

KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION: DOES FAMILY INVOLVEMENT MAKE A
DIFFERENCE IN CHILDREN'S EARLY SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT?

BY

JEAN KANG

B.A., Ewha Womans University, 2000

M.S. University of Kansas, 2005

Submitted to the graduate degree program in Special Education and the Graduate Faculty of the
University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy.

Eva Horn, Ph.D., Chairperson

Judith Carta, Ph.D.

Susan Palmer, Ph.D.

Barbara Thompson, Ph.D.

Steve Warren, Ph.D.

Date Defended: _____ July 28th, 2010 _____

The Dissertation Committee for JEAN KANG

certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION: DOES FAMILY INVOLVEMENT MAKE A
DIFFERENCE IN CHILDREN'S EARLY SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT?

Eva Horn, Ph.D., Chairperson

Date approved: _____

Abstract

Kindergarten transition is a critical experience for children because of its potential long-term impact on school performance. Recognizing this impact, the field of early childhood education has been making great efforts to facilitate children's smooth transition to kindergarten through various approaches. One of the most widely accepted principles of kindergarten transition that guides the field is that of establishing strong and positive relationships among the key factors – child, family, school, and community – is critical in achieving successful transition to kindergarten. Although the family-school connection is one of the relationships that have been emphasized in the field, current understanding of the level of family involvement in kindergarten and the specific outcomes of family involvement is still very limited. Using a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods, this study aims to investigate the impact of family involvement in kindergarten transition on children's early school adjustment. Quantitative analysis was conducted using regression modeling. For qualitative analysis, constant comparative method of analysis was used to analyze the transcripts of individual interview with seven families who recently sent their child to kindergarten. Although quantitative result revealed that family involvement is not a predictor for children's early school adjustment, qualitative result suggests that families believe that their involvement in kindergarten transition has a positive influence on child's early school adjustment. In addition, qualitative results provided information on barriers that interfered with family involvement in the kindergarten transition process and suggestions for schools and other families. Finally, limitations of the findings and implications for future research, policy, and practice are discussed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This dissertation is a product of dedication of many individuals and their support. I would like to thank everyone who has come this long way with me. First, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Eva Horn for her guidance, mentorship, support, encouragement, and patience. Without her dedication for her students' success, I couldn't come this far and this dissertation couldn't be completed. She has been the best advisor anyone can hope for.

I also would like to thank my wonderful committee members, Drs. Judith Carta, Susan Palmer, Barbara Thompson, and Steve Warren for their support and guidance. I appreciate all your support, feedback, insight, and expertise.

I want to thank my parents who have come a long way with me during graduate school years. I am very thankful for their support and guidance during my ups and downs. They have always encouraged me to be the best I can be, to never give up and to dream big. I couldn't be who I am without my parents.

I also owe many thanks to Gayle Stuber who answered many questions regarding the data set and KSDE School Readiness Project.

It is also important for me to thank all my friends and colleagues I met in Lawrence who have been with me and supported me in various ways. Thanks to their prayers and encouragements.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	viii
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Review of Literature.....	3
Research Study.....	4
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	6
Importance of Early Adjustment.....	7
Kindergarten Transition Framework	8
Recommended Practices	10
Current status of implementation.....	11
Usefulness of recommended practices.....	12
Effect of implementing recommended practices.....	13
Factors affecting implementation of recommended practices.....	14
Family School Connection.....	17
Need for Study	20
CHAPTER 3. METHOD.....	23
KSDE School Readiness Project	24
Overview and participants.....	24
Measurement.....	25
Procedures Analysis 1: Quantitative Methods.....	27
Participant.....	27
Measurement.....	28

Analytic procedure.....	31
Procedures Analysis 2: Qualitative Methods.....	34
Participants.....	34
Data collection.....	36
Analytic procedure.....	37
Trustworthiness.....	38
CHAPTER 4. RESULT.....	39
Procedures Analysis 1: Quantitative Results.....	39
Descriptive analysis.....	39
Regression analysis.....	42
Procedures Analysis 2: Qualitative Results.....	45
Current status.....	46
Perception of family involvement.....	50
Barriers.....	51
Suggestions for schools.....	51
Suggestions for families.....	52
CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION.....	54
Major Findings.....	55
Brief overview of the study.....	55
Key findings.....	56
Limitations.....	63
Implications for Future Research, Policy, and Practice.....	65
Implications for future research.....	65
Implications for policy.....	66
Implications for practice.....	67
REFERENCES.....	69

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Research Question and Data Sources for Analysis 1

Table 2. Participant Demographic Information

Table 3. KELI Domains and Skills of Each Domain

Table 4. Definition of Demographic Variables

Table 5. Research Questions and Data Sources for Analysis 2

Table 6. Participant Demographic Information (Analysis 2)

Table 7. Mean Scores for KELI Domains, Early School Adjustment, and National QELI Spring
2000 scores

Table 8. Predictor Correlations

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Total number of Kindergarten Transition Activities in which the Families Participated

Figure 2. Number of Families Participating in Kindergarten Transition Activities by Type of Activity

Introduction

Kindergarten transition is an important experience because it marks a child's entry to formal schooling, and sets the foundation for future school experiences and performances. The influence of early school experience on children's social adjustment and academic achievement has been well documented (Alexander & Entwisle, 1988; Alexander, Entwisle, & Dauber, 1993; Cooper & Farran, 1988; Ladd, 1990; McClelland, Morrison, & Holmes, 2000; Ramey, Lanzi, Phillips, & Ramey, 1998). Despite the excitement of achieving one of the major developmental milestones, entering kindergarten can cause high levels of stress for children and families due to the discontinuities that exist between prior educational settings and kindergarten (Hadley, Wilcox, & Rice, 1994; Hains, Fowler, Schwartz, Korrwitz, & Rosenkoetter, 1989; Pianta & Kraft-Sayer, 2003; Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 1999). As a result, some children, as many as 48%, entering kindergarten are not successfully transition to kindergarten and exhibit difficulties adjusting and some distress or inappropriate behaviors (Hausken & Rathbunm, 2002; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2000).

Recognizing the importance, the discussion on how to facilitate successful kindergarten transition experience has continued in the field of early childhood education. Initially, the focus was solely on how a child should be prepared to be ready to learn. Thus, attempts were made for identifying certain characteristics or set of skills that are expected for first time kindergarteners to exhibit (Blair, 2006; Reynolds, 1991; Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). However, a need for change in how to view kindergarten transition was created as more professionals, researchers, and families began to recognize contextual factors supporting children and its impact on children's transition experience (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). The new

approach views kindergarten transition as a process rather than an event which key contextual factors – child, family, school, and community – constantly interacts with each other and build relationships. Therefore, the field of early childhood education has suggested various practices for establishing and sustaining strong and stable relationships between the key contextual factors (Jang & Mangione, 1994; Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003).

Until recently, many studies on recommended practices for kindergarten transition have focused on the schools and teachers' use of these practices in terms of what types of practices are implemented more or less frequently, what factors interfere or facilitate the implementation, and what characteristics of teachers are associated with their implementation behaviors (Early, Pianta, Taylor, & Cox, 2001; LaParo, Kraft-Sayre, & Pianta, 2003; LaParo, Pianta, & Cox, 2000; Pianta, Cox, Taylor, & Early, 1999; Rathbun & Hausken, 2001; Rimm-Kaufman, Gercke, & Higgins 2001; Schulting, Malone, & Dodge, 2005). Furthermore, few research studies explored the impact of implementing kindergarten transition practices on teachers' perceptions and children's achievement (La Paro et al., 2003; Rathbun & Hausken, 2001; Schulting et al., 2005).

Family-school connection has been identified as one of the key relationships contributing to children's successful transition to kindergarten as well as future school performances (Dockett & Perry, 2001). Thus, many practices recommended for kindergarten transition targeted strengthening this relationship and many schools and teachers have made efforts to involve families in the kindergarten transition by implementing the practices (Nelson, 2004). Despite the widely accepted belief in positive impact of family involvement in kindergarten transition on child outcomes, the field's understanding of the level of family involvement in kindergarten transition and the impact of recommended practices for family

involvement is still very limited. Thus, there is a great need for the study that involves families and explores family involvement in kindergarten transition.

The purpose of this dissertation research is to (a) review the current literature on kindergarten transition, (b) conduct a study using mixed methods design to investigate the impact of family involvement in kindergarten transition on children's early school adjustment after accounting for child and family variables, and (c) determine implications of the current study for educational research, policy, and practice.

Review of literature

The literature review, presented in Chapter 2, consists of four sections. The first section provides an overview of literature on children's early adjustment. The review presents the short term and long term impact of kindergarten transition on children's academic adjustment and social adjustment. This section illustrates the importance of kindergarten transition and early adjustment.

The second section reviews the literature on kindergarten transition framework. It reviews how the field's perspective on kindergarten transition has changed from child centered to a broader system view over the time. It then provides an overview of what a broader system view is and what the key principles are. This section aims to lay the foundation for understanding current recommended practices.

The third section presents the review of literature on recommended practices for kindergarten transition. This section specifically explores information available on implementation and impact of recommended practices for kindergarten transition in the field. It

provides an overview of current status of our understanding regarding kindergarten transition practices and its impact.

Finally, the fourth section presents an overview of currently available literature on family involvement in kindergarten transition. Specifically, the review of the studies focusing on family involvement in kindergarten by investigating currently implemented practices to facilitate family-school connection, participation rate of the families for implemented practices, barriers for participation and needs of the families is provided. This literature review, thus, identifies the area in need for future research specifically those focusing on kindergarten transition experiences of families and documenting empirical evidence of impact of family involvement on kindergarten transition are in need. Furthermore, the literature review lays the foundation for the proposed study which aims to investigate the impact of family involvement in kindergarten transition on children's school adjustment.

Research Study

Kindergarten transition practices that focus on facilitating family involvement are commonly implemented by schools and teachers. However, as mentioned earlier, our understanding of the impact of family involvement in their child's kindergarten transition is still very limited. Therefore the research study was conducted to investigate if family involvement in kindergarten transition is a predictor for children's early school adjustment after other factors (i.e., Child Gender, Age, Disability Status, Prior Educational Experiences) are taken into consideration.

This research study makes a contribution to the field by addressing the shortcomings of the previous studies on the topic. These shortcomings include the need for (a) studies that are more data-based, thus provide empirical evidence, (b) more studies involving families to gain a better understanding of families' kindergarten transition experiences and needs, and (c) studies focusing on impact of family involvement on children's kindergarten transition.

The study utilized a mixed-method design which the quantitative analysis preceded and guided the data collection and analysis for qualitative component. Quantitative analysis was conducted using regression analysis. To analyze the qualitative data, constant comparative method of analysis was used. The findings from the quantitative and qualitative analyses were reviewed to find common themes. Chapter 3 discusses the participants, measurements, procedures, and method for analysis for quantitative and qualitative analyses. Chapter 4 discusses the results found from the analyses. Finally, integration of quantitative and qualitative results, limitations of this study, and implications generated for future research, policy and practice are presented in Chapter 5.

Literature Review

Families with young children encounter multiple transitions throughout the family life cycle (Turnbull, Turnbull, Erwin, & Soodak, 2006). One of the major transitions most families experience as their children reach age 5 is starting kindergarten (Brandes, Ormsbee, & Haring, 2007; Kagan & Neuman, 1998). Like other transitions, starting kindergarten often results in a mix of emotions for children and their families including excitement as well as nervousness because it symbolizes the achievement of a major developmental milestone, but at the same time, it means adapting to various changes and discontinuities between settings (Duda & Minick, 2006; Wildenger, McIntyre, Riese, & Eckert, 2008).

Making a smooth transition and adjusting well to kindergarten is important because “kindergarten is a context in which children make important conclusions about schools as a place where they want to be and about themselves as learners vis-à-vis schools” (Bailey, 1999, p.iv.). Kindergarten classrooms, however, can confront young children with a variety of changes that may challenge their coping abilities such as needing to adjust to a number of new people, schedules, communication styles, and expectations as compared to those previously experienced in their preschool classrooms (Hadley, Wilcox, & Rice, 1994; Hains, Fowler, Schwartz, Korrwitz, & Rosenkoetter, 1989; Pianta & Kraft-Sayer, 2003; Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 1999). Moreover, children with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those from families with low socio-economic status, and children with disabilities often face additional challenges during kindergarten transition process (Bruns & Fowler, 1999; Janus, Lefort, Cameron, & Kopechanski, 2007). In fact, it has been reported that as many as 21% of first time kindergarteners experience frustration and exhibit some distress such as complaining about

school, being upset or reluctant about having to go to school, or pretending to be sick in order to be allowed to stay home from school during kindergarten transition period (Hausken & Rathbun, 2002). In another study by Rimm-Kauffman and colleagues (2000) asked kindergarten teachers on difficulties experienced by children entering kindergarten, over 45% of the children were reported exhibiting some or many problems in both social and academic skills.

Importance of Early Adjustment

The statistics reporting difficulties exhibited by first time kindergarteners are the cause for significant concerns given the potential for immediate as well as long-term negative impacts on children's adjustment to school and their future academic achievement. According to Ramey and colleagues (1998), children who did not like kindergarten do not try hard in schools and do not have good relationships with their teachers and peers. In addition, kindergarten, first grade and second grade teachers' ratings on academic competence of children with a less positive perception on kindergarten were significantly lower than those with a more positive view. The long-term impact of kindergarten transition and early adjustment is also noted by Alexander and Entwisle (1988) who found children's test scores are more subject to change during early years. Also, achievement during the first year of school is more responsive to intervention than during the second year of school. By the third grade, however, children's achievement patterns become relatively stable and tend to remain generally stable thereafter. Furthermore, these researchers found that children who exhibit difficulties in the beginning of the school year tended to have a hard time catching up with their classmates. Another study by Alexander and colleagues (1993) found that the academic performances of second and fourth graders were correlated to behavior ratings that had been completed by their first grade teacher.

In addition, researchers have noted the importance of social adjustment to kindergarten or transition to school for the young child. For example, Ladd (1990) found that children who had more friends in the beginning of school year hold more positive perceptions regarding school and those have better attendance and engagement in school which is considered critical for academic performance. Reputations children earn in the beginning of school tend to follow children's later school life and influence children's performances (Alexander & Entwisle, 1988). In addition, it has been documented that children who start kindergarten without adequate social skills are at greater risk for difficulties in adjusting to school (Cooper & Farran, 1988; Ladd, 1990; McClelland, Morrison, & Holmes, 2000). Furthermore, positive social behaviors are identified by families, teachers, and administrators as critical skills that are necessary for a child to be successful in kindergarten, as important predictors of academic achievement and promotion in school years and often considered as a critical area of evaluation (Agostin & Bain, 1997; Grace & Brandt, 2006; Missall & Hojnoski, 2008).

Because of the extensive evidence for the potential negative and long-term impact of poor early adjustment to school, professional organizations, scholars, policy makers and families express interest in the approaches to kindergarten transition and practices to promote successful kindergarten transition. In the following section, the changes in the framework for understanding kindergarten transition will be discussed which will be followed by the review of current literature on kindergarten transition practices.

