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AUTHOR(S): Cynthia Clements

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Dr. Christiane Wood
COMMITTEE CHAIR

DocuSigned by:
Dr. Christiane Wood
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SIGNATURE

1/30/2019
DATE

Dr. Erika Daniels
COMMITTEE MEMBER

DocuSigned by:
Erika Daniels
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SIGNATURE

1/30/2019
DATE

COMMITTEE MEMBER

SIGNATURE

DATE

COMMITTEE MEMBER

SIGNATURE

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**Supporting Title I Parents and Students in Understanding
Kindergarten Readiness and Standards**

by

Cynthia Clements

A Project Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the

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Abstract

Numerous studies suggest that Title I schools need to find new and innovative ways to involve parents and engage them in the learning process. The purpose of this project was to develop a website and pamphlet to help parents at Title I schools learn effective strategies to encourage kindergarten literacy readiness in their students. It explores the relationship between parents and schools and how to best implement an effective partnership between the two. Additionally, the project offered both web-based and paper pamphlets for parents so that they can learn more about classroom expectations and how to help their students succeed. Both the webpage and pamphlet included explanations of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), community resources to help with education, and practical games to incorporate into home learning. This project helped to build parent teacher collaboration early in the student's academic career and encourage parents to understand today's classroom standards of learning.

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Chapter One: Definition of Problem

The transition from home or pre-school into kindergarten can be an overwhelming change for parents and children. Today's kindergarten classrooms are both academically and developmentally challenging for many incoming students, but especially for students who come from socio-economically disadvantaged families. Socio-economically disadvantaged families often lack the resources and advantages of their affluent counterparts in preparing their children for school. Wesley and Buysee's (2003) study looked at the relationship between economic challenges and kindergarten readiness. Their findings showed that children who might have missed out on family reading time, a literacy rich environment, or high-quality preschool, often come to school less prepared than their peers (Wesley & Buysse, 2003).

In addition, Wesley and Buysee's (2003) research details the changes to academic standards in kindergarten and how a stronger partnership between parents and the community is one way to better prepare our children. Their study suggests that parents need more information about what kindergarten readiness is so that they can help their children be ready and this includes parents understanding the more rigorous literacy skills expected in today's kindergarten (Wesley & Buysse, 2003). Many parents still believe that kindergarten is a place for their child to play and make friends, much like preschool or daycare, but educators need to help parents understand academic and behavior expectations in school today. While historically kindergarten focused on providing children with opportunities to learn socialization skills and play, current practices focus on academics, specifically, beginning literacy skills which include reading and writing (Kim, Murdock, & Choi, 2005). Additionally, research supports the notion that parents have a direct influence on their child's success before they start kindergarten and throughout their

academic career, if they have an understanding about the expectations of their child both academically and behaviorally (Wesley & Buysse, 2003).

In current kindergarten classroom contexts, it is especially important that parents understand the types of literacy demands placed on their children as they begin to learn how to read and write in kindergarten. The purpose of this project was to create a resource for educators (specifically for Title I schools) that can be shared with all in-coming kindergarten parents. I created a website and pamphlet that aims to provide support and strategies parents can implement at home to encourage kindergarten literacy readiness. The website and pamphlet will offer parent friendly definitions of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) so that parents understand what foundational and literacy skills are being taught in the kindergarten classroom. Neuman and Roskos (2013) discuss the need for parents to be informed of the CCSS and any education reforms since they are their child's first teacher. In addition to the CCSS, there will be links and descriptions of literacy games and community resources that can offer assistance to parents and families with teaching literacy skills at home.

Statement of Problem

The demographics of today's classrooms are different than they were 25 years ago. In San Diego County, where this project was launched, the fastest growing demographic is Latinos (San Diego Population, 2018), which makes up the largest part of San Diego's schools (California School Dashboard, 2018). At Beaumont Elementary, where the project was developed, 85% of the students are Hispanic and 86% of the student population come from homes that are considered socioeconomically disadvantaged (California School Dashboard, 2018). Furthermore, the school's current test scores are considered below the state standard in both literacy and

mathematics (California School Dashboard, 2018). Parent involvement has decreased dramatically over the past decades, and teachers at the site struggle to get classroom volunteers and support at home with assignments. Many parents have reported feeling out of touch with the school and feel it is the school's job to educate their child. Considering the current academic and literacy expectations found within the contexts of kindergarten classrooms, encouraging parent involvement and participation is an important factor in developing young children's foundational literacy skills (Chavkin, 2005; Durand, 2011; Wesley & Buysse, 2003).

Unfortunately, many parents are left unaware of kindergarten student expectations until the first report card and parent conferences. By that time, the student could be six or twelve weeks behind their peers and losing ground for academic success for the year. Recent research shows us that children who begin school with poor literacy skills have a hard time catching up with their better prepared peers (Skwarchuk, Sowinski, & LeFevre, 2014). Furthermore, research reveals that a parent's educational level and economic status can impact their expectations of kindergarten readiness and willingness to participate in school activities (Raver et al., 2011). The reality is that today's schools are becoming more culturally varied (Tran, 2014), and educators need to offer all families access to information and resources to help their students. It is important that all schools, especially Title I schools, provide parents with relevant information about the school's expectations for kindergarten both academically and behaviorally to help prepare both students and parents and encourage parent involvement.

According to Durand (2011), recent immigrant and lower socio-economic Latino parents are more likely to look to the child's teachers and school for opportunities and suggestions about how to participate in their child's education. For many schools, this is not the norm; they are

used to middle-class model of parent involvement and student readiness (Durand, 2011). According to Lopez (2001), the traditional model of parent involvement includes participating in PTA activities, supporting fundraising, and helping out in class. At home this model also includes checking homework and helping with areas where children are struggling (Lopez, 2001). The influx of Latino families presents an opportunity for schools to revise their parent involvement programs to include suggestions for literacy skills and behavior expectations. My Title I school still has many of the same volunteer and parent events in place that were there twenty years ago even though the current demographic is completely different. Research shows that as our parent and student demographic changed, so should have our volunteer and partnership opportunities for those families. Delgado-Gaitan (2004) explains the need to look at the schedules of and communication with Latino parents to encourage their participation. Parent involvement programs have the potential to support parents with resources and strategies to help student readiness beginning in kindergarten and throughout students' academic careers, but they need to be convenient for the parents and families must be made aware of the programs being offered for them to be successfully attended (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004).

