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The Pre-First Transition Room Program

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THE PRE-FIRST TRANSITION ROOM PROGRAM

A Thesis
Presented to
The Graduate Faculty
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education

by
Jeffrey Scott Peck
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by

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July, 1987

The pre-first transition room program was studied. Characteristics, philosophies, testing procedures, and reading programs were described. Twenty schools in Educational Service District 171 were surveyed to determine attitudes and the type of pre-first programs available in the Educational Service District. Twenty pre-first students were observed throughout the 1986-87 school year to determine social, emotional, and academic growth. Results indicated similar immature characteristics were displayed by developmentally young children. Pre-first programs are similar in philosophy, goals, and curriculum design. Pre-first programs can provide developmental activities which meet individual needs of pre-first children.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Purpose of the Study

Pre-first transition rooms are structured to allow students the time to grow physically, academically, and socially before they enter the first grade. In the pre-first program, students who are developmentally immature are allowed the extra time to grow so they can avoid early academic failure and damaged self concepts (Solem, 1981). Pre-first rooms may also provide security and a very successful learning environment for children who may otherwise be failing in first grade.

The purpose of this study was to investigate philosophies, policies, characteristics, and identification of pre-first students and pre-first programs. Many schools set a chronological date when students are to enter school. But clinical experience suggests that because of the wide individual differences in developmental rates, chronological age is a poor criterion to any child's readiness for the first grade (Jensen, 1969). Pre-first can be a program which is a preferred alternative to retention or promotion of students who may have difficulty in their first school experience.

Focus of the Study

The following questions were investigated:

1. What behaviors characterize the pre-first students?
2. What are the goals and philosophies of a pre-first program?
3. What identification methods are used in screening pre-first students?
4. What curriculum programs are being incorporated in pre-first programs?

Terms Used in This Study

Development: An individual's social, intellectual, and emotional growth.

Growth: Progress toward a definite maturity brought about in an immature organism by the actions of appropriate environmental forces under constant conditions (Millard, 1951).

Individual: Differentiated from others by distinctive characteristics.

Maturity: An individual's rate of social, intellectual, physical, and emotional growth.

Overplacement: An individual placement in the grade system which doesn't meet behavioral age placement.

Pacing: The presentation of learning experiences in terms of difficulty, scope, and sequence according to the child's maturity (Millard, 1951).

Readiness: Time at which a child can enter into certain types of experiences with meaning, interest, and the probability of satisfying achievement (Caswell, 1956).

School readiness: The ability to cope with the school environment physically, socially, emotionally, and academically without undue stress, and to sustain in that environment (Goldman, 1979).

Screening: The process of testing, evaluating, and separating individuals.

Time: A system or instrument in measuring growth.

Transition: A period of time between two stages of growth.

The following chapter will review literature which is related to this study. Chapter 3 deals with the procedures used in collecting information that answers the questions relevant to this study. Chapter 4 will examine the results of this study. Chapter 5 presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of this study.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Related Literature

Children who are not developmentally ready for first grade often find it very difficult adjusting to the school environment (Rapport, 1985). These children display behavioral characteristics which separate and distinguish them from their peers. These behavioral characteristics often inhibit the pre-first student's ability to succeed in the first grade. During the first grade year many reading skills are developed. It is very important that these reading skills are established in each first grade student. All children should be developmentally ready to grasp and utilize reading skills so they experience success in the school environment.

An article written by Solem (1981) summarized many of the typical characteristics of pre-first students. Solem writes:

Many of the students were hyperactive, they couldn't sit still and they lack many organizational skills. Some of the children were overaggressive. Many of the children daydream and have difficulty concentrating and staying on task. Others have poor perceptual and motor skills. They seem to have problems with coordination and balancing activities. Many of the students see themselves as failures, and have poor self concepts. (p. 283)

Certain other characteristics of pre-first students include frustration with certain tasks, poor peer relationships, feelings of inadequacy, and achievement below grade level

(Solem, 1981). Pre-first students express their tensions by vomiting in the morning before school. They also may have nightmares or even return to bed wetting (Gesell, 1977).

Pre-first students are sometimes nervous and display anxiety in different ways. Often these students wander around the room, and struggle with their work (Gesell, 1977). Pre-first students have many poor social skills. They can become discipline problems in the school environment. Fighting, inappropriate noise, and immature classroom behavior are behaviors many of these children display. Often a child who demonstrates these behaviors in the daily classroom environment is placed into the first grade only to experience defeat and failure. This could even develop a "hate school" attitude (Ilg, 1981).

Since 1950, the Gesell Institute has offered clinical service to parents seeking advice and help for school related behavior problems. Consistent observation of these individuals showed that at least 50% were overplaced in relationship to their grade level (Jensen, 1969). Children who have not been placed in the proper grade by their behavioral age standards are often confronted with tasks they are not ready for. Social and emotional requirements seem beyond their maturity level (Laird, 1980).

Placement of students in kindergarten and first grade on the basis of age alone results in overplacement from one-third to one-half of the pupils in any single class (Jensen, 1969). A study was completed by Louise Ames in

Weston, Connecticut (1963), on a group of 60 kindergarteners which she studied for three years. Her findings indicated that 58% of the students were consistently ready for the grade they were placed in. Thirty-two percent of the students were questionably ready, and 12% were unready developmentally for the next grade (Ames, 1963).

Ames suggests that a battery of tests be given to each individual upon entering school to determine their developmental age. Ames also recommended that adding this extra expense of either time or money to our schools (to give these readiness tests) would more than counterbalance by having the majority of the children in the correct grade. It may also be a tremendous savings not only in money alone, but also in terms of preventing emotional unhappiness and academic failure (Ames, 1963).

When a child has been overplaced, many children often experience the characteristics of frustration and anxiety. Children struggling to do the work of a grade they are not ready for may be unhappy and uninterested in their daily tasks. They are often frustrated intellectually or academically to the point where they never are able to express their true abilities. A child who is overplaced can come to hate school and feel a failure in the school environment (Ames, 1963).

Many pre-first students seem to have similar characteristics which indicate these children may be overplaced according to their developmental ages.

Individuals may learn effectively when they are not expected to work beyond the learning level permitted by their capabilities and previous experience. It may be unwise and impractical to place all children of a given age into a specific learning situation on the assumption that age alone will guarantee the physical, perceptual, and manipulative maturities associated with the "average child of that age" (Chase, 1972).

The New York City Public School system recognized the need for a program that would help students who were retained or not ready for promotion at an early school age. The program was designated to help academic and social underachievers, as well as developmentally immature students. The program guidelines called for pupils to receive a concentrated enriched curriculum emphasizing the development of basic reading, language arts, and math skills (Opperman, 1980).

