvement is influenced by processes and complex relationships. Videos about the transition to kindergarten can provide families an introductory review of the school, suggestions for the transition, as well as ideas as to what to expect, all of which can influence families' early perspectives of the school environment and may impact their involvement.

Various developmental domains including academic, social, and behavioral outcomes have been found to be substantially impacted by family involvement (Choi, Chang, Kim, & Reio, 2015; Deckner, Adamson, & Bakeman, 2006; El Nokali, Bachman, & Votruba-Drzal, 2010; Fernández-Alonso, Álvarez-Díaz, Woitschach, Suárez-Álvarez, & Cuesta 2017; Weigel, Martin, & Bennett, 2006). In addition, family involvement has been found to positively relate to academic success throughout childhood and early adolescence (e.g. Arnold, Zeljo, Docroff, & Ortiz, 2008; Domina, 2005; Froiland, Peterson, & Davison, 2012; McNeal, 2015; Mo & Singh, 2008; Toldson & Lemmons, 2013). Beyond academic outcomes, researchers have found that family involvement can positively impact children's behaviors as well (Domina, 2005; El Nokali et al., 2010). Hara and Burke (1998) found benefits could go beyond an individual child's outcomes to families' perspectives and attitudes toward teachers and the school being positively altered. Thus, not only are children's outcomes personally beneficial in a variety of ways, but the school as a whole can also be impacted by family involvement. As schools plan for kindergarten transitions, it is important to create means of connecting with the family as early in the process as possible. Additionally, schools should consider reaching families utilizing both traditional (e.g., phone calls and mail) as well as innovative (e.g., videos and online portals) methods.

UTILIZING VIDEO TECHNOLOGY

In 2016, 76% of the US population were internet users, which has increased from 43% since 2000 (International Telecommunications Union, 2018). Reaching families where they are is considered a best practice in educational settings, and technology provides a means to communicate with families, which can result in strengthening connections

between the classroom and the home (Epstein, 1985; National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC] & Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media, 2012). As schools aim to reach families as their children transition into kindergarten, making use of internet-based videos maximizes the outreach to families by providing a tool that can be accessed easily but also caters to different education levels and languages.

An additional advantage to using videos for the transition to kindergarten is the ability for families to engage in a media-based activity, which families often enjoy (Takeuchi, 2011). As families participate in watching the videos together, children are also able to learn through conversations about the focus of the video (Strouse, O'Doherty, & Troseth, 2013). Previous studies utilizing video newsletters have found that videos can help promote multiple layers of family involvement including communication, feeling invited into the classroom, and visually showing what is occurring in both the school as well as in the classroom (Sánchez & Walsh, 2010; Walsh, Buckley, Rose, Sánchez, & Gillum, 2008).

PRESENT STUDY

The current study builds upon other studies that have explored the use of videos in families with young children in general (e.g., Walsh et al., 2014). Transition to kindergarten videos for families seem to be a promising approach (Lara-Cinisomo, 2011; Walsh et al., 2018), particularly given that the videos reduce language and literacy barriers by providing information to parents largely in the form of images and audio (Walsh et al., 2014). The present study examines: To what extent did parents' experiences with the transition videos (whether they viewed the videos with their child, and how they rated their quality) relate to their parenting efficacy and perceptions about teachers' and schools' communication with them, after controlling for their educational level and primary language.

METHOD

SAMPLE

Teachers from six prekindergarten classrooms in a large school district in the western United States were recruited for the current study, and 141 children were enrolled in these classrooms. One hundred and ten parents reported watching the videos. All parents of children in these classrooms were received the transitional video links and the survey links, and 91 out of 141 parents completed the full survey, which indicates 64.53% response rate. Even though the response rate is generally not adequate, it is acceptable for risk populations because the selected classrooms had priorities for enrollment, such as that the children needed to be English language learners (ELLs) and/or qualified for free or reduced lunches based on reported family income. Parents' demographic characteristics were displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. *Participants' Demographic Characteristics*

Variable	*n*	%	*M*	*SD*
Age			31.57	8.18
Gender				
Male	17	18.7		
Female	74	81.3		
Ethnicity				
African-American	4	4.4		
Asian/Pacific Islander	13	14.3		

Caucasian	29	31.9
Hispanic/Latino	41	45.1
Multiracial/other	4	4.4
Relationship with child		
Biological parent	84	92.3
Adoptive parent	1	1.1
Stepparent	4	4.4
Others	2	2.2
Language		
English	64	70.3
Spanish	23	25.3
Others	4	4.4
Education		
< High school diploma	13	14.3
High School/GED	48	48.4
Associate's degree	20	20.9
Bachelor's degree	9	9.9
Doctoral degree	1	1.1

Note. $N = 91$.

