PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS IN COMMUNITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Master of Science

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ABSTRACT

Parents of children in five half-day preschools were asked to select the three most important goals from a checklist for a preschool program. Parents participating selected most often the expectations: socialization, growth and development, and creativity.

Parents were also requested to select the three activities they considered inappropriate which were: the use of workbooks, learning a foreign language and learning arithmetic.

A comparison was made on the expectations of parents of three-year-olds and parents of four-year-olds, and parents of first-time enrollees and parents of children previously enrolled.

No statistical difference was found between the groups except for one item, "to learn to write" on the inappropriate list. The difference between parents of three-year-olds and parents of four-year-olds was significant at the .01 level.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

Within the past ten years, there has been evidence of parental interest in enrolling preschool children in some type of organized program. Schneider describes trends in preschool education:

Such factors as family income and occupation of family have an important relationship to the enrollment of young children in preschool educational programs. Higher family income and higher enrollment rates seem to go together, though enrollment of children from low income families is increasing due to Federal programs.

If current rates in preschool enrollment continue, 90% of all five-year-olds, 40% of all four-year-olds and 20% of all three-year-olds would be enrolled in some form of preschool activity by 1980. This would amount to an increase from about 3.9 million in 1968 to about 6.3 million children in 1980.1

Some programs are full-day, usually for disadvantaged or low income working families; some are half-day programs. The health and safety of the individual child and the group and a planned program for the development of children are requisites of any program enrolling children.

The full-day program provides extended care, including the noon meal, nap time, and often includes an age range of two and a half to

five years of age, and usually through the lower elementary school for
before and after school care.

The preschool or nursery school program is generally planned as
a half-day experience for three and four-year-old children. It is
guided by a head teacher or director-teacher and supporting staff with
assistance from selected committees. Parents may assist and participate
in such ways as volunteer services, discussion groups, social activities,
and money raising activities and by providing transportation for field
trips. These programs usually are non-profit and many are located in
church facilities. The church provides space (either free or for a
nominal rent), and some equipment. Other expenses of the programs are
met through tuition paid by the parents.

The activities of the program provided for the children may vary
in content and emphasis.

An understanding of the specific goals or objectives of preschool
programs help parents work cooperatively with the teacher for optimal
growth and development of their child. In order to understand the goals,
parents should have the opportunity to see the program in action.
According to Weber, "Another significant trend relates to efforts to
reach the parents of young children and to involve parents in the edu-
cative process." 2

Two effective ways for parents to learn about the preschool pro-
gram are by visits to the center and by spontaneous and arranged contacts
with staff. Usually the telephone conference is the first contact the

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parents have with either the teacher, director, or registrar of the preschool, and followed by a child-parent-teacher conference at the preschool location. Short conferences at the beginning or end of the child's school day, and individual parent-teacher conferences are desirable as needed.

The program is described by the teacher during the initial parent-teacher conference and the parents can discuss their expectations. When parents question why certain activities are a part of the preschool program while others are not, the teacher can help parents understand the characteristics of good nursery school programs and its relationship to the developmental levels of the age groups enrolled.

Generally, the characteristics of a nursery school are as Read describes:

The nursery school as we will define it is a school serving the needs of two-three-four-year-old children in today's world by offering them experiences adapted to what is now known about growth needs at these age levels. It shares with parents the responsibility for promoting sound growth and learning in a period when growth is rapid and significant. Respect for the individual child and his needs is the basis for a good nursery school program.

Read gives these specific characteristics for a nursery school.

In a good nursery school groups are small.
Nursery school is a place for activity.
Play is the great avenue for learning in the nursery school.
Much of the teaching in a nursery school is done indirectly.
Direct teaching is done with individual children or in small groups.
Every group in the nursery school will have more than one teacher. Young children need individual attention.  

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Important, too, is the understanding of the teacher for the feelings and ideas parents hold for their child and the preschool program. What parents expect their child to experience in a preschool program and what they consider inappropriate can help the teacher understand the feelings and ideas of parents. From a mutual base of parent-teacher understanding, a relationship can grow to one of a mutually cooperative learning relationship for both teacher and parents.

The writer's interest in parental expectations came as a result of serving and working with a preschool committee for a local church and hearing a teacher describe a parent-child-teacher situation, ending with this comment, "I don't know what our parents expect of us!"

The purpose of this study was to learn what parents think are important as goals for their children in a half-day preschool.