If parents have access to an online resource or pamphlet that outlined the expectations and provided support to improve foundational literacy skills and behavior expectations, many students would be able to receive the support and extra instruction they need at home. Research shows that educators must find new ways to encourage parent involvement in student readiness to help support students across economic and social boundaries. Schools need to provide parents with the tools to help their students at home (Bierman et al, 2015). There is a need for schools and teachers to find new ways to support school readiness for all of their students, regardless of their economic status or parent's education (Raver et al., 2011). The goal then, is to inform

parents about expected literacy skills and to provide them with resources they can use to help their students succeed from the very start of school by building student confidence with family support.

Preview Literature

Numerous studies and peer reviewed articles from the past 25 years have established a need to involve parents in student academics to encourage success. The literature review in Chapter 2 will address the challenges faced at Title I schools in regards to kindergarten readiness and parent understanding of current kindergarten standards by offering proven suggestions to families to help prepare their students for school. Sources for the literature review were chosen around the topic of kindergarten readiness and parent involvement at Title I schools. In addition, research focused on the importance of enriching home literacy environments and how to increase parent involvement in building literacy skills. For this project, I focused on scientific and educational studies that looked at how kindergarten readiness and parent expectations can help students navigate elementary school. The literature review focused on teaching parents about the Common Core State Standards, building a stronger parent school partnership, and supporting parents with literacy skills they can teach at home. Of all the research, Epstein's (2001) research was the leading voice in explain the importance of school and parent partnerships to develop successful students. Epstein explains the importance of family school partnerships and through her six types of involvement, schools can foster and encourage parent participation. According to Epstein's model the six types of involvement are: parent, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with community (Epstein, 1996). This model provides suggestions for creating a school environment of family involvement and gives concrete examples of research to explain the importance of the practice. Understanding Title I

school parents and how they are involved in their children's education is key to building a stronger partnership.

Since Epstein's seminal work, others have looked for ways to involve parents across socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, including the need to change the way educators involve Latino parents at disadvantaged schools (Durand, 2011). Durand (2011) focuses on the positive impact that parent involvement within the Latino community has on students as early as kindergarten and first grade and suggests one avenue to this involvement is creating alliances between parents. In addition, this project includes ideas from Delgado-Gaitan's (2004) research that suggests schools with a high population of Latino parents improve parent involvement through parent education and partnership.

Within much of the literature regarding parent involvement there is a theme of not only having parents involved, but supporting literacy at home. According to one study by Burgess, Hecht, and Lonigan (2002) there is a strong correlation between the literacy skills of incoming kindergartners and the home literacy environment. Children who see parents reading at home and actively read with parents are better prepared for school (Burgess, Hecht, & Lonigan, 2002). Additionally, Bierman, Welsh, Heinrichs, Nix, and Mathis (2015) discuss the importance of parents knowing how to interact with their children to build literacy skills during the transition from preschool to kindergarten. Parents play an essential role in building their child's foundational literacy skills. Mol, Bus, de Jong, and Smeets (2008) explain the importance of building a child's vocabulary as essential to furthering their literacy skills. By reading with their children, parents are building their academic vocabulary and helping to prepare them for school

(Mol, Bus, de Jong, and Smeets, 2008). All of these at home literacy activities lead to more successful students and a smoother transition into kindergarten.

Preview Methodology

For the purpose of this project, I created a website and paper pamphlet designed for parents of incoming kindergarteners at a Title I elementary school. The website and pamphlet include simple explanations of the Common Core State Standards for kindergarten so parents can fully understand the literacy goals that are expected of their student in the coming year. Additionally, both formats provide parents with community resources and strategies to support their child both academically and behaviorally and focus on building literacy skills such as; rhyming, sight word recognition, shared reading, and writing. Finally, the website and pamphlet list activities and games parents can play with their children to encourage literacy skills in a fun and meaningful way.

Significance of Project

The purpose of this project was to help parents at Title I schools increase awareness regarding kindergarten literacy and to supply them with resources to help their children with kindergarten readiness and beyond. Furthermore, this project was designed to inform parents of the current CCSS that their students are transitioning to during their kindergarten year. Through this project I looked to find new ways to support and involve the parents at our school who may be feeling marginalized and sidelined by the education system. This project looked at different ways to give parents access to important information to help them be an advocate for their child's academic success and a valuable participant in the process from the day they start kindergarten.

By creating a website and pamphlet to educate and assist parents, this project is helping to create a more academically successful environment for everyone.

Summary of Chapter

Educational research has pointed to the significant role that parents play in the transition students make to kindergarten (McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, , & Sekino, Y., 2004). That role can be overlooked at Title I schools due to parents' busy schedules and lack of access to community resources. It is essential that schools find ways to involve parents in their child's academic career from the very beginning. Title I schools, in particular, need to look for new and innovative avenues to educate and include families in the educational process. Chapter two will take a closer look at the literature that suggests new and innovative ways to promote parent involvement and home support to build literacy skills.

Definitions

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) – is a set of high-quality academic standards in mathematics and English language arts/literacy (ELA). These learning goals outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade. (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2018)

Title I - Part A (Title I) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended (ESEA) provides financial assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards (United States Department of Education, 2018).

Literacy - Students must learn to read, write, speak, listen, and use language effectively in a variety of content areas (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2018).

Chapter Two: Literature Review

A common concern at Title I schools is how to help parents and students have the best possible transition into kindergarten and develop programs that are actively supported by parents and also foster student success. For example, Epstein's research (2010) directs schools to develop partnerships incorporating her six key types of involvement. McWayne (2004) and her colleagues looked at the correlation between parent's education and income level and the success of students in kindergarten. Others, such as Durand (2011), examined the importance of involving parents in the educational process to build student success. These studies recognized that building a strong partnership between home and school is a wonderful way to encourage overall school success. The first step in that partnership is helping parents to understand current state standards for kindergarten and how to help their child succeed.

