Ohio kindergarten readiness collaborative:
Family Fun Event

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Abstract

Children need specific early experiences from day one to be prepared for school and for life. One of the most important things a parent can do for their child is to foster a love of reading and learning in their home. Playing with their child and making play-dates is vital to a child’s development and so a child has time to build those social-emotional skills with his or her peers. If parents created a safe and stimulating environment in the early years, we could help all of our babies and toddlers develop into successful, independent kindergarteners who were well-prepared for life. Together we could grow our children into independent kindergarteners who were well-prepared for life. When parents are aware of what they should be doing to help stimulate their child and why it is so important, they are more likely to participate in such activities. The focus of this family fun event was to empower the parents to be confident in their skills since parents are the first and most important teachers in a child’s life.

Keywords: Children, families, kindergarten readiness, education, home, literacy, social emotional, collaborative
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To my daughter, Mikayla Keathley, I thank you for begrudgingly supporting me through nights and weekends where I was too busy to play and you wrote about me in your diary wishing I would be done with school and I could pay attention to you. Now I can, I am DONE!
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CHAPTER 1 - Introduction to Project and Evidence of Mindfulness

Purpose and Scope

The Ohio kindergarten readiness collaborative is a community collaboration made up of fifteen partners who all are working together to develop solutions to ensure all children enter school healthy and ready to learn. The change I planned on making through this capstone project was to increase the understanding parents and caregivers have on the ways they can support and encourage their child’s learning through play-based activities. The focus of this capstone project was to create an opportunity to collect feedback from parents about their understanding of readiness skills before and after a free kindergarten readiness focused family fun day event. The goal was to leave families feeling empowered to become intentional teachers and to learn how to use materials found in the home to create experiences for their children to learn from. The Ohio kindergarten readiness collaborative’s mission is to enroll all children who reside in the local school district, as early as birth, to provide free developmental screenings, social emotional screenings, family education, peer support services, and referrals to local resources. All of these services impact the children served prior to entering kindergarten. There was a free family fun event hosted on Saturday, April 28, 2017 from 2-4 pm as a culmination of this research project and to serve as a pilot event for future engagement opportunities.

Guiding Values and Project Significance

After teaching in early learning centers for over ten years, I understood the importance of a solid educational foundation and the multiple benefits of group experiences early in life. When the opportunity to work as the coordinator of a collaboration focused on improving the early learning experiences of children arose, I was inspired to become that change agent. The lack of available services, parental education, and access to high-quality experiences for children of all
socio-economic statuses was something that I planned to improve in the long and short term through my work. When our collaborative began, we asked kindergarten teachers what skills they wished their incoming children had. Overwhelmingly, the teachers said that the children needed more social-emotional skills so they could come into school able to listen, play together, be away from their parents, and have independence skills. Our community is dedicated to helping our children to be better prepared for school through educating parents and to help their children build their knowledge by becoming healthy, confident learners. I valued the fact that parents are a child’s first and most important teacher. If we educate the parents, the children will be more likely to learn too.

My personal interest in raising the number of children who are deemed “ready” comes from several years of working as the coordinator for a kindergarten readiness initiative. Over the past three and a half years, I have completed over two hundred and fifty developmental screenings of children ages birth through five. I then worked to create an individualized plan for each child and family to help their child either remain on track for kindergarten or identify the stops along the way they may need to make in order to catch up to their peers.

Many of the families in our community are poor. Children coming from impoverished environments are already starting behind their more fortunate peers. The local school district in northeastern Ohio serves 853 children within their four school buildings preschool through twelfth grade.\(^1\) During the 2017-2018 school year, 61.1% were flagged as economically disadvantaged and all grade levels showed that “students made less progress than expected in

According to the 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, there are 276 children under the age of five who reside in this particular northeast Ohio town. These 276 children are the target demographic of Ohio kindergarten readiness collaborative. As of April 2018, the Ohio kindergarten readiness collaborative had enrolled 208 children who have not yet entered kindergarten of the estimated 276 eligible. Through my work with the collaborative, I can reach those families to help them to feel empowered as their child’s teachers regardless of their own education.

**Record of Initial Mindfulness**

A parent’s greatest possession is their child. Gaining the trust of a parent to not only meet their child but to become aware of possible needs within the home, the parent, or the child is imperative. Being mindful of how I approached families and concerns regarding their child’s development, I was able to build a relationship of trust and understanding with many families. When you are mindful of others, you are able to understand the thoughts, feelings, and beliefs that mold them as an individual and allow for respect and appreciation of others. When you are empathetic, you are free to be at peace with yourself and have more clarity in your own mind and body by releasing your judgements and seeking understanding. I learned that I need to turn everything else off, stop worrying about time, tasks, and just be in the moment. I need to give my complete self to the families I work with.

**Limitations**

Over the past three years of our existence, we have already found that there are about a third of the target population who are hard to reach. There are racial and economic differences, and trust issues

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2 Ibid
https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tabservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF
between many of the families and the service providers. Internally, the impact that effects our collaborative most is the lack of a dedicated space. There are only two paid employees who run the collaborative. I serve as the coordinator and case manager and am full time. We also employ a Promotions and marketing associate who is part time. Both of us share an office with the executive director of our lead partner. The lack of office and meeting space is a huge limitation currently. Though we have been actively searching for a space for the past year, we have yet to find a space which not only fits our needs but also our budget.

For the purpose of the family fun event showcased in this paper, limitations included a lack of public transportation, access to materials, understanding of the importance of kindergarten readiness, and false understanding of appropriate activities. If the weather was not cohesive to walking, many families may have chosen not to attend. On the other hand, if the weather was too nice, other families may choose to participate in another event outside with their family. The space the event was hosted in was at the local public library. Some lower literacy parents may feel a sense of discomfort attending an unfamiliar event in the library. Some parents may not have seen the value in attending this type of event because they felt that their child is “smart” or “ready” and saw the event as a waste of time. This town is very cautious about new activities since there are so many long-running community events. Other families may have been intimidated by the words “kindergarten readiness” printed on the flyer. Parents may feel unsure of the meaning themselves or may think their child is too young to attend, even though the flyer stated the event was intended for all children ages 0-5. Overall, I believe that these limitations did not prohibit the event from being a success but required me to consider alternative locations to host future events to be more inclusive of families in our community.
Definitions of Terms

Collaborative: A group of individuals and representatives of organizations who come together to work toward achieving an agreed upon goal.

Steering Committee: The advising board of elected representatives of the collaborative who attend monthly meetings and whose responsibilities include decision making and analysis of data to determine next steps and achievement of goals.

Kindergarten Readiness (also known as school readiness): “School readiness involves more than just children. School readiness, in the broadest sense, is about children, families, early environments, schools, and communities. Children are not innately ‘ready’ or ‘not ready’ for school. Their skills and development are strongly influenced by their families and through their interactions with other people and environments before coming to school.”

Partner: A member organization or representative of the community who has signed a Memorandum of Understanding in agreement to terms of the collaborative for at least one year.

Social-Emotional: Prior experiences, acceptable management of emotions, and the ability to establish positive and beneficial relationships with others.

Collective Impact: A framework for creating and monitoring progress within specific social problems. It is made up of a group of committed people and institutions with an agreed upon common agenda. Its name derives from the 2011 publication Collective Impact by John Kania and Mark Kramer.

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CHAPTER 2 - Literature Review and Initial Stakeholder Dialogue

Introduction to Literature Review

When I began searching for terms to research the most significant factors leading to a child’s kindergarten readiness, I needed to choose specific terms to limit the information I found. I searched words like “kindergarten readiness,” “emergent literacy,” “home literacy,” “high quality early childhood education,” and “linkage between home life and school readiness skills.” I searched the Claremont Lincoln University’s online library for peer-reviewed research and scholarly journals surrounding the topic of kindergarten readiness. I also used the Google Scholar search engine for research. All of the articles I chose for my literature review came from scholarly journals and publications. My goal was to identify the most important factors with the greatest impact on the readiness of children. I also wanted to focus on the factors that I could impact through my work with Ohio kindergarten readiness collaborative. Since our collaboration has already been active for the past three years, I used the research to help determine how I could better engage parents to increase the impact I could make.