Problem Statement

In this study choices of parents with children enrolled in a half-day preschool program were compiled. Expectations of desired experiences and those considered inappropriate were compared by sorting responses.

Differences in expectations of parents of three-year-olds and four-year-olds were compared. Differences in relation to age of the child could vary because development and behavior patterns of three-year-old children differ from the four-year-olds.

Differences in expectations of parents of a first-time enrollee also were compared to the expectations of parents of children with one or more years of experience in preschool. Parents who had children enrolled previously in a preschool, due to familiarity or participation
in the program, might have different expectations than parents who had children enrolled for the first time in a preschool program.

The specific objectives of this study were:

What are the three experiences parents select as the most important for a child to experience in a half-day preschool program?

What do parents select as inappropriate in a preschool program?

Do parental expectations differ for three-year-olds and for four-year-olds?

Do parental expectations differ if parents have had a child previously enrolled in a preschool?

Null Hypotheses

There will be no difference in parental expectations of preschool programs for parents of a first-time enrollee child as compared to parents with a child or children with one year or more experience in preschool.

There will be no difference in the expectations of parents of children enrolled in the three-year-old class as compared with children enrolled in the four-year-old class.

Definition of Terms

A preschool or nursery school program: usually defined as a half-day program for three and four-year-old children located in the community.

The parents of a first-time enrollee: a parent who had a child enrolled in a preschool situation or setting for the first time.
The parents of a child or children with one year or more experience in preschool: parents who had a child enrolled for at least one year including older siblings previously enrolled in a preschool program.

A child development based program: a program defined and planned around experiences that serve the growth and development needs of the age level of children enrolled.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The search of literature for previous research on parental expectations of preschool programs produced little results. Descriptor words placed in Mechanized Information Center (MIC), a Current Awareness Service of The Ohio State University Libraries, suggested only one source which could be used and it was on future enrollment trends. This library service began for the study in September, 1972, and continued until May 1, 1973, and computer reports were sent to the writer every two weeks.

The MIC Service included two data bases: Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) and Multi-Disciplinary Service (MDS). The descriptor words used for the data base profiles included the following: preschool expectation parents; preschool expectation teachers; preschool parent attitudes; preschool parent reaction; preschool parental aspiration; preschool parents goals; preschool parents objectives; preschool expectation teacher parents; and preschool goals teacher parents. The writer consulted periodically with the person in charge of MIC service for this study to determine additional or other descriptors that might produce more helpful references. Since the result was negative, it can be concluded that little research has been done on parental expectations for preschool programs or placed in data bases of ERIC or MDS.

A search was also made of card catalogs, books, and professional
journals in order to determine why parents send children to preschool, support parents can and do give the teacher and preschool program, and the importance of a positive teacher-parent-relationship.

Apparently little research has been aimed specifically at parental expectations for community preschools. Only one reference was found which highlighted the expectations parents hold when enrolling a child in preschool. This reference was in Baruch's (1939) book, *Parents and Children Go To School* in which she devotes a chapter to "Why Do Parents Send Their Children to School?" In this chapter there is a detailed discussion of the various reasons parents send children to school, but for purposes of this review the writer selected summary statements to highlight parental reasons for enrolling a child in preschool which are as follows:

The largest number of parents send their children to preschool for companionship of other children of their own age.

The most frequent reason, then, that parents give for sending a child to preschool has to do with the child's social needs.

Occasionally parents do realize that there is tension in their home and that a child deserves at least a few hours relief from such an atmosphere. They seek the preschool, then, to afford this relief.

Much more frequently the parent appears at preschool because he feels a need for learning to be a better parent.

Often, too, the mother in the family realizes that being continuously with her child may make her subject to irritation from little things that would not bother her if she had some free time daily for chores and needed recreation.

Many parents realize that when a child enters grade school directly from home the preliminary adjustment may entail stress and strain. These can color the child's attitudes toward school.
The preschool offers definite educational advantages of various kinds. Many intelligent parents see this. They enter their children because they believe the preschool offers distinct advantages and opportunities for growth.4

Parents have a role in supporting the teacher and preschool programs. The leaders and writers in preschool education generally agree that the teachers' contact with the parents of the enrollees is important when planning the preschool program. Christianson believes "the child's needs and interest can be met more realistically when parent counsel is invited and valued."5 In one of fifteen points to consider for program planning Hildebrand stresses "A good program considers the interests and needs of parents as well as children."6

Hymes reminds us that parents will support good education "once they have the chance to think and talk about it." According to Hymes, the reasons for this parental support is, "What parents want for their youngsters is not different from what a good teacher wants."7

The parent-teacher relationship at the preschool level is most important because, according to Hildebrand, "The teacher is in a strategic position to set the stage for early and continuing parent-school interaction."8


7 James L. Hymes, Jr., Teaching the Child Under Six, Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1968, p. 155, 156.