Other program goals included reductions in class size, a commitment to improve self concept, and a program which would foster academic growth (Opperman, 1980). Development of comprehension skills, with added emphasis on critical thinking, and the ability to follow directions and work independently were also important goals of the program. Reading for pleasure, development of a positive self concept, and extra growth time were other goals that could give each student the extra boost to socially and academically catch up to the proper grade level.

The concept that pupils would profit from removal to a special learning environment for a limited period of time was also part of the transition room program in New York. In this environment, class sizes were small and the pupils could receive much more individualized instruction. The pupils' learning problems could be diagnosed and ameliorated so the pupils could profitably return to regular classes and continue to make reasonable progress in future years (Opperman, 1980).

The New York City program established clear and realistic expectations based on pre-assessment of the pupil's performance determined by program objectives (Opperman, 1980). In 1978 selection of the staff to facilitate this program was made. The staff was selected on demonstrated classroom success in working with slow learners, flexibility in classroom management, three years of teaching early childhood grades, and knowledge of a variety of teaching resources. The students were also selected by a careful process which included low achievement levels, California Achievement Test scores, principal/teacher observations, and the lack of readiness in the daily classroom environment (Opperman, 1980).

During the 1978-79 school year there were 489 transition classes established which served over 8,000 pupils in 359 schools. Sixty-one percent were boys and 39% were girls (Opperman, 1980). By the end of the school year attendance data, informal attentiveness observations, and

California Achievement Test scores were evaluated to determine the effectiveness of the program.

The attendance data from the study was somewhat inconclusive. The results indicated the attendance rate was 86% for 60% of the students in the program. This attendance rate percentage was similar to the other schools' rates across New York City (Opperman, 1980). This may indicate a slight improvement in attendance of the students in the transition rooms; these students often have poor attendance records.

Pre and post reading scores from The California Achievement Test were obtained from 40% of the second grade and 50% of third grade transition students. In the first 13 months of the program from March 1878 to June 1979, there was a nine-month growth in reading skills (Opperman, 1980). This would indicate that their reading skills were improving, yet they were still performing below grade level standards. For the same period of time, pupil attentiveness was measured in a sub-study of 45 transition rooms. It was found that over 90% of the pupils observed were attentive throughout instruction (Opperman, 1980). This might indicate that the program kept the majority of the students interested in the daily instruction.

During the 1979-80 school year there were 391 transition classes serving 7,425 students in 13 schools. Using pre and post California Achievement Test data it was determined that reading growth for this period was close to

nine months. This may indicate that the students are reading and developing their reading skills at a normal grade level pace. Attendance rates held steady at 86% throughout the school year (Opperman, 1980). Pupil attentiveness studies also indicated that pupil attentiveness also leveled off and stabilized to about 86% for the pupils surveyed. Data from the 1979-80 transition classes suggest that the transition class experience resulted in improvement in the pupils' ability to work profitably in classrooms. It also indicated that many pupils increased their growth in reading skills, particularly in those classes where the program policies were fully implemented (Opperman, 1980).

The success of the program will take many years to evaluate. Substantial gains in test scores may never occur, but it may be possible to observe emotional and social growth. New York City's program might have been one of the first of this type designed to help the low achievers have a successful, early age experience in school. The program helped boost the city's lagging reading scores, which showed that 60% of the students at one time read below grade level (Goldman, 1979). It helped boost the attendance rates for the transition students, and it helped in improvement of the pupil attentiveness rate.

Reading could be the most important part of a successful transition room program. In a report from the developmental examiner in Georgia,

In 1971, 1,800 Scott Foresman reading readiness tests were administered to incoming first graders. On the basis of the test, it was determined that only three out of ten children would most likely be successful in a first grade reading program. It also indicated that Fall birthday children, and boys more than girls, would have trouble. Using age 6 as a criterion for first grade entrance, the Scott Foresman survey showed that only 54 percent would be ready for reading. Using developmental age as a criterion, 71 percent would be ready to read. There was a greater predictive rate between chronological age and reading success. (Gillespie, 1979, p. 5)

Much of the research indicates that time management, resources, classroom environment, and school climate might be the foundation to a strong pre-first transition room program. The curriculum could be developed so it is individualized as much as possible, tailored to fit the varying needs of each child (Grade Teacher, 1965). Teacher-pupil ratios should be small so the teacher can attempt to help the child in the areas where the child needs the most help (Wilson, 1979). Much of the curriculum can be flexible enough to allow the teachers enough time to nurture social and emotional maturity, and improve reading and math readiness skills (Solem, 1981).

Research studies have also been completed on identification techniques used to determine of an individual may benefit from a transition room program. Over 25 tests have been developed and implemented to diagnose developmental and behavioral learning problems. One such test is called the Incomplete Man Test. This test is one of the most effective tests to determine the developmental readiness of each student (Ames & Ilg, 1963).

The Incomplete Man Test was developed by the Gesell Institute to determine where either child is in his or her developmental stage (Ames & Ilg, 1963). This test is an incomplete man, drawn similar to a stick figure, on a white piece of paper. The child who is being tested must try to complete as much of the drawing as possible. The test is scored on how much of the incomplete man is finished. But even more important is that by the quality of each separate part as added, the examiner can objectively determine the age level of the child's performance (Ames & Ilg, 1963).

Identification of students who may benefit from a transition room program is one of the most difficult jobs an early childhood educator may have to face. The Incomplete Man Test might be used as a tool to determine if an individual child would benefit from a transition room experience. Monitoring the emotional and social growth of each student in the school environment is another way of determining the social and emotional growth of a child. The utilization of kindergarten teachers' recommendations would be appropriate means of identifying and selecting students for transition room programs (Wilson, 1979).

Much of the success of a transition room program could lie in the abilities of the transition room teacher. In a study conducted by Opperman (1980), criteria were established for teachers who might possibly have the ability to teach in this type of program. The criteria included the demonstrated success in working with low achievers,

flexibility in classroom management, three years' experience in teaching early childhood grades, and a knowledge of a variety of teaching resources. Program awareness and encouraged parental involvement as well as the willingness to participate in staff inservice were other criteria listed which are important qualities the successful transition room teacher must possess.

The teacher in the transition program has to become familiar with and understand the common growth sequence of children. The teacher must be able to anticipate when children will most likely be ready for certain types of educational experiences. Staff members must understand what types of experiences lead on to or foster other desired experiences, and staff must be able to recognize readiness for certain types of experiences when it is present. Transition room programs, therefore, must be developed with full recognition of the growth sequence of each child (Caswell, 1956).