Kindergarten Transition Framework

Recognizing the impact of kindergarten transition on children's early adjustment and success in school, several scholars proposed a framework and guidelines for enhancing the

understanding of kindergarten transition (Early, Pianta, & Cox, 1999; Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000; Ramey & Ramey, 1999; Snow, 2006). Initially, the child was viewed as the sole source of school success and the focus was on characteristics and skills that a child must master before entering kindergarten (Ramey & Ramey, 1999; Snow, 2006). Thus, child characteristics or sets of skills that are critical for successful kindergarten transition and early adjustment were identified. For example, intelligence, language developmental status, gender, ethnicity, temperament were identified as characteristics positively related to school success (Blair, 2006; Reynolds, 1991; Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). Furthermore, this maturational view has impacted policies on kindergarten eligibility and parents' decision on redshirting (Lincove & Painter, 2006). However, the child-focused approach was criticized as professionals and families began to recognize the limitations of using child factors for predicting kindergarten outcomes and the important influences of the multiple, broader environmental and contextual factors on the child including those from the family, school and community (Ramey & Ramey, 1999).

Since the need for a new framework for understanding kindergarten transition has emerged in the field of early childhood, several frameworks and guidelines for kindergarten transition have been suggested (Mengione & Speth, 1998; Ramey & Ramey, 1999; Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000; Rous, Hallam, Harbin, McCormick, & Jung, 2007). One of the most frequently referred frameworks in the literature on kindergarten transition is *Ecological/Developmental Model* (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000) which is built on Contextual Systems Model by Pianta and Walsh (1996) and Ecological model by Bronfenbrenner (1986). In this framework, the assumption is that kindergarten transition is an experience of not only a child but also the contextual factors surrounding the child – family, peer, school and community.

Therefore, to be able to provide a stable and strong support for the child during the possibly stressful period of kindergarten transition, building positive and strong relationships between the key players is considered as a core element of this framework (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003). Moreover, because kindergarten transition is a process rather than an event, sustaining the strong relationships through communicating frequently with other key players and establishing a goal in collaboration with others is critical. Based on the core elements described, *Ecological/Developmental Model* believes that children's successful transition to kindergarten should be a 'result of relationships among contexts and persons' (Pianta et al., 2001, p.118) and the responsibilities for achieving school success must be shared by the key players in the kindergarten transition (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003; Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). Thus, many researchers have proposed a number of practices for establishing positive relationships among the key players of the kindergarten transition and for sustaining the relationship (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003; Rous & Hallam, 2006).

Recommended Practices

Recommended practices for transition is defined as 'strategies and procedures that are planned and employed to insure the smooth placement and subsequent adjustment of the child as he or she moves from one program into another' (Hutinger, 1981, p.8). Using the broader systems perspective, numerous practices that can facilitate a smooth kindergarten transition experience have been proposed by many researchers and professional organizations (Laverick, 2008; Lillie & Vakil, 2002; Pianta & Kraft-Sayer, 2003). Pianta and Kraft-Sayer (2003) in particular have developed a comprehensive list of kindergarten transition practices based on the *Ecological/Developmental Model* of kindergarten transition, review of current literature and

input from professionals which they organized into four broad categories: 1) family-school connections, 2) child-school connections, 3) peer connections, and 4) community connections. The practices listed under each category are those emphasizing the importance of establishing strong relationship between the key players of kindergarten transition (Pianta & Kraft-Sayer, 2003). In addition, each of these four categories clearly contributes to ensuring the broader systems prospective which now serves as a framework for recommended practices seen in the literature for kindergarten transition. With a variety of kindergarten transition practices in place, many researchers have conducted research studies on recommended practices for kindergarten transition. The results of the studies can divided into three categories: a) current status of implementation of recommended practices by schools and teachers, b) the effect of implementing the practices, and c) factors influencing teachers' implementation of practices. The following sections will provide review of the literature according to the categories.

Current status of implementation. In general, many of the kindergarten transition practices implemented more frequently by teachers and schools are group-oriented and less time intensive (Early, Pianta, Taylor, & Cox, 2001; Pianta, Cox, Taylor, & Early, 1999). The practices that are reported to be used most often by preschool or kindergarten teachers were sending letters to children and parents before or after school starts, holding an open house after school started, and inviting or taking preschool children to future kindergarten classrooms (LaParo, Kraft-Sayre, & Pianta, 2003; LaParo, Pianta, & Cox, 2000; Pianta et al., 1999; Pianta, Kraft-Sayre, Rimm-Kaufman, Gercke, & Higgins 2001). Although many recommended practices are found to be implemented after school started, teachers and schools were also making efforts to reach out children and families before the first day of school. For example, a study by Schulting and colleagues (2005) reported that calling or sending information about

kindergarten program and holding a parent orientation meeting prior to the school year were used by over 75% of the kindergarten teachers or schools participated in the study.

On the other hand, the recommended practices that require more time and individualized interaction were less frequently used by teachers and schools (Early et al., 2001; Pianta et al., 1999). For instance, home visits made before or after school started was reported to be the least frequently implemented practice with only 4% of kindergarten teachers using (LaParo, Pianta, & Cox, 2000; Rathbun & Hausken, 2001; Schulting, Malone, & Dodge, 2005). From the result of survey on 3,959 kindergarten teachers across the country, LaParo and colleagues (2000) found that general education teachers are less likely to call a child or a child's family before or after school begins. Other practices that are used less frequently by teachers or schools include shortening the school days in the beginning of school year, meeting with the teachers of sending or receiving agencies to discuss about a specific child or about curriculum, or kindergarten teacher visiting preschool classrooms (La Paro et al., 2000; Ruthbun & Hausken, 2001; Schulting et al., 2005; LaParo et al., 2003).

Usefulness of recommended practices. Several studies have asked preschool and kindergarten teachers about their views on usefulness or effectiveness of recommended practices. The majority of the teachers answered that they found kindergarten transition practices to be helpful (La Paro et al., 2003; Pianta et al, 2001). According to the study which asked 3,595 kindergarten teachers to tell whether they think each of 21 kindergarten transition practices listed is a good idea, every practice was validated by at least 48% of the teachers as a good idea. Among the 21 practices listed in the survey, 'call child after' was the practice being endorsed by the lowest percentage of teachers (47.63%) while 'talk with parent after school' being considered

as a good idea by most teachers (97.33%) (Pianta et al, 1999). Another study by Forest and colleagues (2004) which included parents, preschool teachers, and kindergarten teachers of 3 children with autism found that 17 kindergarten transition practices out of 25 listed were viewed as important by all three groups of participants.

Effect of implementing recommended practices. Despite the positive views on the usefulness of the recommended practices for facilitating smooth kindergarten transition, empirical evidence of implementation of the practices are very limited (Rosenkoetter, et al., 2009). However, when implemented, kindergarten transition practices brought positive child and family outcomes such as increased parent involvement, positive kindergarten teachers' perception on children, and better child academic outcomes. In terms of impact on parent involvement, Ruthban and Hausken (2001) investigated the relationship between specific kindergarten transition activities with parent participation in activities held at schools throughout the kindergarten year. According to the result, calling or sending home information about the kindergarten program, hosting pre-enrollment visits for parents and children, letting preschool children visit future classrooms were identified as effective practices to facilitate more active parent involvement. Although visiting children's homes and shortening the school days were reported to be least frequently used practices by teachers, the teachers noted that those practices brought more parent attendance at music/art events and more regular parent volunteers in the classrooms.

Kindergarten transition practices can also positively influence kindergarten teachers' perception on children which is an important factor for children's school adjustment and performances. According to a research study (LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2007), implementation

of kindergarten transition practices in preschools positively influenced kindergarten teachers' perceptions on children. Specifically, interaction between preschool and kindergarten teachers about a child or curricula positively contributed to kindergarten teachers' perceptions on children's social competence and behavior problems.

The positive impact of utilizing recommended practices for kindergarten transition can be found from children's academic outcomes (Schulting et al, 2005). The impact of kindergarten transition practices implemented at school level was a significant predictor of children's academic achievement measured at the end of kindergarten. The influence of kindergarten transition practices had remained effective on children's academic achievement even after considering the influence of other factors such as family's socio-economic status and other demographic factors. In addition, school-level transition practices such as parent and children visit kindergarten transition classroom before school start were a significant predictor for parent-initiated school involvement.

In terms of the degree of benefit from implementation of kindergarten transition practices, children with more diverse backgrounds and needs are found to benefit more than their peers without diverse backgrounds. Stronger effects of using kindergarten transition practices on children's outcomes were observed from that of children from low and middle SES families (Schulting et al, 2005). Another study (LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2007) found that children who are African American and whose mothers had lower educational levels benefit more from implementation of kindergarten transition practices.

Factors affecting implementation of recommended practices. Despite the importance of and the positive evidences of implementing kindergarten transition practices, many teachers

are facing barriers in utilizing the practices (Rosenkoetter et al., 2009). Several factors affecting teachers' implementation of kindergarten transition practices were identified from the current literature. The first factor is Teacher Training or Educational Background.

Kindergarten teachers with early childhood training or primary certification tend to implement more kindergarten transition practices such as holding more formal orientation for parents and making direct contact with parents (Nelson, 2004). Moreover, teachers with specialized training in transition were reported to use more kindergarten transition practices than those without the training (Early et al., 2001).

The second factor that influences teacher implementation of recommended practices is Characteristics of Schools and Classrooms such as location (urban, suburban, rural), class size, ethnicity/race of children, number of student eligible for ELL services, and socio-economic status of families of the children. It is reported that the number of kindergarten transition practices utilized by kindergarten teachers decreases for schools that are located in urban settings with higher number of children who are minority, ELL learners, and who are from low SES families, (Pianta et al., 1999). Furthermore, teachers who have larger class sizes implemented fewer kindergarten transition practices both targeting individual or the whole group (Early et al., 2001).

The third factor is Late Distribution of the Class List which is one of the major barriers for implementing kindergarten transition practices identified by kindergarten teachers (LaParo et al., 2003). More than half of the 3,595 kindergarten teachers indicated that the class list was generated too late which prevented them from implementing more practices to facilitate smooth kindergarten transition (Pianta et al., 1999). This was reported more often by the teachers

working in urban settings with more students who are minority, and who are from high poverty areas (Pianta et al., 1999).

Lack of Funding is the fourth factor that influences the level and frequency of kindergarten practices used by teachers. Many teachers indicated that working during the summer before school start is critical for implementing recommended practices. However, most of them found it challenging because working during summer is not supported by schools or districts due to lack of funding (LaParo et al., 2003).

Another factor identified by the teachers as impacting their implementation was Family-Related Barriers (Pianta et al., 1999). Kindergarten teachers said they were discouraged from using kindergarten transition practices because families are not interested or not easy to reach, teachers did not feel safe to visit children's homes, and parents do not bring their child to school (LaParo et al., 2003; Pianta et al., 1999). Specially, this barrier becomes more serious when schools are located in urban setting, have more ELL students, and have increased number of low income families.

Lastly, Having a Child with Disabilities in the Classroom was another factor that may influence teachers' utilization of kindergarten transition practices (LaParo, Pianta, & Cox, 2000). Teachers who have children with disabilities in their classrooms tend to use more practices before school started and are more involved in community coordination. Specific practices used more often by the teachers who have children with disabilities in the classrooms include sending a letter to or talking with families before school started, holding an open house before the first day of the kindergarten, and participating in kindergarten registration meeting.

Despite the positive impact of using kindergarten transition practices, there is a gap between the ideal and reality of kindergarten transition. For instance, many teachers are currently implementing the practices that are not for building relationships between the key players such as preschool teacher and kindergarten teacher or preschool and kindergarten (La Paro et al., 2003; Pianta et al., 1999). Moreover, many teachers noted that they are not participating in comprehensive transition planning and tend to implement practices with less numbers of barriers (Nelson, 2004; Pianta et al., 1999).

Although most practices currently used by teachers do not facilitate establishing relationships, many kindergarten teachers are aware of the importance of family-school connection in kindergarten transition (Jewett et al., 1998). Furthermore, many teachers report that they are making efforts to create stronger connection between family and school by implementing kindergarten transition practices (Pianta et al., 1999). The following section will focus on family-school connections and will provide a review of current literature on family involvement in kindergarten transition.

Family School Connection

Family involvement has been identified as a critical element for accomplishing successful kindergarten transition (Dockett & Perry, 2001; Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003). Therefore, many schools and teachers recognize the role of families in facilitating kindergarten transition and try to implement practices that foster family involvement (Jewett et al., 1998; Nelson, 2004). The most frequently identified practices in use include 1) sending home flyers, 2) holding an open house, and 3) invite children and families to visit kindergarten classrooms (Pianta, Cox, Taylor, & Early, 1999).

Families also recognize the importance of their involvement in their child's kindergarten transition process. Most parents want to share responsibilities for preparing their child for kindergarten and majority of the families are willing to work with their children at home (Fowler, 1988). Moreover, families often hold high expectations for their children and try to support their child to be ready for kindergarten by providing as many learning opportunities as possible at home (Bernett & Taylor, 2009; Diamond, Regan, & Bandyk, 2000; LaParo, Kraft-Sayre, & Pianta, 2003). The activities families carry out at home to prepare their child for kindergarten include teaching school related skills, talking with other parents, talking about the expectations held for kindergarten, and letting children watch educational television programs. Furthermore, when the opportunities are provided, schools report that the majority of their families do participate and the families in turn report that they feel that the activities are actually helpful in getting their child ready for kindergarten (LaParo, Kraft-Sayre, & Pianta, 2003).

Despite these positive reports, families, as they comment on what they are experiencing, continue to indicate a need for improvement in terms of the number and types of opportunities that are provided. For example, Nelson (2004) found that most schools are not providing a comprehensive transition plan in which the primary focus is on facilitating the active exchange of information between schools and families. In addition, preschool and kindergarten teachers report being less likely to implement those practices that require more intense personal attention and are more time intense such as visiting children's homes and calling individual child (LoCasale et al., 2008; Pianta et al., 1999). Yet, families have identified visits to kindergarten classrooms, and attending kindergarten information meetings as those most beneficial and helpful to the family and the child (McIntyre, Eckert, Fiese, DiGennaro, & Wildenger, 2007). In addition, the majority of families with a child entering kindergarten reported wanting more

information about kindergarten including information on what kinds of activities are available for their children from kindergarten teachers, what are the expectations in kindergarten held by the teachers, who will be the teacher for their children, and what specific strategies they can use at home to support their children. Although families want to be involved in their child's kindergarten transition process, they face many barriers in their ability to participate in the kindergarten transition activities which were offered by schools or teachers including issues such as conflict with work or own school schedules, lack of transportations and child care support, and feeling uncomfortable because they did not know other people at the child's school (La Paro et al, 2003).