In planning my capstone project, I had decided to focus on creating a parent engagement opportunity with the purpose of teaching parents how they could ensure their child was ready to learn. “Ready to learn” and “kindergarten readiness” are terms that have many definitions. As I have learned through my research thus far, aspects of kindergarten readiness are identified differently by each person which changes the definition from person to person, profession to profession. The home life and early experiences a child experiences sets the tone for the child’s school readiness. Children experience a wide range of socioeconomic statuses, maternal education levels, rates of maternal depression, frequency and quality of literacy experiences birth
through five, and other early learning experiences. The first five years of a child’s life are critical to their educational foundation for learning and achievement throughout life.  

The Ohio kindergarten readiness collaborative is working to create a more equal starting point for all children who reside in one northeastern Ohio town. By offering access to free, universal developmental screening tools, family needs assessments, risk-factor surveys, case management, face-to-face meetings, and opportunities for free high-quality parent and child engagement opportunities, I was offering the opportunity to educate parents on ways to better prepare their children for school entry through play-based activities at home. The change I planned to focus on was increasing the parental understanding of kindergarten readiness. I hosted a kindergarten readiness family fun event as the focus of my capstone project. I offered age appropriate kindergarten readiness activities for children and education for parents on how to prepare their children at all ages and stages prior to kindergarten through play-based activities.

Evidence

The experiences of a child within their own home in their earliest years of growth and development are one of the most important factors leading to a child’s school readiness. Many longitudinal research studies have been completed which focused on the various factors within the home and their effects on a child’s level of school readiness. Though one cannot control the events which occur in the home, it is my hope that through the efforts of the Ohio kindergarten readiness collaborative, we can educate parents in understanding the lifelong benefits of positive, supportive, and high-quality activities within the home. Simply reading to a child from birth is a valuable tool in fostering early literacy skills. Reading itself is beneficial but asking questions...
about what is being read helps to grow the connection to words in the book and build comprehension of what is being read.

Kindergarten is the foundation for a child’s future. What a child experiences in their first year of school sets the tone for their entire future. Dr. Laura Justice, professor and researcher at the Ohio State University, stated in a lecture I attended, that children who enter kindergarten in the bottom twentieth percentile, stay there. She went on to lecture about the importance of emergent literacy skill building in young children. If a child has a successful start, they are more likely to enjoy learning and have a greater chance of becoming a high school graduate and be more successful later in their adult life. If a child starts school behind, with unidentified needs, or with a negative tone, they are more likely to dislike attending school and learning and are more likely to drop out of school later in life. According to the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, “It is one of eight national education goals that all children in America start school ready to learn, but national studies estimate that more than forty percent of America’s new kindergartners are not fully prepared or ‘ready’ for school.” The local school district in northeastern Ohio notes that there are roughly thirty percent of children entering kindergarten who are not deemed “ready.”

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9 Laura Justice. “Emergent Literacy” (Presentation, Ohio Department of Education: Literacy Academy Conference, Columbus, Ohio, January 18, 2018).

Overview

I began my research for the literature review by using Claremont Lincoln University’s online library by searching the term “kindergarten readiness.” I found many resources right away. I then went on looking into the history of kindergarten to help me to understand the original intent and structure. Reading these articles helped me to understand the early approaches educate young children involved playing and the use of simple, manipulative toys. I was pleased to see that play was the focus and not academics. Learning about the types of toys the children were given and how they required creativity and intentional experimentation by children was inspiring. One of our partners, an early learning center, operated under a very similar model. I was looking for information that was written about the history of early childhood education back over a hundred years ago.

I decided to focus on the home life and early learning environments of young children and the effects they have on creating the foundation of skills for the children experiencing them. I should note that I added in early learning centers because for some children, they spend more waking hours in care of others than in their own home due to the parent’s work schedules. Research has shown that these factors have not changed much over the past twenty years other than the introduction of technology, which I did not focus on since the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no screen time for children under age two and limited screen time under five.

Past Perspectives on Kindergarten Readiness

Once I began collecting and organizing the articles, I identified several reoccurring themes. I sorted my research on the following topics: Socioeconomic Status, Household
Literacy, Family Support Systems, High-Quality Childcare, Quality of Home Environment, Parental Engagement, and Parental Play Skills. Each of the topics has a variety of subtopics which help to make up the areas that most impact children. In the past, some of these topics were never even considered to be important or worth researching. In fact, emergent literacy was not even formally identified until about twenty years ago. Emergent literacy is the earliest skills acquired naturally between the ages of birth and five. Later early literacy skills which are developed between the ages of five and eight, or during the early elementary school years. What a child experiences the first five years sets the tone for the next five and beyond. An article by Claire Hughes, et al., on behalf of The British Psychological Society states that, “Evidence that children’s early adjustment and development predict important long-term outcomes and (e.g. Keating & Hertzmann, 1999) has attracted great research interest, but a formal definition of school readiness has yet to be widely agreed.”  

Since my focus is on children who are ages birth through five and studies focusing on emergent literacy did not really start until the late nineties, I did not focus on much research prior to this time period. Much of the prior research focused on the impact of socioeconomic differences among children’s homes. Low-income parents of young children often face multiple stressors, including financial strain, low levels of social support, and challenging family and work conditions. The effects of a child’s poverty level may be intensified by the child’s race as

\[\text{[References]}\]


African American and Hispanic children are more likely to live in poverty and be less likely to be ready to enter school. The family’s income is considered a stronger predictor of child cognitive abilities, regardless of parent investments, for Black children than it did for White or Hispanic children. Douglas D. Ready writes in his research, that poverty rates are also linked to school absenteeism in children. This increased absenteeism is attributed to the fact that children living in poverty are more likely to suffer from chronic illnesses and transiency due to maternal employment, or lack thereof, and are likely to fall more than one standard deviation below their peers in literacy development.

Another aspect of kindergarten readiness that has been studied for many years is the concept of literacy development in terms of parents reading to their children and exposing them to books in the home. “Parent and child shared book reading is associated with language skills, reading ability, and school achievement.” The research also found that the mothers with the lowest literacy rates spoke less to their child, especially during shared reading, by not asking questions, labeling items found in the pictures, and their child appeared to be less interested in the activity. These children were also found to be less ready for kindergarten and had lower

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14 Ibid

15 Douglas D. Ready. “Socioeconomic Disadvantage, School Attendance, and Early Cognitive Development: The Differential Effects of School Exposure.” Sociology of Education. Vol. 84. No.4, pp. 271-286. DOI:


vocabulary rates as well as interest in educational activities in general. In fact, “based on some estimates, parental language use in the home and teaching strategies could account for 25-60% of the readiness gap.”\textsuperscript{18} Previously, just reading to a child was considered to be best practice. As more research has been completed, the manner in which a parent reads to their child has become more important. Not only should a parent read and be seen reading but they need to draw attention to the words on the page, what the words mean, asking questions about the text, and asking comprehension and open-ended questions to connect and extend their child’s prior knowledge.

Another issue that was less common throughout history due to mothers typically being homemakers, was the need for high-quality child care. There are few articles and studies related to this topic in the history of the issue of kindergarten readiness. Children who have high-quality parent-child interactions within their home have higher rates of literacy and kindergarten readiness.\textsuperscript{19} Parent and child shared book reading is widely recognized as directly contributing to an increase of language skills, reading ability, and school.\textsuperscript{20} This research has lead me to better understand the impact a child’s caregiver has on their rate of kindergarten readiness. As part of my work, I am looking for ways to impact the interactions parents have in their home. Potential ideas for ways our collaborative could affect the literacy activities in the home include offering free parent education workshops, interactive reading demonstrations, and virtual peer support groups. If parents understand the importance of their children having the freedom to play with other children in more imaginative manners, such as playing outside, using natural materials to


\textsuperscript{19} Ibid

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid
create and build, and to spend more time with children in the neighborhood then their children
would likely be more ready for school. Just as children of the past created their own source of
early childhood education through play, parents can better understand the importance of children
educating and interacting with each other can benefit children immensely.