This review of the literature describes what research has found about helping parents at Title I schools become more aware of the Common Core State Standards, how best to involve families in developing and building literacy skills, and the importance of a partnership between parents and schools. . Title I schools by definition include students who are facing the real life challenge of poverty and the struggles that accompany living in poverty. Research demonstrates that often children who come to school living in poverty exhibit delays both academically and behaviorally (Raver et al., 2011). As educators, we must search for ways to improve teacher-parent partnerships to include parents in their students' academic career. First, parent awareness of their role in developing their child's literacy is indispensable in helping students to be more successful throughout their early academic years (Epstein, 2001). Second, additional research by Epstein shows the importance of parents having a partnership with their school and community to help make their child's transition through each grade (Epstein, 2001). Finally, the research

will look at how best to involve Title I parent in the education process to improve student literacy and academic success. The literature review will address the challenges faced at Title I schools in regards to kindergarten readiness and parent understanding of current kindergarten standards by offering proven suggestions to families to help prepare their students for school. Sources were chosen around the topic of this project and focused on scientific and educational studies that looked at how kindergarten readiness and parent expectations can help students navigate elementary school.

Helping Title I Parents Understand State Standards

The transition into kindergarten is difficult for many reasons, but for parents and students in disadvantaged socio-economic areas, the change can be even more challenging due to a failure to understand what is expected in the first year of school. Helping parents understand academic standards and behavior expectations is an important first step in creating a strong home-school partnership. McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, and Sekino (2004) suggest that parent involvement through academic activities at home will help to reinforce both school academic and behavior expectations. The authors believe

This early proximal relationship provides children with structure and clear behavioral expectations to promote success in school. By engaging in educational activities with their children at home (such as supporting homework and modeling reading behavior), parents communicate clear expectations for achievement, while integrating school curriculum goals within the home (McWayne et al., 2004, pp. 363-364).

In another study, Durand (2011) explains that recent research has shown it is difficult to understand how involved Latino parents are in the early years of their children's' schooling

because they are being judged by White and middle-class standards. Durand believes that, “Moreover, very few quantitative studies have examined whether parental involvement practices contribute directly to Latino children’s early school achievement in domains of learning that are critical to their early school success” (p. 470). Understanding Title I school parents and the ways in which they are involved in their children’s education is key to building a stronger partnership. By creating better partnerships with the fastest growing population in the country, schools have the potential to increase the future success of their students. It is important that educators and teachers develop programs and communication that directly involves and incorporates families and the community to help students succeed (Epstein, 2001).

Supporting Parents with Literacy and Behavior Tools to Prepare their Students

Many parents in Title I schools do not understand the importance of strong literacy skills to help their students succeed both academically and behaviorally. Providing parents with tools and resources to support their children will go a long way in creating an academic home setting and better students (Epstein, 2001). Bierman, Welsh, Heinrichs, Nix, and Mathis (2015) found that going beyond Head Start and adding parent support in kindergarten was helpful in promoting academic success for incoming kindergartners. The study suggests that helping parents develop the tools to academically interact with their children can help promote academics and improve behavior. The study focused on providing parents proper materials, learning games, and materials they could use with their children in preparation for kindergarten (Bierman et al., 2015). In addition, parents need to understand what they need to focus on at home to help with literacy development at school. This can include rhyming books, vocabulary building skills, and active reading with their children. Additionally, Mol, Bus, de Jong, and Smeets (2008) suggest that building vocabulary through parent child reading is an important part

of creating better readers. Furthermore, the author's explain that parents not only read to their child, but engage them in dialogue.

Assuming a social-constructionist nature of book reading, books cannot be a source for acquiring new vocabulary unless children get intensive help and support from adults. Consequently, children may almost never encounter solely an oral rendering of the text. Instead, in most cases the words of the author are accompanied by the social interaction between the adult reader and child (Mol, Bus, de Jong, & Smeets, 2008, p. 8).

Teaching parents how to read with their children is just as important as telling parents to read to their children. Teaching parents about actively reading with their students and discussing key details is an important part of building literacy skills. Educators cannot assume that every parent understands the importance of good reading strategies in building literacy skills. Senechal (2006) noted a link between shared reading with parents and a strong correlation to the child's vocabulary and later reading ability. Parents and students can benefit from the at home implementation of good literacy skills (e.g. print concepts, alphabetic knowledge, and vocabulary) practice that include – picture walks, reading aloud, and making real world connections with the text (Mol, et al., 2008).

In addition to understanding academic requirements, it is also important for parents to be aware of behavior expectations in the classroom and how to develop those skills as well. “For example, children with greater cognitive skills are better able to demonstrate optimal self-regulatory skills through planning, remembering rules, inhibiting impulses, and focusing their attention (Rothbart et al., 2007, as cited in Raver, C., Jones, S., Li-Grining, C. Zhai, F., Bub, K., & Pressler, E, 2011, p. 364-365). Raver and her colleagues suggest that building literacy skills not only better

prepares a student for a successful academic career, but it helps to avoid behavior problems that are caused by student frustration (Raver et al., 2011). There is also a link to school and parent partnership and communication and student behavior. Epstein's (2001) study showed an overall improvement in student behavior and attitude when there was parent involvement in their projects and education.

The Importance of Parent School Partnership

There is a general understanding among educators that having a strong parent teacher partnership is important to improving student learning. This partnership should begin before the student ever steps foot onto campus.

Good home-school communication makes the job easier for the teacher and benefits the students. If parents work closely with teachers, they will know the teacher's expectations, and the students will know that the parents and teachers are working together with consistency. (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004, p. x).