Teachers and families are recognizing each other as critical participants and the importance of family involvement in kindergarten transition (Pianta et al, 2001). Furthermore, two of the national professional organizations (i.e., National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Division for Early Childhood for the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC/CEC) clearly state that implementation of strategies to enhance families' level of involvement in their child's education including kindergarten transition as a recommended practice. Moreover, National Early Childhood Transition Center (NAETC) recently published a technical report on the results of reviewing research studies in early childhood transition and recommended a list of promising practices for supporting families in early childhood transition process between home to preschool, preschool to kindergarten and kindergarten to first grade (Rosenkoetter et al., 2009). The practices were the ones validated by family members and those include sharing information about future placement, transferring records between sending and receiving agencies, connecting with other families, providing support that is more individualized, offering parent training opportunities and providing continuous support after moving to a new

placement. Although the field's understanding has expanded, exactly how the level of family involvement might influence their child's transition to kindergarten and early adjustment is still limited. Furthermore, the discussion on which strategies are more effective in facilitating active family involvement in kindergarten transition is a gap that needs to be investigated. Therefore, this recommendation can only be considered a promising practice rather than evidence-based at this time given the limited research based evidence available.

Currently, when we look to related areas of research, it is clear that the importance of family involvement in their child's education has a direct positive relationship to children's educational outcomes including higher grades (Fehrmann, Keith, & Reimer, 1987) and higher scores in math achievement test (Epstein, 1986), higher high school completion rate (Rumberger, 1995), and higher level of homework completion rate (Epstein & Becker, 1982). In addition, Marcon (1999) reported that preschool children demonstrated positive developments in all domain areas, including social competence and achieved a higher level of mastery in early basic school skills including learning related social skills including work habits when their parents are involved in education. Another recently published study by Mendez (2010) on parent involvement of children attending Head Start program revealed that the relationship between parent and teacher influences children's school readiness outcomes such as language and math competences. In terms of social competence, McWayne and colleagues (2004) found that children whose parents promote learning at home and maintain regular contact with their child's school demonstrated better engagement with peers and teachers.

Need for Study

As noted earlier, most teachers agree with the importance of family involvement in kindergarten transition and the practices which focus on encouraging family involvement are those that are most frequently reported as implemented from among the array of recommended practices. Moreover, when recommended practices are implemented, positive outcomes for child as well as family can be expected.

Recently, NECTC published a report on review of research studies on early childhood transition between 1990 and 2006 (Rosenkoetter et al., 2009). Out of 51 studies reviewed, the majority of the studies investigated kindergarten transition or included children who are entering kindergarten as participants. The major conclusion and implications from the report is that the field is in need of more empirical research that are data-based which aims to identify effective transition practices and that focus on the family and child outcomes produced by implementing the practices.

While the importance of family involvement is a logical focus for supporting successful transition and adjustment to kindergarten given the strong research base for the importance of family involvement in their children's education in general, the empirical evidence documenting the impact of family involvement on kindergarten transition specifically is still very limited as noted by NECTC's report. Moreover, more studies specifically focusing on families' experiences of kindergarten transition are in need to be able to provide more individualized support.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the influences of family involvement in kindergarten transition activities on children's early school adjustment. The specific research questions to be addressed are:

1) When other factors are taken into consideration, is parent participation in kindergarten activities a predictor for children's early school adjustment?

2) Do families perceive that their participation in kindergarten transition activities affect their child's early school adjustment?

3) What barriers do families encounter as they participate in various kindergarten transition activities?

4) What can schools do to better support families in helping their children's transition to kindergarten and early school adjustment?

Method

This study utilized a mixed methods approach (Cresswell, 2003) of combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to answer the research questions. Many social phenomena cannot be fully understood or explained using a single research methodology (i.e., qualitative or quantitative) because of the complexity of the phenomena. Therefore, various data collection approaches and analyses must be conducted to gain a more complete understanding. A mixed methods design can be an optimal method for investigating a particular phenomenon since it provides the advantage of addressing both confirmatory and exploratory research questions concurrently (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). In addition, a mixed method design can provide stronger evidence for drawing conclusions and the results may be generalized to broader contexts (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Thus, a mixed method research design approach was considered appropriate for the current study as the aim of this study is to understand a complex social phenomenon – kindergarten transition. Specifically, in the current study, quantitative methods (or Analysis 1) were utilized to determine whether family participation in kindergarten transition activities serves as a strong predictor of children’s early school adjustment (Research Question 1). Qualitative methods (Analysis 2), which utilizes in-depth semi structured interviews with a small, select subset of families, was used to explore potential explanations for the results obtained from Analysis 1 and to more fully understand the nature of family participation in transition activities (Research Questions 2 through 4).

The quantitative data analyzed for Analysis 1 and the participants of qualitative component were drawn from an existing database of a larger research study, the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) School Readiness Project. Therefore, a brief explanation about the KSDE

school readiness project and larger data-set is provided in the following section. Descriptions of the participants and data collection and analysis procedures are organized by Analysis 1- quantitative analysis and Analysis 2 – qualitative analysis, for the study in the following section.

KSDE School Readiness Project

Overview and participants. The purpose of the KSDE School Readiness Project is to collect data on three critical stakeholders related to school readiness – child, family and school. The collected information is intended to be used to support children’s school success as well as to better understand the factors contributing to children’s school readiness. Since 2004 when the state of Kansas first conducted statewide data collection, state-wide child and program assessment data collection has been completed on an annual basis using a variety of measures focused on child, family, and community/school factors. Although the results from the analyses of 2005 and 2006 kindergarten readiness data revealed that the majority of children who reside in the state of Kansas enter kindergarten ready to be successful, a significant number of children were reported to still be not fully prepared. Thus, in 2007, in order to the attempt to better understand the issue of children at risk for school failure, modifications were made to the data collection process through collaborative efforts among three institutions, the University of Kansas, the Kansas Health Institute, and the Kansas State Department of Education, and referred to as the Kansas School Readiness Project.

The participants of the project were children entering kindergarten in the state of Kansas as of the fall of 2007 as well as their families. To recruit the participants, the Kansas Athletic Classification system was used. That is, each school district is classified according to the size, with 1A being the smallest and 6A being the largest. For the purposes of the school readiness

project, the 5A and 6A districts were combined since several districts in the categories had high schools in both size categories. To complete the stratified random selection, 25% of the school districts in each of the five Kansas Athletic Classification categories were randomly selected, resulting in a total of 76 school districts (i.e., 23 – 1A, 14 – 2A, 14 – 3A, 14 – 4A, and 11 – 5 & 6 A). For each of these 76 school districts, 25% (or one in the case of the smaller districts) of their total elementary schools were randomly selected to recruit participants. Specifically, the principals of the selected elementary schools were asked to distribute consent forms to the parents of the kindergarten children during the first quarter of the 2007/2008 school year. Of the returned consent forms, the classroom teachers selected ten students from one of their sessions (i.e., morning or afternoon) as participants for observation and assessments.

A total of 1,988 beginning kindergarteners were selected across 264 classrooms. The sample consisted of roughly equal numbers of males (50.9%) and females (49.1%). In addition, 13% of the children had Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs), 8.7% of the children were receiving English as a Second Language (ESL) services and 49.6% were receiving free or free and reduced lunch. Over 75% of the sample was Caucasian (76.7%), 13.6% Hispanic, 6.2% African American, 1.5% Native American, and 1.2% Asian/Pacific Islanders.

Measurement. To collect the data on child, family and classroom, four measurements were used. The first two measurements – the Teacher Beliefs Survey and the Kindergarten Teacher Practices Survey - specifically focused on collecting information about schools and classrooms. The Teacher Beliefs Survey is a questionnaire developed by KSDE asking kindergarten teachers to describe (1) their philosophical beliefs about skills needed for kindergarteners to be successful in schools, (2) strategies to support children entering kindergarten with delays, and (3) critical

features of the classroom environment. The second data collection tool, the Kindergarten Teacher Practices Survey (KTP), is a questionnaire assessing classroom practices in domains of physical environment, social context and instructional context. The teachers were asked to complete the survey within the first 6 weeks of school.

The third measure, the Kansas Early Learning Inventory (KELI), focused on child developmental progress or child achievement and was a teacher rated scale. It was developed by the Kansas early childhood experts in collaboration with Riverside Publishing Company that developed the Qualls Early Learning Inventory (QELI) (Qualls, Hoover, Dunbar, & Frisbie, 2003). QELI is a measure completed by classroom teachers on each student's development based on observations made over time in six key areas of development that are closely related to school success – General Knowledge, Math Concepts, Oral communication, Written language, Work Habits, and Attentive Behavior. QELI was reported with good reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .97$) for the overall measure with 44 items and reported to inform valid information about children's cognitive behaviors (Skúlason, 2004). In addition to the six areas of the QELI, Physical Development, Symbolic Development, and Social Emotional Development areas were added by the Kansas early childhood experts to form the KELI. Although the three domains did not undergo a formal validation, they are considered as widely accepted domains for measuring school performances (Hair et al., 2006; Weigel & Martin, 2006) and were vetted by a group of Kansas early childhood experts as noted earlier.

The fourth and last measure, parent survey, was focused on parent's perspective on school readiness. The parent survey asks various questions related to school readiness, such as

prior childcare experiences of the child, participation in state funded early education programs, home literacy activities, and affordability of health insurance.

Procedures Analysis 1: Quantitative Methods

Analysis 1, as noted earlier utilized quantitative methodology to investigate the relationship between families' participation in kindergarten transition activities and children's early adjustment to school. The research question addressed in this analysis is When other factors are taken into consideration, is parent participation in kindergarten activities a predictor for children's early school adjustment? Table 1 provides the list of measures and what information gathered from each measure to answer the research question.

Participants. To address the Analysis 1 research question, a specific subset of participants was selected from the larger database of participants from the KSDE 2007/2008 school readiness project. Specifically, from the 1,988 participants of the KSDE project, two inclusion criteria were used to select the participants for Analysis 1 of the current study. That is, children were included if: (a) their parents completed and returned the parent survey, and (b) their teachers completed and returned the KELI child achievement measure. A total of 1,034 children met the inclusionary criteria and were included in the current study. The participant sample consisted of children with a mean age of 67.47 months ($SD=4.11$) at the time of data collection with 47.3% girls. Children came from a variety of geographic locations throughout the state of Kansas with 35.8% from northeast counties, 33.4% from south central counties, 19.2% from western, and 11.6% from southeast. Over 80% of the children ($n=844$) were White/Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino, while 10.2% of the children ($n=105$) were Hispanic/Latino, 4.9% ($n=51$) was African American or Black, 1.3% ($n=13$) were American Indian/ Alaskan Native, and 1.2% ($n=12$) was

Asian. Forty-five percent of the children in the study were eligible for free/reduced lunch services and 44.1% (n=456). In addition, 71 children were identified as currently receiving services for English Language Learners (ELL). The same number of children (n=71) were reported with the primary language used at home is other than English and Spanish with the highest category noted (81.7%) followed by German (11.3%). Although their primary language used is not English, the child may not be identified as eligible for ELL services based on their language proficiency level. Approximately thirteen percent of the children were reported to have an identified disability, with speech language (7.2%) and developmental delay (5.1%) being the highest categories of all. The categories used in the federal law for determining eligibility for special education were applied to this study. Table 2 shows detailed information about the participants. This representation of the sample is considered accurately reflecting current demographic of the state of Kansas when compared with federal report (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Compared to the federal report, gender distribution, composition of ethnic groups, and language use were very similar to the sample of this study. For instance, the percentage of people who were identified as white/non-Hispanic in the state of Kansas was 86.1% which was followed by Hispanic was 7.0%. Furthermore, the state of Kansas was reported to have 50.6% of females and the percentage of people using other language than English as primary language was 8.7%.

Measurement. All data for addressing the research question for Analysis 1 (quantitative analysis) of the current study were collected as a part of KSDE school readiness project. Of the four measures used for KSDE project (i.e., Teacher Beliefs Survey, Kindergarten Teacher Practices Survey, KELI, Parent Survey), only two measures (i.e., KELI, Parent Survey) were used in addressing the research question 1.

Parent survey. In the beginning of the school year, the parents of the KSDE School Readiness Project completed and returned a survey which was comprised of 17 questions on the factors related to kindergarten transition and school success. The KSDE survey asked the parents to respond about their children's home literacy experience, participation in two stated funded early education programs (i.e., Parents as Teachers and Head Start), prior childcare experiences, and health status. In addition, families were asked a question regarding affordability of health insurance. For the purposes of the current analysis, the parent's responses to two questions of the 17 questions were used, as they are seen to be the most relevant to understanding the transition and early adjustment to kindergarten. The first question asked parents to identify child care experiences within the last 12 months for the child who entered kindergarten. The parents were specifically asked to identify their child's experience according to 6 different types of child care settings: (a) Not in child care, (b) Family child care, (c) Relative care, (d) Preschool, (e) Paid caregiver, and (f) Center-based child care. The parents were asked to report all the experiences that apply.

The second question asked parents to identify the kindergarten transition activities in which they participated. The parents were specifically asked to indicate all of the activities they participated in from a list of 4 activities: (a) Contacted the school to see who would be my child's teacher, (b) Met with the kindergarten teacher in person, (c) Took my child to visit the school before the first day of classes, by arranging this with the school, and (d) Talked with my child about what to expect in kindergarten.

Child developmental status. As noted earlier, the KSDE School readiness project utilized the KELI as completed by the child's classroom teachers based on their observations to report

the developmental status of individual children. The classroom teachers completed and returned the KELI within the first six weeks of school. The KELI is composed of nine developmental domains, and specific key skills that are considered to be important for a child to be successful in kindergarten are listed under each domain. Using a Likert scale (i.e., (a) never, (b) rarely, (c) sometimes, and (d) often), the teachers were asked to evaluate how often each child demonstrated skills listed under each developmental domain. The list of skills for each domain can be found from Table 3.

According to a study (Epley, 2009) which utilized exploratory factor analysis using summed scores for each KELI domain, social-behavior performances and academic performance factors were identified as highly correlated ($r=.68$, $p<.001$). In her study, social-behavior performance included Social Emotional Development, Attentive Behavior, and Work Habits domains while academic performance was defined by General Knowledge, Math Concepts, Symbolic Development, Written Language, and Oral Communication. However, Physical Development domain failed to obtain high correlation with other factors. Based on the report, this study used the same categorization in defining social adjustment and academic adjustment. In addition, Physical Development was dropped from further analysis.

Child and family demographic measures. In addition to the two items from the KSDE Parent Survey and the items from the KELI measure, basic demographic information on the child and family were obtained from the Kansas Individual Data on Students (KIDS) system which has been established to collect a range of demographic data, such as child age, gender, race/ethnicity, disability, and language status of every student (kindergarten through 12th grade) in Kansas. In

addition, family information regarding free/reduced lunch eligibility, primary language used at home, and ethnicity were collected. Table 4 provides definitions of the demographic variables.

Analytic procedure. To understand the children's developmental status and the pattern of the participation of the parents in kindergarten transition activities listed in the parent survey, descriptive analysis using the SPSS program was conducted. The next step involved regression analysis using the ENTER model to address the first research question of the study. Each of these procedures is describe in the sections below first by describing the process of data screening including a brief discussion on handling of missing values and then followed by a thorough description of the data analysis procedures.