**Current Perspectives on Kindergarten Readiness**

Current research on early childhood education and kindergarten readiness is flourishing. The impact of a young child’s education, both at home and in group care, is being seen as
instrumental to supporting future skills and learning. Investing in early childhood programming
has become a hot button issue and research is pouring in to support the needs and outcomes.
Currently, it is important that children who are not able to remain in the home are placed in a
high-quality, regulated early childhood center to help educate and care for children’s emotional
and developmental needs. When a placement is low-quality, many times, the experiences and
overall education a child receives is subpar and ineffective in creating a strong foundation of
skills. The quality and frequency of interactions parents engage or do not engage in with their
children are vital to their child’s literacy development, cognitive, personal, social, and
intellectual well-being. As more parents are working, more children are placed in child care.
This out of the home care may occur with a family member, a babysitter, a childcare center or
home care provider, or a variety of environments. Positive and negative outcomes for a child are

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21 Gregory Taylor, Sharon L. Kagan, Jodi Enda, Sandy Miller, Joni T. Close, Janice Gruendel, Mark McQuillian,
heavily influenced by what surrounding adults pay attention to and do, whether at home or in an early childhood educational care setting.  

High-quality has become a trending topic. High quality can be defined in several ways, but the term high-quality is associated with the teachers setting up the physical environment for the appropriate age and level of their children. Adults should encourage natural play and exploration through natural materials, equipment, and objects being placed throughout a safe environment both indoors and outdoors. In the state of Ohio, there is a childcare rating system which has been an optional requirement of all licensed child care centers but will become a requirement by 2020 for all licensed centers in order to collect funding. High quality is considered to be a star rating of either a 3, 4, or 5 out of a possible 5 stars. All three of the early learning centers in our focus area of northeastern Ohio are high quality but the Ohio kindergarten readiness collaborative is working on ways to bring other center-based and home care providers in the area up to a higher level of quality. This has become important to our work as current research is stating that not only is one year of high quality early childhood education necessary for academic, social-emotional, and literacy skill proficiency, but two years may be more beneficial to both those who need childcare and those who do not. A study also found that children who scored the lowest on cognitive ability skills received the most gain from their experiences in a center-based program. Another benefit was that “after controlling for the

22 Ibid


effects of family socioeconomic status and family structure, preschoolers living in neighborhoods with lower levels of childcare readily available displayed less adaptive behavior skills in school settings than children in neighborhoods with more high-quality and readily available childcare resources.\textsuperscript{25} By working to increase the number of high-quality environments and options, we will be able to allow more opportunities for children to enter kindergarten on a high level of readiness than would be otherwise available.

Parenting skills is another important issue that I researched. The style of parenting that a parent uses directly relates to a child’s well-being, self-esteem, readiness, and skill acquisition. The confidence a mother has in her parenting skills is coupled with instances of financial strain which tends to lead to feelings of inadequacy in the home leading to lower rates of positive interactions with their children.\textsuperscript{26} Another crucial factor within the home is the number of children under the mother’s care. The more children there are to care for, the higher the levels of stress and financial troubles there may be.\textsuperscript{27} The more stress within the household, the less ready for school a child may be. When a family, especially the mother, feels supported and has someone to turn to for resources, the child’s well-being is directly impacted. There is no standard situation for a parent to feel overwhelmed. This is not just true for families in lower income statuses or with lower maternal education levels but anyone at any time can become stressed. The act of parenting is overwhelming in itself and when coupled with financial or resource


\textsuperscript{27} Ibid
instability, the rates of depression can be on the rise. The children in the home suffer the effects of their mother feeling like she lacks parenting abilities or faith in herself. Caregivers, especially mothers, need support and this is a key objective of my work as a case manager within the collaborative.

A child’s home environment can impact their readiness in terms of the amount and quality of educational interactions with their parents, the amount of screen time they receive, physical discipline, parent’s depressive symptoms, and the parent’s attitudes toward literacy and other educational activities and skills. This information was very important to me in planning parental engagement opportunities for the families I serve in our community. By offering play groups, I model activities, questioning styles to engage children’s learning, and including literacy into daily activities like playing with play dough, cars, or painting. I can help build parent’s confidence in their own abilities. Not surprising were the results of the research that found that the more parents were engaged in their child’s education, both in and out of formal school environments, lead to decreased rates of behavioral issues in children being raised in a single-parent home or in a neighborhood which lacks childcare options. Parental involvement includes engagement in positive parenting practices such as showing affection, giving praise, using appropriate instruction, and promoting positive behaviors within your home. These parental behaviors were found to reduce the effects poverty have on a child’s development and school

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readiness.\textsuperscript{30} When a parent is taught how to be a more effective parent, their child can have a better chance at appropriately functioning in the classroom. In other words, the key to changing a child’s behavior may be most impacted by changing the parent’s behaviors.\textsuperscript{31} These studies validate the work Ohio kindergarten readiness collaborative is completing to increase parent engagement activities, increase their peer support, providing ways to offer more positive parenting methods, and sharing resources within the community of parents.

\textbf{Future Perspectives on Kindergarten Readiness}

The future of early childhood education is an inspiration to me. As stated previously, more of a focus has been recently placed on the effects and benefits of early childhood education. When I read that emphasizing the value of the higher levels of problems among children from low-income families, I knew that we must offer more positive and empowering engagement opportunities. There is a difference in the quality of family support received and needed, highlighting the need for family-based interventions.\textsuperscript{32} I was inspired to add intentional and research backed questions to our intake form to better identify children and families with risk factors. These questions also help to create conversation starters to best determine if there is any ways I can help the child or family achieve a greater level of readiness. The more stress within the household, the less ready for school a child may be.

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\textsuperscript{30} Ibid
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Our work will include changing the stigma surrounding early childhood education as only necessary in terms of child care but as essential to the healthy development of children, beginning in infancy.33 Not only is early care and education a necessity but raising healthy children is also imperative to their development and overall readiness. Routine health care for pregnant women and well checks during development of children after birth are critical to maintaining health and wellness.34 Caregivers need support and this is a key objective of my work as the case manager within the collaborative. I work to be that person who can assist families in getting the services they need.

As demonstrated throughout this paper, family support is necessary for positively impacting a child’s readiness. Working to meet the parent’s needs therefore helps the children’s needs to be met. When a parent does not have stability in their own life, the effects trickle down onto their children by means of their linguistic abilities, social-emotional skills, physical development, and academic abilities. By our collaborative identifying and helping families to overcome risk factors such as poverty, literacy, and the support inside of the home we can all lead to the increased level of readiness a child has when they begin school. Not surprising were the results of the research that found that the more parents were engaged in their child’s education, both in and out of formal school environments, lead to decreased rates of behavioral issues in children being raised in a single-parent home or in a neighborhood which lacks


Parent involvement is not just showing up in a classroom or reading some books with your children. Parental involvement includes engagement in positive parenting practices such as showing affection, giving praise, using appropriate instruction, and promoting positive behaviors within your home. These parental behaviors were found to reduce the effects poverty have on a child’s development and school readiness. As more research is released, these topics will gain even more understanding issues in parenting. In the meantime, I will use my connection to the families in my community as a way to educate, empower, and inspire parents to do more with their children, regardless of busy work schedules and commitments.

**Stakeholder Perspectives on Kindergarten Readiness**

The Ohio kindergarten readiness collaborative is made up of fifteen partners who specialize in a wide variety of resources. We have partners who are in the medical, social services, local government, education, and literacy fields. By bringing together a diverse group of partners, we can meet a diverse set of needs. Our key stakeholders are the children, the parents, teachers, community leaders, and service providers. I have based some of my work on the assumptions that our stakeholders know what kindergarten readiness is, how important a child being “ready” is to their lifelong success, and that they all are interested in participating in changing the rates of readiness within our community. Each of our stakeholders have varying responsibilities. Parents are responsible for completing annual developmental and social-

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36 Ibid
emotional screenings and working with their children to best prepare them for school entry. Some parents may be responsible for taking their children to referred agencies to allow their child to receive necessary evaluations or services but other parents may not have that need. The children are only required to play. Fred Rodgers of the iconic “Mr. Roger’s Neighborhood” says that, “Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood.”