Research indicates that there are several major areas which transition rooms should consider in developing a program. The first major area is social and emotional development. Self-esteem is a very important key to healthy social and emotional growth for the child in the transition room program. Effective transition programs attempt to help the child become a sensitive, cooperative, and responsible child. Effective transition rooms will foster a positive self image, and help promote in each child an inner sense of

responsibility and the ability to cope effectively in the school environment (Bohl, 1984). There is a definite need for early success in school. A successful school environment will set an attitude toward one's self for the school years to come (Laird, 1980).

Physical development is another major area in which a transition room program can help certain students catch up to their peers. Children in transition room programs are often taught with a high degree of sensory and physical involvement (Laird, 1980). Hearing, seeing, tasting, touching, and smelling are very important learning tools in the pre-first transition room program. Movement is important because of the development of the small and large muscles of the body. Activities must also be shortened to not only accommodate the children's attention spans but also to gradually build up the stamina and help the developmental sequence of the children so they can cope with the school environment (Laird, 1980).

Academic growth is another major area in which transition room students should experience success and build a strong foundation. Lessons must be appropriate to match each student's individual needs. Many of the academic goals should be centered around individual needs and the learning style of each child. A transition room environment is for students who need continuous learning opportunities to bridge the developmental gap between kindergarten and first grade (Bohl, 1984). Administrators and teachers should work

together as a team to diagnose the academic needs of each child and begin his or her academic instruction at the appropriate instructional level.

Summary

It has been the purpose of this chapter to research pre-first transition room programs. The characteristics of the children who may be able to benefit from the program are often similar. Social and emotional immaturity are often characteristics which students display in a variety of behaviors. Maturity can't be tutored, it can only be strengthened by time. Pre-first transition room programs give each child the time to develop as a whole person before entering first grade (Bohl, 1984).

Each child entering first grade should be given certain evaluations to determine developmental age. Using the developmental age as a guideline to grade level placement will place each student into an instructional level which better matches his or her individual needs. The Incomplete Man Test and the use of observations should be good standards to determine each student's educational needs.

The program New York City Schools developed and implemented is one example of how special classes can be established to help with the problem of early failure in school. The program in New York gave students the extra time to develop and have an opportunity for success in providing a positive learning experience in the early school

years for children who have fallen far behind their peers (Report on T-Classes, 1980).

The transition program is designed to allow each student an equal balance of social, emotional, physical, and academic growth. Every pre-first student should have an even, well balanced educational program which will allow him or her success in many different activities (Hood, 1980). More importantly, the pre-first program gives the students the extra time to mature and grow so they will be more successful in building a strong educational foundation for their future years.

CHAPTER THREE

Procedures of the Study

Background Information

The study was designed to be a descriptive study of pre-first transition room programs. The study used informal observation, interviews, surveys, and questionnaires to obtain the information that was necessary to complete the study. The writer first became interested in the pre-first transition room program concept when the Cashmere School District began the process of implementing a pre-first program into the district during the 1984-85 school year. The writer was actively involved in an administrative internship during the 1984-85 school year. It was an excellent opportunity to observe the program develop and grow into the strong program it is today.

Procedures

During the 1984-85 school year a pre-first transition room program concept was investigated in the Cashmere School District. In September 1984, a preliminary timeline was established by Vale Elementary Principal Con Lautensleger to investigate the concept of a pre-first program (Appendix A). Teachers from grades 2-4 were selected to help with the development of the program, and a parent from the Cashmere community was also selected to serve on the committee to

help develop the pre-first program. The two kindergarten teachers and another first grade teacher were also selected to serve on this committee.

Visitations were completed to several other pre-first programs around the state, and guidelines for these programs were collected and reviewed by members of the pre-first committee. Research articles and a video presentation on pre-first programs as well as the Gesell Institute's findings were made available to the faculty at Vale Elementary. Through the work of the committee, a model for a pre-first room was developed (Appendix B).

A philosophy statement was written by the committee (Appendix C). Affective, cognitive, and course goals were also developed and written (Appendix D). In March of 1984, a proposal to adopt a pre-first program was given to the Board of Directors. It was soon accepted and the pre-first program became a part of the Cashmere School District's curriculum. Three staff members were trained in screening children for the pre-first program. Screening was administered to those children who displayed any of the characteristics of being developmentally immature.

The kindergarten staff was also given a Developmental Readiness Behavioral Checklist (Appendix E) to help screen some of the children for the pre-first program. A checklist for parents and teachers was also made available to help with the screening process (Appendix F). Parents were involved with the screening process. When the results from

the test were available, parents were informed and counseled. The final decision to have children participate in the pre-first program was entirely up to the parents or the child's legal guardian.

The process of selecting a staff member to head the program was soon completed and student learning objectives for the 1985-86 school year were formulated and adopted (Appendix G). The school stage was renovated during the summer of 1985 to accommodate a pre-first classroom. Students who might benefit the most from the pre-first environment were screened and selected. Parental permission was obtained and the basic guidelines for the program were established (Appendix H).

During the 1985-86 and 1986-87 school years, informal observations were conducted on 20 different pre-first students. Ten students each year were randomly selected from the pre-first classroom at Vale Elementary and observed once a week in a 20-minute reading block. The students participated in an informal reading activity in which each student selected a third grade student as a partner and they read stories to each other. The activity lasted 20 minutes and each session was held once a week throughout the school year. Special attention was given to the pre-first students' social development and their progress in their reading skills.

Throughout the 1986-87 school year the author served in a role as the unofficial Assistant Principal at Vale

Elementary. This allowed the opportunity to occasionally meet with the pre-first students on an informal basis. The meeting would take place in the Principal's Office on a one-on-one basis. The pre-first students would usually need counseling, or need to be disciplined for improper behavior in the school environment. This was a unique opportunity to meet with these students on a one-to-one basis and discuss behaviors or emotions they were dealing with.

On April 6, 1986, a questionnaire was distributed to the parents of 20 of the pre-first students. The survey was designed to determine the strengths and weaknesses, attitudes, concerns, and suggestions for the 1986-87 pre-first program. Twelve of the surveys were returned, and the results of the surveys were made available and are used in this study (Appendix I). Thirteen schools in Educational Service District 171 were surveyed by a questionnaire. This survey was designed to examine any pre-first program that may have been in operation during the 1985-86 school year. The survey examined program goals, philosophies, reading curriculum, and placement testing techniques. Eight schools responded and the results are contained in this study (Appendix J).

