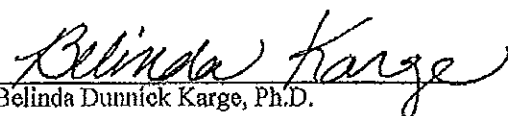




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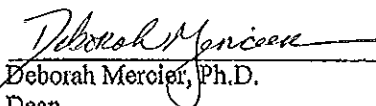
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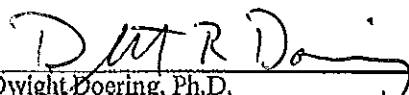

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THE INFLUENCE OF STUDENT POVERTY ON PRESCHOOL TEACHERS'
BELIEFS ABOUT EARLY LITERACY DEVELOPMENT, SCHOOL READINESS,
AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

by

Suzanne E. Devitt

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ABSTRACT

According to the National Center for Child Poverty, in 2011 nearly half of the 72 million children in the U.S. were living in low-income families. Through this study, the author examined the effect that student poverty has on teachers' beliefs about student print knowledge including school readiness and print literacy. Teachers' beliefs were explored using a social justice framework that surrounds an explanatory sequential design. This mixed methods research helped me to identify whether or not teachers' beliefs about students differ based on family socio-economic status (SES). The author of this study worked with a large urban school district located in the California Central Valley. The school district administers a Head Start preschool program and a California State preschool program. A total of 89 preschool teachers from these preschool programs participated in a Likert-style questionnaire. Participants were asked to share their beliefs about student print knowledge, school readiness, and parental involvement based on their 2016-2017 students. After collecting all questionnaires, 10 participants were interviewed to further investigate the effect of poverty on teacher's beliefs about students and families. The overall findings of this study showed that poverty level thresholds between the two preschool programs did not appear to have an effect on participant's beliefs regarding student print literacy, school readiness, and parental involvement. Participants were consistent in beliefs across both programs. Overall, participants were more positive in the areas of school readiness and parent involvement. Participants in both preschool programs were less positive in regards to student print literacy.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education refers to the first educational experiences young children (birth – 8 years of age) have outside of their home with typically non-relative adults (Follari, 2007). Early childhood education can take place in many diverse settings. Some children receive services in a home-based program where they may spend several hours a day at another individual's home with children of similar ages. Other children may receive services in a childcare center. This type of business setting may have one or more locations with multiple teachers and classrooms. Another program model may be run through a local school district and housed within the community on a school campus. Regardless of the setting, early childhood education programs provide vital resources to the community and families. The significance of resources is magnified for families in poverty.

The foundation of any early childhood education program is the curriculum. A high-quality early childhood curriculum should focus on three main developmental areas: physical, cognitive, and social-emotional (Follari, 2007). In addition to focusing on the three core areas, effective early education programs should be built around the Preschool Foundations (California Preschool Foundations, 2008). The Preschool Foundations provide a clear understanding of the types of activities and scope of learning that should be happening in a preschool classroom. All children can benefit from early educational opportunities, but opportunities for high-quality early childhood education makes a pronounced difference in the lives of at-risk children and children of poverty. High profile research such as the High/Scope Perry Preschool Study and Head Start have shown that at-risk children benefit long-term from early preschool experiences (Lipina & Colombo, 2009).

The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study began in the 1960s and studied two groups of African American boys over the span of 40 years. This longitudinal study looked at three- and four-year-olds who were born into poverty and were identified as being at risk of failing in school. The sample student population (African American boys) was split into two groups. One group received a high-quality preschool experience; the other group received no preschool services. The participants were contacted for interviews over the following years, and data was gathered through social service and school records to form a picture of the effect of early preschool experiences on lifetime goals and achievements. The researchers concluded that children who attend a high-quality preschool were more likely to graduate high school, hold down a job, and receive higher pay- and were less likely to commit crimes (Schweinhart, 2005).

In response to President Lyndon Johnson's "War on Poverty," the Head Start program was established to provide opportunities for low-income children who would otherwise not be able to participate or compete at the same level as their classmates from middle and upper-class families. In addition to providing academic support, this comprehensive program focuses on dental, vision, and health screenings that might otherwise go unfilled. Another large portion of the program is family goal setting and support. The Head Start philosophy is to support and mentor the entire family unit through educational programs and community resources (Mills, 1998). This approach allows for the strengthening of the family unit to help ensure long-term success.

Research Questions

1. Are there differences in teachers' beliefs about children's print knowledge in preschool based on the socio-economic status (SES) of children's families?

2. Do teachers vary in their beliefs about parental involvement in children's print literacy development based on the families' SES?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to explore the issues of early literacy development, school readiness, and family involvement within early childhood education with particular attention to be given to teacher beliefs. The focus was on educational policy and teacher attitudes within a social justice construct. The author used the Gorski (2013) Equity Literacy framework for assessing and conceptualizing the effect of teacher's beliefs regarding student knowledge, school readiness, and family involvement on student academic opportunity.

This study made a significant contribution to the field of early childhood education and literacy by highlighting the importance of teachers' beliefs in relation to student poverty. In the wake of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (U.S. Department of Education, 2001), educators continue to wrestle with the reality that many of our students are not making significant gains and becoming proficient readers (Payne, 2013). The Obama administration's attempt to further support school reform was coined Race to the Top. This model took a reward approach to school reform. Schools that were able to provide top teachers and increase academic scores were rewarded financially for their efforts (Fact Sheet: The Race to the Top, 2009). School reform saw another revision with the signing by President Obama of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) on December 10, 2015, which officially replaced NCLB. The ESSA essentially reauthorized the longstanding Elementary and Secondary Schools Act that was signed into law approximately 50 years ago. The ESSA will continue to focus on the positive gains that

have been made over the past decade while also refocusing efforts supporting equal opportunity for all students and continually improving student outcomes (United States, Department of Education, 2015). Despite focused effort and funds, many students and schools in the United States continue to struggle academically. Although there may be many contributing factors, students of poverty show significantly fewer academic gains than many of their more affluent peers (Burchinal et al. 2011; Diamond & Baroody, 2013; Howard, 2010; Jensen, 2009; Payne, 2013). This study focused on teachers' beliefs about students of differing poverty levels, in relation to literacy development, school readiness, and family participation.

Theoretical Framework

In 1995, Ruby Payne published *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*. This original work, along with multiple revised editions, were written to help understand the great cultural and economic divide within the United States. In no other place is it more obviously highlighted than in the public school system. The highly publicized achievement tests that have driven public education for more than a decade have focused all eyes on the largely growing achievement gap (Howard, 2010). The insistence on publishing student achievement data has resulted in school and teacher ranking. It has also left academics and educators' trying to conceptualize what is happening to our students of poverty. Why do the students in the poverty subgroup continue to achieve at a slower rate than their middle and upper-class peers? Payne's longitudinal qualitative research has allowed for the public to look into the lives of the poor in the United States and the highly complex nature of generational and situational poverty (Payne, 2013).

Poverty itself is multifaceted. Finances are important but are only one component, or resource, of poverty (Kiernan & Mensah, 2011). Children need more than just available funds to ensure success. Payne (2013) makes the distinction that poverty is not only financial. She describes nine key factors in identifying student resources necessary for positive cognitive development and academic achievement. The essential factors are (a) Financial; (b) Emotional; (c) Mental/Cognitive; (d) Spiritual; (e) Physical; (f) Support Systems; (g) Relationships/Role Models; (h) Knowledge of Hidden Rules; and (i) Language/Formal Register. These resources may be present in the lives of students and families to different degrees (Payne, 2013). Resource availability should be considered fluid. At times all of the resources may be available, while life circumstances may make some resources unavailable at other times.

Furthermore, when considering financial resources, one must take into account whether or not the family has enough funds to purchase what is necessary to survive. If a family is frequently unable to make ends meet or is relying on community food banks or subsidized housing, they do not have the financial resources to be self-sufficient. It becomes apparent in communities of poverty when financial resources are limited. You might see payday loan businesses pop up in local strip malls, signs referring to electronic benefit transfers or other state aid resources accepted here. These are subtle signs that the community suffers from few financial resources.

When evaluating the availability of emotional resources, it is important to consider if the family has enough internal control to choose the necessary emotional responses to all situations without resorting to self-destructive or detrimental behavior. This is not always easy. Families lacking emotional support systems may resort to

alcohol or drug abuse. Family members may be emotionally or physically unavailable to their family. When a family member is unable to make positive decisions for themselves and others, they may need emotional support.

If a family does not have the mental or cognitive ability to deal with everyday situations, they are described as lacking cognitive resources. An example of such a detriment could be a documented learning disability that makes comprehending and decision-making difficult. If a family struggles in this area and does not have others to lean on when making difficult decisions, they are considered to be lacking cognitive resources (Payne, 2013). This is especially important when dealing with young children. It is important for parents to have the necessary cognitive support to make the right decisions for their children. If they do not fully understand their rights or options, they could make decisions that are not in the child's best interest.

Families lacking in spiritual resources might not have a plan or see themselves as having a bright future. Having spiritual resources may include believing in a type of divine power. A family with positive spiritual resources may rely on their church or place of worship to gain guidance or direction when necessary. This type of resource is something to fall back on during turbulent times (Payne, 2013).

A family with sufficient physical resources can get where they need to go on a daily basis. Remaining healthy and active as well as having the ability to work and maintain a job are examples of physical resources. The concern for physical resources is reflected in a family need for adequate and consistent medical care. If a family must access emergency room care rather than seeing a regular physician, they lack in physical

resources. The same goes for a family who cannot hold down a steady job because of injury or chronic absences due to stress or disease.

Family and friends outside of the home are crucial to success. A single mom, with a sick child, who needs to get to work must have an active support system. She needs someone to call to help with childcare or to request a ride from when the car breaks down. Without a strong support system, small issues turn into major barriers to success.

Having role models who display positive qualities can help to steer individuals away from choices that society would not view as appropriate. If all a child knows is criminal behavior, it is unlikely that they will choose another path, but if they have a positive relationship with a role model who exhibits socially acceptable positive qualities, then they have a choice in behaviors. Resources of relationships and role models allow for a family to know better and therefore do better.

Not all communities are explicit about the rules of acceptance. In some cases, there are hidden rules or assumed knowledge. A family with the knowledge of hidden rules is better able to acclimate to a new environment as well as comply with the expectations of a different group. This resource is critical for school success. There are specific school rules that have a level of expected understanding. One example is language and vocabulary usage. It is unacceptable to use foul language when speaking to a teacher. A child who comes from a family that uses foul language when speaking in normal conversation may naturally talk to his/her teacher in the same manner. Having access to hidden rules in education or any situation is beneficial.

The ability to switch language register to match the environment is crucial. A family who recognizes and can use appropriate vocabulary and sentence structure for the

environment is said to have language/formal register resources. The manner in which one might speak to their best friend or neighbor is not appropriate when applying for a job or giving a presentation at school. Those that can switch easily between language registers are able to create a sense of belonging to any group by just changing speech patterns.

Identifying resources, or lack thereof, is not enough to understand poverty. It is just as important to comprehend the underlying mindset of poverty. Some people experience poverty suddenly or for a short time. Payne (2013) concluded that this is typically due to an event such as an accident or illness. She labeled this as situational poverty. Situational poverty is often looked at as a setback. The family will typically have a plan to resolve the situation or get back on their feet. They may be reluctant to identify themselves as poor and look to re-establish themselves as self-sufficient as soon as possible.

Others are born into poverty and continue to live within the rules and expectations of poverty itself. Payne (2013) described this as generational poverty. Those individuals who experience generational poverty often have no other context with which to compare their situation. They only understand the social rules of poverty. Their views do not extend past their neighborhood and current situation. This narrow understanding of opportunity leaves many born into generational poverty with so few resources that they are ill-equipped to navigate the path out of poverty.

The greatest opportunity to be exposed to something other than poverty is through education and the school system (Payne, 2013). Unfortunately, this opportunity comes with many challenges. Because most of the standard practices and expectations of the

education system come from a middle-class perspective, many students of poverty are left learning more than just the alphabet (Howard et al., 2009). Students are expected to understand the unspoken rules of school without being first taught the vocabulary necessary to succeed. Payne (2013) discussed the need to initially understand the use of language concerning school compared to home. Speech patterns used at home are not necessarily acceptable at school. Payne identifies the five registers of all language: frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate (2013). Using these registers correctly which depends on social situations, are imperative to success.

Frozen register is the repeating of language that does not change. An example is saying a prayer or the Pledge of Allegiance. Formal register is the speech pattern used at school or in the workplace. Standard English is formal register. Consultative register is conversational English. It is not as formal, but still uses correct grammar and complete sentences. Casual register does not follow all the rules of the English language. Slang may sometimes be used, as well as short and less complex sentences. In casual register, non-verbal cues are just as important as verbal speech. The final register to consider is intimate. Intimate register is that which is inappropriate to anyone other than twins or lovers (Nichol, 2011).

Students in poverty may not have access to all forms of register. For example, they may only have access to casual register. This puts them at a disadvantage in the school setting. Students are expected to speak in the formal register at school. The majority of middle class students will have access to formal register as well as the expanded vocabulary to make themselves understood using numerous types of expanded sentence structures (Payne, 2013). It is important to note that the typical three-year-old in

a middle-class home has a larger vocabulary than an adult of generational poverty (Hart & Risley, 1995).

Identifying formal versus casual register is not the only struggle for students of poverty. They must also be able to actively switch between language registers and patterns of discourse. Middle-class families and the school system teach language patterns to replicate formal register discourse. When a story is told, it is explained in a sequential manner that highlights the central theme or plot of the story. Casual register discourse, which is commonly used in homes of generational poverty, often highlights other aspects of the story rather than the plot. The speaker may seem to discuss everything except the actual events of the story. The speaker, as well as comments regarding all parties of the story, validates participation from the listener. Although this casual discourse is more entertaining, it is not the accepted story structure for work or school (Payne, 2013). Understanding that children are exposed to language and syntax solely in the home unless quality daycare or preschool is an option, it is no wonder that children of poverty are entering school at a remarkable disadvantage to their middle-class peers.

Payne's work is not without critics. In contrast, numerous authors have written about the perceived racial undertones of Payne's work, as well as the perpetuation of inaccurate information regarding the intellectual capabilities of diverse populations (Delpit, 2006; Gorski, 2013). It is further expressed that Payne's work has allowed a culture of lackadaisical teaching and excuse based rhetoric within the public school system. The research will adopt a balanced philosophical approach while investigating

the effect of poverty on young children and families as well as the teachers working to educate them.

Definition of Terms

At-risk: children who are less likely to transition smoothly into adulthood

Poverty: the state of being without the needed amount of money or material possessions

Socioeconomic Status (SES): the social standing of a particular individual or group; measured by education, finances, and occupation

Class: the commonly understood categories used to describe a person's place in society most often derived from their socioeconomic standing

Family: a group of people living together; often related

Community: a group of people who live in the same area

Neighborhood: a section of a town or city

Teacher: an individual who teaches something; a person whose job it is to educate students about defined subjects

Beliefs: a feeling that something is true or fact

Literacy: the ability to read and write

Early Literacy: the ability to recognize individual letters, phonemes, and rime; differentiate between objects or print, understand that print has meaning and represents the spoken word

Family Involvement: the commitment of a family to support and engage in meaningful activities that extend academic learning beyond the time spent in the classroom

School Readiness: a measure of how prepared a child is to succeed in school: cognitively, socially, and emotionally

Student Achievement: the ability of a student to master a skill that has been previously taught in the classroom as measured by a standardized assessment

No Child Left Behind: Federal law (2002) that required states to test students in reading and math in grades 3-8 and twice in high school. Students were expected to meet or exceed state standards by 2014. Schools that did not meet expectations of predetermined growth were subject to heavy sanctions including financial loss and reorganization or dismissal of faculty and staff.

Race to the Top: Federal initiative launched in 2012, by the Obama Administration to raise academic achievement by implementing the Common Core State Standards, focusing on College and Career Readiness, and leveraging high-quality teaching strategies and targeted interventions.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): Signed into law on December 10, 2015 by President Barack Obama. The newest federal law that looks to capitalize on the positive momentum in education that has been seen over the past eight years of the Obama administration. This law continues to require high standards, accountability, and annual testing but shifts away from negative consequences tied to test scores. The ESSA provides additional funding for early childhood education and requires safety nets for students who fall behind. An emphasis is placed on local decision making and flexibility rather than a one size fits all model.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter acquaints the reader with the rationale of further study regarding poverty in education and the effect of personal experiences and beliefs on professional practices and educational philosophies. The researcher highlights the widening achievement gap and socioeconomic divide among American children enrolled in subsidized preschool programs. Theories regarding poverty and equity have been widely studied and written about, however the author provides a targeted approach by focusing on the beliefs' of teachers regarding early childhood education and quality care. The further effect of poverty and beliefs on educational opportunities will be presented in relation to teacher training, professional development, and a changing society. The researcher presents the following review of the literature as it pertains to the current research: (a) social justice theory, (b) poverty, (c) American family, (d) American teacher, (e) school readiness, (f) ensuring quality preschool, and (g) expected outcomes.

Social Justice Theory

The term social justice is not new to the field of education. John Dewey's work in the early 1900s titled *The Relation of Theory and Practice in Education* highlighted two distinct types of school theory and practice. In theory one, "apprentice practice" the student or teacher tries to mimic or model their learning in the image of a mentor or expert (Bogotch, 2000; Dewey, 1904). Using this theory, the student would attempt to model exactly what the teacher is doing. In the construct of the teacher education model, where early childhood educators participate in teacher training programs to acquire credentials or permits, the student teacher would look to the expert to share knowledge

and experience of how to teach young children. This model does not foster growth as self-identified best practices are provided to students as a recipe for student success.

The second definition described by Dewey is the act of “laboratory practice”. This intellectual activity allows student teachers the ability to craft beliefs through experiences. This second definition is more likely a catalyst for change. Laboratory practice moves away from rote techniques described in a textbook or academic lecture and embraces actual student practice to improve performance (Bogotch, 2000; Dewey, 1904). Dewey did not consider practice and theory to be conducted in silos. Rather, he saw the benefit of combining theory and practice to produce the best outcome.

In order to fully appreciate Dewey and his effect on the social justice approach, it is necessary to understand his belief that much of student success depends upon the educator in the classroom. Dewey believed it was imperative for teachers to understand individual student perspectives to promote student learning (Bogotch, 2000; Dewey, 1904). This concept is similar to the theory of social justice. Social justice in education is the idea that all students are unique and deserving of an opportunity to engage in an educational system that will allow them to reach their full potential of social and academic growth (Bogotch, 2000; Gorski, 2013; Jensen, 2009). The ability of each student to meet their greatest potential will vary based on many different factors such as consistent family support, access to health care, and the availability of adequate food and shelter. Paul Gorski created his Equity Literacy Framework as a way to assist educators in addressing the needs of all students with a primary focus on students of poverty. Gorski rejected many of the commonly used frameworks of poverty that emphasize a deficit model of low-income families and often perpetuate stereotypical views and

overgeneralizations regarding work ethic, economic competence, and intellectual potential.

Equity Literacy

Equity Literacy requires an individual to resist the notion that equality is the answer to closing the achievement gap when looking at the student performance of students of poverty. Equity asks us to create an educational environment where students are provided the resources that they need to reach their individual potential. The resources required by each student will differ based on the student's particular circumstance. Equity Literacy Theory is a lens with which to view student needs. It requires the ability to recognize and respond the circumstances that become barriers to student learning and success (Gorski, 2013).

Equity literacy includes four core abilities among educators: recognize bias, respond to bias, redress biases, and create a bias-free educational environment (Gorski, 2013). The educator must have the ability to identify biases and inequities within the educational atmosphere. Those inequities may include classroom and school culture as well as societal injustice no matter how subtle. The educator must be able to respond to biases as they are identified within the school and classroom environment. Educators must have the ability to redress or resolve biases that are identified. The creation and cultivation of a bias-free environment must be continually revisited to ensure an equitable learning environment for all students regardless of socioeconomic status (Gorski, 2013). Equity Literacy Theory (2013) not only identifies the four abilities that an equity-literate educator must possess but further identifies ten guiding principles to guide the framework. The ten principles identified by Gorski are (a) The right to equitable

educational opportunity is universal; (b) Poverty and class are intersectional in nature; (c) Poor people are diverse; (d) What we believe, including biases and prejudices, about people in poverty informs how we teach and relate to people in poverty; (e) We cannot understand the relationship between poverty and education without understanding biases and inequities experienced by people in poverty; (f) Test scores are adequate measures of equity; (g) Class disparities in education are the result of inequities, not the result of cultures; (h) Equitable educators adopt a resiliency rather than a deficit view of low-income students and families; (i) Strategies for bolstering school engagement and learning must be based on evidence for what works; and (j) The inalienable educational opportunity includes the right to high expectations, higher-order pedagogies, and engaging curricula.

Principle one is the universal right to an equitable education. Often equitable educational opportunities are not provided based on factors such as funding using property taxes. Children living in poor urban communities in East Palo Alto California will not benefit from the level of school funding generated from a more affluent area such as Redwood City California. Although the geographic distance is small, the degree of wealth differs tremendously (Gorski, 2013; Kozol, 2012).

Principal two identifies the overlapping existence of both class and poverty. It is important to understand that one's class, defined as poverty, working class, middle class, upper middle class, or owning class (Gorski, 2013), is associated with both income and wealth. Class identification does not ignore many other identifying factors such as race, ethnicity, living environment, home language, and other conditions that are not controlled by the individual.

Principle three speaks to the vast diversity amongst groups in poverty. Gorski urged educators to resist the ideology that poor people share a culture simply because they are poor. Instead, he insisted that the commonality between people of poverty are the experiences that they have as a result of their circumstance. Gorski cautioned that because of this diversity there is no one size fits all approach to ending poverty or to reaching every student of poverty as has been widely accepted through previously published works such as that of Payne. Understanding the complexity of poverty emphasizes the urgency and the complicated nature of reaching and teaching students of poverty.

Principle four encourages all educators to identify and reflect on their biases to understand that biases regarding the socioeconomically disadvantaged influence beliefs and impact interactions with the poor. What teachers believe about students of poverty will affect their expectations of poor students. Expectations have a direct effect on outcomes and achievements. Educator beliefs about the causes of poverty predict the interventions and strategies that will be used to address and eliminate classroom inequities (Bullock, Williams, & Limbert, 2003; Gorski, 2013; Williams, 2009).

Principle five challenges educators to recognize the biases and inequities that are the realities experienced by people of poverty. To understand the depth of these inequities, it is important to realize the larger societal contributors to this discrimination. These contributors include inadequate access to affordable housing, lack of employment opportunities, disproportionate access to medical and dental providers and services, food insecurities, and a lack of access to equitable educational opportunities (Gorski, 2013).

Principal five asks educators to approach interactions with students of poverty from a position of understanding while attempting to create equity for all students to succeed.

Principal six conveys the message that has been playing out in urban school districts across the United States since the ratification of NCLB. Test scores do not measure equity. Test scores are only one aspect of education. Standardized testing has reduced schools, districts, and students to nothing more than a number. Standardized tests cannot explain many other aspects of education such as creativity, perseverance, and empathy, all of which demonstrate growth and achievement.

Principal seven indicates the need to move away or reject the mindset that class disparities in education are the result of culture. Culture, as it relates to poverty, has become the catch phrase of educational jargon. The term culture, when being used to explain most inequities, has lost a sense of meaning or a recipe for remediation. It has become an excepted bias in the education field. In principal seven, Gorski (2013) asks the educator to resist the urge to blame or label students based on their perceived culture. The equitable teacher looks further into the situation and makes every effort to recognize, respond, and redress inequities within the school system.

Principal eight requires educators to shift from a deficit model, focusing on inequities that students of poverty face, and instead, highlight the high resilience among people of poverty. This change in perspective allows the educator to focus on a strengths-based approach to reach and teach poor students. This shift is not made easily as research shows that even educators who promote equity and dedication toward advocating for students of poverty often operate from the dominant deficit view (Garza & Garza, 2010; Gorski, 2013; Lindsey et al., 2010).

Principal nine highlights the need for evidence-based approaches when teaching students of poverty. Although there are strategies that have been shown to be effective for reaching students of poverty, many schools and districts are not implementing these strategies. Instead, schools move from one new strategy to another often implementing what is trendy rather than looking at research and practice as to what works for the population of students being served. Principal nine also reminds educators that there will never be a one-size-fits-all approach that will reach all students and bolster academic achievement. All programs must be tailored to meet the needs of the school, community, and individual student.

The last principal of equity literacy is the right of all students to an equitable education that includes high standards, high rigor, and high expectation. This includes engaging curriculum and teachers who implement instructional strategies that promote higher order thinking and problem solving. Students of poverty respond to those that believe in their abilities to succeed and their intellectual potential (Delpit, 2012; Gorski, 2013; Hoy, Tarter, & Hoy, 2006; Kennedy, 2010).

Poverty

Poverty and food scarcity are an international crisis. With one-sixth of the world's population living on less than \$1 a day, it is apparent why over 800 million people in the world are malnourished (Raphel, 2013). It is estimated that an upward of 200 million children worldwide are suffering from a chronic and persistent lack of nutritious food. Approximately 30,000 children die each day from malnutrition and preventable disease (Raphel, 2013). There are numerous humanitarian groups and nonprofit

organizations that work to alleviate hunger and poverty in developing countries around the globe, but who is fighting poverty in America?

Poverty and hunger put children at high risk for health, developmental, and behavioral problems. The children at greatest risk are those who experience poverty when they are young and children who experience persistent and profound poverty. Child poverty is also associated with difficulties later in life such as dropping out of school, poor adolescent and adult health, teenage pregnancy, special needs, and poor employment outcomes. For many families, circumstances could be improved through better utilization of existing state and federal programs.

America's Great Depression unmasked the societal danger of poverty, and while the federal government and numerous state governments have allocated efforts and resources to improve the quality of life for underserved communities, poverty persists as a chronic issue plaguing America. Poverty thresholds in the United States were developed in the early 1960s by an economist, Mollie Orshansky, who was working to develop a measure to assess the risks of low economic status among different groups of Americans. She worked for the Social Security Administration and the work lead her to develop two types of poverty thresholds. One type was derived from the Department of Agriculture's economy food plan, and the other was derived from the low-cost food plan (Fisher, 1992; Orshansky, 1963). Orshansky expanded her original thresholds in 1965 to include families of different make-ups including those without children (Fisher, 1992). Shortly after the publication of Orshansky's report, President Lyndon Johnson announced the new movement, "War on Poverty," in 1965. Poverty rates did decrease for several

years, but the recession of the early 1980s allowed many families to slide back into poverty (Huston, 1994).

According to the U. S. Census Bureau's "2012 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates," the median family income within the United States was \$51,371 and yet 28,296,568 households earned less than \$25,000 annually. For men, failing to graduate high school with a degree had a direct effect on their reported median income. These men, with less than a high school degree, reported a median income at or below the national poverty line. Women who reported an education level of high school completion still reported a median income at or below the poverty threshold.