Data screening. Prior to descriptive and regression analysis, two data sets (i.e., child and family demographic information data and KSDE school readiness project data) were merged into a single SPSS data file and checked to allow for removal of cases with duplicate student and family IDs. Once the check on the merged data files was completed, the data that meets the inclusion criteria was selected. Reviewing of each variable to be included in the analysis was conducted to make sure each is measured on an appropriate type of scale.

Eligibility for Free/Reduced Lunch Service (as an indicator of SES), Ethnicity/Race, Prior Educational Experiences, Geographic Location, Child Age, Child's Disability Status and Child Gender were the child and family demographic variables identified to be the best likely predictor variables for influencing children's early school adjustment. These factors were selected due to the strong evidence in literature of their impact on child's school adjustment and learning outcomes (Boethel, 2004; Ladd & Price, 1987; Peisner-Feinberg, Burchinal, Clifford, Culkin, Howes, Kagan et al., 2001; Rosenkoetter, Schroeder, Rous, Hains, Shaw, & McCormick, 2009).

If an independent variable was not coded appropriately, “Dummy coded variables” (i.e., Child Gender – 0 = girl, 1 = boy, Free/Reduced Lunch Eligibility - Not eligible for free/reduced lunch = 0, Eligible for free/reduced lunch = 1, Child’s Disability Status – 0 = no IEP, 1 = has IEP, Ethnicity/Race – 0 = other, 1 = White/Non-Hispanic) were used to recode the variable. Next, a frequency analysis on all independent variables was conducted to identify missing data. In addition, each independent variable’s scatterplot was reviewed to determine and exclude outliers.

Across the domains of the KELI, the numbers of specific skills listed under each domain varied. For example, while eight skills were listed under the Social Emotional Development domain, only seven items were measured under the Work Habits domain. In addition, several skills listed under three domains (General Knowledge, Written Language, and Math Concepts) were measured with 3- point scales while others were measured with 4-point scales. To account for these variances across KELI domains, each individual child’s mean scores of each KELI domain were converted into standardized scores (z scores). In addition, to evaluate the children’s early school adjustments, the average scores across domains related to social or academic adjustment were calculated. As noted earlier, the decision on how to cluster the KELI domains into academic and social adjustment was done based on the study by Epley (2009) which conducted a factor analysis on academic performance and social performance. Based on the result of the study, current study used same clustering to define academic and social adjustment.

Data Analysis. Multiple regression analysis was used to analyze the quantitative data and answer the research question. Multiple regression is considered an appropriate method for this

study because the study (a) aims to investigate the linear relationship between independent variables (i.e., Free/Reduced Lunch Eligibility, Ethnicity/Race, Prior Educational Experiences, Geographic Location, Child Age, Child's Disability Status and Gender of child, Number of Transition Activities Parent participated) and a dependent variable (i.e., Child's Early Social and Academic Adjustment in school), (b) dependent variable was measured using an ordinal scale which is a type of continuous scale, and (c) independent variables were measured using an ordinal scale or can be reorganized into nominal scales by using dummy coded variables (Brace, Kemp, & Snelgar, 2006).

After considering the different data entry methods that can be used in multiple regression, this study used the ENTER method in which all independent variables were simultaneously entered for analysis. This method is appropriate to use when there is no theoretical basis for entering any particular variable prior to others (Wampold & Freund, 1987). Due to the fact that limited evidence has been reported on the impact of specific variables on children's early school adjustment, the ENTER method was considered appropriate for this study.

The first step was to assess the Pearson Correlation between the independent variables and the dependent variables (the average scores across KELI domains for social and academic adjustments) to determine the independent variables to be entered into the regression equation. As a result, Child Gender, Child Age, Eligibility for Free/Reduced Lunch Service, and Child's Disability Status were identified as the factors to be significantly related to Children's Social Adjustment scores. In addition to all four factors that were also significantly related to social adjustment, and ELL status and Prior Educational Experiences were significantly related.

The next step was to enter the independent variables that were shown as significantly related to Academic or Social Adjustment through Pearson correlation analysis into the regression analysis. To determine whether family participation in kindergarten transition activity is a predictor for children's early school adjustment, all independent variables that were significantly related to each dependent variable (Social Adjustment and Academic Adjustment) were entered into BLOCK 1 while the number of kindergarten transition activities families participated in was entered into separate BLOCK.

Procedures Analysis 2: Qualitative Methods

Analysis 2 employed qualitative methods to gain a better understanding of the perspectives of the parents on their child's kindergarten transition and their involvement in the process. Specifically, more information was collected regarding how families felt regarding the level of influences of their participation in kindergarten transition activities on their child's early school adjustments. Specific research questions addressed in this analysis and the data sources to answer the research questions are listed in Table 5.

Participants. The participants for the qualitative data collection were recruited from the parents of the children who participated in the KSDE school readiness project. An addendum to the original project application, a cover letter explaining the purpose of the interview, and a consent form were submitted to request an approval from the Human Subjects Committee of Lawrence (HSCL). Once HSCL's approval was obtained, the list of the schools that participated in the KSDE school readiness project was reviewed to identify potential sites for recruitment of participants. Eight schools were selected representing various geographic locations as well as different size districts. The 8 principals and the 8 kindergarten teachers of

the 8 schools were contacted by the researcher via e-mails and phone calls explaining the purpose and procedures of the research. In addition, copies of the cover letter and parent consent form were sent to all of the principals and teachers to review before agreeing to support the recruitment of participants. Once the principals and the teachers agreed to support the study, the kindergarten teachers distributed the cover letters and consent forms to the appropriate parents. All teachers from _ schools that were contacted agreed to distribute the letters and consent forms.

As a result, seven families agreed to participate. All participants were biological mothers of the children. Mean age of the mothers was 32 years with range of 26 to 42. All of the mothers identified themselves as 'white/non-Hispanic' in terms of ethnicity and primary language used at home was English. The highest educational level of the mothers varied somewhat with four having a bachelor's degree, two with graduate degrees and one mother with a high school diploma. One mother lived in a large metropolitan area with population greater than 200,000, one live in urbanized area with population between 50,000 and 2000,000. All of the other mothers indicated living in town or small city with population size between 2,500 and 50,000. Three families indicated their household income as over \$75,000, the other three families said between \$40,000 and \$49,999 and one did not identify their income level. In terms of employment status, three worked full time while the other four were stay-at-home mothers. There was only one boy who was the only child with identified disability of hearing impairment. At the time when the interviews were conducted, the mean age of the children was 76.44 months. Among the 5 children whose mothers identified the birth order of their child, two were first born including one who is the only child, one was the second, and two was the third (Table 6).

Data collection. Each mother who agreed to be interviewed returned the consent form with their contact information and preferred times to be contacted such that an interview could be scheduled. The researcher contacted each participant and discussed a convenient date, time and preference in terms of the method for conducting the interview (e.g., face to face or phone interview).

Each interview was conducted as a semi-structured conversation in which the researcher posed a question and used follow-up probes to gather information to enhance the understanding of the parents' perspective. Each interview took 30 – 40 minutes on average. To facilitate the accuracy of recording of the interview responses for data analysis, each interview was audio taped and subsequently transcribed. Upon request, a copy of the audiotape of the interview was provided for one of the interviewees. The participants' identity remained confidential and they were identified by a code name only for the research purpose.

An interview protocol to facilitate the semi-structured interview process was developed. The interview protocol included the following open-ended questions: (a) How did your child's kindergarten year go?, (b) Describe for me what you did to prepare your child for their kindergarten year?, (c) Describe for me what your child's teacher or school did to prepare your child for the kindergarten year?, (d) What could your child's teacher or school have done this past fall to make your child's transition to kindergarten smoother?, and (e) If you did not get a chance to take advantage of activities the school provided to support your child's transition, what prevented you from participating in these activities? The protocol served only as a guideline and additional follow-up questions were asked as needed for further clarification. During each interview, field notes were made to support the researcher's understanding of the parent's intent

and enhance the clarity of the transcripts. In addition, the researcher listened to the interview tapes immediately after each interview to organize the field notes and to make additional notes to support accurate transcriptions. The list of questions was reviewed and additional questions or comments that arose during the previous interview were added to the list of the questions in preparation for the next mother's interview.

Analytic procedure. To be able to analyze the interviews, each audio taped interview was transcribed word for word. Each transcript was sent to the interviewees for review and feedback. All participants except one who didn't return the feedback sheet approved the transcript with minor changes. Once transcriptions and reviews by the interviewees were completed, each transcript was read carefully and coded by the researcher. The constant comparative method (Glaser, 1965; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used for coding or development of categories. Through this method, the differences and similarities of the categories and codes across interviews are studied by comparing them with the ultimate aims to generate a theory. According to Glaser (1965), constant comparative method consists of four stages: (a) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (b) integrating categories and their properties, (c) delimiting the theory, and (d) writing the theory (p.439). The current analysis only focuses on the first two stages of the method since the main purpose of the study is to develop initial common categories and themes rather than on developing grounded theory. For effective and accurate data analysis, various analytic options suggested by Maxwell (2005) were implemented. First, field notes were used to facilitate the accuracy and clarity of the transcript. Second, the researcher wrote memos during data analysis, which has been shown to facilitate analytic thinking and insights. Third, displays such as matrices or tables were used to support the researcher understanding and organization of the data.

After reviewing the transcript, the interview with Dana (the fourth interview) was coded first because it contained the most comprehensive information. The comments made by the participant that were related to the research questions were highlighted and categorized during the reading of the transcript. The next transcript which is the first interview in the sequence of interviews was carefully coded and compared with the categories that were already identified as emerging themes from the first interview coded. A final set of themes were identified through reading all transcripts and constantly comparing the categories as they emerged from each transcript with already identified categories. The first two transcripts that were coded in the beginning of the process were reviewed once again to identify comments that supported and/or illustrated the new categories that were identified by coding later transcripts.

Trustworthiness. To increase the credibility of the results, the three specific strategies suggested by Maxwell (2005) were implemented, respondent validation, triangulation, and research debriefing. For respondent validation, each transcript was sent back to the interviewees for review and provision of comments or feedback. All respondents validated the transcripts which indicate that the transcript was reflecting what was mentioned during the interview. Triangulation strategy was implemented by collecting data from multiple parents and parents from different geographic locations. In consideration of the possible researcher bias, efforts were made before conducting interviews to identify possible bias or specific expectations of the researcher. In addition, the result categories/themes were presented in a debriefing session between the researcher with a senior researcher after completing the coding and analysis process.

Results

The purpose of this study is to understand the potential impact of a family's involvement in kindergarten transition activities on their children's early school adjustment. Four primary questions were addressed in the research; a) When other factors are taken into consideration, is family participation in kindergarten transition activities a predictor for children's early school adjustment?, b) Do families perceive that their participation in kindergarten transition activities positively affects their child's early school adjustment?, c) What barriers do families encounter as they participate in various kindergarten transition activities? , and d) What can schools do to better support families in helping their children's transition to kindergarten and early school adjustment? A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was implemented to address the research questions. In the following sections, the results from quantitative analysis to answer the first research question will be reported which will be followed by the result of the qualitative analysis addressing the other three research questions.

Procedures Analysis 1: Quantitative Results

The first procedure, or quantitative analysis, of this study investigates if the family's participation in kindergarten activities functions as a predictor for children's early adjustment to school. To answer this question, descriptive analysis was conducted and multiple regression modeling was used to analyze the data using the SPSS program. The descriptive analysis results are presented first, followed by the regression analysis.

Descriptive analysis. Descriptive analysis was conducted on the results obtained from Kansas Early Learning Inventory (KELI) completed by the teachers and the family's responses to the questions on the parent survey addressing the family's level of participation in four

kindergarten transition activities. The purpose of the descriptive analysis is to provide a picture of the characteristics of the participants in terms of the children's developmental status as measured by KELI and the types and level of kindergarten activities in which the children's families participated.

Child developmental status. As described earlier, each classroom teacher randomly selected 10 children and completed the KELI teacher report assessment tool on each of the 10 children within the first six weeks of the child's kindergarten year. A mean score was calculated across all children for each of the KELI domains (i.e., General Knowledge, Written Language, Oral Communication, Math Concepts, Symbolic Development, Social Emotional Development, Attentive Behavior, and Work Habits). Table 1 provides these mean scores. Across the sample of children, the 3 domains of Work Habits, Oral Communication, and Social Emotional Development, showed higher mean scores than other domains. The lowest domain mean score of 1.47 was noted in the Written Language domain. In addition, the average scores across domains measuring social or academic adjustment were calculated. For Social Adjustment, the average score across the KELI domains of Work Habits, Attentive Behavior, and Social Emotional Development for each child was calculated. An average score was calculated for General Knowledge, Written Language, Oral Communication, Math Concepts, and Symbolic Development domains for each child's Academic Adjustment. The social adjustment mean score (2.45) was higher than the mean of academic adjustment (2.08). When compared with the mean scores of national sample which comprised of over 2,000 kindergarteners, the children included in this study showed very similar mean scores for 5 domains of QELI except for Written Language (Table 7).

Family participation. One of the major interests of this study is the participation of families in kindergarten transition activities. Each family was asked to indicate whether or not they participated in each of the four kindergarten transition activities listed on the parent survey. The parent survey results were analyzed in two ways. First, the level of participation defined as the number of kindergarten transition activities in which the family reported a ‘yes’ which could range from 0 to 4. Thus, the first step was to calculate the total number for each family. The second part of the analysis was conducted to understand the types of activities in which the families participated. For each of the 4 kindergarten transition activities listed, the total across all the families was calculated.

Figure 1 presents the data for across all the families in terms of the number of activities in which they participated. The majority of the families participated in at least one kindergarten transition activity listed in the parent survey. Of the 1,034 families included in this study, only 11 families (1.1%) did not participate in any of the activities. The number of families that participated in all 4 activities was 371 (35.9%).

Figure 2 presents the data for the types of activities in which the families participated. ‘Talking with the child about what to expect in kindergarten’ was the most frequently the families implemented activity (n=982). This activity was followed by ‘Meeting with the kindergarten teacher in person’ (n=739) and ‘Taking their child to visit the school before the first day of classes by arranging a visit’ (n=673) in level of frequency. The kindergarten transition activity selected by the fewest families completing the survey was ‘Contacting the school to see who would be the child’s teacher’ with only 570 families (55.1%) reporting that they participated.

Regression analysis. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine whether the families' participation in kindergarten transition activities was a predictor for their children's early school adjustment. Correlation analysis was conducted to determine which predictors should be entered into regression analyses. Next, the selected predictors were divided into two unordered sets and entered into the regression model. The first set includes those predictors which were significantly correlated with each of two composite early school domains established. Specifically, a Social Adjustment composite score for each child was calculated as the average score across the KELI domains of Work Habits, Attentive Behavior, and Social Emotional Development. In the case of Academic Adjustment composite score was calculated by creating an average score for the domains of General Knowledge, Written Language, Oral Communication, Math Concepts and Symbolic Development. The second set of predictors included the Total Number of Kindergarten Transition Activities in which families participated.