CHAPTER FOUR

Results of the Study

Thirteen school districts in the Educational Service District #171 were surveyed by questionnaire about pre-first programs (Appendix J). Sixty-two percent of the surveys were returned. Results indicated that 53% of the schools surveyed had similar pre-first programs. Other results showed that one school used its transition program for handicapped children, and another district used its program as a readiness kindergarten for the children that tested developmentally young.

The first item on the questionnaire asked schools to respond about their programs' philosophies. More than 75% indicated similar philosophies. The extra time given to children to grow, the successful learning environment, and developmental readiness were terms most often used in describing these schools' philosophies.

The Cashmere pre-first program emphasizes time and success in its program philosophy. Results from the Cashmere survey indicated that children may associate learning with frustration and failure. However, if the children were given the time to explore interests and grow in self-esteem and confidence, the child may then associate school and learning with success. The Tonasket School District's philosophy was designed to provide an additional year of growth before entering first grade. The extra time

was structured for success through many different developmental activities.

Most of the surveys emphasized the individual development of each student. The pre-first program in East Wenatchee School District accepts children who have fallen below developmental age standards. Through the use of Chapter 1 Language instructions, fine motor, gross motor, visual and auditory skills, the East Wenatchee program attempts to meet each of the children's individual needs.

Various testing procedures were used by the school districts to screen children who may benefit from the pre-first program. Results indicated 100% of the school districts used teacher observation to help screen children for the pre-first program. Length of observation time and the format used to record results were varied. But every school district used teacher observation as a tool in the testing process.

Early Prevention of School Failure program was used by 37% of the schools. Within the kit, several sub tests were used according to schedule. The tests developed by the Gesell Institute were used by 27% of the school districts. Over six other early childhood developmental tests were given. The schools indicated that many observations and tests need to be completed on each child before a decision can be made regarding individual placement.

Letter identification and reading readiness skills were found to be the basis for reading programs for the schools

surveyed. Language experience activities were mentioned by over 80% of the schools as a strategy used in their pre-first reading program. Writing, creative expression through music and dance, independent silent sustained reading, and remedial reading work through the use of computers were other activities mentioned that help facilitate pre-first reading programs.

Over 80% of the surveys indicated that basal reading series were used when the children had the reading readiness foundation. Several of the basal series listed were Economy, Houghton-Mifflin, Scott Foresman, and Lippincott. The results show that the pre-first programs surveyed use many different basal series, but most of the schools believe that reading readiness and language experience are a central concept to their reading program.

Results of the E.S.D. Survey showed that out of 625 students considered for first grade during the 1985-86 school year, 20% were placed into pre-first programs. The Chelan School District indicated close to 35% of the students who were considered for first grade were placed in the pre-first program. The East Wenatchee School District reported approximately 12% of first grade students were placed into pre-first programs. Average class size for all of the programs was averaged out to be about 17 per class.

Questionnaires were given by Vale Principal Con Lautensleger to the parents of 20 Cashmere pre-first children at the end of the 1985-86 school year. Sixty

percent of the questionnaires were returned. Fifty-eight of the questionnaires responded that the teacher was the strength behind the Cashmere program. Positive learning environment, individual growth, and the ability to succeed in daily activities were other strengths listed (Appendix I).

The perceived attitude of the children toward the Cashmere pre-first program was also evaluated. Over 90% of the responses were considered positive. Results indicated that pre-first and the school environment were important to the children. The children seemed happy to be in school and excited about the success they were experiencing in the pre-first program. The results of this survey showed that if these parents ever had another child tested developmentally young, 80% would choose the pre-first program again (Appendix I).

During the 1986-87 school year, informal observations were done randomly on the pre-first children in Cashmere. The results of these observations concluded that all of the children in this pre-first program often displayed many of the same immature behaviors. One hundred percent of the children were observed being physically overactive during a specific learning activity. These children had short attention spans and were often easily distracted. One child involuntarily urinated on the floor, and inappropriate language and behavior were observed in over 60% of these children.

On task analyses were also completed during this observation period. Results from the on task analyses observations showed steady on task progress throughout the school year. During September 1985, it was noted that an average of 25% of the pre-first children sampled were found to be on task during the reading activity. By January 1986, an average of 40% of the pre-first students sampled were on task during the same reading activity. In May 1986, the same observations indicated over 50% of the students sampled were on task.

Conclusions from the analyses' results indicated that the pre-first children became more comfortable with the reading activity each week. The pre-first children developed more interest in the reading activity and were able to participate more as their reading skills developed. Growth and developmental maturity increased throughout the school year in many of the children observed.

During the 1985-86, 1986-87 school years, counseling sessions were completed with pre-first children from the Cashmere program. The sessions were completed when the children had been referred to the school office for inappropriate behavior in the school environment. Over 90% of the pre-first children were referred for inappropriate language or improper physical behavior.

Over 60% of the children showed signs of emotional upset during the sessions. Crying, denial of actions, and physical discomfort were the characteristics most often

noted. Anger, frustration, tension, and anxiety were other characteristics observed. Many of the children were unaware of the specific behavior that caused their referral to the office.

Other observations done throughout the 1986-87 school year found that many of the characteristics of the pre-first children were the same. Daydreaming and the absence of fine motor skills were observed in the lunchroom setting. Poor manners and the inability to eat without a lot of physical activeness were also noted. Socially, the pre-first children often played together. Physical games were most often observed and often the pre-first students would find a section of the playground and play with small manipulative toys together.

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

The study described philosophies, goals, and the curriculum used in pre-first programs. Identification and behavior characteristics of pre-first children were also described. Pre-first students in the Cashmere School District were informally observed. Surveys were used to collect information about different pre-first programs. An evaluation of the 1985-86 pre-first program in the Cashmere School District was summarized and used in the study. On task analyses and counseling results of pre-first children were examined.

Philosophically, pre-first programs are similar. Success and a positive learning environment are goals of pre-first programs. The extra year of school is the "gift of time" pre-first children need. Behavior characteristics of pre-first children are similar also. Immature social and emotional behavior patterns are common in developmentally young pre-first children. Teacher/parent observations are the most widely used identification techniques. Curriculum structure is individualized to meet the children's needs. Language development and reading readiness skills were important concepts in pre-first reading curriculum.

Conclusions

1. Many behavior characteristics were similar in pre-first children. Pre-first children are developmentally immature. Use of developmental age as a standard for entrance into first grade rather than chronological age will better meet some children's educational and social needs. Some children are not ready for first grade at age six. Social, emotional, and academic immaturity are the behaviors most often observed in pre-first children.

2. Pre-first programs' philosophies recognize and are designed with the understanding that children develop and mature at different rates. Pre-first children require extra time to mature and experience early success in learning activities and daily life. Pre-first programs provide to children the "gift of time."

