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School Readiness Of First Grade Charter School Students: An Evaluation Of An Early Childhood Program

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SCHOOL READINESS OF FIRST GRADE CHARTER SCHOOL STUDENTS: AN
EVALUATION OF AN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM

Shandowlyon L Hendricks-Williams

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements of

Doctor of Education

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National College of Education

National Louis University

April, 2016

POSITIONAL AND DISPOSITIONAL LEADERSHIP CHANGE – PROGRAM EVALUATION TO POLICY RECOMMENDATION: A THREE-PART DISSERTATION

SCHOOL READINESS OF FIRST GRADE CHARTER SCHOOL STUDENTS: AN EVALUATION OF AN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM

IMPROVING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT OF PRIVATE STUDENTS RECEIVING TITLE SERVICES: A POSITIONAL AND DISPOSITIONAL CHANGE PLAN

SCHOOLWIDE TITLE SERVICES FOR STUDENTS THAT ATTEND PRIVATE SCHOOLS: A POLICY RECOMMENTATION TO THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT:

Shandowlyon L Hendricks-Williams

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

DLU Digital Commons Document Origination Statement

This document was created as *one* part of the three-part dissertation requirement of the National Louis University (NLU) Educational Leadership (EDL) Doctoral Program. The National Louis Educational Leadership EdD is a professional practice degree program (Shulman et al., 2006).

For the dissertation requirement, doctoral candidates are required to plan, research, and implement three major projects, one each year, within their school or district with a focus on professional practice. The three projects are:

- Program Evaluation
- Change Leadership Plan
- Policy Advocacy Document

For the **Program Evaluation** candidates are required to identify and evaluate a program or practice within their school or district. The "program" can be a current initiative; a grant project; a common practice; or a movement. Focused on utilization, the evaluation can be formative, summative, or developmental (Patton, 2008). The candidate must demonstrate how the evaluation directly relates to student learning.

In the **Change Leadership Plan** candidates develop a plan that considers organizational possibilities for renewal. The plan for organizational change may be at the building or district level. It must be related to an area in need of improvement, and have a clear target in mind. The candidate must be able to identify noticeable and feasible differences that should exist as a result of the change plan (Wagner et al., 2006).

In the **Policy Advocacy Document** candidates develop and advocate for a policy at the local, state or national level using reflective practice and research as a means for supporting and promoting reforms in education. Policy advocacy dissertations use critical theory to address moral and ethical issues of policy formation and administrative decision making (i.e., what ought to be). The purpose is to develop reflective, humane and social critics, moral leaders, and competent professionals, guided by a critical practical rational model (Browder, 1995).

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my deceased brother, Dyrric K Hendricks. You were my biggest cheerleader. I miss you dearly.

Abstract

This program evaluation studied the effectiveness of an early childhood program as it relates to school readiness. The early childhood program of a charter school located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin had been operating for over thirty without an evaluation of its effectiveness. To examine the effectiveness of the early childhood program, seventy-two students were evaluated using a teacher-developed First Grade Readiness Checklist; the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Test and Success for All (SFA) Assessment. School readiness, as a multifaceted construct, included five domains: academic, behavioral, emotional, social and self-help-skills. The results of the survey indicate that the early childhood program was effective in the behavioral, emotional, socials and self-help domains. However, the early childhood program was not effective in the academic domain.

Preface

As the instructional leaders of Urban Day School, I engaged in this program evaluation toward the goal of ascertaining the effectiveness of the early childhood program in light of the dually funded, dually operated and dually led manner in which the school had operated it since 1970. As a New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS) fellow, my vision was to ensure that the early childhood program prepared 3 year old; four year old; and five year old students for a rigorous first through eighth grade experience. School leaders understand the importance of early childhood education, particularly for students from low income families. I wanted to make sure that we were offering a high quality early childhood program that focused on "getting our students ahead before they fell behind".

School leaders evaluate their school programs for various reasons. My rationale was based on academic preparedness for first grade.   As the steward of public funding that Urban Day received, I also wanted to ensure that we were maximizing dollars in manner that led to a high rate of return on student achievement. This program evaluation afforded me an opportunity to provide stakeholders with the necessary information to make an informed decision regarding Urban Day's Early Childhood program. A decision based on student achievement data.

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<center>**Chapter 1: Introduction**</center>

Program Description

     "President Obama has called investing in early childhood initiatives the first pillar of reforming schools and has challenged states to raise the quality of their early childhood programs" (Schweitzer, 2009, p.1). Children from low income families perform lower than their peers academically and non-academically. They also enter school with lower language skills as well as health problems. (Education Week, 2011; Lee et al., 2006; Sadowski, 2006; Ackerman & Barnett, 2005; Vandivere et al., 2004). These factors lead to a higher risk for school failure. High quality early childhood programs benefit children growing up in low income families. (Brown & Scott-Little, 2003).

     Most states offer early childhood programs for four year olds and/or five year olds. Head Start is an example of a federally funded early childhood program. Head start programs serve three, four and five year old children in half day and all day programs. Head Start programs operate in partnership with community based programs, daycares and schools. Judy Centers is an example of a state funded early childhood program. Judy Centers serve students from birth through kindergarten in a full day program. Judy Centers operate in partnership with community based agencies, organizations and businesses. Educare is an example of a foundation funded early childhood program. Educare serves at risk children from birth to five in a full day year round program. Educare programs operate in partnership with community based programs or schools.

     In his 2013 State of the Union address, President Obama called on Congress to expand access to high-quality early childhood programs to every child in America. I conducted a

<center>1</center>

program evaluation of the early childhood program at Urban Day School which is located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

History of Urban Day School.

During a review of school archives ranging from parent newsletters, charter applications, staff handbooks and the school website, I completed a comprehensive overview of the history of Urban Day School's Early Childhood program. Urban Day School grew out of St. Benedict the Moor School, founded by the Capuchin Brothers in 1913 to serve inner city children. Originally staffed by the Dominican Sisters of Racine, the Capuchins closed the school in 1967. Though it had been a Catholic school, a group of Dominican sisters, along with a small committee of lay persons reopened it in fall 1967 as Milwaukee's first nonsectarian community-supported private elementary school. The Dominicans volunteered to teach. Parents and friends volunteered as classroom aids, tutors, and cooks and helped with the general maintenance of the school. Day care and head start was added in the 1970's at the request of parents and community. The Social Development Commission (SDC) was Urban Day's Head Start provider. SDC was Milwaukee's largest Head Start program. The school moved several times in its first three years and eventually settled in the St. Michael's parish school building in 1972.

In 1990, the school became one of the first choice schools under Milwaukee's Parental Choice Program (MPCP) wherein the State of Wisconsin pays the cost of tuition for economically needy students utilizing tax payers' dollars. In recognition of the quality services being offered by the school, the Social Development Commission asked Urban Day School to double the size of its head start program in the spring of 1991. Accepting the challenge to expand, the school sought and acquired leased space in the Holy Angels building. The school then raised funds to purchase and renovate the Holy Angels building. In 2003, the school earned

accreditation from the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA-CASI).

In 2010, Urban Day converted from a private school to a charter school, authorized by the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. A K8 school, it served students from kindergarten through grade eight. Urban Day School's Early Childhood program served children ages three years olds to five years old. The three year old program was a half day head start program taught by head start teachers. The four year old program consisted of a half day head start program and a half day charter school K4 program with students participating in an all-day program. The five year old program was an all-day charter school K5 program. Head Start teachers possessed at least sixty collect credits. Charter School teachers possessed a valid State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction teacher's license in early childhood education. The Early Childhood Director led the half day three year old program and half day four year old program. She held a Master's Degree. I led the half day K4 program and all day K5 program. I held an Education Specialist (Ed.S.) degree and was pursuing my doctorate degree. I also held a Teacher, Principal, Director of Student Services and Special Education, and Director of Instruction license from the State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. The Early Childhood Director and I met weekly to collaborate on all aspects of instructional programming.