RESEARCH TOOLS AND PROCEDURES

There were four videos and information sheets in total with one set electronically sent to parents per week in their preferred language, either English or Spanish. One survey link (in either English or Spanish) was sent with each video and information sheet.

Video Production and Focus. The research team at one large University, including two associate professors, two graduate students, and one undergraduate student, designed and created four transition to kindergarten videos and information sheets at the University's laboratory school. One video in the current study was piloted and responses indicated that a transition to kindergarten video intervention including more than one video would be well received (Walsh et al., 2018). The content of the videos was determined by feedback from the pilot study (Walsh et al., 2018), existing video projects in the extant literature (Calabrese, 2006; Sánchez & Walsh, 2010; Walsh et al., 2008; Walsh et al., 2014), and a review of tech-centric programs that promote families' knowledge about the transition to kindergarten (Harvard Family Research Project, 2015; Lara-Cinisomo, 2011).

The first video focused on general information about preparing for kindergarten, the second video focused on hands-on learning activities, the third video focused on different perspectives (administrator, teacher, and parent) about the transition to kindergarten, and the fourth video focused on kindergarten registration information. The eight video links, for example, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yuW0kMKB1NY (English) and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWn0aOE5c1I (Spanish) can be found in Walsh et al.'s (2018) study. There were four video links in English and four video links in Spanish. The video intervention occurred in the month of May, which is considered a key time of transition to kindergarten efforts by the school district, including their primary focus of distributing transition to kindergarten packets. Packets include a storybook about the transition to kindergarten, a list of other storybooks about this topic, and a handout for parents with guidelines for activities to do at home. The video links and information sheet were the same as those described in Walsh et al.'s study (2018) description of the

intervention. The English versions of the information sheets were assessed via the Flesch Readability Test in Microsoft Word and the average readability scores were tantamount to a high school reading level (Walsh et al., 2018). To create the Spanish video, a transcript of the English video was translated by a native Spanish speaker on the research team and the video was then subtitled in Spanish. Four segments from each video that were approximately 2 minutes in length were back-translated by a native Spanish speaker not on the research team to ensure that the videos were accurately translated.

*Rubric of the Quality of Videos***.** We used a rubric from the existing literature to support teachers' decision making about use of the transition to kindergarten videos (Walsh, Cromer, Sanders, & Weigel, 2013). Early childhood videos have been evaluated in relation to NAEYC guidelines or standards as well as for their technical features, such as length of video, audio, visual definition, and lighting (Walsh et al., 2013). Specifically, this rubric had three items to rate the developmentally appropriate practice featured in the video and seven items about technical features (length, written language conventions, audio, resolution, camera technique, lighting, menu functionality). Two raters, (i.e., two trained graduate students) independently scored all four videos in English using a published rubric that focused on the technical features of the videos and the extent of developmentally appropriate practice featured in the content (see Walsh et al., 2013). The scale ranged from 1 = "insufficient" to 4 = "distinguished". Largely, most of the ten dimensions were scored a 3 or 4. The raters had 80% agreement or above on all four videos (Walsh et al., 2018).