3. Pre-first program goals are based on individual progress. Progress bridges the developmental gap which exists between kindergarten and first grade. The goals of pre-first programs are not to repeat the kindergarten experience or have an easy first grade. The goals of pre-first programs are to creatively meet the individual developmental needs of the pre-first student. Time and success should be the central foundation to pre-first program goals.

4. Identification methods used in screening and placement of children are consistent. Teacher observation is the most commonly used form of evaluation technique.

Teacher observation is a valuable tool in evaluation of children for pre-first programs. Teacher observation can identify social, emotional, and academic immaturity. Behavioral patterns can be observed so developmentally immature children can be identified and evaluated further.

5. The Gesell Institute provides testing and counseling techniques to evaluate developmental readiness. Many school districts use the Early Prevention of School Failure testing method. Various reading and language achievement tests can be used to evaluate academic development. Evaluation of developmental readiness should be performed for every child entering first grade.

6. Pre-first curriculum is quite different in the pre-first programs included in the study. Language development and letter identification are used in many pre-first reading programs. Basal reading series were all found to be different in the schools surveyed. Pre-first curriculum is as individual as the children in the program. Individualized curriculum provides the children the successful learning experience they need to develop a strong learning framework so they will be successful in their future years.

Recommendations

This study is recommended to be used as an introductory guide in the development of pre-first programs. There is a need for alternative educational programs for children who

are diagnosed developmentally immature. Pre-first programs are the alternative which gives children the extra "gift of time."

Research is recommended to investigate and report on the academic growth of pre-first children. Achievement testing prior to the pre-first school year should be administered and evaluated by trained professionals. Post testing should be completed at the end of the pre-first school year. Academic achievement scores could then be evaluated for further use in a research project. Research is also recommended for social and emotional growth of pre-first children. This would be accomplished by daily observation of pre-first children in the school environment.

Pre-first programs allow children the unique opportunity to mature, develop, and experience academic success at their own pace. The need for individualized pre-first programs is obvious. Learning and experiencing academic success at an early age will build a healthy educational foundation. The writer recommends that pre-first programs become a major part of every elementary school curriculum.

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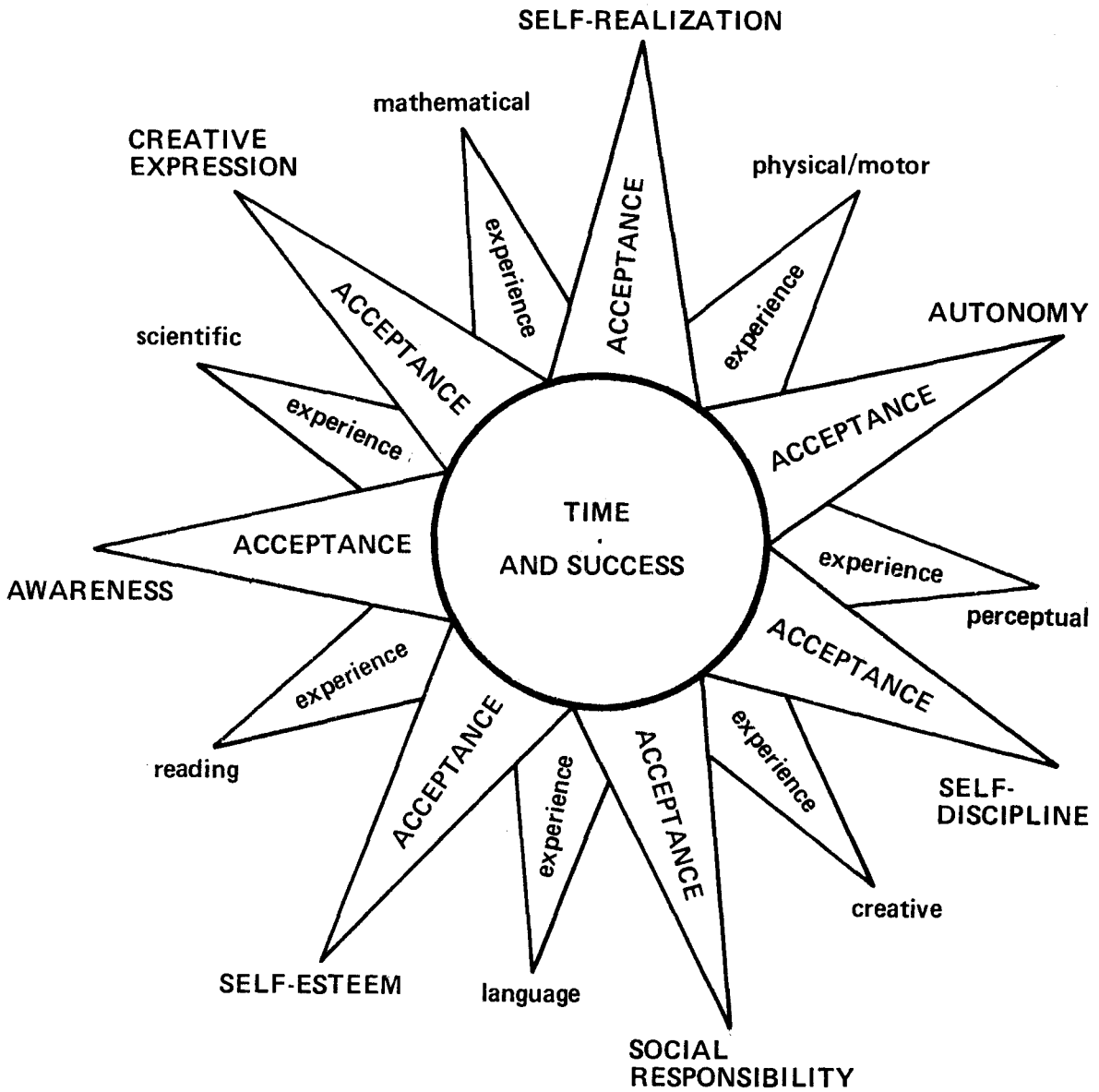
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Appendix A

VALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
 Investigation of Pre-First Program
 September, 1984

WHEN	WHAT	COST
By Oct. 31	Select parent representative	-
	Select staff representative from grades 2-4	-
Fall, 1984	Visit 2 successful pre-first programs (e.g., Monroe, Ellensburg, Chelan, Puyallup)	4 or 8 sub days
By Mar. 1	Design a program - SLO's activities, special needs, etc. Report progress to Board.	-
By Mar. 30	Screen students for possible pre-first placement (Gesell)	7½ sub days
By May 15	Inservice - District Staff Inservice - Parents	Travel for guest speaker
By June 7	Final report to Board, including all recommendations	Unknown. Will include cost of start-up.