The Social Development Commission (SDC) was the head start provider for Urban Day until June of 2013. SDC loss its federal head start funding when the federal Head Start office decided not to renew its contract. Another head start provider provided head start services to student attending Urban Day beginning in August of 2013. Students that participated in this program evaluation received half day three year old and half day four year old services by SDC's head start program for the 2010-2011; 2011-2012; and, 2012-2013 school years.

Goals of the Program.

Urban Day School's Early Childhood program was based on the premise that all students share certain needs, and that students of low-income families, in particular, benefit from a comprehensive and developmental program to meet those needs. The overall goal of Urban Day's Early Childhood program was to bring about a greater degree of social and academic competence in students. The mission of Urban Day School, inclusive of the Early Childhood program, was to provide students, three years old through eighth grade with a learning experience that emphasizes academic excellence and personal achievement, enabling the students to make a successful transition into higher education and to become value-creating leaders of our society, according to the school's website. Urban Day School's Early Childhood program's objective was to prepare students starting at age three for an education characterized by personal discovery, individualized instruction and academic rigor. Students were expected to be well prepared for continued academic and personal growth, according to the school's website.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness of Urban Day School's Early Childhood program as it relates to school readiness as defined by the student performance data on the first grade readiness checklist and formative assessments. The construct of school readiness will be explored in Chapter Two, Literature Review. The methodology used to collect data and the concepts that grounded those methods will be presented in Chapter Three, Methodology. The results of the program evaluation are presented in Chapter Four, Results. Recommendations and discussions are presented in Chapter Five, Conclusion.

Problem Statement.

The objective of Urban Day School's Early Childhood program was to prepare students starting at age three for an education characterized by personal discovery, individualized instruction and academic rigor. Students were to be well prepared for continued academic and personal growth, according to the school's website. In over thirty years of its existence, Urban Day School's Early Childhood program had not been evaluated.

Because the Early Childhood program was operated by two different set of teachers; funded by two different revenue sources; and operated by two different leaders, I was wondering about the effectiveness of the program as it relates to preparing students, who participated in the program from August 2010 through June 2013, for first grade. The three year old program was a half day head start program. The four year old program consisted of a half day head start program and a half day charter school K4 program with students participating in an all-day program. The five year old program was an all-day charter school K5 program. The Early Childhood Director led the half day three year old and half day four year old program. I led the half day K4 program and all day K5 program. The Early Childhood Director and I met weekly to collaborate on all aspects of instructional programming.

This program evaluation examined the academic and non-academic outcomes of students that participated in Urban Day School's Early Childhood program. Non-academic outcomes included behavioral, emotional, social and self-help skills. I wanted to know what percentage of students, who participated in the program from August 2010 through June 2013 met the academic, behavioral, social, emotional, and self-help standards of the early childhood program.

Research Question.

What is the effectiveness of the early childhood program on school readiness?

Subquestions.

What percentage of students met the academic standards of the early childhood program as measured by the First Grade Readiness Checklist, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test and Success for All Reading Assessment?

What percentage of students met the behavioral standards of the early childhood program as measured by the First Grade Readiness Checklist?

What percentage of students met the emotional standards of the early childhood program as measured by the First Grade Readiness Checklist?

What percentage of students met the social standards of the early childhood program as measured by the First Grade Readiness Checklist?

What percentage of students met the self-help skills standards of the early childhood program as measured by the First Grade Readiness Checklist?

Significance of the research.

"Several national studies indicate that children from low-income homes who are enrolled in high-quality early childhood programs are more apt to overcome skill gaps than those not enrolled in the programs" (Schweitzer, 2009, p.1). As the number of early childhood programs has increased, the pressure to provide data on program effectiveness will increase. Parents, educators and parents want to know if early childhood program are effectively preparing students for school (Brown, et. al., 2007, p. 2).

Stakeholders.

The results of this program evaluation are beneficial to early childhood practitioners; educators; and, administrators of community based organizations and schools that partner with early childhood programs. The educational community will appreciate the contributions made as

a result of the findings. Various stakeholders will find the results of this program evaluation beneficial. The stakeholders were the consumers of the early childhood program, students and parents. Teachers and administrators were also stakeholders as implementers of the early childhood program. The school's governance board was a stakeholder in that this entity made decisions to financially support effective programs. Parents and community members, who requested head start program, would find it of importance to know if the early childhood program had effectively met its objectives when deciding whether or not to enroll their children in the program. Potential impact include the school's governance board's support in continuing the program as it is; continuing it with some changes; or discontinuing it. Because Urban Day School was a charter school authorized by the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, UWM's Charter School office would find the results of this program evaluation of value when determining whether or not to renew Urban Day's charter school contract in 2016. As the provider of head start services for three and four year old students who participated in Urban's Day's early childhood program, the Social Development Commission (SDC) would find the results of this program evaluation pertinent.

Terms and Definitions

The following terms are used throughout this program evaluation:

Assessment: A systematic procedure for obtaining information from observation, interviews, portfolios, projects, tests, and other sources that can be used to make judgments about characteristics of children or programs. (High, 2008, p. 199). For the purposes of this program evaluation, assessments used include the First Grade Readiness Checklist, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test and Success For All (SFA) Reading assessment.

Criterion-referenced assessment: an instrument that compares an individual's performance to a predetermined criterion or standard to determine whether the individual has met the standard (Brown, et. al. 2007, p. 4). For the purposes of this program evaluation, the criterion-reference assessment used was the First Grade Readiness Checklist.

Disadvantaged children: those who qualify for free and reduced-priced meals (Scheitzer, et al, 2009, p. 3).

Domain: A broad category or dimension of children's learning and development. (High, 2008, p. 199). For the purpose of this program evaluation, the domains were academic, behavioral, social, emotional and self-help skills.

Early Childhood Program: a program that provides services to three year old, four year old and five year old students (operational).

Low-income: family household income of less than 150% of the federal poverty level (Burchinal, in press, p. 1).

Norm-referenced assessment: an assessment that compares an individual's performance with the performance of a norming group or sample (Brown, et.al., 2007, p. 4).

Program Evaluation: pertinent information used by those who hold a stake in whatever is being evaluated, helping them to make educated, informed decisions (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011).

Pedagogy: The practice (or the art, the science or the craft) of teaching. (Siraj-Blatchford, et al, 2002, p. 7)

Standardized assessment: a testing instrument that is administered, scored, and interpreted in a standard manner. It may be either norm referenced or criterion referenced. (Brown, et. al., 2007, p. 4).

Student outcome standards: the knowledge and skills children are expected to demonstrate by the end of their preschool year (Blazer, 2012, p. 3). For the purposes of this program evaluation, student outcomes standards are skills that students were expected to demonstrated in the academic, behavioral, social, emotional and self-help skills domain as well as performance on the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test and Success For All (SFA) assessment.

Role of the Researcher

I was the instructional leader/principal of the Urban Day School from July 2010 until January 2014. Urban Day School's leadership pursued me via a search firm in the beginning of 2010 when I was serving as a Milwaukee Public School (MPS) administrator. I had just completed the New Leaders for New School (NLNS) fellowship which prepares school leaders to work in high poverty, high need schools in urban settings with the goal of becoming a 90/90/90 school. 90/90/90 schools serve student populations wherein 90% of the students are minorities; 90% come from low income families; and, 90% of the student are performing at or above grade level. Urban Day School served a student population wherein in excess of 90% of the students were African American and came from low income families. The key to achieving the goal of 90% of students performing at or above grade level was a high quality early childhood program the ensured that students demonstrated mastery with skills needed for school readiness, more specifically first grade.