Our partners have all signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which outline the requirements of being recognized as a partner in our work. Such requirements include attendance at annual meetings, representation on the Steering Committee and possible involvement with Impact Teams, and general marketing requirements like adding our logo and website to their website and sharing our flyers with their clients and staff. At times, we lack the ability to engage partners in our work because they have many responsibilities within their organizations. Because I am employed full time to complete the work of the collaborative, I not only feel as though I am responsible for completing the work myself but that I cannot ask partners to complete tasks on our behalf due to their lack of time.

Our lead partner is responsible for maintaining communications, is the fiscal agent, payroll provider, serves as the direct supervisor, and currently houses the collaborative employees’ office. Most of the stakeholders have been on board with the collaborative’s work from the launch of the formal collaboration back in June of 2014. Prior to receiving grant funding to support the work of the collaborative, partners had attended many meetings to determine the mission, vision, and the long and short-term goals of the collaborative. Partners had a say in the structure of the leadership, marketing materials, hiring of the coordinator, and

maintained constant contact and gave their feedback on many important issues. The stakeholders helped to determine the best practices the collaborative would use to impact kindergarten readiness and set up the processes for doing so. We continue to involve our partners in monthly steering committee meetings, through regular electronic communications, and shared resources.

Through my research of the factors that most effect a child’s level of readiness, I was able to more closely determine which partners could provide beneficial programming and services. Through our intake needs assessment, the intentional questions all correlate not only to research proven factors which effect readiness, but also to the services I can refer families to through the collaborative. Everything from children receiving basic medical care like well checks and immunizations, to mental health screenings to identify sources of trauma, and education are all positive opportunities for change for all of our stakeholders. These ideas may seem rudimentary but prior to implementing the intake questions, I was unaware of some of the factors our children were up against prior to entering school. Early intervention is key to helping children enter kindergarten healthy and ready to learn. When disparities are identified and treated prior to age five, the future negative impact is lessened while the need for further intervention is also lessened and the “problem” may become obsolete.

Connecting with parents to identify their own definition of kindergarten readiness and their view of the impact their role as a parent has on their child’s future is a beneficial way to create impact in a positive way. By changing the common knowledge to be more inclusive of early intervention, awareness of what is normal or age-appropriate behaviors, and reducing stigmas about needs are all changes we can make. There remains a stigma about children receiving services and that it is the fault of the parent. Many times, it is not the parent’s fault and by empowering the parent to identify and seek services, they are improving their child’s future
substantially. Parents are the child’s first and most influential teacher. By providing parents with access to screenings, services, case management, and support the parents are able to become even greater educators and advocates for other children and families in the community.

By compiling the literature review, I was able to collect a large number of resources to support our work in the community to further my capstone research plan. We can use this information to further our reach by submitting grant requests to support our work and that of our partners. Families continue to be the biggest focus of our work. Through the research I completed, I was able to identify the most impactful factors within a child’s home and identify the ways our collaborative can create systems change in our community.

**Conclusion**

By educating parents on the importance of the effects they have on their child, I will be able to open up the conversation and work with families to identify potential ways we can help them. I always tell parents that if I do not ask, I will not know and encourage them to do the same. If parents are in need of something, large or small, if they vocalize that need I can find resources in the community to help. Children are also important as they are the future generations. If we can make things better, more inclusive, more attainable, and common, then we can help more children to better succeed in life. By putting such programs in place, they will be more well-known and used in the future. We are also collecting data from these families to closely monitor the impact we have on our initiatives. As we are collecting and evaluating our data, we are able to make educated decisions on where to focus our future efforts. Our collaborative will be following these children through graduation to complete a longitudinal study to monitor and reproduce our findings in other communities. Students who attend a local college, within our own community, are completing further research on our behalf. There is a
professor who is not only a parent member of our collaborative, but also a faculty member of the local college. He is interested in supplying the statistical analysis of our impact overtime and using his students to learn on behalf of and to the benefit of our collaborative. Last year, his students completed interviews with past and current parents involved as clients of our collaborative and with parents who were unaware of our work in the community. This information has been beneficial to helping us move forward in programming opportunities and marketing materials. Research shows that to ensure a good start in life all infants and toddlers need good health, strong families, and positive early learning experiences.\(^3^8\) The Ohio kindergarten readiness collaborative is using research and policy recommendations from organizations such as Zero to Three to help guide our mission and vision. Programs and services that address these areas are critical; however, they are only as strong as the infrastructure that supports them.\(^3^9\) In order for our work to be effective, our services must be accessible, affordable, high quality, and culturally responsive.\(^4^0\) Infrastructure is all of the behind the scenes work that goes into making universal programming possible and effective. The Ohio kindergarten readiness collaborative has been working since June of 2014 to create an impact on the kindergarten readiness levels of the children of a local city school district. Through continued research, data collection, and community support, we will improve our reach and impact upon


\(^3^9\) Ibid

the future generations of children who reside in our target city of northeastern Ohio by working with families to better educate them on how to prepare their children for kindergarten.
CHAPTER 3 - Methods Determined with Stakeholders

Project Goal Determined by Researcher and Stakeholders

Kindergarten readiness is something that many parents misinterpret as their child needing to perform a series of academic tasks like reading and writing but that is not all that is needed. Children need to have some basic skills to be successful. Basic skills like being able to make friends, follow directions, and strong small muscles in the hands, all lead to positive achievement once a child enters kindergarten. To address this needed parental education, it was determined that a kindergarten readiness event made up of activities that could be duplicated easily, and cheaply, at home would be the focus of this capstone project. The idea for a community event surrounding play-based activities began back in January 2018. Two of our collaborative partners expressed interest in offering more events but were unsure of what the families wanted to attend.

Out of these conversations came the idea for a community-wide survey of families to determine the most wanted activities, days, times, and frequency for events. I created a survey using Survey Monkey and included questions asking about the best day of the week, time of day, number of events the families would attend, and the types of reoccurring events or groups they would be interested in. I received thirty-two responses in a week’s time. The number of families who responded showed me that this topic is something that community members were interested in completing and would be beneficial to their families in return. The survey resulted in our collaborative learning that most respondents were interested in attending family engagement events, not just events for one of their children. They were seeking activities to do together with children of mixed ages. The respondents also chose weekend afternoons as the number one choice. Several responders wrote in that they would like to be able to have events that are offered on Saturday afternoons so “dad could come too since he has to work during the week.”
survey result report was sent out to all our fifteen collaborative partners for their information. I used the survey results to help guide my capstone project planning. I knew that I needed to offer a family-friendly event on a Saturday afternoon between the times of 2 and 4 pm. (See Appendix F)

My next step was to begin planning the type of family engagement activities that would be the most beneficial for the parents and children. I decided that I wanted to offer a family fun event that was set up with activities that could be easily duplicated at home, and using either repurposed materials or items that could be purchased inexpensively. The activities that I would choose were also skills that were assessed in the Ages and Stages screenings. Skills like cutting with scissors, hopping on one foot, jumping, communicating, and problem solving would all be the focus of the event.

Shortly thereafter, I spoke to Dr. Stan Ward to get approval for my capstone project and to make sure I was on the right track. We discussed the ideas for the event that I had and the measurement tools I would use. It was decided that I would ask that attendees complete a quick survey so I could gauge their understanding of kindergarten readiness skills both before and after they taken part in the event. We ended the call with plans for me to discuss the activities and survey questions with our steering committee the next day.