Correlation analysis. Results of a Pearson Correlation analysis indicated that Child Age, Child Gender, Eligibility for Free/Reduced Lunch Services, and Child's Disability Status were significantly correlated with child's Social Adjustment composite scores (Table 8). In the case of Academic Adjustment, Child Age, Child Gender, Eligibility for Free/Reduced Lunch Services and Child's Disability Status were also found to be significantly correlated. In addition, English Language Learner (ELL) status, and the Prior Educational Experiences were also found to be significantly correlated for the academic adjustment factor. Furthermore, the children's Academic and Social Adjustment scores were significantly correlated ($r=.644, p<.01$). The variables that were significantly correlated were selected for use the multiple regression model for further analysis. Table 8 presents correlations for all variables.

Children's academic adjustment. Two multiple regression analyses were conducted to predict Children's Early Academic Adjustment. The first analysis included the six independent variables as predictors (i.e., Child Age, Child Gender, Child's Disability Status, Eligibility for Free/Reduced Lunch Services, ELL status, and Prior Educational Experiences) or set one. The result was significant with an $R^2 = .144$, adjusted $r^2 = .139$, $F(6,1012)=28.299$, $p<.01$. The second analysis which included the step two predictor or the number of kindergarten transition activities in which the families participated did not reach significance, $R^2=.003$, adjust $r^2=.003$, $F(1,1017)=3.555$, $p<.01$. Based on these results, the six independent variables of Child Age, Child Gender, Child's Disability Status, Eligibility for Free/Reduced Lunch Services, ELL status, and Prior Educational Experiences appeared to be better predictors of the Children's Early Academic Adjustment than the Number of Kindergarten Transition Activities in which the families participated.

Next, a multiple regression analysis was conducted with all six independent variables (Child Age, Child Gender, Eligibility for Free/Reduced Lunch Services, Child's Disability Status, ELL Status, and Prior Educational Experiences) and the variable of the Total Number of Kindergarten Transition Activities in which the families participated as predictors. The linear combination of the seven variables was significantly related to the children's early academic adjustment, $R^2=.145$, adjust $r^2=.139$, $F(7,1011)=24.538$, $p<.01$. The six independent variables significantly predict even after consider the influence of the variable Total Number of Kindergarten Transition Activities families participated with R^2 change = .142, $F(6,1011)=27.941$, $p<.01$. On the other hand, the prediction of the variable 'Total Number of Kindergarten Transition Activities in which the families participated' after the influences of other independent variables were taken into consideration was not significant with R^2 change

=.002, $F(1,1011)=1.83$, $p=.176$. Based on these results, the Total Number of Kindergarten Transition Activities families participated appears to offer little additional prediction beyond the contribution made by Child's Age, Child Gender, Child's Disability Status, Eligibility for Free/Reduced Lunch Services, ELL status, and Prior Educational Experiences to children's early academic adjustment.

Of the six predictors entered into the model, Eligibility for Free/Reduced Lunch Services was the most strongly related to children's early academic adjustment (bivariate correlations = -.221, $p<.01$). However, when the effects of the other five predictors were controlled, Child Age was most significantly correlated to children's early academic adjustment (partial correlation = .219, $p<.01$).

Children's social adjustment. The same procedure for conducting the multiple regression analyses on Academic Adjustment was completed to predict the children's early Social Adjustment. The first analysis, which included four independent variables that were significantly correlated with children's early social adjustment (i.e., Child Age, Child Gender, Child's Disability Status, and Eligibility for Free/Reduced Lunch Services), emerged as a significant model, $R^2 = .389$, $\text{adjust } r^2 = .148$, $F(4,1019)=45.371$, $p<.01$. However, the regression equation with the Total Number of Kindergarten Transition Activities in which the families participated did not show significant results, $R^2 = .000$, $\text{adjust } r^2 = .000$, $F(1,1022)=.065$, $p=.798$. Based on these results, Child Age, Child Gender, Child's Disability Status, and Lunch Services appeared to be better predictors of the children's social adjustment than the level of family participation in child kindergarten transition as measured by the Total Number of Kindergarten Transition Activities in which families engaged.

The second step was a multiple regression analysis with all five independent variables (i.e., Child Age, Child Gender, Child's Disability Status, Eligibility for Free/Reduced Lunch Services, Total Number of Kindergarten Transition Activities families participated). The linear combination of these five variables was significantly related to the children's social adjustment, $R^2=.151$, $\text{adjust } r^2=.147$, $F(1,1018)=36.311$, $p<.01$. Four independent variables significantly predict over and above the Total Number of Kindergarten Transition Activities in which the families participated with R^2 change = .151, $F(4,1018)=45.370$, $p<.01$. On the other hand, adding the variable Total Number of Kindergarten Transition Activities in which families participated did not make a significant change on the regression model with the other four predictors, R^2 change = .000, $F(1,1018)=.211.83$, $p=.646$. Based on these results, family participation in kindergarten transition activities appears to offer little additional predictive power beyond the contribution made by Child's Age, Child Gender, Child's Disability Status, and Eligibility for Free/Reduced Lunch Service to children's early Social Adjustment.

Of the four independent variables entered into the model, Child's Disability Status was the most strongly related to children's early social adjustment (bivariate correlations = $-.274$, $p<.01$, partial correlation = $-.274$, $p<.01$).

Procedures Analysis 2: Qualitative Results

To examine the current kindergarten transition process that families experience, interviews were conducted by the investigator with seven families who have sent their child to kindergarten in fall of 2007. The interview transcripts were analyzed and several key themes were identified. In the following section, the key themes identified are categorized into five sections: (a) current status of kindergarten transition, (b) perception of families on their involvement in the kindergarten transition, (c) barriers preventing families from participating in

kindergarten transition activities, (d) support schools can provide for families to encourage their participation in kindergarten transition, and (e) suggestions for other families as they send their child to kindergarten.

Current status. In the following section, the kindergarten transition experiences of the families are organized in five sub-categories: a) Prior educational experiences, b) Kindergarten readiness, c) Preparation at home, d) Preparation support provided by schools, and e) Early adjustment.

Prior educational experiences. A child's prior out of home educational experiences can influence his/her school adjustment (Magnuson, Meyers, Ruhm & Waldfogel, 2004). Therefore, the question on the type(s) and duration of educational experiences each child had before entering kindergarten was addressed. All of the families reported on their child's prior out of home educational experiences. Six of the seven children were reported to have attended preschool before entering kindergarten while the child who didn't attend preschool attended a play group program that was offered once a week for an hour and half through a state funded program based on *Parents as Teachers* (See <http://www.parentsasteachers.org/>), a program to support children that involves coaching of parents. The families reported seeing positive impacts on their children as a result of having participated in these previous educational experiences. They believed that the experiences helped their children become familiar with the expectation of a structured environment and routines and reduced the child's level of anxiety as they transitioned to kindergarten which in turn led to their adjusting to the new schools more easily and without significant problems. One mother said "he made the transition very easy because he had already been in the school system". In addition, another mother mentioned the

positive result of attending preschool as “she already knew you know the routine type environment, you know, with snacks and naps and doing different activities throughout the day”.

Kindergarten readiness. The level of anxiety families experience while going through kindergarten transition can be influenced by the readiness demonstrated by the children. Therefore, the families were asked the question “Did you think your child was ready for kindergarten? Why or Why not?” All families thought their child was ready for school at the time of kindergarten transition. The reasons provided by the families can be categorized into three main areas – academically, socially and physically. Five of the seven families said that because their child knew letters, numbers, colors, they were prepared for kindergarten. A mother noted, “I think you know my opinion of being ready is having a general understanding of you know how things work, numbers, your letters, um, colors, basically....he had the basics down”. In addition, exhibiting competency in certain social skills such as being able to listen to others, making friends, and being independent were noted by the four families as evidence of their children’s readiness for kindergarten. For instance, one mother said “she’s very outgoing and very talkative with other kids and she wasn’t particularly shy “. Three families noted that being old enough and thus physically ready was the reason they thought their child was ready to transition to kindergarten.

Preparation at home. To get ready for kindergarten and decrease the level of anxiety that comes from the kindergarten transition process, the families tried to prepare their child for kindergarten at home in a number of different ways. Some of the approaches used by the families included working on basic academic skills such as colors, shapes, numbers, and letters. Five of the seven families reported supporting their child’s learning of basic academic skills by directly helping their child, through shared book reading, or by keeping journals with their child.

Four of the seven families said they talked about kindergarten before the first day of the school so that their child would know what to expect. Three of the families purposefully took their child to the kindergarten classroom or to the school before the first day of kindergarten. In addition, going out to buy supplies, getting up earlier, playing with other children, and talking to neighbors whose children had transitioned to kindergarten to learn of potential activities in which they could participate were listed as some preparation activities carried out by the families. Furthermore, families whose child had an older sibling reported that the experiences their siblings had in kindergartens gave them an edge in identifying and participating in kindergarten transition activities.

Preparation support provided by schools. In addition to the support the families provided for their child for a smooth kindergarten transition, schools provided activities for the families and the children. Five of the seven families said they attended an official meeting offered by the school for families who will be sending their child to kindergarten in the fall. It is referred to by a variety of names including kindergarten round up, pre-enrollment, or kindergarten information night. It is an opportunity for families to meet the kindergarten teachers as well as other school staff, complete required paper work, and ask questions. While parents are attending the meeting, children are typically invited to the classrooms and provided with a variety of fun activities in which to engage. Out of the seven families, five mentioned having attended kindergarten round up but only four of the families who attended such an event said it was helpful.

Five of the 7 families said the kindergarten teacher contacted them before school started. The point when the initial contact was made varied from few days before the school started to 2 to 3 weeks prior. Sending out a post card to the children with an introduction of the teacher and

a welcome message was the most popular format for an initial contact. Most families said their child was excited to receive a post card from the teachers and knowing teacher's name was helpful. One family in particular reported that their child's teacher also sent a letter to parents. Specifically, the family reported that their child's teacher sent a package 3 weeks before school started and included the teacher's photo, welcome letter to the child, and a letter to the parents. This parent stated, "As soon as my child received that package then it just opened a whole new door too and made her feel very comfortable."

All of the families reported that their children's schools and kindergarten teachers offered opportunities for their children to visit the school and/or classroom prior to the first day of kindergarten. Two of the schools invited future kindergarteners to attend on a regular (weekly or monthly) basis near the end of the previous school year so that they could get familiar with the school building and staff members. In other schools, the children and families were invited to visit the classroom, meet the teachers, and drop off school supplies a few days before the first day of school. This event was referred as 'meet your teacher night' or 'open house'.

Other activities that the families reported that their schools provided prior to the first day included sending out a newsletter to let the families in the community know about events regarding kindergarten, providing preschool programs or other related experiences, and screening with follow-up evaluation for addressing children's current developmental status and/or concerns.

Early adjustment. Four of the seven families said their child did not show any problem or anxiety on the first day of school. In addition, all seven of the families said that their child made a smooth adjustment to kindergarten. One mother stated, "there were no behavioral issues at the beginning of the year. She's adjusted to the schedule during the day pretty easily

too, like she kind of knew within the first couple of weeks what their routine was and really looked forward to things they'd do".

The majority of the families interviewed reported regularly receiving newsletters from their child's teacher that summarized activities occurring in the classrooms. In addition, many families communicated with the teacher through e-mail exchanges, phone calls, daily notes or face-to-face meetings such as parent-teacher conferences.

Perception of family involvement. All of the families reported believing in the importance of their involvement in their child's education including the transition to kindergarten. In terms of their participation in kindergarten transition activities specifically, the families noted that they thought that it helps their child because it reduces the level of anxiety their child might experience. Furthermore, they also reported that they felt that participation allowed them to provide the appropriate support to their child throughout the kindergarten transition process. For example, one mother noted, "It just makes it more comfortable for your child.... Because I knew what to tell them and they knew what to expect and instead of being in the dark." In addition, another mother emphasized the importance of family involvement because it shapes the first impressions of the schools for children and it can affect their future performance. "So if you are spending time taking your child and talking to your child about school, going and discussing school, making that important by spending time on it, then you're instilling in your child that school is important... they're going to focus on that because you're focused on it"

Yet another mother commented, , "Because I think that if you have a parent present as much as you can be, that just encourages the child to be part of the class on their own and it just makes them more successful in the class." As illustrated by this comment most families think

family involvement in their child's education is critical because it affects their child's performance in school. In addition, the families believed that if they know more about what is going on in their child's classroom, they can provide more support at home to enhance their child's learning.

Barriers. Overall, most of the families said they did not experience any major barriers that prevented them from participating in kindergarten transition activities provided by the schools. The only barrier that was reported by two of the seven families was 'schedule conflict' but with different reasons causing the conflict. In one case, having more than one school age child resulted in a schedule conflict because the school's activities for all children and all grade levels were offered at the same time. The parent said "Sometimes what I do is I have the three kids, I let them pick one holiday and I come to that holiday party in their room, but I can't go to each of their rooms on every holiday because I've got three, and I can't take, I can't take the whole day off every holiday off." On the other hand, the other family's scheduling conflict arose because her husband's work schedule and the kindergarten transition activities provided conflicted. Although her husband wanted to be more involved in the kindergarten transition process, his work schedule and frequent travelling made it more difficult for him to participate.

Suggestions for schools. All seven of the families interviewed said they had successful kindergarten transition experiences and didn't have specific suggestions for the schools. However, two of the parents when asked, 'Can you identify the major factor that contributed to your successful experience? identified school and staff members' commitment and openness as the major factors contributing to their successful kindergarten transition experience. One of these parents stated, "I would have to say, well it's an openness to and I guess if the support of the child, the true commitment to the child. That to me is probably what sets my experience

apart. I feel that there was a commitment and everything else just wrapped around that commitment, the communication wrapped around that commitment, the entire staff wrapped around that, it was...the focus was really was my child. And so I think, yeah, I think that's really what it was. I mean, that focus drove the ultimate communication, it drove support, it drove you know, everything. I mean the activities, the curriculum, the structure...the everything. " Another reason reported by these parent could be categorized as 'getting familiar'. By participating in the transition activities, opportunities were provided for the children to learn what to expect in kindergarten, and the parents believed that this familiarity facilitated their child's successful kindergarten transition.

Finally, two parents noted that the 'child characteristics' were an important factor. This is illustrated by one parents comment, "I think a lot of it is her personality..and our interaction with her has encouraged her personality traits like her to adjust and her desire to learn".

Suggestions for families. Based on their experiences, the families were asked to share suggestions for other families to facilitate successful kindergarten transitions. During the interviews, several families mentioned the differences that exist between kindergarten and their child's previous educational experiences as well as the stress the child can experience because of these differences and discontinuity. Therefore, most families emphasized the importance of providing support to their child to decrease the fear and anxiety that might arise from this uncertainty.

The suggestions provide by the families for other families in assisting their child to be prepared for kindergarten included: a) Talk to the child about how the first day will go, b) Take the child to school before the school year actually begins, c) Teach the child some of the basic academic and school social skills, d) Gather as much information as possible about the school,

teacher and expectations, e) Become familiar with the school staff, f) Involve children with the needed shopping for school supplies, g) Provide as many opportunities as possible for the children to interact with same aged peers and playing with groups of children, and h) Encourage them to have a desire to go to kindergarten and be excited about the prospect. Other families suggested that parents should enjoy their child as much as possible while they are still at home.