Numerous studies have looked at how teacher-parent partnerships can be improved in Title I schools (Epstein, 2001; McWayne et al., 2004). Delgado-Gaitan (2004) suggests the importance of providing Latino parents different incentives and schedules to allow for full participation (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004). One of the easiest ways for teachers to improve involvement is to understand the parent's background and culture. "Connecting across the home-school border requires educators and Latino parents each to know the culture of the other. This happens through clear and deliberate communication" (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004, p. 4). It is important the educators realize that many parents come from different school systems and need a deeper understanding of the American school system so they can better participate. Delgado-Gaitan also

suggests that schools need to reach out throughout the year, but not only to Latino parents, but their community as a whole.

Generations of historical, social, and cultural distance between the schools and the Latino community must be bridges. This is possible only through systematic outreach to Latino community leaders, to Latino religious and social organizations, and to every Latino family to make them an integral part of the decision-making voice of the school on a regular basis (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004, p. 11).

The question then becomes what is the best way to reach out to the parents and community. Epstein (2001) has done significant research on how to involve families in the academic setting. Epstein (1996) outlines the six types of involvement schools can foster to encourage parent participation. According to Epstein's model the six types of involvement are: parent, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with community (Epstein, 1996). According to Epstein's (1996) model, parenting is the environments at home to support students, this can include parents reviewing homework or reading with their child. Communicating is defined as the tools the school and families use to communicate with one another and can take the form of electronic or paper correspondence. It may also include newsletters and phone calls. Next, Epstein discusses volunteering and how the school recruits parents and families to help in the classroom and at the school site. This can include parent helpers in the classroom or finding out the talents parents have that could benefit the school and their students. The fourth type of involvement is learning at home, and defines the school's responsibility to educate parents about the skills students are required to master. The fifth type of involvement is decision making, and explains the role parents should take as advisors and

participants in their student's education. Finally, Epstein explains the need for the final involvement element of collaborating with the community. Epstein explains the need for parents to be given information on services in the community that may help with building their students' academic skills or providing essential health services. According to Epstein, the type of involvement that can immediately improve student achievement is learning at home.

Epstein explains that Family interactions with children about schoolwork and homework may, if well designed and effectively implemented, increase students' completion of homework, improve students' attitudes toward school, boost students readiness for the next class lesson, and improve students' performance on tests and report card grades (Epstein, 2001, p. 510).

It is essential that as teachers we supply parents with the tools to help their students learn at home when these skills are otherwise not available. Epstein suggests building a strong partnership with parents through an annual action plan and action team (Epstein, 2001). These schoolwide programs should begin right away to bring parents into the school system with their children and make sure they know from the first day that their involvement is important to their child's success. McWayne (2004) and her colleagues discuss the importance of looking for workable new options for parents that allow them to participate in school programs and their students' education. Their study points out the importance of looking for non-traditional ways for parents, especially working parents, to participate in their child's education (McWayne et al, 2004).

Conclusion

Throughout the literature regarding kindergarten readiness, there is a constant theme of the importance of parent-school partnership and encouraging parents to become involved in their students' academics to promote success. Helping parents to understand the curriculum and develop the skills to help their children is an essential component in a positive kindergarten transition. The goal of educators should be to create an environment where parents are both knowledgeable of and involved in their children's education. My project focuses on parent involvement and providing support about what it takes for their students' to have academic and behavior success in school. Taking into consideration what research has stated about the importance of literacy skills and parent school partnership, I have created a website and pamphlet to inform parents about literacy expectations and offer them resources that can help them in their journey. Finally, the website offers tools and games to help parents interact with their children in a meaningful and educational manner.

Chapter 3: Methodology

With the population of California ever-changing, educators need to adapt how they partner with parents and families as they best prepare students for kindergarten. From 2016 to 2017, the California Department of Education reported that 54.24% of all students at California's public schools were Latino (California Department of Education, 2018). At the school where this project was first implemented, like many California Title I schools, the Latino and low-income family population was even higher (Great Schools, 2018). With this shift in demographics, it is important for Title I schools to find new ways to involve parents in their child's education. Many Title I schools are not effectively reaching out to parents to help them understand the requirements of kindergarten academics and behavior expectations (Epstein, 2010). Epstein (2010) suggests that if educators want full family support and buy-in, they must look for new ways to involve parents rather than the traditional middle-class White model of the past. The purpose of this project is to help parents at Title I schools increase awareness regarding kindergarten literacy and to supply them with resources to help their children with kindergarten readiness and beyond.

Considering the changing demographics at Title I schools and the research that supports teacher-parent partnerships (Durand 2011; Epstein 2001), it was clear that a website and pamphlet were needed at our school site to help families with the transition kindergarten. It is critical that educators look for new ways to include incoming kindergarten families in the education of their children from the very beginning by supplying families with community resources and at home recommendations on how best to help their children succeed. No longer can the assumption be made that families know the expectations of the kindergarten classroom or understand how to get involved and advocate for their children.

Design

The purpose of the website and pamphlet was to help educate incoming parents at Title I schools on the academic and behavior expectations of today's kindergarten classroom.

Furthermore, the information was meant to provide parents with community resources and at home materials they could use to help their children academically and behaviorally. The website offers parent friendly definitions of the Common Core State Standards so that parents understand what foundational and literacy skills are being taught in the classroom. Neuman and Roskos (2013) discuss the need for parents to be informed of the CCSS and any education reforms since they are their child's first teacher. In addition to the CCSS, there are links to games and community resources that can offer assistance to parents and families in teaching literacy skills. With the rise of tablets as a viable replacement to the traditional laptop, the website is mobile and tablet friendly. According to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA),

In 2017, more households had a mobile data plan than wired broadband service. Additionally, for the first time since NTIA began tracking use of different types of computing devices, tablets were more popular than desktop computers among Americans, and the number of people who used multiple types of devices also increased substantially (National Telecommunications and Information Administration, 2018).

In addition to these statistics, another interesting fact the NTIA reported was that in 2017, 78% of people over the age of 3 were using the Internet. (NTIA, 2018). It was important to have a website that parents can access easily that offers accurate information to help them.