8 Hildebrand, op. cit., p. 321.
Read places much responsibility on the preschool teacher for the development of a positive, cooperative parent-teacher relationship:

The nursery school teacher remains in a key position to help parents. She can help the parent value what the child is and does. She can help the parent see a relationship between a single bit of behavior and total growth patterns.9

Combs offers a challenge as well as a reminder to preschool teachers but perhaps parents should be included for they are a child's first and continuing teacher:

After all, what children make of the world is dependent on us, on you and me ... Every good experience a person is given is given forever . . .

Many teachers believe that what they do is unimportant. This is never so! It is never unimportant because you cannot 'unexperience' a good experience.10

A constant question preschool teachers and parents must ponder is the best way to help children grow and develop in their world of today and yet live in the world they will face tomorrow. Perhaps a partial answer to this question is realistically phrased by Lee:

You asked me to discuss the individual in a changing society. I would say to you, what is needed is that an individual should be encouraged and trusted to be an individual, to develop and trust his own capabilities for finding his way in a changing world.11

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9Read, op. cit., p. 386


CHAPTER III

METHOD

Research Design

The research design of this study was a descriptive survey. The instrument used was a check list of sixteen items.

The instrument was developed from a pilot study and from professional opinion. In the pilot study, mothers of children previously enrolled in a preschool were contacted and asked to respond to two questions: "What did you expect for your child when enrolled in preschool?" and "What did you expect for yourself?" The answers given by the mothers to these two questions were analyzed and grouped. Objectives given by professionals in nursery school manuals were also incorporated.

The sixteen item check list was composed of eight statements on experiences appropriate to the preschool program and eight statements on activities which were considered inappropriate.

Professional preschool educators were asked to rank items on the instrument considered important and also experiences inappropriate to the preschool program. The items selected by the professionals were used to validate the questionnaire items.

Procedure

Five preschools were selected from a total of nineteen community preschools in northwestern Franklin County because the pattern of
attendance was the same—three-year-olds two half-days a week and four-
year-olds three half-days a week.

The head teacher of each preschool was contacted for permission
to give the questionnaire to the parents of the children enrolled.
Each participating head teacher gave the instrument to the parents who
voluntarily participated by returning it to the writer in a self-
addressed, stamped envelope.

The instruments were coded by number according to a number given
the preschool. Signatures on the questionnaires were optional.

Parents were asked to number and rank the three most important
experiences they expected for their child in preschool. On a duplicate
check list parents ranked the three experiences they considered most in-
appropriate.

Identical checklists were used to prevent confusion for the par-
ents when selecting the three most important and three inappropriate
goals or activities. A letter explaining the purpose of the study
(Appendix A) and an information sheet were included (Appendix B).

Follow-up notes, on a half sheet of light blue paper, reminded
the parents to return the questionnaire (Appendix A).

Description of Sample

The subjects were parents of children enrolled in five preschool
programs. In general, the parents resided in the community which could
be designated as suburban and rural.

The one hundred thirty-two questionnaires were completed by one
hundred twelve mothers and six fathers with fourteen mothers and
fathers completing it together.
One hundred thirty-eight questionnaires, seventy-two percent, were returned, of which six were incomplete. The percentage of questionnaires returned by each preschool is given in Appendix C.

On the first page of the questionnaire in the comment space this question was asked: Are items checked also the opinion of other family members? Thirty-three respondents did not reply, eighteen said no, and eighty-one responded yes.

Four families did not agree on selection and/or ranking of the questionnaire items; therefore, both mother's and father's choice could be used as they had indicated selection in separate ways. Eight families did not select and rank inappropriate items on the second page of the questionnaire, therefore, the number of respondents to each page of the questionnaire was not the same.

Of the one hundred thirty-eight families responding to expectations, eighty-five were parents of children enrolled for the first time; fifty-three were parents of children with previous experiences in preschool; forty-eight were parents of three-year-olds and ninety were parents of four-year-olds.