Appendix B



GOAL MODEL FOR PRE-FIRST PROGRAM
 Cashmere School District
 Vale Elementary

Appendix C

VALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Philosophy Statement
for
Pre-First Transition Room

Pre-first is a program designed to offer a child a positive progression from kindergarten to first grade. It is philosophically based on child development research. The viewpoint looks at the whole child--intellect, social, physical, and emotional--and where he/she is now. The child will be met at his/her individual developmental age and be encouraged and challenged to grow both academically and developmentally in a program designed to strengthen the whole child. Emphasis will be placed on the development of self concept in an environment conducive to success for each child.

When we place a child in situations for which he/she is not ready, we inhibit his/her change of becoming the whole person he/she was meant to be. The child then associates learning with frustration, and failure. However, given the time to explore interests, expand on present abilities, and grow in confidence and self-esteem, the child will then associate school and learning with success.

Appendix D

Pre-First Transition Room

AFFECTIVE GOALS

1. SELF-ESTEEM - To foster a positive sense of self.
2. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY - To help the child become a sensitive, cooperative, and responsible group member.
3. SELF-DISCIPLINE - To promote in each child an inner sense of responsibility and the ability to cope effectively.
4. AUTONOMY - To foster individuality, self-direction, independence, and decision-making skills.
5. SELF-REALIZATION - To assist the child in becoming the whole person he/she was meant to be.
6. CREATIVE EXPRESSION - To encourage the child to explore and develop his/her own creativity.
7. AWARENESS - To foster an appreciation of his/her environment through the senses and exploration.

COGNITIVE GOALS

1. MATHEMATICAL - To build a foundation for math concepts through manipulation of concrete materials.
2. PERCEPTUAL - To build a foundation for perceptual concepts through visual kinesthetic and auditory experiences.
3. PHYSICAL - To provide movement experiences for development of physical and motor skills.
4. LANGUAGE - To build a foundation for effective communication by providing experiences in listening, speaking, and writing.
5. READING - To provide positive opportunities for growth in reading experiences so that each child is successful.
6. SCIENTIFIC - To provide an environment in which discovery, investigation, and spirit of inquiry are fostered and developed.
7. CREATIVE - To provide an atmosphere conducive to creativity through music, art, free play, storytelling, dramatics, and puppetry.

PRE-FIRST GRADE MATH COURSE GOALS

Learning opportunities provided shall assist in acquiring and developing:

1. Number concepts up through 30.
2. Ability to recognize and name numerals to 30 (randomly).
3. Ability to write numerals to 30 or beyond.
4. Ability to count orally by ones and tens to 50.
5. Ability to recognize and identify the following geometric shapes: circle, rectangle, triangle, and square.

PRE-FIRST GRADE READING COURSE GOALS

Learning opportunities provided shall assist in acquiring and developing:

1. Ability to recognize upper and lower case letters.
2. Ability to distinguish between beginning and ending sounds (auditory and/or written).
3. Ability to develop critical thinking in sequencing and problem solving.
4. Ability to demonstrate left to right and top to bottom visual movement.
5. Awareness of the written word through recognition of their own first and last names, number words, and color words.
6. Introductory knowledge of rhyming words.

PRE-FIRST GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES COURSE GOALS

Learning opportunities provided shall assist in acquiring and developing:

1. Ability to identify the family unit.
2. Ability to identify and demonstrate safe practices involving busing, walking, meeting strangers, and fires.
3. An introductory understanding of different kinds of work; for example, classroom jobs and family occupations.
4. Ability to demonstrate getting along with peers and taking care of personal needs.

PRE-FIRST GRADE SCIENCE COURSE GOALS

Learning opportunities provided shall assist in acquiring and developing:

1. Ability to use a variety of sources to acquire information; for example, personal observation and stored information.
2. Ability to sort objects according to their likenesses and differences.

PRE-FIRST GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS COURSE GOALS

Learning opportunities provided shall assist in acquiring and developing:

1. A variety of experiences to foster growth in the communication skills of listening, reading, speaking, and writing.
2. Appreciation of the different forms of literature.
3. Familiarity with correct line usage and letter spacing.
4. Ability to listen, follow directions, and work independently.
5. Ability to speak in complete sentences.
6. Ability to contribute meaningfully to group discussions.

PRE-FIRST GRADE LIBRARY COURSE GOALS

Learning opportunities provided shall assist in acquiring and developing:

1. Ability to select a book from the shelf and properly check it out.
2. Ability to demonstrate careful handling of library materials.
3. An understanding that books provide; for example, information and enjoyment.

PRE-FIRST GRADE ART COURSE GOALS

Learning opportunities provided shall assist in acquiring and developing:

1. Ability to verbally identify the eight basic colors.
2. Ability to create individual art utilizing a variety of art media.
3. Respect for use and care of art tools and materials.
4. An appreciation of art.

PRE-FIRST GRADE PHYSICAL EDUCATION COURSE GOALS

Learning opportunities provided shall assist in acquiring and developing:

1. An introductory knowledge of locomotor skills; for example, walking, running, hopping, jumping, leaping, skipping, galloping, sliding, and step-hopping.
2. Ability to use non-locomotor skills; for example, bending, pushing, pulling, twisting, and falling.
3. An introductory knowledge of ball handling skills; for example, throwing, catching, bouncing, and kicking.
4. Introductory skills in the use of various floor and hand apparatus; for example, balls, balance beam, scooters, and jump ropes.
5. Experiences with timing and body control through rhythm activities.