Project Methods Determined by Researcher and Stakeholders

I presented my idea for the family fun event at the monthly steering committee meeting and my partners loved the idea. They thought that choosing to offer a sampling of the activities and skills assessed in the Ages and Stages Questionnaires was a great idea as was the plan to only use readily available materials found in the home. The partners thought that his event would be successful and could be easily reproduced throughout the year.
During a meeting with the marketing specialist, the event details were planned in more detail, including sitting down and making a list of activities and materials that would be used at the event. We determined how we would run the tables and what literature or signage would be created specifically for the event. We also decided that we wanted to include parents who were interested in volunteering. I sent out an email to the parents who had indicated on their intake form that they would be interested in volunteer opportunities. I also emailed the mothers who frequently attend the play groups that I run since the event would include many of the activities that I have offered at the play groups over the past few years. I had eight parents respond that they would be interested in working one of the tables at the event that was coming up in a few weeks. The email simply described the activities and the details of the event like the time, location, and date. I told the parents that they would be asked to bring their own children to the event and sit at the stations and play with their children to model and engage other parents. The volunteers would be asked to just talk to the other parents, many they may already know, and just talk about “parent issues” surrounding getting your child ready for kindergarten.

The week leading up to the event involved gathering materials for the stations and making copies of intake packets, pre-and post-event surveys, the ethical guidelines statement, and creating signage for each of the stations. The stations included the areas of the Ages and Stages Questionnaires: Communication, Problem-Solving, Personal Social, Gross Motor, Fine Motor, and Social-Emotional skills. Each of the station signs had a few words describing the activities at the station. For example, the communication station sign was to be hung in the area with books, cozy chairs, puppets, and pillows. One sign said, “Communication Station: Read, Ask Questions, Talk About the Pictures, Sing Songs, Play Pretend.” All the signs were
laminated so they could be used in future events like this one, should it prove successful and enjoyable by families.

The Family Fun Event was hosted on Saturday, April 28th from 2-4pm at the public library. The event was set up in a large community room with tables around the room and a large open area in the center with a masking tape obstacle course created on the floor. The day before the event, the parents who had volunteered were sent a reminder email with a copy of the final activities list attached for their information. (See Appendix D) I told the parents that they could move from area to area, depending on where their child was interested in playing. I also told the parents that their children would be teaching the other children as well, whether they intended to or not. Other volunteers included two of the early learning center executive directors who are partners, one of which is the lead partner and both on our steering committee, and their children, my daughter, a graduate of the collaborative’s pilot programming, and the marketing associate. There was an offer sent out to all the partners to volunteer at the event tables even though they were not invited to host their own tables with marketing information. None of the other partner organizations attended.

**Project Measurements Determined by Researcher and Stakeholders**

Our collaborative partners reviewed the goals of the project and decided the best way to assess parental understanding was to use a pre- and post-event survey. This survey would measure the understanding as well as capture some insight into the activities already occurring within the homes. The pre-event survey would include the following questions:

1. What is the most important skill or skills for a child to have when they start kindergarten?
2. What activities do you do at home to prepare your child for school?
3. How confident are you that you are doing the right things to prepare your child for kindergarten?
4. How often do you read with your child?
We also wanted to determine what the parents learned by attending the event, if anything. We knew that by asking specific questions we could gauge if their ideas surrounding activities they should be doing had changed or if they were reassured that they were doing the “correct” things for their children. After some conversation, we determined that these would be the post-survey questions we would ask.

1. What new ideas for kindergarten readiness did you learn today?
2. How will you change what you play with your child after today’s event, if anything?
3. How confident are you, after coming to this event, that you are doing the right things to prepare your child for kindergarten?
4. Do you have any questions about kindergarten readiness or your child’s development? Please explain and include your name, email and/or phone number.
5. How likely would you be to attend this type of event again?

We discussed how we would track the changes between pre-and post-event surveys. We decided that we would ask for the ages of the children as the first question on both surveys. We did not want to ask for the parent or children’s names because we thought that we may get more truthful answers if we left the survey somewhat anonymous. Our partners also thought that we could gather the ages of the children we could determine if the confidence level and/or understanding of kindergarten readiness was different if parents who were first time parents or parents of children who have yet to enter kindergarten was different from parents who had older children in the home. (See Appendix A, B, and C)

The pre-event survey was copied with the Ethical Guideline Statement on the other, since both pages were needed to be completed prior to the event. The decision to copy the forms this way was the idea of the marketing associate. She thought that the parents would more willing to complete the surveys and put more thought into their answers if they knew that the information was also going to help me complete my capstone research project. Parents would be asked to take a clipboard and complete the short documents either before entering the
community room or once they entered the room and were settled. Parents would also be given
the opportunity to register for the collaborative or update their information using the quick
intake forms during the event as well. When parents were seen getting ready to leave or
towards the end of the event, the promotions and marketing associate was planning to give the
post-event survey to the parents. As a thank you for attending the event and to provide
materials to continue the activities at home, each child would be given a home literacy kit
while their parents completed the post-event survey. These literacy kits will extend the efforts
made during the pilot capstone project.
CHAPTER 4 - Results: Evidence of Change through Project Implementation

How Stakeholders Were Interviewed to Determine Project Goals, Methods, and Measurements

For the capstone project, the stakeholders worked together to create the activities to be offered, the purpose of the event, the measurement tool, and the reporting back to the steering committee regarding the success for the event. A pre- and post-event survey was created through discussions with the steering committee and through discussions with several parents who are part of a parent group that is active within the organization. The goal was to have parents currently involved with the organization volunteer to run the activities at the event with their children to help model and engage with other parents. The goal for the number of attendees was to have at least one parent volunteer and one attendee come to the event.

During this capstone project, I focused on implementing parent engagement activities to improve how parents interact with their children and increase their understanding of kindergarten readiness. I did this by offering a free community event on April 28, 2018 showcasing ways to educate your child through play, intentional reading to and with your child, and increasing the number of children enrolled in kindergarten and transitional activities prior to the first day of school. This event will serve as the pilot for future kindergarten readiness events we will host. The surveys will help to determine parent’s perspectives on what kindergarten readiness is and to identify what they are currently doing to educate them within their homes. The post event survey will help our collaborative to identify if the event was successful in helping parents to feel more positive about their role as a parent educator.
Actions Taken by Researcher and Stakeholders

The table below contains a list of tasks and the schedule in which I planned to complete them. There is also a column which shows that all tasks were completed on time. Other details of the events and meetings concerning the planning of the event are included within the Collaboration Log. (See Appendix E for Collaboration Log)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Goal/Focus</th>
<th>Completed/Notes on Changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>April 8-14</td>
<td>Create Family Fun Event Flyer/Marketing Materials. Write Press Release</td>
<td>Completed on time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Send out invites to partners and parents to assist with event</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>April 15-21</td>
<td>Submit press release. Plan activities for event. Finalize plans. Make</td>
<td>Completed on time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>blueprint for room arrangement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>April 22-28</td>
<td>Final Preparations for event</td>
<td>Completed on time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Host Family Fun Event Saturday, April 28th 2-4pm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>April 29-</td>
<td>Review surveys.</td>
<td>Completed on time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>May 6-12</td>
<td>Contact families by email to follow up after the event</td>
<td>Completed on time. Only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>May 13-19</td>
<td>Send second attempt email for follow-up with participants</td>
<td>Completed on time. No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>May 20-26</td>
<td>Review results of event with steering committee Determine future event</td>
<td>Completed on time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>plans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Measurements of Results
During the event, I offered pre- and post-event surveys to gain understanding of each person’s idea of what kindergarten readiness means, what activities they do at home, and what they plan to do at home after the session is over. Long term, the collaborative will measure the rate of enrollment of members in the collaborative over the estimated community population and
in the completion of the kindergarten transition activities. We will identify our success of this particular event by counting the number of children in attendance, the number of adults, the number of current collaborative members, the number of new collaborative members, the number of updated enrollments, the number of parent volunteers and the improvement in the parent’s self-confidence in their ability to appropriately prepare their child for kindergarten.

I will include my findings in a report made to the collaborative’s steering committee, whose members include the director of special education and the elementary principal of the school district we are focusing on. There was a steering committee meeting which occurred in May 2018 but I was unable to attend the meeting to review the results of the surveys personally. The results will be shared in the chart form at the June 2018 meeting.