National poverty guidelines identify three levels of poverty: extreme poverty-below 50% of poverty, poverty-below 100% of poverty, and near poverty-below 125% of poverty. A family of four that earns an annual income less than \$23,550 is considered to be living in poverty. Statistics show that families where a woman is the head of household are more often affected by extreme poverty. Of those living in extreme poverty, 65.5% are households headed by single women (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2013). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2012), 24.4% of households in the United States are living under the poverty line for a family of four.

The most unfortunate statistics are those that affect children. The U.S. Census Bureau report identified 20,229,811 children living in poverty. That number represents roughly 22% of U.S. children. That is greater than the child poverty rates of the 1970s when the War on Poverty had reduced the percentage of children living in poverty to nearly 15% (Darling-Hammond, 2010). It was documented in the year 2000 that the United States had the highest rate of child poverty compared to any industrialized nation

(Darling-Hammond, 2010). To further illustrate the significant threat of poverty, the American Academy of Pediatrics identified poverty as the number one risk to a child's health (Raphel, 2013).

Poverty impacts the lives of children in many ways. Every 32 seconds in the United States, another child is born into poverty (Children's Defense Fund, 2010). Children who are experiencing poverty often worry about having their basic needs met. These children may worry about whether or not food will be available for their next meal. These food insecurities exist in every county in the United States (Raphel, 2013). A correlation has been made between the food insecurities of children and an increase in behavioral problems and lagging language development (Coles, 2009; Jensen, 2009; Krashen, 2011; Raphel, 2013). In addition to food insecurities, these children may also live in homes where health and physical safety are a concern. These children are less likely to receive regular medical care due to a lack of health insurance, high copays, or lack of transportation (Berliner, 2009; Krashen, 2011). Children of poverty often attend schools that do not employ a full-time nurse therefore lessening their chances of receiving timely medical care (Berliner, 2009; Krashen, 2011). Safety may be a concern within their neighborhood. Families who are struggling to provide adequate food, shelter and a safe environment are less likely to have the means and time to create a print rich environment for their young children. Libraries within the community are often not in proximity to poor neighborhoods (Paul Gorski, *Reaching and Teaching Students in Poverty*, 2013). School libraries that serve primarily poor children are also less likely to be fully stocked with high-quality literature. These libraries are often used as vehicles to solve immediate adult issues such as the search for employment or to type a resume.

Libraries in poor neighborhoods are less likely to be utilized to increase literacy opportunities among young children (Neuman & Celano, 2001/2012).

Darling-Hammond (2010) states in her book *The Flat World and Education*, “We need to take education for poor children as seriously as we take the education of the rich, and we need to create a system that guarantees all of the elements of educational investment routinely to all children” (p. 279). The highly publicized study *Worlds Apart: One City, Two Libraries, and Ten Years of Watching Inequality Grow* (Neuman & Celano, 2012) identified the need for additional efforts to help low-income families access the services they need. It is not enough to simply provide adequate or equal facilities. Community and education leaders must provide the amount of scaffolding necessary for community members to access the support that is needed to benefit from the resources available (Neuman & Celano, 2012). National programs such as Head Start were created to help provide an equitable start to at-risk children, children of poverty, and their families (Mills, 1998).

The American Family

The term family was not coined until the late 14th century (Coontz, 2011). Before this, kin groupings were so sparse that no word was necessary to describe their makeup. As groups began to inhabit areas that were closer in proximity to one another, it became necessary to establish a word and definition to define the groups. The word family that we use today was derived from a Latin word meaning household (Coontz, 2011).

Early families would typically consist of extended family and acquaintances living together under one head of household. The common patriarch set them apart from other groups who were living nearby (Coontz, 2011). This simple definition of the

family continued into the early 19th century. During this period, many families consisted of blood relatives as well as household workers and borders. This broad sense of family was embraced by both Europeans and Americans who commonly considered a shared residence as the crux of family life.

By the late 19th century, the term family began to take on a narrower meaning. During this era, the family began to be defined much as it is today: as man and wife (Coontz, 2000/2011). This definition was further solidified as families began to live further apart and the industrial revolution was in full swing. With the emphasis away from the family farm and self-sufficiency, families no longer needed to be large or include multiple generations to ensure survival.

The definition of the American family has evolved throughout the 20th and into the 21st century. Family values and socially acceptable gender roles must be mutually shared to identify a standard definition of any word, especially family. Each decade dawned a new shift in American values beginning in the 1950's. The typical American family of the 1950's consisted of a father who was the sole wage earner, a mother who took care of the home, and two or more children (Bianchi & Casper, 2000). The image of this typical American family held fast the values of marriage and distinct gender roles within the family unit. The strong economy of this period allowed for such gender roles to persist. It was possible for a man to successfully own a home and support a family on one income. Governmental policies supported this ideal family by embracing economic policies and employment practices that favored males and specifically Caucasian males (Bianchi & Casper, 2000).

The civil rights movement of the 1960s bolstered support for minorities and women to gain legal protection in their employment and lessen the discriminatory practices that were common only a decade prior. This new era gave way to a transformation in attitude, belief, and practice regarding family values as well. The availability of contraception and the movement of the 1960s and 70s to seek individual fulfillment led to a change in the typical behavior of teens and young adults. Women were no longer marrying directly out of high school. Men and women became more accepting of multiple partners and pushed off having children until later in life. It was no longer taboo to cohabitate, reside with roommates, or even to live alone (Bianchi & Casper, 2000).

Although marriage was still typical in America, divorce was quickly becoming just as common. The gains in average life expectancy and the shift in economic freedom afforded women more choices. Shifting gender roles and a changing economy meant that many women were quickly becoming primary wage earners. Men became participants in the raising of children and caring for and maintaining the household. This change was classically portrayed in the 1983 film “Mr. Mom” (Dragoti, 1983). The film captures the changing gender norms of the American family. In the movie, Michael Keaton finds himself unemployed and suddenly caring for his children while his wife lands a high-paying job at an advertising firm. This movie illustrates the changing family norms of the 1980s and 90s.

As gender norms begin to blur, so too does the reality of the American family. For statistical purposes, the definition of family is two or more people living together who are related by marriage, blood, or adoption (Bianchi & Casper, 2000). This narrow

definition of family does not necessarily match the reality of most American homes. In 1960, 85 percent of households were considered family households. By the year 2000, only 69 percent of households were considered family. Between 1960 and 2000, two parent homes with children dropped from 44 percent to just 24 percent of all households (Bianchi & Casper, 2000). These changes in household demographics have just as much to do with an aging population as they do with a widening of cultural values to include an acceptance of individuals who live with partners or who choose to live alone. Many families, due to economic hardships, live in homes with either multiple generations or live in multifamily homes. Women are more likely than ever to find themselves as head of household. Forty percent of women are the primary breadwinners today, compared to 11 percent in 1960 (Angier, 2013).

In today's world, family culture may appear very different than the families that were represented during the colonial time. Immigration and globalization have impacted families by bringing diverse cultures together to form many different modern day family structures. Both choice and circumstance have influenced the way that Americans are living their daily lives.

Modern day families come in many shapes and sizes. Expanding views and acceptance of differences have led to a pivotal time in our global culture. As business and entertainment rapidly change to emphasize changing values, so does the concept of family. In our schools and communities, we can see many different family structures that are unique.

The nuclear family is typically labeled the intact family. This term came to be during the 1940s and was used to describe a family with a father, mother, and children.

This family type is still considered by some to be the ideal type of household and has historically been supported by mainstream media. Up until the last decade, the nuclear family was portrayed on television and in movies as the ideal family. Television shows such as *Ozzy and Harriet*, *Leave it to Beaver*, *The Cosby Show*, and *Family Ties* all allowed the viewing audience a chance to see what a family looks like and how it should behave. Emphasis was put on economic stability, thriftiness, and high moral values. This is not the reality of many Americans, the 2008 Bureau of Census reported that only 25% of children live in nuclear families (Barbour, C., Barbour, N., & Scully, 2011).

Single parent families are becoming a typical family structure in America (Barbour et al. 2011). Most of these families are led by mothers. Rather than quickly remarrying, like most women would have done 50 years ago, women are choosing to remain single heads of household. Growing acceptance of divorce and marriage out of wedlock combined with the likelihood of women working outside the home have given women more choices regarding family and the romanticized ideal family structure. Medical advances have also allowed women to become pregnant for a larger window of time and under certain circumstances without a particular mate. Sperm donors have opened the door for women to design their family, even if it does not fit the norm (Barbour et al. 2011).

The blended family is quickly becoming the most common family in America (Barbour et al. 2011). The blended family may include a parent with children who marries an individual without children. This type of blended family is the simplest form and may be labeled the post-nuclear family. When a parent with children marries another parent with children it is referred to as a reconstituted family (Barbour et al. 2011). The

most recognized blended or reconstituted family was portrayed on television as *The Brady Bunch*. In the fictional sitcom *The Brady Bunch*, a mother with three daughters marries a man with three sons. Together they form the Brady Bunch. Although this reconstituted family is widely accepted these days, a new type of blended family is becoming more common. The single blended family is growing in popularity as some adults feel strongly that marriage is not for them. Although they may live as married partners with children from previous relationships, they choose not to engage in the formality of marriage (Barbour et al. 2011).

The extended family consists of a nuclear, single parent, or blended family plus additional people who are typically relatives. An example of an extended family that is becoming more common in the United States is the multigenerational family. As “baby boomers” continue to age and modern medicine has allowed the average adult lifespan to increase, many grandparents are moving in with their adult children and their families.

An example of the extended family is that of *Monique* and *Juan*. *Monique* and *Juan* married right out of high school. They have been together for 20 years and have two sons. As *Monique*’s parents have continued to age, they have been plagued with numerous health issues. Her mother has diabetes and has had multiple falls over the last year. Her father suffers from heart problems and requires some supervision. Due to the increasing need of care, *Monique* and *Juan* have arranged for her parents to move in with them. This new living arrangement will benefit both families. The grandparents will be able to help with some supervision of the children and *Monique* will be able to supervise and initiate emergency care for her parents if necessary. This extended family structure

has been historically prevalent in other countries but is just now trending in American family culture.

Adoptive families can take many forms. Some parents choose to adopt because they have a desire to have children but an inability to produce biological children of their own. Other families adopt children into a home where biological children also reside. Some adoptions may be private adoptions handled by doctors or lawyers, and others are public adoptions through a city or county agency. Others are considered kinship adoptions where families adopt children that were born to a relative or a stepparent (Barbour et al. 2011). However an adoption comes about, it is a legal joining of a new family that may or may not be of the same nationality or race. It is the newly formed family that will create their family culture full of traditions and values.

An increasingly common family structure is the subfamily. This structure is typically formed for economic reasons (Barbour et al. 2011), allowing two families to live under one roof to share in household responsibilities and expenses. Another type of subfamily that became quite common during the Great Recession of the late 2000s was the young family that moved back in with maternal or paternal grandparents. Due to lost jobs and unstable housing conditions, many adult children made the necessary decision to move themselves and sometimes their entire family into the homes in which they grew up.

Not all families consist of blood or biological relatives. Foster families are those who take in children who have been removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect, children who are orphaned, or children who have been abandoned. Foster families are in high demand as the number of children needing suitable housing continues to grow in

urban communities. It is important to note that two-thirds of all children in foster care are children of color (Barbour et al. 2011). Although many of these children eventually become available for adoption, some are difficult to find permanent homes due to medical needs and the lasting effects of trauma. Growing up in the foster care system can be difficult for foster children and equally as trying for the families who provide care.

The foster system itself is not without flaws. Because of the financial incentives to provide homes for foster children, not all foster families are part of the system for the right reasons. There have been high-profile cases in the news that depict awful living conditions, abuse, and neglect of children while in the foster care system. All the while, high-quality and committed foster families continue to be greatly needed in urban cities.

In some cultures, homosexual families face significant scrutiny and discrimination, but gay and lesbian families are gaining more mainstream status in the United States. Popular television shows like *Modern Family* highlight the normality of the same-sex family. Same-sex families with children form through many ways including adoption, artificial insemination, and previous heterosexual relationships. Same sex families struggle with the same issues as does all other families. They juggle family and work commitments, children's schooling, and financial hardships as any other family would endure. Gay and lesbian families are subjected to a greater amount of prejudice and must take greater precautions to ensure that they have acquired legal custody of shared children through adoption.

Another variant of the American family is that of an incarcerated parent. The United States of America is now the world's leading jailer. The nation's prison population has nearly quadrupled over the past 30 years (Angier, 2013). One out of

every 28 children has an incarcerated parent. It is estimated that more than half of the 2.3 million inmates are parents to children under the age of 18 (Angier, 2013). Low income, low educated, children of color are seven and a half times more likely to have an incarcerated parent at some point during their childhood (Angier, 2013). This family model has become so mainstream that a popular children's show, Sesame Street, has developed a character to help children identify and cope with their feelings. Alex, the Muppet with an incarcerated father, joined the cast of Sesame Street featured in an online teaching kit titled, 'Little Children, Big Challenges' (Ortiz, 2013). The changing dynamics of the American family are a reflection of the lives of the children in our classrooms.

The American Teacher

The typical American teacher has evolved since colonial times. The PBS series *Only a Teacher* documents the changing educational system in the United States as well as the changing role of the teacher. During the early American years, most schoolmasters were young men (Levin & Pinto, 2000). These men used their experience in the classroom as a way to better themselves, become more connected to their community, and eventually move on to a more prestigious job. This process left many schools with frequent turnover and at times a teacher shortage. With the draw of various career opportunities and the growing need for educators, women began to take center stage in the American classroom. This was a massive cultural shift, as women were not typically seen working outside of the home.

The need for teachers continued to grow as early school reformers such as Horace Mann began to envision free schools for all children in all communities. These schools

were called “common schools” and were revolutionary for their time. Religious institutions did not back them and they did not require students to pay tuition. They were funded through taxation of the people and offered an opportunity to instill universal political values as well as a basic education.

The teacher in the common school was most likely a woman and young. In the early years, teachers were not likely to be much older than their students. Young women in their teens would often be at the head of the class and offering daily instruction. By 1849, schools dedicated to the education of teachers began openly. The first such school opened in Massachusetts in 1849. This new institution was called a “Normal School”. Its sole purpose was to prepare the nation’s teachers better to meet the needs of students in America. The acceptance of women as educators and their need to be well educated themselves allowed for the evolution of teacher programs to become more frequently offered at colleges and universities throughout the United States. For the first time, women were widely accepted in a profession. Many women began to see themselves as having a purpose beyond the family and home.

As more schools were opening to meet the need of the growing immigrant population, teachers became tasked with teaching students’ American values and customs along with the English language. The American classroom today still holds many similarities to that of the early colonial days. Teachers may not be teaching in a one-room school house, but many are still working to meet the needs of students who come from many different cultures and backgrounds.

According to the National Center for Education Information, there are approximately 3.2 million public school teachers in the United States (Feistritzer, 2011).

The demographics of America's teachers point to an increasingly younger more liberal female teacher who may have had a previous career other than teaching (Feistritzer, 2011). These teachers are more likely to have entered the teaching profession by way of an alternative type teacher credentialing program and are predominantly Caucasian. Feistritzer shared that teachers of Hispanic descent are the most predominant ethnic group represented within the increasing demographic of teachers of color (2011).

When describing teacher demographics by region of employment: city, suburb, rural, or town; Caucasian teachers are evenly distributed, but their colleagues of color tend to work primarily in the city with urban youth (Feistritzer, 2011). The imbalance in the demographics of teachers is in sharp contrast to the present day classroom of students. America's classrooms are filled with an ever-increasing percentage of a socioeconomically, culturally, racially, and linguistically diverse student population (Murrell & Foster, 2003). How these students are being taught is a direct reflection of teacher beliefs. The educational philosophies of teachers must continue to evolve to be culturally responsive educators.

Belief Systems

The term beliefs, as defined by Rath and McAninch (2003), are the ideas that are felt to be true by any person that are not supported by evidence and can therefore not be considered knowledge. This definition of belief is critical to identify, as many of us hold beliefs that we have either formulated on our own or may have been instilled in us from our families. Regardless of where the idea originated, we view the belief to be true and therefore see others and situations through the lens of our belief system.

Belief systems are significant when evaluating educators who set out to provide an equal opportunity to education for all students. While some gravitate to a private school or religious school setting, most become part of a public school system (Feistritz, 2011). No entrance examination identifies beliefs or prejudices that might be detrimental to this work. All candidates that choose to enter the teaching profession, complete the needed coursework and pass the required background checks, become teachers.

Several questions come to mind. Are our teachers adequately equipped to teach diverse students? Do they have the tools necessary to communicate effectively with families of diverse backgrounds? Do preconceived beliefs about different groups get in the way of effective teaching? As the achievement gap between Caucasian middle to upper-class students and students of racially and socioeconomically diverse backgrounds continue to rise, it is imperative that we identify the possible cause and discuss feasible solutions to the overarching problem.

Many teachers do not recognize poverty as a barrier to school readiness and therefore adopt a deficient perception (Howard et.al, 2009). Perhaps this belief is subconscious, but too many teachers are accepting the common misconception that children of poverty are less capable than their middle and upper-class peers. Research has shown that students of poverty lack the exposure necessary and are expected to enter our schools on a level playing field (O'Hara, 2006). By the time a child is three, those who come from professional families have twice as many words in their vocabulary than those children from welfare families. Those same children were given IQ tests, and those results were consistent with the disparities seen in vocabulary development. IQ scores of

children of welfare were 79, while children of professionals averaged 117 (O'Hara, 2006).

School Readiness

School readiness is described as the measure of how prepared a child is to succeed in school. School readiness includes aptitude in the areas of cognitive, social, and emotional development. A gap in school readiness, much like that seen in the area of achievement, identifies that a child or group of children are not making progress or achieving similarly to other children. School readiness is a reflection of the experiences that a child has had the opportunity to be a part of before the start of formal schooling (Howard, Dresser, & Dunklee, 2009). The variety and number of experiences that a child has had is often predictive of the child's cognitive level of development (Bradley & Corwyn, 1999). Because our students of lower socioeconomic backgrounds typically come to school with limited experiences, it would be expected that they have not reached their potential for cognitive development. This lack of experience should not be confused with a lack of potential. The National Education Goals Panel identified five areas that must be well developed to indicate school readiness: (a) Physical well-being, (b) Social and emotional development, (c) Supportive environments, (d) Language, and (e) Knowledge (Howard et. al, 2009).

Physical wellbeing could be described as a child's overall care and development. It would include routine medical care and immunizations as well as routine screenings like vision, hearing, and dental with continued follow-up care as needed. Included within the realm of physical well-being would be a child's ability to throw a ball or hold a pencil as demonstrations of both gross and fine motor development.

The development of social and emotional skills are also important indicators of school readiness. Children need to be confident enough to have their personal needs met. They need to be able to ask to use the bathroom or request a drink of water. It is just as important to be able to follow directions and interact with others. These skills will allow a child to build friendships and participate in classroom activities.

Children who come from supportive home environments have an easier time acclimating to the formal school setting because their caregivers have instilled a sense of security. They have been provided the opportunity to be curious and investigate their surroundings. They have been provided with support and encouragement that have fostered a level of independence and self-reliance (Howard et.al, 2009).

Language is a strong predictor of school readiness. Children, who have experienced a rich language environment, have been encouraged to communicate through speech. They have been both spoken to and encouraged to use language to communicate their wants, needs, and feelings. Often these children have been read to and included in conversations that have, as a result, increased their vocabulary beyond that of their language deprived peers.

The final area to indicate school readiness is that of cognition and knowledge. Children who have been exposed to basic concepts such as cause and effect, patterns, and problem-solving are more readily able to transfer and extend that knowledge to new experiences within the classroom. These children are more comfortable with basic knowledge concepts because they are common aspects of learning that were first introduced in the home or early care environment.

In today's classroom, the different level of school readiness among children is evident. For robust school readiness, a child would need to have exposure to more than just culture. Children need to be exposed to educational activities and resources that allow them to expand their vocabulary, make sense of the world, and form relationships with caring nurturing adults (Howard et. al, 2009). Unfortunately, due to extenuating circumstances such as language barriers and poverty, many of our poor public school students are entering kindergarten a year and a half behind their middle-class peers (Grundel, Oliveira, & Geballe, 2003)

Of course not all children who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds will experience deficient school readiness, but children who are deficient in one or more of the readiness areas are at greater risk of suffering academically as well as being referred for special education services (Howard et. al, 2009). With one out of three children entering kindergarten without the school readiness skills needed, it is no wonder that children who come from poverty are already falling behind their middle-class peers academically, physically, and socially (Feldman, 2001; Foster, 2000; Gershoff, 2003; Howard et. al, 2009). A 2002 study compared the home environments of kindergarteners from the five poorest and richest communities in the nation and found startling differences. Children in the wealthiest communities owned an average of 150 books compared to 38 books owned in poor homes. The study goes on to identify the disparities among children being read books. In wealthy communities, 93% of children were read to three or more times a week. In the poor communities only 63% of children were being read to three or more times weekly. Instead of reading, poor communities allowed their children to watch more television. Families of poor communities reported

that they allowed their children to watch 18 or more hours of television per week, while wealthier communities reported a weekly allowance of television to be 11 or fewer hours. The differences continued to include the differences in experiences of wealthy children. Children of affluent communities were more likely to attend extracurricular activities such as music or dance (Lee & Burkham, 2002).

The lack of experiences and school readiness is seen in children who come from poverty is not and should not be regarded as a deficiency on the part of the children. The inequalities should be viewed as a call to action to provide a socially just education for all students, especially those of poverty.

Ensuring Quality Preschool

For over fifty years, the federally funded Head Start program has assisted low-income families by offering nutrition, health, social service, and school readiness support. This comprehensive program was based on a new understanding of the effects of poverty and the undeniable benefits of education. It was designed as a way to meet the needs of low-income preschoolers and break the cycle of poverty (Zigler & Muenchow, 1992). The two-generational approach supports both the parent and child in an attempt to make a lasting impact on families most at risk (NHSA, 2015). The program's success includes converting a disadvantaged student who was not able to speak or communicate at the time she was eligible for Head Start to now being a Senior Member of Congress from California. Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez is a prime example of what the Head Start program can achieve.

The total amount of Head Start funding is decided annually by Congress. According to the National Head Start Association (2015), the estimated Head Start/Early

Head Start funding for the 2016 fiscal year is \$8,533,095,000. The Administration for Children and Families oversees the Head Start program ensuring that federal grants are awarded to many different local agencies that are operating Head Start programs (Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, 2004). Head Start Programs vary depending upon their program design. Some programs offer Early Head Start (pregnant moms and babies from birth until age two years and eleven months, others operate preschool only programs for children ages three to five, while some offer a combination of both. Programs may be half day or full day, the whole year or part year depending upon the needs of the community and the availability of resources. It was reported by that National Head Start Association that there were 1039 Early Head Start Grantees and Sub-grantees; 1592 Head Start Grantees and Sub-grantees; 57 American Indian/Alaskan Native Early Head Start Grantees and Sub-grantees, 146 American Indian/Alaskan Native Head Start Grantees and Sub-grantees; and 50 Migrant and/or Seasonal Head Start Grantees (2015).

CLASS

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) is a tool that is used in many early childhood education classes to ensure quality education is happening in preschool classrooms. CLASS was created as part of the research project of the National Center for Early Development and Learning (NCEDL) (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008). This assessment tool is used in countless preschool through grade three classrooms. The CLASS tool is designed to rate teacher-student interactions within a predetermined class time, by rating 10 dimensions using a one through seven scale: (a) Positive climate, (b) Negative climate, (c) Teacher sensitivity, (d) Regard for student perspectives, (e)

Behavior management, (f) Productivity, (g) Instructional learning formats, (h) Concept development, (i) Quality of feedback, and (j) Language modeling (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008).

Each dimension falls within one of three domains: (a) emotional support, (b) classroom organization, and (c) instructional support. Emotional support is made up of dimensions one through four. Positive climate can be described as the overall feeling of comfort or emotional connection between the student and teacher. An example of positive climate would be observing a teacher greet her students at the door at the beginning of class and engage in conversation with both the student and parent. Conversely, a negative climate is more than just the absence of positive. A negative climate describes the level of hostility or anger that may be experienced through yelling or threatening speech. Teacher sensitivity is a teacher's awareness of student needs. The fourth dimension is regard for student perspectives. This dimension describes the depth to which a teacher focuses on student interests and points of view (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008).

The second domain of CLASS is classroom organization. This domain consists of three dimensions: Behavior management, Productivity, and Instructional learning formats. Behavior management describes the level of expertise to which a teacher monitors, predicts, and redirects student behavior. The degree to which a classroom runs smoothly is described as productivity. The final dimension, Instructional learning formats, is characterized as a teacher's ability to provide engaging activities that students are eager to participate in and hold their attention (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008).

The third and final domain of CLASS is instructional support. This domain is typically the most difficult for teachers to master. Instructional support consists of concept development, quality of feedback, and language modeling. Concept development is characterized by a teacher's ability to elicit higher order thinking through activities and discussions. Quality of feedback is a teacher's specialized ability to extend student thinking through dialogue. Language modeling is the teacher's ability to extend student vocabulary (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008). This third domain is of particular importance especially when working with students of poverty. Providing the extended language opportunities through dialogue and feedback can help to close the language gap that is typically already apparent.

The CLASS tool is implemented by an independent rater who must be certified as "reliable". The rater must complete training as well as an online assessment in order to receive CLASS certification (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008). Many preschool programs require the CLASS tool to be used in order to guarantee quality classroom instruction and identify areas that are in need of additional support. Head Start is one example of a program that uses CLASS as a monitoring tool.

Desired Results Developmental Profile

The Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) is a developmental continuum created by the California Department of Education, Early Childhood Education Division (2015) that is used to track the development and growth of young children from infancy through kindergarten age. California is one of the only states to create their own assessment to track the growth and development of young children. The DRDP is a formative assessment that is completed with the cooperation of teachers and

families and designed to be conducted in a natural setting through interactions and observation. Families and teachers collaborate to identify a child's developmental level within eight domains: (a) Approaches to Learning-Self-Regulation, (b) Social and Emotional Development, (c) Language and Literacy Development, (d) English-Language Development, (e) Cognition, (f) Physical Development-Health, (g) History-Social Science, and (h) Visual and Performing Arts (California Department of Education, 2015).

The Approaches to Learning Self-Regulation (ALT-REG) domain is key for students who are preparing to enter school. This domain assesses a child's ability to focus on a task and remain persistent in finishing an activity. It is important for children to have the ability to focus on daily classroom instruction. A child's natural curiosity and ability to take the initiative, along with the capability to delay gratification and exhibit self-control are essential qualities that must be both taught and cultivated (California Department of Education, 2015).