Appendix E

VALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Guidelines for Kindergarten Teachers

DEVELOPMENTAL READINESS BEHAVIORAL CHECKLIST

CHILD'S NAME _____ TEACHER _____ DATE _____

BIRTHDATE _____ CHRONOLOGICAL AGE _____

A CHILD MIGHT SHOW EVIDENCE OF:

1. IMMATURE EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

- _____ a. Doesn't work well independently
- _____ b. Overly sensitive
- _____ c. Cries easily
- _____ d. Fearful of new situations or change
- _____ e. May not get along with other children
- _____ f. Reluctant to participate in many classroom activities
- _____ g. Slow to adjust to classroom routines
- _____ h. Short attention span
- _____ i. Unable to cope with frustrations

2. IMMATURE PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Lack of:

- _____ a. large/small motor coordination
- _____ b. eye/hand coordination
- _____ c. handedness
- _____ d. body awareness

3. IMMATURE LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

- _____ a. Immature speech patterns
- _____ b. Inability to interpret pictures
- _____ c. Inadequate vocabulary
- _____ d. Non-fluent speech

4. INEFFECTIVE WORK HABITS

- _____ a. Consistently needs verbal instructions repeated
- _____ b. Short attention span
- _____ c. Easily distracted
- _____ d. Needs individual attention
- _____ e. Cannot work independently
- _____ f. Unable to sit still in group activities

5. READINESS

- a. Lack of visual perception
 - (1) alphabet letter identification
 - (2) numeral identification
 - (3) likeness/difference symbols, patterns, colors, objects, shapes, etc.
 - (4) left/right awareness
- b. Lack of auditory perception
 - (1) rhyming
 - (2) letter sounds differentiation, reproduce sequences, etc.
- c. Lack of background experience
 - (1) does not verbalize
 - (2) does not illustrate
- d. General difficulty in pre-academics
 - (1) does not understand math concepts and relationships
 - (2) does not understand sound/symbol associations

6. SUPPORTIVE DATA

- a. Physical size and age
- b. Parental concern

TEACHER COMMENTS:

PARENT CONFERENCES:

Gesell Readiness Score _____

Appendix F

VALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Pre-First Transition Program

CHILD _____ TEACHER _____ YEAR _____

BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS OF READINESS

	<u>HOME</u>	<u>SCHOOL</u>
Feels inadequate	_____	_____
Often says, "I can't"	_____	_____
Always "tells teacher" about another child's misbehavior	_____	_____
Seldom laughs or smiles	_____	_____
Is overanxious about being right	_____	_____
Daydreams	_____	_____
Exhibits Jekyll-Hyde behavior	_____	_____
Does not relate well with peers	_____	_____
Is a follower	_____	_____
May be a loner	_____	_____
Uses tension-reducing behaviors	_____	_____
Sucks thumb	_____	_____
Bites nails or fingers	_____	_____
Cries easily	_____	_____
Whines rather than expressing needs or feelings in words	_____	_____
Experiences fatigue	_____	_____
Resists getting ready for school	_____	_____
Frustration	_____	_____
Often verbalizes negative feelings about others (e.g., "He's dumb")	_____	_____
Discipline problems	_____	_____
Hollers	_____	_____
Destroys classroom materials	_____	_____
Fights with peers	_____	_____
Does not follow directions	_____	_____
Learning in spurts	_____	_____
A short attention span	_____	_____
Achievement below expectations	_____	_____
Is reluctant about trying new ideas	_____	_____
A difficult time finishing work	_____	_____
Non-participation in group activities	_____	_____
Rarely speaks in large group or circle time	_____	_____
Avoids looking at others; looks down towards floor when speaking	_____	_____
Upon arrival at school, always waits to be told what to do	_____	_____
A lack of fine or gross motor control	_____	_____
Will not engage in gross motor play or outdoor activities	_____	_____
Cannot (will not) participate in paper/pencil tasks	_____	_____

Appendix G

VALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Pre-First Transition Room

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

LANGUAGE - The student will:

1. Speak in complete sentences.
2. Listen and follow directions.
3. Contribute meaningfully to group discussions.
4. Become familiar with writing the correct letter formation and correct line usage.

MATH - The student will:

1. Sort given materials into 3 classifications.
2. Represent patterns with concrete materials.
3. Interpret information on a graph.
4. Recognize and name numerals to 30.
4. Write numerals to 30.

READING - The student will:

1. Recognize and name capital letters.
2. Recognize and name small letters.
3. Know consonant sounds.
4. Know short vowel sounds.
5. Distinguish between beginning and ending sounds.
6. Know left to right and top to bottom.

Appendix H

VALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Pre-First Transition Room

BASIC GUIDELINES

A. Placement Procedures

1. Kindergarten teacher fills out Developmental Readiness/Behavioral checklist.
2. Gesell Developmental Screening is administered.
3. Parent, teacher, pre-first teacher and Gesell evaluator will conference to determine final placement of child.
4. A pre-first or first grade student transferring from another district will be placed at his/her current level. If teacher observation indicates misplacement, steps 1-3 of placement procedures shall be taken.
5. If a first grade teacher observes a child's overplacement after 6 weeks of instruction, steps 1-3 of placement procedures shall be taken.

B. Class Size

1. Ideal class size shall be 20 students with flexibility to consider the exception.

Appendix I

VALE ELEMENTARY PRE-FIRST EVALUATION

May, 1986

On April 26, 1986, a questionnaire was sent to the parents of 20 pre-first students. Twelve were returned. The following is a summary of the results:

What do you feel are the strengths of the pre-first?

- * Sheila! The reading program is a real plus. So exciting to see your child "click" into the understanding of what reading is all about!
- * It gives the kids an extra year to mature and they are "not flunked" because it's all day and different than kindergarten!
- * The LEA and Dekodiphukan programs made the first attempts at reading painless. I also feel good about the concrete use of math objects.
- * Positive experience in school - chance for successful performance by children who are not developmentally ready for first grade.
- * Sheila Stewart! Numerous interesting and educational experiences the children are exposed to daily.
- * A positive program, continual positive reinforcement.
- * The teacher gets to spend more time with the children.
- * Children being allowed to learn at their own pace; the wealth of materials to learn from, physical expression, a positive environment and teacher.
- * Sheila Stewart as their teacher; that they have the year to adjust to the academic demands, they learn to become responsible for themselves, and that the class allows ample creativity and free choice activities.
- * The reading program. Individual help.
- * Sheila Stewart. Her enthusiasm and dedication are contagious - for the parents as well as the children.
- * I feel pre-first builds confidence, teaches responsibility, and helps organization.
- * Sheila. The activities that are designed for individual growth. The math and reading program.

Pre-First Evaluation
Page Two

What parental concerns do you have about pre-first?

- * The location. It sets apart the children from the rest creating a "difference" from the others. Too large of a class!.
- * The program is fine and seems to be well accepted by the kids.
- * That all the students are, indeed, developmentally young (not a dumping ground). Cooking only with one exit.
- * Safety of the site - one escape route, overcrowding of the room. A full size classroom would be preferable.
- * The physical environment - the facility needs to be larger, natural lighting and in general, a room that fits in with the typical Vale Elementary classroom. Will my child be stimulated and excited about learning in the first grade as he has been in Pre-First?
Reading program - - Transition from picture code to letters, could this occur earlier in the year?
Possibly more self-paced. I am not convinced at this point that this method of teaching reading is superior to other conventional methods.
- * My only real concern is about the transition to first grade: I hope the kids' creativity, self-direction and responsibility won't be lost. I wonder if there will be differences in kids entering from pre-first vs. the kids who enter from kindergarten. I would like to see a room more similar to the kindergarten rooms (more space).
- * Mainly that our son will be 19 at graduation, but we cannot tell at this time whether that will be a positive or negative side effect.
- * I worry that this small group of kids feel a little alienated from the rest.
- * I know this is a very difficult task, but I feel screening is very important to the success of the goal of pre-first. Pre-first should never become just a "dumping ground" for all who aren't totally ready for first grade. This would not be fair to the pre-first teacher or the other pre-first students. Suggestions: Stay out of kindergarten a year, resource room, repeat kindergarten.