Discussion

Kindergarten transition is a critical experience for a child as well as for the family, school, and community. It is an on-going process which presents a variety of challenges which may have long-term impacts on children's school experiences. Thus, the field of early childhood education has made efforts to support children and their families to make a smooth transition to kindergarten. One of the most widely accepted beliefs is that sustaining strong and positive relationships between the key players – child, family, school, and community- contributes positively to children's kindergarten transition experiences. Therefore, a variety of transition practices that may enhance the relationships have been suggested in the field.

One of the relationships many schools and teachers are constantly trying to enhance is family-school connection. Although family involvement in their child's education in general proved to be an effective strategy, our current understanding of the level and impact of family involvement in kindergarten transition is still very limited.

This study makes a contribution to the current discussion on kindergarten transition practices and its impact on children and their families with useful information. First, the research study addresses the shortcoming of the previous studies on family involvement in their child's kindergarten transition. Second, the data set used for the study was collected from randomly selected participants throughout the state which includes children and families from diverse geographic location, programs, and backgrounds. Third, the study used mixed methods design which provides broader and in-depth information on kindergarten transition for teachers, schools, and policy makers.

This chapter consists of three sections. Section 1 summarizes the findings of the study and how the findings are related to previous research studies. Section 2 discusses the limitations of the study which will be followed by section 3, implications for future research, policy, and practice.

Major Findings

In this section, the major findings from quantitative (Component 1) and qualitative (Component 2) analyses will be discussed. First, a brief overview of the study will be presented. This will be followed by the discussion on specific findings of the study. Finally, the limitations of the study and implications for practices, research, and policy development will be discussed.

Brief overview of the study. The purpose of this study was to address the question of family involvement being a significant predictor for children's early school adjustment when other factors such as child age, gender, prior educational placement, disability status, language status, and family SES are taken into consideration. Furthermore, this study aims to gain a broader picture of kindergarten transition by listening to experiences of families who are one of the key players of kindergarten transition. Four specific research questions were raised for this study: 1) When other factors are taken into consideration, is parent participation in kindergarten activities a predictor for children's early school adjustment?, 2) Do families perceive that their participation in kindergarten transition activities affect their child's early school adjustment?, 3) What barriers do families encounter as they participate in various kindergarten transition activities?, 4) What can schools do to better support families in helping their children's transition to kindergarten and early school adjustment?.

To address the questions, mixed-methods design was utilized. A procedure of quantitative analysis (i.e., data collection, analysis of the data) preceded and guided the qualitative component of the study. The quantitative component included the data from a total number of 1,034 children and their families. To understand the participants, descriptive analysis was conducted using children's KELI scores and families' responses to the question asking their participation in kindergarten transition activities listed in parent survey.

For the qualitative component, individual interviews with 7 families were conducted. All of the participants were mothers who identified themselves as white/non-Hispanic using English as a primary language. The mothers shared their experiences of transition as their child entered kindergarten, identified barriers that prevented their participation in the activities provided by the schools to facilitate smooth transition, shared the perceptions on their involvement in kindergarten transition processes and provided suggestions and tips to share with other families and schools. The constant comparative method was used to analyze the qualitative data. In the following section, the key findings from quantitative and qualitative analyses will be discussed under three headings.

Key findings. Analyses of quantitative and qualitative results revealed additional information. Those information will be presented in the following sections.

Family involvement and early school adjustment. The results from quantitative analysis revealed that family involvement in kindergarten transition measured by the number of transition activities families participated in was not a predictor for children's early school adjustment when the influences of the other factors (i.e., Child Gender, Child Age, Prior Educational Experience, ELL status, Disability Status, Family SES) that may impact children's early school adjustment

were taken into consideration. This study hypothesized that children will adjust better as their families' level of involvement in kindergarten transition increases. This hypothesis was based on previous research studies reporting positive outcomes of parent involvement in their child's education and current recommended practices for kindergarten transition (Epstein, 1986; Fehrmann, 1987; Lamb Parker, Boak, Griffin, Ripple & Peay, 1999; Marcon, 1999; Mendez, 2010; Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003).

Although the result of quantitative analysis did not support the hypothesis, the interviews with seven families indicated that family involvement may have positive influence on children's early school adjustment. During the interviews, all of the participants shared their firm beliefs in the importance of family involvement in their child's education and the positive impact of their involvement in kindergarten transition. Several families indicated that their child adjusted to kindergarten easily because the level of anxiety was reduced. Furthermore, the families said they were able to provide appropriate support for their child by participating in kindergarten transition activities.

Family involvement and kindergarten transition practices. As noted above, the qualitative results suggested that the families place value on their involvement in their child's education including kindergarten transition. This value clearly is mirrored in quantitative results which showed a high participation rate in kindergarten transition activities listed in the parent survey. For the 4 kindergarten transition activities listed in the parent survey asking each family's participation, over 60% of the families participated in 3 or 4 activities while only 14% in 1 or none. Moreover, when the total number of families participated in each activity was calculated, at least 55% of the families participated in each activity. The qualitative result

supported the quantitative result. The families indicated that they participate in a variety of activities to promote their child's smooth kindergarten transition. For instance, the families visited their child's future classroom and met the teacher, went to open house, attended kindergarten round up and talked with their child about kindergarten. These results mirror the result reported by La Paro and colleagues (2003) which found that when opportunities are provided, majority of families participate in all kindergarten transition activities.

When families were asked the types of kindergarten transition activities which they participated, the activity 'talk with the child about what to expect in kindergarten' was the most frequently implemented practice (95%). Additionally, qualitative analysis results also revealed that four out of seven families had conversations with their child about kindergarten. Similar results can be found from the study by La Paro and colleagues (2003) which reported over 90% of the families 'talked with their child about behavior expectations held at kindergarten and about meeting new peers'. Another study by Barnett and Taylor (2009) also reported that 55% of the families had social discussion (i.e., talk about kindergarten) with their child 1-2 times per week. Despite the frequent implementation, it is important to note that families are still in need of information and resources for them to be able to have conversations with their child about kindergarten. According to McIntyre and colleagues (2007), 60.5% of families of first time kindergarteners want to know behavioral expectations in kindergarten. Moreover, over 80% of the families wanted to have information on academic expectations held in kindergarten.

During the interview, all families said that their child had a chance to visit their kindergarten classroom before the first day of class. Similarly, descriptive analysis found that 65% (n=673) of the families took their child to visit the school before the first day by arranging it

with the school. The study by La Paro and colleagues (2003) provides another point to consider regarding family's participation in this activity. The study involved 86 families and investigated the types of transition activities families participated in when substantial support and encouragement for implementation of the activities are provided. One of the supports provided in the study was 'family workers' who facilitated families to use practices to facilitate smooth kindergarten transition. As the result, the study reports a higher family participation rate (98%) for the same activity. This result suggests that when supports are provided, family involvement in kindergarten transition may increase.

Separate from the activities provided by schools, families provided various transition activities at home for their child who will be entering kindergarten. The activities used by the families included teaching basic academic skills (i.e. numbers, colors, songs), taking child to future classroom before the first day of kindergarten, going out to buy school supplies, and talking to neighbors who have kindergarten transition experiences. Several research studies on kindergarten transition revealed similar results of families providing a variety of learning opportunities that can facilitate their child's smooth kindergarten transition (Barnett & Taylor, 2009; Diamond et al., 2000; La Paro et al., 2003). Furthermore, some of the activities reported by the participants of this study, such as teaching basic skills and talking with their child about kindergarten, were the activities most commonly used by families who sent their child to kindergarten (La Paro et al., 2003). Despite the positive reports, a previous study indicates that many families are in need of information on how to prepare their child at home for transition (McIntyre et al., 2007). According to the study, approximately 70% of the families wanted to know what caregivers can do to help their child to be prepared for kindergarten.

Studies by Pianta and colleagues (2001) and La Paro and colleagues (2003) reported that when kindergarten transition practices are implemented, the majority of families found the practices to be useful in preparing for their child's kindergarten transition. The participants of this study also mentioned how specific kindergarten transition practices were helpful. For instance, several parents mentioned that kindergarten teachers' contact made before the first day of school not only made the child get excited about going to kindergarten, but also facilitated smooth adjustment to school and reduced the level of anxiety experienced by the child. Similarly, the families identified visiting the classroom and meeting the future teacher as a helpful activity.

It is noteworthy that the two activities discussed directly address two needs identified by majority of the families participated in the study by McIntyre and colleagues (2007). According to the study, approximately 50% of the families wanted to have opportunities to visit child's future kindergarten classroom, and over 70% wanted to have information on who their child's future teacher will be. These results indicate that families are satisfied with activities provided by schools and find them useful when those activities address their needs.

In terms of the barriers families face as they try to participate in kindergarten transition activities provided by schools, Schedule Conflict was identified as a barrier by two families who were interviewed. This mirrors the findings from a previous study (La Paro et al.,2003) that over 70% of families indicated their work schedule or own school schedule as the biggest barriers that interfere them from participating in kindergarten transition activities provided by schools. Although the result of this study found Schedule Conflict being a barrier, this study provided different sources for schedule conflict than those identified by La Paro and colleagues

(2003). For example, one family said having more than one school age child resulted in a schedule conflict because the school offered activities for all children at all levels at the same time. Moreover, another family shared their experience of schedule conflict that was due to the work schedule of the father of the child in particular.

Impact of prior educational experience. Most families interviewed indicated that their child's out of home educational experiences prior to entering kindergarten positively influenced their child's early school adjustment. The families believed that attending preschool or having similar experiences helped children become familiar with the expectation of a structured environment and routines. Moreover, families indicated that the familiarity acquired from previous educational settings reduced the child's level of anxiety as they transition to kindergarten and let them adjust more easily. Although the families did not directly mention the impact of their child's prior out of home educational experiences' specifically on academic adjustment, the Pearson correlation analysis revealed that the variable Prior Educational Experiences was significantly related to children's early academic adjustment ($r=.137, p<.01$). These results suggest that having educational experiences at out of home settings prior to kindergarten transition may positive influence on children's early school adjustment.

Children's readiness. All seven families interviewed said they thought their child was ready by the time when he/she entered kindergarten. They specifically described evidences of readiness their child exhibited academically, behaviorally, and physically. This result was confirmed by KELI scores. The children who participated in this study showed similar mean scores when compared to national sample in 6 domains - General Knowledge, Oral

Communication, Written Communication, Math Concept, Attentive Behavior, and Work Habits. This result indicates that the children included in this study can be considered as ready to learn.

Emphasis on continuity. Across all the themes that emerged from qualitative results, Importance of Providing Continuity' was consistently emphasized. Clearly, the families interviewed were aware of discontinuities that exist between sending and receiving agencies. As discussed in chapter 4, several families mentioned the differences they found between their child's previous educational setting and kindergarten and stress or anxiety their child may experience due to the discontinuities between the settings. Therefore, the families made efforts to increase their child's familiarity with kindergarten. One example is implementing activities that can help children to become familiar with kindergarten. The activities include teaching basic skills, taking children to future classrooms, and talking about kindergarten. Another example of efforts made by families to reduce discontinuities is participating in kindergarten transition activities provided by schools. According to the descriptive analysis result, majority of the families participated in 3 or 4 activities listed in the parent survey.

Finally, the importance of reducing the discontinuities were addressed in the suggestions the participants made for other families such as 'take the child to school before the first day of school', 'become familiar with the school staff', and 'gather as much information as possible about the school'. These suggestions mirror the practices recommended and used in the field to reduce discontinuity (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003).

In response to the primary research question, the quantitative result revealed that family involvement in kindergarten transition activities was not a predictor for children's early academic and social adjustment after contributions made by other factors were taken into

consideration. However, the qualitative result suggested that family involvement in kindergarten transition is important and in fact, has a positive impact on children's early adjustment. According to the families interviewed, all of the families valued family involvement in kindergarten transition. Furthermore, they reported specific positive outcomes of their involvement such as children's smooth adjustment and parents' increased capabilities in supporting their child.

In terms of the barriers interfering families' participation in kindergarten transition activities provided by schools, schedule conflict was the main barrier identified by the families. In addition to conflict with work schedule which was the biggest barrier identified in a previous study (La Paro et al., 2003), the participants of this study indicated that having more than one school age children and schools providing events for all grades at the same time may cause challenges in participating in transition activities provided by schools.

The families interviewed were satisfied with their experiences of kindergarten transition. Thus, no suggestions for schools to better support children entering kindergarten and their families were made. However, open communication between school and family, commitment of school staff, and families' participation in kindergarten transition activities were the key aspects contributed to their successful kindergarten transition experiences identified by the families.

Limitations

There are several limitations that should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results of this study. First, using an existing data set presents a limitation. Although an existing data set allows an investigation of the research questions with a larger sample in a cost-

efficient manner, the data collected were not specifically intended to answer the questions of this study and therefore limits variability of data collection sources and flexibility of interpreting the results. If the data had been collected specifically to address the research questions, the results of quantitative analysis may turn out different and could be better connected to the result of qualitative analysis.

Another limitation comes from the measure used to indicate children's developmental status and social and academic adjustments, KELI. Although KELI was developed based on QELI which is a tool with established reliability and validity, the three additional domains (Social Emotional Development, Symbolic Development, Physical Development) that were developed by Kansas early childhood experts were not validated with a bigger population. Although those are widely accepted as important domains for measuring school readiness, further investigation for validating specific skills listed under each domain is needed. Furthermore, using a 3- or 4- point scale in KELI may have a danger of clustering too many children who are demonstrating different levels of skills into one category without detecting that real differences exist among the children. Therefore, the limited sensitivity of KELI may have influenced the result of the quantitative analysis.

Similar concern remains with using only 4 transition activities listed in the parent survey to determine the level of family involvement in kindergarten transition. Previous research studies indicated that parents are involved in their child's education in various ways (Lee & Bowen, 2006; Gutman & McLoyd, 2000). Similarly, families support their child throughout kindergarten transition process in both direct and non-direct ways such as creating a positive home environment, teaching specific skills, taking children to school, and attending school

events (Barnett & Taylor, 2009; Diamond et al., 2000; La Paro et al, 2003; McIntyre et al., 2007; Pianta et al., 1999; Rathbun & Hausken, 2001). Thus, determining the level of family's participation based on 4 kindergarten transition activities may not fully reflecting families' true level of involvement in kindergarten transition.

Finally, in this study, limited diversity was present among the participants for both quantitative and qualitative analysis in terms of ethnicity/race, disability status, and English language learner status. The participants were mainly White/non-Hispanic whose primary language was English. In addition, the number of children with disability or identified as ELL learners that were included in this study was very low. Although this demographic composition is consistent with federal data on this state, previous research studies have reported that demographic factors such as ethnicity and disability can influence family involvement in kindergarten transition and teachers' implementation of kindergarten transition practices (Diamond et al., 2000; La Paro et al., 2000; Pianta et al., 1999). Therefore, extra caution needs to be in place when generalizing the findings of this study to the broader population.