Even with the massive gains in internet use, there are still many lower income homes that do not have reliable access to the Internet. Due to this fact, the project also includes a pamphlet that can be given to parents at kindergarten registration and again at Back to School Night. The pamphlet has the same resources as the website. It includes kindergarten literacy expectations, games and activities parents can use to improve literacy skills at home, and a list of free community resources to promote literacy and kindergarten readiness.

The aim of the project is the creation of the pamphlet and website to answer many parent questions and offer additional resources to encourage parents to reach out for help from both the school and community when they have a question or concern regarding their student. The design of both focused on three important sections. The first section of both the website and the pamphlet will address the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for kindergartners in reading, writing, and speaking and listening. These standards are explained to parents in simple yet academic language and direct them to links with further information if they desire. To educate parents about literacy expectations in kindergarten, I found a parent friendly explanation of the CCSS and literacy expectations in kindergarten on the National PTA website (National PTA, 2018). Their explanation of the CCSS and literacy skills in kindergarten is user friendly and explained in layman's terms. It avoids terms such as, phonemes, phonological, and digraphs that might be confusing to parents. The National PTA's explanation was clear and understandable. This project gives parents access to the literacy standards in real-world language that is easy to understand.

The next section gives parents school, district, and community resources that they can reach out to for support when they have questions or concerns. Included are the school's website, phone

number and address along with the district's information. This section also includes information about the Vista Public Library (2018) and an app called Ready 4K (2018) that sends parents weekly suggestions they can use to improve kindergarten readiness at home. This information can be difficult for new parents to access, and having all of the contacts in one place makes it easier for future access to the school and district. .

The final section of the website supplies parents with examples of games and activities they can play with their children to help with academics and behavior skills that are important in the classroom. The pamphlet and website offers parents literacy games and skills they can use at home with their children to help build their child's literacy skills. These include rhyming, suggestions on how to read with their children, recommendations on how to promote writing at home, and ideas to encourage children to build storytelling skills. The games and activities are based on research outlined about improving vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency (Mol, et.al. 2008). Creating a strong home based literacy model is supported by many studies (e.g., Mol, et. al, 2008; Skwarchuk, S. L., Sowinski, C., & LeFevre, J.-A., 2014) and the areas of focus for this project have been found to be lacking by staff and administrators at our school site.

Target Audience

It is essential that educators realize that parents and families want their children to be successful in school and part of our job is to educate families about today's classroom.

“Families care about their children's success, but most parents need more and better information from schools and communities to become and remain productively involved in their children's education (Epstein, 2001, p. 161). The information for this project was designed in collaboration with the help of teachers, administrators, parents, and parent liaisons to create both a website and

informational pamphlet that is easily accessible to incoming kindergarten parents at Title I schools at one particular elementary school. Initially, the focus was on one local Title I school and the parents in that community. Following the successful rollout of both the website and the pamphlet the goal is to develop information for all Title I schools within the district. According to Great School's website, at the pilot school site, the demographics were 77% Hispanic, 46% English Language Learners, and additionally, 80% of the families come are low-income status (Great Schools, 2018). In the development of the website and pamphlet, it was important to focus on helping the families at this location.

Low-income and ethnic minority parents may display different types of involvement in children's schooling than middle-SES, Euro-American parents because they may differ in regard to their habitus around the construct of involvement, and because they may experience significantly more situational and personal barriers that limit their ability to be involved in the ways that are legitimized by the school or most strongly associated with academic achievement (Durand, 2011, p. 472).

With this in mind, the website and pamphlet given to parents needed to be both helpful and focused on their specific needs.

Instruments

To develop the pamphlet and website, I focused on relevant current literature that supported the need for parent partnership with Title I schools and how to build literacy through those partnerships. Much of the literature found focused on the importance of parent partnerships with schools to produce happier and more successful students (e.g. Durand, 2011; Epstein, 2010; Farver, Xu, Eppe, & Lonigan, Epstein, 2006).

When families are involved in their children's learning, children do better in school and in life. In addition to the strong research and practice finding about family involvement in education, current policy initiatives also dictate a strong role for the family involvement in education (Chavkin, 2005, p. 16).

This project focused on building literacy skills in the kindergarten classroom by improving the parent school partnership and providing parents with information to help their students. This relationship cannot be ignored and must be utilized to help students be successful. Farver, et.al. (2006) looked at the associations between literacy practices at home and the receptive vocabulary of preschool children. Their five year study established that shared literacy activities at home had a direct impact on a child's future literacy skills (Farver, et. al, 2006). This literature emphasized the need for resources to involve parents and get them more information and involved in their student's education. With this research in mind, the pamphlet and website were developed to encourage parent literacy practices and to encourage parent-school partnership.

Procedures

When designing this project, I focused on an immediate need at my school site. In speaking with parents, administrators, and our parent liaison, I discovered that there was a lack of information available to parents from one easily-accessible source. Parents would relay their frustrations about not understanding what the expectations were for their children and felt that waiting until parent conferences was too late to find out about the CCSS or where their child was not succeeding. Our school is very focused on improving literacy and foundational skills across the grade levels, but I wanted to start at the beginning with kindergarten. I thought if we could get parents to understand the CCSS for that grade and build on that understanding that we would

be creating a partnership with parents that will continue through their child's educational career with us. It is essential that parents understand and have resources available to help build their child's literacy skills.

To develop the website I decided to use the webpage I had developed for through WordPress and Ionis for my own classroom work (learningwithmrsc.com). This site would allow me to add information in the future and would give parents a reliable website that they could have contact with. Additionally, the website is easy to edit and allows users to view the website through a tablet or phone. It is also already connected to the school's website.

When developing the pamphlet, I chose to use the online resource Canva (2018) because it is user friendly and free for educators. Using the information outlined in my literature review, I focused the pamphlet on resources that parents could use to build literacy skills. These include parent friendly definitions of kindergarten CCSS, district and local community resources, and descriptions of literacy activities they could use at home with their child. The school principal, literacy coaches, the school's community liaison, and other colleagues reviewed the pamphlet and website to provide feedback and offer additional resources that maybe helpful to local families.