The Social and Emotional Development (SED) domain assesses children's ability to form bonds and interact appropriately with adults and peers. This domain focuses on children's ability to recognize themselves in relation to others and understand important social cues (California Department of Education, 2015). An observer might watch a child participating in dramatic play to see elements of this domain.

The Language and Literacy Development (LLD) domain assesses a child's ability to communicate in either English or their home language. Receptive and responsive language are measured as well as a child's ability to identify letters, sounds, and concepts of print. A child's interest in literacy is gauged as well as a child's writing development (California Department of Education, 2015).

The English-Language Development (ELD) domain is exclusively for children who are learning English as a second language. This domain focuses on a child's experiences with the English language only (California Department of Education, 2015). Much like the LLD domain, the English Language Development domain also explores expressive and receptive language of children. This may include using gesture, words, or sentences to communicate depending upon the developmental level.

The Cognition (COG) domain, includes both math and science as criteria for exploration. The observer would be assessing in many different areas including, spatial awareness, number recognition, visual discrimination, and cause and effect (California Department of Education, 2015). An assessment could take place during center time, small group, or even activity time outside as a child sorts objects such as rocks and sticks.

The Physical Development-Health (PD-HLTH) domain assesses a child's progress within a variety of measures. An assessor would look for opportunities to observe both gross and fine motor skills (California Department of Education, 2015). Physical activity or outdoor time provides an opportunity to observe a child's ability to participate in active play and manipulate objects through activities that require concentration and coordination. This domain also examines a child's ability to independently care for themselves and demonstrate their ability to attend to tasks such as dressing and toileting.

The History-Social Science (HSS) domain assesses a child's ability to cooperate and negotiate with others (California Department of Education, 2015). The importance of conflict negotiation among peers is a skill that becomes increasingly crucial as a child moves into grade school. Higher ratios between students and staff at the elementary level

mean that children may need to work out more problems themselves. A teacher may not be able to intervene to solve small issues or disagreements. The HSS domain identifies a child's progress in developing effective skills to manage relationships with peers.

The Visual and Performing Arts (VPA) domain assesses children in four key areas: visual arts, music, drama, and dance. A child's development is measured based on their ability to intentionally participate in activities that support the four key areas (California Department of Education, 2015). An assessor would look for a child's ability to express themselves creatively using multidimensional art, creating intentional sounds, pretend play, and dance.

The measures, within each domain, are used to describe a developmental continuum; early developing to later developing areas (California Department of Education, 2015). Student work, anecdotal notes, and photographic evidence are gathered to provide evidence of child development. Teachers use the knowledge gained from the DRDP for differentiating instruction to meet the needs of each child.

Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised Edition

The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised Edition (ECERS-R) is used to determine the quality of an Early Childhood Education Program by rating how well the program is meeting children's developmental needs. The ECERS-R tool can be utilized by a teacher in the classroom to self-evaluate or it can be used by an outside observer.

The ECERS-R tool is divided into seven subscales: (a) space and furnishings, (b) personal care routines, (c) language-reasoning, (d) activities, (e) interaction, (f) program structure, and (g) parents and staff. Each subscale contains items that are used to make

up a quality early childcare education program. Each item is ranked using a 7-point scale consisting of predetermined indicators. Individual indicators are scored by assigning a yes, no, or NA where appropriate (Cryer et al, 2003).

Completing the space and furnishings section requires the educator to look at the areas that students spend the majority of their classroom time. This educator must also look closely at the classroom space and furnishings to determine if there is adequate space for the children to move around freely and experience all areas of the classroom. The educator must identify the condition of the classroom and furnishings. Are the classroom items in good repair? Children should have access to clean and well care for materials. Children who experience high-quality classrooms will have higher self-esteem and take better care of their surroundings (Cryer et al, 2003).

The personal care routines section include all areas such as mealtime, toileting, napping, and sanitation. Completing this indicator ensures that a program provides proper modeling and care in all areas of a personal nature so as children develop positive personal care routines for healthy development.

The language-reasoning section of the ECERS tool asks the early childcare provider to take a holistic approach to language, communication, and literacy. Classrooms that score highly in language-reasoning provide many opportunities for children to develop the love of books. Books are available for children to readily explore as well as participate in traditional classroom read-a-louds. Staff is encouraged to engage in frequent conversation with children. Formal as well as informal conversation enhances vocabulary and communication skills that benefit children in all aspects of development.

In addition, preschoolers should be provided many varied activities that help to promote enhanced development in both fine motor and gross motor skills. Fine motor development includes activities that help children manipulate small objects. Promoting intentional fine motor activities will help children be able to manipulate scissors and correctly hold a pencil, both needed skills as children enter formal schooling. Art activities and crafting provide exciting opportunities for young children to develop fine motor skills while also enhancing creativity and descriptive language.

Gross motor activities help to build strong muscles and enhance balance and coordination. Outdoor time is often utilized to create opportunities for gross motor development, but other classroom activities such as music and movement are also appropriate. A teacher can encourage gross motor movement during multiple different classroom activities such as building, dancing, or even climbing.

The ECERS tool helps educators to recognize the need for many types of activities within a preschool day. High scores in the activity section reflect a classroom that provides an opportunity for many different child-focused choices such as art, blocks, sand and water play, science, math, dramatic play, and technology as appropriate (Cryer et al, 2003).

The interaction section of the ECERS tool allows educators to focus on child supervision and interactions between early childcare staff and children. The tool helps highlight how children are disciplined within the classroom and during outdoor play activities. Special consideration is given to the verbal interactions between teacher and child as well as between children.

Program structure is also an important component of ECERS. This section of the tool helps staff identify what is actually happening in the classroom. It is not as important what a written schedule might say. What is important, is how children are spending their time. The tool helps teachers identify whether a daily schedule is flexible enough to provide spontaneity but also consistent enough to provide a predictable daily routine. The balance between structure and flexibility is ideal for the preschool classroom setting.

The final component of ECERS is parents and staff. This component requires the rater to determine the quality and opportunity for parents to participate in the preschool classroom. If parents are unable to participate, it is essential that staff make every effort to provide the necessary information to parents that will allow them to feel involved. Not every parent will be willing to devote time during class hours to volunteer, but they can participate in other ways. Parents can be called upon to help make programmatic decisions, discuss child progress, and complete necessary tasks whether at home or directly in the classroom (Cryer et al, 2003). Parent involvement is valuable and the ECERS-R tool helps to identify whether the staff is making the necessary effort to include all families and caregivers.

The ECERS-R tool enables program staff to identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement within a program. When scoring using the ECERS-R tool, it is less important what the individual indicator is marked and is more important what the average score of the identified classroom (Cryer et al, 2003). ECERS-R scores help administrators choose areas of focus for continued program improvement.

Tools such as CLASS, DRDP, and ECERS-R help teachers to identify areas of success as well as areas that require focused support. It is not enough to simply point out what is deficient in a classroom. It is essential to create change through coaching and reflective teacher practices. All teachers have an opportunity to continue on the continuum and move from good to great. A major contributor is teacher beliefs. Positive teachers that get to know the community and form relationships with students and families will be more likely to have a lasting positive effect on the community (Parrett & Budge, 2012).

To create lasting change for our communities, educators must improve literacy rates among our students. If students are not graduating high school with the skills needed to be self-sufficient, including the ability to read and comprehend, they are destined to continue the cycle of poverty. Educators must look critically at our educational pedagogy and evaluate whether or not we are meeting the needs of our students. The term “students” must include children from all backgrounds including different races, nationalities, and socioeconomic status. If all students are not finding success, then a change must be made to create a socially just environment conducive to learning where high expectations for all are the norm rather than the exception (Parrett & Budge, 2012).

Based on the data gathered from the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLK), for the 2013-14 program year, the Head Start Preschool program served 1,076,000 children age birth to 5 and 81% of these children were ages 3 and 4 at the time of services. Participating families identified their racial background based on the criteria established by the United States Census Bureau. National demographics identified families as follows: 43% White; 9% Biracial; 29% African American; 2% Asian; 3.4%

American Indian or Native Alaskan; 0.6% Pacific Islander; and 13% other. This ethnic breakdown equates to 62% Non-Hispanic and 38% of Hispanic origin (Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, 2014).

The Head Start philosophy is to support the entire family by providing resources and support to keep families on track and accessing all available services that children need to grow and learn. Examples of resources and services could be access to information regarding adult education or job training, assistance accessing medical insurance or information regarding local food banks or housing. For the 2013-14 program year, data for Children's Health Measures showed an increase in all areas based on the total enrollment period. Program data indicated that the percentage of children that had immunization, health insurance, and a dental and medical home all increased between 3-10% (Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, 2014). This data suggests that the program that began over 50 years ago is still having a positive impact on the lives of children.

Expected Outcomes

The author based the foundation of this study on an original work by Dr. Jacqueline Lynch (2010). Lynch's study examined the beliefs of kindergarten teachers regarding students' literacy knowledge and parental involvement in literacy events based on SES. Lynch found that teachers in higher SES schools were more likely to report higher student print knowledge than teachers in low SES schools. It was also noted that no significant difference in teachers' beliefs about parent involvement regardless of SES was identified. Also, research findings indicated that teachers in high SES schools believed that parents had more literacy knowledge to share with their children and were

more interested in participating in their child's literacy development. Based on these findings, similar outcomes are projected for this research.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The fundamental objective of the author was to test the research questions related to preschool teachers' beliefs regarding print literacy, school readiness, and family involvement as well as the effect that poverty has on those views. The methodology used to test the defined research questions is presented in this chapter. The chapter is organized into seven sections: (a) research design, (b) instrumentation, (c) measures, (d) data analysis, (e) validating findings, (f) ethical considerations, and (g) summary.

Research Design

Through this study, the researcher intended to answer two questions regarding the effect of student poverty on the belief system of educators. Question one: Are there differences in teachers' beliefs about children's print knowledge in preschool based on the socio-economic status (SES) of children's families? Question two: Do teachers vary in their beliefs about parental involvement in children's print literacy development based on the families' SES? If question one and two are true, what effect will that have on student outcomes (see Figure 1).

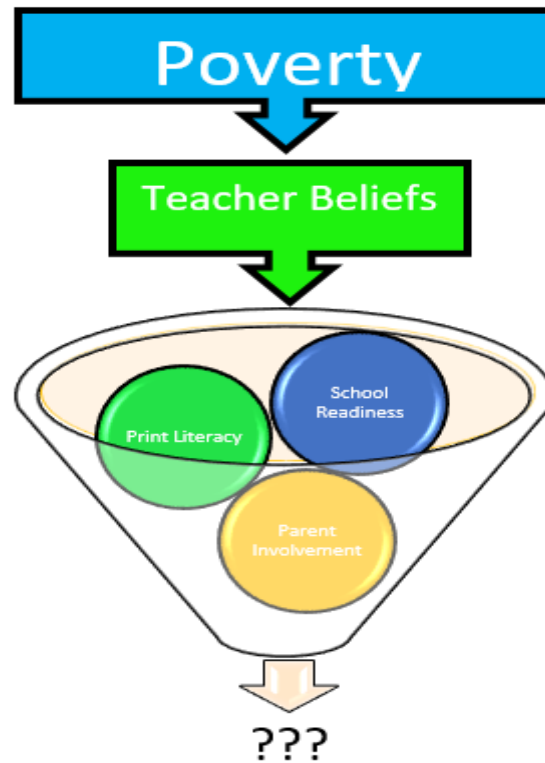


Figure 1. The Poverty Effect. Devitt 2016

Research Hypothesis

To address the research questions identified in this study, two hypotheses were developed. Support for these hypotheses was substantiated by the literature examined and the theoretical perspective utilized throughout this research.

1. Among early childhood educators, preschool teachers employed in programs with a higher income threshold believe that their students have greater print knowledge at the start of the preschool year when compared to the beliefs of teachers employed in lower income threshold preschool programs.
2. Among early childhood educators, preschool teachers employed in programs with a higher income threshold believe that parent involvement in children's print

literacy development is higher when compared to the beliefs of teachers employed in lower income threshold preschool programs.

Selection of Participants

One hundred preschool teachers from one identified school district located in the California Central Valley were asked to participate in this research. The California Central Valley includes 18 counties and roughly five million people. The Central Valley stretches from Shasta County in the north to Kern County in the south (Umbach, 1997). Although the area is considered one valley, it is made up of many diverse communities (Umbach, 1997). The school district chosen reflects the vast cultural and socio-economic diversity seen within the Central Valley.

The selected school district is located in an urban city within the California Central Valley. It is characterized as having a high poverty rate resulting in an identified low (SES) for many families. This district serves over 40,000 students from preschool to adult. Approximately 93% of students are minority, and 28% speak a language other than English. The United States Census Bureau and the California Department of Education (2010) identify roughly 82% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch and 24% of families are living below the federal poverty threshold.

Preschool teachers from the chosen school district teach 3 to 5 year-old children in half-day classes. Preschool teachers' base instruction on district-adopted curriculum and teacher-created instructional units aligned with the California Preschool Foundations. The Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP), Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS), and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) are used to ensure high-quality lesson delivery and instructional strategies.

Instrumentation

The quantitative instrument consisted of a Likert-style questionnaire used to record each teacher's beliefs in three areas: children's print literacy knowledge, children's school readiness, and parental involvement in children's print literacy. The research questionnaire was based primarily on a study previously conducted by Dr. Jacqueline Lynch (2010). The original questionnaire was modified, with permission, to meet the needs of this current research.

The survey consisted of 20 closed questions. Fourteen questions were focused on the teacher's beliefs about student print knowledge and school readiness and six questions focused on the teacher's beliefs about parental involvement. Teachers were asked to rank their beliefs based on a pre-identified Likert-style scale: strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D), strongly disagree (SD), or don't know (DK). Cronbach's alpha was used to demonstrate reliability among question groups.

The first section of the questionnaire focused on the teacher's beliefs about student print literacy. Print literacy is defined by Lynch (2010, p. 157) as "interactions involving some form of written text for communicative purposes, generally involving the reading or writing process." This section asked questions regarding student knowledge of the English alphabet including letters, sounds, and words. The second section focused on the teacher's beliefs about the student's school readiness including the ability to listen to a story and correctly hold a writing utensil. The last section focused on the teacher's perception of family involvement in the student's early literacy development (Lynch, 2010). One fellow researcher and Concordia University faculty were asked to review the

survey before implementation. The ideas and suggestions were included in the final version of the questionnaire. The complete questionnaire is located in Appendix A.

For the qualitative portion, interviews were held using criterion sampling to determine participant eligibility and purposeful maximal sampling to highlight different perspectives on the case. Ten participants were asked to participate in follow-up interviews. Interview questions were developed using data collected from the quantitative data analysis of survey answers and data trends. The complete survey is located in Appendix A

Procedures

The mixed methods research design used in this study followed a social justice framework that surrounds an explanatory sequential design. This design (diagramed in Figure 2) allowed the researcher to begin with a quantitative design model and then use qualitative methods to provide a deeper understanding of the initial quantitative results (Creswell, 2014).

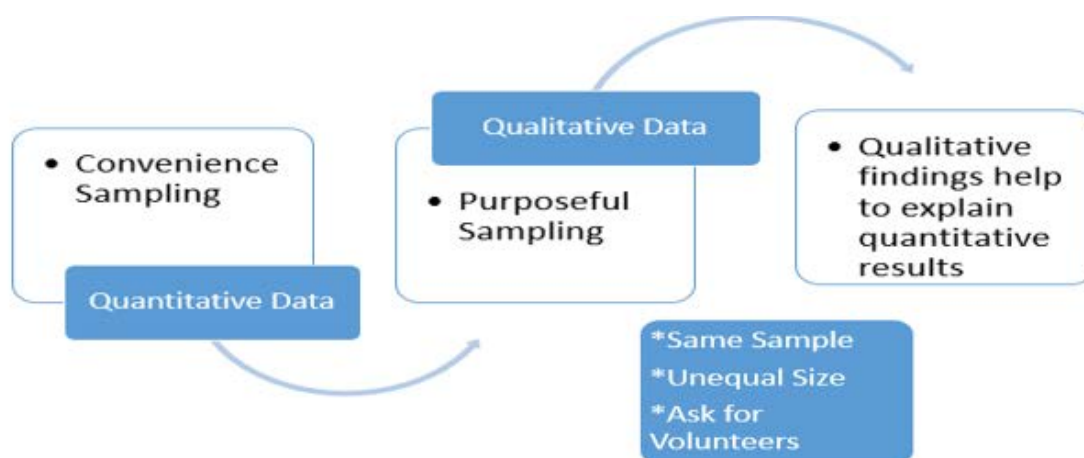


Figure 2: Explanatory Sequential Sampling Design. Devitt 2016

The quantitative section of this study used the well documented quasi-experimental design (Creswell, 2014; Shadish, Cook & Campbell, 2002). The purpose of choosing the quasi-experimental design was to test a hypothesis regarding causes that can be manipulated by the researcher (Karge, 2015). Although the quasi-experimental design lacks random unit assignment, it is aligned in purpose and structure to the randomized experimental model (Shadish et al., 2002). This design type was chosen because of the limited resources and funding that cause the use of a randomized controlled sample to be unfeasible (Shadish et al., 2002).

The author used the quasi-experimental posttest only design. This design was diagrammed as X, O₁. The treatment was represented by X. O₁ represented the posttest. The independent variable (X) was identified as the known family SES based on parent identified yearly income provided at preschool program enrollment as well as free or reduced lunch applications. The dependent variable was defined as teacher beliefs regarding student print knowledge, school readiness, and family involvement. To counteract any validity concerns, the researcher included as much information about posttest conditions as possible and was careful when making inferences and generalizations about the findings (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008).

The qualitative portion of this study was conducted using phenomenology as the particular research methodology. Phenomenology was used to gain a deeper understanding of teacher beliefs identified during the quantitative part of the research. Phenomenology provided the researcher an opportunity to examine the effect of poverty on belief systems using Head Start and California State Preschool Program (CSPP) teachers within one district to be explored (Creswell, 2013). This method allowed

teachers' beliefs within each of the identified programs to be compared. The research design is reflected in Table 1.

Table 1

<i>Mixed Methods Research Design</i>	
Quantitative	Qualitative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quasi-experimental posttest only design • Diagrammed as X, O₁ • Treatment: X • Posttest: O₁ • IV: Family SES • DV: Teacher Beliefs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phenomenological • Comparison of Phenomenon's • Teacher beliefs in Program A: Head Start • Teacher beliefs in Program B: California State Preschool • Comparison of interviews

The qualitative portion involved 10 individuals who were chosen using purposeful maximal sampling to provide different perspectives on the identified issue (Creswell, 2013). Data was collected by conducting personal interviews. A comparison was performed using an analysis of themes followed by an interpretation of meaning (Creswell, 2013).

This mixed methods research design called for all Head Start and CSPP teachers from one identified school district located in the California Central Valley to be invited to participate in this research. One hundred preschool teachers were given questionnaires during a "welcome back to school" staff meeting. Questionnaires were printed on green paper and the adult informed consent document was printed on yellow paper. Teachers were asked to submit the completed questionnaires and consent document by placing them in color-coded file folders. The green file was to hold the completed questionnaires while the yellow file was to keep the completed consent forms. The documents were collected in different files to ensure that the researcher would not be able to identify

which participant submitted each survey. Those who completed the survey were given a ticket to participate in a drawing. A drawing was held for two \$25.00 Target gift cards as well as four gift baskets that I created. Each gift basket consisted of a brightly colored bin that was filled with teacher supplies such as pencils, pens, notepads, and a calculator. Each basket was wrapped in cellophane and tied with a large bow. Raffle tickets were given to encourage participation in the research study. Ten dozen cookies were also provided for all teachers regardless of their involvement in the research study. Cookies were set up on a refreshment table located in the lobby of the meeting space. The table was brightly covered and small decorations were arranged on the table. A printed sign that read “What you do matters” was used as a table focal point. Teachers were encouraged to enjoy cookies during the meeting break time. Additional break time minutes were given in order to accommodate questionnaire responses and submission of the research documents: the questionnaire and adult informed consent.

All raffle tickets were collected from interested participants and a drawing of six tickets was held at the end of the staff meeting. Four tickets were drawn during the gift basket giveaway. The winning teachers were able to select the gift basket of choice until all baskets were taken. The last two tickets drawn were for the \$25 Target gift cards. The winning teachers were very excited. One winner screamed with enthusiasm and jumped up and down when her number was called.

All returned questionnaires were gathered and sorted by participant program affiliation as indicated in the participant demographic section. A total of 41 CSPP questionnaires and 40 Head Start questionnaires were collected. Eight questionnaires were unusable because program affiliation was not identified. It is the belief of the

researcher that some teachers opted not to complete the questionnaire due to tense contract negotiations between the district and teachers' union. Although the researcher was not representing the school district, some teachers may be practicing "work to rule." This negotiation tactic calls for teachers to refuse to complete any task not directly identified under their printed job description.

Ten teachers were invited to participate in additional semi-structured interviews to gain a deeper understanding of the teacher's beliefs and experiences regarding student poverty, student print literacy, school readiness, and family involvement. The 10 participants were randomly selected by drawing from the fifty teachers that expressed interest on the previously administered adult informed consent form. The selected participants were notified via email that they were chosen for further study. The participants were then asked to select a date and time that worked best for their schedule to be interviewed. Participants were advised that an independent researcher could be made available upon request. The independent researcher was included in the research design as an alternative to remove any confidentiality concerns that the participants may have felt based on the position and familiarity with the research author, who worked within the selected district (see Figure 3).

Of the first 10 teachers contacted for the follow-up interview, only five responded by selecting a date for participation. After scheduling identified interviews, the researcher returned to the adult informed consent document and chose five additional teachers for follow-up interviews. All of the teachers selected during the second round participated in the qualitative portion of the research. It is unknown why the initial participants were unresponsive to the email request. The researcher suspects that the

current strained employee relations and the impending strike may have played a role in influencing participation. The exact reason may never be known.

At the onset of each interview, the researcher read the participant a printed disclaimer assuring the participating teacher that responses would not be shared. The researcher also presented each participant with an audio consent document that further stated the parameters surrounding the qualitative interview data gathering procedure. The participants were asked open-ended questions, and participant responses were recorded using a digital audio recording device. At the conclusion of each interview, the participant was presented a gift card in the amount of \$10 to thank them for their participation. Participants were not informed of any compensation before interview participation. It was the belief of the researcher that advanced notice of any incentive may affect the participation and authentic qualitative data gathering strategies.

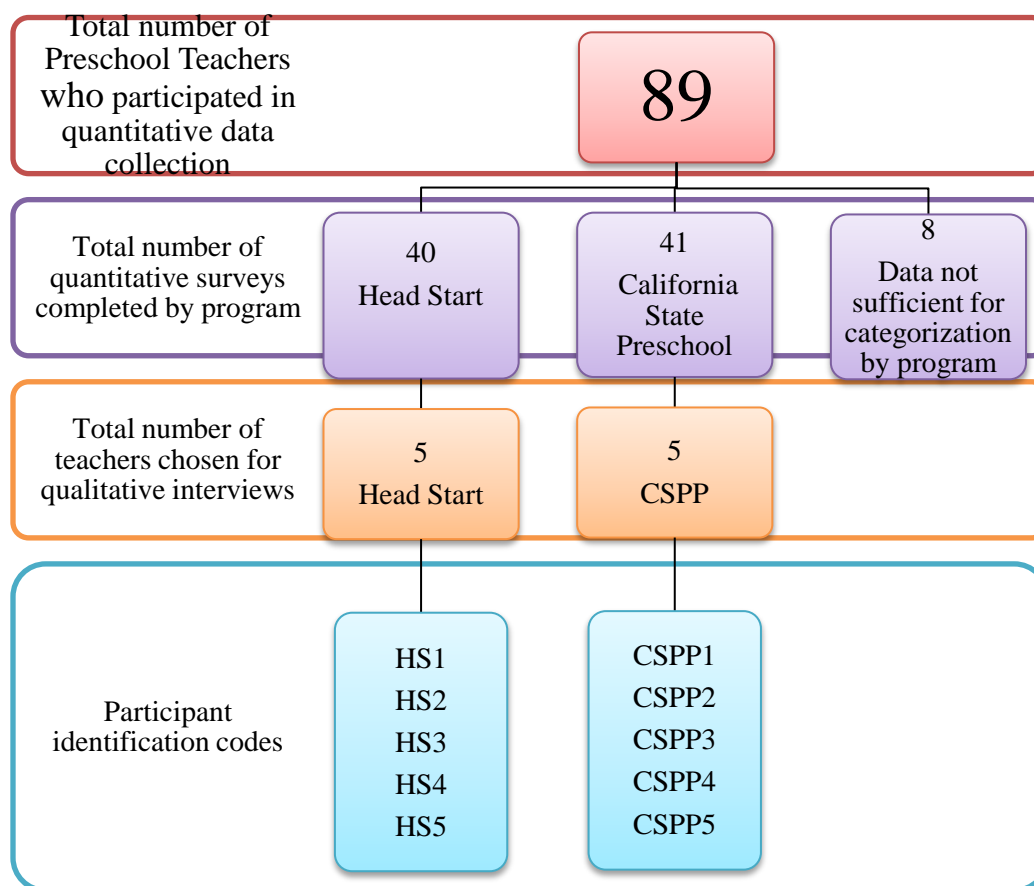


Figure 3. Selection of Participants. Devitt 2016

Measures

Early literacy research provides examples of the impact of specific types of teachers' literacy instruction on children's early literacy skills (Justice, Kaderavek, Fan, Sofka & Hunt, 2009); however, we know little about the impact of poverty and family on teacher beliefs. The intent of this research was to promote a better understanding of the role student poverty plays on teachers' beliefs in Early Childhood Education.

Furthermore, when teachers are asked outright about their beliefs, many say children in poverty struggle to learn to read more often than children in affluent communities, yet Lynch (2010) found kindergarten teachers' beliefs about students' knowledge of print literacy, and parental involvement in children's print literacy development to be the same

regardless of poverty level. The researcher used Lynch's survey with preschool teachers to determine if similar outcomes would prevail. There are substantial policy implications for this work. If robust programmatic systems and specific types of teacher's pre-literacy instruction yield preschool teacher beliefs that children *can* and *are* learning regardless of poverty, it opens the door for extended discussions and examinations of practice at both the teacher education and teacher professional learning community levels. In the Handbook of Research Methods in Early Childhood Education, Olivia Saracho (2015) emphasizes the critical importance of Qualitative methodology as a means to influencing policy and discovering the voices of participants. These voices become the framework for program improvement and effectiveness.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involved descriptive statistics, t-tests, ANOVA and qualitative analysis. T-tests were chosen as a means of analysis based on the original study by Jacqueline Lynch. It was determined that T-tests should be conducted to replicate the study by Lynch. However, the researcher also ran an analysis of variance (ANOVA) as an additional form of analysis (and more appropriate for this type of in-depth research). Descriptive statistics were used to analyze teachers' beliefs about student print knowledge and school readiness as it relates to literacy. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze teacher's beliefs about parental involvement in activities to enhance student literacy. T-tests examined whether or not there is a difference between mean scores of teacher's responses based on identified socio-economic status of student populations. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare between-group samples including identified factors such as age, ethnicity, and marital status.