Survey of Parents' Experiences. The survey was available in English and Spanish and included 32 questions in total with question logic for one question. Survey links were sent with the videos and information sheets via PsychData throughout the month of May. We used exclusion criteria for this study and only participants that watched the videos and fully completed the entire survey were included. The first section of the survey featured eight demographic questions followed by six questions about the video and two additional open-ended questions inviting participants to elaborate on helpful and unhelpful aspects of the video intervention. Parents rated the appropriateness of the length, the quality of the audio, the visual definition, and the usefulness of the videos on a 5-point rating scale (from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree"). We calculated summative scores of the four items of the video experience. Participants were mostly satisfied with the videos, particularly the length of each video, which ranged from 5 to 8 minutes. Many aspects of the video, such as general information about the transition to kindergarten, ways for parents to prepare, and the information the videos conveyed about child development, were deemed helpful (Walsh et al., 2018). Parents expressed that future video interventions should reduce the quantity of subtitles and show footage from both prekindergarten and kindergarten classrooms (Walsh et al., 2018).

Parents' Engagement. The next section of the survey included 16 questions about family involvement using 6-point Likert-type responses (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005). The three topics within this section included: (a) five items for parental self-efficacy (Cronbach's alpha = .78), (b) seven items for specific invitations from the child's teacher or teacher communication (Cronbach's alpha = .81), and (c) four items for general invitations for involvement or school communication (Cronbach's alpha = .88). An example of an item about parental self-efficacy is "I know how to help my child do well in school" (Walker et al., 2005, p. 101). A sample item about invitations from the child's teacher includes "My child's teacher asks me to help out at the school" (Walker et al., 2005, p. 102). An example of an item that measures general invites from school is "This school lets me know about meetings and special school events" (Walker et al., 2005, p. 101). After the last survey was completed, one participant won the raffle of a $25.00 gift card at the end of the study.

Parents' Demographic Characteristics. We also collected parents' demographic characteristics. Parents' education was coded as 1 = "less than high school diploma", 2 = "high school diploma/GED", 3 = "Associate's degree", 4 = "Bachelor's degree", 5 = "Master's degree", and 6 = "Doctoral degree." Parents whose primary language was English were coded as 1, and those whose primary language was other than English were coded as 0.

RESULTS

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics and correlations among all study variables are presented in Table 2. We examined associations between the study variables. Parents with higher parental self-efficacy tended to perceive that there was more communication from teachers but less communication from the school. Parents' perceptions of communication from teachers and from school were marginally (i.e., $p < .10$) correlated with each other. Parents who rated highly on the quality of the transition video tended to report higher levels of parenting efficacy, teacher communication, and school communication. Parents' viewing the transition videos with children was not associated with their video experiences but was negatively correlated with their parental self-efficacy.

Table 2. *Bivariate Correlation among Parents' Characteristics, Transition Video Experience, and Engagement in Children's Education*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.Education						
2.English	.438***					
3.Viewing video with child	-.361***	-.291**				
4.Video experience	.135	.175+	-.105			
5.Parental self-efficacy	.401***	.521***	-.393***	.236*		
6.Teacher communication	.026	.188+	-.039	.270**	.366***	
7. School communication	-.255*	-.193+	.150	.386***	-.218*	.201+

Note. English = English as primary language.
+ $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

PREDICTION OF FAMILY ENGAGEMENT WITH PARENTS' VIDEO-VIEWING EXPERIENCE

Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted to predict parents' parental self-efficacy and perceptions about teacher communication and school communication with their transitional video experience and viewing of the video with their child after controlling for parents' education and speaking English as primary language. As shown in Table 3, overall regression models predicting parental self-efficacy and parents' perceptions of school communication were statistically significant, but predicting parents' perceptions of teacher communication was only marginally significant. In total, 33.8% of variance in parents' self-efficacy, 5.8% of variance in parents' perceptions about teacher communication, and 23.7% of variance in their perceptions about school communication were explained by our regression model.

The quality of the transitional video experience rated by parents was not associated with their parental self-efficacy, whereas their viewing the video with their child was negatively associated with parental self-efficacy ($\beta = -.22$, $p < .05$) after controlling for

their educational level and having English as primary language. Parents who rated the transitional video quality highly were more likely to perceive that their children's teacher ($\beta = .25$, $p < .05$) and school ($\beta = .45$, $p < .001$) communicated with them after controlling for their education level and having English as primary language. Parents' viewing the video with their child did not predict their perceptions of teacher communication or school communication after controlling for the other variables including the quality of video experience. Among control variables, parents who spoke English as their primary language ($\beta = .37$, $p < .001$) were more likely to have higher levels of parental self-efficacy. Parents who had higher educational levels were less likely to perceive their child's school as communicating with them ($\beta = -.22$, $p < .05$).