In June 2013, the Social Development Commission (SDC) loss its federal head start funding. Another head start provider provided head start services to student attending Urban Day beginning in August of 2013. For the purposes of this study, the early childhood program that I evaluated included the all-day three year old and half day four year old head start program

operated by SDC. I transitioned from my role as instructional leader/principal after UWM

renewed Urban Day School's charter school contract in January 2014. I had initially signed a

three year contract with Urban Day School on July 1, 2010. My contracted ended on June 30,

2013 but I agreed to continue working with the school through the charter renewal process. One

of the campus directors succeeded me as the principal of Urban Day. I completed this program

evaluation as a means of assisting all stakeholders, Urban Day School's community,

administrators, staff, board members, community members and funders in determining the

effectiveness of the Early Childhood program. When serving as the instructional

leader/principal, I did not oversee the half day three year old and the half day head start program.

As instructional leader/principal, I did oversee the half day K4 and all day K5 programs.

Summary

The evaluation of Urban Day School's Early Childhood program was important because

it provided student outcomes of a dually funded and operated early childhood program to various

stakeholders. The school had not evaluated its early childhood program in thirty years. The

Urban Day School community; the Social Development Commission; and the University of

Wisconsin Milwaukee would benefit from knowing if the early childhood program was effective.

The results of this program evaluation provided a means for making a decision about whether to

continuing the program as it is; continuing it with some changes; or discontinuing it. The

methodology used to collect data and the concepts that grounded those methods will be presented

in Chapter Three, Methodology. The results of the program evaluation are presented in Chapter

Four, Results. Recommendations are presented in Chapter Five, Conclusion.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review contains research relevant to the role that quality early childhood programs play in providing students with first grade readiness skills. Initial reviews focused on Head Start, Judy Centers and Educare, three early childhood programs. Head Start and Educare operate in Milwaukee, Wisconsin as well as nationwide. Judy Centers operate in the state of Maryland. These three programs were included in the literature review for their recorded impact on school readiness. Subsequent reviews focused on the multifaceted construct of school readiness and an attempt to define it. Additional reviews focused on early childhood philosophies and pedagogical approaches.

Early Childhood Program

Head Start.

Head Start, an early childhood program, began in 1964 as part of Lyndon Johnson's "war on poverty". Under the Economic Opportunity Act, three to five year of children from low income families receive half day or full day services focusing on education, health and parental involvement (Severns, 2012, p. 2). "Head Start providers are a diverse group. Using money appropriated each year by Congress, the Office of Head Start provides grants to local early education providers, such as preschools, community organizations, and school districts" (Severns, 2012, p. 4).

Per the Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 and the Head Start Program Performance Standard 1307, school readiness goals are achieved by meeting standards in the following areas:

1. Social and emotional development

2. Language and literacy

3. Approach to learning

4. Cognition and general knowledge

5. Physical development and health

In 1969, Westinghouse Learning Corporation conducted an evaluation of Head Start. The findings were that inasmuch as there were some cognitive and language gains in first grade; by second or third grade, students that participated in head start performed no better than those who didn't (Severns, 2012, p. 6). In 1998, Congress mandated a Head Start impact study. Data collection occurred from 2002 through 2006. Eighty-four head start agencies participated which served over five thousand three year olds and four year olds. The results were released in 2010. The findings were that the vast majority of gains from Head Start participation didn't last through first grade (Puma, et. al., 2010).

Judy Center.

Judith P Hoyer, Prince George County's Supervisor of Early Childhood Education, led the state of Maryland's initiative to combine the early childhood programs and schools with her Judy Centers Network in 1993. The centers provide full day services for children, birth to five, with the goal of school readiness. School readiness standards, according to Hoyer, include:

1. Being healthy, socially adjusted, emotionally aware, and able to communicate with adults and other children

2. Having an awareness of print and letter-sound relationships and understanding a story

3. Understanding basic math ideas, patterns, shapes, and how to put things in a certain order

4. Having awareness about animal and plant life, and people's roles in the family and the community

5. Being comfortable with individual creativity and an appreciation for self-expression through the arts (Schweister, 2009, p. 1)

The Maryland State Department of Education conducted a program evaluation comparing outcomes of students who participating in Judy Centers to non-participants on the Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR). "In the consecutive school years of 2003 to 2005, the MMSR data showed that economically disadvantaged children (those who qualify for free and reduced-priced meals) with prior Judy Centers experience were significantly more successful in terms of readiness for school than disadvantaged children without such experience" (Schweitzer, 2009, p. 3). Eighty two percent of the Judy Center participants were school ready in comparison to seventy-six percent of the non-participants.

Educare.

In 2000, the Ounce of Prevention Fund opened the first Educare in Chicago, Illinois. The goal was to focus on school readiness for the most disadvantaged students. The Buffett Early Childhood Fund opened the second Educare in Omaha, Nebraska. The two "Funds" developed the Bouncing Learning Network to extend Educare to other cities. The centers bring together child care services; head start programming and public schools. School readiness is fostered by a focus on:

1. Research based practices and educational strategies

2. On site family support and parental services

3. Small class sizes and high staff-to-child ratios

4. Use of the arts to support social-emotional, language and literacy development (Schweister, 2009, p. 2)

School readiness goals are achieved by meeting standards in the following areas:

1. Social

2. Emotional

3. Early literacy

4. Language

During the 2007-2008 school year, the Bounce Learning Network conducted an implementation study comparing outcomes of students who participated in Educare to non-participants using the Bracken Basic Concept Scale. When evaluated for vocabulary on a standardized measure of reading readiness, Educare students with three to five years' experience averaged scores of 99.2, just below the national mean for all children. (Schweister, 2009, p. 3)

Definition of School Readiness

School readiness, as a standard of quality, has yet to be universally defined. The English government defines school readiness as a "finite construct, implying there should be a fixed standard of physical, intellectual and social development that prepares students to meet school requirements" (Bingham & Whitebread, 2012, p. 203).

The U S Department of Education proposed $1.3 billion in funding for a "Preschool for All" program, providing domains for school readiness as follows: (1) language and literacy development; (2) cognition and general knowledge (including early mathematics and science development); (3) approaches toward learning; (4) physical well-being and motor development: and (5) social and emotional development (School Readiness Fiscal Year 2015 Request). Bertram and Pascal's (2009) definition of school readiness is based on four key areas: (1)

language development and communication skills; (2) attitudes and dispositions; (3) social competence and self-esteem; and, (4) emotional well-being.

In his report "Early Intervention: The Next Steps", Graham Allen defines school readiness as "having the social and emotional foundation skills to progress in speech, perception, ability to understand numbers and quantities, motor skills, attitude to work, concentration, memory and social conduct; having the ability to engage positively and without aggression with other children and the ability to respond appropriately to requests from teachers" (2001, p. 15).

"School readiness is defined by two characteristic features on three dimensions. The characteristic features are transition and gaining competence, and the dimensions are children's readiness for school, school readiness for children and families' and 'communities' readiness for school" (Britto, 2012, p. 6). In broadest terms, school readiness refers to skills and knowledge that children bring to school (Scott-Little, Kagan, & Frellow, 2006). Despite Ackerman and Barnett's 2005 policy recommendation, policy makers and educators still have not explicitly defined readiness.