Of the one hundred thirty families responding to activities considered inappropriate, eighty-one were parents of children enrolled for the first time; forty-nine were parents of children with previous experience in preschool; forty-seven were parents of three-year-olds and eighty-three were parents of four-year-olds.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed by item analysis for the two duplicate pages of the questionnaire: what parents expected their children to
experience and what was inappropriate for children to experience. The questionnaires were sorted and compared twice, one time according to age of child enrolled and a second time according to previous experience of the parents with nursery school experience. The rank order of the expectations and inappropriate activities was compiled using total frequency counts per questionnaire item. Chi Square was the statistical procedure used to determine differences for the individual questionnaire items for responses of the two groups of parents.

The responses of the parents of a first-time enrollee were compared to the responses of parents of children with one year or more experience in preschool. For each questionnaire item the responses of parents of children enrolled in the three-year-old class was compared to the responses of parents of children enrolled in the four-year-old class.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

General Findings

The parents participating in this study selected most often the expectations for socialization, growth and development, and creativity.

The three items considered most inappropriate for a child to experience in preschool were use of workbooks, learning a foreign language, and learning arithmetic.

There was no significant difference between the groups of parents who had children enrolled in preschool in choice of most important activities.

In selecting inappropriate experiences, the item "to learn to write" (seventh in rank order) was the only item which was significantly different between parents of three-year-olds and parents of four-year-olds. The chi square values for questionnaire items are shown in Appendix D.

The null hypotheses were: 1) there will be no difference in parental expectations of preschool programs for parents of first-time enrollees as compared to parents with a child or children with one year or more experience in preschool, and 2) there will be no difference in the expectations of parents of children enrolled in the three-year-old class as compared with the parental expectations of children enrolled in the four-year-old class in each preschool.
The statistical analysis using the chi square test failed to reject the null hypotheses at the .05 level of significance with one exception. The item, "to learn to write," selected by parents in this study as an inappropriate activity for a preschool program, showed a difference between parents of three-year-olds and parents of the four-year-olds which was significant at the .01 level.

Parental Choices of Expectations

A total of eighty-five first time parents and fifty-three parents with previously enrolled children completed the first page of the questionnaire selecting the three most important items they expected the child to experience in preschool. Parents of forty-eight three-year-olds and ninety parents of four-year-olds completed the first page of the questionnaire selecting the three most important expectations for a preschool program. Total frequency counts (including, first, second, third choice) of parents are shown in Table 1.

Nine of the sixteen items listed on the questionnaire were selected in the parental expectations. The questionnaire item selected most often by parents was "to learn to get along with other children of the same age." The second item selected by parents centered on the individual child, "to have the opportunity to further his own rate of growth and development through the use of space, equipment, materials not available in his home situation." Parents selected as third choice the desire to have a child participate in activities to encourage creativity, stated as "to experience activities that encourage the child's creativity."

The remaining rank order selections of activities considered
important for a child to experience in a preschool program can be seen in Table 1. These activities focused further on developing social relationships in a child's world, physical growth activities, and a better understanding of himself in his surrounding world.

**TABLE 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total Frequency Counts</th>
<th>Rank Order</th>
<th>Questionnaire Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>to learn to get along with other children of the same age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>to have the opportunity to further his own rate of growth and development through the use of space, equipment, materials not available in his home situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>to experience activities that encourage the child's creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>to learn to like the experience of school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>to have special activities each day that are the child's to enjoy in a child's world, apart from an adult world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>to develop ability through motor sensory experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>to learn more about life and living in the everyday world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>to learn to express feelings such as anger in ways other than hitting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9th</td>
<td>to participate in activities to keep him occupied, thus out of mischief</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of responses ranked 1, 2, and 3 = 824.
Parents Choices of Inappropriate Items

Of the one hundred thirty parents who completed the second page of the questionnaire by selecting three inappropriate activities or goals, eighty-one were parents of children enrolled for the first time; forty-nine were parents of children previously enrolled; forty-seven were parents of three-year-olds; and eighty-three were parents of four-year-olds.

Total frequency counts (including first, second, third choice) of inappropriate activities are shown in Table 2.

In choosing inappropriate activities, parents made a wider selection of items compared to selection of items for expectations.