Summary

Even though the initial design of this project is for parents at Title I schools, the information provided can be used for all parents within the district. The website and pamphlet will serve to educate and empower parents to partner with schools and will suggest ideas to help parents be active participants in their children's early education. In addition, the website will be made

available to teachers across the district to revise, edit, and share with their parents to reach a broader audience.

Chapter 4: Project

Website and Pamphlet

Learning with Mrs. C. Website (<http://learningwithmrsc.com/>)

Common Core Standards (<http://learningwithmrsc.com/common-core-state-standards>)

Community Resources (<http://learningwithmrsc.com/community-resources>)

Literacy Activities (<http://learningwithmrsc.com/literacy-activities>)

Pamphlet

(https://www.canva.com/design/DADNIF6ie_w/jdixa7HTKmfH4nsfwEJpg/view?utm_content=DADNIF6ie_w&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=sharebutton)

Website Homepage

Hello,

I am currently a 2nd grade teacher in the suburbs of San Diego, California. I am in the process of getting my master's degree in literacy and was inspired to start a website to help students and their families learn more about literacy skills and school. I am beginning with kindergarten to support our incoming kindergarten families and hope to continue to build the website to support upper grades.

In addition to that project, this year my students are helping to build a pollinator garden for the preschool at our site. This will include writing books and creating slideshows to share with the preschoolers so they can take good care of the garden once it is built.

Thank you!!!

Mrs. C.



Figure 1. A copy of the homepage of the website.

Website Common Core State Standards for Kindergarten Page

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) can be difficult for parents to navigate and understand. The National PTA has developed a wonderful website to help inform parents about the basics of the standards and how they can help their children succeed in school. I have taken the text below directly from their website and provided a link below to additional information about the CCSS provided on their website.

English Language Arts & Literacy

Learning new language skills is a hallmark of kindergarten. Your child will learn about the alphabet and its role in reading. Your child will practice rhyming, matching words with beginning sounds, and blending sounds into words. Practice with these types of activities is a powerful step toward learning to read and spell correctly. The size of your child's vocabulary is another key factor in his or her ability to read and comprehend books and stories. Your child also will begin to experiment with writing and will be encouraged to use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing letters to share information, ideas, and feelings.

A Sample of What Your Child Will Be Working on in Kindergarten

- Naming upper- and lower-case letters, matching those letters with their sounds, and printing them
- Comparing the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories, such as fairy tales and folktales
- Retelling familiar stories and talking about stories read to them using details from the text
- Using a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to describe an event, including his or her reaction to what happened
- Stating an opinion or preference about a topic or book in writing (e.g., "My favorite book is . . .")
- Taking part in classroom conversations and following rules for discussions (e.g., learning to listen to others and taking turns when speaking)

- Speaking clearly to express thoughts, feelings, and ideas, including descriptions of familiar people, places, things, and events
- Asking and answering questions about key details in stories or other information read aloud
- Understanding and using question words (e.g., who, what, where, when, why, how) in discussions
- Learning to recognize, spell, and properly use those little grammatical words that hold the language together (e.g., a, the, to, of, from, I, is, are)

Here is a wonderful video that explains the CCSS for parents.



Figure 2. A screen shot of the video available on the website.

Resource Page:

National PTA - [National PTA \(https://www.pta.org/home/family-resources/Parents-Guides-to-Student-Success/kindergarten\)](https://www.pta.org/home/family-resources/Parents-Guides-to-Student-Success/kindergarten)

Community Resources Page

FREE Parent Resources to help you prepare your child for kindergarten -

Vista Unified School District -
[VUSD \(http://www.vistausd.org/schools\)](http://www.vistausd.org/schools)
(760) 726-2170

Ready 4K -

[Ready 4K \(https://ready4k.parentpowered.com/\)](https://ready4k.parentpowered.com/)

Each week, parents will receive three texts with fun facts and easy tips on how to use everyday activities to support their child's development.

Vista Public Library -

[Vista Library \(http://www.sdcl.org/locations_VS.html\)](http://www.sdcl.org/locations_VS.html)

[Library Calendar
\(http://host.evanced.info/sdcl/evanced/eventcalendar.asp?ag=&et=&dt=mo&df=calendar&cn=0
&private=0&ln=32\)](http://host.evanced.info/sdcl/evanced/eventcalendar.asp?ag=&et=&dt=mo&df=calendar&cn=0&private=0&ln=32)

Vista Library 700 Eucalyptus Ave, Vista, CA 92084
(760) 643-5100

Free book checkout and community events for parents and children

Traveling Story -

Volunteers listen as volunteers read stories and ask students engaging questions about what they have read. Kids earn "book bucks" towards prizes they can earn. These volunteers are at the Vista Farmer's Market each Saturday.



Figure 3. A picture of the StoryTent link from the website.

Literacy Activities Page

If you are wondering how to help build literacy skills at home you aren't alone. First, literacy is not just reading, it is reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Help your child get ready for kindergarten by teaching them basic literacy skills. You are your child's first teacher and what you do at home will build a foundation for their academic career. Here are a few suggestions and ideas along with some great websites that offer additional tips and games.

Website Literacy Strategies Page

LITERACY STRATEGIES

Picture Walk

Before you begin a story look through the illustrations with your child and discuss what they see and what the story might be about.

Read Aloud

Read with your child often. While reading ask the child to name characters, the setting, and discuss the story problem and possible solutions. Encourage your child to pick books they are interested in and spark their imagination.

Make Connections

While you are reading encourage your child to find ways the story connects to their life or other books they have read. For example, if you are reading about the beach, talk about a time they have visited the beach.

Promote Writing

Writing is an important part of literacy. Introduce your child to pencils, crayons, and paper. Encourage them to write their name or short notes. Practice writing their name. Help them to draw pictures of family, friends, and animals.

Story Telling

Have your child tell you a bedtime story about their day.

Literacy Games:

RHYMING I-SPY

Where ever you are with your child, take a few minutes and find an object and see if they can "spy" the rhyming word. Example - While in a parking lot say to your child, "I spy a word that rhymes with far." Keep challenging your child as their rhyming becomes better with longer more difficult words.