Descriptive analysis of teacher comments during interviews was conducted using open coding and memoing (Creswell, 2013). The identified school district and Concordia University Irvine Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the research proposal and research design methods outlined by the author. Data was collected during the first quarter of the 2016-2017 school year. Analysis of data was completed during the second quarter of the 2016- 2017 school year.

Validating Findings

The survey included questions from an existing research tool (Lynch, 2010) and added additional questions to better understand the teacher perspectives being examined in this research. Initially, a total of six open-ended questions were developed. After the researcher had become better acquainted with the participants, it was apparent that adding additional questions that had a more targeted focus would create an opportunity for heightened clarity of teachers' beliefs and feelings. The researcher responded by adding additional questions to the qualitative section of the research.

To ensure descriptive validity, investigator triangulation was used. Two other researchers were asked to review the data and data collection methods. Their comments and recommendations were used to ensure validity within the research findings (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1998). Interpretive validity was insured within the qualitative research strand by returning to participants and clarifying data and interviews (Creswell, 2013). The participants were given the opportunity to explain their feelings by rereading the portions of interviews that reflect their opinions and expressed beliefs. Triangulation of methods was used to ensure internal validity. A mixed methods design was used that

encompassed both survey and interview data. Triangulation was further used to compare the different individual responses as well as the two distinct preschool programs.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher anticipated potential ethical issues to arise based on several factors: familiarity with the content, transparency of the research, and anonymity of participants. The researcher was employed by the participating school district and therefore had a previous working relationship with some of the participating teachers. The researcher alleviated these concerns by using several techniques. Arrangements were made for another researcher to be available to conduct participant interviews upon request. However, no such requests were made. Participants were provided an informed consent document that provided a simple description of the research. Participant surveys did not require individuals to identify themselves. Surveys were conducted during a large preschool staff meeting. The large gathering data collection ensured that participant identity would be protected.

Summary

This study was conducted to examine the effect that student poverty has on preschool teachers' beliefs about student print knowledge including school readiness and print literacy. The goal of the researcher was also to further examined preschool teachers' beliefs about families in poverty and the perceived level of parent involvement in their children's early literacy development. A Likert-style questionnaire was distributed to a total of 100 preschool teachers from two preschool programs in the California Central Valley. This quasi-experimental posttest only design was used to ask participants to recall their beliefs about student print knowledge, school readiness, and

parental involvement at the beginning of the school year based on their 2016-2017 students. After collecting all questionnaires, 10 participants were invited to participate in a follow-up phenomenological study. In-depth interviews were used to further investigate the effect of poverty on preschool teachers' beliefs about student knowledge and parental involvement. Data was collected and analyzed during the 2016-2017 school year.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The intent of this study was to investigate the influence of student poverty on preschool teachers' beliefs about early literacy development, school readiness, and parent involvement. The purpose of this study was achieved by examining preschool teachers' quantitative and qualitative responses as well as comparing beliefs between two differently funded programs within one predetermined California school district. The results of the data analysis are presented within this chapter: (a) quantitative results, (b) qualitative results, and (c) limitations and delimitations.

Quantitative Results

In total, 81 questionnaires were included in the analysis: 40 were completed by Head Start teachers and an additional 41 were completed by State Preschool teachers. Nearly all of the teachers (79 out of 81, or 98%) had obtained their early childhood education permit, and most (58 out of 81, or 72%) also indicated that they had more than 10 years of teaching experience (see Table 2). Overall, most respondents (53 out of 81, or 70%) indicated that their employment status was "permanent." There was, however, a statistically significant difference in the proportions of State Preschool versus Head Start teachers whose employment statuses were "permanent" and "probationary"; significantly more Head Start teachers indicated that their employment status was probationary (43% versus 13% of State Preschool teachers), and significantly more State Preschool teachers indicated that their employment status was permanent (82% versus 57% of Head Start teachers) - (see Table 5),

Table 2

Respondent Years Teaching

Demographic		State Preschool		Head Start		Total	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Years Teaching	1 - 5 years	10	24.4%	3	7.5%	13	16.0%
	6 - 10 years	5	12.2%	5	12.5%	10	12.3%
	11 - 15 years	4	9.8%	15	37.5%	19	23.5%
	16 - 20 years	10	24.4%	7	17.5%	17	21.0%
	21 - 25 years	5	12.2%	5	12.5%	10	12.3%
	26 - 30 years	2	4.9%	1	2.5%	3	3.7%
	31+ years	5	12.2%	4	10.0%	9	11.1%

Note. * $p < .05$

Table 3

Respondent Permit Type

Demographic		State Preschool		Head Start		Total	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
ECE Permit Type	Standard Teacher	19	52.8%	7	24.1%	26	40.0%
	Master Teacher	8	22.2%	9	31.0%	17	26.2%
	Director	9	25.0%	13	44.8%	22	33.8%
	Multiple Subject Credential	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	No Permit	0	0.0%	2	5.0%	2	2.5%

Note. * $p < .05$

Table 4

Respondent Employment Status

Demographic		State Preschool		Head Start		Total	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Employment Status	Substitute	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	Temporary	1	2.6%	0	0.0%	1	1.3%
	Probationary	5	12.8% *	16	43.2% *	21	27.6%
	Permanent	32	82.1% *	21	56.8% *	53	69.7%
	Don't Know	1	2.6%	0	0.0%	1	1.3%

Note. * $p < .05$

Nearly all of the teachers who indicated a gender were female (78 out of 80, or 98%), and more than half who indicated a marital status were married (43 out of 79, or 54%). The largest group of respondents indicated that their age was between 41 and 50 years old (28 out of 79, or 35%); in total, 65% reported being over the age of 40. Overall and among each group of teachers (State Preschool and Head Start), the largest group of teachers reported an ethnicity of Hispanic/Latino (39% overall, 32% State Preschool, 46% Head Start). Respondents who marked more than one ethnicity were included in the “Other/Multiple” ethnicity category. Teachers included in this group made up less than 10% of respondents within both the State Preschool and Head Start groups, and represented 6.3% of respondents across both programs (see Table 5).

Table 5

Respondent Demographics

Demographic		State Preschool		Head Start		Total	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Gender	Male	2	5.0%	0	0.0%	2	2.5%
	Female	38	95.0%	40	100.0%	78	97.5%
Age	21-30	4	10.0%	3	7.7%	7	8.9%
	31-40	8	20.0%	13	33.3%	21	26.6%
	41-50	14	35.0%	14	35.9%	28	35.4%
	51-60	12	30.0%	7	17.9%	19	24.1%
	61+	2	5.0%	2	5.1%	4	5.1%
Ethnicity	White/Caucasian	12	29.3%	5	12.8%	17	21.3%
	African American	5	12.2%	7	17.9%	12	15.0%
	Native American/Pacific Islander	1	2.4%	1	2.6%	2	2.5%
	Hispanic/Latino	13	31.7%	18	46.2%	31	38.8%
	Asian	6	14.6%	7	17.9%	13	16.3%
	Other/Multiple	4	9.8%	1	2.6%	5	6.3%
Marital Status	Married / Domestic Partner	25	64.1%	18	45.0%	43	54.4%
	Single / Never Married	9	23.1%	10	25.0%	19	24.1%
	Widowed	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	Divorced	5	12.8%	11	27.5%	16	20.3%
	Separated	0	0.0%	1	2.5%	1	1.3%

Note. * $p < .05$

The survey was comprised of 20 items organized into three topical areas with six to seven items each: Children's Print Literacy Knowledge (Print Literacy), Children's School Readiness (School Readiness), and Parent Involvement in Children's Print Literacy (Parent Involvement). All items provided closed-end, selected response options organized on a 4-point scale: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The response option "Don't Know" was not assigned a point value as a valid response for the purpose of quantitative analysis. All items were positively phrased (e.g., "Children can point to a picture...") with the exception of item three in the School

Readiness area: children do not know how to hold a pencil at the beginning of the school year. This single item was reverse-coded, with the Strongly Agree response scored as 1, Agree scored as 2, Disagree scored as 3, and Strongly Disagree scored as 4 (see Table 6).

Table 6

		Which program are you teaching?					
		State Preschool		Head Start		Total	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Parents are very interested in their children's reading and writing development	Strongly Agree	4	10.0%	3	7.5%	7	8.8%
	Agree	19	47.5%	20	50.0%	39	48.8%
	Disagree	10	25.0%	12	30.0%	22	27.5%
	Strongly Disagree	6	15.0%	4	10.0%	10	12.5%
	Don't Know	1	2.5%	1	2.5%	2	2.5%
Parents have read schoolwork sent home to their children	Strongly Agree	1	2.6%	2	5.1%	3	3.8%
	Agree	16	41.0%	16	41.0%	32	41.0%
	Disagree	11	28.2%	16	41.0%	27	34.6%
	Strongly Disagree	7	17.9%	3	7.7%	10	12.8%
	Don't Know	4	10.3%	2	5.1%	6	7.7%
Parents talk about books with their children	Strongly Agree	2	5.3%	1	2.6%	3	3.9%
	Agree	14	36.8%	13	33.3%	27	35.1%
	Disagree	14	36.8%	19	48.7%	33	42.9%
	Strongly Disagree	6	15.8%	2	5.1%	8	10.4%
	Don't Know	2	5.3%	4	10.3%	6	7.8%
Parents have read stories to their children at home	Strongly Agree	5	13.2%	3	7.9%	8	10.5%
	Agree	18	47.4%	18	47.4%	36	47.4%
	Disagree	9	23.7%	10	26.3%	19	25.0%
	Strongly Disagree	3	7.9%	1	2.6%	4	5.3%
	Don't Know	3	7.9%	6	15.8%	9	11.8%
Parents have engaged in writing the alphabet at home with their children prior to entering school	Strongly Agree	1	2.6%	1	2.6%	2	2.6%
	Agree	9	23.7%	10	26.3%	19	25.0%
	Disagree	17	44.7%	17	44.7%	34	44.7%
	Strongly Disagree	8	21.1%	5	13.2%	13	17.1%
	Don't Know	3	7.9%	5	13.2%	8	10.5%
Parents have engaged in reading instructions/direction with their children	Strongly Agree	2	5.3%	1	2.6%	3	3.9%
	Agree	8	21.1%	8	21.1%	16	21.1%
	Disagree	16	42.1%	18	47.4%	34	44.7%
	Strongly Disagree	9	23.7%	5	13.2%	14	18.4%
	Don't Know	3	7.9%	6	15.8%	9	11.8%

Instrument Reliability

The survey instrument demonstrated strong reliability, indicated by a Cronbach's alpha of 0.91. As for the topical areas, the seven items in Print Literacy yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85. The seven items in School Readiness yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.71; however, when the single negatively phrased item is excluded, this measure of reliability jumps to 0.79, which approaches the commonly accepted level of 0.80. The six items in the Parent Involvement area yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89.

Analyzing the item-total correlation for the questionnaire revealed that School Readiness item three, the single negatively phrased item, is the only item that had an item-total correlation of less than 0.5 – in fact, the correlation is -0.05, and the reliability of the total instrument increases to 0.92 if the item is deleted. To ensure that the re-coding of the item was not the problem, the same analysis was conducted with the item coded in the same manner as other items – with Strongly Agree scored as 4, Agree scored as 3, Disagree scored as 2, and Strongly Disagree scored as 1. This yielded a positive item-total correlation of 0.05. Since the magnitude of the correlation is so small, whether the item is recoded or not, it is unclear whether respondents consistently recognized that this item was phrased differently than the other items.

Print Literacy

Participant responses for the seven print literacy questions indicate some discrepancy between programs. Item one, "Children know the names of most of the alphabetic letters at the beginning of the year," received a combined response rate of disagree and strongly disagree of 85.3% for State Preschool teachers and 90% for Head Start teachers. This finding shows that teachers in both programs agree that students do

not know the names of the alphabet at the beginning of the year, yet Head Start teachers feel more strongly about the answer. When asked if students know the sounds of the alphabet at the beginning of the school year, similar results were found: a combined total of 92.7% of State Preschool teachers either disagreed or strongly disagreed and 96.3% of Head Start teachers either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Response frequency when asked if students could write some letters of the alphabet indicated that 65.9% of State Preschool teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed as compared to 67.9% of Head Start teachers. Teachers in both programs continued to share similar beliefs when asked about the ability of children to point to a capital letter at the beginning of the school year. A total of 80.5% of State Preschool teachers either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement compared to 81.5% of Head Start teachers. A total of 80.5% of State Preschool teachers also disagreed or strongly disagreed that students could identify rhyming words at the beginning of the school year. Beliefs among Head Start teachers were even stronger showing 93.8% of teachers either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that children can identify rhyme. When asked if students could read simple words at the beginning of the school year, 90.2% of State teachers either disagreed or strongly disagreed compared to 93.8% of Head Start teachers who indicated that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. The final question under the Print Literacy section asked participants if they believed that children could write simple sentences when they entered the preschool program. A total of 92.6% of State Preschool teachers answered either disagree or strongly disagree. Head Start teachers also disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that children could write simple sentences at a rate of 96.3%. When analyzing each print literacy response, teachers in both Head Start and State

Preschool programs agree that children do not come prepared with print literacy skills.

Based on survey answers, a higher percentage of Head Start teachers either disagreed or strongly disagreed with each question (see Table 7).

Table 7

Print Literacy Response Frequencies

		Which program are you teaching?					
		State Preschool		Head Start		Total	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Children know the names of most of the alphabetic letters at the beginning of the year	Strongly Agree	1	2.4%	0	0.0%	1	1.2%
	Agree	3	7.3%	4	10.0%	7	8.6%
	Disagree	16	39.0%	15	37.5%	31	38.3%
	Strongly Disagree	19	46.3%	21	52.5%	40	49.4%
	Don't Know	2	4.9%	0	0.0%	2	2.5%
Children know the sounds of most of the alphabetic letters at the beginning of the school year	Strongly Agree	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	Agree	2	4.9%	0	0.0%	2	2.5%
	Disagree	15	36.6%	7	17.9%	22	27.5%
	Strongly Disagree	23	56.1%	32	82.1%	55	68.8%
	Don't Know	1	2.4%	0	0.0%	1	1.3%
Children can write at least some of the alphabet at the beginning of the school year	Strongly Agree	1	2.4%	1	2.5%	2	2.5%
	Agree	12	29.3%	11	27.5%	23	28.4%
	Disagree	15	36.6%	17	42.5%	32	39.5%
	Strongly Disagree	12	29.3%	11	27.5%	23	28.4%
	Don't Know	1	2.4%	0	0.0%	1	1.2%
Children can point to a capital letter successfully if asked to at the beginning of the school year	Strongly Agree	1	2.4%	2	5.0%	3	3.7%
	Agree	6	14.6%	5	12.5%	11	13.6%
	Disagree	12	29.3%	16	40.0%	28	34.6%
	Strongly Disagree	21	51.2%	17	42.5%	38	46.9%
	Don't Know	1	2.4%	0	0.0%	1	1.2%
Children can identify words that rhyme at the beginning of the school year	Strongly Agree	0	0.0%	1	2.5%	1	1.2%
	Agree	2	4.9%	1	2.5%	3	3.7%
	Disagree	15	36.6%	15	37.5%	30	37.0%
	Strongly Disagree	23	56.1%	23	57.5%	46	56.8%
	Don't Know	1	2.4%	0	0.0%	1	1.2%
Children can read simple words, such as cat at the beginning of the school year	Strongly Agree	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	Agree	3	7.3%	1	2.5%	4	4.9%
	Disagree	6	14.6%	8	20.0%	14	17.3%
	Strongly Disagree	31	75.6%	31	77.5%	62	76.5%
	Don't Know	1	2.4%	0	0.0%	1	1.2%
Children can write simple sentences composed of simple words using invented and/or conventional spelling at the beginning of the school year	Strongly Agree	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	Agree	2	4.9%	0	0.0%	2	2.5%
	Disagree	6	14.6%	5	12.5%	11	13.6%
	Strongly Disagree	32	78.0%	35	87.5%	67	82.7%
	Don't Know	1	2.4%	0	0.0%	1	1.2%

Mean scores for the seven items in the Print Literacy section are arranged between 1.25 and 2.05 for State Preschool teachers, and between 1.13 and 2.05 for Head Start teachers, indicating that respondents did not believe that students began the school year with a high level of print literacy. The small standard deviations (0.54 – 0.85 for State Preschool teachers and 0.33 – 0.85 for Head Start teachers) confirms the high level of consensus on items in this area. A mean of responses to Print Literacy items was also calculated for each respondent, which averaged 1.55 for State Preschool teachers and 1.50 for Head Start teachers (see Table 8).

Table 8

Mean Survey Responses, Print Literacy Items

Item	State Preschool			Head Start		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Print Literacy (aggregate)	40	1.55	0.59	40	1.50	0.34
Know names of most letters	39	1.64	0.74	40	1.58	0.68
Know sounds of most letters	40	1.48*	0.60	39	1.18*	0.39
Can write some letters	40	2.05	0.85	40	2.05	0.81
Can point to a capital letter	40	1.68	0.83	40	1.80	0.85
Can identify words that rhyme	40	1.48	0.60	40	1.50	0.68
Can read simple words	40	1.30	0.61	40	1.25	0.49
Can write simple sentences	40	1.25	0.54	40	1.13	0.33

Note. * $p < .05$

Standard t-tests were used to describe differences in responses to items based on teachers' pre-school program, as well as the overall difference in respondents' overall mean Print Literacy score. For the most part, responses to items were consistent between groups. A significant difference was found between State Preschool and Head Start teachers on the item "Children know the sounds of most of the alphabetic letters at the beginning of the school year" $t(67)=2.61, p=.01$. The mean score for State Preschool teachers for this item was 1.48, compared to 1.18 for Head Start teachers. Since both

averages are below 2 (Disagree), this difference only highlights the strength of each group's disagreement with the statement – Head Start teachers were more likely to indicate that they “Strongly Disagree” with the statement (82%) than State Preschool teachers (58%).

In order to determine whether grouping respondents by any of the demographic variables resulted in significantly different Print Literacy scores, separate one-way (single factor) ANOVAs were conducted by each demographic variable. The respondent demographic variables used were: age, ethnicity, marital status, years teaching, permit type, employment type, and preschool program (see table 9).

Table 9

ANOVA for Print Literacy by Demographic Variables

Demographic	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	Print Literacy <i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Age					
Between Groups	4	.416	.104	.436	.782
Within Groups	74	17.687	.239		
Total	78	18.107			
Ethnicity					
Between Groups	5	2.137	.427	1.958	.095
Within Groups	73	15.932	.218		
Total	78	18.069			
Marital Status					
Between Groups	3	1.994	.665	3.148	.030*
Within Groups	75	15.831	.211		
Total	78	17.824			
Years Teaching					
Between Groups	6	1.287	.214	.931	.478
Within Groups	73	16.818	.230		
Total	79	18.105			
ECE Permit Type					
Between Groups	2	.042	.021	.083	.920
Within Groups	61	15.338	.251		
Total	63	15.380			
Employment Status					
Between Groups	3	.389	.130	.540	.656
Within Groups	71	17.046	.240		
Total	74	17.435			
Preschool Program					
Between Groups	1	.061	.061	.265	.608
Within Groups	78	18.043	.231		
Total	79	18.105			

Note. * $p < .05$

The test for homogeneity of variance (Levene's statistic) was not significant for any of the print literacy ANOVAs ($p > .05$). This indicates that there was no violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variance and validates the use of ANOVA to identify significant differences among average print literacy scores. The analysis identified the effect of marital status as significant on print literacy scores, $F(3,75) = 3.15$, $p = .03$.

To determine which of the marital status groups were significantly different from each other on print literacy, post hoc analysis using the Tukey HSD criterion for significance was conducted (see Figure 4).

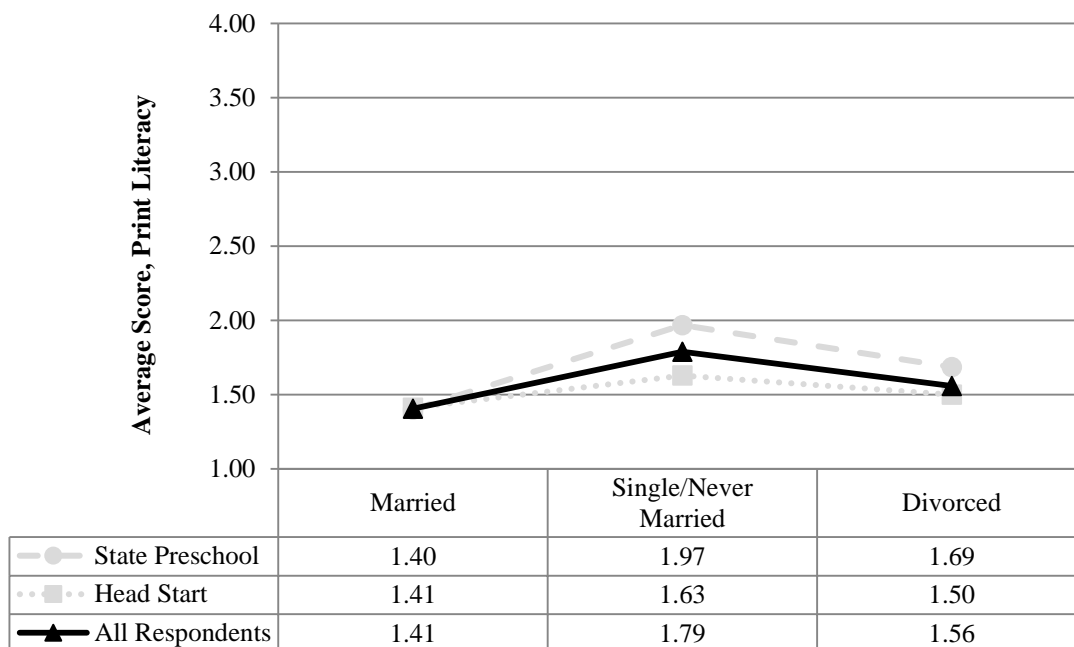


Figure 4. Average Print Literacy Score by Marital Status. Devitt 2016

The analysis indicated that across all respondents, the average print literacy score was significantly lower for those who were married ($M=1.41$, $SD=.36$) than for those who were single/never married ($M=1.79$, $SD=.64$). As a follow-up, a two-way (2x4) ANOVA was conducted to determine whether there was an impact of program type for any marital status; this did not, however, reveal a significant interaction of the two demographic variables (see Figure 4).

To further investigate scores for the area, two-way ANOVAs were conducted on Print Literacy for preschool program and all other demographic variables; however, none of these revealed significant interaction effects, either. That is, within each ethnic, marital status, years teaching, ECE permit type, and employment type subgroup, it made no difference to print literacy scores whether respondents were affiliated with State Preschool or Head Start.

School Readiness

Participant responses for the School Readiness questionnaire indicate only a slight discrepancy between State Preschool and Head Start programs. When analyzing question one “Children can recognize their name at the beginning of the school year” a combined total of 65.9% of State Preschool teachers either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. The percentage of Head Start teachers who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement was slightly lower at 57.9%. This finding indicates that Head Start teachers felt stronger that children could recognize their name at the beginning of preschool. When participants were asked if they believed that children could write their name at the beginning of the year, 92.5% of State preschool either disagreed or strongly disagree compared to 78.9% of Head Start teachers who either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Question number three in the school readiness section was the only question that was negatively coded. Participants were asked their beliefs regarding the statement “Children DO NOT know how to hold a pencil at the beginning of the school year”. A total of 67.5% of State Preschool teachers answered that they agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. A total of 52.6% of Head Start teachers responded that they agreed or strongly agreed. This indicated that a higher percentage of Head Start teachers believe that their students begin the school year already able to hold a pencil. When asked if students could name labeled objects within the classroom, 62.5% of State Preschool teachers either disagreed or strongly disagreed and 55% of Head Start teachers answered similarly. Question 5 asked if teachers believed children could point to a picture at the beginning of the school year. This question received the most positive response within each group. A total of 90% of State Preschool teachers either agreed or strongly agreed

with this statement. Head Start teachers answered this question even more favorably with 97.5% of respondents choosing agree or strongly agree. Question six was answered favorably within each group. When asked if children have a favorite storybook, 65% of State Preschool teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. The percentage of Head Start teachers who agreed or strongly agreed that children had a favorite storybook at the beginning of the school year was lower at 51.3%. The final question of the print literacy section asked teachers whether or not they believe that children can make story predictions at the beginning of the school year. A total of 66.6% of State Preschool teachers responded disagree or strongly disagree and 65.4% of Head Start teachers indicated that the either disagree or strongly disagree (see Table 10).

Table 10

School Readiness Response Frequency

		Which program are you teaching?					
		State Preschool		Head Start		Total	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Children can recognize their name at the beginning of the school year	Strongly Agree	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	Agree	14	34.1%	16	42.1%	30	38.0%
	Disagree	15	36.6%	17	44.7%	32	40.5%
	Strongly Disagree	12	29.3%	5	13.2%	17	21.5%
	Don't Know	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Children can write their name at the beginning of the school year	Strongly Agree	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	Agree	3	7.5%	9	23.1%	12	15.2%
	Disagree	21	52.5%	17	43.6%	38	48.1%
	Strongly Disagree	16	40.0%	13	33.3%	29	36.7%
	Don't Know	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Children DO NOT know how to hold a pencil at the beginning of the school year	Strongly Agree	5	12.5%	3	7.9%	8	10.3%
	Agree	22	55.0%	17	44.7%	39	50.0%
	Disagree	9	22.5%	14	36.8%	23	29.5%
	Strongly Disagree	4	10.0%	4	10.5%	8	10.3%
	Don't Know	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Children can readily name labeled objects in the classroom at the beginning of the school year	Strongly Agree	2	5.0%	2	5.0%	4	5.0%
	Agree	13	32.5%	16	40.0%	29	36.3%
	Disagree	14	35.0%	14	35.0%	28	35.0%
	Strongly Disagree	11	27.5%	8	20.0%	19	23.8%
	Don't Know	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Children can point to a picture at the beginning of the school year	Strongly Agree	10	25.0%	8	20.0%	18	22.5%
	Agree	26	65.0%	31	77.5%	57	71.3%
	Disagree	3	7.5%	1	2.5%	4	5.0%
	Strongly Disagree	1	2.5%	0	0.0%	1	1.3%
	Don't Know	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Children have a favorite storybook at the beginning of the school year	Strongly Agree	7	17.5%	3	7.7%	10	12.7%
	Agree	19	47.5%	17	43.6%	36	45.6%
	Disagree	10	25.0%	17	43.6%	27	34.2%
	Strongly Disagree	4	10.0%	1	2.6%	5	6.3%
	Don't Know	0	0.0%	1	2.6%	1	1.3%
Children can make accurate predictions when engaging in story sharing at the beginning of the school year	Strongly Agree	1	2.6%	0	0.0%	1	1.3%
	Agree	12	30.8%	14	35.9%	26	33.3%
	Disagree	19	48.7%	19	48.7%	38	48.7%
	Strongly Disagree	7	17.9%	6	15.4%	13	16.7%
	Don't Know	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

Mean scores for the seven items in the School Readiness area ranged between 1.68 and 3.13 for State Preschool teachers, and between 1.90 and 3.18 for Head Start teachers. Five of the seven items yielded a mean score of less than 2.50 among both groups of teachers, indicating that teachers in both programs generally did not believe that students began the school year with a high level of school readiness. The two items that scored above 2.5 were, “students can point to a picture in the classroom at the beginning of the school year” and “students have a favorite storybook at the beginning of the school year.” The mean score for “students can point to a picture in the classroom at the beginning of the school year” was 3.13 for State Preschool teachers, and 3.18 for Head Start teachers, indicating that teachers in both programs generally agreed that students have this skill when entering school. The mean score for “students have a favorite storybook at the beginning of the school year” was 2.73 for State Preschool teachers, and 2.58 for Head Start teachers. As this item’s means for the two groups approximate the midpoint between 2 (Disagree) and 3 (Agree), it indicates mixed opinions among the staff of both programs, where slightly more respondents agreed than disagreed with the statement. A mean for responses to School Readiness items was also calculated for each respondent, which averaged 2.31 for State Preschool teachers and 2.42 for Head Start teachers (see Table 11).