I engaged in data assessment by directly speaking with each attendee, adult and child, during the event. I spoke to the children and asked them about what they were doing, what they had tried already, what activity was their favorite, etc. I took the time to ask each parent if they had any questions about kindergarten readiness or concerns about their individual child. I will also use the feedback and activities used in the parent engagement session to create educational materials to be distributed through social media, the schools, and to our members through emails and link on our webpage.

Each child received a home literacy kit upon exiting the event which contained a variety of intentional materials including books, paper, scissors, writing/drawing tools, and other fun learning activities. A week after the event had taken place, I contacted the parent participants to ask if their understanding of kindergarten readiness had changed after attending the event, if they felt more or less confident after the event, and if they tried any new activities or tools from the literacy kits in their homes with their children after attending the event. Photographs of the
activities offered at the event will be used in future marketing materials and to accompany written suggested activities for parents within the homes to help stimulate their child’s learning. (See Appendix G)

Below is a table which includes the responses on the pre-and post-event surveys. I have included the narrative exactly as written by the parents. The post-event survey results table shows the growth in confidence the parents self-reported as a result of attending the event. Parents were also contacted one week after the event to ask them about their use of the activities they learned at the event. I asked them specifically if they had tried any newly learned activities or if they were more intentional about completing readiness activities with their children. Only one parent replied to the email and he stated that he had started using a cutting box at home for his two sons, ages 3 and 4. He said that the cutting box was great because he took my advice and included his old bills and other junk mail for the boys to practice cutting and gluing with. He said that he liked that the boys were helping to shred sensitive documents and it was environmentally friendly because he was repurposing the materials he would have previously thrown away.

Below is a table including the results of the pre-event survey as completed by nine families who attended the family fun event that was hosted by the collaborative.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q #1. Age of Child(ren)</th>
<th>Q #2-What is most important</th>
<th>Q #3 What activities do you do at home to prepare your child for school</th>
<th>Q #4 Confidence level prior to event</th>
<th>Q #5 Frequency of Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 ½</td>
<td>Be Social, Listening</td>
<td>Flash Cards, reading, some tablet time w/ learning games</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>A few times a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 ½</td>
<td>I’m not actually sure</td>
<td>Matching, color sorting, etc.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>A few times a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4, 17 months</td>
<td>Good Language Skills, strong social emotional skills duly</td>
<td>Crafts, books, helping with cooking, helping in the garden</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 &amp; 4</td>
<td>Social interaction skills, listening skills</td>
<td>Arts &amp; crafts, reading time, tracing, learning numbers &amp; letters</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>A few times a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Hold a pencil properly, able to sit for a period of time, potty-trained</td>
<td>Read, write, draw, paint, color, play sports, listen to music, teach manners</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 &amp; 3</td>
<td>Social skills- knowing how to interact with other children, ability to listen &amp; follow directions, curiosity</td>
<td>Provide a variety of activities-arts &amp; crafts, building blocks, reading, balls, etc. Also allow for as much outside time as possible plus group activities, story times, play groups</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Daily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Pre-Event Survey Results Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q #1. Age of Child(ren)</th>
<th>Q #2-What is most important</th>
<th>Q #3 What activities do you do at home to prepare your child for school</th>
<th>Q #4 Confidence level prior to event</th>
<th>Q #5 Frequency of Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Emotional development and social communication, knowing how to share and take turns, to express emotions, to have patience and play attention for a defined period of time, to listen to teacher and friends</td>
<td>Practice asking questions when one wants something instead of demanding, offering choices and allowing child to choose, expressing emotions, especially when upset or disappointed with words. Practice letter recognition and writing when interest is expressed.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 &amp; 7</td>
<td>Identify letters, numbers, good interactions with other children</td>
<td>Read, index card reviews</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Social &amp; Problem solving skills</td>
<td>Practice personal information, writing skills, fine motor &amp; gross motor skills, memory games, using daily activities as teachable moments, PLAY😊</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Daily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Below are the results of the surveys that were completed when the family was leaving the event. The purpose of the post-event survey was to determine if there was any improvement in the parent’s personal confidence and to see if the activities that the parents experienced were something that they would do at home as well. The last question, “What is the likelihood that you would attend another event similar to this one?” was used to determine if parents found the event engaging, purposeful, and if we should continue to offer similar events in the future.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q #1. Age of Child (ren)</th>
<th>Q #2 - What new ideas did you learn today?</th>
<th>Q #3 - How will you change what you play?</th>
<th>Confidence level BEFORE attending event</th>
<th>Q #4 - Confidence level after event</th>
<th>Q #5 - Questions about readiness/your child?</th>
<th>Q #6 - Likelihood to attend another event like this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 ½</td>
<td>Creativity Social Skills</td>
<td>A lot of everyday things at home can be used to learn and play with</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Not quite sure yet. We still have over the next year and a half to get her ready.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 ½</td>
<td>Everything was very helpful. I knew I wanted to get started doing activities like this with my son. This has given me many ideas like the pom-poms &amp; Just scissors/ripping activities.</td>
<td>More Scissors. He loved using them.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>I’m concerned about his speech. I think he’s delayed but I’m not sure.</td>
<td>10 PLEASE DO MORE!!!!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4, 18 months</td>
<td>More fine motor skills at home</td>
<td>New ideas for fine motor skills</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Not at this time</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 &amp; 4</td>
<td>Cut boxes w/ different styles of safety scissors are an excellent activity for fine tuning their hand/eye coordination skills</td>
<td>We already do lots of blocks, obstacle courses &amp; play dough at home but could do more arts and crafts and increase story time.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Nope</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lacing-fine motor, tongs/hole punch-&gt; grip/motor, Legos, gross motor-jumping</td>
<td>Try to use simple things around the house to practice skills (buttons, egg cartons, pompons, tongs, etc.)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>All were answered at this event</td>
<td>7 Would be more fun if not parent guided.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3. Post-Event Survey Results Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q #1. Age of Child (ren)</th>
<th>Q #2 - What new ideas did you learn today?</th>
<th>Q #3 How will you change what you play?</th>
<th>Confidence level BEFORE attending event</th>
<th>Q #4 Confidence level after event</th>
<th>Q #5 Questions about readiness/your child?</th>
<th>Q #6 Likelihood to attend another event like this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 &amp; 3 1</td>
<td>Gross &amp; fine motor activities. Fun literacy activities (book making, puppets w/ books)</td>
<td>Provide a variety of activities arts &amp; crafts, building blocks, reading, balls, etc. Also allow for as much outside time as possible plus group activities, story times, play groups</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Not at this time. (It helps that I have one who is already post-K)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 &amp; 7</td>
<td>I really liked the lacing plates and playing with everyday objects like coffee filters &amp; cotton balls - was more engaging for pretend play than I would have imagined.</td>
<td>I think perhaps using objects to do more imaginative play; putting together unlikely objects to see what connections the kids make.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 &amp; 7</td>
<td>Did not complete a post-event survey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Using scrap materials for tactile experiences and fine motor skills</td>
<td>Add more abstract ideas</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessment of Goal Achievement

The table below breaks down the project goals and the outcomes of those goals as determined by the stakeholder group.

**Table 4. Measurement of Event Goals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have at least one parent volunteer attend the event</td>
<td>There were 5 parent volunteers who attended the event with their children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have at least one family attend the event</td>
<td>There were 9 families who attended the event 14 children 9 adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate an increase in the self-confidence of</td>
<td>25% remained the same confidence level pre-and post-event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parents regarding their role as an educator to their</td>
<td>33% increased their confidence level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child(ren).</td>
<td>10% decreased in their self-confidence level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 did not complete both the pre-and post-event survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of New Collaborative Enrollments</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of updated Collaborative Enrollment Forms</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 had updated their enrollments the past 6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 family was not eligible to enroll due to school district of residence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 5 - Final Reflections and Recommendations

Overall Project Summary

By completing the pilot Family Fun Event, I learned a lot about what parents and children enjoy doing together. The parents and children moved through stations of self-guided activities to encourage the practice of kindergarten readiness skills. By engaging current OberlinKids parents as volunteers, I helped to empower parents to connect with each other regarding worries, ideas, and their children. The children were able to show their parents how creative and capable they are when they are given open-ended materials to use. The children explored the materials available in each station and created their own activities, such as cutting the dry spaghetti verses my plan for them to use the scissors to cut the play dough and the dry spaghetti to stand up in the play dough. The children made friends, laughed, enjoyed learning alongside of their parents and most of all, they had fun. The purpose of the event was to encourage parents to understand that children learn best and the most through play and experimentation. The parents learn many new ways they can stimulate their children’s skills at home through play-based activities which will help to build their kindergarten readiness skills.