Early Childhood Philosophies

Reggio Emilia.

This philosophy emphasizes the student as a learner, integrated emergent curriculum and project work; the teacher-student learning relationship; and, the documentation of children's thinking process and products. Started by schools in Reggio Emilia, a city in Italy, parents are considered equal partners with teachers in their child's education. "For many, the view of the student as a learner has been the most influential Reggio Emilia concept" (Stegelin, 2003, 163). Students are viewed from a positive attribute perspective as curious, capable and creative thinkers. This philosophy focuses on the positive attributes that students bring to school, as

ready learners. The curriculum is integrated in favor of thematic teaching across content areas

that are often times initiated by the student. These projects may be large scale, involving the

entire class or smaller in cooperative groups of three to five students. Teachers are facilitators in

the learning process, readily available and accessible to guide discussions and assist in making

connections. Documentation of student learning involves recording the process as well as the

product. The process is emphasized because teachers want to understand how students' arrive at

their conclusions. Examples of documentation include:

1. Samples of student work at different stages

2. Written narratives dictated by students to teachers

3. Observations and comments from parents, teachers and other adults

4. Photographs of the students at various stages during the learning process

5. Running records or other written accounts

6. Portfolios

7. Home/school journaling (2003, p. 165.)

Waldorf.

This philosophy emphasizes the unique development of students and supports creative,

imaginative play and artistic activity. Focus is on teaching the whole – the head, heart and hands

of students (Easton, 1997).   This philosophy is grounded in early childhood development.

Learning occurs through experience, a constructivist approach. It is believed that when students

relates what they learn to their own experience, they are engaged. Authentic assessment consists

of portfolios. Student learn collaboratively through projects. Students engage in service learning

as a means of becoming socially responsible citizens (Chauncey, 2006). Waldorf education is

based on the belief of its founder, Rudolf Steiner, who believed that students are beings of body,

soul and spirit. Thus, this belief has resulted in some viewing Waldorf schools as Christian based, creating challenges with establishing public funded Waldorf schools.

Montessori.

This philosophy emphasizes individualized learning that is student directed. Learning is tailored to each child's interest, learning style and needs. The classrooms have large opens spaces which allow for students to spread out and work on activities that are arranged from simple to complex and concrete to abstract. Student learn at their own pace. There is more emphasis on students learning from one another rather than teacher provided instruction. Maria Montessori, the first female physician in Italy, discovered this philosophy based on observations of children in her care while working in the slums of Rome. There is a body of research that supports that the effect of Montessori education is sustained through high school amongst Black boys who experienced it in the Milwaukee Public School district (Dohrmann et al, 2007).

High Scope.

This philosophy balances student led and teacher led learning. It is grounded in the belief that learning comes from students' own initiative and thus students are allowed to make choices regarding the learning activity; with whom they will play with, and how they will play. Students plan, carry out and review their learning activities throughout the day. Classrooms are arranged in centers which are organized by the teacher. Teachers serve as facilitators, fostering positive small group and large group activities. Learning is promoted through teacher questioning and conversations with students. A cognitive development approach, students are encouraged to problem solve and think independently. The four principals of the high scope philosophy are:

1. Active learning
2. Positive child-adult interactions

3. Child-friendly environment

4. Consistent routines (Hohmann and Weikart, 2002).

Bank Street.

This philosophy focuses on promoting competence, individuality and socialization amongst students. Student choice is emphasized. Individual or group work activities are available in a well structured environment with clear expectation. Students are allowed to explore "unstructured materials (water, paint, sand, etc.) and structured materials (puzzles, books, etc.) within areas for dramatic play and block building (Epstein, Schweinhart and McAddoo, 1996)). The core of the curriculum is Social Studies. This philosophy is implemented at the Bank Street College of Education in New York.

Pedagogical Approaches

"Pedagogy comes from the Greek 'pais' meaning child and 'agein' meaning to lead" (Hegstrup, 2003, p. 1772). The following are pedagogical approaches to school readiness often found in early childhood programs.

Academic.

Academic pedagogy focuses on subject knowledge and cognitive processes. Emphasis is on constructing new knowledge based on previous knowledge (Hedges & Cullen, 2005). Students are taught skills which advance cognitive processes. "For superior education to occur, students must grasp fundamental cognitive processes at a young age" (Luke, 2003, p. 3).

Behavioral.

Behaviorist pedagogy is based on the behaviorist framework of stimuli; response; and feedback (Wallace, 1996).   All behavior is controlled by external rewards or reinforcement

linked to the stimuli. For example, classroom troublemakers "learn" to be disruptive because they seek attention (reinforcement) from their teachers and peers.   Therefore, the onus is on the teacher to construct a learning environment that maximizes the use of positive feedback, rewards and reinforcements (Tomei, 2010).

Emotional.

Emotional pedagogy focuses on the feelings of the child. It asserts that "in order to learn, one must feel" (Chabot & Chabot, 2004, p. 3). Based on this assertion, teachers make it a point to understand the emotions of students and embed emotional competency in their instructional strategies.

Social.

Social pedagogy focuses on the whole child. Social pedagogy, as a theoretical and practical framework for understanding children, focuses on building relationships through engagement (Department for Education and Skills, 2006). Based on this framework, Cameron (2005) described the notion of 'head, heart and hands'. Head refers to teacher's use of their cognitive skills to assess students' actions. Heart refers to the close relationship between the teacher and the adult. Hand refers to teacher's daily involvement with the student.

Self-help skills.

Self-help skills pedagogy is rooted in the belief that students must develop skills that increase their independence and decrease their dependence on others (Carter, 1974). Self-help skills include the ability to feed self; dress self; toileting self; and, cleaning self.

Summary

"School readiness is a multifaceted construct. Experts consider a number of skills and abilities to be important for success in school, ranging from academic-related skills to social skills, emotional readiness, physical abilities, and attitude toward learning tasks." (Brown, et. al 2007, p. 5). For the purpose of this program evaluation, school readiness standards were determined by the knowledge and skills children were expected to demonstrate by the end of their preschool years, and student performance on the initial first grade assessments. Student outcomes were categorized into five domains:

1.   Academic

2.   Behavioral

3.   Emotional

4.   Social

5.   Self-help skills

Student performance focused on two areas:

1.   Performance on the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) test

2.   Performance on the Success for All (SFA) assessment

As the result of considering the literature on program evaluations, school readiness definitions and early childhood philosophies, I developed the methodology and procedures for this program evaluation. The methodology used to collect data and the concepts that grounded those methods will be presented in Chapter Three, Methodology. The results of the program

evaluation are presented in Chapter Four, Results. Recommendations and discussions are

presented in Chapter Five, Conclusion.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This study was based on program evaluation theory (Yin, 1984). I engaged in a series of logical steps leading to accessing criterion and normed referenced data that was readily available. Through the analysis of data obtained, I formed a conclusion about the effectiveness of the early childhood program. More specifically, I used the Malcom Provus's Discrepancy Evaluation Model (DEM) theory based on the following processes:

1. Agreeing upon school readiness construct based on the academic and non-academic skills teachers expect of entering first grade students

2. Determining whether a discrepancy exists between the performance of first grade students who participated in the early childhood program and the agreed upon readiness construct.

3. Using information about discrepancies to decide whether to improve, maintain, or terminate the program or some aspect of it (Fitzpatrick, et al., 2011).