Table 11

Mean Survey Responses, School Readiness Items

Item	State Preschool			Head Start		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
School Readiness (aggregate, minus “Do not know how to hold a pencil”)	41	2.31	.56	40	2.42	0.45
Can recognize their name	41	2.05	0.80	38	2.29	0.69
Can write their name	40	1.68	0.62	39	1.90	0.75
Do not know how to hold a pencil (reverse coded)	40	2.30	0.82	38	2.50	0.80
Can name a labeled object in the classroom	40	2.15	0.89	40	2.30	0.85
Can point to a picture	40	3.13	0.65	40	3.18	0.45
Have a favorite storybook	40	2.73	0.88	38	2.58	0.68
Can make accurate predictions when story sharing	39	2.18	0.76	39	2.21	0.70

Standard t-tests were used to describe differences in responses to items based on teachers’ pre-school program. Responses to items were consistent across the two groups, with no significant differences found for any items or the mean overall School Readiness score.

To determine whether grouping respondents by any of the demographic variables resulted in significantly different School Readiness scores, separate one-way (single factor) ANOVAs were conducted by each demographic variable. The respondent demographic variables used were: age, ethnicity, marital status, years teaching, permit type, employment type, and preschool program (see Table 12).

Table 12

<i>ANOVA for School Readiness by Demographic Variables</i>					
Demographic	<i>df</i>	School Readiness			<i>Sig.</i>
		<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	
Age					
Between Groups	4	2.795	..699	3.237	.017*
Within Groups	74	15.975	.216		
Total	78	18.769			
Ethnicity					
Between Groups	5	2.564	.513	2.103	.074
Within Groups	74	18.038	.244		
Total	79	20.602			
Marital Status					
Between Groups	3	1.108	..369	1.578	.202
Within Groups	75	17.561	.234		
Total	78	18.669			
Years Teaching					
Between Groups	6	1.161	.194	.733	.625
Within Groups	74	19.535	.264		
Total	80	20.696			
ECE Permit Type					
Between Groups	2	.372	..186	.648	.527
Within Groups	62	17.798	.287		
Total	64	18.170			
Employment Status					
Between Groups	3	.626	.209	.761	.520
Within Groups	72	19.769	.275		
Total	75	20.396			
Preschool Program					
Between Groups	1	.226	.226	.873	.353
Within Groups	79	20.470	.259		
Total	80	20.696			

Note. * $p < .05$

For school readiness, one-way ANOVA revealed that the effect of age was significant on respondents' average scores for the area, $F(4,74) = 3.24$, $p = .02$ (see Figure 5). The test for homogeneity of variance (Levene's statistic) was not significant for any of the ANOVAs conducted on school readiness by demographic characteristic ($p > .05$), indicating that there was no violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variance for the analyses conducted and validating the use of ANOVA to identify significant differences in average school readiness scores.

To determine which of the age groups were significantly different from each other on school readiness, post hoc analyses using the Tukey HSD criterion for significance

was conducted. The analysis indicated that the average school readiness score was significantly lower for 41-50 year-old respondents ($M = 2.19$, $SD = .50$) than for 21-30 year olds ($M = 2.79$, $SD = .44$) (see Figure 5).

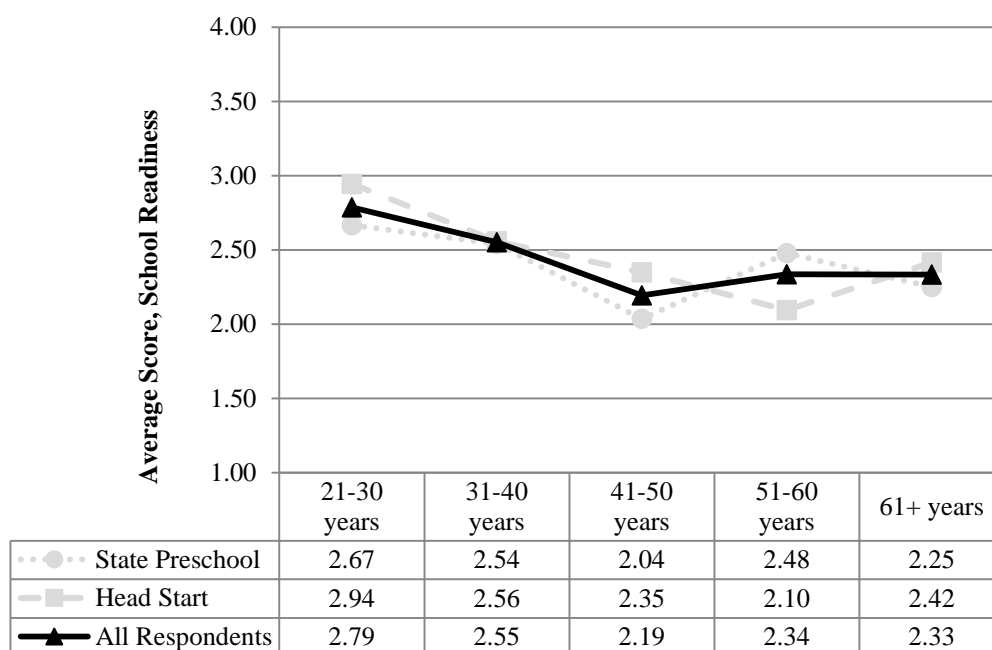


Figure 5. Average School Readiness Score by Respondent Age. Devitt 2016

As a follow-up test, a two-way (2x5) ANOVA was conducted to determine whether there was an impact of program type for any age group; this test, however, did not reveal a significant interaction of the two variables (see Figure 5).

Two-way ANOVAs were additionally conducted for school readiness, with preschool program as one factor and each of the other demographic variables as a second factor; however, none of these revealed significant interaction effects. That is, within each ethnic, marital status, years teaching, ECE permit type, and employment type subgroup, school readiness scores were not significantly different for State Preschool teachers compared to Head Start teachers.

Parent Involvement

The section of the questionnaire labeled “Parent Involvement” asked teachers to share their beliefs regarding the amount of involvement parents or caregivers have had in developing literacy skills in their child. Question one asked teachers to share their beliefs regarding parent interest in children’s reading and writing development. When answering question one, 57.5% of State Preschool teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their parents were very interested. Head Start teachers shared exactly the same beliefs with 57.5% of teachers answering agree or strongly agree to the question. Question two asked teachers to share their belief regarding parents’ likelihood to read schoolwork that was sent home. A total of 43.6% of State Preschool teachers agree or strongly agree with this statement compared to 46.1% of Head Start teachers. When responding to question three “Parents talk about books with their children”, 52.6% of State Preschool teachers either disagree or strongly disagree. This sentiment is shared by Head Start teachers, 53.8% of responding Head Start teachers either disagree or strongly disagree. Teachers in both programs answered more favorably to question four. A total of 60.6% of State Preschool teachers and 55.3% of Head Start teachers either agree or strongly agree that parents have read stories to their children. Teachers did not respond as positively to the statement “Parents have engaged in writing the alphabet at home with their children prior to entering school”. A total of 65.8% of State Preschool teachers either disagree or strongly disagree and 57.9% of Head Start teachers feel the same. The final question under the section of Parent Involvement asks teachers to indicate whether or not they believe that parents have engaged in any type of reading instruction with their child prior to the beginning of preschool. When answering this question, 65.8% of State Preschool

teachers either disagree or strongly disagree and 60.6% of Head Start teachers share the same beliefs (see Table 13).

Table 13

Parent Involvement Response

		Which program are you teaching?					
		State Preschool		Head Start		Total	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Parents are very interested in their children's reading and writing development	Strongly Agree	4	10.0%	3	7.5%	7	8.8%
	Agree	19	47.5%	20	50.0%	39	48.8%
	Disagree	10	25.0%	12	30.0%	22	27.5%
	Strongly Disagree	6	15.0%	4	10.0%	10	12.5%
	Don't Know	1	2.5%	1	2.5%	2	2.5%
Parents have read schoolwork sent home to their children	Strongly Agree	1	2.6%	2	5.1%	3	3.8%
	Agree	16	41.0%	16	41.0%	32	41.0%
	Disagree	11	28.2%	16	41.0%	27	34.6%
	Strongly Disagree	7	17.9%	3	7.7%	10	12.8%
	Don't Know	4	10.3%	2	5.1%	6	7.7%
Parents talk about books with their children	Strongly Agree	2	5.3%	1	2.6%	3	3.9%
	Agree	14	36.8%	13	33.3%	27	35.1%
	Disagree	14	36.8%	19	48.7%	33	42.9%
	Strongly Disagree	6	15.8%	2	5.1%	8	10.4%
	Don't Know	2	5.3%	4	10.3%	6	7.8%
Parents have read stories to their children at home	Strongly Agree	5	13.2%	3	7.9%	8	10.5%
	Agree	18	47.4%	18	47.4%	36	47.4%
	Disagree	9	23.7%	10	26.3%	19	25.0%
	Strongly Disagree	3	7.9%	1	2.6%	4	5.3%
	Don't Know	3	7.9%	6	15.8%	9	11.8%
Parents have engaged in writing the alphabet at home with their children prior to entering school	Strongly Agree	1	2.6%	1	2.6%	2	2.6%
	Agree	9	23.7%	10	26.3%	19	25.0%
	Disagree	17	44.7%	17	44.7%	34	44.7%
	Strongly Disagree	8	21.1%	5	13.2%	13	17.1%
	Don't Know	3	7.9%	5	13.2%	8	10.5%
Parents have engaged in reading instructions/direction with their children	Strongly Agree	2	5.3%	1	2.6%	3	3.9%
	Agree	8	21.1%	8	21.1%	16	21.1%
	Disagree	16	42.1%	18	47.4%	34	44.7%
	Strongly Disagree	9	23.7%	5	13.2%	14	18.4%
	Don't Know	3	7.9%	6	15.8%	9	11.8%

Mean scores for the six items in the Parent Involvement area ranged between 2.09 and 2.71 for State Preschool teachers, and between 2.16 and 2.72 for Head Start teachers,

indicating mixed opinions among staff of both programs, with an overall Parent Involvement mean of 2.32 for State Preschool teachers and 2.43 for Head Start teachers (see Table 14).

Table 14

Mean Survey Responses, Parent Involvement Items

Item	State Preschool			Head Start		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Parent Involvement (aggregate)	41	2.32	.68	40	2.43	0.56
Parents are interested in children's reading and writing development	39	2.54	0.88	39	2.56	0.79
Parents have read schoolwork sent home	35	2.31	0.83	37	2.46	0.73
Parents talk about books with their children	36	2.33	0.83	35	2.37	0.65
Parents have read stories to their children at home	35	2.71	0.83	32	2.72	0.68
Parents have engaged in writing the alphabet at home with their children	35	2.09	0.78	33	2.21	0.74
Parents have engaged in reading instruction/direction with their children	35	2.09	0.85	32	2.16	0.72

Note. $*p < .05$

Standard t-tests were used to describe differences in responses to items based on teachers' preschool program. Responses to items were consistent across the two groups, with no significant differences found for any items or for the mean overall Parent Involvement score.

In order to determine whether grouping respondents by any of the demographic variables resulted in significantly different Parent Involvement scores, separate one-way (single factor) ANOVAs were conducted by each demographic variable. The respondent demographic variables used were: age, ethnicity, marital status, years teaching, permit type, employment type, and preschool program (see Table 15).

Table 15

ANOVA for Parent Involvement by Demographic Variables

Demographic	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	Parent Involvement		
			<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Age					
Between Groups	4	1.557	.389	1.052	.386
Within Groups	74	27.382	.370		
Total	78	28.939			
Ethnicity					
Between Groups	5	4.425	.885	2.475	.040*
Within Groups	74	26.455	.357		
Total	79	30.880			
Marital Status					
Between Groups	3	1.904	.635	1.793	.156
Within Groups	75	26.546	.354		
Total	78	28.450			
Years Teaching					
Between Groups	6	.724	.121	.296	.937
Within Groups	74	30.171	.408		
Total	80	30.896			
ECE Permit Type					
Between Groups	2	.329	.165	.361	.698
Within Groups	62	28.266	.456		
Total	64	28.595			
Employment Status					
Between Groups	3	.738	.246	.593	.622
Within Groups	72	29.870	.415		
Total	75	30.608			
Preschool Program					
Between Groups	1	.208	.208	.536	.466
Within Groups	79	30.687	.388		
Total	80	30.896			

Note. $p < .05$ *

For parent involvement, a one-way ANOVA revealed that the effect of ethnicity was significant on respondents' average scores for the area, $F(5,74) = 2.48$, $p = .04$, (see Table 7). The test for homogeneity of variance (Levene's statistic) was not significant for any of the ANOVAs conducted on parent involvement by demographic characteristic ($p > .05$), indicating that there was no violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variance for the analyses conducted and validating the use of ANOVA to identify significant differences in average parent involvement scores.

To determine which of the ethnic groups were significantly different from each other on parent involvement, post hoc analyses using the Tukey HSD criterion for significance was conducted. The analysis indicated that when individual groups are compared to each other, there is no significant difference. This was likely due to the different number of respondents in each ethnic group, which ranged from 2 to 31. Further, the two smallest groups - Native Americans ($n=2$) and Other/Multiple ($n=5$) comprised the lowest and highest scoring groups, respectively, with a 1.37 point difference between their average scores. In comparison, there were at least 12 respondents from the other four ethnic groups, and these groups had scores within a far smaller range of 0.48 points.

To identify differences among respondent subgroups by the preschool program, a two-factor ANOVA was conducted to determine whether the average score for parent involvement significantly differed by any of the demographic variables when additionally split by the preschool program variable. Respondents' preschool program was crossed with respondents' reported age, ethnicity, marital status, ECE permit type, and employment status. This analysis confirmed the aforementioned main effect of ethnicity on parent involvement, and additionally revealed the interaction of preschool program and ECE permit type on parent involvement scores $F(2,59)=4.91, p=.01$ (see Figure 6).

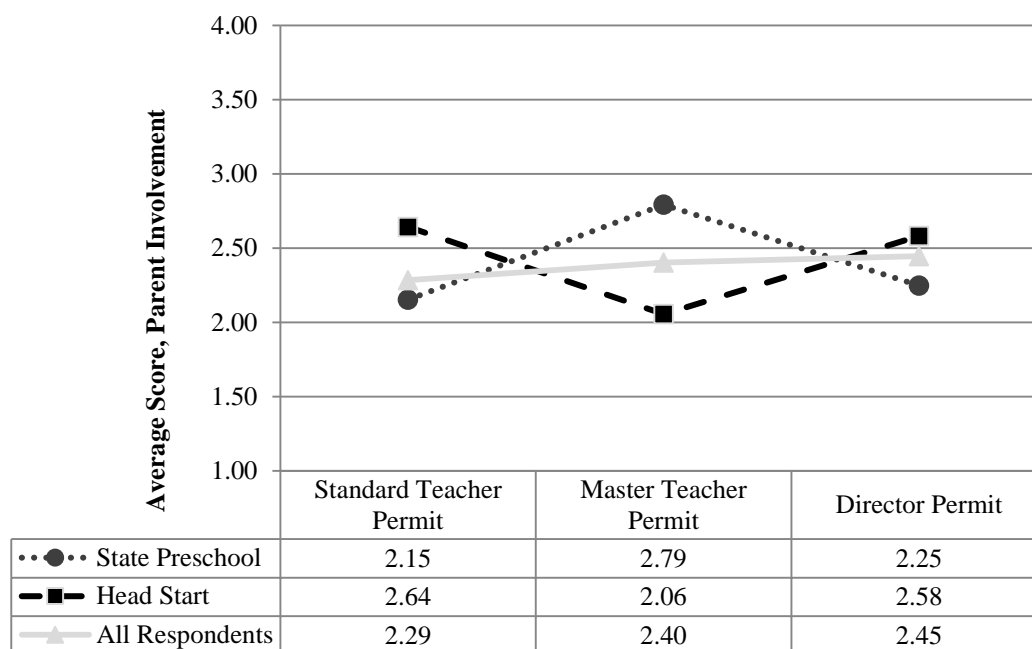


Figure 6. Average Parent Involvement Score by Respondent ECE Permit. Devitt 2016

Standard t-tests comparing parent involvement by the program for each permit type showed that for those with the master teacher permit, respondents in state preschool ($M=2.79$, $SD=.26$) scored parent involvement significantly higher than those in Head Start ($M=2.06$, $SD=.57$). This significant difference is of particular interest because the mean parent involvement score for Head Start teachers approximates 2 – *Disagree*, while the mean parent involvement score for state preschool teachers more closely approximates 3 – *Agree*.

The significant difference in parent involvement scores revealed by this 2x3 ANOVA provides some support for one of the hypotheses: that those employed in programs with a higher income threshold believe that parent involvement in children's print literacy development is higher when compared to the beliefs of teachers who are employed in lower income threshold preschool programs. As a significant difference based on preschool program was only found among respondents with a master teacher

permit, additional research is required to shed light on what characteristics of master teachers in particular may be influencing this group to view parent involvement differently based on preschool program. Due to the lack of significant differences for mean responses to individual items or overall areas, this survey data does not confirm the hypothesis that preschool teachers employed in programs with a higher income threshold believe that their students have greater print knowledge at the start of the preschool year when compared to the beliefs of teachers who are employed in lower income threshold preschool programs.

Qualitative Results

The 10 preschool teachers who agreed to participate in in-depth interviews were given a unique individual code that will be used to identify their responses during the qualitative portion of this research. The participants who were Head Start teachers were identified by HS followed by a number one through five (see Table 16). The State Preschool teachers were identified by PS followed by a number one through five (see Table 17). Each code represents one preschool teacher and was kept consistent throughout the research project.

Table 16

Head Start Participants (HS)

HS1	Head Start Participant 1	School A
HS2	Head Start Participant 2	School B
HS3	Head Start Participant 3	School C
HS4	Head Start Participant 4	School D
HS5	Head Start Participant 5	School A
		(repeat)

Table 17

State Preschool Participants (SP)

SP1	State Preschool Participant 1	School E
SP2	State Preschool Participant 2	School F
SP3	State Preschool Participant 3	School G
SP4	State Preschool Participant 4	School H
SP5	State Preschool Participant 5	School I

Results of Interview Participants by Software Generated Nodes

Using NVivo 11 software, the ten participant interviews were computer coded by identifying themes to be referred to as Nodes. Each participant interview was computer analyzed to look for emerging Nodes amongst the transcribed text. A computer generated graph allowed for a visual representation of the Nodes present within each interview. Although the interview questions remained consistent, participants responded differently based on beliefs and experiences.

Participant HS1

At the time of the interview, Head Start participant one taught at school A; a south-east school located in the California Central Valley. Although the preschool classroom was enrolled with three and four year olds, the children who attend school A ranged in age from three years (preschool) to fourteen years old (eighth grade). EdData reported that approximately 350 students attend this school and 83% qualified to receive free or reduced lunch. English Language Learners (ELL) accounted for 42% of the total enrollment. Approximately 40% of students enrolled spoke Spanish in the home. Additional languages reported were Lao, Hmong, Ilocano, and Arabic. School A was reported to have a diversity index score of 31 (EdData, 2014-15).

Upon analyzing the interview of participant HS1, the query data showed that a total of 2701 words were coded. A total of 64 Nodes were identified see Figure 7 for additional details. The data query indicated that 60% of the total transcribed interview was coded. The Nodes covering the largest percentage of the document were preschool at 19%, private preschool at 14%, families at 9%, school readiness at 8%, literacy at 7%, and single parent families at 7%. This data informed the researcher that 64% of the coded interview focused on these themes. Based on the NVivo11 word analyzing software, the most commonly used words during the interview process by HS1 were think, child, just, know, and parents (see Figure 7).

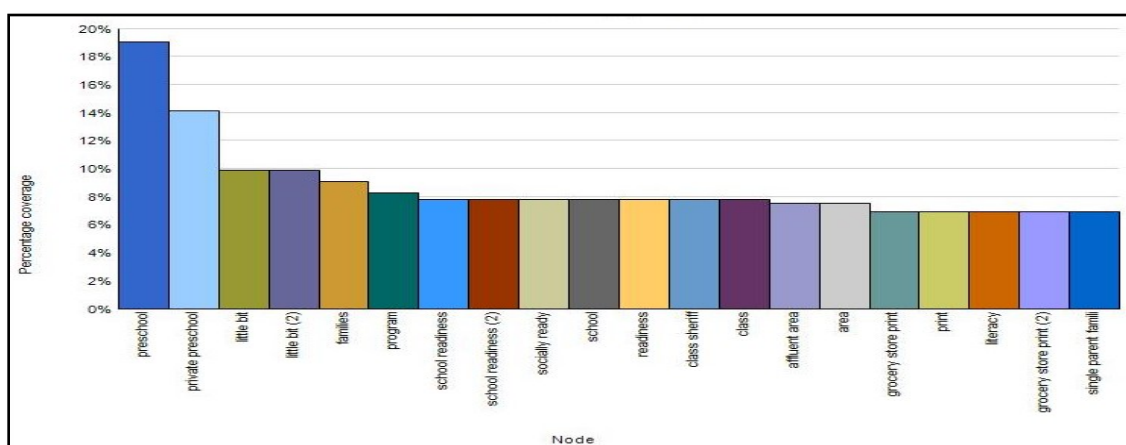


Figure 7. Head Start Participant 1 Interview Data by Node. Devitt 2016

Participant HS2

At the time of the interview, Head Start participant two taught at school B. School B was located in the south-west area of an urban city within the California Central Valley. School B was comprised of preschool through eighth-grade classrooms with an enrollment average of 475 students. Approximately 80% of students qualified to receive free or reduced-cost meals. Approximately 35% of students were English Language Learners (ELL). Spanish speakers made up the largest percentage of ELL students at

31%. The following languages were also indicated in data reported for school B: Arabic, Cebuano, Hmong, Cantonese, Filipino, Lao, and Tongan. School B was reported to have a diversity index score of 37 (EdData, 2014-15).

Upon analyzing the interview of participant HS2, the query data showed that a total of 3689 words were coded. Figure 8 showed a total of 80 Nodes were identified. The data query indicated that 50% of the total transcribed interview was coded. The Nodes of interest in this research covered the following percentage of the document: program at 13%, teacher at 10%, Head Start Program at 9.5%, school at 8%, and school readiness at 7%. This data informed the researcher that 47.5% of the coded interview focused on these themes. Based on the NVivo11 word analyzing software, the most commonly used words during the interview process by HS2 were think, child, just, know, like, and parents (see Figure 8).

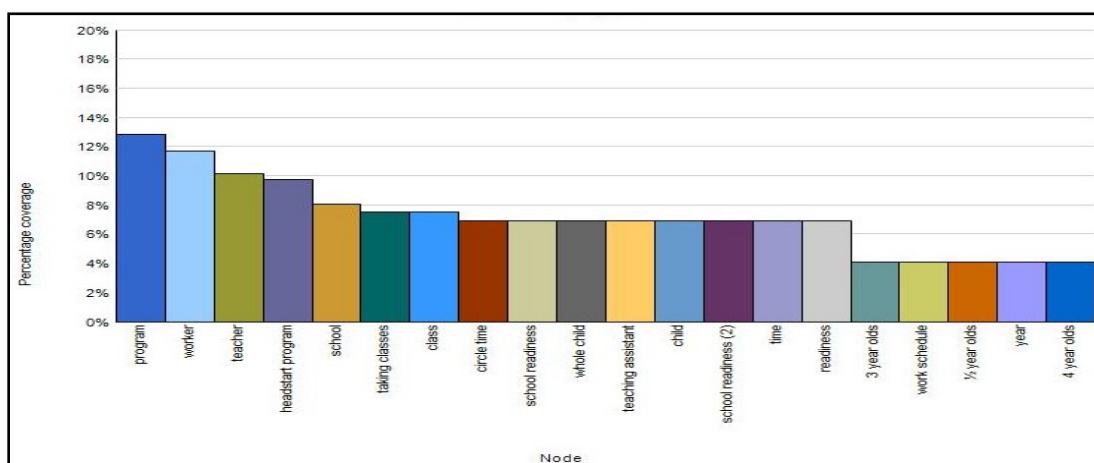


Figure 8. Head Start Participant 2 Interview Data by Node. Devitt 2016

Participant HS3

At the time of the interview, Head Start participant three taught at school C. School C was another south-east school. It was reported that there were approximately

750 students in grades preschool through eighth enrolled. EdData reported that 82% of students at school C qualified to receive free or reduced-price lunch (2014-15).

Approximately 50% of students were English Language Learners representing five different languages: Hmong, Spanish, Lao, Khmer, and Punjabi. School C was reported to have a diversity index score of 23 (EdData, 2014-15).

Analyzing the query data of participant HS3, showed that a total of 1658 words were coded. A total of 39 Nodes were identified. The data query indicated that 61% of the total transcribed interview was coded. The Nodes of interest in this research, reflected in Figure 9, covered the following percentage of the document: children at 10%, families at 6%, and learning things at 10%. This data highlighted for the researcher that 26% of the coded interview focused on these themes. Based on the NVivo11 word analyzing software, the most commonly used words during the interview process by HS3 were think, child, just, know, like, and parents (see Figure 9).