Pre-First Evaluation
Page Three

What is your child's attitude about the program?

- * Good. Loves the math concepts. There is still the feeling of why he didn't go to first grade. But better to go ahead 1/2 way than stay in kindergarten.
- * He really liked pre-first until just recently. I think he's over tired or depressed in general.
- * Good - not at all stressed.
- * Generally good. He expresses dislike of having the stage unavailable - is this being discussed by other Vale students?
- * Positive attitude - he enjoys the program and the teacher. However, the fall was very difficult for him since his twin sister was in first grade and was reading.
- * He doesn't like it.
- * He has felt very positive about it. He enjoys learning and has learned a lot about being responsible for himself, cooperating and participating.
- * Excellent.
- * Very good.
- * Our son loves school and his teacher. There is so much going on in Sheila's class that he can hardly wait to return from vacations and weekends.
- * She loves it.
- * Now it is positive, but at the first of the year he felt it a put-down to be in pre-first. I think this came from peers going on to first grade.

What changes would you like to see in the program?

- * A smaller class, a different classroom/or windows! More of a plan about the progression of the reading program. I felt in the dark.
- * I think the program is fine and the kids seem to be happy.
- * Good - not at all stressed.

Pre-First Evaluation
Page Four

- * Support the teacher in her desires for improvements, additional equipment, aide support.
- * Smaller class size. A part-time aide to assist. The program seems to dependent on volunteers.
- * A typical classroom - I feel the room (converted stage) located where it is and so totally different from other classrooms immediately sends a negative message to the student, "You are different."
- * Bigger room for one. More time spent on reading. I don't like their reading materials.
- * I'd like to see a room more similar to the kindergarten rooms with more space, an area for physical play and windows/light! I think a pre-first classroom should be a priority.
- * That the kids advancing quickly could get introduced to the alphabet and phonics a bit sooner. Basically I am impressed with my son's ability to read and to figure out words that are the exceptions to the rule.
- * Reduction in the size of the class. An aide available, and a larger classroom.

If you had another child assessed as developmentally young, would you place him/her in pre-first?

- * Yes, definitely!
- * Yes.
- * Yes.
- * It would be an option we would carefully consider.
- * Probably. However, I feel I could better answer this question after Kurt completes first grade. I feel I cannot really assess the success of pre-first at this point.
- * Depends on the child.
- * Yes.
- * Absolutely.
- * Yes.

Pre-First Evaluation
Page Five

- * Yes - especially if Sheila is the teacher.
- * Yes.
- * Yes.

Comments/Suggestions

- * As a parent I faced more uncertainty about placing my child in the program. A lot of agonizing. One wants to have your child progress like "all the others"! Perhaps more support (a group?) before and more informative meetings during school. If not that, volunteering to help in classroom will help one have a better concept about the program.
- * Everything is fine. Keep up the good work!
- * I am very pleased with many of the things Sheila has done. This kind of a program must take a tremendous amount of organization and time.
- * Evaluate overall results of having the pre-first program. Has it effectively reduced the numbers of children being retained at that level?
- * I think Mrs. Stewart has done a wonderful job. Her work and energy and concern combine to make her a wonderful teacher. The concept of developmental readiness should be earned through the school - into the next grades. Having seen our son learn to read when he was ready makes me believe that this is an optional way to learn.
- * My son grew to feel very frightened of Mr. Lautensleger because of other children getting physically punished in the office. I wish he (Con) could spend enough time with the children so they wouldn't fear him or being punished for some minor infraction of conduct. I feel that spending time to know Con as a caring person and not just as the school disciplinarian would carry through the kids' attitude and experience throughout their grade school years. I feel my son had an excellent year. He became very enthusiastic about learning and about school. I am very grateful we had the pre-first grade. I also feel that Sheila was the perfect choice for their teacher. I thought the programs chosen for math and reading skills were excellent for these children.

Pre-First Evaluation
Page Six

- * Mrs. Stewart made the class an excellent learning experience for the parents as well as the children.
- * We are grateful for this opportunity to go on record with our feelings about Mrs. Stewart and her pre-first program. We feel as positive about Mrs. Stewart's class the impact she has had on our son that this may sound somewhat effusive, but is nonetheless sincere.

Mrs. Stewart positively exudes enthusiasm for the children and her class. I am sure she puts in many extra hours to pull together the wonderful lessons in her curriculum. She must be a teacher 24 hours a day, always thinking of something new to bring to the class (or take the class to) - constantly evaluating possibilities for her students. The "above and beyond the call" which makes up her pre-first program evidenced in events such as the wonderful Christmas program and all the field trips and also in the weekly reports sent home to parents are proof of her feelings for the children and also her feelings about herself as a teacher and her profession. What a difference between a teacher who shows up to put in their time and Mrs. Stewart! The classroom activities are a testament to the time and thought Mrs. Stewart gives to her class and their capabilities. These are challenging thought-provoking and success-oriented.

In a time where the general trend is toward more and more academic elementary grades, the pre-first concept is a solution for children who would otherwise wither in a second year of 1/2 day kindergarten or be overwhelmed in a first grade class. We have been extremely pleased with our son's growth this past school year, but feel that much of the credit goes to Mrs. Stewart and her programs and not simply to an additional year of school.

- * I feel the stage is not the appropriate place for the pre-first for two reasons (1) safety, (2) attitude of schoolmates.
I feel another exit should be available.
I have felt the program to be very beneficial to Spencer. It has been exciting, educational and fun! I do hope these pre-first kids are watched through 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc. The attitude of the first grade teachers will be so very important, also. Thanks!

Appendix J

E.S.D. 171 Survey, May, 1986

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS SURVEY AND RETURN IT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

1. Briefly describe your program's philosophy: _____

2. Briefly describe the type of testing used to determine who is placed in your program: _____

3. Briefly describe the reading program you use: _____

4. How many students are in your program? _____

5. How many students are in the first grade? _____

6. Do you have any additional comments which may help me in this study? _____

7. Feel free to include any additional information. Thank you! _____