Implications for Future Research, Policy, and Practice

For several reasons, this study makes a contribution to the field of education with useful information on family involvement in kindergarten transition. Quantitative and qualitative results generated number of issues that may provide guidance and implications for future research, policy and practices.

Implications for future research. The quantitative result revealed that family involvement in kindergarten transition activities was not an effective predictor for their child's

early school adjustment. However, the qualitative result indicated that family involvement has a positive impact on not only children but also families. These contrasting results suggest that further investigation with more various tools that can collect data on broader aspects of kindergarten transition is needed.

Both quantitative and qualitative results indicated that families want to be involved in their child's kindergarten transition. Therefore, when opportunities to be involved are provided, families showed high participation rates. If we take a close look at those activities most families participated in, they are directly addressing the needs of families identified in the study by Nelson (2004). The result of this study with supporting evidence from literature suggests that understanding the needs of children and families will lead to a higher level of family involvement which can lead to positive child outcomes. Therefore, in the future, more studies should focus on understanding what families are in need such as information, resources, transition practices to be used, etc.

Finally, more studies involving families from diverse backgrounds are needed. Until recently, most studies in kindergarten transition that involved families were targeting families who are white/non-Hispanic and middle class. As our early childhood classrooms are becoming more diverse than ever, more efforts to understand all families regardless of their backgrounds should be made.

Implication for policy. The result of this study clearly indicates that families of children who are entering kindergarten want to be involved in their child's transition to kindergarten. However, families are facing barriers participating in the kindergarten transition process. Therefore, it is important to create an environment where family involvement is encouraged,

expected, and appreciated. In creating such an environment, it is widely accepted that teachers and schools play critical roles. The fact that most schools and teachers are making efforts to facilitate family-school connection by implementing various kindergarten transition practices reflects schools' and teachers' awareness of the importance of family involvement in kindergarten transition. Furthermore, when implemented, most families find the practices to be useful. Despite these positive findings, efforts made by teachers and schools often get discouraged by lack of financial resources to support summer work that is necessary in planning and implementing kindergarten transition practices. Moreover, teachers frequently find that a comprehensive transition plan that can guide their work with families and children may not be available from the districts. Therefore, this study suggests that systematic support for schools and teachers should be in place so that they can create strong relationship with families.

Implication for practice. As noted earlier, when kindergarten transition activities provided by schools directly address the needs of children and families, participation of the families in the activities increase. In addition, families often find the activities that address their needs to be useful. Therefore, it is important for practitioners to understand the specific needs of families and plan kindergarten transition practices. To be able to gain a better understanding, collaborations with other professionals and families is critical. Additionally, maintaining open communication with other key players of kindergarten transition as indicated by one of the participants of this study is important.

Qualitative and quantitative results of this study indicated that families provide various learning opportunities and activities at homes to prepare their child for kindergarten. In addition, families want more information on how they can help their child at home to be

prepared for kindergarten (McIntyre et al.,2007). Therefore, this study suggests providing families with resources and ideas for activities that can be done at home. For instance, practitioners can provide a suggested book list for children and families and activity packages for children and families to work on. In addition, the result of descriptive analysis shows that the majority of families have a conversation with their child about kindergarten. Thus, it can be very helpful if practitioners communicate with the families about academic and behavior expectation, routines, and curriculum before school start.

References

- Agostin, T. M., & Bain, S. K. (1997). Predicting early school success with developmental and social skills screeners. *Psychology in the Schools, 34*, 219-228.
- Alexander, K. L., & Entwisle, D.R. (1988). Achievement in the first 2 years of school: Patterns and processes. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 53*, 1-157.
- Alexander, K. L., Entwisle, D. R., & Dauber, S. L. (1993). First-grade classroom behavior: Its short- and long-term consequences for school performance. *Child Development, 64*, 801-814.
- Bailey, D. (1999). Forward. In R. C. Pianta, & M. J. Cox (Eds.), *The transition to kindergarten* (pp.xv-xvi). Baltimore, MD:Paul H. Brookes.
- Barnett, M. A., & Taylor, L. C. (2009). Parental recollections of school experiences and current kindergarten transition practices. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 30*, 140-148. doi:10.1016/j.appdev.2008.11.001
- Boethel, M. (2004). *Readiness: School, Family, & Community Connections. Annual Synthesis 2004*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.
- Brace, N., Kemp, R., & Snelgar, R. (2006). *SPSS for psychologist* (3rd Ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associate, Inc.

- Brandes, J. A., Ormsbee, C. K., & Haring, K. A. (2007). From early intervention to early childhood programs: Timeline for early successful transitions (TEST). *Intervention in School and Clinic, 42*, 204-211. doi:10.1177/10534512070420040301
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986). Ecology of the family as a context for human development: Research perspectives. *Developmental Psychology, 22*, 723-742.
- Bruns, D. A., & Fowler, S. A. (1999). Designing culturally sensitive transition plans for young children and their families. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 31*, 26-30.
- Cooper, D. H., & Farran, D. C. (1988). Behavioral risk factors in kindergarten. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 3*, 1-19.
- Cresswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication.
- Diamond, K. E., Reagan, A. J., & Bandyk, J. E. (2000). Parents' conceptions of kindergarten readiness: Relationships with race, ethnicity, and development. *The Journal of Educational Research, 94*, 93-100. doi: 10.1080/00220670009598747
- Dockett, S., & Perry. B. (2001). Starting school: Effective transitions. *Early Childhood Research & Practice, 3*(2).
- Duda, M. A., & Minick, V. (2006). Easing the transition to kindergarten: Demonstrating partnership through service-learning. *Mentoring & Tutoring, 14*, 111-121.
doi:10.1080/1361126050043293935eed1001_3

- Early, D. M., Pianta, R. C., & Cox, M. J. (1999). Kindergarten teachers and classrooms: A transition context. *Early Education & Development, 10*, 25-46. doi:10.1207/s15566
- Early, D. M., Pianta, R. C., Taylor, L. C., & Cox, M. J. (2001). Transition practices: Findings from a national survey of kindergarten teachers. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 28*, 199 – 206.
- Epstein, J. L. (1986). Parents' reaction to teacher practices of parent involvement. *The Elementary School Journal, 86*, 277-294.
- Epstein, J. L., & Becker, H. J. (1982). Teacher practices of parent involvement. *The Elementary School Journal, 83*, 277-294.
- Fehrmann, P. G., Keith, T. Z., & Reimers, T. M. (1987). Home influences on school learning: Direct and indirect effects of parent involvement on high school grades. *Journal of Educational Research, 80*, 330-337.
- Forest, E. J., Horner, R. H., Lewis-Paler, T., & Todd, A. W. (2004). Transitions for young children with autism from preschool to kindergarten. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 6*, 103-112. doi:10.1177/10983007040060020501
- Fowler, S. (1988). Individualizing family involvement in school transitions: Gathering information and choosing the next program. *Journal of the Division for Early Childhood, 12*, 208-216.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine Publication Company.

- Glaser, B. (1965). The constant comparative method of qualitative analysis. *Social Problems, 12*, 436-444.
- Grace, D. J., & Brandt, M. E. (2006). Ready for success in kindergarten: A comparative analysis of teacher, parent, and administrator beliefs in Hawaii. *Journal of Early Childhood Research, 4*, 223-258. doi:10.1177/1476718X06067578
- Hadley, P. A., Wilcox, K. A., Rice, M. L. (1994). Talking at school: Teacher expectations in preschool and kindergarten. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 9*, 111-129.
- Hains, A. H., Fowler, S. A., Schwartz, I. S., Kottwitz, E., Rosenkoetter, S. (1989). A comparison of preschool and kindergarten teacher expectations for school readiness. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 4*, 75-88.
- Hausken, E. G., & Rathbun, A. H. (2002, April). *Adjustment to kindergarten. Child, family and kindergarten program factors*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA. Retrieved from <http://eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED463849.pdf>
- Hutinger, P. L. (1981). Transition practices for handicapped young children: What the experts say. *Journal of the Division for Early Childhood, 2*, 8-14. doi: 10.1177/105381518100200103
- Jang, Y., & Mangione, P. L. (1994). Transition program practices: Improving linkages between early childhood education and early elementary school. Retrieved from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED380200.pdf>

- Janus, M., Lefort, J., Cameron, R., & Kopechanski, L. (2007). Starting kindergarten: Transition issues for children with special needs. *Canadian Journal of Education, 30*, 628-648.
- Jewett, J., Tertell, L., King-Taylor, M., Parker, D., Tertell, L., & Orr, M. (1998). Four early childhood teachers reflect on helping children with special needs make the transition to kindergarten. *The Elementary School Journal, 98*, 329-338.
- Johnson, R. B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational Researcher, 33*, 14-26.
- Kagan, S. L., & Neuman, M. J. (1998). Lessons from three decades of transition research. *The Elementary School Journal, 98*, 365-379.
- Ladd, G. W. (1990). Having friends, keeping friends, making friends, and being liked by peers in the classroom: Predictors of children's early school adjustment? *Child Development, 61*, 1081-1100.
- Ladd, G. W., & Price, J. M. (1987). Predicting children's social and school adjustment following the transition from preschool to kindergarten. *Child Development, 58*, 1168 – 1189.
- La Paro, K. M., Kraft-Sayre, M., & Pianta, R. C. (2003). Preschool kindergarten transition activities: Involvement and satisfaction of families and teachers. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 17*, 147-158.
- La Paro, K. M., Pianta, R. C., & Cox, M. J. (2000). Teachers' reported transition practices for children transitioning into kindergarten and first grade. *Exceptional Children, 67*, 7-20.

- Laverick, D. M. (2008). Starting school: Welcoming young children and families into early school experiences. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 35, 321-326.
doi:10.1007/s10643-007-0201-8
- Lincove, J. A., & Painter, G. (2006). Does the age that children start kindergarten matter? Evidence of long-term educational and social outcomes. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 28, 153-179. doi:10.3102/01623737028002153
- Lillie, T., & Vakil, S. (2002). Transitions in early childhood for students with disabilities: Law and best practices. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 30, 53-58.
- LoCasale-Crouch, J., Mashburn, A. J., Downer, J. T., & Pianta, R. C. (2008). Pre-kindergarten teachers; use of transition practices and children's adjustment to kindergarten. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 23, 124-139. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2007.06.001
- Magnuson, K. A., Meyers, M. K., Ruhm, C. J., & Waldfogel, J. (2004). Inequality in preschool education and school readiness. *American Educational Research Journal*, 41, 115-157.
- Mangione, P. L. & Speth, T. (1998). The transition to elementary school: A framework for creating early childhood continuity through home, school and community partnership. *The Elementary School Journal*, 98, 381-397.
- Marcon, R. A. (1999). Positive relationships between parent school involvement and public school inner-city preschoolers' development and academic performance. *School Psychology Review*, 28, 395-412.

- Maxwell, J. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication.
- McClelland, M. M., Morrison, F. J., & Holmes, D. L. (2000). Children at risk for early academic problems: The role of learning-related social skills. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 15*, 307-329.
- McWayne, C., Hampton, V., Fantuzzo, J., Cohen, H. L., & Sekino, Y. (2004). A multivariate examination of parent involvement and the social and academic competencies of urban kindergarten children. *Psychology in the Schools, 41*, 363-377. doi: 10.1002/pits.10163
- Mendez, J. L. (2010). How can parents get involved in preschool? Barriers and engagement in education by ethnic minority parents of children attending Head Start. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 16*, 26-36. doi:10.1037/a0016258
- Missal, K. N., & Hojnoski, R. L. (2008). The critical nature of young children's emerging peer related social competence for transition to school. In W. H. Brown, S. L. Odom, & S. R. McConnell (Eds.), *Social competence of young children* (pp.117-137). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.
- McIntyre, L. L., Eckert, T. L., Fiese, B. H., DiGennaro, F. D., & Wildenger, L. K. (2007). Transition to kindergarten: Family experiences and involvement. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 35*, 83-88. doi:10.1007/s10643-007-0175-6
- Nelson, R. F. (2004). The transition to kindergarten. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 32*, 187-190.

- Peisner-Feinberg, E., Burchinal, M. R., Clifford, R. M., Culkin, M. L., Howes, C., Kagan, S., et al. (2001). The relation of preschool child-care quality to children's cognitive and social developmental trajectories through second grade. *Child Development, 72*, 1534-1553.
- Pianta, R. C., Cox, M. J., Taylor, L., & Early, D. (1999). Kindergarten teachers' practices related to the transition to school: Results of a national survey. *The Elementary School Journal, 100*, 71-86.
- Pianta, R. C., & Kraft-Sayre, M. K. (2003). *Successful kindergarten transition : Your guide to connecting children, families, & schools*. Baltimore,MD:Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
- Pianta, R.C., Kraft-Sayre, M. K., Rimm-Kaufman, S., Gercke, N., & Higgins, T. (2001). Collaboration in building partnerships between families and schools: The National Center for Early Development and Learning's kindergarten transition intervention. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 16*, 117-132.
- Ramey, C. T., & Ramey, S. L. (1999). Beginning school for children at risk. In R.C. Pianta & M.J.Cox (Eds.), *The transition to Kindergarten* (pp.217-252). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing, Co.
- Ramey, S. L, Lanzi, R. G., Phillips, M. M., & Ramey, C. T. (1998). Perspectives of former Head Start children and their parents on school and the transition to school. *The Elementary School Journal, 98*, 311-327.
- Rathbun, A. H., & Hausken, E. G. (2001). *How are transition-to-kindergarten activities associated with parent involvement during kindergarten?* Paper presented at the

Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Seattle, WA.

Retrieved from: <http://eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED452951.pdf>

Reynolds, A. J. (1991). Early schooling of children at risk. *American Educational Research Journal*, 28, 392-422.

Rimm-Kaufman, S. E., & Pianta, R. C. (2000). An ecological perspective on the transition to kindergarten: A theoretical framework to guide empirical research. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 21, 491-511.

Rimm-Kaufman, S. E., & Pianta, R. C. (1999). Patterns of family-school contact in preschool and kindergarten. *School Psychology Review*, 28, 426-438.

Rimm-Kaufman, S.E., Pianta, R.C., & Cox, M. J. (2000). Teachers' judgments of problems in the transition to kindergarten. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 15, 147-166.

Rosenkoetter, S., Schroeder, C., Rous, B., Hains, A., Shaw, J., & MacCormick, K. (2009). *A review of research in early childhood transition: Child and family studies*. Technical Report #5. Lexington: University of Kentucky, Human Development Institute, National Early Childhood Transition Center. Available at <http://www.lhdi.uky.edu/nectc/>.