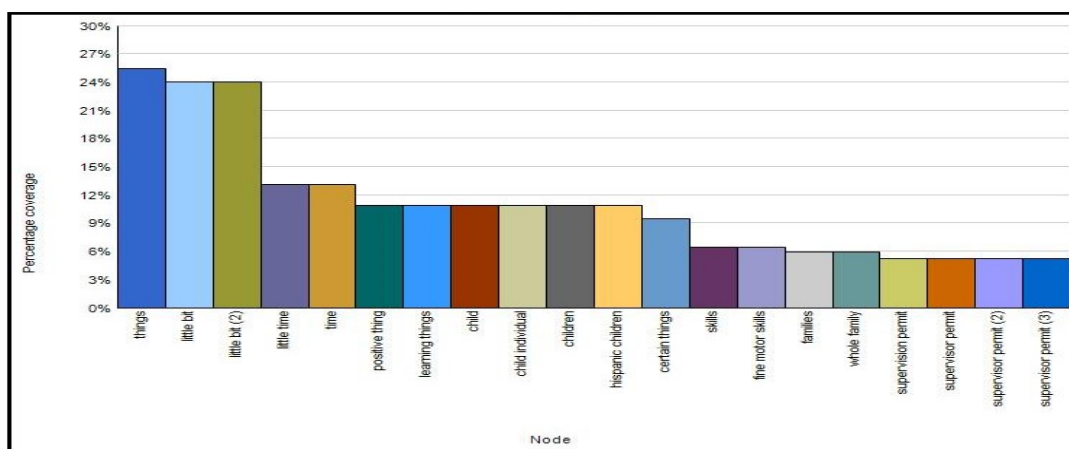


Figure 9. Head Start Participant 3 Interview Data by Node. Devitt 2016

Participant HS4

At the time of the interview, Head Start participant four taught at a midtown school located adjacent to a kindergarten through eighth-grade elementary school.

Although the preschool was not located directly on the elementary school campus, both schools were run by the same school district and draw from the same population of students. For the purpose of demographics, elementary school demographics will be reported. School D had approximately 520 students enrolled (EdData 2014-15). Of enrolled students, approximately 87% of students qualified to receive free or reduced priced lunch. A total of 56% of students were categorized as English Language Learners. It was reported that 54% of ELL students spoke Spanish. In addition to Spanish, students at school D also reported speaking Cantonese, Filipino, Korean, Cebuano, Hmong, Ilocano, and Lao. School D was reported to have a diversity index score of 13 (EdData, 2014-15).

Analyzing the query data of participant HS4, showed that a total of 2401 words were coded. A total of 56 Nodes were identified. The data query indicated that 59% of the total transcribed interview was coded. The Nodes of interest in this research covered the following percentage of the document: parent at 13.5%, school at 12%, children at 10%, single moms at 9.5%, and preschool program at 5.5%. This data informed the researcher that 55.5% of the coded interview focused on these themes. See Figure 10 for additional details regarding identified Nodes. Based on the NVivo11 word analyzing software, the most commonly used words during the interview process by HS4 were think, child, just, know, like, and parents (see Figure 10).

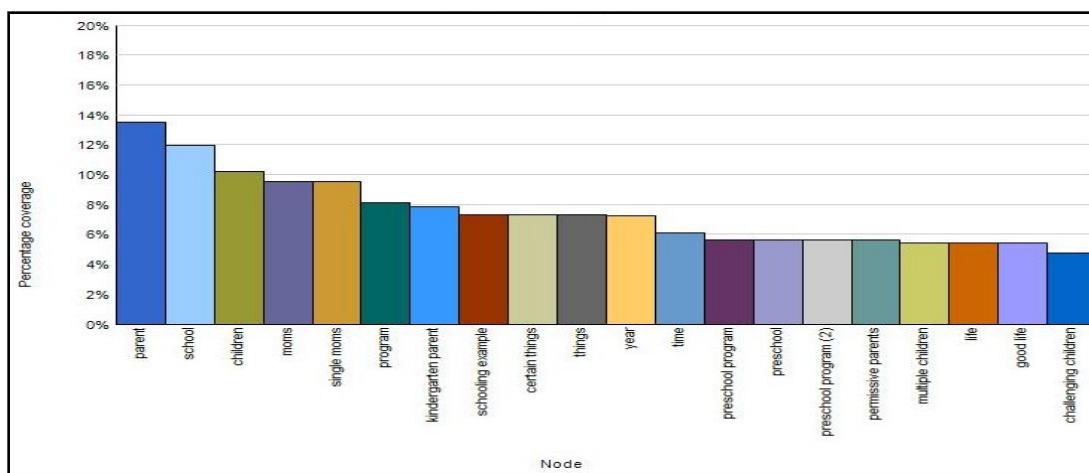


Figure 10. Head Start Participant 4 Interview Data by Node. Devitt 2016

Participant HS5

At the time of the interview, Head Start participant five also taught at school A. Demographics of school A were described along with Head Start participant one and therefore will not be repeated.

Analyzing the query data of participant HS5, showed that a total of 1418 words were coded. A total of 27 Nodes were identified. The data query indicated that 35% of the total transcribed interview was coded. The Nodes of interest in this research covered the following percentage of the document: parent at 14.5%, families at 14.5%, school at 12.5%, school readiness at 10%, family dynamic at 8.5%, parent engagement at 8.5%, single parent at 6%, and preschool at 5%. This data informed the researcher that 79.5% of the coded interview focused on these themes. Figure 11 showed a graphical representation of identified Nodes. Based on the NVivo11 word analyzing software, the most commonly used words during the interview process by HS5 were think, child, just, know, like, children, and parents (see Figure 11).

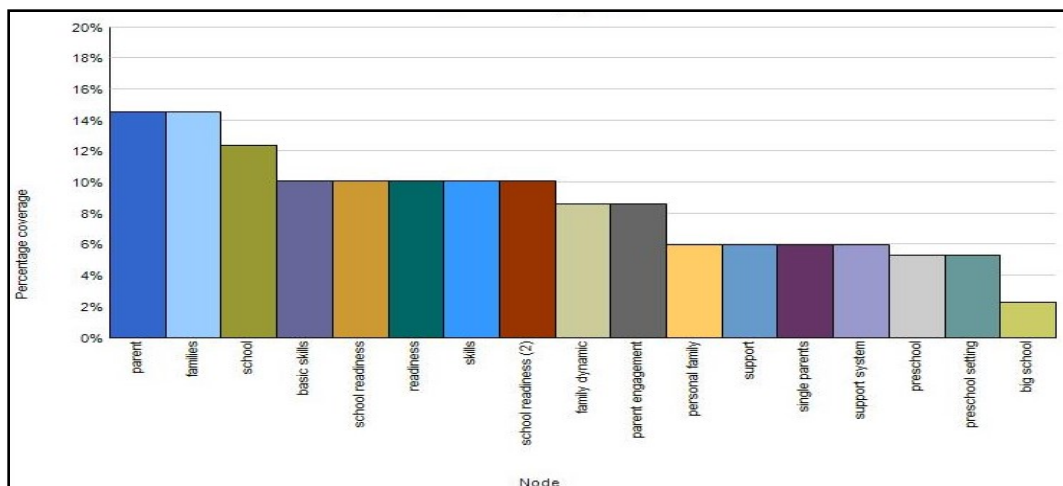


Figure 11: Head Start Participant 5 Interview Data by Node. Devitt 2016

Participant SP1

At the time of the interview, state preschool participant one worked at school E. School E was located in the North East section of an urban city located in the California Central Valley. School E was a large preschool through eighth-grade campus with approximately 860 students. A total of 80% of students qualified for free or reduced-price lunch. Approximately 20% of students were English Language Learners (ELL). Students in school E spoke; Arabic, Filipino, Khmer, Urdu, Cantonese, Hindi, Hmong, and Spanish. Spanish was reported as the predominant language spoken by ELL students at school E. School E was reported to have a diversity index score of 46 (EdData, 2014-15).

Analyzing the query data of participant SP1 identified a total of 4007 words were coded. A total of 23 Nodes were identified and shown in Figure 12. The data query indicated that 29% of the total transcribed interview was coded. The Nodes of interest in this research covered the following percentage of the transcribed document:

environmental print at 8.25%, parent at 8.25, print at 8.25%, families at 6%, skills at

5.75%, and preschool at 1.75%. This data told the researcher that 38% of the coded interview focused on these themes. Based on the NVivo11 word analyzing software, the most commonly used words during the interview process by SP1 were think, child, just, know, one, get, and parents (see Figure 12).

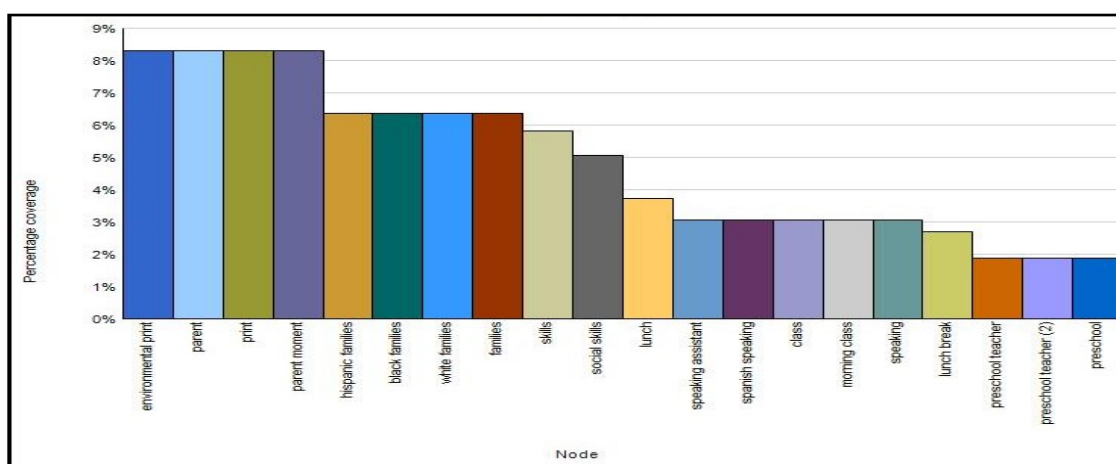


Figure 12: State Preschool Participant 1 Interview Data by Node. Devitt 2016

Participant SP2

At the time of the interview, state preschool participant two worked at a midtown school that will be referred to as school F. School F had a student population of roughly 735 in grades preschool through eighth. Students who qualified for free and reduced lunch accounted for 81% of total student enrollment. Approximately 20% of students were classified as English Language Learners. ELL students at school F reported speaking Spanish, Cantonese, Hmong, Lao, Punjabi, Filipino, Khmer, and Pashto. School F was reported to have a diversity index score of 46 (EdData, 2014-15).

Analyzing the query data of participant SP2 identified a total of 2028 words were coded. A total of 33 Nodes were identified. The data query indicated that 51% of the total transcribed interview was coded. The Nodes of interest, represented in Figure 13, in

this research covered the following percentage of the transcribed document: child at 11.75%, teacher at 9%, parent at 8.75%, skills at 8.75%, children at 6%, and preschool at 5%. This data told the researcher that 49.25% of the coded interview focused on these themes. Based on the NVivo11 word analyzing software, the most commonly used words during the interview of SP2 were child, just, preschool, and parents (see Figure 13).

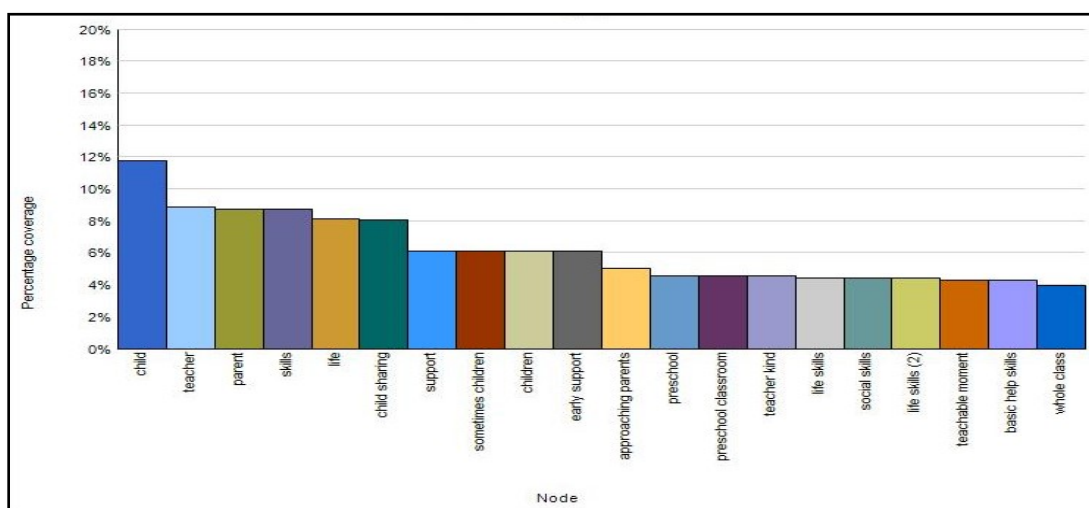


Figure 13: State Preschool Participant 2 Interview Data by Node. Devitt 2016

Participant SP3

At the time of the interview, state preschool participant three worked at school G. School G was located in the south side of an urban school district in the California Central Valley. School G is a preschool through eighth-grade campus with approximately 740 enrolled students. Approximately 84% of students enrolled at school G qualified for free or reduced-price lunch. A total of 43% of students were identified as English Language Learners. Of the ELL subgroup, 39% of students were identified as speaking Spanish as their home language. Students were also identified as speaking:

Cantonese, Filipino, Khmer, Cebuano, Hmong, Ilocano, and Lao. School G had a reported diversity index score of 23 (EdData, 2014-15).

Analyzing the query data of participant SP3 identified a total of 1577 words were coded. Figure 14 reflected a total of 17 identified Nodes. The data query indicated that 29% of the total transcribed interview was coded. The Nodes of interest in this research covered the following percentage of the coded portion of the transcribed document: teacher at 9%, literacy at 7%, print literacy at 7%, and moms at 5%. This data informed the researcher that 28% of the coded interview focused on these themes. Based on the NVivo11 word analyzing software, the most commonly used words during the interview process by SP3 were child, teacher, going, and lot (see Figure 14).

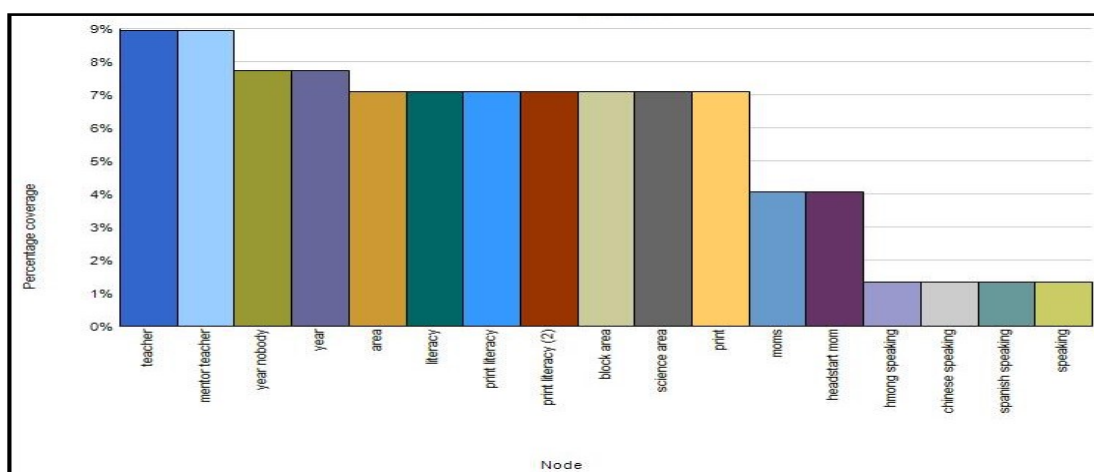


Figure 14: State Preschool Participant 3 Interview Data by Node. Devitt 2016

Participant SP4

At the time of the interview, state preschool participant four worked at school H. School H was located in midtown. School H had approximately 585 students enrolled in grades preschool to eighth. Ninety percent of students enrolled in school H qualified for free and reduced-price lunch. Approximately 22% of students were identified as English

Language Learners. Languages spoken at school H included Hindi, Lao, Punjabi, Spanish, Khmer, Pashto, Samoan, and Urdu. School H had a reported diversity index score of 43 (EdData, 2014-15).

Analyzing the query data of participant SP4 identified a total of 2750 words were coded. A total of 49 Nodes were identified. The data query indicated that 40% of the total transcribed interview was coded. The Nodes of interest in this research covered the following percentage of the coded portion of the transcribed document: families at 14.5%, child at 13%, teacher at 11%, preschool teacher at 9%, preschool at 9%, and literacy at 8.5%. This data told the researcher that 65% of the coded portions of the interview focused on these themes. See Figure 15 for additional details. Based on the NVivo11 word analyzing software, the most commonly used words during the interview process by SP4 were think, school, just, year, Suzanne, like, children, and parents (see Figure 15).

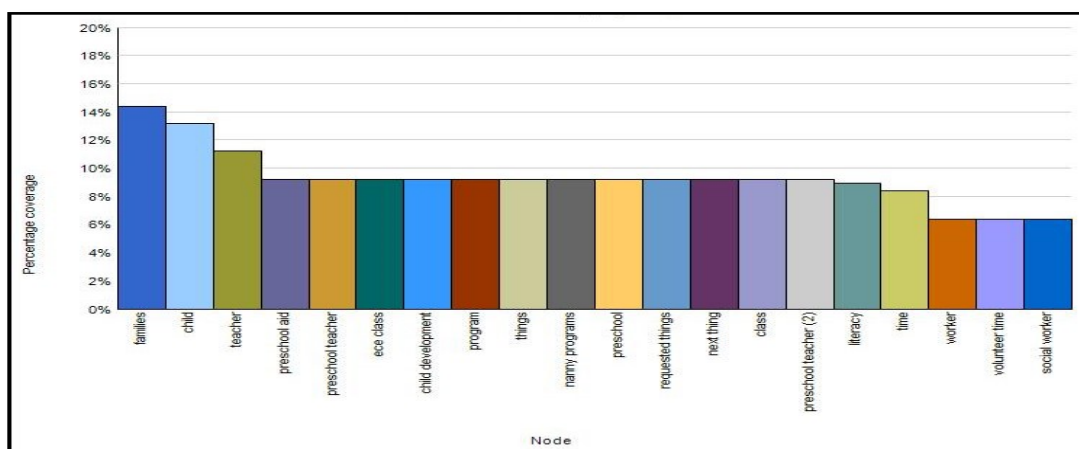


Figure 15: State Preschool Participant 4 Interview Data by Node. Devitt 2016

Participant SP5

At the time of the interview, state preschool participant five worked at an east side school that will be referred to as school I. School I had a reported enrollment of 935

students in grades preschool through eighth. Approximately 88% of students qualified for free or reduced-price lunches. Fifty-one percent of students were identified as English Language Learners. Fifty percent of students who attend school I reported speaking Spanish as their home language. In addition to Spanish, students were also reported to speak Arabic, Hindi, Ilocano, Lao, Filipino, Hmong, and Khmer. School I had a reported diversity index score of 16 (EdData, 2014-15).

Analyzing the query data of participant SP5 identified a total of 1302 words were coded. A total of 20 Nodes were identified. The data query indicated that 43% of the total transcribed interview was coded. The Nodes of interest in this research, represented in Figure 17, covered the following percentage of the coded portion of the transcribed document: families at 14.75%, print at 6%, environmental print at 6%, supporting families at 5%, single parents at 2%, and parents at 2%. This data told the researcher that 35.75% of the coded section of the interview focused on these themes. Based on the NVivo11 word analyzing software, the most commonly used words during the interview by SP5 were know, think, going, like, may, and parents (see Figure 16).

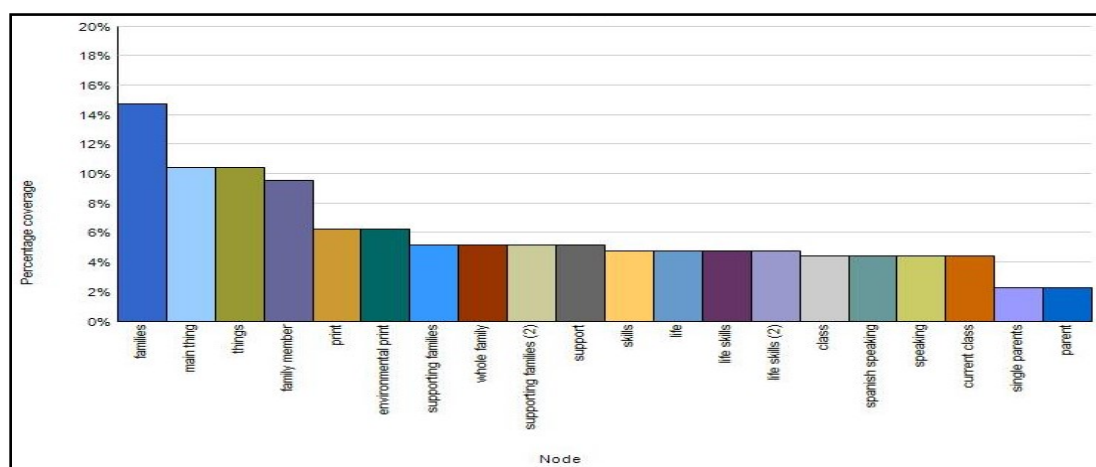


Figure 16: State Preschool Participant 5 Interview Data by Node. Devitt 2016

Results of Interview Participants by Pre-identified Nodes

The following qualitative results were gathered using a forced Node approach. Utilizing NVivo 11 software, the researcher pre-identified the desired nodes and looked to gather text that supported each selected Node. The researcher pre-identified the following Nodes: school readiness, print literacy, families, poverty, students, and preschool. Individual beliefs shared by teachers were included in the tables below.

Table 18 showed the responses of four Head Start Teachers regarding their beliefs about school readiness. Based on the previously recorded interviews conducted by the researcher and using NVivo11 software to analyze individual participant interviews. It was discovered that participant HS1 referenced school readiness one time during the interview. This reference to school readiness covered 7.93% of the total interview for HS1. Participant HS2 also made one reference to school readiness which covered 6.99% of the total recorded interview. Participant HS4 spoke of school readiness for 4.62% of her total interview. Participant HS5 had the largest percentage of interview time speaking of school readiness at 10.12% of total recorded interview time.

Table 18

Head Start Teacher Beliefs about Children's School Readiness

Teacher Code	Belief Shared
HS1	<p>"I think my first job in school readiness is getting them socially ready because if they're not socially ready, they can cut. They can color. They can write their names and they can write words, but if they're not socially ready they are going to have a tough time. So school readiness, for me is to make sure they are socially ready to start with and then we can add academics as they become socially ready. By socially ready, I mean they can share. They can get along. They can work out a problem amongst themselves. So at the beginning of the year I don't expect it, but by spring break, I expect that I can make one of the children a monitor in the class and our class sheriff so if you have a problem, go talk to the class sheriff and the three of them can work it out. They need to be able to work it out. When they get to Kindergarten, they have 30 something kids. They have to problem solve. The teacher doesn't have time to say "let's work this out." She's got certain things that she needs. And I've found that if they are ready socially, they're going to pick up academics much faster."</p>
HS2	<p>"My idea of school readiness is making sure that the whole child is ready for the experience of going into Kindergarten and that is everything from food, shelter, and clothing to their emotional state to how well they react around adults and their peers so it's completely well rounded. I make sure that their academics is on point – making sure that they can hold that pencil, that they can write their name, they know what to do with that pencil or the pen, they know how to erase mistakes, they know how to stand in line. They have to be able to self-regulate because there's not as much supervision once they get into Kindergarten. When they're on the playground they have to be able to problem solve and they have to use critical thinking. They have to figure out how to get that turn because all the kids are cutting in front of them. They have to figure out how to get the ball back. They have to figure out how to stay in line when that bully is pushing you out of line because there is normally not enough adults able to intervene. So I teach a lot of self-help skills as well. I normally do that as part of my Kindergarten transition the last three months of school."</p>
HS3	<p>"Well, you mean in our home or for parents. Well for parents, some of the kids I have now or even I've heard the other teachers that where there's kids that are not able to hold a pencil and this is something that you would have to start learning at home."</p>
HS4	<p>"School readiness is primarily getting them ready for a life long journey. So a lot of parents talk about Kindergarten, what I told my parents is that not only Kindergarten is important but the rest of their life. Yes, Kindergarten is an immediate goal because it's a year from now, but we are establishing a foundation forever for them to finish college and beyond so making a preschooler school ready is helping them all around. So with their families, home, with writing their name, with creating social skills, emotional skills, so just the child as a whole. That's my view of school readiness."</p>
HS5	<p>"For school readiness, I feel that they would know basic skills first. Just coming into the classroom, getting used to the environment, feeling safe. Getting to experience the material that we have for them and then gradually work on building the foundation for their education. You know writing their names, learning their alphabet, learning their numbers. It's not going to happen in just one month, two months, and three months. It's a learning process. But by the time, at the end when they finish with us at least they can get used to going to a new environment. That's what I really see as school readiness, just preparing them for the next level"</p>

Although four out of five Head Start Participants spoke directly about school readiness, only one State Preschool teacher specifically included school readiness as part of her interview responses. Participant SP4 made one reference to school readiness during her interview. The topic of school readiness covered a total of 3.94% of the total interview response of SP4 (see Table 19).

Table 19

State Preschool Teacher Beliefs about Children's School Readiness

Teacher Code	Belief Shared
SP1	Not coded
SP2	Not coded
SP3	Not coded
SP4	“Well, I think school readiness is educating the whole child not just cognitively getting them ready for Kindergarten, but socially, emotionally and preparing the whole family for what school readiness is and how to get them ready for school. And how to practice self-control. It's not just learning literacy and ABCs and writing their names, but the whole package for school readiness. And sometimes parents don't do that. They think it's just - my child can write their name, but your child is over there on the wall when we are all sitting on the carpet, and not being compliant.”
SP5	Not coded

During the interview process, three Head Start teachers spoke specifically about their beliefs regarding “children's print literacy”. Table 20 summarized the responses of each Head Start teacher. Participant HS1 made two references to children's literacy during her individual interview. These references covered 6.94% of the total interview for HS1. Participant HS2 made one reference to children's literacy covering 2.15% of the total interview text. Participant HS4 also made one reference to children's literacy during individual interviews. Children's literacy was identified as 2.44% of participant HS4's total interview (see Table 20).