Consistency of Guiding Values

The guiding values that I identified early on through this capstone project remained true to the end. I stated in chapter one that my goal was “to reach those families who need the confidence to feel empowered as their child’s teachers regardless of their own education.” The parents who may seem the most educated and attentive may be those parents who believe that flashcards and skill-and-drill activities best prepare their children for school. The parents who are least educated may appear to be disinterested in their child’s learning and feel that the school is a better source of education than the parent is themselves. Neither of these statements are true, nor
are any combination of the two. What is true is that all parents can learn a new idea or method, or skill to share with their children. All children are capable of learning. All children teach themselves through playing with items around them. When parents and children can actively play together they can produce a stronger, more ready child. I have continued to see the impact empowered parents can have on their children. The kindergarten readiness event that I hosted for the fulfillment of the capstone project showed me so much about how families interact with each other and the ways that I can help them to become more empowered and the children’s learning can be nurtured. The method I chose to use parents and children to teach other children and parents through modeling worked perfectly. Parents reported that they all would attend another event with the same set up. This project was a success and I have learned so much about how I can better myself as a teacher to all of my clients, children and adults alike. This event helped to build trust between families and our collaborative. Our collaborative gained great exposure.

**Project Impact on the Researcher**

This project helped to build my self-confidence as well as the parents. I learned that my ideas for setting up stations for parents and children to move through at their own pace, checked in with by myself or volunteers occasionally, is a great model. The parent and the children enjoyed the event and I was able to watch true learning take place in front of my eyes. Most importantly, I was able to share the experience of watching a child learn and perfect a newly acquired skill along with their parent. I was able to share in the excitement of the parents and children as they were successful at the attempted skills, at their own level of appropriateness. Parents reported that they loved the event. Children reported that they had fun playing. Each family was able to go home with a literacy kit full of materials to help extend their learning
 beyond the day of the event. All of these outcomes were above and beyond my expectations for the event.

**Project Impact on the Stakeholders**

The parent volunteers reported that they enjoyed the activity and interacting with other parents. I was able to overhear and join in on some of the conversations between the parents about kindergarten, fears they have, questions that needed answers, and trust being built among parents and community members. One parent said that she was amazed at the progress her son made in such a short time. She stated that “he had never touched a pair of scissors before today and now, look at him cutting away! I never thought that he would be ready to use scissors at just three years old.” Another father said that his two boys loved arts and crafts but he always used store-bought craft materials, not recycled materials. He was inspired to use open-ended materials for his boys to create with instead of having a finished product in mind. He noted that “they are having so much fun and are working on this for way longer than they ever work on crafts at home.” I shared with him that open-ended activities allow the children to create and explore, rather than do as they are told. They learn so much more that way and have a sense of pride at the end.

**Overall Project Assessment**

My goal was to offer a kindergarten readiness event which would empower parents to educate parent through play and exploration. The strengths of this event were the arrangement of the room and the activities that were available. The room arrangement allowed for movement to be free of obstructions yet was not inviting children to run around and be unsafe. There were child and adult sized tables and chairs, accommodations were made, like the cutting boxes being placed on the floor for the children to use, and the ability to move from station to station as the
children pleased. The activities were also perfectly chosen for the event. They were creative, open-ended, ample, and child-friendly. Weaknesses of the event were that the event was a pilot and was not trusted and that there were other events occurring in town at the same time. The weaknesses were not something that could have been avoided because there always has to be a first event. Secondly, the other event in town was not advertised anywhere but to the college students. The other event was held just down the road from the library and was a draw from the loud music that was playing. Several parents did comment that the event was not child appropriate due to the extremely loud music but that they children still had fun and there was food.

**Recommendations for Future Projects**

This event will be duplicated much in the same way it was done in the pilot. The event ran perfectly, there was positive feedback, the location was central to the community, and the event was free. Alternative locations, days of the week, and times will be tested in the future. I anticipate that the event will occur at least quarterly as time moves forward. Our idea is to host this type of event at least quarterly, for marketing and engagement strategies. We could host this event at various locations around the community like at churches, partner agencies, outdoor spaces like parks, and at the different early learning centers we are partnered with. The activities would not have to change much. The materials would just need to be refreshed before each event. We could even bring one of the stations to other community-wide events and use it as a draw to engage new families to talk about our collaboration and to offer free enrollment to new families. Due to the lack of staffing, we may be limited in the frequency of hosting this event. We are looking to hire another staff member and hosting these events would be one of their responsibilities. Partners could borrow the materials to host their own events as well.
REFERENCES


Justice, Laura. “Emergent Literacy” (Presentation, Ohio Department of Education: Literacy Academy Conference, Columbus, Ohio, January 18, 2018).


APPENDIX A: Ethical Guidelines

To Whom It May Concern,

I am doing an action research project about Kindergarten Readiness as the focus of my Capstone Project at Claremont Lincoln University, and I am asking you to be a participant in my research. I will give priority to your interests at all times. To protect your interests in my final report, I promise the following:

• Your identity will be protected at all times in my final report unless you give me specific permission to use your name.
• You are free at any time to withdraw from the research project, whereupon I will destroy all data relating to you. I will report that a participant decided to leave the project, and reflect on ways the project might have been more conducive for all participants.
• I will make a copy of my research report available to you.
• A copy of this signed Ethics Statement will be emailed/mailed to you within 1 week.

Researcher’s Name: Jennifer Keathley Date: April 28, 2018

I have received this ethics statement from Jenn Keathley.

I give permission to use my unidentified information in your final report.

I give my permission to use photographs of my family in marketing/social media.

I give my consent to be contacted for a follow up electronic survey.

Parent/Caregiver’s Name(s): ________________________________

Children’s Names/Ages: ________________________________

Signed ____________________ Email address ________________________________
or Home Address (for mailed copy of consent) ________________________________

PLEASE NOTE: If at any time you have any questions or concerns about the project, you may contact the Dean of Capstone Studies at Claremont Lincoln University, Dr. Stan Ward. Please contact him by email: sward@claremontlincoln.edu, or call the university: 909-667-4400.
APPENDIX B: Pre-Event Survey

Pre-Event Survey

1. What are the ages of your children?

2. What is the most important skill or skills for a child to have when they start kindergarten?

3. What activities do you do at home to prepare your child for school?

4. How confident are you that you are doing the right things to prepare your child for kindergarten? (Circle one)

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
   Not at all  Somewhat  Very

5. How often do you read with your child? (circle one)

   Daily  A few times a week  Once a week  A few times a month  Rarely/Never
APPENDIX C: Post-Event Survey

Post Event Survey

1. What are the ages of your children?

2. What new ideas for kindergarten readiness did you learn today?

3. How will you change what you play with your child after today’s event, if anything?

4. How confident are you, after coming to this event, that you are doing the right things to prepare your child for kindergarten?

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
   Not at all     Somewhat     Very

5. Do you have any questions about kindergarten readiness or your child’s development? Please explain and include your name, email and/or phone number.