The item selected most often as inappropriate for a child to experience in a preschool program was "to use workbooks." The second was "to learn a foreign language," and the third choice was "to learn arithmetic." The remaining rank order in the selection of inappropriate activities can be seen in Table 2. Other choices focused on skill development such as learning to read or learning to write, and learning to use helpful ways to express feelings, like anger.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total Frequency Counts</th>
<th>Rank Order</th>
<th>Questionnaire Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>to use workbooks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>to learn a foreign language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>to learn arithmetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>to participate in activities to keep him occupied, thus out of mischief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>to learn to read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>to learn to sit quietly during an adult program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>to learn to write</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>to learn to express feelings such as anger in ways other than hitting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>to learn more about life and living in the everyday world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>to develop ability through motor sensory experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9th</td>
<td>to learn to like the experience of school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9th</td>
<td>to learn the alphabet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9th</td>
<td>to experience activities that encourage the child's creativity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of responses ranked 1, 2, and 3 = 770.
Discussion of Findings

The parents participating in this study selected most often the expectation, "to learn to get along with other children of the same age." This finding supports Baruch's statements in the review of literature on why parents send children to preschool:

The largest number of parents send their children to preschool for companionship of other children of their own age.

The most frequent reason, then, that parents give for sending a child to preschool has to do with the child's social needs. Parents believe the preschool furnishes the companionship their child should have, and that it simultaneously helps him to the best use of this companionship.\(^{12}\)

The item receiving the second highest frequency count was "to have the opportunity to further his own rate of growth and development through the use of space, equipment, and materials not available in his home situation." The third choice was "to experience activities that encourage the child's creativity."

These choices of activities considered important support a child development based program with emphasis on socialization and creativity.

The remaining items selected by the parents as important for a child to experience in preschool were: 4) "to learn to like the experience of school," 5) "to have special activities each day that are the child's to enjoy in a child's world, apart from an adult world," 6) "to develop ability through motor and sensory experiences," 7) "to learn more about life and living in the everyday world," 8) "to learn to express feelings such as anger in ways other than hitting," and 9) ____________

\(^{12}\)Baruch, op. cit., pp. 17-25.
"to participate in activities to keep him occupied, thus out of mischief."

Through these remaining selection of items, parents in this study supported a program that helps guide the socialization experiences to the child's world.

The three items selected from the sixteen questionnaire items as most inappropriate for a child to experience in preschool were 1) "to use workbooks," 2) "to learn a foreign language," and 3) "to learn arithmetic." By selecting these items as the three most inappropriate, the parents further supported a child development based program because the items selected center on the use of a learning aid, the workbook, and specific skill development, such as learning a foreign language and arithmetic which are considered to demand levels of ability and concentration above those of a majority of children and are suited to later periods of development.

Parental Comments

A comment space was provided on each page of the questionnaire to provide opportunity to express opinions which might differ from items listed. These comments were included in the study because of additional information they provided. Parental comments either supported selections or further explained their selection of questionnaire items. Some comments added another dimension to socialization of the child; such as the value of play time with other children of the same age, and development of a relationship with another adult, the teacher. Parents commented on a specific area of a child's development such as development of self-confidence and exposure to readiness activities.
The following comments on the first page were in response to the question, "Do you have other expectations not listed above?"

... He enjoys having a small piece of his own world.

... to acquire self-confidence.

To have the opportunity to just play with other children in his own age group ...

So my little girl would have other little girls of exactly her own age to play with and consider as friends ...

I just want to comment that while I don't expect formal instruction and learning of alphabet, reading, and writing, etc. at nursery school level, I'd expect exposure to it and feel this should distinguish a quality nursery school from an ordinary play school.

... to learn more about people and living outside of the child's immediate family.

To learn to relate the principles of Christian living to everyday life.

To have a warm relationship with another adult (teacher) who is concerned with her.

To begin to enjoy learning.

It is our opinion that the main factor is that the child learns to like the school situation--included in that experience is getting along with children the same age. As far as we are concerned, if the child likes the school atmosphere he will want to learn to read, to write, to use workbooks, the alphabet, arithmetic, and a foreign language. Having a foreign language offered in preschool is an extra bonus, as it expands the child's learning abilities but does not cover material that would have to be recovered in kindergarten. Although we want our children to have a head start when they enter school, we do not want them to be bored because they've learned everything in preschool that is being taught in kindergarten. If a child develops a keen interest in school he will try to work up to his ability. A preschool gives a child a view of other children in a play and work situation and helps to ease the social adjustment to the classroom situation. It also gives the child a chance to learn to accept instruction from an adult other than his parents and outside the home situation.
If we could up-grade the whole elementary school system, we could up-grade the preschools in the sense that each child could learn at his rate--be it learning to draw, print, read, etc. . . . I know that most children do not have formal preschool training and when they're enrolled in kindergarten the preschool children have to wait for others to catch up. If we could just let them continue to reach out we could get the non-preschoolers more stimulated at the same time.