Table 20

Head Start Teacher Beliefs about Children's Print Literacy Knowledge

Teacher Code	Belief Shared
HS1	<p>"To me, print literacy is just exposing them to any kind of print. You know, cursive or typed or printed, but exposing them to print and making children aware that words mean something in relation to a subject or picture or something like that.</p> <p>I think parents can play an active role in print literacy by starting in utero reading to the child. I know a lot of people are like yeah that's kind of weird but there's research that shows that a baby's hearing is well developed and reading to them in utero starts them along that path. And then reading to them a lot - I know my daughter only did it because I was nagging her about it - but she started taking the kids to the grocery store and they would read the signs and say that's broccoli right there. Not because they saw it was broccoli, but because it said broccoli. Even when they would get the sales paper for the grocery store print literacy and then that would help them to begin to connect the print with meaning."</p>
HS2	<p>"I think print literacy is them recognizing letters and numbers and recognizing that they are on pages and you can turn them. And understanding what the book is and how to hold the book. And understanding that that book is precious and we don't rip it and we don't sit on it and we don't scoot it around. Show them upside-down and right side up, things of that nature. And it helps them to recognize the letters in their name."</p>
HS3	Not coded
HS4	<p>"Print literacy - the first thing that came to mind was books and picture books, maybe not necessarily any words, maybe it can have words. Pretty much showing them stories, reading them stories. It can even be on posters. Just anywhere around the classroom print is like objects, letters, words, pictures on a paper."</p>
HS5	Not coded

During individual interviews, two state preschool participants discussed their beliefs of children's' print literacy. Respondent SP3 made reference to children's print literacy once during her interview. This reference made up 7.09% of participant SP3's entire interview. Participant SP4 made three references to print literacy during her individual interview. These responses covered a total of 8.98% of the recorded interview (see Table 21).

Table 21

State Preschool Teacher Beliefs about Children's Print Literacy Knowledge

Teacher Code	Belief Shared
SP1	Not coded
SP2	Not coded
SP3	“For me print literacy is everything you see that has labels. All of our cubbies and everything have – when they clean up, everything is labeled. It’s either labeled with words or it’s labeled with matching pictures so they’re learning how to read the words and to match pictures so that’s print literacy for me. Everything has labels – desk, teacher, everything. Not only that, but we have books in every area. We have Science books in the science area. I have household books in the dollhouse. I have block books in the block area. We have books in the library. Print everywhere.”
SP4	“Is that like print knowledge? Everybody uses different terms. Print knowledge is what they know about the written word about writing included, about letters and reading left to right, the basics print knowledge. You can tell who is being read to at home, the way they treat the books and they pick them up. I think the print literacy is not just the learning how to read and write but the whole process at home and family involvement and how we welcome them to come to school and learn because if they don’t have that at school, then they’re not going to have that development. I think it’s my responsibility to educate the parents at this level what print literacy is and how they can help them at home.”
SP5	Not coded

During individual interviews, all five Head Start teachers shared their beliefs about families. Participants shared beliefs using one to three references and interview percentages ranged from 3.88% to 14.55%. Participant HS1 referenced families on three occasions during the individual interview for a total percentage of 9.07. Participant HS2 made two references to families covering 3.88% of her interview. Participant HS3 made one reference to her beliefs about families, and this reference covered 5.98% of the individual interview. Two references were made by HS4 and covered 4.09% of the total interview. Participant HS5 also made two references to her beliefs about families. These references included 14.55% of the individual interview of participant HS5 (see Table 22).

Table 22

Head Start Teacher Beliefs about Families

Teacher Code	Belief Shared
HS1	<p>"I think I've had one single dad here, but it was a lot of single moms. Now that I have more Hispanic children, there are two parent families. It was kind of interesting and I'm not really sure why other than a lot of them have come from Mexico to make a better life for their families so maybe that's why.</p> <p>Single parent moms don't usually work. The parents that I've had for the last few years, the Hispanic families, the dad is working 12 to 14 hours of the day and a lot of the moms are stay at home moms. That's the way they want it. They want the mom to be home and take care of the house and the family."</p>
HS2	<p>"Okay, here, we base applications on their economic status so depending upon how much money they're making in their household, that determines whether they are in a Head Start Program or they're in the State Preschool program or whether they need to be referred out to a program where they are paying cash. The other programs that I did work at were cash paying so it was more affluent, wealthy families, but they were paying for institutionalized programs where it was 6 AM to 6 PM type program so it would be breakfast, lunch and two snacks and a nap and homework and transportation to and from school, things of that nature."</p>
HS3	<p>"As of now, I want to say they all speak English</p> <p>Let me see, with after doing my home visit, I want to say they all have both parents with them. It's either /or actually the father, actually some of them the fathers are working and the others are stay at home moms – more percentages are stay at home moms."</p>
HS4	<p>"I've seen a lot of single parents the majority are single moms and they come from big families so a lot of the children in my classroom have 3, 4, 5 siblings and they're all living in the same household. I do have one single dad which is different because usually it's primarily single moms. A few are two family, Dad and Mom, but usually dad is out of the picture because he is working two shifts or he's in the Bay Area or he's just not there in the household so, although there is a mom and dad, he's not necessarily there."</p> <p>Researcher - Are you finding that most of the parents work or don't work?</p> <p>"Half and half, if they're not working there either going to school or they're facing a major struggle so they're trying to get over that hurdle so that they can either go to school or go to work."</p> <p>Researcher – So they do have the desire to work even if they are not working?</p> <p>"Yes, so that they can provide their children with a better life."</p>
HS5	<p>"I'd say they were similar, but their family dynamic was kind of different. The way they participated. I saw more parent engagement there. More parent involved in their child's education. When I was there, I didn't really have to do my planning because with State Preschool parents have to volunteer. I didn't have to say "Oh, I need you today or tomorrow. They just knew. There was one parent that took initiative in that classroom and she just made a calendar and every parent knew that when they signed up for the program, they had to volunteer. They just put their name on the date that they're off and that they can just come in."</p>

Four out of five State Preschool teachers expressed their beliefs about families during individual interviews. Participant SP1 made three references to families. Those references covered 6.35% of the audio recorded interview. Participant SP2 spoke about her beliefs regarding families for a total of 1.99% of the total interview. Participant SP4 made four references to families during the interview process, covering 14.41%. Three references were made about families from SP5. These references covered 14.73% of the interview (see Table 23).

Table 23

State Preschool Teacher Beliefs about Families

Teacher Code	Belief Shared
SP1	“We just started fresh. All of them with the exception of one is mom and dad. We do have one who is a repeater. His grandmother has custody of him. We have been seeing recently both (parents) of them together versus mom and dad in separate households which is nice. All come in together, too. Mom and Dad dropping off. Quite a few of them are working. I believe the majority are. Especially, even in the morning class, One came today on her lunch break to make sure her older daughter was signing out properly. I feel everyone seems to be very situated. It’s nice. Over the years I have experienced many different things: homelessness, domestic violence, drug abuse, and so forth. It’s nice the last few years that there really hasn’t been anything where I’ve had to go and say Hey, we need services for this.”
SP2	“They were mainly two parent households. I recall the dads not coming in as much because they were working, but the moms came in because they weren’t working.”
SP3	Not coded
SP4	“This is my fourth year at this school, but I spent over a dozen at (school) where there was a different makeup of [the] population of families and children so moving to this school was a bit of an adjustment after that. Much more single family homes. Last year I had six fathers who were in and out of jail within my class and that is very much the population about a third of the population here. This school draws from some of the motels and downtown area. It’s not safe. That’s all of our area, and it makes a difference with the children coming to school.”
SP5	“Oh I don’t know. I’m still getting to know the families, to be honest. One family member, (name) is a little boy in our class, and it is similar because he just lost his brother in a car accident and last year we lost our mother. But being in the classroom, it’s sort of hard to provide a role for the parents because we’re in the classroom. If we was outside the class and worked with the whole family, that would be different, but it’s sort of hard because you’re not with the parents. You are mainly with the child.”

Three out of five Head Start teachers specifically addressed the importance of preschool in the lives of children. Participants HS1, HS4, and HS5 each made one specific reference to the importance of preschool. The percentage of each reference ranged from 5.33% to 5.66% of the total recorded interviews (see Table 24).

Table 24

Head Start Teacher Beliefs about the Effect of High-Quality Preschool

Teacher Code	Belief Shared
HS1	"I think it's very important for children to go to preschool. If they're not going to go to some kind of formal preschool, they need to go to a preschool co-op or something that gives them the social experience of being around other kids and listening to other adults besides their mom or their dad."
HS2	Not specifically coded
HS3	Not specifically coded
HS4	"Yes, definitely. It's the most important thing, more than college, elementary school, anything because it's the early years that matter and set up for the rest. Too bad that bigger politicians don't recognize that because I recognize that, but yes, it's the most important thing. If you are in Head Start, I think it benefits the entire family. If you're in a private preschool or a different program, it might or might not because a lot of what we do is focused on the child. We do all around. We do home visits. We do things like that. In Head Start, I would say yes for everybody. In a different program, it depends on the teacher and the program and their values."
HS5	"Yes, we are the foundation for them. If we get them starting off on the right foot, I think they can succeed when they go to bigger school, the big school, the K school. I think (preschool) it does help them (the family as a whole). Because they kind of have an idea of how school is starting right. You know, you have to be there, school is starting at 7:30. You have to be there right on time. You have to be there at 12 right on time so I think preschool setting that foundation really helps these parents. This is school. This is just like a regular school."

Three of five State Preschool Participants specifically addressed the importance of preschool during their individual interviews. Participants each made reference to preschool one time, and the percentage of coverage ranged from 1.8% to 4.59% of the total interview (see Table 25).

Table 25

State Preschool Teacher Beliefs about the Effect of High-Quality Preschool

Teacher Code	Belief Shared
SP1	“Yes absolutely. It benefits the family as a whole because there are some parents that might not be able to get the resources on their own for behavioral problems or even if they’re autistic and they’re having trouble getting help outside, we can bring those resources into help them.”
SP2	“Yes, preschool is very important because that’s their opportunity to grow without all the structure and the demands like in a K-12 world. I believe that any concerns that come up, the earlier the intervention the better. If they come to us in preschool, and we do see concerns or parents see concerns, they can be addressed. Long term they’re more to be successful because of the early intervention and early support versus a child who in Kindergarten with all the structure and all the demands sometimes children can fall through the cracks. Then go into 1 st and 2 nd and come to 3 rd , they find that the child has a delay in a certain area and it might be too late.”
SP3	Not coded
SP4	“Yes, because it’s early intervention. Because it allows all these children to come to school and get that support that they need to be ready for Kindergarten that they’re not going to get at home. And for the children that need to be caught up to just be developmentally at the stage they are supposed to be at because they come here behind. I see a ton of growth during the year.”
SP5	Not coded

Although participant interviews were not specifically coded for responses about poverty, three out of five Head Start teachers spoke specifically about the subject of poverty and the effect poverty has on the children and families of this community. No State Preschool teachers addressed poverty in their individual interviews (see Tables 26 and 27).

Table 26

Head Start Teacher Beliefs about the Effect of Poverty in the California Central Valley

Teacher Code	Belief Shared
HS1	“Some of these families are at the bottom of the lower class. Their needs do not come up because the ones that are from Mexico, they have come from an economic status that was so much lower that they feel like they’re doing fine here. They’re doing well.”
HS2	“Parent wise (in this city) has been different (from jobs I’ve had in other cities) due to their economic status and where they’re living and how they’re living and whether or not they have jobs. Those are extremely different. Parents here are really struggling.”
HS3	Not specifically answered
HS4	“In Head Start, they still need to be low-income families, but I still see a major struggle in this city in particular. I’ve been doing home visits so I can see where (other city) families are having a hard time, but these families are having that much harder – lack of food, lack of clothing, lack of appropriate living space. Some families are living in crowded areas very dangerous neighborhoods where I’m at so I see the need being amplified a thousand times more in here.”
HS5	Not specifically answered

Table 27

State Preschool Teacher Beliefs about the Effect of Poverty in the California Central Valley

Teacher Code	Belief Shared
SP1	Not specifically answered
SP2	Not specifically answered
SP3	Not specifically answered
SP4	Not specifically answered
SP5	Not specifically answered

Figure 17 represents the effect of poverty on teacher’s beliefs. Each teacher would have a figure that looks slightly different depending upon their beliefs and expectations of students and families of poverty.

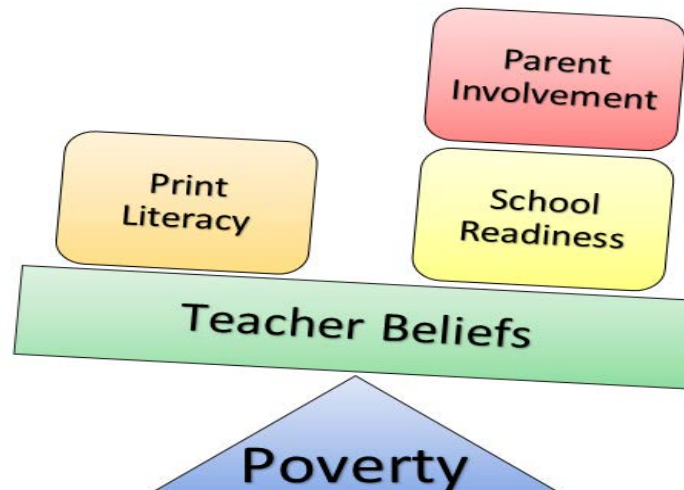


Figure 17. The Effect of Poverty. Devitt 2016

Limitations and Delimitations

This research did not include focus groups. Due to the personal nature of beliefs, the researcher felt that conducting an anonymous survey followed by individual interviews was the best way to gather accurate data. It was a concern that some individuals would not share their true feeling in the presence of their peers. It was of equal concern that some individuals would be swayed by the group mentality and therefore might change their views to assimilate better with other participants.

Along with delimitations, the author also identified limitations in the research. Surveys were only distributed within one Northern California school district. One grade span and two differently funded programs were chosen to participate. In addition, the researcher was not able to personally observe within the classrooms of teachers identified for individual interviews.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to understand whether or not student poverty affects teacher's beliefs regarding print literacy, school readiness, and family involvement. This research is focused on one urban school district located in the California Central Valley. The chosen school district implements two preschool programs with different eligibility requirements based primarily on family income. Program one is the federally funded Head Start program. Head Start guidelines ensure that households with the lowest income are the priority for services. Program two, California State Preschool, has a slightly higher income threshold. This state-funded program allows for families who make a moderately higher monthly income to be eligible for services.

A total of 100 preschool teachers were invited to participate in a Likert-style questionnaire. The questionnaire focused on the teachers' beliefs regarding the three areas of focus: print literacy, school readiness, and family involvement. After the collection of surveys, 10 preschool teachers were asked to participate in a follow-up interview. The researcher followed an explanatory sequential design and used a social justice framework to analyze data and make recommendations (see Figure 18).



Figure 18. Social Justice Framework: Explanatory Sequential Design. Devitt 2016

Demographics

Based on the 81 questionnaires included in the analysis, 98% of participating teachers stated that they had obtained an early childhood education permit. Each early childhood education permit requires the teacher to meet different educational standards ranging from an identified number of early childhood education classes to a set schedule that reflect a well-rounded early childhood program with an emphasis in specific state and college coursework. Research data showed no teachers within the collected sample reported having a multiple subject teaching credential. The researcher believed that this is based primarily on the vast difference in the salary structure of the chosen district. The annual salary of a standard permit state preschool teacher is based on a 5 hour work day and ranges from \$15,000 to approximately \$29,000. The annual salary range of an eight hour Head Start employee is slightly higher (\$20,000 to \$47,000).

The salary scale of a credentialed teacher is significantly higher. A beginning teacher who is pursuing their credential begins at approximately \$44,000 and a fully

credentialed teacher's salary can reach a maximum of \$85,000 annually. Based on salary, it would be unlikely for a teacher with a multiple subject teaching credential to be working in a preschool classroom. It would be much more likely to have a credentialed teacher who enjoys working with young children to remain in a transitional kindergarten (TK) or kindergarten classroom. The researcher spent 16 years as a kindergarten teacher within the identified school district. The choice to remain at the kindergarten level, instead of pursuing preschool, was based solely on the monetary salary difference between the two jobs.

In total, 72% of teachers who completed the questionnaire indicated that they had more than 10 years of experience in the early childhood education field. The questionnaire did not ask respondents to differentiate the location of early childhood experience. From the survey data alone, there is no way to identify if the service experience occurred at the designated school district or with another agency. It is possible to make some predictions based on participant identified employee status. Upon hiring, all district teachers are given an employment status by the Human Resources Department. Teachers begin as a probationary employee for two years. After the successful completion of two years in the district, teacher status typically changes from probationary to permanent. Probationary teachers are evaluated by their administrator a minimum of two times each year during the first two years of employment. When a teacher becomes permanent, their evaluation cycle changes to be every other year. Many teachers (70%) indicated that their employment was permanent. A statistically significant difference was detected in the proportion of state preschool versus Head Start teachers who reported that their employment was permanent versus

probationary. In total, 43% of Head Start teachers said that their employment was probationary versus 13% of State Preschool teachers. Significantly more State Preschool teachers stated that their employment was permanent (82% vs. 57% of Head Start teachers).

These statistical findings are not surprising due to the fact that the Head Start program began in the identified school district during the 2015-16 school year. In order for the district to open 38 new classrooms, extensive hiring was needed. The preschool department has doubled in size since the opening of the Head Start program. Due to the fact that many of the Head Start teachers are new to the school district, it would be expected to have a larger percentage of probationary employees. Provided that all teachers remain with the district and have successful evaluations each year, it would be expected that the number of probationary teachers will dramatically decrease by the 2018-19 school year.

Teacher Retention

Teacher retention remains a focus throughout the state of California. It is not uncommon to have a beginning teacher stay only a few years before moving on to a different career (Futernick, 2007). Unrealistic classroom expectations, as well as difficult working conditions, can often leave teachers feeling unsatisfied with their career choice and seeking a change. This phenomenon is even more widespread in the early childhood education field. Lower pay and limited educational prerequisites allow for a higher transient teaching force. These factors call into focus the question, “What motivates a preschool teacher to stay in the classroom?”

When Head Start teachers were posed the question, “Why do you choose to continue teaching in the early childhood education field?” a range of answers were received. Participant HS5 described the practical reason that she has remained in the position. She expressed her desire to be there for her family as well as her students. She says:

The flexibility, I was able to be home with my children when they’re off and also the holidays. We get the same holidays, and it works out so well for mothers. I just think it works out well. It’s something I can relate to because they’re [parents] in my shoes and I’m in their shoes, and I’m trying to advocate for them as well as benefiting for myself, also. (HS5)

Another Head Start teacher described the intrinsic joy she received when watching her students succeed as they moved on to the local elementary schools. She shared her feelings about the happy reunions she would share with her students:

What made me stay is seeing how much the children excelled in my program, and when they would come back in Kindergarten and first grade, they were so excited about school. The feedback I was getting from the teachers is what really made me stay because I knew I was making a difference. (HS2)

The same question was posed to California State preschool teachers. State teachers expressed the joy that the children bring, as well as the difference that they felt they were making in their lives.

I love this age group. Everything is so new to them. Their minds absorb so much. The simplest things make them happy. There’s not as much politics as in the upper grades. (SP1)

Every day something funny happens, and I'm really a kid at heart so this is the perfect job for me. There is a lot of stress but the happiness and the funny stuff and they're having fun and when something catches in their little brain and they repeat it, it all makes it worth it. (SP3)

I just like to help the families and mainly work with the children. I like to be part of their growing because besides them being at home, they're with us the other half of the day. So teaching them what they need to know, just basic skills, social skills, like sitting down-that's the main thing to me. (SP5)

Teacher Preparation

While investigating preschool teacher preparation in the identified school district, it became quickly apparent that most teachers were native to the Central California region. Many attended the local junior college and then went on to complete their B.A. through a small private college that was designed to accommodate the working professional. Most classes were offered in the evenings, and many were also available online for added convenience. Teachers described a typical experience during their early childhood education coursework. Most did a combination of classwork and practicum classes that allowed teachers to get hands-on experience in an early childhood center located on a junior college campus. Newer teachers also shared a balance between traditional classes and new online opportunities. Regardless of the educational learning format, many teachers shared common stories, experiences, and instructors during their preparatory program. In some cases, teachers felt additional preparation for working with

children and families of poverty would have been helpful within their early childhood education program.

Print Literacy

Based on the 81 questionnaires that were collected and used for analysis, a small standard deviation within each group indicated that teachers in both State Preschool and Head Start agreed in their belief that children entering their preschool classroom did not have strong print literacy skills. Mean scores for the seven items in the Print Literacy area ranged between 1.25 and 2.05 for State Preschool teachers, and between 1.13 and 2.05 for Head Start teachers. These scores indicate that respondents did not believe that students began the school year with a high level of print literacy.

This concept was further investigated during qualitative interviews. During the 10 individual interviews, most teachers spoke about their understanding of print literacy and what that would look like in the classroom. Interestingly, the definition of print literacy held by teachers was not consistent between participants or programs. When asked to describe print literacy, one Head Start teacher said,

I think print literacy is them [children] recognizing letters and numbers and recognizing that they are on pages and you can turn them. And understanding what the book is and how to hold the book. And understanding that that book is precious, and we don't rip it and we don't sit on it and we don't scoot it around. Show them upside-down and right side up, things of that nature. And it helps them to recognize the letters in their name. (HS2)

Another Head Start teacher states,

To me, print literacy is just exposing them to any kind of print. You know, cursive or typed or printed, but exposing them to print and making children aware that words mean something in relation to a subject or picture or something like that. (HS4)

When asked to describe print literacy, a state preschool teacher SP1 said,

[Print literacy is] Environmental print. That's the way I look at it. Like these signs [points to the wall]. They know that these signs mean caution because they've seen them somewhere. Again the McDonald's, Target because they see it, they know it. You can show them a picture that says Barbie and they know it says Barbie. They don't even need to see a picture of it. Same thing with Hot Wheels or Jack in the Box. Print rich, having words but you also need things that associate. Like that sign up there is NO and they know there's nuts up there so they know it's NO PEANUTS. (SP1)

Another response from a State Preschool teacher,

[Print Literacy] is just being able to hold a book. Being able to understand what a book is. Being able to go into the environment and understand that there's letters, not even just words, but letters. For preschool, that would be the first step. (SP5)

It is interesting to find the working definition and understanding of print literacy to be so broad and yet the beliefs regarding students to be so similar. One possible conclusion could be that many of the students that are enrolled in both preschool programs actually qualify for either program based on income eligibility. Therefore in regards to socioeconomic status, both groups of students are similar. Also, many teachers

who are now teaching in a Head Start classroom initially began as a state preschool teacher. Having moved from a state preschool class to a Head Start room could explain the homogeneity between the two groups of teachers.

It was also noteworthy that most of the teachers in both programs attended local teacher education and bachelor's programs. Having been exposed to many of the same college instructors could explain how teacher education helps to create or mold a standard belief system. This theory would not explain the differing opinions regarding the definition of print literacy but does highlight the need for continuing professional development of all staff including individual coaching and mentoring.

An additional finding to consider was the effect of marital status on print literacy scores. The researcher discovered that teachers who identified themselves as never having been married were the most optimistic about children's print literacy knowledge upon entering preschool. Respondents who identified as being currently married were least optimistic about children's print literacy knowledge. This concept would require additional research to determine the reasoning behind the effect of marital status on teacher beliefs. Based on these findings, Hypothesis 1 must be rejected. The data collected, both quantitative and qualitative, did not indicate that preschool teachers employed in programs with a higher income threshold believe that their students have greater print knowledge at the start of the preschool years when compared to the beliefs of teachers employed in lower threshold programs.

School Readiness

Focusing on the school readiness responses of the 81 teacher questionnaires, led to the finding that teachers in both programs agreed that students do not enter preschool

exhibiting high levels of school readiness. Five out of seven school readiness questions yielded a mean score of less than 2.50 indicating agreement between groups (Head Start and State Preschool) regarding low school readiness abilities. Two questions generated mean scores above 2.50. These questions highlighted the areas that teachers felt students exhibited higher levels of mastery at the beginning of the school year. These questions were “Students can point to a picture in the classroom at the beginning of the school year” and “Students have a favorite storybook at the beginning of the school year.” Teachers in both programs agreed to these findings. However, the overall school readiness scores between groups showed Head Start teachers (2.42) to be slightly more favorable in regards to beliefs about school readiness skills than State Preschool teachers (2.31).

In follow-up interviews, teachers from both programs were asked to talk about their idea of school readiness. Teacher HS3 considered school readiness to be the immediate needs of the child to be successful. She stated,

My idea of school readiness is making sure that the whole child is ready for the experience of going into Kindergarten and that is everything from food, shelter, and clothing to their emotional state to how well they react around adults and their peers, so it’s completely well-rounded. I make sure that their academics is on point – making sure that they can hold that pencil, that they can write their name, they know what to do with that pencil or the pen, they know how to erase mistakes, they know how to stand in line. They have to be able to self-regulate because there’s not as much supervision once they get into Kindergarten. (HS3)

Participant HS5 has a very different definition of school readiness. She looked at the big picture when describing school readiness. Her focus on a lifetime of academic success can be understood through the following statement:

School readiness is primarily getting them ready for a life long journey. So a lot of parents talk about Kindergarten. What I told my parents is that not only Kindergarten is important but the rest of their life. Yes, Kindergarten is an immediate goal because it's a year from now, but we are establishing a foundation forever for them to finish college and beyond so making a preschooler school ready is helping them all around. So with their families, home, with writing their name, with creating social skills, emotional skills, so just the child as a whole. That's my view of school readiness. (HS5)

When State Preschool teachers were asked to answer the same question and share a bit about their understanding of school readiness, they highlighted the essential component of social and emotional skill development. Participant SP2 described her complex beliefs regarding school readiness:

School readiness for preschool, I believe, is building that social/emotional part. That's the foundation of it all. Once they have that self-esteem to want to have that inner drive to do more for themselves, they'll want to try more. Once they build that, they can then start building on the academic part. You can be bright as a whip, but if you can't share a simple block with the peer next to you, that's a struggle. And I believe social skill is a life skill that we teach. (SP2)

Participant SP4 did not negate the importance of the family within the preschool model. She identified the opportunity that preschool brings to educate the entire family

on early childhood issues and developmental milestones that they might not otherwise be aware of. She shared:

Well, I think school readiness is educating the whole child- not just cognitively getting them ready for Kindergarten, but socially, emotionally and preparing the whole family for what school readiness is and how to get them ready for school.

And how to practice self-control. (SP4)

Regardless of the definition employed by the preschool teacher, the underlying theme continued to be that there is much work that needs to be done to provide children of poverty an equal start in the academic environment, beginning in preschool.

Further data analysis was completed to investigate whether participant age played a factor when answering survey questions regarding school readiness. A one-way ANOVA to compare age groups followed by a post hoc analyses using the Tukey HSD criterion for significance, was conducted. This analysis identified that participants in the 41-50 age bracket scored school readiness lower than those participants whose age was in the 21-30 year-old range. Although the additional analysis was done regarding program type, no other significant findings were identified regarding school readiness.