Table 3. *Predicting Parents' Engagement in Children's Education with Transition Video Experience after Controlling their Education and Primary Language*

	Parental self-efficacy			Teacher communication			School communication		
Predictor	*B*	*SE*	*β*	*B*	*SE*	*β*	*B*	*SE*	*β*
Step 1									
Education	1.25	0.58	0.21*	-0.35	0.59	-0.07	-1.22	0.66	-0.21+
English	5.01	1.16	0.43***	2.21	1.17	0.22+	-1.15	1.31	-0.10
Model									
F(2,88)		19.62***			1.81			3.48*	
Adjusted R^2		.293			.018			.052	
Step 2									
Education	0.83	0.58	0.14	-0.43	0.60	-0.09	-1.28	0.61	-0.22*
English	4.37	1.14	0.37***	1.87	1.17	0.19	-1.75	1.20	-0.15
Viewing video with child	-2.35	1.00	-0.22*	0.10	1.03	0.01	0.76	1.05	0.07
Video experience	0.85	0.57	0.13	1.42	0.59	0.25*	2.90	0.60	0.45***
Model									
F(4,86)		12.49***			2.38+			7.99*	
Adjusted R^2		.338			.058			.237	
ΔR^2		.045			.040			.185	

Note. English = English as primary language
$+ p < .10$. $* p < .05$. $*** p < .001$

DISCUSSION

This study supports that video specifically focused on the transition to kindergarten yields positive outcomes, particularly with regard to parents' perceptions about teacher and school communication. These findings suggest that incorporating a structured process of preparing children for the transition to kindergarten with their parents may help to increase parents' perceptions about teacher and school (Walsh et al., 2018). While the current study cannot make a direct link between transition videos and these positive outcomes, it does fill gaps in the literature (i.e., Walsh et al., 2018; Lara-Cinisomo, 2011) related to the exploration of transition videos and the potential impact that they may have on parents' perceptions of parental self-efficacy and communication with schools and teachers. The quality of the video experience rated by parents was not associated with their parental self-efficacy, whereas their viewing video with child was negatively associated with parental efficacy after controlling for their educational level and primary language.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Building on the current findings, future research may be needed to more thoroughly examine the impact of preparation videos on children's transition to kindergarten. First, further research evaluating the link between watching the videos and children's actual adjustment to kindergarten may provide further support for the use of these videos. Additional research examining the components of the video that are most helpful may also be beneficial in fine-tuning the actual content of videos.

Regarding practice, these findings would suggest that incorporating transition videos into school curricula potentially appears to have positive effects. Building on this, school districts and teachers may benefit from incorporating additional emphasis on targeting parent-child dyads into planning for kindergarten.

LIMITATIONIS AND CONCLUSIONS

Although there are several implications of this work, there are also limitations. We did not know how many videos each family watched throughout the intervention. We did not know which videos were rated more helpful to families than others; however, Walsh et al. (2018) provided information about helpful and unhelpful features across all the videos.

We failed to capture if this was the families' first child transitioning to kindergarten or if the family had experienced the transition with other children (Walsh et al., 2018). Similar to other video research designed to promote family engagement, this intervention is considered one-way communication (e.g., Walsh, Cromer, & Weigel, 2014; Walsh, Sanders, & Randolph, 2013) and future interventions should seek funding to help determine how to promote bidirectional communication through an iterative process with parents and teachers. Nonetheless, this line of study continues to show promise for reaching racially/ethnically diverse families and low-income groups (Sánchez & Walsh, 2010; Sánchez, Walsh, & Rose, 2011; Walsh et al., 2014; Walsh et al., 2018). Whether our findings would generalize to groups with higher levels of parental education and other cultural and linguistic groups warrants attention. Overall, the present study provides insight into transition to kindergarten videos, in English and Spanish, as an important technological tool to potentially promote family engagement, particularly with Hispanic/Latino families.

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