Statement of the Problem

The objective of Urban Day School's Early Childhood program was to prepare students starting at age three for an education characterized by personal discovery, individualized instruction and academic rigor. Students were to be well prepared for continued academic and personal growth, per the school's website. In the school's over thirty years of existence, the effectiveness of the early childhood program had not been evaluated. Specifically, I examined the academic and non-academic outcomes of students who participated in the early childhood program.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness of Urban Day School's Early Childhood program as it relates to school readiness. The goal of this program evaluation was to determine if the early childhood program was effective as is and needs to remain the same; somewhat effective, but needs some changes; or ineffective and needs to be discontinued.

Significance of the Study

"Several national studies indicate that children from low-income homes who are enrolled in high-quality early childhood programs are more apt to overcome skill gaps than those not enrolled in the programs" (Schweitzer, 2009, p.1). As the number of new programs has increased, the pressure to provide data on program effectiveness will increase. Parents, educators and parents want to know if early childhood programs are effectively preparing participants for school. (Brown, et. al., 2007, p. 2).

Role of the Researcher

I was the instructional leader/principal of Urban Day School from July 2010 until January 2014. Urban Day School's leadership pursued me via a search firm in the beginning of 2010 when I was serving as a Milwaukee Public School (MPS) administrator. I had just completed the New Leaders for New School (NLNS) fellowship which prepares school leaders to work in high poverty, high need schools in urban settings with the goal of becoming a 90/90/90 school. 90/90/90 schools serve student populations wherein 90% of the students are minorities; 90% come from low income families; and, 90% of the student are performing at or above grade level. Urban Day School served a student population wherein in excess of 90% of the students were African American and came from low income families. The key to achieving the goal of 90% of students performing at or above grade level was a high quality early childhood program that

ensured that students demonstrated mastery with skills needed for school readiness, more specifically first grade.

In the June of 2013, the Social Development Commission (SDC) loss its federal head start funding. Another head start provider provided head start services to students attending Urban Day beginning in August of 2013. For the purposes of this study, the early childhood program that I evaluated included the half day three year old and half day four year old head start services operated by SDC. I transitioned from my role as instructional leader/principal after UWM renewed Urban Days School's contract in January 2014. I had initially signed a three year contract with Urban Day School on July 1, 2010. My contracted ended on June 30, 2013 but I agreed to continue working with the school through their charter renewal process. One of the campus directors succeeded me as the principal of Urban Day. I completed this program evaluation as a means of assisting all stakeholders, Urban Day School's community, administrators, staff, board members, community members and funders in determining the effectiveness of the early childhood program. When serving as the instructional leader/principal, I did not oversee the three year old and the half day head start program. As instructional leader/principal, I did oversee the half day K4 and all day K5 programs.

Research Question

What is the effectiveness of the early childhood program on school readiness?

Sub questions

What percentage of students met the academic standards of the early childhood program as measured by the First Grade Readiness Checklist, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test and Success for All (SFA) Assessment?

What percentage of students met the behavioral standards of the early childhood program as measured by the First Grade Readiness Checklist?

What percentage of students met the emotional standards of the early childhood program as measured by the First Grade Readiness Checklist?

What percentage of students met the social standards of the early childhood program as measured by the First Grade Readiness Checklist?

What percentage of students met the self-help skills standards of the early childhood program as measured by the First Grade Readiness Checklist?

Quantitative Paradigms

This quantitative study utilized student performance data on norm-referenced assessments as well as student outcomes from the First Grade Readiness Checklist, a criterion-referenced assessment.

Participants

Participants were seventy-two students in first grade who participated in Urban Day School's Early Childhood program from August 2010 through June 2013 (N=72). Ninety-nine percent of the students were African American. Ninety-two of the students qualified for free or reduced lunch.

Staff were four first grade teachers employed at the school (N=4). One hundred percent were Caucasian females. Fifty percent had been employed at the school since August 2010 (n=2). Twenty-five percent had been employed at the school since 2012 (n=1). Twenty-five percent had only been employed at the school since August 2013 (n=1). One-hundred percent of

the teachers were initial educators, possessing less than five years of experience (n=4). One

hundred percent were not residents of Milwaukee. They resided in the suburbs (n=4).

Data Collection & Analysis

There are various ways to collect student performance data:

1.   Direct assessments requiring students to complete an act

2.   Checklists and rating systems completed by a teacher or parent

3.   Natural observations wherein the teacher or observer records the child's actions

4.   Achievement tests

5.   Record reviews (Brown, et. al. 2007).

The data collected during this research included a checklist completed by first grade teachers and

achievement tests. Student performance data on the Success For All (SFA) assessment was

collected at the end of the K5 school year. Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test data was

collected at the beginning of the students' first grade year. The First Grade Readiness Checklist

(FGRC) data was collected at the beginning of the students' first grade year. More information

about these assessments are presented later in this chapter. This data was completed annually and

was readily available upon request in the school office.

First Grade Readiness Checklist.

The First Grade Readiness Checklist (FGRC) was developed by the first grade teachers

who were employed at Urban Day School as a means of assessing students' readiness for first

grade as part of their common and normal practices (See Appendix A). Teachers met weekly

during their student-released common planning time for three months to collectively identify

skills that they expected of students entering the first grade. During the first few weeks, they each listed skills individually resulting in four separate lists. Over the next few week, they identified commonalities amongst their individual list that resulted in an agreed-upon collective list of skills. Finally, the teachers categorized skills into five domains: (1) academic; (2) behavioral; (3) emotional; (4) social; and, (5) self-help. Table 1 represents the number of skills in each domain.

Table 1

Number of Skills Expected of First Grade Students
by Domain on the First Grade Readiness Checklist

Domain	Skills
Academic	18
Behavioral	7
Emotional	4
Social	6
Self-help	7

Mastery was defined by a student demonstrating the ability to complete seventy-five percent of the skills in each domain.

First grade teachers completed the First Grade Readiness Checklist (FGRC) at the onset of each school year for each student. Based on observation teachers recorded "yes" or "no" for each skill. Observations were conducted throughout the school day (before, during and after school). Teachers also observed students in different settings (lunchroom, art room, playground, hallway, etc.). The observations began on the first day of school, August 26, 2013 and ended on September 20, 2013. Upon completion, I collected the First Grade Readiness Checklist.

Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test.

Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) developed the MAP test as a means to determine student progress in the areas of reading, language arts, and math. It is a computerized

test that is administered three times per year (fall, winter, spring). Teachers proctor the test. As students answer questions, the test is adjusted based on their performance. If a student answer a question correctly, the next question is more difficult. If a student answers the question incorrectly, the next question becomes easier. There are forty-two questions on the reading test and students must answer each question to proceed to the next. Students are not allowed to skip a question. After the student completes the test, a Rasch unIT (RIT) score is provided to measure student achievement on the test as well as student growth when comparing student performance to previous or subsequent tests. (Northwest Evaluation Association, 2010).

NWEA initially developed RIT score norms in 1996. Having conducted new norming studies, NWEA complete the most recent on in 2011. A RIT score has remained the same. How a RIT score is compared to distributions, such as percentile rank, has changed. Such differences are a result of differences of how RIT scores are distributed based on samples used in the subsequent studies. RIT score norms provide a means to compare a student's performance on the MAP test to other students in the same grade and age. The national normed RIT score for first grade student on the fall reading assessment is 160, placing the student in the 50th percentile. (NWEA, 2011).

The first grade teachers set up and proctored the MAP test during the testing window, September 9, 2013 through September 20, 2013. Students completed the test in the computer lab. Most students finished the test in fifty minutes, but others were allowed additional time for completion. Once the testing window closed, I was provide student performance data for the students who participated in this study.

Success for All (SFA) Assessment.