SIGHT WORD CONCENTRATION

This is a new spin on the old memory game. Create a deck of sight words using index cards. Start with the first five or ten and make two of each word. After you make the cards flip them over and you and your child take turns flipping them over and looking for matches.

Here are some educational websites that offer fun games you can explore with your children at home.

Scholastic -

[Scholastic \(https://www.scholastic.com/parents/books-and-reading/raise-a-reader-blog/5-literacy-games-to-play-your-child.html\)](https://www.scholastic.com/parents/books-and-reading/raise-a-reader-blog/5-literacy-games-to-play-your-child.html)

Reading Rockets -

[Reading Rockets \(http://www.readingrockets.org/article/six-games-reading\)](http://www.readingrockets.org/article/six-games-reading)

PBS Parents –



How to Start Playing On-the-Go Literacy Games

Find simple games that don't require any materials — so you can play them anywhere!

 Expert Tips & Advice 0

Figure 4. A copy of the link from PBS Parents website.

<http://www.pbs.org/parents/expert-tips-advice/2018/04/how-to-start-playing-on-the-go-literacy-games/>

This Reading Mama

<https://thisreadingmama.com/teaching-kids-how-to-read/https://www.whatdowedoallday.com/category/literacy>

Pamphlet

KINDERGARTEN AT A GLANCE

- Naming upper- and lower-case letters, matching those letters with their sounds, and printing them
- Comparing the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories, such as fairy tales and folktales
- Retelling familiar stories and talking about stories read to them using details from the text
- Using a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to describe an event, including his or her reaction to what happened
- Stating an opinion or preference about a topic or book in writing (e.g., "My favorite book is . . .")
- Taking part in classroom conversations and following rules for discussions (e.g., learning to listen to others and taking turns when speaking)
- Speaking clearly to express thoughts, feelings, and ideas, including descriptions of familiar people, places, things, and events
- Asking and answering questions about key details in stories or other information read aloud
- Understanding and using question words (e.g., who, what, where, when, why, how) in discussions
- Learning to recognize, spell, and properly use those little grammatical words that hold the language together (e.g., a, the, to, of, from, I, is, are)

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

VISTA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
<http://www.vistausd.org/schools>
 (760) 726-2170

READY 4K -
<https://ready4k.parentpowered.com/>
 This family friendly app sends you text messages to help with kindergarten readiness. They send three fun and easy messages per week.

VISTA PUBLIC LIBRARY
http://www.sdcl.org/locations_VS.html
 Vista Library 700 Eucalyptus Ave,
 Vista, CA 92084
 (760) 643-5100
 Free book checkout and community events for parents and children

LITERACY GAMES

RHYMING I-SPY
 Where ever you are with your child, take a few minutes and find an object and see if they can "spy" the rhyming word. Example - I spy a word that rhymes with far.
 Keep challenging your child as their rhyming becomes better.

SIGHT WORD CONCENTRATION
 This is a new spin on the old memory game. Create a deck of sight words using index cards. Start with the first five or ten and make two of each word. After you make the cards flip them over and you and your child take turns flipping them over and looking for matches.

Figure 5. Page one of the pamphlet.

LITERACY STRATEGIES

Picture Walk
 Before you begin a story look through the illustrations with your child and discuss what they see and what the story might be about.

Read Aloud
 Read with your child often. While reading ask the child to name characters, the setting, and discuss the story problem and possible solutions.

Make Connections
 While you are reading encourage your child to find ways the story connects to their life or other books they have read. For example, if you are reading about the beach, talk about a time they have visited the beach.

Promote Writing
 Writing is an important part of literacy. Introduce your child to pencils, crayons, and paper. Encourage them to write their name or short notes.

Story Telling
 Have your child tell you a bedtime story about their day.

KINDERGARTEN SIGHT WORDS

the	have
of	from
and	or
a	one
to	had
in	by
is	words
you	but
that	not
it	what
part	all
he	were
was	we
for	when
on	your
are	can
as	said
with	there
his	use
they	an
I	each
at	which
be	she
this	do

BEAUMONT ELEMENTARY
 Kindergarten Readiness
<https://be-vistausd-ca.schoolloop.com/>