Parental comments on the second page of the questionnaire centered on specific and personal ideas and experiences related to the selected inappropriate activities. One parent explained her beliefs on children learning a foreign language by telling of a personal experience of living in a foreign country; another took issue with the word learn and still another commented on the amount of pressure children feel today and its effect on retention.

The following comments were in answer to the question, "Are there other activities not listed above which you would like to add to the list?"

Having lived in a foreign country for a year with a preschool child, I can say that a foreign language is very difficult for this age group. Children are just learning the language of the parents in the home and hearing another language outside can be confusing. The child picks up a few words, but it all becomes one language to him until he can distinguish that two separate languages are involved. Only the exceptional child can learn the two thought patterns involved in learning home and a foreign language at one time, at this age.

Except for number four above (to learn a foreign language) I would hope that a preschool would incorporate all of the sixteen items in their program.

I prefer a preschool to emphasize socialization and acquaint a child with a school-type situation through arts and crafts, etc. Leave the academics to the elementary and kindergarten grades! I'm old fashioned and feel these youngsters of today are being pushed so rapidly I wonder what they possibly retain.
I can keep my own child occupied and out of mischief!!! I would have no need for nursery school for my child if this were a goal of nursery school.

I only find two that I feel are strongly inappropriate. The others if approached on a preschool level and in an unstructured manner I feel are appropriate.

Learn is a difficult word to interpret; I would expect an exposure to numbers and letters that would be the basis for further cognitive skills.

Summary

This study provided information about parental expectations in five community preschool programs in northwestern Franklin County.

Expectations selected most often by the participating parents support a child development based preschool program with emphasis on socialization of the child and a program that encourages the child's creativity.

The three expectations receiving the three highest frequency counts were: 1) to learn to get along with other children the same age, 2) to have the opportunity to further his own rate of growth and development through the use of space, equipment and materials not available in his home situation, and 3) to experience activities that encourage the child's creativity.

Parents in the study also selected activities they considered inappropriate for a preschool program. Questionnaire items receiving the highest frequency counts were: 1) to use workbooks, 2) to learn a foreign language, and 3) to learn arithmetic. Parents considered learning specific subject matter like a foreign language and arithmetic and the use of a learning aid such as workbooks as questionable if included as an integral focus in the curriculum.
The age of the child and amount of previous nursery school experience a parent has been associated with did not make a difference in the expectations parents held for preschool programs, with the exception of item seven, to learn to write, considered inappropriate by the parents. The statistical analysis by chi square failed to reject the null hypotheses, with the exception mentioned above.

Implications

Parents agreed, at a high rate of consistency, on expectations for preschool which supported a child development based program. Generally, the age of the child and the parents previous experience with preschool did not make a difference in their expectations.

A possible reason for agreement on expectations between the groups of parents compared was that the questionnaire was given during the sixth month of the school year. During the first six months, parents could have been informed about the preschool program by the teacher through the intake and other conferences, by participation in group meetings, by informal discussion with other parents and the teacher. Parents could also be informed by reading professional and lay literature and through their professional background.

The instrument may not have been valid in that there could have been other reasons for enrolling a child in preschool than those given, such as convenience for the parents.

The questionnaire could be used by the teacher at the intake conference to help establish a means of discussion of parental goals. If there were major differences between parental goals and teacher
goals, the teacher would need to raise questions with the parents as to the suitability of enrolling the child.

The development of a supportive parent-teacher relationship is important to the growth and development of individual children and the group. Read's emphasis on the value of the teacher's role is summarized as follows:

As the teacher works with different parents, she will strive to understand the differences in their feelings. She will gain much in working with them that will help her in her own understanding of children . . .

Working together, teachers and parents will find the satisfactions that come with confidence, skill and understanding. 13

13 Read, op. cit., p. 386.
Dear Parents:

As part of the requirements for a M.S. Degree at OSU, I chose to study expectations parents hold for preschool programs. Since your child is enrolled in a preschool program, I would like to include your opinions in my study. If you are willing to share your ideas for the study, please take a few minutes to check the enclosed questionnaire. If a difference of opinion exists between adult members of the family when checking the questionnaire, please indicate the difference in the comment space.