Success for All (SFA) is a school wide reading program that began as a partnership between the Baltimore Public School district and John Hopkins University in 1987 (Madden, et al (1991). Students are re-grouped based on their reading levels for a ninety minute uninterrupted reading block. A reading group may have first, second and third graders who are all performing at the same reading level. This regrouping is a form of the Joplin Plan, which had been found to increase reading achievement in elementary students (Slavin, 1987).

Student reading at the kindergarten through first grade level are place in the "Reading Roots" group which emphasizes phonemic awareness, vocabulary enrichment, story blending, storytelling, and retelling through the use of cooperative groups. (Slavin & Madden, 2000). Teachers provide instruction utilizing a script. At eight week intervals, students' reading skills are assessed. First grade teachers received the end of the year SFA reading performance data for their students from the previous kindergarten teacher. I was provided with the end of the year kindergarten data for new first grade students who participated in this study.

Ethical Considerations

Participation in this study did not involve any physical or emotional risk to students and is only comprised of data already available. The First Grade Readiness Checklist (FGRC) outcomes were based on observations of students throughout the first month of school. Students were not required to engage in any activities that differed from that of typical first graders at the school. The performance data was based on student performance on assessments that were no different than those administered to typical first graders at the school.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study presents an opportunity for a subsequent program evaluation of Urban Day School's Early Childhood program to ascertain if the same results will be likely with a different group of first grade students. The sample size was a limited to first grade students who participated in Urban Day School's Early Childhood program from August 2010 through June 2013.

My role as the instructional leaders and a New Leader for New Schools (NLNS) fellow presents a limitation to this study. My leadership goal of becoming a 90/90/90 school was regularly communicated to the staff as well as my desired to see measureable growth each year. This expectation may have adversely affected the research tools utilized during this study that are subject to the influence of teachers, SFA reading assessment and the development of the First Grade Readiness Checklist. I purposely, to the maximum extent possible, attempted to remove my "lenses as the school leader", during this study so as to not influence the results.

The Success For All (SFA) program has been the subject of debate amongst the research community. There are polarized views on the effectiveness of SFA, inclusive of documented failure of SFA in Baltimore as a predictor of subsequent failures in Florida, Ohio, Mississippi, Tennessee and Texas. This will be explored more extensively in Chapter Five, Conclusion.

The teacher ratings on the First Grade Readiness Checklist (FGRC) were subjective. Inasmuch as there was an inter-observer agreement between teachers when discussing how to rate the first grade student on the criterion referenced assessment, there were some concerns regarding the validity of that measurement which will be explored more intensively in Chapter Five, Conclusion.

Summary

The methodology used in this program evaluation consisted of criterion referenced data obtained through the use of a First Grade Readiness Checklist which evaluated student performance in the academically and non-academic domains. In addition, student performance data was collected from the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test and Success for All (SFA) reading assessment. The methodology was based on Malcom Provus's Discrepancy Evaluation Model.

As the result of considering the literature on program evaluations, school readiness definitions and early childhood philosophies, I developed the methodology and procedures for this program evaluation. The results of the program evaluation are presented in Chapter Four, Results. Recommendations are presented in Chapter Five, Conclusion.

Chapter 4: Program Evaluation Results

Introduction

The purpose of the program evaluation was to determine the effectiveness of Urban Day School's Early Childhood program as it relates to school readiness. I examined the academic and non-academic outcomes of students who participated Urban Day School's Early Childhood program. As the instructional leader/principal, I had access to the data as part of my role as an administrator. Data was collected using criterion referenced data obtained via the First Grade Readiness Checklist (FGRC) and normed referenced data based on student performance on the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test and Success for All (SFA) reading assessment.

Prior to reporting on the results of this program evaluation, it is important to clarify what data was utilized for each of the research sub questions. Regarding sub question #1, academic outcomes, the researcher triangulated data using the First Grade Readiness Checklist (FGRC); Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) performance data; and Success for All (SFA) performance data. Regarding sub questions #2 through #5, the researcher used the FGRC. Mastery on the FGRC was defined as a student demonstrating seventy-five percent of the skills in each domain.   More details about the skills in each domain will be explored when presenting the outcomes for each sub questions.

Research Questions & Sub questions

The research question is what is the effectiveness of the early childhood program on school readiness?

Sub question 1

What percentage of students met the academic standards of the early childhood program as measured by the First Grade Readiness Checklist (FGRC), Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test and Success for All (SFA) Assessment?

Teachers completed the FGRC for each of the seventy-two students. Mastery was defined by a student demonstrating the ability to complete seventy-five percent of the skills in each domain. Thirty students demonstrated mastery in the academic domain. One student demonstrated mastery of all skills in this domain. Table 2 represents skills expected of students in the academic domain.

Table 2

Skills Expected of Students in the Academic
Domain on the First Grade Readiness Checklist

Skill
Write a simple complete sentence
Cuts straight and curved lines
Sort similar attributes
Reads, writes and represents numbers to 100
Identify simple patterns
Knows shapes and colors
Knows short vowel sounds
Read, write and says alphabet
Knows alphabet letter sounds
Write first and last name
Knows rhyming words
Identifies coins and coin value (penny, knuckle, dime quarter)
Identifies story elements (character, setting, etc.)
Sounds out CVC words
Add/subtract within 10
Recognize and print upper/lower case letters
Identify time to the hour
Skip counts by 2's, 5's, & 10's

Difficulty was defined by a student demonstrating the inability to complete the skill three of four times. Twenty-nine students demonstrated difficulty with rhyming words. Sixty-eight

students demonstrated difficulty identifying coin values (dime, nickel, quarter). Forty-eight students demonstrated difficulty identifying story elements. Seventy students demonstrated difficulty identifying time to the hour. Sixty-two students demonstrated difficulty skip counting (2's, 5's, and 10's). Table 3 represents the percentage of students demonstrating difficulty with skills in the academic domain.

Table 3

Percentage of Students Demonstrating Difficulty with
Academic Skills on the First Grade Readiness Checklist (n=72)

Skill	n	Percent
Difficulty with rhyming words	29	40.3%
Difficulty with coin value	68	94.4%
Difficulty with story elements	48	66.7%
Difficulty with time to hour	70	97.2%
Difficulty with skip counting	62	86.1%

The reading skills of each of the seventy-two students were assessed using the Measures of Academic Progress test. Twenty-nine students scored at or above the national norm. Forty-three students scored below the national norm. Table 4 represents student performance data on the Measures of Academic Progress test.

Table 4

Student Performance Data on the
Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Test (n=72)

Performance	n	Percent
Students scoring at or above the national norm	29	40.3%
Students scoring below the national norm	43	59.7%

The reading skills of each of the seventy-two students were assessed using the SFA reading assessment. Sixty-seven students performed at the first grade level. Five students performed below grade level. Table 5 represents student performance data on the Success For All assessment.

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Table 5

Student Performance Data on the
Success For All (SFA) Assessment (n=72)

Performance	*n*	Percent
Students reading at or above grade level	67	93.1%
Students reading below grade level	5	6.9%

Sub question 2

What percentage of students met the behavioral standards of the early childhood program as measured by the First Grade Readiness Checklist (FGRC)?

Teachers completed the FGRC for each of the seventy-two students. Mastery was defined by a student demonstrating the ability to complete seventy-five percent of the skills in each domain. Fifty-eight students demonstrated mastery in the behavioral domain. Fifty-four students demonstrated mastery of all skills in this domain. Table 6 represents skills expected of students in the behavioral domain.