Parent Involvement

Each participant was asked to score questions on the quantitative questionnaire that would help to determine their beliefs regarding parent involvement in children's print literacy development. One significant finding was discovered. The difference in beliefs between teachers with master's degrees did differ by program type. The analysis found that teachers within the State Preschool program who have acquired a master's degree believe that parents are more involved in their children's print literacy development than

did teachers within the Head Start program with the same degree. This finding does support the hypothesis that teachers in higher income threshold programs believe more favorably about parent involvement in print literacy development.

When asked about parent involvement in individual interviews, some Head Start teachers shared their belief that parent involvement often depends on parent education levels. When one Head Start teacher was asked if she thought parents found parent involvement a priority she said:

Sometimes and it really depends on the parent's education level I think because if the parent is not educated themselves then they are afraid they are going show that they're not educated. They want their child to succeed. They want their child to do better than them, but at the same time, they can't show that they aren't educated enough. That's one of the reasons when I do my first home visits, I try to talk to them about reading to their child and I always, whether I think they are literate or not, I always tell them your child doesn't know if you read so talk about the pictures if you don't know how to read. Tell the story about the pictures. A lot of times they don't let me know that's what they do until later on and then I can kind of gather. (HS1)

Although the same question was posed to State Preschool teachers, there were no in-depth beliefs shared. State Preschool participants did make general statements about their beliefs such as the following statement by SP2: "All parents care about their kids. They do what they can to support them". This common sentiment among State Preschool teachers may explain why there was a significant difference in the between-group findings (Head Start vs. State Preschool). Based on these findings, Hypothesis 2 must be

rejected. Although some areas of significance were discovered, the overall data did not indicate that preschool teachers' beliefs regarding parent involvement in children's print literacy development was dependent upon parental income or socio-economic status (see Figure 19).

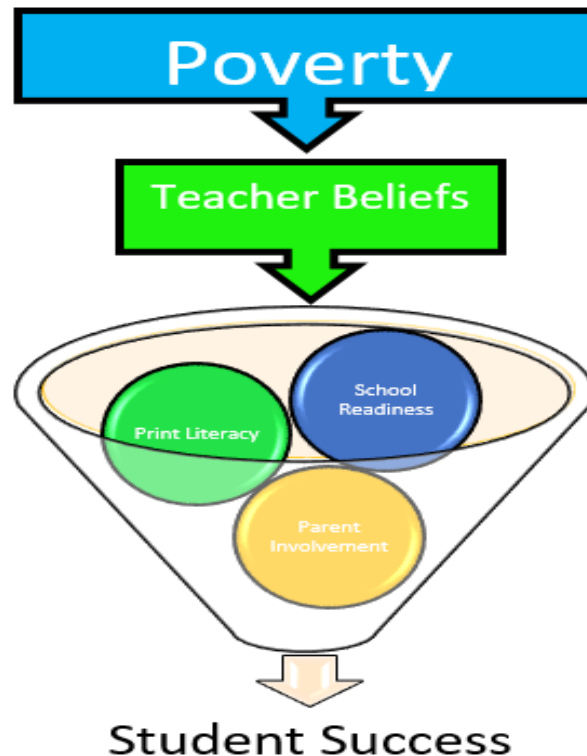


Figure 19. Funnel of Beliefs. Devitt 2016

This research study was designed based on the work of Dr. Jaqueline Lynch (2010). Lynch conducted her study in Canada and based her research on the identified beliefs of kindergarten teachers. Lynch used a pre-test/post-test design where teachers were given a questionnaire at the beginning of the school year and again at the end of the year. Data was measured and analyzed using both sets of quantitative information. Findings from this research were that teachers from higher SES schools were more likely

to report that students had greater print literacy knowledge, but that SES did not have an overall effect on teachers' beliefs about parent involvement. Lynch concluded that teachers' beliefs varied regarding students' print knowledge based on socio-economic status. This finding was consistent at both the beginning and ending of the school year. Lynch further concluded that differences in beliefs based on students' socio-economic status could translate into different expectations for kindergarten students.

Although this study was based on the original work by Dr. Lynch, the researcher made some changes to the focus and design of this research. The researcher chose to focus on preschool teachers instead of kindergarten teachers. A post-test only design that compared two different preschool programs administered by one district in the California Central Valley was used. The quantitative survey was adjusted to meet the needs of this research design. Qualitative interviews were conducted to help answer these four questions: (a) Are our teachers adequately equipped to teach diverse students?; (b) Do they have the tools needed to communicate effectively with families of diverse backgrounds?; (c) Do preconceived beliefs about diverse groups get in the way of effective teaching?; (d) As the achievement gap between Caucasian middle to upper-class students and students of racially and socioeconomically diverse backgrounds continue to rise, it is imperative that we identify the possible cause and discuss attainable solutions to the overarching problem.

Summary of Findings

Throughout all 10 qualitative interviews involving participants of both Head Start and state preschool programs, all teachers agreed that preschool was valuable to all children, especially those of poverty. Participant SP4 shared her belief that preschool

offers the ability to catch children up in case they are falling behind. When asked if she felt preschool was important, she stated:

Yes, because it's early intervention. Because it allows all these children to come to school and get that support that they need to be ready for Kindergarten. And for the children that need to be caught up to just be developmentally at the stage they are supposed to be at because they come here behind. I see a ton of growth during the year. (SP4)

Head Start teachers expressed similar remarks. Participant HS1 said, "Yes, preschool is very important. It helps the whole family learn new skills". Many of the preschoolers and families are experiencing early childhood expectations and learning about developmentally appropriate behaviors for the first time. In both programs, preschool parents are invited to attend monthly parent meetings to learn about pertinent early childhood topics ranging from car seat safety to nutritional choices. The information provided through parent meetings makes an impact on preschool families. Parents begin to change behaviors based on the information and training that they are provided. Parents, in turn, bring that information back to their neighborhood community and help educate even more families.

It is not unusual for parents to speak to teachers about all topics of concern. Preschool often becomes a hub for family support. The preschool teacher can assist in referring families for any number of needs. A parent may share a need for assistance finding adequate housing one day and another parent might share they are living in an abusive environment. Preschool teachers often become the one individual that a family can turn to when in crisis. Head Start teachers identified a higher level of comfort when

talking to parents about needs other than preschool academics. State preschool teachers described their ability to provide resources to families to improve their current situation but did not express the willingness to work with families to ensure that they were successful in meeting their immediate needs and maneuvering through a complex system of community supports.

Through research and analysis, it is evident that high-quality preschool is beneficial in communities, especially low socio-economic urban communities. Unfortunately, not all children have the opportunity to benefit from high-quality preschool. It has been well documented that investing in preschool makes a lifelong impact on individuals and communities. For every one dollar spent on early education, three to seven dollars are saved (Yoshikawa et al., 2013). Although, income eligibility and a finite number of preschool slots often leave a portion of children without early school experience. These barriers to learning create glaring inequities among children based primarily on their socioeconomic status. High-quality preschool provides opportunities to level the playing field for low income and at-risk children.

To ensure that the quality of a preschool program remains high, several assessments mentioned throughout this research can be used. The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised Edition (ECERS-R) is used to identify the strengths of a program, as well as the ability of the program to meet children's developmental needs (Cryer et al, 2003). The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) is used to determine the quality of teacher to student and student to teacher interactions happening within a preschool setting (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008). Having a high CLASS score as well as a high ECERS-R score ensure that an individual classroom and

teacher are creating an environment within a classroom that are both high-quality programmatically, but also meet the needs of students developmentally including high-quality interactions that build confidence, security, and self-esteem. At the individual child level, the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) is a developmental continuum that tracks student strengths and abilities using observational evidence and work samples to demonstrate individual student academic and social achievement (California Department of Education, 2015). This California assessment provides data that can be used to plan individualized instruction to maximize classroom learning time for each child regardless of their background or socio-economic status. The California Preschool Foundations are an additional resource that correlates with the DRDPs by developmental domain. The Preschool Foundations are a guide to what typically developing students should be displaying. The companion guide to the Foundations is the Preschool Frameworks. The Frameworks offer practical suggestions for teachers to support individual student development. Having assessment tools such as ECERS-R, CLASS, and DRDP ensure that students are receiving a high-quality preschool experience. These assessments also help individual preschool programs identify areas of need to improve program quality. High-quality preschool programs provide the greatest opportunity for children of poverty to make the academic gains needed to begin kindergarten at the level of academic readiness as their middle-class peers.

In the California Central Valley, there are three distinct groups of children. There are those who meet the income eligibility requirements to qualify for free preschool, those whose parents make an income that allows for private out of pocket childcare, and the group that falls in the middle. These families do not qualify for free preschool

because their income is too high and yet cannot afford the price of private programs. These children often miss out on early childhood education. They likely enter kindergarten having only spent time with family or in daycare. Although the family may provide a safe and loving environment, these children may not have had the educational experiences of their peers. This leaves them behind their peers in most academic and developmental areas.

Social Justice

Studies have shown that high-quality preschool makes a positive impact on all children. Middle-class children, as well as low income children, benefit the most from attending preschool. Children who attend high-quality preschool show a positive correlation between program participation and increased literacy, language, and numerical growth (Barnett & Frede, 2010; Yoshikawa et al., 2013). High-quality preschool also has a positive effect on society. Children who attend high-quality preschool are more likely to show increased social-emotional awareness. They are less liable to have behavior problems, more likely to graduate high school, hold down a job, and less liable to become incarcerated as an adult (Barnett & Frede, 2010). Helping children to become positive members of society aids in creating safer and more productive communities. Adults who are employed are less likely to commit crimes or rely on public assistance. Lower crime rates help neighborhoods to feel safer and more invested in their community. In the urban areas of the California Central Valley, residents are in dire need for stability and more secure neighborhoods to raise their families.

Knowing that preschool makes a long-term difference in the opportunities and successes of all children, it makes sense to say that preschool access should be of highest priority in all communities regardless of family structure or make-up. It is especially important in an urban setting. Adopting a social justice mindset can help policy makers focus on the larger picture of community resiliency and growth. A place to start would be, to create a Universal Preschool system that promotes preschool programs with low student: teacher ratios, consistent curriculum, professional development for staff, and monitoring at the program level would help to ensure quality in each classroom. Using a framework such as Paul Gorski's *Equity Literacy Framework* as a guide for developing programs and classrooms, could propel California Early Childhood Education as a model of visionary change for closing the achievement gap.

Continuing the practice of only focusing on low-income students in the availability of free preschool, ignores the research that says preschool makes a difference for everyone. The effect of a high-quality preschool experience would create opportunities for continued growth and an evolution of children entering kindergarten with the academic and social skills ready to learn and succeed. At a time when school age academic success is highly focused upon by politicians, media, and change makers, it would stand to reason that the obvious place to start would be the, often overlooked, field of early education. The benefits of providing preschool to all children outweigh the monetary cost of running and monitoring the programs (Yoshikawa et al., 2013). An investment in preschool is not only cost effective, but it would be a documented movement towards equity in a country that is fighting to eliminate racial and economic divides. It is a call to action.

Implications for Future Research

In an effort to provide additional clarity regarding teacher beliefs, it is recommended that future research focus on three areas: exaggerated poverty discrepancies between programs, teacher marital status, and the educational philosophy of preschool teachers who have pursued a California master teacher permit. The author of this study originally intended to compare kindergarten teacher's beliefs using participants from two different districts. The originally chosen districts remain close geographically, but are vastly different when comparing average family SES, median home prices, and family income. The researcher changed the study approach after accepting a position within the Early Childhood Education Department of the chosen school district. The researcher acknowledges the opportunity for continued research using participants who teach students who come from varying levels of financial wealth. Additionally, further exploration regarding the effect of marital status upon teachers' beliefs, as highlighted within this research, should be considered. Further examination of the effect of permit type, specifically those who achieve a master teacher permit, on teachers' beliefs about student knowledge is also recommended. At this time, the researcher cannot draw further conclusions as to the significant findings identified in this study.

It is important to note that poverty within the California Central Valley and the chosen urban school district is high. Many preschool age children come from homes where food, shelter, and safety are not the norm. They are in fact a luxury. Due to widespread poverty, the two identified preschool programs used for comparative purposes in this study have many similarities. Both programs draw from a homogeneous population of local residents. In many cases, both Head Start and CSPP run on the same

elementary school campuses. Children who qualify for CSPP (slightly higher income ceiling) also qualify for the Head Start program based on financial need. It is possible for a family to have one preschooler in a CSPP class as well as a sibling in a Head Start classroom. Therefore, it is not surprising that the children in both programs enter preschool having had similar experiences and opportunities.

Throughout this research process, it has been the goal to answer three fundamental questions. Question one: Are our preschool teachers adequately equipped to teach diverse students? The evidence that preschool teachers are adequately equipped to teach diverse students, solely based on their teacher education classes, is minimal. Teachers described their teacher preparation programs to be primarily based on theory and classroom lecture. Some teachers described a practicum for hands-on learning that was run by their educational institution of higher education. Teachers that described this component expressed that it was helpful to be with students, but shared their understanding that the contrived setting of minimal children and low teacher to student ratio was not like what they experienced when they accepted their first assignment as a classroom teacher. Question two: Do preschool teachers have the tools needed to communicate effectively with families of diverse backgrounds? The answer to this question varied among participants. Some teachers shared that they felt comfortable talking with parents on all levels including adult topics that may result in referrals such as food scarcity or homelessness. Other teachers expressed that they only felt qualified to discuss preschool academics. They were happy to provide a referral to a district social worker for other issues, but they did not want to give guidance on other topics. Several teachers shared that they felt more comfortable sharing advice or speaking about adult

topics if they were speaking to someone of their own ethnic community. For example, participant SP2 shared that she felt as if she could speak more candidly with someone of her cultural group. This participant shared that the comfort level was increased if speaking in their native language. Question three: Do preconceived beliefs about diverse groups get in the way of effective teaching? The answer to this question was harder to identify. No teacher openly expressed that they had preconceived beliefs about diverse groups, but some shared incidents that they witnessed with other staff that they would identify as biased or racist in nature.

Implications for Policy Makers and Program Administrators

The findings of this research will benefit the greater Early Childhood Education community by identifying the support and mentoring needed for early childhood educators working with families and children of poverty. The findings of this study helped to identify coaching needs of early childhood education teachers working with diverse or at-risk families. Several benefits derived from the results include: identifying areas of need within higher education to provide opportunities for coursework that focuses on lower socio-economic families; promote a better understanding of the role student and family poverty plays in teachers' beliefs about early childhood education; and identify individual perspectives regarding student success. It also became apparent that opportunities to work within an authentic preschool setting should be made available. It is the recommendation that a version of "student teaching" be mandated for Early Childhood Educators that are applying for their initial permit or certificate. This would be especially important for applicants of supervisory or director permits. These higher level certifications should embed practical experience with an emphasis on graduated

responsibility. A model to look to for additional ideas for new teacher support could be the California Teacher Induction program. This two-year intensive program provides guidance, mentoring, and reflection on instructional practice with the help of a qualified support provider.

Educators can no longer be silent on the impact of the classroom teacher on the success of students. Preschool teachers' beliefs influence instructional practices. Instructional practices are the cornerstone of the classroom. The most vulnerable of children, those affected by poverty, feel the effects of the classroom teacher at a heightened level. The children who reside in low socio-economic communities deserve an opportunity to experience the same high-quality instruction as children who live in high-income suburbs around the country. It is the responsibility of educational leaders to demand high-quality teacher preparatory programs and create opportunities for continued support.

Teachers need to share their knowledge of high-quality instructional pedagogy with parents. To make an impact on early literacy and school readiness, we must include the family into the dialogue. Regardless of the structure of the family, it is clear that most of the participants interviewed in this research shared a common belief that parents care about their children and want to help them be successful. The mitigating factor for teachers is often the education level of the parents. This is not to say that teachers believe that parents must be highly educated to help their child become school ready, but teachers need to make parents feel that they are a crucial part of their child's educational development. Teachers need to leverage the resources brought by parents to help students succeed in school (Epstein, 2015). Parents need to be trained on how to provide

high-quality interactions with their children. They need teachers to demonstrate higher level questioning strategies through frequent parent education meetings. Parents need to feel that they are valuable to the classroom teacher and provided opportunities to practice new skills under the guidance of the teacher. There must be a partnership between parents and teachers (Epstein, 2015). This model can easily be brought to community centers and neighborhood libraries to reach a greater audience. Through persistence and education, we can make a difference in the academic success of children in low socio-economic communities.

The implications and findings of this study will affect Early Childhood Education Programs. Part of the dissemination plan for this research study is to share its findings and help develop comprehensive training, coaching, and mentoring for teachers working with students of poverty. Additionally, the study will ultimately impact instructional strategies and student outcomes by influencing higher education and teacher preparatory programs to better equip a teacher who works with low socio-economic families.

In order to have an effect on the policies and regulatory practices that impact early childhood education, this study will also be shared with elected officials. The researcher will use strong community ties and participation on local committees and boards to further share these findings and be a local change maker. Frequent invitations to early childhood education round tables and local policy councils will provide the opportunity to make contact with both local and regional officials. The goal is to share direct findings that will give policymakers and program administrators a realistic look inside the classroom where early childhood education programs are being administered.

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APPENDIX A

Quantitative Survey

Thank you for your participation. Please answer the following questions based on the students that you have in your classroom for the 2016-2017 school year.

Circle the answer that best represents your beliefs regarding *Print Literacy, School Readiness, and Family Involvement*:

Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD), Don't Know (DK)

Children's Print Literacy Knowledge

1. Children know the names of most of the alphabetic letters.

At the beginning of the school year SA A D SD DK

2. Children know the sounds of most of the alphabetic letters.

At the beginning of the school year SA A D SD DK

3. Children can write at least some of the alphabet.

At the beginning of the school year SA A D SD DK

4. Children can point to a capital letter successfully if asked to.

At the beginning of the school year SA A D SD DK

5. Children can identify words that rhyme.

At the beginning of the school year SA A D SD DK

6. Children can read simple words, such as cat.

At the beginning of the school year SA A D SD DK

- 7. Children can write simple sentences composed of simple words using invented and/or conventional spelling.**

At the beginning of the school year SA A D SD DK

Children's School Readiness

- 1. Children can recognize their name.**

At the beginning of the school year SA A D SD DK

- 2. Children can write their name.**

At the beginning of the school year SA A D SD DK

- 3. Children do not know how to hold a pencil.**

At the beginning of the school year SA A D SD DK

- 4. Children can readily name labeled objects in the classroom.**

At the beginning of the school year SA A D SD DK

- 5. Children can point to a picture.**

At the beginning of the school year SA A D SD DK

- 6. Children have a favorite storybook.**

At the beginning of the school year SA A D SD DK

- 7. Children can make accurate predictions when engaging in story sharing.**

At the beginning of the school year SA A D SD DK

Parental Involvement in Children's Print Literacy

- 1. Parents are very interested in their children's reading and writing development.**

SA A D SD DK

2. Parents have read schoolwork sent home to their children.

SA A D SD DK

3. Parents talk about books with their children.

SA A D SD DK

4. Parents have read stories to their children at home.

SA A D SD DK

5. Parents have engaged in writing the alphabet at home with their children prior to entering school.

SA A D SD DK

6. Parents have engaged in reading instruction/direction with their children.

SA A D SD DK

Demographics

This section asks questions about you. The data you share will not be used to personally identify you, and will not be passed on to anyone else. Please choose the answer that best describes you and your current status.

1. Gender

() male () female

2. Age

() 21-30 () 31-40 () 41-50 () 51-60 () 61+

3. Ethnicity

() White / Caucasian () African American () Native American / Pacific Islander
() Hispanic / Latino () Asian () Other _____

4. Marital Status

() Married / Domestic Partner () Single / Never Married () Widowed
() Divorced () Separated

5. How many years have you been teaching?

() 1-5 () 6-10 () 11-15 () 16-20 () 21-25 () 26-30 () 31+

6. Do you hold an Early Childhood Education Permit?

☐ yes ☐ no

If yes, what type of permit?

☐ Standard Teacher ☐ Master Teacher ☐ Director ☐ Multiple Subject
Credential

7. What is your employment status?

☐ Substitute ☐ Temporary ☐ Probationary ☐ Permanent ☐ Don't Know

8. Which program are you teaching?

☐ State Preschool ☐ First 5 ☐ Head Start ☐ Don't Know

Survey used was modified with permission:

Lynch, J. (2010). Kindergarten teachers' beliefs about students' knowledge of print literacy and parental involvement in children's print literacy development. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 56(2), 157–171.

APPENDIX B

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Disclaimer: This interview is being conducted for the sole purpose of completing the doctoral research and dissertation component set by Concordia University, Irvine. This interview will not be used in any way other than to provide qualitative data regarding preschool teacher perceptions of school readiness and family involvement. The participants name will not be revealed in connection with any answers to these questions. This interview transcript will not be shared with anyone other than Suzanne Devitt and will in no way be shared with any other employee or staff.

___For the purpose of organizing my notes, can you please state your name?

Part 1

Can you tell me the number of years you have been teaching in an Early Childhood Education Program?

What permits do you currently hold? Example: Standard, Director, Manager, etc.

What made you decide to pursue a career in ECE? What has kept you in the field?

Have you worked in an area outside of San Joaquin County? If so, can you describe any differences between the parents and children that you serve?

Can you describe the children in your class? (ethnicity, language, age, wealthy, poor?)

Can you describe the families of the children you serve?

Would you consider your family to be similar or different than the families in your class?

How and/or why?

Do you feel that your teacher prep program adequately prepared you to teach diverse students? If not, what could they do better?

You can answer the next question specifically about yourself or other teachers. Do preconceived beliefs or biases about diverse groups get in the way of effective teaching?

Part 2

How would you describe school readiness?

Do you believe that your students enter preschool with the necessary skills to succeed and why?

What could parents do at home to help with school readiness?

Do you think parents know how to prepare their children for preschool? If not, do you think parents would be willing to do activities to help their children become school ready?

If someone asked you to explain print literacy, what would you say?

What role, if any, do you feel parents play in providing activities to enhance print knowledge?

What role, if any, do you feel you play in providing activities to enhance print knowledge?

Part 3

Do you find that parents come to you with questions regarding their child's academics?

Do parents ever ask questions or advice about their child, not related to academics?

Do parents ever come to you seeking help or advice regarding family issues? If so, what types...emotional, financial etc.

Do you feel comfortable providing advice to parents about topics other than education?

What role, if any, do you feel that you provide in supporting the family as a whole?

Do you feel that preschool is important for children? Do you feel that preschool participation benefits the family as a whole? Why or why not?

If there was an additional service or services that you could provide to children or families, what would it be?

My research is specifically focusing on the effect of poverty on teacher's beliefs regarding school readiness, print literacy, and parental involvement. Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX C

Survey/Interview: Informed Consent Form for Participation in
Suzanne Devitt's Research
Study on
School Readiness and Parent Involvement: A Teacher's
Perspective

Dear Preschool Teacher,

You are invited to participate in a research study that is trying to ascertain the teacher's perspective of preschool student's level of school readiness and degree of parental involvement at the beginning of the school year. Your answers will be used to evaluate trends in student readiness within your program as compared to students in other California Preschool Programs.

Your answers will be kept confidential and the researcher will not be able to designate any participant to a specific set of answers. If you have any questions please feel free to ask the researcher, Suzanne Devitt, or email Dr. Belinda Karge, the supervising faculty for this research (belinda.karge@cui.edu). At any time you may email Suzanne Devitt at suzanne.devitt@eagles.cui.edu.

You do not have to participate in this study and you can stop participating in the study at any time. It is not expected that the survey will cause distress or discomfort; however, if at any time you feel uncomfortable, please feel free to stop responding to the survey and turn it in to the envelope. Your participation will help provide data for a research study that is studying preschool student's school readiness and degree of parental involvement at the beginning of the school year from the perspective of a preschool teacher. It is hoped that the research will help the educational community better understand the importance of early childhood education on academic success.

Again, please note that your responses to this study are confidential. In the future, follow-up interviews will be conducted and your participation would be appreciated again. At the end of the ADULT INFORMED CONSENT FORM you will find a signature line. If you are willing to participate in an interview at a later date, please put an X on the appropriate line as well.

Thank you,

Suzanne Devitt

The additional copy is for your records

APPENDIX D

Adult Informed Consent Form

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to investigate a teacher's perspective regarding preschool student's school readiness and parent involvement. This study is being conducted by Suzanne Devitt, under the supervision of Dr. Belinda Karge, Professor in the School of Education, Concordia University, Irvine. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board, Concordia University Irvine, in Irvine, CA.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to examine a teacher's perspective of preschool student's school readiness at the beginning of the school year as well as perceived parent involvement.

DESCRIPTION: You are being asked to fill in a survey that asks some questions about your experience as a preschool teacher. You may also be asked to participate in a follow-up interview.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation is completely voluntary and you may discontinue participation at any time. You do not need to participate to receive cookies. They are provided as a convenience for you.

CONFIDENTIALITY OR ANONYMITY: Your identity will remain completely anonymous, and neither the district's name nor school name will be reported. The findings, reported in my doctoral dissertation, will simply say that data was collected from preschool teachers within a central California school district. All data, recordings, and findings will be stored either in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home, or in the researcher's private computer that is protected by security software and passwords. All records will be destroyed by January 1, 2019.

DURATION: The researcher plans to conduct a survey and follow up interviews. The entire data collection phase should last from August 1, 2016 - December 31, 2016. The survey should take about ten minutes to complete, but follow-up interviews may take 30-60 minutes.

RISKS: It is not expected that the survey or interviews will cause distress or discomfort; however, if at any time you feel uncomfortable, please let the researcher know and discontinue participation if appropriate.

BENEFITS: Participants may benefit from the self-reflection inherent in the survey and the follow-up interview as they consider their beliefs, student's needs, and instructional practices. The higher education community will benefit from a better understanding of the need for high-quality early childhood education programs and teacher preparatory programs that focus on diverse populations and social justice.

AUDIO: Consent form will be given to participants

CONTACT: For questions about the research and research participants' rights, or in the event of a research-related injury, please contact Dr. Belinda Karge, dissertation committee chair: 949-214-3333, belinda.karge@cui.edu.

RESULTS: The results of this study will be published in the researcher's doctoral dissertation at Concordia University Irvine.

CONFIRMATION STATEMENT:

I agree to participate in the research study described.

SIGNATURE:

Print Name	Signature	Date
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_____ **Yes, I am willing to participate in an interview at a later date.**

_____ **No, I would rather not be involved.**

APPENDIX E

Audio Use Informed Consent Form

As part of this research project, I will be making an audio tape recording of you during your participation in the interview. Please indicate your willingness to consent by initialing below. Your recording will no way affect your credit for participation. I will only use the audio tape in a way that you agree to. In the use of this audio tape, your name would not be identified. If you do not initial below, the audio tape will be destroyed.

The audio tape can be studied by the research
team for use in the research project.

Please initial _____

***I have read the above description and give my consent for the
use of the audiotape as indicated above.***

Signature: _____

Date: _____