This study will result in an exploratory set of guidelines for preschool teachers which could contribute to teacher-parent cooperation so important to help preschool children grow and develop daily.

Responses will be confidential and will be discussed only in terms of responses of the group. The results of this study will be shared with you at a later time. You will find a self-addressed, stamped, envelope enclosed for your convenience in returning this to me by the end of the week or sooner.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Genevieve B. Schroeder
(Mrs. Wayne E.)

GBS:n1
Enclosure
Dear Parents:

There is still time to return the questionnaire on parental expectations of the preschool program. I would like to include your opinions and would like a majority sample of the preschools I am including in my study. There are no "wrong" answers to the list since I am asking "What did you expect?" I also gave an opportunity to add if the list did not include your particular expectations.

Would you return the questionnaire by Tuesday, March 27, 1973? Please call me (451-7788) any evening between 7 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. if you have misplaced the questionnaire. I appreciate your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Genevieve B. Schroeder
(Mrs. Wayne E.)
922 J Chatham Lane, Apt. J
Columbus, Ohio 43221
Information Sheet

Before you share your ideas, I would like the following information:

1. Number of older children in your family ______

2. Have the older children attended a preschool?
   Yes _____   No _____

3. Is the child enrolled in this preschool the first child you have enrolled in a preschool?
   Yes _____   No _____

4. How many children do you have presently enrolled in this preschool?
   Three-year-old group ______  Boy? _____  Girl? _____
   Four-year-old group ______  Boy? _____  Girl? _____

Please specify who checked questionnaire.

Mother ________

Father ________

Other (Please specify, example: aunt, uncle) ________

Your Name __________________________
(Optional)
Please select the three most important items which you expected your child to learn in preschool. Rank these three items as 1 for most important, 2 and 3 for next in importance.  

 As a parent of a child enrolled in a preschool program, I expect my child:

_____ 1. to learn to express feelings such as anger in ways other than hitting.

_____ 2. to use workbooks.

_____ 3. to develop ability through motor and sensory experiences.

_____ 4. to participate in activities to keep him occupied, thus out of mischief.

_____ 5. to learn to read.

_____ 6. to learn to sit quietly during an adult program.

_____ 7. to learn to write.

_____ 8. to learn to like the experience of school.

_____ 9. to learn to get along with other children of the same age.

_____ 10. to learn the alphabet.

_____ 11. to have special activities each day that are the child's to enjoy in a child's world, apart from an adult world.

_____ 12. to learn arithmetic.

_____ 13. to experience activities that encourage the child's creativity.

_____ 14. to learn a foreign language.

_____ 15. to learn more about life and living in the everyday world.

_____ 16. to have the opportunity to further his own rate of growth and development through the use of space, equipment, and materials not available in his home situation.

COMMENT: Are items checked also the opinion of other family members? Yes ___ No ___. Do you have other expectations not listed above? If so, please comment. You may use the back of this page.
Please select the three items you consider inappropriate for your child to experience in preschool. Rank these three items as 1 for most inappropriate and 2 and 3 for next in inappropriateness. **RANK ONLY THREE.**

As a parent of a child enrolled in a preschool program, I expect my child:

_____ 1. to learn to express feelings such as anger in ways other than hitting.

_____ 2. to use workbooks.

_____ 3. to develop ability through motor and sensory experiences.

_____ 4. to participate in activities to keep him occupied, thus out of mischief.

_____ 5. to learn to read.

_____ 6. to learn to sit quietly during an adult program.

_____ 7. to learn to write.

_____ 8. to learn to like the experience of school.

_____ 9. to learn to get along with other children of the same age.

_____ 10. to learn the alphabet.

_____ 11. to have special activities each day that are the child's to enjoy in a child's world, apart from an adult world.

_____ 12. to learn arithmetic.

_____ 13. to experience activities that encourage the child's creativity.

_____ 14. to learn a foreign language.

_____ 15. to learn more about life and living in the everyday world.

_____ 16. to have the opportunity to further his own rate of growth and development through the use of space, equipment, and materials not available in the home situation.

**COMMENT:** Are there other activities not listed above which you would like to add to the list? You may use the back of this page.
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### TABLE 4

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*Significant at .01 level

Enter Chi Square at 1 Degree of Freedom $P = .0500$ $P = .0100$

$3.84$ $6.64$
REFERENCES