Table 6

Skills Expected of Students in the Behavioral
Domain on the First Grade Readiness Checklist

Skill
Doesn't shout out much
Follows rules
Doesn't hit friends out of anger
Sits quietly
Follow directions
Works independently for 15 minutes
Little escalated behaviors beyond crying

Difficulty was defined by a student demonstrating the inability to complete the skill three of four times. Eight students shout out too much. Eleven students demonstrated difficulty with following rules. Eleven students hit friends out of anger. Fourteen students demonstrated difficulty with sitting quietly. Twelve students demonstrated difficulty with following

directions. Ten students demonstrated difficulty with working independently for fifteen minutes.

Five students engaged in escalated behaviors beyond crying. Table 7 represents the percentage

of students demonstrating difficulty with each skill in the behavioral domain.

Table 7

Percentage of Students Demonstrating Difficulty with Behavioral
Skills on the First Grade Readiness Checklist (n=72)

Skill	n	Percent
Difficulty with shouting out	8	11.1%
Difficulty with following rules	11	15.3%
Difficulty with hitting friends	11	15.3%
Difficulty sitting quietly	14	19.4%
Difficulty following direction	12	16.7%
Difficulty working independently for 15 min	10	13.9%
Difficulty with escalated behaviors	5	7.0%

Sub question 3

What percentage of students met the emotional standards of the early childhood program

as measured by the First Grade Readiness Checklist?

Teachers completed the FGRC for each of the seventy-two students. Mastery was

defined by a student demonstrating the ability to complete seventy-five percent of the skills in

each domain. Sixty-nine students demonstrated mastery in the emotional domain. Fifty-one

students demonstrated mastery of all skills in this domain. Table 8 represents skills expected of

students in the emotional domain.

Table 8

Skills Expected of Students in the Emotional Domain
on the First Grade Readiness Checklist

Skill
Demonstrates self-control
Knows emotions (mad, sad, happy)
Identifies characteristics about self
Express feelings verbally

Difficulty was defined by a student demonstrating the inability to complete the skill three of four times. Sixteen students demonstrated difficulty with self-control. Three students had difficulty knowing their emotions (mad, sad, and happy). Two students demonstrated difficulty identifying characteristics of self. Six students had difficulty expressing feelings verbally. Table 9 represents the percentage of students demonstrating difficulty with each skill in the emotional domain.

Table 9

Percentage of Students Demonstrating Difficulty with Emotional Skills on the First Grade Readiness Checklist (n=72)

Skill	n	Percent
Difficulty with self-control	16	22.2%
Difficulty with knowing emotions	3	4.2%
Difficulty identifying characteristics of self	2	2.8%
Difficulty expressing feelings verbally	6	8.3%

Sub question 4

What percentage of students met the social standards of the early childhood program as measured by the First Grade Readiness Checklist?

Teachers completed the FGRC for each of the seventy-two students. Mastery was defined by a student demonstrating the ability to complete seventy-five percent of the skills in each domain. Sixty-one students demonstrated mastery in the social domain. Fifty-nine students demonstrated mastery of all skills in this domain. Table 10 represents skills expected of students in the social domain.

Table 10

Skills Expected of Students in the Social Domain
on the First Grade Readiness Checklist

Skill
Alternate feet while walking downstairs
Uses pleasantries (please, thank you)
Shares and takes turns
Works in groups and pairs
Walk in line quietly
Raises hand prior to speaking

Difficulty was defined by a student demonstrating the inability to complete the skill three

of four times. Seven students demonstrated difficulty using pleasantries (please, thank you).

Four students demonstrated difficulty taking turns. Five students demonstrated difficulty

working in groups/pairs. Twelve students experienced difficulty walking in line quietly. Six

students demonstrated difficulty raising their hand prior to speaking. Table 11 represents the

percentage of students demonstrating difficulty with skills in the social domain.

Table 11

Percentage of Students Demonstrating Difficulty
with Social Skills on the First Grade Readiness Checklist (n=72)

Skill	n	Percent
Difficulty using pleasantries (please, thanks)	11	9.7%
Difficulty sharing/taking turns	4	5.6%
Difficulty working in groups/pairs	5	6.9%
Difficulty walking in line quietly	12	16.7%
Difficulty raising hand prior to speaking	6	8.3%

Sub question 5

What percentage of students met the self-help skill standards of the early childhood

program as measured by the First Grade Readiness Checklist?

Teachers completed the FGRC for each of the seventy-two students. Mastery was

defined by a student demonstrating the ability to complete seventy-five percent of the skills in

each domain. Seventy-two students demonstrated master in the self-help skills domain. Sixty-

two students demonstrated mastery of all skills in this domain. Table 12 represents skills

expected of students in the self-help skills domain.

Table 12

Skills Expected of Students in the Self-Help Skills
Domain on the First Grade Readiness Checklist

Skill
Ties shoes
Clean up after one's self
Responsible for one's own property
Tuck in shirt
Use bathroom without assistance
Button/zips clothing without assistance
Cleans one's face without assistance

Difficulty was defined by a student demonstrating the inability to complete the skill three

of four times. Eight students demonstrated difficulty tying their shoes. Two students

demonstrated difficulty cleaning their face without assistance. Table 13 represents the

percentage of students demonstrating difficulty with skills in the self-help skills domain.

Table 13

Percentage of Students Demonstrating Difficulty with
Self-help Skills on the First Grade Readiness Checklist (n=72)

Skill	n	Percent
Difficulty typing shoes	8	11.1%
Difficulty washing face without assistance	2	2.8%

Summary

Regarding academic outcomes, forty-two percent of the students demonstrated mastery

based on the FGRC. Forty percent of the students performed at or above the national norm on

the MAP test. Ninety-three percent of the student performed at or above grade level on the SFA

reading assessment.

Regarding non-academic outcomes, eight-one percent of the students demonstrated mastery in the behavioral domain. Ninety-six percent of the students demonstrated mastery in the emotional domain. Eighty-five percent of the students demonstrated mastery in the social domain. One hundred percent of the students demonstrated mastery in the self-help skills domain.

As the result of considering the literature on program evaluations, school readiness definitions and early childhood philosophies, I developed the methodology and procedures for this program evaluation. In this chapter, I presented the results of this program evaluation. Recommendations are presented in Chapter Five, Conclusion.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Introduction

The purpose of this program evaluation was to determine the effectiveness of the early childhood program as it relates to school readiness as defined by the student performance data on the First Grade Readiness Checklist and formative assessments. I conducted a review of relevant literature as it relates to early childhood programs, definitions of school readiness and early childhood philosophies. I engaged in a series of logical steps leading to accessing criterion and normed referenced data that was readily available. In this chapter, I formed a conclusion about the effectiveness of the early childhood program.

Outcome

The academic outcomes for students that participated in the early childhood program varied according to the three data sources. Based on the FGRC outcomes, the early childhood program was not effective. Mastery of skills in the academic domain was defined by a student demonstrating the ability to complete seventy five percent of the skills in each domain. Only forty-two percent of the students demonstrated master in the academic domain. Seventy-five percent of the students needed to demonstrate mastery in order for the early childhood program to be considered effective. Based on the MAP test outcomes, the early childhood program was not effective. Forty percent of the students scored at or above the national norm. Seventy-five percent of the students needed to score at or above the national norm in order for the early childhood program to be effective. Based on the SFA reading assessment outcomes, the early childhood program was effective. Ninety-three percent of the student performed at or above grade level. Seventy-five percent of the students needed to score at or above grade level in order for the early childhood program to be effect.