6. How likely would you be to attend this type of event again?

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
   Not at all     Somewhat     Very
## APPENDIX D: Event Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Station</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Materials Needed</th>
<th>Volunteers Needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Registration Station</strong></td>
<td>Sign In, Pre-Event Survey, Post-event Survey, Confidentiality Agreement</td>
<td>Copies of Confidentiality Agreement/Sign in Form</td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Copies of Pre-Survey Form</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Copies of post-Survey Form</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Entry Forms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Give Away Literacy Kits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Table Cloth/Runner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gross Motor</strong></td>
<td>Throwing games</td>
<td>Balled up socks/Laundry Basket</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crawl/jump/Hop/Tip Toe from line to line</td>
<td>Masking Tape</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Masking Tape obstacle course</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sensory</strong></td>
<td>Squeeze/Squish Texture Play Dough</td>
<td>Play Dough</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bead hide and seek</td>
<td>Scissors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lacing games</td>
<td>Beads (variety)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dry Spaghetti</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rolling Pins</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cookie Cutters /Plastic Knives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>Read a story</td>
<td>Books (variety of subjects and ages)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sing a Song</td>
<td>Chairs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ask Questions</td>
<td>Blankets/Pillows</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rhyming Games</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fine Motor</strong></td>
<td>Write a Book</td>
<td>Premade small booklets (construction and copy paper stapled)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Draw a picture</td>
<td>Pens/Pencils/Markers/Crayons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cutting box</td>
<td>Plastic Bin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lacing Games</td>
<td>Scissors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Variety of materials (straws, paper, fabric, string, magazines)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Paper Plates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hole Punch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Event Materials</strong></td>
<td>5-8’ Tables</td>
<td></td>
<td>2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14 chairs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Chairs from Children’s Area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pillows/Bean Bags/Blankets/Stuffed Animals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Audio/Visual Equipment-For Milestone PowerPoint Slides (optional)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Event Setup</strong></td>
<td><strong>Registration</strong>- 1 table in lobby of the library outside of community room 2 chairs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Gross Motor</strong>-Against back wall and into center of room. No 1 tables.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Fine Motor</strong>- 2 tables by wall of outside windows with 6 chairs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Communication</strong>- 2 chairs and cozy materials. Basket of books against Children’s Area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Sensory</strong>- 2 tables front of room with 6 chairs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX E: Collaboration Log

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Attendees</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 4, 2018</td>
<td>Meeting with Librarian regarding family engagement events in town.</td>
<td>Coordinator, Marketing Associate, Children’s Librarian</td>
<td>Meeting was to determine what events/groups have been successful in the past and which have not. Gather questions for community survey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 5, 2018</td>
<td>Meeting with City Recreation Superintendent regarding community events of past and future.</td>
<td>Coordinator and City Recreation Superintendent</td>
<td>Meeting to determine what events have been requested, successful, and are planned for the future. Gathered questions for the community survey from the City.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 10, 2018</td>
<td>Sent draft community survey to partners for feedback.</td>
<td>Coordinator and 15 partners, including lead partner, City, and Library.</td>
<td>A survey was created using Survey Monkey. The draft survey was sent out to partners for their final thoughts, questions to be added, and feedback on the survey itself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 16, 2018</td>
<td>Reviewed feedback from partners</td>
<td>Coordinator and marketing Specialist.</td>
<td>Determined what questions were most needed and what feedback from community members would be most beneficial to all partners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 19, 2018</td>
<td>Survey Monkey Link sent to all emails in the client database and on social media accounts.</td>
<td>Coordinator and 312 email addresses and social media users.</td>
<td>Community members completed the survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 23, 2018</td>
<td>Reminder with survey links sent to same sources. Survey closes 1/26/2018 at 12pm.</td>
<td>Coordinator and 312 email addresses and social media users.</td>
<td>Community members completed the survey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Attendees</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 29, 2018</td>
<td>Reviewed Survey results</td>
<td>Coordinator</td>
<td>32 individuals completed the survey on behalf of their families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1, 2018</td>
<td>Launched new screening model for families. (Digital and paper options)</td>
<td>All partners and clients were notified of changes</td>
<td>The addition of digital intake forms allows another option for busy parents to complete their registration forms and begin the screening process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 8, 2018</td>
<td>Began literature review/research of factors leading to or prohibiting kindergarten readiness</td>
<td>Coordinator and lead partner</td>
<td>Began collecting research about factors contributing to kindergarten readiness for literature review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 9, 2018</td>
<td>Began planning capstone project</td>
<td>Coordinator, lead partner, marketing specialist.</td>
<td>Created a list of options for family engagement event including kindergarten readiness as a focus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 20, 2018</td>
<td>Discussed capstone plans by phone</td>
<td>Coordinator and Dr. Stan Ward, CLU</td>
<td>Finalized kindergarten readiness event concept, discussed measurement options, and goals for the event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 21, 2018</td>
<td>Presented capstone project plan to partners</td>
<td>Steering Committee members (15 partner representatives)</td>
<td>Partners were told about the event, given the details for the date/time/location and were asked for input, volunteers, and ideas using the results of the community survey completed in January.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 6, 2018</td>
<td>Meeting with marketing Specialist</td>
<td>Coordinator and marketing specialist</td>
<td>Discussed details of ideas for the event, reviewed date options, times. Date chosen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Attendees</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 4, 2018</td>
<td>Created marketing flyer</td>
<td>Coordinator and marketing specialist</td>
<td>Flyer was created and submitted to lead partner for approval.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 11, 2018</td>
<td>Final plans overview</td>
<td>Coordinator, lead partner, and marketing specialist</td>
<td>Discussed the final plans for the capstone/Family Fun Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 18, 2018</td>
<td>Presented final plans to steering committee</td>
<td>Steering Committee members (15 partner representatives)</td>
<td>All partners loved the idea of the event and agreed to share the flyer with their clients. Reviewed survey questions and goals/measurements. Received feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 25, 2018</td>
<td>Final event planning meeting</td>
<td>Coordinator and Marketing</td>
<td>Final planning of activities, reviewed blueprint, discussed materials needed, volunteers we have/need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 25, 2018</td>
<td>Reminder email to parent volunteers</td>
<td>8 parent volunteers and coordinator</td>
<td>3 volunteers are no longer able to help, 3 will be there for sure, 2 maybes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 28, 2018</td>
<td>Hosted Family Fun Event 2-4pm Public Library</td>
<td>Coordinator, Marketing Specialist, 2 partners, 4 parent volunteers</td>
<td>Event was set up, hosted, and cleaned up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 30, 2018</td>
<td>Reviewed survey results</td>
<td>Coordinator</td>
<td>Parents were very pleased with the event and would attend again. Their families learned and had fun. Will try more creative, open-ended activities at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 7, 2018</td>
<td>Ethical Guidelines copies sent out with follow up question</td>
<td>10 families who attended, coordinator</td>
<td>Attendees received a copy of their signed ethics statement and were asked “what activities have you tried at home since the event?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX F: Community Event Interest Survey Results

Figure 1.

What types of activities would you participate in if they were offered?

Figure 2.

What location(s) would you be most likely to attend an event at?
Figure 3.

How often would you be interested in attending an event?

- A few times a week
- Once a Week
- Twice a Month
- Monthly
- I would not consistently attend
- I would not attend any events

Figure 4.

What day of the week would you most likely attend an event?

- Monday
- Tuesday
- Wednesday
- Thursday
- Friday
- Saturday
- Sunday
Figure 5.

What time of day would you be most likely to attend an event?

- Weekday 7-9 am: 0%
- Weekday 9-11 am: 10%
- Weekday 12-2 pm: 20%
- Weekday 2-4 pm: 30%
- Weekday 4-6 pm: 40%
- Weekday 5-7 pm: 50%
- Weekday 7-9 pm: 60%
- Weekend 9-11 am: 10%
- Weekend 12-2 pm: 20%
- Weekend 2-4 pm: 30%
- Weekend 5-7 pm: 40%
- Availability Varies: 50%

Figure 6.

Where do you generally look for event information?

- Facebook: 70%
- Community Calendar: 5%
- Community Dashboard: 5%
- Tribune: 10%
- Chronical Telegram: 0%
- Other newspaper: 0%
- Flyers hung around town: 0%
- Word of mouth/Friend: 0%
APPENDIX G: Photographs of the Activities Before and After the Event

Fine Motor Station-Before the event
Communication Station

Gross Motor Station - Masking Tape Obstacle Course
Sensory Station
Play Dough

Sensory Paint Drawing Bags

Cutting Boxes With various textures and recycled materials
Communication Station/Gross Motor Station- The children had to ask others to play and practice team work to play with the parachute.
After the event pictures of the above stations