550 Beaumont Dr,
 Vista, CA 92084
 (760) 726-4040

Figure 6. Page two of the pamphlet

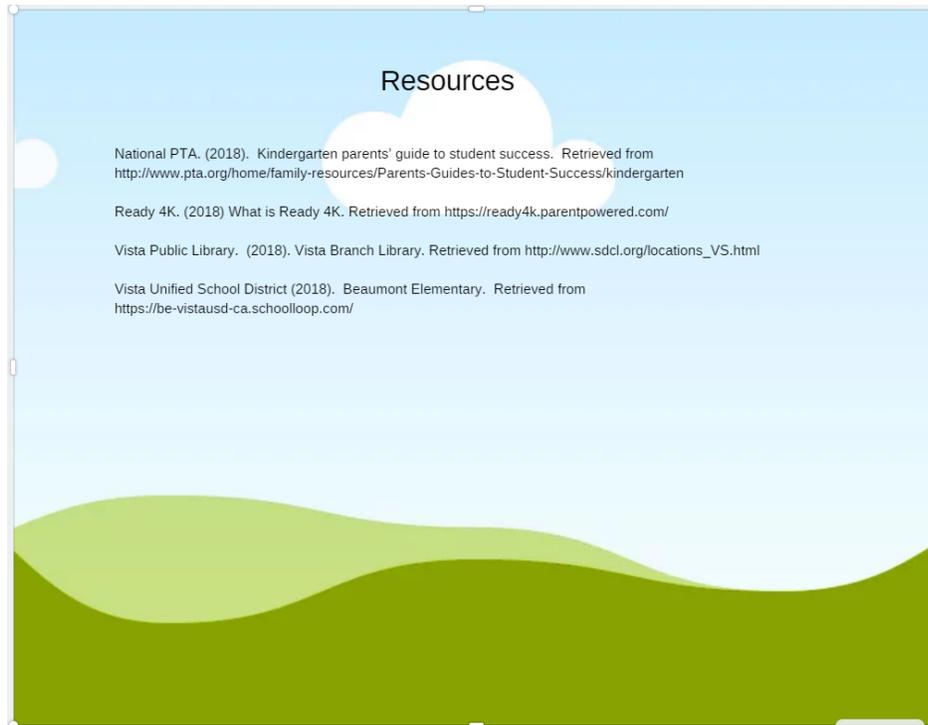


Figure 7. Page three of the pamphlet

Chapter 5: Reflection

Introduction

The transition to kindergarten is both an exciting and anxious time for students and their families. Kindergarten is the first step in a long, and hopefully productive, academic career, but many parents at Title I schools are unaware of the literacy expectations of the kindergarten classroom. There is a need for schools and families to create a strong partnership to help make the kindergarten year more productive and less anxious. By helping parents to prepare their students for the academic and behavior expectations of the kindergarten classroom by building literacy skills at home, the transition and school year can be more enjoyable for all. Durand (2013) explains the importance of parent involvement to improve literacy skills while Epstein (2001) describes the key components of a strong partnership between the community, school, and families. The purpose of this project was to develop a website and pamphlet to help parents at Title I schools learn effective strategies to support their students and encourage kindergarten literacy readiness. The website and pamphlet that were created as a result of this project, are a first step in building a stronger partnership and to help parents to understand their very important role in teaching literacy skills at home. Additionally, in the promotion of literacy skills through parent involvement, the project supplies parents with community resources they can access to help in that endeavor. The project was designed specifically with the needs of Title I parents in mind. It offers both an internet and paper resource for parents to use throughout the year.

Lessons Learned

Through this project I became aware of the importance of effective partnerships between parents and schools (Durand, 2013; Epstein, 2010). Epstein (2010) and her colleagues have spent a great deal of time researching the most effective ways to reach out to parents in Title I

communities. Reflecting on this research, I designed the website and pamphlet to help build a partnership between incoming kindergarten parents, the school, and the community. The first page focuses on educating parents about the academic expectations that are placed on students entering kindergarten. Halgunseth (2009) builds on the Epstein's (2001) ideas and discusses the need for schools to increase family engagement in order to build a strong partnership and academic success. Supplying parents with literacy skills information is part of those expectations to exchange knowledge described by Halgunseth (2009). Explaining the CCSS gives parents a better understanding of today's literacy expectations for kindergartners, such as phonics and word recognition (California Department of Education, 2018). The website page contains links to the National PTA website that offers simple verbiage regarding literacy expectations. It also contains a video that parents can view to learn more about what the CCSS are and how they are implemented in school.

The next page looks at games and activities that parents can use to improve their child's literacy skills. These games are designed to build rhyming skills and word recognition. In addition to the games, there are a list of activities parents can use with their children at home to work on literacy skills. These skills include reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Evans and Shaw (2008) describe the important of a strong literacy rich environment at home to help prepare students for kindergarten. To support building a rich literacy environment at home many of the ideas suggested in their article are suggested on the pamphlet and website (e.g., shared reading, word recognition, word reading) for parents to practice with their children.

Finally, the last page gives parents a list of community resources they can access for including the local public library, school district, and a parent app called Ready 4K that offers parents

activities and advice to improve kindergarten readiness. Epstein (2001) discusses the importance of parents having community resources they can reach out to for help. Both the pamphlet and the website focus on educating parents about literacy skills, providing parents with community resources they can access to help build those skills, and by providing parents with easy and free games and activities they can play with their children. Additionally, both the pamphlet and website have been designed to be user friendly and easily revised and updated by educators as information changes and new research comes to light.

Recommendations for Implementation

As an educator it was easy for me to understand and find information on the Internet about teaching literacy to young children. I believe that one important aspect of this project is that the website and pamphlet will be a resource for parents and educators who are not as familiar with teaching children literacy strategies and may find it more difficult to locate helpful and reliable information. The goal is to supply all incoming kindergarten parents with access to the website and a copy of the pamphlet at both kindergarten registration and at the kindergarten meet and greet the week prior to the start of kindergarten. In addition, the website and pamphlet could be offered as a resource to the school's transitional-kindergarten (TK) and preschool parents at parent conferences or end of the year promotion events. School staff (e.g., liaisons, teachers, and secretaries) will be asked to give both the pamphlet and website information to parents at registration and at other opportunities as they present themselves.

Limitations

Currently, the biggest limitation to the project is that the website and pamphlet are in English. Translating both to Spanish will help reach more families. Furthermore, some parents

do not have the resources to use the website so they will be limited to the information provided on the handout.

Future Direction

The vast majority of the research I reviewed throughout this project points to the need to build children's literacy skills at home as the foundation of a successful academic career (e.g., Kim, Murdock, & Choi (2005); McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, & Sekino, (2004); Skwarchuk, Sowinski, & LeFevre, (2014). In addition, Epstein's (2001) research informs educators the need for meaningful partnerships with parents to build student achievement. Building upon the current research, the website and handout are the first steps in building a stronger and more effective relationship with the parents at my school site. In the future, I would like to translate both the website and pamphlet into Spanish and offer parents a mini-summer course in building literacy skills. Additional programs could also be offered to parents to improve literacy home environments such as book clubs and family reading days. I intend to seek out additional community resources to add to the website and pamphlet over the next year. Going forward, I would like to seek out and build community partnerships to benefit our students and families.

Conclusion

In today's highly academic classrooms, parents and teachers need to give every child the strongest advantages they can offer for success. Literacy skills are an essential component of today's academic atmosphere. The CCSS are complex and students need to be ready to read and write, listen and speak in kindergarten. This project is designed to be a first step in helping parents to better understand their part in their child's education. Furthermore, this project hopes

to be an initial starting point to help teachers develop a stronger partnership with parents at these schools.

Parents want their children to succeed in school and enjoy their academic career. This project offers parents relevant information and resources to help them teach their children. It is critical that today's educators look for every avenue possible to reach parents from day one and build on that relationship to help foster student success. We are stronger for our students if we team with their parents and community.

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