The non-academic outcomes for students that participated in the early childhood program are more favorable. Mastery of skills in the behavioral, emotional, social and self-help domain was defined by a student demonstrating the ability to complete seventy-five percent of the skills in each domain. Seventy-five percent of the students needed to demonstrate mastery in each of these domains in order for the early childhood program to be considered effective. Eight-one percent of the students demonstrated mastery in the behavioral domain. Ninety-six percent of the students demonstrated mastery in the emotional domain. Eighty-five percent of the students demonstrated mastery in the social domain. One hundred percent of the students demonstrated mastery in the self-help skills domain. Based on the FGRC outcomes, the early childhood program was effective in the non-academic domains.

Discussion

The variance in academic outcomes based on the three data sources made it difficult to draw a conclusion about the effectiveness of the early childhood program in the academic domain. Inasmuch as less than half of the students demonstrated mastery on the FGRC and scored at or above the national norm on the MAP test; sixty-seven out of seventy-two students demonstrated grade level reading skills on the SFA assessment. Further discussion regarding the research tools utilized to measure school readiness in the academic domain follows.

Success For All (SFA) Reading Assessment

Forshaw (2003) questioned the effectiveness of the SFA program in Hartford Elementary Schools. This was based on the work of Pogrow (2002) and Wahlberg & Greenberg (1999). Pogrow's research asserts that the failure of SFA in Baltimore was a predictor of subsequent failures in Florida, Ohio, Mississippi, Tennessee and Texas. According to Pogrow, the reading performance declined. He further asserts "there is no evidence that SFA/Roots & Wings get

students anywhere near reading at grade level by third grade or that it is especially effective in grades K-2 or that it produces relative progress after first grade" (Pogrow, 2002, p. 468). Walberg & Greenberg's research asserts that the average SFA student failed to read at grade level when they reached the third grade. He believes that initial gains are a result of the "placebo effect" because those implementing the new program are being watched. Referring to the "Diogenes factor", the researchers assert that program evaluation of SFA that yield positive results may be using "selective evidence and misleading comparisons" (Walberg & Greenberg, 1999, p. 2).

First Grade Readiness Checklist.

The First Grade Readiness Checklist was developed by four Caucasian female teachers who possessed less than five years of teaching experience and who resided in the suburbs. Their knowledge and experience working with African American children living in poverty was limited, at best. The skills identified by the teachers on the FGRC were their opinion and weren't not grounded in research on preparing students for first grade. The teachers discussed and chose skills that they believed were necessary for students to possess when they arrived to first grade. They neglected to draw upon current research on early childhood philosophies nor any documented early childhood programs' school readiness expectations.

Dr. Chris Emdin, Columbia University's associate professor states "in urban schools, and especially for those who haven't had previous experience in urban contexts or with youth of color, educators learn "best practices" from "experts" in the field, deemed as such because they have degrees, written articles, and meet other criteria that do not have anything to do with their work within urban communities" (2016, p. 19). He further contends that "urban education experts don't live in urban communities" and that they "can't fathom the day-to-day experiences

of urban students who see themselves as ready to learn despite not being perceived that way"
(p.20). Student are viewed as needing to be cleaned up and given a better life as if they are dirty
and their present life have little value. "The idea that one individual or school can give students
'a life' emanates from a problematic savior complex" (p. 20).

The early childhood teachers' beliefs about their students are subconsciously embedded
in their beliefs about their students. Skills they chose to measure on the First Grade Readiness
Checklist were grounded in a deficit model. The teacher failed to consider an attribute that
student who live in poverty possess….resilience. There a vast body of research on resiliency.
Resilience is "the set of attributes that provides people with the strength and fortitude to confront
the overwhelming obstacles that they are bound to face in life" (Sagor, 1996, p. 38). Gordon
defines resiliency as "the ability to thrive, mature and increase competence in the face of adverse
circumstance" (1985, p 239). Students living in poverty demonstrate resiliency and
unfortunately the teachers neglected including this skill, as well as other documented skills,
when developing their checklist.

Recommendation

Based on the polarized results within the research community on Success For All (SFA),
Urban Day School's Early Childhood program would benefit from conducting a program
evaluation on the effectiveness of SFA with their students, particularly examining longitudinal
data through the third grade. Thus, based on the controversy around the SFA program, I
conclude that aside from the SFA performance data, Urban Day School's Early Childhood
program was not effective in the academic domain.

Based on the limited experience of the teachers as well as their limited knowledge and
experience working with African American children in poverty, the Urban Day's early childhood

teachers would benefit from professional development in what is referred to as "reality pedagogy" by Emdin. This would afford them an opportunity to first and foremost gain an understanding of the students and then provide instruction based on the reality of the students' experiences (2016). This would enable teachers, as ambassadors of the school, to be "ready for the students" rather than expecting the students to be ready for the school. I also recommend professional development on the early childhood philosophies. Then, the teacher would possess the knowledge, skills and disposition to produce a reliable and valid First Grade Readiness Checklist that can be utilized to measure school readiness of future first grade students. Thus, based on the inadequacies presented, I conclude that aside from the First Grade Readiness Checklist, Urban Day School's Early Childhood program was not effective in the academic domain.

Based on the results of the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test, Urban Day School's Early Childhood program does not prepare its students for first grade in the academic domain. This strong conclusion is drawn from this sole source of data due to the fact that the MAP assessment is normed referenced and thus the only valid measurement utilized to measure first grade readiness in the academic domain.

Summary

Early childhood programs offers experiences critical for preparing students for school. For the purposes of this program evaluation, school readiness involved five domains: (1) academic; (2) behavioral; (3) emotional; (4) social; and, (5) self-help skills. Early childhood students must master skills within these domains to insure that they are ready for first grade. Early childhood programs benefits from regular program evaluations to assess their effectiveness.   However, the results of this program evaluation provided answers to the initial

research questions as well as led to recommendations for improving the means for evaluating

Urban Day School's Early Childhood program.

Epilogue

On April 9, 2016, an article appeared in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel entitled "Urban Day School of Milwaukee To Close at the End of the School Year". A board member cited declining enrollment and financial hardship as the rationale for the school making the decision to close. Inasmuch as the charter was renewed in 2014, Urban Day was facing a charter review in May of 2016. A board member stated that the pending review didn't impact their decision to close.

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Appendix A: First Grade Readiness Checklist

Emotional:

	Yes	No
Demonstrates self-control		
Knows emotions (mad, sad, happy)		
Identifies characteristics about self		
Express feelings verbally		

Social:

	Yes	No
Alternate feet while walking downstairs		
Uses pleasantries (please, thank you)		
Shares and takes turns		
Works in groups and pairs		
Walk in line quietly		
Raises hand prior to speaking		

Self Help:

	Yes	No
Ties shoes		
Clean up after one's self		
Responsible for one's own property		
Tuck in shirt		
Use bathroom without assistance		
Button/zips clothing without assistance		
Cleans one's face without assistance		

Behavioral

	Yes	No
Doesn't shout out much		
Follows rules		
Doesn't hit friends out of anger		
Sits quietly		
Follow directions		
Works independently for 15 minutes		
Little escalated behaviors beyond crying		

Academic

	Yes	No
Write a simple complete sentence		
Cuts straight and curved lines		
Sort similar attributes		
Reads, writes and represents numbers to 100		
Identify simple patterns		
Knows shapes and colors		
Knows short vowel sounds		
Read, write and says alphabet		
Knows alphabet letter sounds		
Write first and last name		
Knows rhyming words		
Identifies coins and coin value (penny, knuckle, dime quarter)		
Identifies story elements (character, setting, etc.)		
Sounds out CVC words		
Add/subtract within 10		
Recognize and print upper/lower case letters		
Identify time to the hour		
Skip counts by 2's, 5's, & 10's		