Rous, B. S., & Hallam, R. A. (2006). *Tools for transition in early childhood: A step-by-step guide for agencies, teachers, & families*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

- Rous, B., Hallam, R., Harbin, G., McCormick, K., & Jung, L. (2007). The transition process for young children with disabilities: A conceptual framework. *Infants and Young Children, 20*, 135-149. doi: 10.1097/01.IYC.0000264481.27947.5f
- Rumberger, R. W. (1995). Dropping out of middle school: A multilevel analysis of students and schools. *American Educational Research Journal, 32*, 583-625.
- Schulting, A. B., Malone, P. S., & Dodge, K. A. (2005). The effect of school-based kindergarten transition policies and practices on child academic outcomes. *Developmental Psychology, 41*, 860-871. Doi:10.1037/0012-1649.41.6.860
- Snow, K. L. (2006). Measuring school readiness: Conceptual and practical considerations. *Early Education and Development, 17*, 7-41. doi:10.1207/s15566935eed1701_2
- Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2003). Major issues and controversies in the use of mixed methods in the social and behavioral sciences. In C. Teddlie & A. Tashakkori(Eds.), *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research* (pp.3-50). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Turnbull, A., Turnbull, R., Erwin, E., & Soodak, L. (2006). *Families, professionals, and exceptionality: Positive outcomes through partnership and trust* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, JN: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- U.S. Census Bureau (2000). Census 2000 Data for the State of Kansas. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/census2000/states/ks.html>

Wampold, B. E., & Freund, R. D. (1987). Use of multiple regression in counseling psychology research: A flexible data-analytic strategy. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 34*, 372-382.

Wildenger, L. K., McIntyre, L. L., Fiese, B. H., & Eckert, T. L. (2008). Children's daily routines during kindergarten transition. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 36*, 69-74.
doi:10.1007/s10643-008-0255-2

Table 1

Research Question and Data Sources for Analysis 1

Measure	Sources of Information
<p>KELI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● General Knowledge ● Math Concepts ● Symbolic Development ● Written Language ● Oral Language ● Social Emotional Development ● Work Habits ● Attentive Behaviors 	<p>Child Developmental Status</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mean scores of each KELI domains <p>Early School Adjustment</p> <p>(a) Academic Adjustment : General Knowledge, Math Concepts, Symbolic Development, Written Language, Oral Language</p> <p>(b) Social Adjustment: Social Emotional Development, Work Habits, Attentive Behaviors</p>
<p>Parent Survey</p> <p>Q. 17 – Transition Activities</p>	<p>Level of Family Involvement: Number of activities participated</p>
<p>Q. 5. – Types of child care child attended before entering kindergarten</p>	<p>Prior Educational Experiences</p>
<p>KIDS (Kansas Individual Data on Students)</p>	<p>Child Age, Gender, Disability Status, ELL status, Eligibility for Free/Reduced Lunch Service</p>

Table 2.

Participant Demographic Information (Analysis 1)

Variable	N	
Child Gender	Boys	N = 545 (52.7%)
	Girls	N = 489 (47.3%)
Child Age	Mean	67.47 months
	Range	59 – 86 months
Race/Ethnicity	White	N = 844 (81.6%)
	Hispanic or Latino	N = 105 (10.2%)
	Black or African American	N = 51 (4.9%)
	American Indian/Alaska Native	N = 13 (1.3%)
	Asian	N = 12 (1.2%)
	Refused to designate	N = 9 (0.9%)
Geographic Location	Northeast	N = 370 (35.8%)
	South Central	N = 345 (33.4%)
	Southeast	N = 120 (11.6%)
	Western	N = 199 (19.2%)
ELL	Eligible	N=71 (6.9%)
Disability	Speech Language	N=74 (7.2%)
	Developmentally Delayed	N=53(5.1%)
	Other Health Impairment	N=3 (0.3%)
	Hearing Impairment	N=2 (0.2%)
	Orthopedic Impairment	N=1 (0.1%)
Free/reduced Lunch Eligibility	Eligible	N = 615 (45%)
Primary Language other than English	Spanish	N = 58 (5.6%)
	German (High or Low)	N = 8 (0.8%)
	Arabic	N = 1 (0.1%)
	Chinese	N = 1 (0.1%)
	Other	N = 3 (0.3%)

Table 3.

KELI Domains and Skills of Each Domain

Domain	Skills
General Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Know personal information in addition to her/his own name? ● Identify and name common colors? ● Distinguish between opposites of common characteristics? (e.g., soft/hard) ● Identify simple likenesses and differences in pictures (i.e., sizes, themes) ● Follow progression from left-to-right, top-to-bottom, front-to-back?
Math Concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Count orally from 1 to 10? ● Count orally from 1 to 20? ● Write simple numerals ● Identify simple shapes (e.g. circle) ● Know the relative value of common coins? ● Compare the size of familiar objects that are not in view? ● Use blocks, beads, etc. to make and extend patterns? ● Measure objects using a self-defined unit? ● Classify objects according to numerical properties (e.g., size) ● Demonstrate an understanding of the numerical value of simple numbers?
Oral Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Speak in complete sentences? ● Answer a direct question? ● Ask relevant questions? ● Voluntarily share ideas and information orally? ● Orally describe the content of a picture? ● Recall facts from a story read aloud? ● Retell, reenact, or dramatize simple stories after listening to them more than once? ● Use personal experiences, knowledge, and/or feelings when speaking?
Written Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Print her/his own first and last name? ● Write uppercase letters? ● Write lowercase letters? ● Copy simple words (e.g., dog, big)? ● Write simple words from memory (e.g., the, is, red)? ● Match simple words with pictures? ● Combine drawing and writing to convey his/her meaning?

Table 3.

KELI Domains and Skills of Each Domain (Continued)

Domain	Skills
Social Emotional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Follow established routines, including managing routine transitions? ● Accept changes in routines/daily schedules? ● Follow/ negotiate rules in a group situation? ● Show sensitivity/empathy toward others? ● Work cooperatively with others? ● Suggest positive solutions to conflict? ● Cope well with frustration and disappointment? ● Willingly try new tasks?
Work Habits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ask for help as needed? ● Complete class work on time? ● Willingly make corrections? ● Sustain effort in an activity despite difficulty? ● Wait for directions before beginning an assignment? ● Follow teacher suggestions? ● Work independently as appropriate?
Attentive Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Follow simple oral directions? ● Stay on task? ● Complete short-term tasks? ● Pay attention in class? ● Listen while others are talking? ● Resist simple distractions when working? ● Keep up with the pace of instruction?

Table 4.

Definition of Demographic Variables

Variable	Definition	Identifier
Gender	Child's gender	-Female -Male
Race/ Ethnicity	General racial category which the individual most identifies	-White -Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islanders -Black or African American -Asian -American Indian or Alaska Native
Primary Language	Primary language or dialect of the child used at home	
ESOL/ Bilingual	The type of ESOL/Bilingual Program in which the child participates	-Not eligible -Title III funded -State ESOL/Bilingual Funded -Both Title III and State ESOL/Bilingual Funded -Monitored ESOL student -ESOL eligible, not currently receiving ESOL services -Receives ESOL services and not funded with Title III and/or State ESOL funding
Child age	Child's chronological age at testing	
Socio-economic status	Based on child's eligibility for free or reduced lunch	-Not eligible -Eligible for Reduce Priced Lunch -Eligible for Free Lunch
Primary Exceptionality	An indication of whether or not the student has an active Individual Educational Plan (IEP) under the IDEA Part B or for giftedness	-Black = none -AM = Autism -DB = Deaf/Blindness -ED = Emotional Disturbance -GI = Giftedness -HI = Hearing Impairment -LD = Specific Learning Disability -MD = Multiple disabilities -MR = Mental Retardation -OH = Other Health Impairment -OI = Orthopedic Impairment -SL = Speech/Language Disability -TB = Traumatic Brain Injury -VI = Visual Impairment

Table 4.

Definition of Demographic Variables (Continued)

Variable	Definition	Identifier
Geographic Location	The location of school where child enrolled	
Prior Education Experience	The type of child care the child attended within past 12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Not in child care (child at home or with parent most of time) -Family child care (person doing child care in their home) -Relative care (grandparent, other family members) -Preschool (Headstart, school district, or private preschool) -Paid caregiver in your home (nanny or daily baby sitter) -Center –based child care (church or commercial facility)

Table 5.

Research Question and Data Source for Analysis 2

Research Question	Data Sources
<p>Do families perceive that their participation in kindergarten transition activity affect their child's early school adjustment?</p> <p>What barriers do families encounter in participating in various kindergarten transition activities?</p> <p>What can schools do to support families in supporting their child's transition to kindergarten and early school adjustment?</p>	<p>a. Individual interview with parents of the children who went to kindergarten in the fall of 2007</p> <p>b. Each interview last approximately 30-40 minutes and audio taped</p> <p>c. Field notes and memos</p>

Table 6.

Participant Demographic Information (Analysis 2)

Variable	N	
Child Gender	Boys	N = 1
	Girls	N = 6
Child Age	Mean	76.44 months
	Range	69 – 82 months
Child Disability	Hearing Impairment	N = 1
Parent Age	Mean	32 yrs
	Range	26 – 42 yrs
Parent Race/Ethnicity	White	N = 7
Geographic Location	Large City/Metropolitan area (population greater than 200,000)	N = 1
	Urbanized area (between 50,000 and 200,000)	N = 1
	Town or small city (between 2,500 and 50,000)	N = 5
Household Income	Over \$75,000	N = 3
	Between 40,000 and \$49,000	N = 3
	No response	N = 1
Primary Language	English	N = 7

Table 7

Mean Scores for KELI Domains, Early School Adjustments and National QELI Spring 2000

scores

KELI Domains	Mean	SD	N	National QELI Spring 2000
General Knowledge	2.32	.515	1031	2.34
Oral Communication	2.47	.581	1033	2.58
Written Language	1.47	.665	1031	2.27
Math Concepts	2.07	.570	1026	2.07
Symbolic Development	2.13	.581	1033	
Social Emotional Development	2.45	.552	1034	
Attentive Behavior	2.43	.590	1026	2.50
Work Habits	2.50	.540	1024	2.53
Academic Adjustment	2.08	.511	1034	
Social Adjustment	2.45	.543	1034	

Table 8.
Predictor Correlations

	Geo-graphic Location ^ρ	Child age ^ρ	Child gender ^ρ	Primary Race/Ethnicity ^ρ	Primary Eligibility Free/reduced Lunch ^ρ	Disability/ELL ^ρ	Primary Language ^ρ	Prior Education Experiences ^ρ	Academic Adjustment ^ρ	Social Adjustment ^ρ
Geographic Location ^ρ	1 ^ρ									
Child age ^ρ	.130** ^ρ	1 ^ρ								
Child gender ^ρ	-.002 ^ρ	.081** ^ρ	1 ^ρ							
Primary Race/Ethnicity ^ρ	.089** ^ρ	.049 ^ρ	.008 ^ρ	1 ^ρ						
Eligibility Free/reduced Lunch ^ρ	.045 ^ρ	-.037 ^ρ	.006 ^ρ	.012 ^ρ	1 ^ρ					
Disability ^ρ	.068* ^ρ	.099** ^ρ	.051 ^ρ	.012 ^ρ	.142** ^ρ	1 ^ρ				
ELL ^ρ	.155** ^ρ	-.022 ^ρ	-.026 ^ρ	.268** ^ρ	.244** ^ρ	-.081** ^ρ	1 ^ρ			
Primary Language ^ρ	-.187 ^ρ	.240* ^ρ	.016 ^ρ	.600** ^ρ	.177 ^ρ	-.140 ^ρ	1 ^ρ			
Prior Education Experiences ^ρ	.008 ^ρ	-.007 ^ρ	.000 ^ρ	-.051 ^ρ	-.144** ^ρ	.049 ^ρ	-.163** ^ρ	1 ^ρ		
Academic Adjustment ^ρ	.034 ^ρ	.188** ^ρ	-.084** ^ρ	.008 ^ρ	-.221** ^ρ	-.200** ^ρ	-.098** ^ρ	.137** ^ρ	1 ^ρ	
Social Adjustment ^ρ	.019 ^ρ	.146** ^ρ	-.177** ^ρ	.033 ^ρ	-.166** ^ρ	-.274** ^ρ	-.029 ^ρ	.000 ^ρ	.644** ^ρ	1 ^ρ

** Significant at the .01 level *

* Significant at the .05 level ^ρ

Figure 1. Total number of Kindergarten transition activities in which the families participated

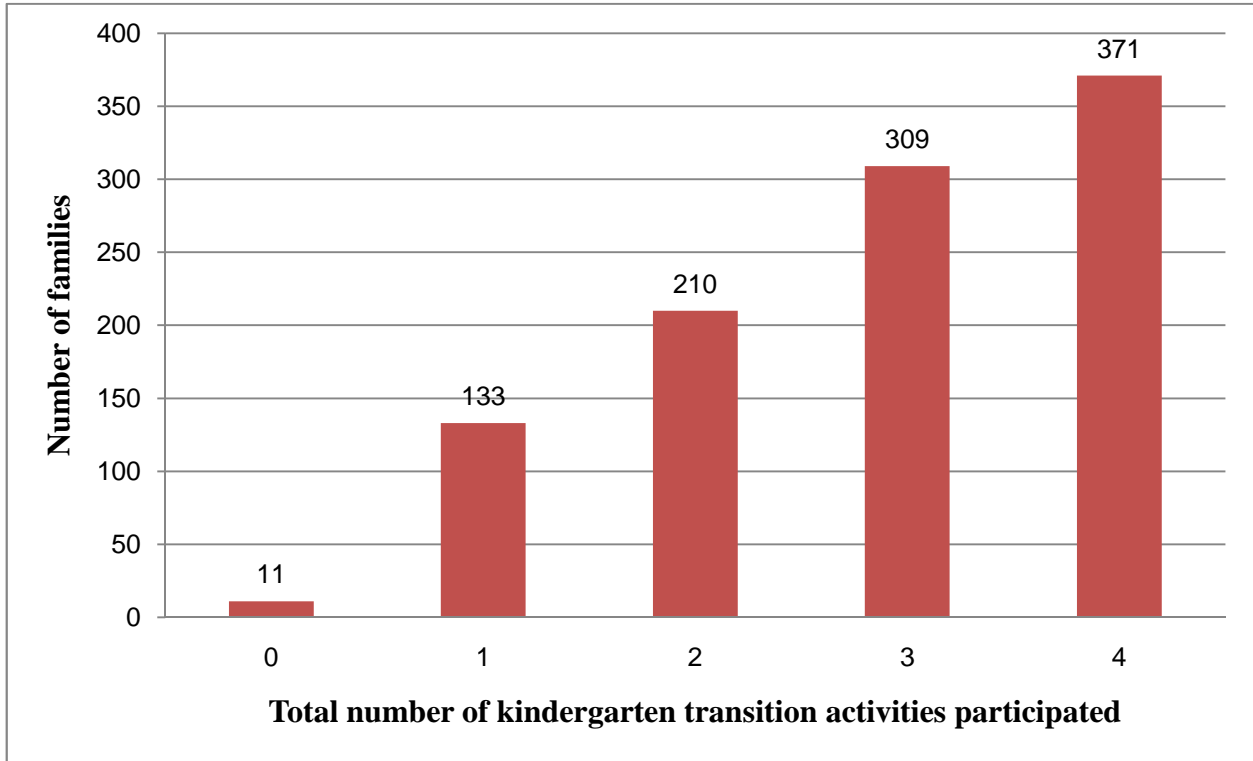


Figure 2. Number of families participating in Kindergarten transition activities, by type of activity

